

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

BRISTOL/FAIRCHILD BOLINGBROKE
IV-T 10001/L8756'
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 70/AF/626

- 1937 Canadian Government issued contract for licence production of Blenheim Mk.IV to Fairchild Aircraft Co Ltd under the 'Bolingbroke' designation, the aircraft when built being externally identical to the Bristol produced Mk.IV but with American instruments and other equipment replacing British equipment on many aircraft. A few carried American engines as insurance against a shortage of Bristol Mercury engines. The Bolingbroke was intended for use as a coastal reconnaissance bomber.
- 15 Nov 39 Deliveries of Bolingbrokes to RCAF commenced, all constructed by Fairchild Aircraft of Longueuil, Quebec. The type was used operationally on anti-submarine patrols from Canada and the Aleutians over the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.
- 1941 Bolingbroke 10001 was ordered as part of the second batch of Bolingbroke IV-Ts, RCAF serial numbers 9850-10199 - a total of 350 aircraft, delivered between March 1942 and May 1943.

The Bolingbroke IV-T, a navigation and gunnery crew trainer, was the last variant produced. The 220th and all subsequent Bolingbrokes, RCAF serials 9152-10256, were of this type, 457 IV-Ts being delivered to the RCAF, with a further 51 built but not taken on charge, and eventually scrapped.

Powered by two 920hp Mercury XX engines, the standard Bolingbroke IV-T was painted overall trainer yellow for high visibility with large black fuselage side and underwing serial numbers. Some were converted to target-towers and carried black 'wasp' stripes to show their role. The aircraft were used to train British Commonwealth Air Training Plan trainees for overseas service until the end of the war and disappeared rapidly afterwards, all being struck off charge by mid 1947.

- 20 Oct 42 10001 taken on RCAF charge.
- Nov 42 To No.3 Bombing & Gunnery School, McDonald, Manitoba.

Little is known of this aircraft's service career, although two logbooks in DoRIS indicate that at least some of its service was spent with No.5 (RCAF) Bombing and Gunnery School, Dafoe, Saskatchewan:

The Aircrew and Pilots Flying Log Book of L H Williams, DoRIS Ref.M10326 records a flight with this unit 28 Apr 43, beginning at 09.25. It was an air gunnery practice flight flown by Sergeant Pilot Clewley, and Williams fired 400 rounds.

The 'Flying Log Book for Aircrew other than Pilot' of J M Blenkinsop, DoRIS Ref.B3101 shows that during course 97A at Dafoe, on 23rd Feb 1944 Blenkinsop, piloted by WO McElgunn, took off at mid-day for a 45-minute air gunnery practice flight, the result being 'Nil Hits'.

15 May 46 Struck off charge. Flying hours 905:10.

Shortly afterwards the Bolingbroke was sold from RCAF MacDonald to a Mr C A Yuill for \$200. This happened to many hundreds of war surplus aircraft - Ansons, Oxfords, Battles, Lysanders, even Lancasters - at this time. Mr Yuill, like many of his contemporaries, transported the aircraft to his farm at Portage La Prairie, Manitoba to strip for parts for various uses around the farm. The aircraft then stood virtually complete at the farm for the next 20 years, although most of the perspex and instruments were smashed, engines and controls seized and panels removed/missing. It still carried the weathered remains of its overall yellow colour scheme and large serial numbers on fuselage/wings. Photos - Control Column Vol.3 No.5 p.3; Bristol Blenheim (Bowyer) p.116.

25 Apr 66 Purchased by RAF Museum from Mr Yuill for \$200 - the same price he had paid for the aircraft in 1946. John Tanner, RAFM Director, intended from the beginning that the aircraft would be rebuilt to resemble a Blenheim.

14 Jun 66 Moved by this date to RCAF station at Portage La Prairie to await shipment - RCAF personnel undertaking the move.

09 Aug 66 Crated for despatch to Portsmouth Mr S L Thomson of MacDonald provided a replacement instrument panel and Mr P Halajeski of Portage the wheels.

c.1967 May have stood crated on dockside in Canada for over a year.

1968? Delivered to UK. Damaged during transit. Exchanged with RCAF for Beaufighter RD867 since the RCAF provided assistance with dismantling and packing the aircraft.

1969 Stored crated at RAFM store, Henlow. Photo - Scale Models Oct 70 p.781.

Mar 69 Engineering survey estimated 3390 man-hours of work to restore the airframe (barely half the eventual total).

25 Feb 72 Restoration task agreed by AeAEE Boscombe Down as a 'recreational activity'. Restoration then expected to take 2-3 years by a team of volunteers led by Norman Parker and later John Robinson and Ray Mewett.

- 1972 Early on in project decision to rebuild as a Blenheim confirmed and L8756/XD-E of 139 Squadron RAF chosen as the representative aircraft. The 'genuine' L8756 was SOC 4 May 44. 139 Sqn make the RAF's first operational sortie of WW2. Fuselage restored first. Photos of fuselage at Boscombe Down - Control Column April 1975 p.56.
- 5 Nov 73 Wings/Engines followed on from Henlow to Boscombe. Transported by 71 MU Bicester.
- c.Jul 78 Restoration Completed, after over 8000 man-hours work.
- 14 Jul 78 Moved from RAE Boscombe Down to RAF Abingdon by road. The aircraft was delivered by road by RAF Abingdon's Salvage and Transportation flight (Photos -Control Column Aug/Sep 78 p.133; Wingspan April 1995 p.27.)
- 17 Jul 78 By road from RAF Abingdon to Battle of Britain Museum at RAFM Hendon.
- Aug 78 The two civilian personnel who had overseen most of the restoration Messrs John Robinson and Ray Mewett were released by Boscombe Down to help assembly of the aircraft in the BoB Museum prior to the opening that November. The aircraft has remained on public view ever since. Photos - Control Column Vol 13 No.1 p.4; Scale Aircraft Modelling April 1985 cover and pp.305-306.

Other UK Bolingbroke Survivors

- RCAF 9041 Forward fuselage to Manx Aviation and Military Museum 2004.
- RCAF 9048 Bol IV-T. Arrived in UK from California, USA 10 July 2006; for Bristol Aero Collection. SOC 21 Aug 46-sold to a farmer.
- RCAF 9893 Bol IV-T Stored with IWM, Duxford. Under restoration 1998 using the centre section of 10038.
- RCAF 9940 Bol IV-T Museum of Flight, East Fortune.
- RCAF 10038/G-Mk.IV
'V6028' Restored to fly but crashed 21/6/87. Remains with Aircraft Restoration Co at Duxford for spares use. (Bol. IV-T) Centre section to 9893 for restoration for IWM 1998.
- RCAF 10201/G-BPIV Aircraft Restoration Co, Duxford. Flew 1993 – was airworthy, but crashed August 2003; under rebuild. (Bol IV-T)

Of the 508 Bolingbroke IV-Ts built, at least 35 survive in various states of dereliction or restoration, over 20 of them in Canada, thanks to their survival in assorted farmyards after disposal c.1946-47.

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