

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

MESSERSCHMITT Me262A-2a W/NR.112372/VK893/AM51/8482M

MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 85/AF/69

- March 1945 Assembly date at Leipheim; The left hand upper ecu panel bears the date 18 December 1944 and the inspector's stamp 'Kontrolle 257'
- 23 Mar 45 Test-flown at Memmingen by Uffz.Sepp Gerstmayr between 16.29 and 16.36.
- 24 Mar 45 Flown by Ofw. Otto Kaiser between 09.52 and 10.13
- Delivered to Jagdgeschwader (JG) 7 'Nowotny' as one of 89 new Me 262s delivered to JG7 that month.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND/EARLIER SUGGESTED IDENTITIES

- 08 May 45 Correspondence from R. C. Gosling at one point suggested that during the afternoon this aircraft and four other ME 262s of 1./JG7 flew from Zatec, Czechoslovakia to Fassberg, northern Germany to surrender to British forces-one of two or three Me262 sorties made that day. On the way they strafed Russian armoured columns and shot down a Russian P39 Airacobra. Pilot for this 11th hour sortie was Uffz. Engler of JG3. (However, Peczkowski in his Messerschmitt Me 262A Schwalbe, 2002, states that it was captured by UK troops on 6 May at Lubeca)
- 08 May 45 Several Me 262 aircraft surrendered at Fassberg, including 'Yellow 7' of 1/JG7. The RAF found at least six Me262s at Fassberg from JG7 and KG51. As the German military situation deteriorated by mid April 1./JG7 had some 40 Me262s on strength, down to 26 by 30^h April. Aircraft from JG7 and KG51 later formed an ad hoc composite unit, 'Gefechtsverband Hogeback'. Taken over briefly by No.616 Squadron, the RAF's first operational jet squadron, flying Meteor aircraft.
- 29 May 45 Two aircraft flown to Lubeck, No.616 Squadron's base at this time, one by the squadron's Commanding Officer, Wg Cdr E E (Warren) Schrader, DFC. Of these,1./JG.7 aircraft110800/Yellow 7 on landing at Lubeck with the nose-wheel unable to be lowered, was seriously damaged, and probably scrapped in situ. Photo: War Prizes (027726) p.140. 500210/Yellow 17 of 3./JG.7 was the second aircraft.
- 1 Jun 45 112372 flown by Flt. Lt. Arend to Twenthe, Holland
- 23 Jun 45 One aircraft-possibly 112372- ferried from Kastrup, Denmark, to RAE Farnborough by Sqn Ldr Moloney and initially used for an engineering assessment of the type by RAE Structures and Mechanical Engineering

Flight. German insignia painted over with black paint. (Peczkowski p.96)

Some doubt remains about the actual exact identity of the RAF Museum aircraft, 112372. The British acquired at least seven A-series aircraft. Russ Snadden originally believed 112372 was actually Yellow 17 ex 3/JG7, as discussed in his May 1997 article in *Aeroplane Monthly*.

See also ME262 file letter from former 616 Squadron pilot Clive Gosling dated 19 Sep 1998 which generally supports this view, though his letter of 7 Oct 98 on file accepts that 112732 is the Cosford aircraft but mentions the Eric Brown believes it has the wings of 262 w/nr. 500200.

NEW ID

Further research, and discovery of a new photograph, by Russ Snadden in 2003 however provided a new source and identity for the RAFM aircraft. He summarises the evidence in 'Stormbird Revealed' *Aeroplane*, March 2004 pp.44-45. The photo, reproduced in the article, came from Canada and was taken at Twenthe, and shows 112372 undergoing maintenance in a hangar at Twenthe, with roughly applied British roundels, and w/nr 112372 visible on the fin and the (red/blue) rear fuselage bands of JG7 and a shield-born '2' forward of the windshield. Snadden suggests it could therefore be from Gruppe III. /EJG 2. For colour profile in this condition, see *Jagdgeschwader 7 'Nowotny'* (Forsyth) p.59, with photo in this condition undergoing engine testing at Farnborough or Brize Norton on p.121.

There is further discussion in 'Messerschmitt Me 262 – The Production Log 1941-1945,' by Dan O'Connell, suggesting 112372 may be the abandoned jet in which Lt. Czypioka of NJG 11 had two new engines installed at Lubeck and flew to Schleswig shortly before its surrender, and placed in a line-up at Schleswig – photo O'Connell p.149 as 'Red 2' applied over the former JG 7 crest, and retaining the red/blue JG 7 fuselage band.

29 Jun 45 Flown from Farnborough to Brize Norton by Squadron Leader Tony Martindale.

At Brize Norton, 112372 was flown by Bell Test Pilot Jack Woolams.

27 Jul 45 Transferred to RAE Aerodynamics Flight.

6 Sep 45 First test flight at RAE, Farnborough.

Sep 45 Allotted RAF serial number VK893 by 19 Sep.

Further test flights 19 & 27 Sep, 11 & 16 Oct, 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 19, 27 & 29 Nov 45 (last recorded flight) totalling 8 hours 15 minutes flying time - mostly by Sqn Ldr A F Martindale, also Flt Lt Foster and Flt Lt R A Marks. Photo with Air Min Number AM51 - Captive Luftwaffe (009336) p.116. Also *Aeroplane* June 2003 p.75, dated October 29th 1945 (sic). Flight Book at the PRO records most of these as 'Performance and Handling' Flights of between 15 minutes and one hours' duration.

- 1947 At RAF College Cranwells' station Museum by this date. The Museum was established at Cranwell North in September 1946. Photo: Control Column May 68 p.8.
- 1960 Cranwell Museum closed and collection dispersed. At Bicester by March 61 for refurbishment by No.71 MU until this time still carried VK893 serial. See Air Britain Digest Jun 61 p.67. E-mail from Mr. L.Garey November 2009 recalls seeing the aircraft at Bicester in March 1961, still with Luftwaffe markings visible and RAF serial just visible on top of them, the markings being removed by April 1961 prior to repainting. Photos following refurbishment - Airfix Magazine Nov 61 p.248 and Air Pictorial Nov 61 p.364. Given mottled grey camouflage scheme and markings of III/JG7.
- Late 1961 Moved to RAF Gaydon, Warwickshire. Photos: Captive Luftwaffe (009336) p.117 and Airfix Magazine Dec 66 p.128 (as displayed at Gaydons' Sep 66 Battle of Britain Open Day); Also Flight International 11 Oct 1962 p.618.
- 1968 Stripped and repainted at Gaydon under the supervision of Russ Snadden, (who later restored Bf109 'Black Six') in preparation for Gaydon's Battle of Britain display that September. In the absence of any proof of original scheme, painted in markings of 110800 'Yellow 7' of JG7.
- 14 Sep 68 Repainted aircraft displayed at Gaydon. Photo - Aeroplane Monthly May 1997 p.64.
- c.1972 To RAF Finningley, Yorkshire upon closure of RAF Gaydon. Lacked all instruments at this time (file letter 15 Aug 74). Repainted as 'Red X' of KG51 - originally Air Min 81, in error. Colour photo at this time - Flypast November 2002 p.58.
- Nov 75-May 76 Displayed outside at RAF Museum Hendon for 'Wings of the Eagle' display. Photos: War Prizes (027726) p.155; Aviation News 22 Aug-4 Sep 86 p.32; Control Column Jan 76 p.6; Aeroplane Museums Guide 2002 p.67; Aeroplane June 2003 p.77. Photo en route by road to Hendon - RAF News week ending Nov 22 1975 p.20.
- 16 Feb 76 Allocated RAF maintenance serial 8482M
- 1976 To RAF Cosford to join the regional collection there.
- Dec 85 To the Regional Collection at RAF St Athan. Stripped to bare metal and repainted 1987.
- 23 Feb 1989 Returned to Cosford following closure of St Athan collection. Still displayed at Cosford as one of eleven surviving Me262s (including 2 Czech aircraft assembled post-war) from 1433 built. Photos at Cosford - Aeroplane Monthly May 1997 p.64; Flypast November 2002 p.66; aeroplane March 2004 p.45; War Prizes - The Album p.114.

- 2003 Following further research outlined above, given minor refurbishment and repaint into markings of 'Yellow 4' at Cosford prior to moving to RAFM Hendon for display in 'Milestones of Flight' building.
Photos – Flypast July 2003 p.15; Aviation News July 2003 p.536; Airfield Review July 2003 p.57; Wingspan International No 17 p.12-13.
- 14 Jul 03 By road to RAFM Hendon for installation in new Milestones of Flight building. Displayed as 'Yellow 4' with Red 2 crest. Photos – Flypast October 2003 p.10; Aeroplane October 2003 p.5; Wingspan International 20 p.64. On display- Aeroplane March 2004 p.44; Flypast August 2006 p.31; Wrecks and Relics 20th Edition; Flying M Spring 2009 pp.9/10.

TEXT - ANDREW SIMPSON