

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

VICKERS FB.5 GUNBUS REPLICA `2345'/G-ATVP
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 73/A/1066

- 1965 The Weybridge Branch of the Royal Aeronautical Society decided to commemorate the forthcoming 1966 centenary of the Royal Aeronautical Society; The Vintage Aircraft and Flying Association was formed with the object of funding, building and flying a replica of the Vickers Gunbus as the first truly all Vickers design and the world's first fighting aeroplane designed from the outset as a gun carrier.
- 19 Jul 65 First timber cut (for the wing ribs) for the construction of the replica, built in the evenings, weekends and lunchtimes by volunteer workers and BAC apprentices. The tubular metal-framed fuselage nacelle was largely constructed in the Apprentice Training School at BAC Weybridge. Photo: RAeS Weybridge Branch Programme 1966 p.39, (R103614); the wings, tail surfaces and undercarriage by the volunteer workforce. For full account of the construction, see 'Gun Bus Re-born' - Flight International 11 Aug 66 p.231-2. The aircraft was given the constructors' number VAFA.01. The original 100hp Gnome Monosoupape engine was assembled from two engines, one, sectioned from the RAF Museum store at Henlow and the other from RAF Little Rissington. The aircraft was originally offered on permanent loan to the RAF Museum in 1965 and this offer was accepted, becoming a donation in 1968. Six hundred drawings were used in the rebuild, being acquired from the Science Museum.
- 31 May 66 Registration G-ATVP issued.
- 04 Jun 66 Completed airframe rolled out and taken by road from Weybridge to Wisley airfield.
- 05 Jun 66 Airframe displayed statically at the Royal Aeronautical Society Centenary display at Wisley. Finished as 2345 Bombay (2). Photo: Air Pictorial Jul 66 p.250.

The original Gunbus No.2345 was from the batch 2340-2347 built by Vickers at Crayford to contract A2978, Vickers order No.485/14/837, ex-RNAS 865-872, delivered Sep 1915. No.2345, probably originally RNAS No.870, was reported at Farnborough 17 Sep 15, moving to France (No.18 Squadron RFC at Treizennes) 26 Nov 15. On 28 November 1915, it became the first British aircraft confirmed have to (unofficially) carried instruments for meteorological research. One of No.18 Squadron's Officers was 2nd Lt C K M Douglas RFC, an observer who had a great interest in meteorology.

Douglas attached a thermometer to the gun mounting, and on 28 November 1915 made two flights and recorded temperatures as the aircraft climbed after take-off, using the data gathered to research the way variations of temperature with height affected the development of clouds, the variation in visibility with height and the formation of precipitation (see 2012 correspondence from B J Booth on Gunbus file). His pilot was Captain Hereward de Havilland, on patrols between Bethune and Armentieres, with similar flights made in 2345 on 26 and 30 November, with flight times of between 1.45 and 2.5 hours.

2345 was struck off charge at No.1 Air Depot 27 Feb 16. One of 123 FB5 aircraft built at Crayford.

- 08 Jun 66 Rebuilt Monosoupape first run in engine test rig.
- 12 Jun 66 Engine installed and first taxiing trails.
- 14 Jun 66 First flight at Wisley; pilot D.G. 'Dizzy' Addicott; project leader Geoff Gregg flew in the front seat as ballast (Aeroplane June 2006 p.19).
- 19 Jun 66 Public debut, flying from Wisley to the display at the Royal Aeronautical Society Garden Party at the College of Aeronautics, Cranfield, Beds. Flown by BAC test pilot 'Dizzy' Addicott, with Mr J. Stuart Castle, who as Lieut. J. Stuart Castle was shot down in a Gunbus over the Western Front on 31 March 1916, in the gunner's seat.
- Photos: Airfix Magazine Aug 66 p.367; Flight International 30 Jun 66 p.1090; Flight International August 1966 p.231; Air Pictorial August 1966 p.292; Aeroplane June 2006 p.20; Fair Oaks Airport (Jones) p.241.
- 27 Jul 66 Had flown 8 hour 26 minutes by this date, including one forced landing (no damage) caused by a magneto short-out.
- Sep 66 Flown at the SBAC Farnborough Display; Photos: RAF News w/e 27 Jan 68 p.10; Air Pictorial Aug 66 p.292.
- 17 Sep 66 Flown at Biggin Hill Battle of Britain open day.
- Photos flying at Wisley; Aircraft Illustrated Jan 82 p.18; other views of replica in flight; British Civil Aircraft Since 1919 (001705) p.35; Air International Sep 94 p.166 (Colour); Aeroplane Monthly May 76 p.234-5; Air Enthusiast Jun 71 p.51; RAF Souvenir Book 1968 p.93.
- Summer 67 Flown at Royal Aeronautical Society Garden Party at Denham. Photo: Aviation News 18-31 Dec 92 p.738. By October 1967 the replica had made 102 flights totalling some 38 hours flying time.
- 22 May 68 Photographed performing at Shoreham airfield - Aeroplane Monthly August 1997 p.26.
- 1968 Shown at Biggin Hill Air Fair - photos RAFM PC73/59/126-127.

- 10 Jun 68 Formally handed over to the RAFM at the RAF Golden Jubilee Display at RAF Abingdon. Dizzy Addicott, as Chairman of the VAFa presented the aircraft to Sir Dermot Boyle, Chairman of the RAF Museum Trustees. Photo at Abingdon - Air Britain Digest Jul 68 p.191; Aircraft Magazine June 2010 p.47. (Also on 10 June at Abingdon the Afghan Air Force presented the Hawker Hind to the RAFM.)
- 14 Jun 68 Flown for the Royal Review at Abingdon.
- c.Jan 69 Dismantled and stored in RAFM store at RAF Henlow.
- 27 Feb 69 Recorded by Board of Trade as permanently withdrawn from use; registration cancelled.
- 06 May 69 CoA expired.
- 20 Oct 71 Delivered to Hendon from Henlow together with the Sopwith Camel and Sopwith Triplane. Photo at Hendon - Aeroplane Monthly Sep 82 p.477.
- Late 1981 Prompted by deterioration of the fabric covering the Gunbus was taken to the RAFM RC&RC Cardington for a six-month overhaul, which included anti-corrosion treatment and a complete recovering. It has remained on view at Hendon since 1982.
- May 2003 Moved across to reconstructed Grahame White Factory Building for further display. Photo – Flypast March 2004 p.10.
- The Vintage Aircraft and Flying Association also constructed the Vickers Vimy replica displayed in the Grahame White Factory.

TEXT - ANDREW SIMPSON