

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

HAWKER HURRICANE MK.1 P2617/8373M
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 72/A/1404

- 1938 Ordered by the Air Ministry from Hawker Aircraft Co Ltd, contract No.962371/38/C.23a, and sub-contracted to Gloster Aircraft Co Ltd. Part of a batch of 500 aircraft.
- 1939/40 Built by Gloster Aircraft Co Ltd at Brockworth near Gloucester as part of batch P2614-P2653. Fitted with 3-blade propeller and 1,280hp Merlin III No.119697. Now carries Merlin 33739. Probably test flown at Glosters.
- 19 Jan 40 Taken on Air Ministry Charge. To No.20 MU Aston Down (Storage Unit).
- 24 Feb 40 To No.6 MU Brize Norton (Storage Unit).
- 14 Apr 40 Allotted to No.615 (County of Surrey) Squadron Royal Auxiliary Air Force, then based in France at Vitry-en-Artois, but temporarily at Abbeville, equipped with Gladiators.
- 14 Apr 40 Allotted to No.1 Repair and Salvage Unit - same day as No.615 Squadron allocation.
- 15 Apr 40 Allotted to No.607 (County of Durham) Squadron Royal Auxiliary Air Force at Abbeville, France, equipped with Gladiator aircraft, but in the process of re-equipping with Hurricanes This almost immediate reallocation from No.615 Squadron may perhaps be explained by a possible pooling of aircraft between squadrons. Both were part of the air component of the British Expeditionary Force.
- 26 Apr 40 No.607 Squadron returned to Vitry-en-Artois (NW of Arras) upon completion of conversion to Hurricanes.
- 27 Apr 40 No 615 Squadron – and `A' Flight of No.607 Sqn moved south-west to Abbeville to re-equip with Hurricanes (from Gladiators). Letter from Wg Cdr J R Kayll (File, 28/1/76) confirms that P2617 flew with `A' Flight as AF-F. (`B' Flight moved to Abbeville for a similar conversion 9 May 1940). However, Sydney Ashurst, 607 Squadron historian, mentions that AF-F codes were carried by P2574 and P2617 possibly only acquired these codes after its visit to Rollasons for repair the following month.

- 10 May 40 Opening of German Blitzkrieg on France. No.607 Squadron in action immediately against scattered formations of unescorted enemy bombers over the Belgian frontier.
- 19 May 40 As some 20 German divisions exploited a gap that effectively split the Allied armies in two, No.607 Sqn moved to Norrent Fontes (between Lille and Le Touquet) and operated throughout the day from that base.
- 20 May 40 As the Germans continued to advance towards Amiens and Arras, Squadron ordered to abandon all Hut equipment etc. and move a short distance NW to Boulougne. P2617 flew at least two sorties this day: Plt Off Humphreys Patrol 06.00 - 07.00. Plt Off Bromley Patrol 10.40 - 11.40.
(Recorded in `A' Flight authorisation book, DoRIS Ref.B211). This was the squadrons' last day in France. Since 10 May they had claimed 72 enemy aircraft confirmed and 56 damaged. 'Twelve Days in May' (Grub St) p.294 mentions P2617 being flown back to Croydon on this day.
- 21 May 40 Squadron embarked for Dover.
- 22 May 40 Squadron re-assembled at Croydon.
- 29 May 40 Damaged and transferred to Rollasons, Croydon (M Goodman) as Cat B (Beyond Repair on site).
- 30 May 40 Flown at Croydon by Fg Off Irving - 15-minute afternoon flight -repairs presumably effected quickly.
- 9 & 10 Jun 40 Flight-tested by Sqn Ldr B A Hitchings (File Letter 16 Nov 1972).
- 11 Sep 40 Recorded in Log Book as having being flown on operational sortie by Flt Lt James Michael Bazin on operational sortie from RAF Tangmere, West Sussex. (Log Books at Tangmere Aviation Museum - see Flypast Aug 1988, P.30 and February 2000 p.99). His only flight in P2617.
- 26 Oct 40 Allotted to No.1 (Canadian) Squadron at Prestwick (Later No.401 Squadron). Flew patrols over Clyde Approaches.
- 20 Nov 40 15.45 Hours (Dusk) Flew patrol sortie, during which oil pressure failure forced the pilot, Fg Off Watson to make a wheels-up forced landing in a field near Saltcoats, Stevenston, Ayrshire having flown from Castletown, the squadron base.
- 21 Nov 40 To Gloster Aeroplane Co for overhaul and repair after the above accident.
- 29 Mar 41 To No.15 MU Wroughton.
- 04 May 41 To No.5 MU Kemble.
- 31 Jul 41 To No.9 Service Flying Training School, RAF Hullavington.

05 Aug 41 Damaged in landing accident - placed on No.43 Group disposal account. Occurred at Babdown relief landing ground. Undercarriage collapsed on landing. Judged to be a structural failure probably due to previous heavy landings, with no blame on the pilot. A/C fitted at this time with Merlin III 144414. See Accident Card in DoRIS, roll MFC 77/16/25.

27 Aug 41 Flown twice on formation flying exercises by Flt Lt N R G Baker. (Data via M Goodman).

03 Sep 41 Flown at No.9 SFTS by J Fryer, who made two further flights in P2617 the following day. (Data via M Goodman).

15 Sep 41 Sgt S S Joseph made his first solo Hurricane flight in P2617. (Data via M Goodman).

24 Sep 41 Damaged when force landed in a field - hitting obstruction of wooden stakes. The pilot was judged to be at fault in showing poor judgement in proceeding with the flight under adverse weather conditions. The incident occurred at 19.45 hours at a location one mile south of Ruddington on the Notts - Loughborough road. See Accident Card in DoRIS, Roll MFC 77/16/25.

01 Oct 41 Repaired in works by de Havillands'.

06 Dec 41 To No.9 SFTS (Service Flying Training School) Hullavington.

31 Dec 41 RAAC (Repaired aircraft awaiting collection).

10 Jan 42 To No.8 Service Flying Training School, Montrose.

09 Mar 42 To No.9 (Pilots) Advanced Flying Unit Hullavington - redesignated from No.9 SFTS 14 Feb 42.

09 May 42 Flying Accident, Cat AC (Repair beyond unit capacity). No accident card on file at RAFM.

14 May 42 Repaired on site by party from Hawker Aircraft Ltd.

23 May 42 To No.9 (P)AFU, Hullavington.

21 Aug 43 To No.22 MU Silloth (Storage Unit).

3 Apr 44 One of several Battle of Britain vintage aircraft selected for preservation by the Air Historical Branch at this time. (PRO File AIR 2/10,184)

14 May 44 Reported as ready for transfer by road to No. 82 MU Lichfield.

06 Aug 44 To No.52 MU RAF Cardiff (Pengam Moors - Packing Depot)

c. Dec 44 In a single case to No.76 MU 'For Museum Purposes'. (Packing Depot, RAF Wroughton, Wilts - 52 MU having had to use its museum aircraft Bellman hangar for wood storage from December 1944, though initially allocated to No. 222 MU.

- 1 Feb 46 Recorded at No. 47 MU RAF Sealand.
- May 47 Possibly one of the seven aircraft transferred to AHB museum aircraft store at RAF Stanmore Park from Sealand.
- Apparently later stored at RAF Stanmore Park to c.1956 and the AHB store at Fulbeck.
- Jul 51 Used in the Battle of Britain period film 'Angels One Five', starring Jack Hawkins and John Gregson, alongside five borrowed Portuguese Air Force Hurricanes and LF363 from the RAF and PZ865/G-AMAU from Hawkers. Filmed at RAF Kenley, Surrey (doubling as the fictional 'RAF Neethley) and released in 1952. Taxied in a couple of scenes and may have actually flown (though this is unsubstantiated) - coded in No.56 Squadron markings as US-B/'P2619 or US-P'.
(Photos - After the Battle 30 and The Battle of France Then and Now (Cornwell 2008) p.344, plus Aeroplane May 2012 p.110 and photo in Combat Codes Flintham/Thomas 2003 Appendix F) or, less likely, possibly used in static studio 'crash' shots at Elstree.
Six airworthy Hurricanes used, also Science Museum Hurricane L1592 for static shots.
- 12 Aug 55 Hurricane 'R2617' (Probably actually P2617) noted entering Croydon Airport on a sixty-foot trailer. Complete but lacking propeller. In Grey-Green camouflage.
- Possibly en-route for filming (see below) - Letter from J J Masterton, Air Pictorial October 1955).
- Aug/Sep 55 Loaned by the RAF for the making of 'Reach for the Sky', the story of Douglas Bader, starring Kenneth More. Re-serialised T4107/SD-P, SD-W and SD-X. Used for static shots only. Filmed, again, at Kenley. The RAF also loaned a static Mk.I, L1592 again, and airworthy Mk.II LF363.
- Sep 55 Displayed on Horseguards Parade London, coded '14' with traces of the 'Angels One Five' codes 'US' under the paint - delivered direct from Kenley. (See letter from D Shepherd, Air Pictorial Jan 56). See also Control Column Feb 1971 for Photo.
- Jul 57 Stored alongside many other Air Historical Branch airframes at No.15 MU Wroughton.
- 1958 Photographed at RAF Rufforth, Yorkshire standing outside a hangar in good condition but minus outer wings. Code '14' on fuselage. (Air Pictorial, Feb 1959).
- 1958 To 71 MU Bicester. Overhauled for display purposes with the exhibition flight as the only Mk.I Hurricane owned by the RAF.
- Sep 59 Displayed on Horseguards Parade for Battle of Britain week.

- 22 May 60 Displayed at Palace Green, Durham on occasion of presentation and laying up of 607 County of Durham Squadron standard in Durham Cathedral. Photos: Twenty-One Squadrons; AAHS Journal Spring 1961 p.33 - with AF-T codes.
- 12-18 Sep 60 Again displayed on Horseguards Parade, coded AF-T.
- By May 1967 At RAF Henlow for restoration for use in 'Battle of Britain' Film. Restored to taxi-able condition. Refurbishment completed 8 February 1968. Photo: Air Pictorial Sep 69 p.32
- Early 1968 Used in filming of 'Battle of Britain' Film, carrying false serials H3426, H3427 and codes MI-C and MI-S. Apparently off set by April 1968. (See Control Column 1967-8)
- 14 Jun 68 Displayed at RAF 50th Anniversary Royal Review, Abingdon re-coded as 607 Squadron AF-T. (It had worn these codes originally since 1961 at least.) Colour Photos: Scale Models Dec 73 p.831; Flypast August 2003 p.63. B/W; Flypast Battle of Britain 70th Anniversary p.103.
- 15 Sep 68 Displayed on Horse Guards Parade, Whitehall as part of RAF 50th Battle of Britain Week celebrations.
- 1970 Displayed at Wavertree Liverpool together with Spitfire I K9942, another BoB film veteran also now at Hendon. Both aircraft back on charge with 71 MU Bicester Exhibition Flight at this time. Also displayed at Town Moor, Newcastle upon Tyne that year for an RAF Battle of Britain display.
- Mid May 72 To RAFM Hendon from Bicester. Displayed in Camm Hall area.
- May 72 Formally allotted to RAFM by MOD. Initially displayed uncoded with silver undersides to represent an early production aircraft, since at that time its Battle of France involvement had not been conclusively proven.
- 5 Sep 73 Allotted RAF Instructional serial 8373M.
- 1978 Transferred to BoB Hall 'E Pens' where it has remained on display ever since, in the colours of No.607 Squadron that it currently wears, as AF-F. Photo: Aircraft Illustrated Jul 90 p.374; Flypast Battle of Britain 70th Anniversary pp. 102-103.
- 3 Aug 98 One of a large group of aircraft donated to the RAFM by the MoD.

TEXT - ANDREW SIMPSON

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