

## “FLYING HIGH” VENOM

Returning from the Abingdon Air & country show last week, I passed a De Havilland Venom mounted in a dramatic pose on a pole next to a roundabout, at Grove in Oxfordshire. On returning home, a quick search on the Internet revealed that the owner of an Industrial Park that now occupies part of the former RAF and USAAF airfield, wanted to commemorate the former airfields existence. So J-1758/G-BLSD a former Swiss Air Force De Havilland Venom, and a long term former resident of North Weald airfield, was repainted into 145 Sqn colours (?) and placed in position in October 2007. Venoms were never based at Grove, Douglas Dakotas were, but the pole would need to be HUGE for one of those to be displayed here!



## FLY NAVY (part 1)

Having last visited the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) museum at RNAS Yeovilton in 1982, I thought it was about time I paid another visit. So in January, I had talked my lovely, understanding wife into a day trip to the museum, for my birthday treat. As my birthday fell on a Monday, I took a day off work, only to arrive at the rather empty museum car park. A bit strange I thought. Then I saw the sign, closed on Mondays during the winter months!!! So a few weeks ago I set out again to the museum, this time minus the family. I stopped briefly at the main gate of HMS Heron, to “snap” the gate guards, a BAe Sea Harrier FA2 ZD578 and a Westland Lynx HMA8 XZ728. Entering the museum, you enter Hall 1, which has on display early FAA aircraft including a Bristol Scout replica, the wooden fuselage of a Short 184, a Sopwith Pup replica, and



an immaculate Supermarine Walrus L2301. A Fairey Firefly TT.4 VH127, mentions the involvement of the FAA during the Korean War. Also in the hall, bringing the FAA story up to date is a Sea Harrier FA2 XZ499, a genuine Falklands conflict veteran, with one “kill” to its name, the pilot Lt D A B Smith, of 800 NAS, having shot down an Argentinean Skyhawk A-4B on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1982, with a AIM-9L Sidewinder. Another Falklands conflict veteran amongst the aircraft in Hall 1 is a Westland Sea King HAS6 XZ574, which was based on HMS Hermes. On 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1982, XZ574, crewed by His Royal Highness, The Duke of York, was sent to locate and rescue the crew of Sea King ZA311 which had crashed into the sea. The pilot of ZA311 was rescued, however Petty Officer Casey was not found and became the first British serviceman to die in the Falklands conflict. A Westland Dragonfly HR.1 VX595, which had its first flight in June 1949, and

a Westland Lynx HAS3 XZ699, which first flew in March 1980, on display side by side, enabled me to compare just quite how far helicopter design has progressed since the 1940's.

Moving on into Hall 2, I was pleased to see a very rare aircraft, Fairey Albacore N4389, a torpedo-cum-dive bomber. The aircraft on display is the only known surviving example, having been built from parts from two aircraft. The Vought Corsair KD431 on display, has over a five year period, had layers of 1963 applied paint carefully stripped off to reveal the original WW2 markings and insignias. Many of the markings applied on the production line during assembly at the Goodyear factory in Ohio in 1944 are also now visible. A similar treatment is being carried out on Grumman Martlet AL246 in the conservation workshop, to also reveal original wartime markings. (To be continued)



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