



## Hawker Nimrod II K3661 (G-BURZ)



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There are a number of period photographs of the aircraft, some with the Fleet Air Arm Museum, including two of each of its landing accidents. In 1972 the Nimrod was discovered half buried on a scrap dump at Ashford in Kent, more or less complete, but well corroded.

The aircraft remains were recovered and donated to the RAF Museum, who held them in store at RAF Henlow. The fuselage only was sold off by the museum when the Henlow storage facility was closed, to Mike Cookman, who was constructing an Hawker Typhoon at the time, from relic parts. Aero Vintage Ltd. bought the Nimrod fuselage from him in August 1991, and later that year, the wings (including the wings from a second Nimrod that Aero Vintage acquired, but a Nimrod I) and tail unit, which by now had re-appeared at the RAF Museum's Cosford 'deep' storage facility. The engine remains with the RAF Museum.

Still with no known identity established, a letter printed in Wingspan magazine concerning this aircraft, resulted in the proprietor of the Kent Battle of Britain Museum at RAF Hawkinge, Mike Llewellyn, telephoning Aero Vintage with the news that they had a display case full of parts from this Nimrod. This included the control column, the instrument panel, map box, ammunition chutes, and much besides, but most importantly - and the real prize, was the original cockpit data plates from the aircraft, indicating it's serial number 41H 59890 and RAF number, K 3661.

Interestingly, the Nimrod was discovered only a couple of miles or so from where Lympne airfield was, and a photograph has emerged of the Nimrod's tail showing the aircraft (with a very late 802 Sqn crest on the fin) as it was

right at the end of its service life; the photo gives some evidence that it may have been an instructional airframe as there is fabric damage. That led to the suggestion that the photograph was taken at RAF Lympne, in the then-standing Belfast Hangars where there was an FAA mechanics school. In the background of the original photo can be seen Boy Scouts and well-dressed visitors, suggesting an open day. RAF Lympne was host to HMS Buzzard, formed in 1937 with several aircraft from HMS Ark Royal, but not the Nimrod at this stage, as it was known to be at Lee on Solent in 1939 (in storage possibly). The Naval Air Mechanics School was located at RAF Lympne in Sept 1939 (as HMS Daedulus II), and we believe the aircraft may have been sent to RAF Lympne as a ground instructional airframe. It next appears at Ashford Air Training Corps hut on the road out of Ashford leading to Canterbury, just on the outskirts of Ashford. The ATC are still on this site, which is just 100 yards from the rubbish dump where the airframe was found. An ex-cadet from that period recalls there being the Nimrod in their hut with the wings stacked behind the fuselage, but whether it came from RAF Lympne or direct from FAA stocks is not known.

Restoration was started in earnest in 1992, with the first challenge being to re-manufacture the spars, which are a complex roll-formed item manufactured from high tensile steel strip. Without this extremely difficult part being successfully re-made there would have been no point in going further forward, as Retrotec (the restoration arm of Aero Vintage and Historic Aircraft Collection Ltd. (HAC) were only prepared to restore the aircraft if it could be 100% authentic down to the smallest detail. The fortunate discovery of a large number of drawings in Denmark, eased the way forward after the spars were re-manufactured satisfactorily, and further years of work and research has led to the aircraft towards completion. A Kestrel engine was found in Canada, and rebuilt to the appropriate specification. The Nimrod first flew on 16th November 2006 at Duxford.

This aircraft is very different to the Nimrod I, in that it has swept wings, a tail wheel, a very complex steam condensing cooling system and a gas start system. The engine was more powerful also, a Kestrel VI engine being specified.

Nimrod K3661 G-BURZ is on permanent display in Hangar 3 at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford

#### Manufacture completed 5th September 1934

- Known movements from Air Historical Branch archives and other sources.
- 1st January 1935 placed in storage No. 2 Aircraft Storage unit at Cardington.
- Packing depot Sealand 7th October 1936
- Issued to 802 Squadron and in Mediterranean 23rd October 1936 Carried side code 56
- Was on strength until June 1938 during which time it suffered two landing accidents. Repaired each time.
- Was placed on Admiralty charge (Fleet Air Arm) 24th May 1939
- At Lee on Solent December 1939. Official records stop at this point.
- Possibly at HMS Daedulus II at RAF Lympne as Ground Instructional Airframe
- The Ashford (305 Squadron) Air Training Corps (previously Air Cadet Defence Corps),
- Municipal Dump, North of Ashford, Kent
- RAF Museum, storage facility at RAF Henlow
- Mick Cookman up to 1991
- Aero Vintage Ltd
- Historic Aircraft Collection 1993

#### Nimrod II

Wing Span: 33 ft 6 in (10.23 m)  
Length: 26 ft 5 in (8.09 m)  
Height: 9 ft 8 in (3.0 m)  
Power: Kestrel VI FP 600 hp  
Weight: 3115.7 lbs (1413 kg)  
Maximum Speed: 168 kts (311 km/h)  
Service Ceiling: 28002 ft (8535 m)  
Range: 2 hours endurance  
Armament: Two forward firing synchronised Vickers Mk III with 600 rounds per gun. Provision for four 20 lb bombs

Nimrod II K3661 is available for air displays, memorial flights, TV and film work and other promotional activities. Please Janice Black at:

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