

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

HAWKER SIDDELEY GNAT T.1 XR977/8640M
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 85/A/146

- Mar 62 Ordered to contract No. KC/2B/031 as part of the final batch of 41 Gnat T.1 trainers for the RAF, serials batch XR976 - XR987. Built by Hawker Siddeley. Constructor's number FL574.
- 1 Jan 64 First flight.
- 29 Jan 64 Awaiting collection.
- 10 Feb 64 To RAF Valley, Anglesey.
- 11 Feb 64 On charge with No. 4 Flying Training School at Valley, with the code 46. Used to train jet fighter/bomber pilots following on from their basic training on the Jet Provost.
- 19 Jun 64 Cat.4R flying accident
- 23 July 64 To Hawker Siddeley Aircraft for repairs.
- 14 Sep 65 Returned to No. 4 FTS.
- 19 Oct 66 Declared Cat.4
- 2 Nov 66 To Hawker Siddeley for repair.
- 16 Aug 67 Repairs completed; back on charge with No. 4 FTS the following day.
- 7 May 70 Suffered Cat. 4 damage in belly landing. Further details from e-mail and memoirs extract from S/Ldr Mark Fielding, RAAF (Retd), 2010. Then a Pilot Officer, he was the aircraft's RAAF student pilot on exchange with RAF Valley, undertaking the advanced pilot course. He was one of six RAAF student pilots trained on exchange with the RAF at the time of the Vietnam War as the RAAF could not train pilots quickly enough to meet their wartime commitments. His instructor was Flt Lt John D. 'Jonks' Kendrick. On an afternoon dual instructional instrument sortie at 35000ft altitude. On final approach with airbrakes and undercarriage doors extended the aircraft suffered control loss when PO Fielding selected 'air brakes in'.

Post-crash examination revealed that it had suffered a major split in the port undercarriage ram causing total loss of all hydraulic fluid and partial loss of control. With F/Lt Kendrick having taken control, and the undercarriage only partly extended, the aircraft belly landed intact at Valley and the crew escaped unharmed.

- 26 Jun 70 Following dismantling and assessment at Valley, to Hawker Siddeley Aircraft for repairs.
- 9 Feb 72 Repairs complete; back with No. 4 FTS the following day.
- 4 Mar 74 Unserviceable - Cat.3. Repaired by party from No. 71 MU between 7 March and 29th May 1974.
- 22 Mar 76 Transferred to the Central Flying School at RAF Kemble, Glos.
- 12 Apr 76 To Red Arrows as 'Red 3', still at Kemble.
- 17 Feb 78 Under repair by personnel from RAF Abingdon until 30 March 1978, when it returned to Red Arrows strength. Photo at Hurn (Bournemouth) Airport, July 1978 - Flypast March 1982 p.42.
- 1979 Last display season for the Red Arrows Gnats prior to replacement by the BAe Hawk, which they still fly today.
- 16 Sep 79 Last public display by the Red Arrows Gnats, at RAF Valley, following on from a display at RAF St. Athan, Glam. the previous day.
- 20 Sep 79 Movement card records allocation to Royal Aircraft Establishment Bedford, and striking off charge the same day, although there is no evidence this move was made.
- 5 Oct 79 Made final flight as one of a number of ex Red Arrows Gnats transferred to No. 2 School of Technical Training, RAF Cosford, Salop as 8640M for ground instructional use.
- 1982 Transferred to the Aerospace Museum Cosford still in 'Reds' colour scheme, replacing ex Red Arrows Gnat XP514 in the collection as XR977 was in better condition.
- 3 Aug 98 One of a number of aircraft gifted to the RAFM by the MoD.
- 3 Dec 2017 By road to RAFM Hendon and installed in Hangar 1 prior to inclusion in new exhibition opening in 2018. Photo stored at RAFM Cosford MBCC beforehand – Aeroplane January 2018 p.14.

TEXT: ANDREW SIMPSON

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