

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

ENGLISH ELECTRIC P.1A WG760/7755M
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 1987/0014/A

- 1 Apr 50 Two flying prototypes and one static test airframe ordered for evaluation from English Electric to contract No.SP/6/Acft/5175 CB7 (a).
- 27 Jul 50 Serial allocated.
- 1953-4 Built by English Electric at Strand Road, Preston, Lancs. Constructor's number 95001.
- May 54 Undergoing full ground-system testing at Warton.
- Jun 54 Dismantled and taken by road to A&AEE, Boscombe Down, Hants; re-assembled there and functional trials of aircraft and systems commenced. Photo - Lightning (Scott) p.12. Photos of official roll-out at Boscombe; Aeroplane Monthly August 1988 pp.456-7, Aeroplane June 2013 p.75 and Aircraft Illustrated April 1985 p.157.
- 2 Jul 54 First engine run; photo Aeroplane Monthly August 1988 p.459; Flypast August 2004 p.51.
- 21 Jul 54 Engine runs completed.
- 22 Jul 54 Following delays due to minor hydraulic and engine problems, ground taxi trials commenced, to check the aircraft's braking system, tail brake -chute and nose-wheel steering. Eight such tests were satisfactorily completed by 2nd August.
- 24 Jul 54 On one of these high-speed tests with English Electric chief test pilot Wing Commander Roland P. Beamont at the controls, 125 kts was reached and the aircraft briefly flew for 500 yards on a straight hop. Further short down - the runway hops were also made, courtesy of the braking parachute and the length of the Boscombe Down runway. Photo at Boscombe at this time - English Electric Aircraft (Putnam) p.226; Flypast August 2004 p.51.
- 2 Aug 54 Braking tests.
- 3 Aug 54 Initially planned date for first flight, delayed when Beamont accidentally fired off the engine bay fire extinguishers during a cockpit check.

- 4 Aug 54 Successful Maiden flight from Boscombe Down; pilot Roland Prosper 'Bee' Beamont. Taking off at 09.58 an altitude of 15000 feet and a maximum speed of 440 knots - Mach 0.85 - was reached during the 40 minute flight, shadowed by Canberra chase plane WD973. Photos - Aeroplane Monthly August 1988 pp.460-461 and Aircraft Illustrated April 1985 p.158; Also photo and colour profile in English Electric Lightning) McLelland 2009) p.18.
- 5 Aug 54 Second flight, making handling assessments at low altitudes, though the aircraft did reach 30,000 feet.
- 11 Aug 54 On its third flight, lasting 50 minutes, the aircraft, flown by Beaumont, became the first British aircraft to exceed the speed of sound in level flight - Mach 1.02 - at an altitude of 30,000 feet.
- 13 Aug 54 Fourth flight; flew two deliberate level supersonic runs at up to Mach 1.08 at a maximum altitude of 40,000 feet.
Nine further flights made before the end of August, one including a manoeuvre at supersonic speed.
- 15 Sep 54 Beamont displayed the aircraft for Prince Bernhardt of the Netherlands.
- 23 Sep 54 27th flight - Flown back to Warton for continued testing (handling and performance trials) following successful completion of the initial flight-test programme.
- 10 Oct 54 Photographed in flight - Air Enthusiast May/June 1997 p.44.
- 28 Nov 54 50th flight - reached Mach.1.22 for the second time.
- 11 Mar 55 To A&AEE Boscombe Down for initial assessment – 13 flights by A Squadron-40, 000 feet could be reached in four minutes, handling was easy and docile throughout the flight envelope; the ejection seat was criticized as being uncomfortable.
- 29 Mar 55 Returned to Warton for minor adjustments to aileron and tailplane 'feel'.
- 7 Jul 55 Took part in display at Farnborough to mark the Golden Jubilee of the Royal Aircraft Establishment.
- 3-7 Sep 55 Loaned to English Electric to appear in SBAC show.
- Nov 55 Further preview assessment at A&AEE.

- Used for general handling, supersonic research and performance trials.
- 1955/56 Re-heated Armstrong Whitworth Sapphire engines fitted and engineering modifications made.
- 31 Jan 56 Test flying of WG760 resumed.
- 5 Mar 56 Escaped damage when canopy lost during flight.
- 5 Jul 56 Allotted to English Electric for general development work.
- 13 Aug 56 Canopy again lost during flight; aircraft undamaged.
- 31 Aug 56 To SBAC Farnborough until 12 September, on loan to English Electric.
- Late 56 Grounded for fitting of a new pair of wings. Photo on test afterwards - Aeroplane Monthly October 1988 p.587.
- 6 May 57 Authority for transfer to A&AEE for tests of landing runs on wet runways.
- 20 May 57 Authority for transfer to RAF Finningley, Yorks for further wet runway trials.
- 31 Aug 57 Loaned to English Electric to participate in SBAC display until 10 Sep. Photos - Aeroplane Monthly September 1988 pp.520-521; Aeromilitaria Spring 2011 Back Page.
- Oct 57 Cambered wings and inset ailerons fitted.
- 25 Nov 57 Authority for transfer to A&AEE for handling trials with the extended wing leading edge.
- 17 Jan 58 From A&AEE to RAE Bedford for Safeland arrester barrier trials.
- 3 Mar 58 Returned to English Electric Co. charge.
- 4 Mar 58 In company with P1B XA847 to CFE team at Warton for supersonic familiarisation.
- 10 Jun 58 To RAE Bedford for further crash-barrier trials followed by infrared radiation detector trials. Up-rated AW Sapphires fitted in this period.
- 12 Nov 58 Damaged at Bedford - engines, jet pipes and tailplanes had been removed and placed on the hangar floor during repairs following damage sustained on barrier trials. Whilst the hangar doors were being closed, a 60-foot

maintenance ladder was knocked over onto the components on the floor, damaging them.

- 29 Jun 59 Flew to Warton from Bedford for continuation of development work in aid of the Lightning - stalling tests and infrared radiation measurements from 1960.
- 18 Feb 61 Final flight; given special send-off from Warton. Photo of preparations for final flight; RAF Flying Review Sept. 1962 p.70.
- 7 Jun 62 Grounded; total flying hours 268.17 - 703 flights.
- 2 Jul 62 By road from Warton to No.8 School of Technical Training, RAF Weeton, Lancs for ground instructional use, training Lightning ground staff; Allotted RAF Maintenance serial 7755M.
- c. Sep 65 To RAF St. Athan, Glamorgan for continued ground training use with No.4 School of Technical Training. Photo - Flight International 18 August 1966.
- Early 1966 No. 71 Maintenance Unit RAF Bicester for restoration, painted to represent a P1B of the Air Fighting Development School, coded 'I'.
- Nov 66 To RAF Henlow, Beds, and displayed on the parade ground at the Officer Cadet Training Unit alongside fellow P1A prototype WG763, both initially till carrying the markings of the Air Fighting Development School on their noses, though WG760 was recoded 'F'; the AFDS colours were later removed. Photo on display on Parade Ground, November 1970, marked as 7755M; Aircraft Illustrated August 1971 p.310.
- 29 Jul 82 By road to Lightning base RAF Binbrook, Lincs for restoration to static display standard by Chief Tech Derek Chapman and Crew 1 Engineering Team. . Photo - Lightning (028076) p.7. Displayed at that year's Binbrook open day on 28th August. Photos; Aeroplane Monthly Nov.82 p.574; Aircraft Illustrated Nov.82 p.523; English Electric Lightning (McLelland) p.78.
- 23 Jan 86 Following allocation there 6 May 1985, aircraft dismantled nose section by road to the Aerospace Museum, RAF Cosford, Salop, with remainder of aircraft following 23 Jan 86; re-assembled, and it remains on display. Photo being dismantled at Binbrook - Lightning (Scott) p.279. Photo at Cosford – English Electric Lightning (McLelland) p.22.

2008

Underwent conservation/anti-corrosion work in the Michael Beetham
Conservation Centre (MBCC) at Cosford. Photo – Flypast October 2008
p.12.

TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON

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