

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.
- 14Jun 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&AEE 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).
- 13/20 Aug 70 Staged flight, Gander-Boston Logan-New York – Chicago – Andrews Air Force Base – Chicago – Los Angeles – Vancouver – Montreal – Gander – Brize Norton, with a historic cargo – see below.
- 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.
- 12 Mar 71 25 minute air test (Prior logbook) Abingdon – Brize Norton.
- 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 Decimommamo 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.
- 21 Jul 73 Brize Norton – Goose Bay – Offutt AFB Nebraska –(23rd) – Nassau (25th) – Belize – Nassau (26th) – Gander – Brize Norton (27th) (Penny LB)
- 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 – Churchill 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.
- Oct 73 Roberts logbook records Brize – Gutersloh-Wildenrath on 14th, Wildenrath – Aldergrove-Gutersloh on 16th, Gutersloh-Aldergrove-Brize-Gutersloh on 17th.
- 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.
- 27 Aug 76 Declared non-effective airframe. Photo stored at Kemble, 16 Feb 1978 - A History of Royal Air Force Brize Norton (Bond - 022676).
- 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.
- 2006 Moved into new National Cold War Exhibition building, which opened to the public 8 February 2007. Photos on display – Flypast March 2007 p.18.

TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON

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