

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

**BRISTOL BRITANNIA 312F G - AOVF
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 84/A/740**

Built by Bristol at Filton as a Britannia Series 310 Variant 312. Constructors number 13237, Production number 034.

Initially destined for the 300 series long-range variant and registered G - AOFF 21 Nov 1955 to the Bristol Aeroplane Company but not taken up and the registration cancelled 1 Jan 56 when the aircraft was not built as such.

- 13 Feb 57 Registration G-AOVF issued.
- 14 Dec 57 Rolled out at Filton.
- 18 Dec 57 First flight.
- 31 Dec 57 Certificate of Airworthiness issued.
- 2 Jan 58 Delivered to BOAC at Heathrow airport as one of 18 variant 312 aircraft to serve with that operator from December 1957, registrations G-AOVB – G-AOVT.
- 19 April 58 Used on three week Royal Tour of the West Indies for the Trinidad and Tobago Independence celebrations, carrying H.R.H. Princess Margaret, who was the first member of the Royal Family to fly on a BOAC long range Britannia. Interestingly, one of the RAF escort aircraft during the tour was Avro Shackleton WR960, now part of the RAFM collection and displayed at Manchester Museum of Science and Industry.
- 7 May 58 Arrived back at London Heathrow at 07.15am following the 11,000 mile Caribbean Tour. The return flight of 4500 miles from Nassau in the Bahamas with a refuelling stop at Gander took a journey time of 14 hours 15 minutes. Captain throughout the tour was Donald Anderson, Manager of the Britannia 312 Flight, and the aircraft was specially modified.
- 4 Jul 58 To Cambridge airport for modification work
- 20 Aug 58 Modifications complete.
- 6 Sep 58 Entered BOAC service as BA 563/132. Photos in BOAC service -Flypast April 1995 p.25; Aeroplane August 2005 p.76.

BOAC used the series 312 aircraft on the prestigious London-New York route; in BOAC transatlantic service the aircraft were operated in a pure First Class configuration, equipped with 26 sleeper seats and 26 ordinary first class passenger seats, giving a total passenger load of only 52.

This lower capacity enabled BOAC to make most flights to North America non-stop, although Goose Bay and Gander were still sometimes used for refuelling stops when strong headwinds prevailed. The scheduled flying time from London to New York was 12 hours, but the Britannias frequently made quicker crossings - 9 ½ hours in one case. Westbound favourable westerly winds reduced the journey time to 11 hours.

The Britannia 312 network was soon widened to include San Francisco (from 6 May 1958), and Montreal, Detroit and Chicago, from 17 April 1958. Some services to the Caribbean and South America were also taken over by the aircraft (Bermuda, Nassau, Kingston, Montego Bay and Caracas), in addition to flights to Johannesburg from July 1958, Entebbe and Nairobi from October 1958 and Tokyo from 1st April 1959 via New York, San Francisco, Honolulu and Wake Island. Series 312 flights to Tel Aviv began November 1959. The San Francisco flights took 18.5 hours, with a refuelling stop at New York.

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| Nov 58 | Damaged at New York. |
| 27 Jul 59 | Damaged when taxiing at Prestwick following collision with a KLM Vickers Viscount. |
| Jan 61 | One of 'VF's pilots at this time on the Prestwick - USA run was ex Fighter Pilot Norman Tebbit, later 'Thatcher Era' Conservative party chairman. |
| 13 Apr 63 | While climbing out of Antigua an explosion was heard on the starboard side of the aircraft and No.2 engine was shut down as a result. In fact a tyre had exploded, damaging the undercarriage bay and engine. The flight was terminated and passengers transferred to another aircraft. |
| 29 May 63 | During the descent to Montreal, Canada, an oxygen cylinder was ignited causing a cabin fire and had to be extinguished by a cabin steward, causing slight burns to the steward and two women passengers. |
| 11 Jan 64 | Operated with BOAC for the last time on a New York - London flight; BOAC withdrew its Britannia 312 aircraft between October 1963 and April 1965, giving way to Comets and Boeing 707s. |
| 4 Mar 64 | Leased to British Eagle Airlines on a five-year hire - purchase agreement with the option to buy. Allocated the name 'Friendship'. By 1965 British Eagle operated 17 Britannia aircraft. |

Based at Liverpool and Heathrow, the 14 ex BOAC series 312 aircraft were initially used on the daily UK domestic Heathrow to Glasgow/Edinburgh/Belfast routes in competition with BEA Vickers Vanguard as the first independent airline to operate scheduled services in parallel competition with BEA, beginning Nov 63. They were also used on Charter work and a trooping contract between London and Singapore/Hong Kong, until that contract ended in March 1968.

- 31 Jul 64 Damaged whilst taxiing at Karachi Airport, India. Whilst operating a trooping flight from Singapore to London with 111 passengers and 8 crew onboard, the aircraft suffered the failure of the port main undercarriage after landing on a scheduled refuelling stop. There were no casualties and G - AOVF was repaired and returned to service.
- 17 Sep 65 Flown on transatlantic charter flight to New York via Manchester Airport.
- Feb 66 Flown on charter flight from the Far East via Edinburgh.
- 9 Mar 66 Charter flight from Manchester to Tunis.
- 28 Feb 68 Flown from Heathrow to British Eagles' base at Liverpool for conversion to 312F Freighter version whilst still with British Eagle. The third of five such conversions intended.
- 12 Aug 68 Test flown following conversion, which included fitting of a forward freight door and strengthened cabin floor.
- 15 Aug 68 Delivered from Liverpool back to Heathrow.
- 6 Nov 68 British Eagle, beset by financial problems, ceased trading.
- 27 Nov 68 Repossessed by BOAC under hire purchase conditions.
- 22 Jan 70 Purchased by Monarch Airlines and flown from Heathrow to Luton Airport, Beds for storage.
- 21 Apr 70 Leased by the Gatwick based Donaldson International Airways Ltd and allocated the name 'Nike', derived from the name of a member of the owning Geekie family. Used for charter work alongside Donaldson's three other Britannias for European and Atlantic passenger charter work such as textile shipping to/from Hong Kong, flying out raw materials such as Scottish wool and bringing finished goods back to the U.K. Photo – Aviation News June 2006 p.454.
- 27 May 70 Flown from Luton to Southend Airport, Essex.
- 15 July 70 Following an overhaul and repaint, flown to Belfast; three hours after delivery, flew to Liverpool to begin revenue earning operations.
- 2 Aug 70 Final freight trip, having made 34 round trips.

- 16 Nov 70 Flown to Stansted Airport and stored.
- 24 Jul 72 Purchased by Donaldson International.
- Jul 72 Withdrawn from use and stored at Baginton Airport, Coventry from the end of the month, due to replacement by Boeing 707s.
- 31 Oct 72 Purchased by the freight-carrying Gatwick based IAS/International Aviation Services (UK) Ltd.
- 1 Nov 72 Leased to African Safari Airlines for six weeks.
- 19 Dec 72 Returned to the renamed IAS Cargo Airlines Ltd and named 'African Queen'. Photos in their livery - A History of the Bristol Britannia (Littlefield) p.81; Air Pictorial Sep 75 p.354. Operated on charter freight services to Africa and the Middle East along with two other Britannia aircraft.
- Apr 76 Leased by the Manston Airport, Kent based Invicta (1976) Ltd. Used along with a second Britannia (G-ANCF) for livestock services to Europe and freight runs to Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Flown by IAS Cargo crews under IAS call signs. Most cattle flights were to Milan carrying up to 250 one-year-old calves outwards and hence consumables to Gibraltar, and then on to Tenerife for fresh oranges via a refuelling stop at Tangiers, then back to Luton via a fuel stop at Malaga.
- As listed below, this period of Victor Fox's career is well covered by information provided 1998 by her ex RAF flight engineer at this time, Ted Sharpe. These flights catered for general cargo which frequently included animals - racehorses, cows, sheep and pigs.
The Nairobi - London Gatwick cargo was usually pineapples, with fresh produce or flowers flown in from Larnaca (Cyprus) and flowers or cigarettes from Holland.
The Nairobi - Blantyre - Nairobi flights were interesting - the coffee from Nairobi was usually transferred at Blantyre directly on to a unmarked C-130 'Hercules' for an unknown destination - perhaps South Africa?
- 23 Apr 76 Flew Manston - Baghdad. Flight time 7.50 hours. Flew on to Sharjah 24th, Cairo 25th, and Malta 26th April.
- 2 Aug 76 Flew Gatwick - Cairo
- 11 Aug 76 Flew Gatwick -Istanbul, and onto Muscat, Salalah and Dubai on the 12th, Larnaca on the 13th and back to Gatwick on 14 April.
- 30 Aug 76 Flew Cairo - Nairobi, and on to Lusaka and Mombasa 1 Sep, returning to Nairobi on 2 Sep.
- 22 Sep 76 Flew Nairobi - Sanna - Jeddah, and on to Heraklion and Rotterdam the following day.

- 2 Oct 76 Flew Gatwick - Cairo and on to Nairobi on the 3rd, Blantyre and back to Nairobi on the 4th, Jeddah and Cairo on the 6th and Manston on the 7th.
Other flights that month were Luton - Gatwick on the 9th and Stanstead - Gatwick on the 14th.
- 30 Nov 76 Flew Gatwick - Palma - Lagos.
- 6 Dec 76 Test flight from Gatwick, followed by flight to Cairo on the 7th, Nairobi 9th, Blantyre and back to Nairobi on the same day, Nairobi - Djibouti-Amman 13th, Amman - Cairo - Rotterdam 14th and Gatwick on the 15th.
- On arrival at Amman on the 13th the crew were informed that they had brought in the first ever airborne delivery of coffee (which had previously arrived by road) and they were presented with watches to commemorate the occasion.
- 7 Jan 77 Flew Gatwick - Baghdad - Zahgdan - Sharjah - Baghdad - Gatwick.
- 23 Feb 77 Flew Gatwick - Manston and on to Rotterdam and Palma on the 24th, Libreville on the 25th and Tenerife on the 26th, returning direct to Gatwick on the 27th.
- 19 Apr 77 Flew Gatwick - Cairo, Cairo - Nairobi on the next day and on to Nairobi and Blantyre and back to Nairobi on the 22nd, to Khartoum and Cairo on the 23rd, and back to Gatwick on the 24th.
- 30 Apr 77 Flew Gatwick - Benina - Khartoum; to Cairo on 1st May, Rotterdam on 2 May and Back to Gatwick the next day.
- 9 May 77 Flew Gatwick - Cairo, on to Nairobi the next day, Blantyre and back to Nairobi on 11 May, Jeddah and Cairo on the 12th, returning to Gatwick on the 13th.
- 20 May 77 Flew Gatwick - Cairo. To Sanaa and Khartoum on the 21st, Cairo on the 22nd and Gatwick via Rotterdam on the 23rd.
- 3 Jun 77 Flew Gatwick - Baghdad, to Muscat the following day, to Salalah, Sharjah and Athens on 5 Jun, and direct to Gatwick the next day.
- 15 Jun 77 Flew Gatwick - Cairo, to Nairobi the next day, Blantyre and Kigali on the 17th, Mombasa and Cairo on the 18th, and direct to Gatwick on the 19th.
- 29 Jun 77 Flew Gatwick - Abadan, and to Helsinki the next day, returning to Gatwick on 1st July. This flight was to deliver two reels of copper covered electric cable. Because of the nature of the cable these reels could not be loaded

flat, only on their rims, which required load spreaders which weighed more than the cargo.

- 22 Jul 77 Flew Nairobi - Blantyre-Nairobi, on to Bujumbura the next day and Mombasa on the 24th.
- 19 Aug 77 Flew Lagos - Blantyre, to Nairobi the next day and Jeddah - Le Touquet on the 13th.
- 1 Sep 77 Flew Gatwick - Cairo, onto Nairobi on the 2nd, Blantyre and back to Nairobi on the 3rd, Nice on the 4th and Gatwick on the 5th. It had been hoped to fly Nairobi - Gatwick direct, with no freight but maximum fuel load, reaching a height of 31,000 feet.
- 19 Sep 77 Flew Gatwick - Belgrade - Abadan, to Heraklion the next day, Cairo to Nairobi on the 21st, Jeddah on the 23rd, Doha on the 24th and Gatwick via Larnaca on the 25th.
- Returned briefly to IAS Cargo Airlines flying to East Africa and occasionally the Far East. By May 1978 'VF carried their livery of silver lower fuselage and wings, white upper fuselage and tail, 'IAS Cargo' titles in black on upper fuselage and IAS logo in black on the fin.
- 28 Oct 78 'VF ended Britannia operations with IAS Cargo Airlines with a service from Nairobi to Gatwick.
- 8 Nov 78 Purchased by Invicta International Airlines Ltd-one of two Britannias in their fleet. Photo in their livery - Littlefield p.82. This livery consisted of silver lower fuselage and wings, white upper fuselage, red fuselage cheat line and fin, 'Invicta' in black and 'International' in yellow to form the company name along the top of the fuselage, with the company logo on the fin.
- 3 Aug 79 Leased by Redcoat Air Cargo Airlines for two months.
- Returned to Invicta International
- 30 Sep 80 Up to this date G - AOVF had flown 44,025 hours, made 11,371 landings and flown some 11,006,250 nautical miles - equivalent to flying around the world 688 times; the highest-time Britannia.
- 6 Jan 81 Re - registered 9Q - CAZ and leased to IAC Cargo Airlines of Zaire. Photos - Littlefield p.82; Whispering Giant; The Story of the Bristol Britannia (McKim) p.148.
- 4 Jun 81 Returned to Invicta International as G - AOVF.
- Jun 81 Retired and stored at Manston, Kent. Stored alongside Britannias G-ANCF and G-BEMZ-the end of the Zaire lease had meant the end of Invicta's existence.

- 26 Aug 82 Passed to the official Receiver upon the demise of Invicta International and stored outside at Manston Airport, Kent.
- 21 Feb 83 Sold to Merchant Air Ltd of New Zealand. Ferried to Southend Airport, Essex on this date and placed in open store pending overhaul. Photo - Flypast July 1984 p.25. In October 1983, Merchant Air acquired Britannia 308F G-ANCF, stored at Manston since 30 October 1980, as a source of spares and engines for G-AOVF. (G-ANCF is now preserved at Speke, Liverpool)
By May 1984 this company was in liquidation whilst the New Zealand Government Liquidators Office sought to dispose of the aircraft.
- 2 May 84 The aircraft was sold to the Royal Air Force Museum by Avon Aircraft Services Ltd at Bournemouth.
- 31 May 84 Flown from Southend to RAF Cosford for preservation at Cosford Aerospace Museum, landing at 16.10 following one overshoot. The 55 minute flight required three crew; Captain Ellis, Flight Engineer Whiteight and Flight Engineer Smart.
The Captain's Defect report consisted of the comment 'A great deal less than usual! - RIP Victor Fox' Final flying hours 44,116.

Photos newly arrived - Wrecks and Relics 10th edition p.198; Flypast Aug 84 p.15; Wrecks and Relics – The Album p.79 .The aircraft had been put back into airworthy condition for this one - off ferry flight. After delivery the engines were exchanged for time - expired units.
- Dec 85 Repainted in BOAC colours with the assistance of British Airways. Given grey polyurethane undersides to aid weatherproofing. Photos - Flypast Jan 86 p.14; A History of The Bristol Britannia (Littleford) pp.117 and 120; Aeroplane Monthly Museums Supplement May 92 p.3; Supplement to Aeroplane April 2001 p.35.
- June 98 Top half of fuselage and the tail repainted; On rubbing down the fuselage the 'I.A.C. Airlines' markings from 1981 were discovered.

The aircraft remained on external display at Cosford, moving across the site in 2004 to make way for the new Cold War Exhibition building. Photos – The Flying M Yearbook 2004 pp.11-12; Flypast June 2006 p.4.
- May 07 Work began on repainting into RAF colours as XM497 'Schedar', which first flew 17 November 1960, delivered to RAF 5 December 1960, WFU December 1975; Sold to Young Cargo as OO-YCF and used for spares at Stanstead. Broken up July 1977.
Photos of repaint – Flypast July 2007 p.9; Flypast February 2008 p.16; The Flying M Yearbook 2007 p.12; Wrecks and Relics 21st Edition.