

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

HAWKER TEMPEST TT5 NV778/8386M
MUSEUM ACCESSION No.72/A/571

Fitted with 2, 180 HP Napier Sabre IIA engine. Contract No.1876 - one of the third production batch of 200 Tempest V series 2 aircraft built by Hawkers at Langley, Berks.

- 25 Nov 44 Inspectors' report of this date found in starboard wing trailing edge during restoration July 1994 indicating construction date.
- 05 Jan 45 Controller, Research and Development (CRD) Napier's - probably based at Napiers' engine development establishment at Luton Municipal Airport.
- 25 Jan 45 Damaged, Cat AC (Repair beyond unit capacity) Repaired on site (ROS) by Hawkers' staff.
- 02 Feb 45 CRD Napiers - presumably at Luton again.
- Feb 45 No.56 Squadron. Flying Tempests on the continent from Field B80 Volkel at this time, fuselage codes US -. However, there is apparently no evidence in squadron records of NV778 being on their strength.
- 24 Feb 45 Damaged, cat AC/FB - Repair beyond unit capacity, operational damage.
- 30 Aug 45 CRD Napiers - presumably back at Luton.
- 26 Jan 46 To Hawker Aircraft Co.
- 04 Feb 46 Damaged, Cat B - Beyond repair on site - Repaired in Works (RIW) Hawker Aircraft.
- Mar 46 Recorded in Home Census.
- 19 Aug 46 Repairs complete - Awaiting collection.
- 09 Sep 46 To No.5 MU Kemble, Glos, where many surplus Tempests were stored at this time.
- 24 Mar 50 To Hawkers for conversion to Target Towing role - one of 80 such conversions done Feb 1950 - May 1952, all at Langley using Tempest V aircraft. Given Sabre IID during rebuild. This was in response to the need for a tug with a much higher speed than the Martinet to serve the new generation of jet fighters.

- 9 Nov 50 Test flown from Langley by Neville Duke (Tempest file letters, 30 Oct/14 Nov 03); 30 minutes, probably flown to Hawker Flight Test schedule for clearance of production aircraft.
- 15 Nov 50 25-minute flight test from Langley by Neville Duke.
- 29 Nov 50 Ex-Conv - modifications complete.
- 12 Dec 50 To 6 MU, Brize Norton, Wilts.
- 20 Sep 51 To 20 MU, Aston Down, Glos.
- 27 Oct 52 To 233 OCU, Pembrey, Wales. The unit was formed that same month, receiving its first Tempests, having four on charge by the end of the month, including NV778, and 16 by Feb 1953. The aircraft carried standard target-towing markings for the time - silver doped upper surfaces and yellow/black undersides and black serials, plus a red fin. Other Tempest V aircraft with the unit included NV917, EJ631, EJ633, EJ669, SN127, SN219 and SN259.

The career of NV778 at No.233 OCU is comprehensively charted by the logbook of Sgt M J Perry (DoRIS Ref.MF10113/8-9) who joined the unit c. March 1953, flying Tempests - including NV778 on the following dates:

- 1953 24 Apr 'high ¼'s at 10,000 feet'; 4 May - Flag Towing; 28 May -Flag Towing - 1.35 hour flight, apparently typical for such flights; 10 Nov and 24 Nov - Flag Tow flights.
- 1954 5 and 8 Jan - 1.10 hour Flag Tow Flights; 3 Feb - Air Test; 22 Jul - Flag Tow; 23 Aug - Flag Tow; 30 Aug - two flights - Air Test and Formation Cross-Country; 1 Sep - Formation Cross-Country Flights; 27 and 28 Sep - Flag Tows; 23 Dec - 35 minute Air Test.
- 1955 12 Jan - 30 minute Flag Tow; 24 Jan - 20 minute Air Test; 28 Jan - Flag Tow; 2 and 3 Feb - Flag Tows; 3 Mar - Formation Flight; 9 Mar - Flag Tow. 10 Jun - 1 hour Flag Tow.

The same logbook includes several photos of 233 OCU Tempests including one of NV778 taking off.

By 11 Jul 1955 Sgt Perry was helping to ferry the units' redundant Tempests to No.20 MU Aston Down, though a different pilot took NV778 on her last flight-see below.

- 12 Jul 55 To 20 MU Aston Down, a 30-minute flight flown by Desmond Martin. (See logbook extract on Tempest file) 233 OCU retired its last Tempests that month - the last unit to fly Tempests in the RAF.

Martin made the last ever RAF Tempest V flight when he took Tempest V '259' to Aston Down on 19th July 1955.

Meteor 8 aircraft took over from the Tempests, the last of which flew out of Pembrey 19 Jul 55 (Air International Apr 81 p.204-5)

30 Nov 55 Sold to the Ministry of Supply - as were a number of other Tempests at this time. Many were used for weapons effect trails at Shoeburyness.

Apr 57 Mr Bernard I Robertson photographed the complete fuselage of NV778 on the scrap dump - an old dispersal pen - at North Weald airfield. (See file letter, 27/9/79.)

However, Control Column, August 1968, records that the dismantled aircraft arrived at North Weald on a Queen Mary trailer 19 Apr 1958 and lay in a dispersal pen 'for several months' before disappearing.

Due to the closeness to the 33 Squadron presentation noted below, perhaps the 1957 date is the correct one. The remains of NV778 at this time still bore the rather faded Target Tug colour scheme.

1958 Reconstructed from the remains of several aircraft lying at Shoeburyness ranges, for display during No.33 Squadrons' standard presentation on 24th April 1958 at Middleton St George - given the serial number SN219 and coded 5R-F to represent a 33 Squadron Tempest in WW2. The recent restoration, begun at Cardington by the late Ian Mason and other Cardington/Wyton/Cosford Technicians indicates that whilst some 85% of the existing airframe is that of NV778, the tailplanes and elevators at least do come from SN219, also a 233 OCU aircraft that also passed to the Ministry of Supply 30 Nov 1955. Some panels are also from SN219, at least one panel comes from Tempest VI NX262 and a cannon cover from Mark V EJ753, plus cockpit under-shield from Tempest II PR622, which flew on fighter-bomber clearance tests with 'A' Squadron Boscombe Down in 1947. The propeller was from a Bristol Brigand.

Aug 58 Placed on gate at Middleton St George, still as SN219/5R-F. Photos: Flight 29 May 59 p.741; Air Britain Digest Summer 95 p.47; Military Aviation Review Aug 77 p.12; Flypast May 2002 insert; Aeroplane Displays/ Museums Supplement April 2003 (1963 colour shot); Goosepool (History of RAF and RCAF Middleton St George-Howes) p.326 (colour).

Sep 63 Moved to gate at RAF Leeming on closure of Middleton St George. Refurbished at Leeming.

Aug 65 To RAFM store at Henlow, transported by No.60 MU, being erected there by 24 November 1965.

- 18 Apr 68 Refurbishment work (begun 21 December 1967) completed by 27 MU Shawbury, Shropshire when the correct identity - NV778 was discovered. Photo as rolled out – Flypast May 2002 insert. Moved to Abingdon from 22 April 1968.
- 14 Jun 68 Displayed as NV778 at Abingdon for the RAFs' 50th anniversary display. Photo stored at Abingdon with other aircraft - Flight International 23 May 68 p.772; On display; Aeromilitaria Winter 2002 rear cover (colour).
- 08 Sep 68 Displayed at Horse Guards Parade, minus fuselage codes but with underwing `invasion' stripes. Colour photo - Scale Models Feb 73 p.103; Also Flight International 3 Oct 1968 p.538.
- 1968 To storage at RAF Cosford.
- 20 Sep 69 Displayed at Battle of Britain Day Open Day at RAF Gayden, Warwickshire. Photo - Airfield Review No 86 April 2000 – cover and The Hawker Tempest (Franks 2012) p.51.
- 1972 To Bicester for refurbishment by 71 MU - underwing stripes removed as incorrect. Hence to Hendon in time for opening of RAFM November 1972. Photo displayed at Hendon; Warpaint Series 55 Hawker Tempest Mk. II to VI (Caruana) rear cover.
- 5 Sep 73 Allotted RAF Maintenance Serial 8386M.
- 17 Dec 91 To Cardington for complete strip-down and overhaul and return to TT Mk.5 status. Cockpit frame and controls stripped and rebuilt by December 1993. Photo - FlyPast Jan 94 p.50.
Photo of restored Sabre engine at Cardington - The Flying M Yearbook 1998 p.31.
Photo of restored fuselage and engine; Flypast February 2000 p.67; Flypast January 2001 p.27. See also The Hawker Tempest (Franks 2012) pp. 94-97, 102 – 108)
- 3 Aug 98 One of a large number of aircraft donated to the RAFM by the MoD.
- 20 Jan 2000 By road to temporary RAFM facility at RAF Wyton, Cambs due to closure of RAF Cardington. Photo at Wyton, November 2000; Flypast May 2002 Insert.
- 13 Nov 2001 By road to new RAFM Conservation Centre at Cosford for continued work due to the closure of RAFM centre at Wyton. Port wing assembly to Medway Aircraft Restoration Society at Rochester airport for restoration March 2002. Photo under restoration at Cosford; Aircraft Illustrated February 2003 p.85; Wrecks and Relics 19th Edition.
- Photos at Cosford as completed and assembled; Flypast July 2003 pp.14-15; Aeroplane July 2003 p.4; Aviation News July 2003 p.536; Wingspan

International No 17 p.12.

6 May 2003

By road to RAFM Hendon for re-assembly and suspended display in new 'Milestones of Flight' building. Photos on display; Wingspan International 20 p.61; Wrecks and Relics 20th Edition; Aeroplane February 2011 p.23; The Hawker Tempest (Franks 2012) pp.37, 111 – 113); Air Britain News March 2015 p.426.

NV778 is the only complete original Tempest Mk. V - Kermit Weeks in Florida owns the fuselage of EJ693, formerly with Nick Grace, RAFM and a Dutch Technical College at Delft having crashed on 1st October 1944. With Tempest II wings, ex India. Registered N7027E.

In 1997 this aircraft had a complete cowling and radiator intake assembly made by Personal Plane Services at Booker, using those (and other parts) from NV778 as a pattern. The aircraft has been at Booker since c.1996.

There was also an unidentified Tempest V cockpit section (ex-scrap yard) under restoration by Ted Sinclair in the Norwich area, using the original rear fuselage of RAFM Tempest II HA457. Also, Ludham Control Tower and Military Museum, Norfolk formerly displayed a second 'Sinclair' Tempest V cockpit, later kept with the above example.

One of these may be the Tempest V frame/firewall acquired by Naylan Moore c.2010, possibly TT.5 SN280 (SOC 30 Dec 1949), now at AeroVenture, Doncaster.

By May 2012, Wycombe Air Park/Parkhouse Aviation housed two Tempest V firewall/windscreen/cockpit elements, ex Wickenby, Lincs to form a restoration project.

TEXT - ANDREW SIMPSON