

Case study

Restoring an iconic World War II torpedo bomber from nothing but wreckage



Fairey Barracudas flying in formation

There is not a single remaining example of a Fairey Barracuda anywhere in the world. These British carrier-borne aircraft saw action in the Atlantic, Mediterranean and Pacific and were involved in key engagements during the war including missions to destroy the German Battleship Tirpitz and supporting the allied invasion of Italy.



Fleet Air Arm Museum, Yeovilton, UK

To ensure generations of visitors can see an example of the Barracuda the dedicated team at the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm Museum have set about painstakingly recreating an example from nothing but the wreckage from several different crash sites.

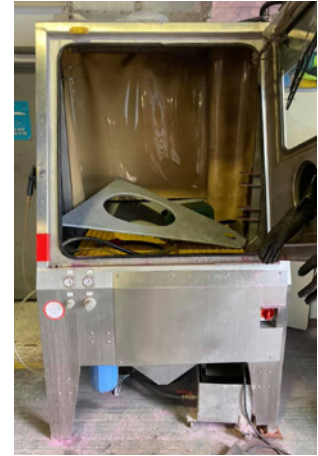


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Fairey Barracuda parts recovered from several different crash sites

It is an incredibly challenging task, imagine the hardest jigsaw puzzle with half the pieces missing, the remaining half in a terrible condition and not fitting together properly, and you are part of the way there to understanding just how difficult this project is!



A large Barracuda component in the Fleet Air Arm Museum's Vapormatt Puma Manual wet blasting machine

Their Vapormatt Puma manual wet blasting machine is helping with the daunting task of recreating a Barracuda to eventually go on display in the museum, and so far the results have been spectacular.



Steel fitting before and after wet blasting

The steel fitting in the image above is from wreckage that has sat at the bottom of The Solent since the crash. The Barracuda plunged into the water just moments after taking off from HMS Daedalus for a test flight in 1943. The pilot was able to swim the 500m back to shore. As you can see, wet blasting has transformed the component to its original condition.



Main undercarriage torsion box bracket before and after wet blasting

The bracket from a main undercarriage torsion box in the image above is from a different crash site, this time Northern Ireland. This Barracuda took off from Maydown for Easthaven and spun into a bog just five miles from the airfield. Sadly, the crew of three perished in the crash. In 1971 a combined team from RNAS Yeovilton and 63 HQ Sqdn RE recovered the aircraft. Again, wet blasting has returned the part to its original condition.

With help from their Vapormatt Puma wet blasting machine the team at the museum hope to have the recreated Barracuda on display in the not-too-distant future.



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