

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

VICKERS VARSITY T.MK.1 WL679
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 1993/0860/A

- 53 Built at Bournemouth/Hurn by Vickers-Armstrongs Ltd. to contract C.6125 as one of 163 Varsities built. Serials batch WL665-WL692.
- 9 Sep 53 First flight.
- 21 Sep 53 Awaiting collection.
- 9 Oct 53 No.8 Maintenance Unit, RAF Little Rissington, Glos (Aircraft Storage Unit).
- 14 Jan 54 Transferred to Ministry of Supply charge; To Radio Flight at Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough, Hants.
- 27 Jan 64 Flying logbook of Sqn. Ldr. I. Davies AFC records a number of flights as A.E.O on WL679 with the R.A.E. Radio Flight from this date. Includes I.L.S trials in Jersey and London airport In July 1966, in Jersey in December 1966, V.L.F Aerial trials in February 1967, Satellite/Aircraft communications link trials in July 1967, more I.L.S trials at London airport, Gatwick, Manchester and Prestwick in September 1967 and in Jersey in December 1967 and Andrews Field in March 1968.

And from the logbook of Squadron Leader Terry E. Gill, Instrument and Electrical Engineering Flight, Experimental Flying Department, RAE Farnborough; (Extracts on file)

28.1.64	FL Brading	Self	Check 1 Asy Idg	.25
"	Self	L/C Cryer	C.T.	1.10
29.1.64	Self	"	C.T. 1 Asy Ldg	1.30
4.2.64	"	"	TOD 2 Asy o/s 2 Asy Idgs	1.35
7.2.64	"	SLdr Carroll	TOD to Hatfield & ret 1GCA	1.25
26.8.64	Self	Crew	UHF Data link	4.00
28.8.64	"	"	"	2.50
16.6.65	SLdr Harper	Self	CT	.50
21.8.65	"	"	Farnboro Nice Idris	7.30
"	"	"	Idris Malta	1.15
24.8.65	"	"	Malta Nice Farnboro	7.05
15.2.66	Self	Crew	CT	1.05

- 29 Aug 68 Radar Research Establishment, Pershore for radar development work as part of the MoD (Procurement Executive) Aircraft Fleet.
- Jun 69 To Little Stoughton, Beds. for re-sparring.
- Apr 70 Returned to service at Pershore.
- Jul 73 Retired from use at Pershore and initially allocated for fire practice.
- 13 Jul 73 Reprieved and sent to Royal Aircraft Establishment/Blind Landing Evaluation Unit, Bedford, and later at Farnborough as part of 'C' Flight. The aircraft was useful because it had a steel wing spar and a third generator, useful for running additional electrical trials equipment on board. At this time the aircraft wore an aluminium finish with white roof, separated by a broad medium blue cheatline.
- Aug 73 Issued to Short Brothers' Varsity and Chipmunk servicing facility at West Malling, Kent and given the Low -Light Television (LLTV) equipment from fellow Varsity WJ893. Operated from West Malling by Shorts for LLTV trials and then flew the first ever high-resolution thermal imaging system.
- Mar 77 To RAE Farnborough from West Malling. The cockpit was redesigned and rebuilt at Cranfield, Beds for the installation of trials equipment.
- Apr 77 Involved in trials of Forward Looking Infra Red sensors fitted in the forward section of the under-fuselage pannier, to check the usefulness of infra-red television when used in starlight and subjected to the effect of headlights etc. Photos - Forever Farnborough p.150; Aircraft Illustrated May 1978 p.225; Air Pictorial Nov 1991 p.308. Later work included thermal imaging trials such as GEC's High Resolution Thermal Imaging System (HSB) High Special Bandwidth covering targets on land and water. Trials were undertaken in the UK and with the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) in Germany. See the detailed account in Wingspan August 1991.
- 85 Overhauled by Westcountry Aircraft Servicing at Exeter Airport and given the standard RAE 'Raspberry Ripple' colour scheme of Post Office red fin, tailplanes, engine nacelles and outer wing panels, white upper fuselage and Oxford blue fuselage and wings with Royal Aircraft Establishment titling on the upper fuselage sides.
Photo awaiting delivery back to RAE Farnborough - Aircraft Illustrated May 1985 p.231. Profile showing colour scheme - Scale Aircraft Modelling Sep 1995 p.311. See also colour photos in Wingspan August 1991

pp. 8 –11 and Aeroplane Displays/Museums Supplement April 2003.
Known at Farnborough as the ‘Flying Pig’ due to its portly profile.
Latterly part of the fleet of the Defence Research Agency Missile
Technology and Counter-Measures Department, flying an average of two
two hour sorties per week, all at low level (250 feet) over particular targets
for the sensors being tested.

17 Jul 91 As the world’s last airworthy Varsity, made a special flypast over
Brooklands, Weybridge, Surrey flown by Squadron Leader Ian Cummings.
These three low passes were to mark the anniversary of the first Varsity
flight on 17 July 1949.

2 Aug 91 Retired from use as the last airworthy Varsity, and stored at Farnborough.
The final two-hour flight from Farnborough on this date included a
number of passes over its birthplace, Hurn Airport, Bournemouth and a
pass over Boscombe Down. The pilot was Sqn Ldr Neil Dawson, with a
crew of six. Photo over Farnborough on this occasion - Forever
Farnborough p.165; Aircraft Illustrated Mar 93 p.41; Classic Aircraft
December 2012 p.57; Aeroplane Monthly August 2017 p.90. The last
operational trial carried out on this flight involved ADAPS, an airborne
transponder-ranging system, bringing the aircraft’s flying hours to some
4,350.
Replaced by a former Queen’s Flight Andover CC.2, XS790.

27 Jul 92 Flown to Aerospace Museum, Cosford, Salop for display by Sqn Ldr Ian
Cummings and Wg Cdr. John Pierce; this final flight was delayed by
engine cooling trouble on take off and had to turn back. The aircraft
eventually arrived at Cosford five hours late.

Replaced the deteriorated Varsity WF408 in the collection. Photo landing
at Cosford - Flypast October 1992 p.58. Photo on display July 1997;
Wrecks And Relics 16th Edition (1998).

1992 Allotted Maintenance serial 9155M.

Varsity T.1 WF369 is preserved at Newark Air Museum, and WF372 at
Brooklands Museum and WF382 at Berlin-Tegel, along with WJ945 at
Newquay and WL626 at East Midlands Aeropark, along with Swedish
Elint Varsity 82001 (ex WJ900) at The Flygvapenmuseum, Linköping.

TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON

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