Junkers on ice!

Birger Larsen.

The Junkers Ju52 airplane lying on the glacier in the Kobbelv area about two hours drive north of Bodø came out of the ice this summer.

Thirteen years ago we recovered important details including the right engine, intended for completing the various restoration projects of this type in Norway. This year we have not had extremely hot days but a higher overall temperature combined with relatively little snow last winter made the Junkers reappear.

Since no recovery expedition to this wreck was planned for this summer, this came as an extra activity in an already hectic period of the year.

It all started when our contact person for this area, Erling Koppang phoned, telling that the front engine was now out of the ice. He had asked a pilot on a helicopter from the company Nordlandsfly working in the area, to make photos of the wreck. Studying the pictures we immediately found out that we had to act as soon as possible.

Erling had already talked to the pilot of the helicopter and he said that the coming Friday was a good day for an expedition if the weather permitted.

The road ends just down from the glacier. This road stops at 680 meters but the wreck is at an altitude of 1400 meters. The terrain is very steep so using a helicopter is really the only way of taking down heavy parts of the wreck.

Friday sept 7th we started out very early. At 0800 in the morning we arrived at the place were we were to be picked up by the helicopter. Altogether 6 people were used for the expedition.

The plans were to arrive at the glacier at the earliest possible time. In this way we should have plenty of time (we thought) to have the work done. Because of other priorities the helicopter picked us up at 1100 hrs - a lot later than planned.

The helicopter had to make two flights in order to have the whole recovery crew in position for the dismantling. The moving ice had torn loose the front engine from the mounts so this part of the preparations was relatively easy. A little more work was needed for the disconnection of the engine mount. Also some interior details still in place in the wreck had to be removed. All of the smaller details collected were put in a net, ready for lifting by helicopter.

The left engine was still well into the ice. Two of the people from the recovery crew had a big job trying to free the engine from the ice. However, our late arrival at the glacier made it impossible to finish in time for the arrival of the helicopter.

However, the work done this day made the recovery of this last engine possible at a later date.

Four flights down from the glacier carrying people and parts went without problems. This enabled us to set course for Bodø late in the evening. A stop for dinner and coffee made this a perfect day.

The hot weather continued for another week and we started hoping that we could still manage to recover the last engine. The 16th our contact in the area again went up on the glacier. He had a look at the engine and he returned with the message that now the engine was almost completely out of the ice.

A small delegation was sent on a visit to 330 Sqdn. This squadron is operating the Sea-King

Helicopter used for rescue work. Helpful as ever, they suggested Friday 21th as a possible day for recovery of the last engine.

Friday the weather was relatively cloudy but still good enough to put the recovery crew up on the glacier. Three people from the museum volounteered for the task. This time we also brought with us a TV-journalist from NRK (Norwegian Broadcasting Company).

At the same time a two-man crew went by car and a trailer to be in position for loading the engine directly from the helicopter and onto the trailer.

This was not to be!

Half an hour before the return of the helicopter the weather deteriorated and the clouds started to form around the glacier. The recovery crew had to scramble down the mountainside if they were to be picked up by the helicopter. Even if the engine now was ready to be picked up they had to leave everything behind.

The next Monday we again made contact with the 330 Squadron. The helicopter crew now stated that THEIR engine WAS to come down!! They had done the flightplanning already and started out early in the morning. Only problem now was that because of the early departure of the helicopter we could not have the trailer in position in time. This problem was solved by renting a local mobile crane. The transport team again set course for the Kobbelv area and at around four o`clock we had the engine loaded on the trailer.Two hours later we again could deliver one good engine for restoration to the museum.

The local TV had a story on the recovery of the engine some time later.

Without the great help from NORDLANDSFLY and 330 SQDN the recovery on the glacier could not have been possible. Thank you to you all!!

Some facts about the airplane:

Type: Ju52 3mGe.

**Serial No: 2828.**

**Markings: KI+AL**

Unit: 3/KGzbv 108.

This airplane crashed into the glacier june 8th. 1940 while trying to drop supplies to german troops trying to walk overland to Narvik (“Unternehmen Büffel.”)

The crew was unhurt and was able to walk down to the German camp in the area.