

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

ROYAL AIRCRAFT FACTORY BE2b REPLICA `687'/BAPC 181
MUSEUM ACCESSION NO.1992/0382/A
(Incorporating Fuselage Frame 72/A/993)

- Nov 72 Fuselage frame of a BE2a displayed in WWI workshop scene in side gallery of newly opened RAF Museum Hendon. Photos: Scale Models Dec 72; Air Extra No.2 p.25; RAFM Guide (1974-001796) p.4; later replaced by the Bleriot XXVII fuselage currently displayed.
- The BE2a fuselage frame was previously at the RAFM store at Henlow, and had been assembled with new wood and original metal fittings from three original BE2 fuselage frames.
- c.Feb 83 Fuselage frame to Mr John Mackenzie of Shirley, Southampton to aid in the construction of a replica BE2b under contract for the RAF Museum. Much of the basic structure was built from scratch, using original factory drawings.
- 1984 Replica Renault 70hp V8 engine constructed at the RAF Museum Reserve Collection and Restoration Centre RAF Cardington, using an original engine loaned by the Science Museum as a pattern. An original 70hp Renault 4-blade propeller was fitted, originally acquired from a garage in Weston-super-Mare. (69/E/1438).
- Early 1988 Airframe to RC&RC Cardington.
- Feb 90 Trial rigged at Cardington. Photo: Aeroplane Monthly Apr 90 p.199.
- 1990-91 Aircraft fabric covered, rigged, armed and assembled at RC&RC Cardington. Photo: Aeroplane Monthly Oct 92 p.4.

The aircraft was given the identify of BE2b No.687. On 26 April 1915 2nd Lt William Barnard Rhodes-Moorhouse used this aircraft for attack on Courtrai Railway Station, Cambrai, Northern France. He dropped a 112lb (45kg) bomb from low level (300 feet) to ensure accuracy and was badly wounded by rifle fire, his aircraft was also hit by splinters from his own bomb. Despite his wounds he made the 35-mile/40 minute flight back to his own airfield at Merville but died of his wounds the next day having reported the success of his mission. He was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross - the first to be given for an aerial action - the following month.

- Jun 92 Completed replica delivered to RAFM and displayed in the Bomber Command Hall. Photo at Hendon - Air Pictorial Sep 92 p.439.

- 12-13 May 1997 Dismantled and taken by road to RAF Marham as centrepiece of No 2 Squadron celebration that weekend. Returned to Hendon for reassembly 19 May 1997, following display in the officer's Mess dining room.
- Jul 97 Re - rigged to add one degree to dihedral on site at Hendon.
Photos in Bomber Hall - W.W.1 Aero Aug 98 p.109; The Flying M Spring 2012 p.15.
- 20 Aug 02 Again temporarily loaned to No.2 Squadron at RAF Marham, Norfolk for the Squadron's Anniversary celebrations, due to return 3 September. Left RAFM Hendon by road following dismantling the previous day; returned off loan 3rd September 2002, and re-rigged the following day.
- 15 Jul 03 Temporarily loaned out for Royal International Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford, Glos to feature in the 'Centenary of Flight' display there 19/20 July. Photo – Flypast September 2003 p.108.
- Returned to RAFM Hendon 22 July 2003, and re-rigged the following day.
- 17 Apr 2012 Moved from Bomber Hall to Grahame White Hangar for further display.

TEXT - ANDREW SIMPSON