INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

SHORT BELFAST C Mk.1 XR371
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 78/A/1122

Dec 60  Ordered as one of 10 Belfasts, serials block XR362 - XR371 to contract KD/2S/02.

1966  Built by Shorts at Belfast. Constructor’s number SH.1825.

14 Jun 67  First flight.

30 Jun 67  Awaiting collection.

3 Jul 67  No. 53 Squadron at RAF Brize Norton.

24 Jul 67  Three-day loan to Ministry of Technology.

Nov 67  XR371 and XR369 involved in the withdrawal of British troops from Aden to Bahrein.

21 Jan 69  To Short’s for modifications - drag reduction and autoland fitting.

Oct 69  At the Blind Landing Experimental Unit, Bedford for trials work, still on Short’s charge.

9 Mar 70  Returned to No.53 Squadron.

Apr 70  XR371 and four other Belfasts participated in exercise Bersatu Pardu, the biggest airlift exercise ever undertaken by Air Support Command, flying return flights between Brize Norton and Singapore.

Named Enceladus c.1970 in keeping with the naming of each aircraft after a giant.

The pilot’s logbooks of F/L Graham Humberstone record a number of flights during this period. Copy on file with Aircraft Department.

15 Apr 70 2.20-hour flight, Changi-Gan.

9 May 70  Local circuits – 1.20 hours.
19 May 70  Local letdowns – 50 minutes.

21 May 70  Brize-Norton – Aldergrove (NI) – Odiham (22 May) – Robert Thacker logbook extract on Belfast file. Part of operations supporting arms amnesty collecting boxed weapons from Aldergrove.

25 Jun 70  From Brize Norton to Boscombe Down, hence to Gander, Offutt AFB Nebraska, Yuma AFB, Lambert Field, NAS Pensacola, and Gander to Brize Norton (2 July 1971) – Taking Harrier aircraft from A&AE Boscombe Down to Yuma for hot weather trials, and bringing back Phantom aircraft spares from McDonnell Douglas at St Louis. (Thacker logbook extracts on file)

6 Jul 70  Logbook of Flt Lt Brian Prior, Senior Squadron Navigator, records 20 minute flight from Brize Norton to Boscombe Down, and flight onwards to Gander via Shannon the following day. Two days later, the aircraft staged from Offutt AFB to Edwards AFB on a three-hour flight, and a 4.55 hour flight from Webb AFB to Andrews AFB the following day (10 July)

10 Aug 70  Flew Brize Norton – Marham (Thacker logbook).


Aug 70  In conjunction with Belfast XR367, transported Supermarine Stranraer CF-BXO from Canada to the UK for preservation by the RAF Museum. XR371, carrying the wings and other parts, left Abbotsford, British Columbia 18 August, arriving at Brize Norton via Montreal and Gander on 20 August. See above staged flight.

5/6 Dec 70  Staged flight, Brize Norton – Luqa – Akrotiri-Brize Norton, with local flight diverted to St Mawgan on 9th and return the following day.

9 Mar 71  Servicing by No. 71MU at RAF Abingdon, completed 29 April 1971.


6 Jul 71  Humberstone logbook – 45 day continuation check. 2 hours.

12/13 Jul 71  Brize Norton-Coningsby – Soellingen (West Germany) – Laarbruch – Cottesmore (13 July) – supporting Phantom Squadron exchange – Thacker logbook,
16 Aug 71  Continuation local and Abingdon delivery – 3 hours.

2 Oct 71  Thessaloniki (Greece)-Brize Norton-5.45 hours.

18 Oct 71  Night circuits. One hour.

4 Nov 71  4.10 hour flight, Akrotiri, Cyprus – to Luqa, Malta (Prior logbook). Staged Luqa – Brize Norton the following day (5 hour flight)

6 Nov 71  1.25 hour flight, Brize Norton – RAF Wildenrath, West Germany, (Prior logbook)

18 Nov 71  Logbook of Co-pilot Flt Lt Colin Penny (DoRIS X002-9390-011) records flight from Brize Norton to Waddington and return. Prior logbook records 4.25 hour Gander – Bermuda flight on same day.

23 Dec 71  All 10 Belfasts flown together in formation at Brize Norton - Photo United In Effort (Manson-029000) p.140. Recorded in Humberstone logbook – 1.45 hour flight in XR371 as No.4

14 Jan 72  Lengthy staging flight (Prior logbook) Akrotiri – Masirah; Masirah – Gan (15th), Gan – Tengah (17th), Tengah – Hong Kong (18th), Hong Kong – Labuan (20th), Labuan Tengah (20th), Tengah – Gan (21st, 6.55 hours), Gan – Masirah (22nd), Masirah – Akrotiri (23rd).

29 Jan 72  Santa Maria (Azores) – Bermuda; Belize – Nassau the following day, and then Nassau – Bermuda.

31 Jan 72  Bermuda-Brize Norton. 9.25-hour flight. (Humberstone LB)

2/6 Mar 72  Staged flight, Took off from Brize Norton but returned due to undercarriage malfunction. Took off again, thence Santa Maria-Bermuda-Nassau-Bermuda-Lajes-Brize Norton. (Humberstone)

7 Mar 72  Penny LB records flight from Brize Norton to Gutersloh and on to Decimomannamo and return.

17 May 72  Two hour flight, Dulles – Dobbins AFB, returning the following day, when the aircraft flew on to Brize Norton (Prior logbook)

8 Jun 72  Round trip, Scampton – Brize Norton – Aldergrove – Brize Norton.

5 Sep 72  Flew Sharjah – Bahrein, and then on to Akrotiri. (Prior logbook)

9 Sep 72  Flew Akrotiri – Brize Norton overnight (Prior logbook)
9 Sep 72  Penny LB records flight from Brize Norton to Bardufoss and return.
3 Oct 72  Brize Norton – Aldergrove – Gutersloh – Brize Norton (Penny)
7 Oct 72  Brize Norton – Gutersloh and return (Penny LB)
10 Oct 72  Brize Norton – Lajes (4.55 hours) – Prior logbook.
13 Oct 72  Belize – Bermuda – six hour flight, Prior logbook
15 Oct 72  Gander – Brize Norton (Prior logbook)
17 Oct 72  Brize Norton – West Raynham – Laarbruch – West Raynham (Penny)
11 Jan 73  Abingdon – Fairford flight load outbound with Concorde support equipment for ‘hot & high’ trials in Johannesburg, South Africa. (Thacker Logbook)
16 Jan 73  Local continuation flight. Two hours. (Humberstone)
13 Feb 73  Tengah-Gan. 6.50 hours. (Humberstone and Penny LBs)
28 Feb 73  Flew Brize Norton – Bergen (Norway) – Stavanger (Prior logbook)
1 Mar 73  Flew Stavanger – Bardufoss – Brize Norton (Prior logbook)
28 Mar 73  Brize Norton – Luqa-Akrotiri and return. (Humberstone and Penny)
Feb 73  Logbook of Flt Lt David Roberts records a number of flights in XR371 by himself when trainee pilot with No 241 OCU, including 15th, 21 and 27th, the latter a solo.
12 Jul 73  Roberts logbook records two flights around Liverpool.
31 Jul 73  Brize Norton-Gutersloh-RAF Valley-Brize Norton. (Humberstone)
Aug 73  Roberts logbook records Brize-Gutersloh-Valley flight on 1st, and Akrotiri – Masirah –Gan – Tengah on 3rd.
13 Sep 73  Roberts logbook records Brize-Kinloss on 13th, Brize – Wildenrath –Leeming-Wildenrath on 16th, Wildenrath – Leeming – Brize on 17th, Brize – Coningsby-Akrotiri on 18th, Akrotiri – Brize on 19th, Brize – Kinloss on 28th, Gander – Churchhill on 29th, and McHord – Los Angeles International on the 30th.

16 Sep 73  Tromso – Brize Norton (5.05 hours), and on to Bardufoss (4.30 hours), then return to Brize Norton (5.30 hours) – Prior logbook.

17 Sep 73  Brize Norton – Farnborough, and on to Wildenrath (Prior logbook)

23 Sep 73  Akrotiri – Masirah- Akrotiri (1 Nov) (Penny LB)

27/8 Sep 73  Akrotiri-Masirah-Akrotiri.


13/20 Oct 73  Staged flight Brize Norton-Akrotiri-Masirah-Gan-Butterworth (Malaya)-Tengah (Singapore)-Changi-Tengah and return to BN. Conflicts with above.

30 Oct 73  Tengah – Gan – Masirah – Akrotiri (1 Nov) Penny LB.

19 Nov 73  Servicing by No. 71 MU at RAF Abingdon, completed 21 Mar 74. Regular runs for the Belfasts at this time included weekly or fortnightly flights to RAF Wildenrath in West Germany and other runs to the ranges in Sardinia.

29 Nov 73  Roberts logbook records 45 minute flight, but see above.

13 May 74  Laarbruch – Brize Norton (1.3 hours, Prior logbook)

14 May 74  Gan – Tengah (6.55 hours, mostly at night) and 20 minutes Abingdon – Brize Norton (Prior logbook). Intervening leg presumably by another crew.

3 Jun 74  Humberstone logbook records 3 hour training flight.

14 Aug 74  Brize Norton – Luqa – Akrotiri – Brize Norton (Penny LB)

4 Nov 74  Circuits and letdowns – 3 hour flight.
26 Nov 74  Tengah – Gan (7.5 hours); Gan – Masirah the following day (6.15 hours). Then Masirah – Akrotiri 28 November (8.5 hours). All Prior logbook.

6 Dec 74  Local training flight.-Roberts logbook.

12 Dec 74  To 19th; Brize – Luqa-Binbrook – Brize-Luqa – Akrotiri –Luqa-Brize. (Roberts logbook)

11 Feb 75  Practicing engine shutdowns and letdowns.

5 Mar 75  Letdowns and circuits-2.45 hours.

7 Mar 75  Akrotiri – Almaza (2.10 hours) and return (1.3 hours) – Prior logbook.

24 May 75  Roberts logbook - Brize – Gander, McHord –Winnipeg on 27th, and Gander – Keflavik on 29th.

14 Jun 75  Upper Air Work

18 Jun 75  Night circuits using radar.

17/26 Jul 75  Staged flight, 9118 – Gan-Tengah-Kai Tak (Hong Kong)-Tengah-Gan-Masirah-Akrotiri-Brize Norton.

12 Aug 75  Captain’s conversion exercise.

22 Sep 75  Roberts logbook – Brize – Biggin Hill-Gutersloh-Brize.

10 Oct 75  Roberts logbook; Brize-Odiham, returning the following day.

9 Nov 75  Roberts logbook – Nassau – Belize-Nassau.

16 Dec 75  Conversion exercise-letdowns.

1/5 Feb 76  Staged flight, Brize Norton-Gander-Nassau-Gander-Brize Norton

12 Feb 76  Letdowns and night circuits practice.

11 Mar 76  Roberts logbook – Brize – Bruggen-‘Deci’, to Wildenrath the following day and on to Brize.

9 Apr 76  Roberts logbook - Brize - Gander

15 Jun 76  Local training. 3.10 hours.
Jul 76  Roberts logbook – Air display practice on 21st.

26 Aug 76  To No. 5 MU, RAF Kemble, Glos for storage, flown by Jock Manson as the Belfast force was gradually run down from June 1976. Total flying hours with RAF approx. 9,229.


14 Sep 76  No.53 Squadron disbanded as part of a round of defence cuts that also saw the disposal of the Britannia and Comet C.4C fleets.

25 Aug 78  Flown to Rolls Royce’s Engine Division airfield at Hucknall, Notts. following its sale to that company for recovery of its Rolls-Royce Tyne Mk.101 turboprop engines.

6 Oct 78  Flown to Aerospace Museum, RAF Cosford, Salop for preservation after its donation by Rolls-Royce; On take off from Hucknall the flaps dropped and could not be retracted, so the pilots - Bob Reynolds and ‘Rocky’ Oliver had to make the climb out and ferry flight in a landing configuration and land on the very short Cosford runway, the shortest on which a Belfast had ever landed. Photo on final approach into Cosford - Belfast (016504) p.92. The engines were removed at Cosford. Photo as initially displayed - Belfast (016504) p.93.

1 May 79  Transferred to RAF Museum ownership.

Summer 82  Painted in HeavyLift Cargo Airlines colours to represent the UK civil operator of the type who then flew three ex RAF Belfasts from its base at Southend Airport, Essex. Photos - Flypast Dec 1982 p.56; Flypast Mar 1995 p.15.

1988  Repainted into RAF Air Support Command colours, the £18,000 cost being sponsored by the Manpower Services Commission, Shorts and HeavyLift. Photo - Aircraft Illustrated Jun 88 p.28.

    Photo as repainted - Flypast March 1995 p.15.

Oct 96  Repainted in RAF Transport Command colours, this time by Challenge Aviation, costing £20,000 with the paint donated by a local firm and further sponsorship by Short’s. The undercarriage was also repaired with new wheels and tyres. Photo being repainted - Flypast Dec 1996 p.16. Photo completed - Aeroplane Monthly Jan 1997 p.11; Aircraft Illustrated Jan 97 p.75.
4 Jan 98  Blown 25 feet from its undercarriage plinths by gale force winds; survived relatively undamaged except for the undercarriage. Photos; Aeroplane Monthly Mar 98 p.3; Flypast Mar 98 p.18.

Sep 02  Again repainted by Challenge Aviation. Photo as completed; Flypast January 2003 p.18; Aircraft Illustrated March 2004 p.63.


TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON

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