

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

WESTLAND LYSANDER III R9125/8377M
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 74/A/21

Built by Westland Aircraft, Yeovil as part of contract No.23637/39. Serial number batch R9100 - R9135 from total order for 100 aircraft, part of a total of 367 Lysander Mk.III's constructed. Delivered with Bristol Mercury XVA engine, later re-engined with 870hp Mercury XX engine.

- 02 Aug 40 No.5 MU Kemble.
- 29 Sep 40 One of 12 Mk. III Lysanders delivered to re-equip No.225 (Army Co-operation) Squadron at Tilshead, Wilts, replacing Lysander II aircraft. The squadron was at this time tasked to fly reconnaissance patrols along a section of south coast where German landings were expected. Flew with 'B' Flight on such patrols during the Battle of Britain, coded LX-. Part of the 13 squadrons forming No.71 (Army Co-operation) Group.
- 28 Apr 41 Inspection found that six of No.225 Squadrons' Lysanders, probably including R9125, had a cracked engine mounting strut, and they were sent to the contractors for repair.
- During its seven months with the squadron, R9125 had flown 36 operational coastal patrol and photo reconnaissance sorties, totalling 49¼ hours, with several different crews, a full list of which is held with the aircraft's history file.
- 02 Jun 41 Returned to No.5 MU Kemble.
- 08 Jul 41 To No.44 MU Edzell (Scotland).
- 18 Sep 41 To Westlands, Yeovil - modified for target towing duties.
- 24 Dec 41 To the newly opened RAF Chelveston for the Central Gunnery School.
- Apr 42 Central Gunnery School moved to Sutton Bridge.
- Undated To No.9 MU, Cosford.
- 18 Jun 42 To No.7 OTU, Limavady, Northern Ireland for target towing duties.
- 27 Aug 42 Tipped on its nose causing Cat. B damage - swung off the runway during a down-wind landing.
- 31 Dec 42 To Central Navigation School, Cranage.

11 Jan 44 To No.5 MU, Kemble.

11 Feb 44 Returned to Westlands for repair/modification.

25 May 44 Work complete - awaiting collection.

28 May 44 To No.5 MU, Kemble.

15 Oct 44 To No.161 (Special Duties) Squadron, Tempsford, Beds. Special Duties Lysander IIIs carried a 150-gallon long-range ventral fuel tank, extra oil tank, rear bench seat, and port side external ladder. The Squadron code was MA-though from April 1944 the Lysander Flight carried the codes JR-

There is no evidence that R9125 flew operationally with this squadron, which flew its last operational Lysander mission 5/6 August 1944, after which remaining Lysanders were used for ferry and communications work, including non-operational special transport services to liberated France and Belgium, until the Lysander Flight was disbanded in November 1944, three Lysanders being retained for miscellaneous duties for a while longer. There is no mention whatever of R9125 in No.161 Squadrons' ORB for the period October 1944 - May 1945.

15-21 Nov 44 Flt Lt. George Turner was flying at Tempsford and at Somersham for the RAF Film Unit, which was making 'School for Danger' for the Central Office of Information. Later called 'Now it Can be Told' it was premiered in February 1947, and told something of the Special Duties Operations. (See 'We Landed by Moonlight' -Hugh Verity p.190). The film used a Lysander coded JR-M, which Turner states was R9125. Certainly these are the codes worn by the aircraft in the 1950s-60s at least, suggesting that it was the aircraft used in the film. Photographic and airframe evidence confirms that R9125 did at some stage carry the special duties ventral tank and ladder as visible on the aircraft used in the film, and it retains the Special Duties type bench seat and luggage space in the rear cockpit. (See letter from Hugh Verity to David Upton, 25 Aug 1994 on A/C correspondence file.)

09 Mar 45 Recorded as being on strength of No.38 Group.

1 Aug 45 Letter to Air Ministry Librarian (who had responsibility for preservation of historic relics at this time) from W/Cdr. L.F. Ratcliff, RAF Tempsford confirming that 'Further to our conversation of yesterday...the particular Lysander which we have at this station has quite a good history attached to it. The number of the machine is R 9125...would you please confirm that you will be requiring this aircraft, and that you can take it on to your charge. (AIR 2/10, 185)

25 Aug 45 Allotted to No.76 MU for packing and storage as a Air Historical Branch museum aircraft.

19 Nov 45 Flown from Tempsford to No.76 MU Wroughton (Packing Depot).

Jan 46 Lysanders declared obsolete by RAF.

- 1946 One of a dozen aircraft transferred to AHB storage at RAF Stanmore Park due to closure of No.76 MU.
- 21 Jun 47 Final entry on movement card - 'presumed struck-off charge'. However, R9125 was possibly one of the two Lysanders still held in deep store Jan 48. 10 other Lysanders still on charge then were scrapped by the end of 1948, but one, V9326, earmarked as a historical aircraft in 1945, was not sold for scrap until 28th April 1949.
- Nov 54 Listed as part of the Air Historical Branch Collection by this date, probably still kept at RAF Stanmore.
- 1957 Stored with other AHB aircraft at No.15 MU Wroughton, Wilts.
- 11 Sep 58 Displayed in SD colours, coded JR-M at Woolwich Tattoo, London. Normally kept crated at AHB store at Fulbeck by this time (1958-59) or possibly Cranwell (See below).
- For the Woolwich Tattoo the Lysander was used in a display by the Royal Air Force Escaping Society to show a mock rescue of British aircrew from occupied France, with the help of actual former members of the French resistance movement, with a photo appearing in the 'Kentish Observer' of 12th September 1958.
- The display was described in the Tattoo programme "You will see a Lysander aircraft 'land' at the rendezvous. This aircraft was invariably used for these operations and this actual aeroplane is the sole survivor of these extremely able craft... this aircraft, normally carefully preserved in crates at RAF Cranwell, has been kindly loaned by the Air Ministry".
- 1961 Displayed as JR-M at RAF Finningley Open Day, still in SD colours. Photo: Air Pictorial Aug 62 p.254.
- Mar 61 Stored at RAF Cosford by this date. Photo at Cosford - with ventral tank - Veteran and Vintage Aircraft of the World (Hunt 1965).
- 01 Feb 63 Photographed at Cosford by BBC in conjunction with TV series - 'Moonstrike' - covering the RAF's wartime special duties Squadrons- see 'The Cosford Magazine' Vol.1 No.1 March 1963. The series was not altogether a success - the young Dennis Potter, then a TV critic, dismissed it out of hand due to cheap production and the use of mocked-up aircraft due to the non-availability of an airworthy Lysander.
- Sep 63 Displayed at the RAF Finningley, Yorks. Battle of Britain At Home display. Colour photo - Flypast August 1999 p.71.
- 06 May 65 Displayed as JR-M at RAF Bicester for Queens' visit. No serial number on airframe.
- Sep 67 At RAFM store Henlow by this date. Photo - Lysander Special (010811) p.55.

c.Dec 67- Feb 68	Repainted as LX-L of No.225 Squadron, 1940 by 27 MU Shawbury.
14 Jun 68	Displayed, newly restored, at RAF 50th Anniversary display at RAF Abingdon.
05 Jul 68	Displayed at Founders Day event at RAF Hendon - moved from Abingdon by No.71 MU.
08 Sep 68	Displayed at Horseguards Parade during Battle of Britain week. Then returned to Henlow by No.71 MU. Photo - Wingspan Oct 93 p.23; Flight International 3 Oct 1968 p.538.
30 Nov 71	To RAF Museum Hendon as LX-L and displayed in main hall by this date.
1978	Moved to New Battle of Britain Museum, where it remains on display.

TEXT - ANDREW SIMPSON