

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

AVRO LINCOLN B.2 RF398/8376M
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 84/A/1182

Built by Armstrong Whitworth to contract Acft/239/SAS/C.4. Packard Merlin 68A Engines. One of 281 of the UK Lincoln Production total of 528 aircraft built by AWA; Serial batch RF383 – RF427. Built at Baginton, near Coventry, with final assembly and flight test at Bitteswell, near Rugby.

20 Sep 43	Ordered as one of 200 Lancaster Mk IV aircraft delivered between March 1945 and March 1947.
11 Sep 45	First flight.
13 Sep 45	No.46 MU, Lossiemouth (Aircraft Storage Unit).
16 Nov 46	To Armstrong Whitworth at Baginton for mods.
2 Jan 47	Flew again after modification.
16 Jan 47	Modifications complete.
25 Apr 47	To No.15 MU Wroughton, Wilts.
28 Oct 47	English Electric Co for further mods.
05 Jan 48	Modifications complete.
08 Jan 48	To No.38 MU Llandow.
26 Feb 48	To Armstrong Whitworth at Baginton for more mods as a B.2/4A.
05 May 48	Awaiting collection.
03 May 48	To No.5 MU Kemble, Gloucs, Aircraft Storage Unit. Note slight discrepancy in date here as recorded on the a/c movement card.
03 Aug 49	To Armstrong Whitworth for yet more mods.

- 29 Nov 49 Flew again following modification.
- 30 Nov 49 Modifications complete.
- 08 Dec 49 To No.5 MU Kemble.
- 8 Jun 50 Avro CWP mods, completed 22 June 1950
- 17 Nov 50 To No.51 MU Lichfield, Staffs – an Aircraft Storage Unit.
- Jun 51 More modifications by a Boulton Paul CWP
- Jul 51 Mods by Avro CWP
- 08 Aug 51 To No.5 MU Kemble.
- 19 Nov 51 Back to No.51 MU Lichfield for short-term storage.
- 3 Jan 52 Apparent evening visual bombing and fighter affiliation flight – 7 ¼ hours – see copy of Bomber Command Flight Engineer Log (Lincoln Aircraft) on correspondence file. Took off at 19.54hrs, flying 1338 miles. Frederick Dunning, OBE, in October 2006 (see file note) suggested a reason for this; the RAF was at the time concerned with low-flying Soviet aircraft laying mines in Southampton Water, and had devised an exercise to counter it, using height-finding radar at Ventnor Radar Station on the Isle of Wight, using a Lincoln aircraft–possibly RF398– flying from RAF Tangmere.
- 25 May 54 To No.5 MU Kemble.
- 1 Dec 55 Mods by Avro CWP, completed 12 Dec 55.
- 27 Nov 57 Nearly two years after the withdrawal of the last front-line RAF Lincolns, RF398 finally reached a flying unit – The Bomber Command Bombing School (BCBS) at Lindholme, Yorks. By now equipped with Mk.IVA H2S radar, '398 was redesignated a B.2/IVA, and carried the units distinctive Royal Blue spinners as one of 14 Lincolns on strength with 'B' Squadron of the BCBS.
- 08 May 58 `ADA Mods'
- 20 Jun 58 Back to the BCBS; formed part of a six-Lincoln fly-past at the 1958 RAF Lindholme 'At Home' Day.

- Sep 60 On static display at the RAF Gaydon, Warwicks Battle of Britain Day Display, with royal blue spinners. Photo: British Museum Aircraft. (DoRIS Ref.009349).
- 04 Oct 60 To No.23 MU RAF Aldergrove, Northern Ireland. BCBS retired its last Lincoln, WD143 – the last in Bomber Command – two days later. Two other Lincolns RF351 & RF389, went to Aldergrove from BCBS the same day.
- 27 Jul 61 Prepared for ferry flight. Made 1 hour 20 minute test flight, bringing total flying hours to 741 (560 landings). Then made a 1 hour 35 minute evening flight to new base at RAF Watton.

This and complete technical history of RF398 for the period 27 Jul 61 – 29 Nov 63 contained in five form 700s and Job Cards, DoRIS Ref.B3219.

RAF Watton, Norfolk was home of RF398's new unit, the Central Signals Establishment (CSE) '398 was sent to replace the CSE's long-serving Lincoln WD148, withdrawn with cracked wing spars. The CSE was engaged in electronic warfare and countermeasures training, including electronic/radio listening, detection and jamming devices.

The CSE and its successor unit flew Lincolns for some 15 years, probably longer than any other RAF Unit. '398 flew on the units' Development Squadron, and a full log of its flights Jul 61 – Apr 63 is held with the aircraft's history file.

At Watton, RF398 arrived with her original hand-priming equipment mounted in the starboard engine bay, but received WD148's electric cockpit priming system by Oct 61. The mod (No.1715) was done single-handedly by SAC George Jiggins, despite having no drawings available.

- Sep 61 RF398 photographed in colour in formation with two other Lincolns over RAF Waddington. Photo – Avro Lincoln (Butler) p.22.
- 01 Jan 62 CSE Development Squadron renamed No.151 Squadron, by now the last Lincoln Unit in the RAF. The five Lincolns, including RF398, flew as `B' Flight. Other unit aircraft included Canberras, Hastings and Varsitys.

The Lincolns continued to participate in service exercises and provided anti-jamming training for ground radar operators, who had to overcome the jamming signals put

out by the Lincolns, just one of which flying at 15,000 feet could allegedly shut down the entire UK east coast radar chain.

- 02-09 Jun 62 All five Lincolns to RAF Idris (Libya) on detachment – Photos: Wingspan Mar 90 p.43 and ‘Lincoln at War’ p.162; Flypast December 2006 p.58.
- 27 Jun 62 45-minute conversion flight; pilot Flt Lt. Jackson (Flt Lt J Langley logbook)
- 5 Jul 62 1.35-hour continuation training, including landings (Langley logbook) Pilot Flt Lt Jackson.
- 19 Jul 62 2.5-hour flight during exercise ‘Kingpin’; pilot Flt Lt Jackson (Langley logbook)
- 24 Aug 62 4.05 hour flight including two day landings; pilot Flt Lt Langley.
- 14 Nov 62 2.15-hour flight Watton – Tangmere–Watton, including two day landings – pilot Flt Lt Langley.
- 29 Nov 62 4.15 hour flight during exercise ‘Kingpin’ – pilot Flt Lt Langley.
- 19 Dec 62 2hr 50-minute continuation training flight – pilot Flt Lt Langley.
- 28 Jan 63 Two-hour continuation training flight, pilot Flt Lt Langley. Included five day landings.
- 11-15 Feb 63 RF398 flew to Akrotiri (Cyprus), Idris and Luqa (Malta), possibly the last time a Lincoln went abroad. Pilot Flt Lt Langley.
- 25 Feb 63 Day/Night continuation training – 3.30 hours. Pilot Flt Lt Langley.
- 12 Mar 63 Final 530 mile cross country farewell flight by three Lincolns, excluding RF398, over East Anglia, although flying continued until the end of the month.

RF398 itself flew on the 1st, 4th, 8th, 11th, 15th (Continuation Training, Flt Lt Langley), 18th, 19th, and 20th, March, including Formation Flypasts on the 19th and 20th. See extract from log book of Flight Lieutenant John Langley for March 1963 on file.

- 31 Mar 63 Lincoln flight disbanded.
- 04 Apr 63 Placed into short-term store.
- 30 Apr 63 Flt Lt John Langley flew RF398 on the penultimate RAF Lincoln Flight, from Watton to RAF Henlow, Beds for storage for the future RAF Museum.
Touching down at 15.25, this 45-minute flight closed '398's flying career of 1043.05 flying hours, 291.05 of these with the CSE and 792 landings. The aircraft was struck off RAF charge upon arrival.

Flt Lt Langley had already flown Lincoln RF461 to Shawbury for scrapping on 18 April, and Lincoln RA685 to the same place for the same purpose the following day.

Last RAF Lincoln Flight of all was probably RF461, from 27 MU Shawbury to 23 MU Aldergrove 18/19 June 1963 – see MU A/C log books in DoRIS. Sold for scrap 27 April 1964.

Interestingly, RF398 was kept serviceable at Henlow for a while and the engines frequently ground run during the summer and autumn of 1963, on four occasions in May, three times in June, twice in July, three times in August and September and once in October (11th).

- 30 Oct 63 Final ground run, then taxied under its own power to a new parking place at Henlow outside the museums' 'Pickle Factory' storage hangars.
- 29 Nov 63 Engines inhibited and cockpit, wheel, and engine covers fitted, and external parts subject to corrosion greased. Last entry on the Form 700. Photos in this condition: Lincoln at War (Ian Allan) (DoRIS Ref.011345) and 'Air Extra' No.13 p. 12 (as of Jun 65), also 'Prop Swing' Summer 2003 pp.31–32.

In early 1963 it was originally thought that two Lincolns would go to RAF Hullavington, Wilts for preservation by the Air Historical Branch but this was not proceeded with.

- c. Aug 65 Tail wheel assembly exchanged with that of Lancaster PA474, which was cracked, this aircraft then being stored alongside RF398 at Henlow and being restored to fly.

- 18 Apr 68 A visitor to RAF Henlow during the making of the Battle of Britain film noted 'activity (dismantling for road movement) seemed to be centred on the Lincoln and it was good to note that she was wearing a nice new coat of paint' (Control Column Jun 68). Refurbishment work on the Lincoln had commenced 22 January 1968, with surface finish being worked on by 25 March 1968. It would appear that refurbishment included installation of a rear turret, with the latter-day fairing being removed and stored by the RAFM, with whom it is still extant.
This external refurbishment and move by road to RAF Abingdon, Berks was carried out by No.71 MU Bicester.
- 2 May 68 To Abingdon by road from Henlow.
- 14 Jun 68 Displayed in Static Park at the RAFs' 50th anniversary Royal Review at Abingdon. Colour photo – Aeroplane Monthly 1994 UK. Aircraft Collections and Museums Guide. Fitted also with a dorsal turret for this event – photos cover & p. 194 of Air Britain Digest Jul 68; Veteran & Vintage Aircraft (Hunt) p.12 (002064); Air Pictorial Nov 95 p.512 (colour); International Air Power Review Premier Issue p.186 (colour); Avro Lincoln (Butler) p.1 (Colour); Wrecks and Relics–The Album p.51 (colour); Flypast October 2004 p.68 (colour); Aeroplane December 2007 p.79 (Colour).
- Late Summer 68 Moved by No.71 MU to RAF Cosford, Salop for storage – Photo: Control Column Sep 69. Dorsal turret removed.
- 5 Sep 73 Allotted RAF instructional serial 8376M at Cosford as a book – keeping exercise.

The aircraft has been proudly maintained at Cosford ever since, latterly as a centrepiece of the Aerospace Museum (Now RAF Museum Cosford) Collection. In the 1980s the aircraft gained media notoriety through its supposed 'Haunting' leading to inconclusive all night vigils by psychic groups and tests by the then Wolverhampton Polytechnic.

The Friends group at Cosford has done considerable work on the airframe, and in 2000 the rear turret was restored using funds from the West Midlands Branch of the Air Gunners Association. Photos temporarily displayed outside Cosford – Aircraft Illustrated Mar 86 p.162; Aeroplane Monthly Mar 86 p.115. Photo of interior of bomb aimer's position – Flypast April 1999 p.43. Colour photo in hanger – Supplement to Aeroplane April 2001 p.13. Detailed photos – Avro Lincoln (Butler) pp.37–39; Flypast October 2006 pp.19–23.

Other surviving Lincolns

- RF342/G-APRJ Ex-trials a/c and Southend Air Museum. Made final British Lincoln flight into Southend 9 May 67. Major sections dismantled with Imperial Aviation Group, North Coates, Lincs from Jan 1998, and moved to Sandtoft, Lincs 1999, and stored with cockpit of Lancaster KB994 and parts of Lancaster KB976. Nose section (ex Lancaster TW911) with Wizzard Investments Ltd at Greenham Common, Jan 2004, and to Paul Allen's collection in the USA 2008; Lincoln and Lancaster parts excluding nose shipped to Australia (Mark Pilkington) for restoration November 2006, arriving at the Australian National Aviation Museum, Moorabbin Airport, from March 2007.
- RF530/G-37-1 Former RR Tyne test-bed. Upper rear fuselage section converted to Glider trailer following scrapping at Hucknall Jan 1966- extant out of use at Dunstable Aerodrome, Beds, 2009. Ex Rolls - Royce Tyne test Bed.
- RE351/B-010 Argentine Air Force. Preserved at Museo Nacional de la Aeronautica, Moron Airport, Buenos Aires. W/d 1st Aug 67 as one of the last of the Argentine Lincoln aircraft. Actually B-004 but renumbered for display, making the last ever Argentine Lincoln flight to Buenos Aires. To National Museum of Aeronautics, Moron, Buenos Aires, 2002. Photo-Flypast May 2004 p.82.
- SX924 Wings, centre section and rear fuselage/tail-substantial crash remains in and around Watson Lake, Canada. Crashed 10 November 1948.
- A73-27 *Nose only at Camden Museum of Aviation, Narrellen, Australia. Lincoln Mk 30 Ex Fire Dump, Mascot, Sydney. Photo; Flypast December 2004 p.93.
- A73-36 Lincoln Mk 30A; Tail turret and small section of rear fuselage in store with RAF Museum since 1970, ex RAAF Richmond.
- A73-64 'Long Nosed' Lincoln Mk. 31; Tail section and remains of dorsal turret only formerly at RAAF Museum, Point Cook; crash site recovery ; prop blade and rudder with Caboolture Warplane Museum, Aus.

A73-

Rear fuselage only. Sid Beck Collection, Cairns, Queensland (Aviation News 21 Oct - 3 Nov 94). Possibly A73-64, as above?

/B-017

Villa Reynolds, Argentina - Photos: Air Pictorial Feb 96 p.78; Actually B-016 but renumbered for display; possibly now renumbered B-016. Retired 1st August 1967.

TEXT - ANDREW SIMPSON