

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

HANDLEY PAGE VICTOR K.2 XH672/9242M
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 1995/1001/A

- 1960 Built as one of 34 Victor B.2 aircraft by Handley Page Ltd at Radlett, Herts to contract 6/Acft/11313/CB6 (c). Serials batch XH668-XH675, the final part of the second Victor production batch.
- 6 Apr 60 First flight, 55 minutes, taking off at 15.00; pilot P.P. Baker.
- 7 April 60 Production Test flight by Victor Project pilot John Allam.
- 26 May 60 Awaiting Collection - on loan to makers for autoland, autopilot development and engine surge trials, since engine surge was being experienced during deceleration, so high-altitude trials were required.
- 28 Jun 60 Air Test
- 19 Aug 60 (And previously 30th June, 2/7/13 July; 8th August 1960); Engine surge investigation test flights.
- Following air test on 20 February 1961, six further manufacturer's engine handling tests in March 1961. (for full list of manufacturers trials by XH672, see Handley Page Victor (Brooks 2007) pp.45-46)
- 11 Apr 61 To A&AEE Boscombe Down for handling trials for Victor B.2 Certificate of Airworthiness release.
- 8 May 61 Involved in near miss with Hunter aircraft.
- 7 Jun 61 To Handley Page at Radlett for refit of auto pilot equipment and setting up instrumentation for Handley Page Auto-Pilot flight tests-six flights, 23 November – 28 December 1961, and again 9th January – 25 April 1962 – a further twenty auto pilot trial flights.
- 31 Aug 61 Loaned to Ministry of Aviation, with formal allotment from 2 Nov 61.
- 17 May 62 To Handley Page at Radlett
- 25 Apr 62 From HP Radlett to A&AEE Boscombe Down for further auto pilot/autoland trials.

At this time the aircraft was also involved in Red Neck Side-Looking Airborne Radar (SLAR) trials, the equipment being carried in long underwing pods, with a Red Neck pod under the port wing and a starboard underwing fuel tank beneath the starboard wing. Photo – Handley Page Victor (Butler & Butler) p.82.

- 14 Dec 62 First flight with window pods, with flight trials with pods continuing from 21 December 1962 to 20 December 1963, along with Auto Pilot trials.
- 26 Aug 63 From HP Radlett to Boscombe Down for further auto-pilot and radio altimeter Mk.7 trials.
- 3 Sep 63 Flying log Book of Sqn. Ldr. I. Davies AFC records auto-pilot trials at Boscombe Down with S/L Davies as A.E.O, with further flights on 4th, 9th, 10th and 11th September. Also Radio Altimeter trials on 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th November, and I.L.S trials at Bedford on 6th December.
- 9 Oct 63 Braking parachute failed upon landing.
- 11 Dec 63 To Handley Page at Radlett for automatic pilot/landing system trials, with flights from 1st January 1964. Victor test pilot John Allam was involved in demonstrating successful auto landing using more than one runway installation in head wind, cross wind and light tail wind conditions at Radlett before the planned move to Boscombe for the official capability appraisal; John Allam recalled in 2005 (file letter) that the Ministry requested 200 successful auto landings without failure before the aircraft could be accepted by the A&AEE for appraisal-the company trials were completed without a single failure of auto pilot/auto land equipment in the aircraft; on completion the aircraft was again offered for it's A&AEE appraisal only to be told that the auto land requirements for the V-bombers had been cancelled.
- 26 Jun 64 Trials completed; allotted for embodiment by manufacturers of Certificate of Airworthiness modifications from 26 Jun.
- By 26 June 1964 the aircraft had completed 147 test flights for Handley Page.
- 2 Jul 64 Allotted to Handley Page at Radlett for Modification to B (SR) 2 standard and Certificate of Airworthiness release. (Actual Delivery date 3 July)
- Modified as one of nine of the radar equipped Victor B.2 (SR) variant for maritime reconnaissance and day/night photography.

This variant replaced the Valiant as Bomber Command's standard strategic reconnaissance aircraft. In 1970 the cameras were removed and the aircraft operated in the radar reconnaissance role.

- 10 Jul 65 First flight following conversion; pilot J W Allam; one of six HP test flights following conversion.
- 11 Aug 65 Modifications to SR.2 standard completed.
- 12 Aug 65 Delivered to RAF Wyton.
- 13 Aug 65 No. 543 Squadron, RAF Wyton. Photos at this time - Aviation News 8-21 Nov 1991 p.595 and Handley Page Victor (Butler & Buttler) p.71.

Participated in Bomber Command and joint maritime exercises and survey of the oil spill from the Torrey Canyon, and in August 1967 an extensive photo survey of Denmark, in addition to high-level reconnaissance, survey and ocean surveillance duties.

- 13 Apr 66 To Handley Page for modifications (wing strengthening).
- 21 Jun 66 Test flight following modification-pilot P. Murphy, time one hour.
- 23 Jun 66 Returned to No. 543 Squadron.
- 9 May 69 Participated in Daily Mail two-way Transatlantic Air Race (RAF code name Exercise Blue Nylon) organised to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Alcock and Brown's first non-stop flight. XH672, navigator Derek Aldred, took part in race eastbound between Floyd Bennett Field, Brooklyn, New York and the BAC airfield at Wisley, landing with just 1,400lb of fuel remaining.

Two large additional fuel tanks fitted in the bomb bay.
- 4 Feb 72 First solo on type by Wg Cdr R F Mudge (last CO of 543 Squadron) 4hrs 20 minutes.
- 23 Mar 72 Scramble take-off and photography of East Anglia – 6.10 hrs – Mudge.
- 18 Apr 72 6hr flight – Exercise Fair Focus (Mudge)
- 24 Sep 72 5.55 hr flight – Exercise Strong Express (Mudge)
- 27 Sep 72 5.05 hr flight- radar tests (Mudge)

- 29 May 73 Sqn Commanders Crew Check – 5.30 hrs (Mudge)
- 1 Jun 73 Photographic Reconnaissance and Radar Training -6hrs (Mudge)
- 27 Jun 73 Sqn Cdr's crew check – early return to base due to storms. (5.10hrs)
- 22 Nov 73 Simulator Substitution – 3hrs – Mudge.
- 9 Jan 74 Sqn Cdr crew check – Night Navex – Return to base due to fog (3.2 hrs)
- 20 Mar 74 To Hawker Siddeley Aviation (Pilot Wg Cdr Mudge, 30 minutes) at Woodford for modification to flight refueling standard as a tanker - one of 24 Victors so modified under a contract issued in October 1969, though XH672 was the only B.2 (SR). converted, the others being the pure B.2 variant.
- 24 May 74 No. 543 Squadron disbanded at Wyton to permit conversion of its Victors to refueling tankers.
- 8 May 75 Stripping commenced for conversion.
- 3 Feb 78 Last Victor K2 conversion, XH672 was 'Set 24' – the 24th and final Victor K2 conversion'; towed out of the 'New' Assembly Hall at British Aerospace Woodford. Photo – HP Association Newsletter No.116, June 2005.
- 14 Apr 78 First flight following conversion 2.10hrs, pilot C Masefield; nine manufacturer's test flights following conversion.
- 23 May 78 Delivered to RAF Marham, Norfolk; 35 minute flight, pilot Woodford Chief Test pilot Charles Masefield; co-pilot his deputy, Robby Robinson.
- 24 May 78 To No. 57 Squadron at RAF Marham. Carried standard matt dark green and medium sea grey camouflage, with white undersides and Day-Glo red stripes under the wing tips and on the underwing pods.
- Personal record of Chief Tech Brian Barker, crew chief of XH672 from 1978 to April 1983 (extracts held at RAFM Cosford) records a number of flights;
- 2 Aug 78 Sculthorpe – Luqa (Malta)-deploying Lightning aircraft (Flash Trail to Akrotiri, Cyprus); pilot Flt Lt Dean. Detached to Sculthorpe whilst Marham runway was resurfaced. Returned following day.

- 16 Oct 78 Round trip to/from Sculthorpe in support of exercise Red Flag; pilot S/Ldr Alexander (Barker record)
- 18 Oct 78 Sculthorpe – Goose Bay, Canada-deploying Jaguar aircraft (Panther Trail) to Nellis AFB to take part in Red Flag. Pilot S/Ldr Alexander. (Barker record)
- 19 Oct 78 Goose Bay – Offutt AFB- Red Flag. Pilot S/Ldr Alexander. Barker record.
- 23 Oct 78 Return to base at Sculthorpe. Pilot S/Ldr Alexander (Barker record)
- 5 Jun 79 Marham – Brindisi, Italy – deploying Phantom F.4 aircraft (Ghost Trail) to Akrotiri. Pilot F/Lt Druitt. (Barker record) Returned to base at Marham 8 June; pilot F/Lt Dean.
- 18 Jun 79 Marham – Goose Bay. Positioning at Goose Bay prior to 60th Anniversary celebration of Alcock and Brown non-stop crossing of the Atlantic. XH672 landed with hydraulic failure. Pilot F/Lt Barrell; Returned to base at Marham 21 June. Barker record.
- 16 Jul 79 Marham to BAe Warton, Lancs. Carrying out ground trial of the MRCA (Tornado GR1) in-flight refueling system. Pilot Sqn Ldr Lumb; returned to base at Marham by same pilot 18 July. (Barker Record)
- 27 Feb 80 Marham – Goose Bay. Positioning flight to recover aircraft from Exercise Red Flag. Pilot Sqn Ldr Ward. Returned to base at Marham by same pilot 29th February (Barker record).
- Apr/May 82 Involved in Operation Corporate - the Falklands Conflict; at this time the Victors were the RAF's only strategic tankers.
- 23 Apr 82 Deployed to the Victor detachment at Wideawake Airfield on Ascension Island, flying non-stop from Marham
- 30 Apr 82 One of 13 Victors in a stream departure – one a minute - from Ascension Island to service that night's 'Black Buck 1' bombing raid on Port Stanley Airfield, being the lead aircraft 'Red One'. Piloted by Sqn Ldr M.D. Todd.
- Taking off at 22.53, XH672 was airborne for 4 hours 20 minutes as one of the outbound tanker aircraft, landing back at Wideawake airfield at 03.14 hrs, taking off again at 05.24, flown by Squadron Leader B R Neal, to rendezvous with the returning Vulcan abeam Rio and provide the fuel for it to recover to Ascension.
- Landed back at Wideawake at 14.51 hours, meaning that in just under 16 hours, XH672 had been airborne for 13 hrs 48 minutes.

3-4 May 82 Flown as tanker on Black Buck 2 mission, pilot Flt Lt A D Richardson.

11/12/13
May 82 Airborne for 11 hours 50 minutes with three other Victors in support, as contingency cover for ready alert Sea Harrier on the Atlantic Conveyor as it proceeded from Ascension island with its cargo of Harriers and helicopters. Pilot for the last such mission on 13th May was Sqn Ldr. Tuxford.

15 May 82 Operated in support of Nimrod MR.2P maritime reconnaissance flight from Ascension Island. Flown by F/Lt. A. D. Richardson, XH672 was airborne for 7 hours 35 minutes on the outbound leg.

1 Jun 82 Covered the deployment of two No. 1 Sqn. Harrier GR.3's from Ascension Island direct to flagship HMS Hermes in the Total Exclusion Zone around the Falklands. Flown by Flt Lt. Millikin. Airborne for 11 hours 45 minutes.

3 Jun 82 Cover for Black Buck mission.

12 Jun 82 Cover for final Black Buck Mission, a bombing raid on Stanley Airport.

15 Jun 82 Returned to UK (Marham) via Dakar.

29 Jun 82 To RAF St. Athan, Glam. For major overhaul.

12 Aug 82 Returned to No. 57 Squadron at RAF Marham.

3 Jan 83 Lajes, Azores – Bermuda. Deploying Jaguar aircraft on Exercise Red Flag. Pilot Flt Lt Standing. (Barker record)

Apr 83 Photographed at Wideawake Airfield - Falklands-The Air War (016864) p.397

25 Jun 83 3hr training flight (Navigator's Flying Log Book of Flt Lt John Weller)

15 Jul 83 3.10hr training flight, (Weller LB)

12 Oct 83 2.35hr training flight (Weller LB)

13 Jan 84 To MoD (PE) at A&AEE Boscombe Down for aileron up-rig trials.

23 Feb 84 Returned to No. 57 Squadron.

13 Jan 84 A&AEE Boscombe Down

23 Feb 84 Returned to No. 57 squadron.

9 May 84 2.10 hr flight, followed by 1.25 hr Lossiemouth – Coltishall flight to Brize Norton (Weller LB)

16 May 84 2.05hr QFI training flight (Weller LB)

24 Feb 86 To RAF St. Athan for major overhaul.

26 Jun86 Returned to No. 57 Squadron.

2 Jul 86 No. 55 Squadron, RAF Marham, following the disbandment of No.57 Squadron.

29 Feb 88 Landing accident at USAF Offutt AB-hydraulic failure resulted in the aircraft running off the runway. As recorded and illustrated in Flypast October 2008 p.107, this resulted in ‘I Ran Offut’ artwork being applied to the crew door. Many of the USAF groundcrew at Offutt were Irish-American, so the tongue-in-cheek phrase is meant to be said in an Irish accent, ‘I ran off it’.

Aug 90 With the build up of Iraqi aggression in the Gulf and the invasion of Kuwait on 2nd August, No.55 Squadron operated from Marham over France and Sicily to help deploy fast jets to the Gulf, Operation Granby, moving to Muharraq, Bahrein in December 1990.

Jan 91 Involved in Desert Storm operations against Iraq. Operated from Muharraq in standard hump and light aircraft grey colour scheme.

Named ‘Maid Marian’ with nose art of a brunette in black and yellow attire holding a blue spear, the emblem of No. 55 Squadron, applied by 55 Squadron engineering ground crew member Cpl. Andy Price, six aircraft being named after Crew Chief’s wives/girlfriends, this one being named after his own wife.

Black petrol pump symbols acted as mission tallies. Photos - Air Forces Monthly Gulf Special p.59; Aircraft Illustrated June 1991 p.293; RAF Yearbook Gulf Special p.49; Scale Models International Oct 91 p.13; Aircraft Magazine February 2011 p.30 (March 1991 view). XH672 was the highest scoring refueller, with 52 missions.

No. 55 Squadron was later involved in Operations 'Warden' and 'Jural' over northern and southern Iraq respectively, based at Akrotiri, Cyprus between 7 Sep 1991 and 3 Feb 1992 for 'Warden' and at Bahrein between 9 Dec 1992 and 8 Sep 1993 for 'Jural'.

- Aug 91 Pilot David Williams; co-pilot Syd Buxton; special passenger former Handley Page test pilot Johnny Allam.
- Photo c.Oct 1993 refueling a Tornado - Royal Air Force News 15 Oct 93 p.2. Photo at this time also- Aircraft of the Royal Air Force (Thetford) 1995 Edition p.203; Aeroplane Monthly Dec 93 p.40-41 (colour).
- 23 Sep 93 Took part in three aircraft farewell formation over the North Sea with XM717 (nose now at RAFM Hendon) and XL164. Photos - Aircraft Illustrated Dec 1993 p.43 and 45 and Flypast July 2012 p.86.
- 30 Sep 93 XH672 conducted flypasts of Victor-related sites around the UK, using the call-sign 'Spartan 55'. Final operational task for the Victors was as QRA fighter support.
- 15 Oct 93 No. 55 Squadron stood down as a Victor unit and the Victor K.2 ceased to be an operational RAF type; XH672 and two other Victors made the disbandment parade FlyPast, '672 being flown by Captain Flt Lt T Hatcher as call sign 'Spartan 1'.
- 16 Oct 93 Transferred to Victor Disbandment Flight.
- 30 Nov 93 Flown from Marham to RAF Shawbury, Salop by the 'Victor Disposal Flight' - the last ever official flight by a Victor (although two privately preserved examples are maintained in taxiable condition at Bruntingthorpe and Elvington, the former making a short 'unofficial' flight some years later) The 3,700 foot Cosford runway was too short, with no over-runs available, to safely land a Mk.2 Victor. Pilots for the last flight, call sign again 'Spartan 1' were Sqn Ldr. Steve Jenkins and F/Lt. Tony Inglebrecht, who both kept their hands on the controls so that they could both claim to have made the last Victor landing. Also on board was former Handley Page test pilot Johnny Allam, who carried out test and development flights on most Victor variants-this was his first and only Victor passenger flight, plus Peter Lambert and Bill Scragg. Crew photo – Victor Boys (Blackman 2009 p.177) Photos on landing - Aircraft Illustrated Feb 94 p.7; Air Forces Monthly Feb 94 p.7; Flypast Mar 95 p.13; Flypast December 2002 p.60; Wrecks and relics – The Album p.109 (colour; Great aviation Collections of Britain (Ellis) p.203). Delivery flight made minus the underwing fuel tanks. Total flying hours 8196.

94 Dismantled and moved by road to RAF Cosford, Salop by February 1994 to join the (then) Aerospace Museum there, where it remains on display.

19 May 2006 Moved into new RAF Museum Cosford National Cold War Exhibition building.

Allotted RAF Instructional serial 9242M

TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON

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