

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

GLOSTER METEOR F.8 (mod) WK935/ 7869M
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 84/A/1169

- 15 Jan 51 One of 343 Meteor F.Mk.8 aircraft ordered to contract No.6/ACFT/6066/C.B.7 (b), serial numbers WK647 - WL191.
- Built as a standard Meteor F.Mk.8 as the last of 429 Mk.8s off the Armstrong Whitworth assembly line. Serial block WK906 - WK935. A total of 1090 F.8 aircraft were built up to May 1954.
- 12 Sep 52 Allotted to Armstrong Whitworth Aircraft at Baginton for conversion under contract to the Ministry of Supply.
- Converted to undertake research into the possibilities of flying an aircraft from the prone position together with power boosted flying controls trials. Armstrong Whitworth added a specially built bubble - canopy cockpit to the nose ahead of the nosewheel bulkhead with pilots' adjustable foam rubber couch and full set of controls, with a small control stick in front of the pilot and leg operated rudder pedals behind and below the prone pilot, although a second pilot always flew in the conventional cockpit in case of difficulties. This safety pilot handled engine starting, re-lighting and fuel control. Tailfin modified with additional area forward of tailplane with Meteor NF Mk.12 type fin giving more surface area for greater stability and to compensate for the extra fuselage length. At 52.5 feet this was the longest Meteor produced.
- The conversion was connected with a Bristol Aircraft design-the Type 178 - submitted in 1951, to specification F.124T which called for the development and construction of a delta winged, rocket - powered prone-pilot interceptor.
- 10 Feb 53 Modifications complete; handed over for trials work on behalf of RAE Farnborough's Institute of Aviation Medicine and the Bristol Aeroplane Company who planned to use the prone-pilot position in its Type 185 rocket-powered interceptor. Flew in overall silver finish with type D roundels. The nose position gave a poor view out, particularly upwards and forwards, and difficulty was also experienced in locating the runway end from a normal circuit. Colour profile - Aeroplane Monthly July 1996.
- 10 Feb 54 Made initial flight in prone pilot form with Eric George Franklin DFC, AWA's chief test pilot, at the controls. This was the last experimental flight from Baginton before it closed for test flights. Landed at AWA's flight test airfield at Bitteswell. Photos at this time - Aeroplane Monthly March 1994 pp.26 - 28; Aeroplane Monthly Jul 96 p.48;

Pioneers to Partners (Foyle & Marriott) p.175. Initial flight trials were satisfactory with just a few minor modifications required.

Also flown at this time by Wing Commander Allen Crawford of the Institute of Aviation Medicine - He also flew the aircraft later at Farnborough.

- 31 Aug 54 Despatched from Armstrong Whitworth at Bitteswell to the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough for temporary storage after 16 hours flight testing at Bitteswell, during which most of the flying from the prone position was done by Bill Else.
- 1 Nov 54 Allotted for use by the Farnborough based Flight Section of the Institute of Aviation Medicine, Ruislip. Four pilots of the Institute and two Royal Aircraft Establishment test pilots undertook most of the flying tests with a few sorties flown by pilots from RAF units and the aircraft industry. For account of flying the aircraft and cockpit illustrations see Flight 30 Mar 56 pp345 - 348 and Aeroplane Monthly Aug 79 pp.411 - 415.
- 7/8 Jul 55 Flown, and statically displayed, at the 50th Anniversary of the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough, Hants. Photo – Air Britain Aviation World Summer 2012 p.83.
- 31 July 55 Last flight of the test programme. By this date 99 sorties involving 55 hours flying had been made. Although the tests had proved that the prone pilot position was feasible for a trained pilot the Bristol project had already been cancelled. The Meteor tests continued for pure research purposes.
- The aircraft was cocooned and put into store.
- 20 Apr 56 Flown to No. 12 MU RAF Kirkbride, Cumbria following removal of the cocooning. Several hundred other Meteors were latterly stored here awaiting scrapping.
- 5 Nov 58 Transferred to non - effective stock.
- 19 Feb 59 Returned to effective stock prior to ferry flight.
- 15 May 59 Flown to No.33 MU, RAF Lyneham, Wilts prior to the closure of No.12 MU by June 1960. See account 'Flat out into History' Aeroplane Monthly Mar 94. Unit test pilot Hugh O. Field noted that the pre delivery inspection at Kirkbride had cleared the aircraft for flying for 28 days, so he took advantage of this.
- 29 May 59 35-minute solo handling flight from Lyneham by Hugh Field.
- 12 Jun 59 Last flight, duration 20 minutes, again from RAF Lyneham. Hugh Field flew the aircraft from the prone position. A safety pilot was also carried – OC 33 MU Lyneham, Wg Cdr P.P. Villa.
- 20 Mar 64 Transferred to non - effective stock.

- 12 Jan 65 Transferred to Air Historical Branch and moved to RAF Colerne, Wilts as 7869M for display purposes. Colour photo at Colerne - Air Extra No.13 p.32.
- 6 Oct 75 By road to regional collection at RAF St Athan, Glamorgan due to the impending closure of RAF Colerne the following March.
- Early 77 To Aerospace Museum (now Royal Air Force Museum Cosford) at RAF Cosford, Salop, where it remains on display.

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