

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

SOPWITH TABLOID (REPRODUCTION) G-BFDE `168'
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 83/A/526

- 1976-80 Built by Nottingham based Rolls-Royce engineer Don Cashmore, using original drawings from BAe Kingston as a reproduction aircraft with a converted Continental PC60 Ground Power Unit as the engine and ailerons instead of the original aircraft's' wing warping. Modern instruments also fitted. Construction took just over 2,400 hours. Constructor's number PFA/67-10186.
- 22 Sep 77 Registered as G-BFDE.
- The original Tabloid No.168 flew with the Royal Flying Corps in 1914 and on 8 Oct 1914, flown by Flt Lt Reginald L G Marix of the RNAS, carried out the world's first strategic bombing operation when it bombed the Zeppelin sheds at Dusseldorf, destroying the brand new LZ25. Fuel shortage forced Marix to make a forced landing near Antwerp during the return flight and the aircraft was abandoned to advancing German troops. The reproduction bears the markings of this aircraft.
- 22 Jun 80 Maiden flight by Rolls-Royce test pilot John Lewis, flying from Hucknall airfield near Nottingham, which became the aircraft's base. A second flight was made that day to total 30 minutes flying time. Powered by a Continental PC-60 GPU.
- 03 Jul 80 Further 30 minute's flight following changes required for better longitudinal control. Thereafter flown regularly - see Journey Log and Aircraft Logbook, DoRIS Ref.AC95/51/1-2. Flew displays at Cosford, Old Warden, Cranfield, Middle Wallop, Leicester, Coventry, Duxford and other venues over the next few years. Photos: Aeroplane Monthly Oct 81 p.546-7; Aircraft Illustrated May 81 p.236.
- 03 -05 Jul 81 Awarded Airtours Sword as the best replica at the Popular Flying Associations' Leicester Rally. Photos as of April 1982 (all colour); FlyPast Jun 82 p.52; FlyPast Jul 82 p.1. Photos at Leicester - Aeroplane Monthly Sep 81 p.510.
- 18 Sep 82 Logbook extract - `Heavy landing - starboard wheel tucked under and axle broken. U/c broke up and machine nosed over onto its back'. Final flight - total 134 flights, 66.35 flying hours.

- 1982-3 Damage repaired by Don Cashmore with new parts as necessary. Aircraft recovered and converted to wing-warping configuration, and provision made to fit a rotary engine - by this date agreement had been reached to sell the aircraft to the RAF Museum, who had initially expressed an interest in the aircraft in 1981. The aircraft was duly purchased by the Trustees of the RAF Museum.
- 23 Mar 83 Delivered to RC&RC Cardington, where an original 80hp Gnome rotary engine and contemporary propeller were fitted. Photos: Aircraft Illustrated Dec 83 p.558-561; Wingspan Apr 88 p.12; FlyPast Sep 83; Aviation News 7-20 Oct 83 p.429; Aeroplane Monthly Jul 83 p.347.
- 04 Jun 83 Permit to fly expired.
- 10 Nov 83 To RAF Museum Hendon from Cardington.
- 8 Dec 86 Registration cancelled as withdrawn from use.
- Mar 89 Returned to RC&RC Cardington for corrections to markings and partial recovering. Returned c.1990 to Hendon where it remained on display in the Bomber Command Hall until moved into the Grahame White Hangar in July 2005.
- 24 Nov 2010 Moved into adjacent newly reconstructed Grahame White Watch Office building for continued display.

TEXT - ANDREW SIMPSON