

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

BLERIOT XXVII C/N 433/BAPC 107/9202M  
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 85/A/226

Until acquired by Richard Nash c.1936, the history of this aircraft is unclear, with no authenticated details known. Although for many years claimed as the 1911 Gordon Bennett Cup racer, this is not so - that machine was earlier and differed in appearance considerably. However, further research by RAFM Curator of Photographs, Andy Renwick, in October 2007 seems to indicate that the RAFM aircraft is the elder of two considerably different aircraft built with a Bleriot XXVII identity. The Bleriot XXVII was a streamlined racing version of the standard Bleriot XI.

Aug/Sep 1911 The RAFM aircraft is probably that built by Bleriot during his summer holidays, according to "The Aeroplane" 28 Sep.1911 p.401. With a length of 8.50m/28ft and span of 9m/29.5ft it was first flown at Hardelot Beach in late September by Monsieur Alfred Le Blanc, Bleriot's test pilot, achieving an unofficial speed of 130kph (81mph) and later by Lieut. de Conneau, having been built as a single seat racing aircraft and possibly to evaluate a different way of mounting the engine as adopted by the second 'Bleriot 27' shown at Paris (see below), suggests Renwick. Photos- Flight 30 Sep.1911 p.853 & 855; Fitted with 50 HP Gnome Rotary engine, it may be Company Inventory No 27 (as referred to by Flight magazine) rather than a Type 27.

Dec 1911 A. Renwick's researches indicate this is not the small 21ft long, 23ft span 'Bleriot 27' shown at the Paris Aero Salon with a shorter forward fuselage and different propeller, undercarriage and cockpit opening than the RAFM example, wings removed and a 50hp Gnome. Photo and details-Flight 23 Dec.1911 p.1112; Flight 30 Dec 1911 p.1131-2; The Aeroplane 29 Dec 1911 p.704. The aircraft bore no identifying markings, and was completed following the show, possibly being the racing monoplane flown by Edmond Perreyon at Etampes in January 1912; it may have been the Type XXVII ordered by Rene Barrier for use in the USA.

Aug 1914 Stored crated at Le Havre (Renwick suggests it was packed ready for export, but not delivered due to the outbreak of the First World War) and remained there until discovered by Richard Nash c.1936, and presented to him by Monsieur Molon, an early racing driver and aviator, along with Bleriot XI aircraft No 54 and 164 (the latter now also at Hendon).

The three Bleriot's were shipped uncrated to the Thames by the General Steam Navigation Co, transferring them mid-stream to a lighter, then taken from London Docks to Weybridge by Dick Nash in his Ford lorry, recorded a 1950 article. On arrival at Weybridge its oil tank was found to be still half full.

15 Jun 36 Crashed by Richard ('Dick') Nash at Brooklands, Surrey and badly damaged-Nash escaped with a cut chin and the aircraft was rebuilt, possibly by A R Weyl, later of Dart Aircraft. Photos-Aeroplane Monthly Jul 81 p. 407; Prop Swing Summer 2004 pp.33-36. The aircraft was based at Brooklands with Nash's International Horseless Carriage Corporation.

Photo 1930s with Nash in cockpit- Royal Aero Society Garden Party Programme 1954 p.17.

1937-38 Completely overhauled. On test with a suitable propeller, took off in 30 feet.

38 Spare engine, ex USAAC acquired from Minneapolis.

8 May 38      Appeared at Royal Aero Society Garden Party at Faireys Great West Aerodrome (now Heathrow). Photos- Flight 12 May 1938 p.461; Aeroplane June 2003 p.34.

Jun 39        Loaned by Nash to the Science Museum, South Kensington along with his Fokker DVII, Sopwith Camel and a Bleriot XI for a special exhibition on early aeroplanes. Photo-Flying 10 Jun 39 p.9.

1939-45      Stored for duration of the war, probably at Brooklands.

1947-48      Repairs undertaken at RAF Colerne, Wilts.

Jul 50        Displayed at RAF Display at Farnborough, Hants. Photo; Air Pictorial March 2001 p.222.

19-21 Jul 51    Displayed at Daily Express 50 Years of Flying display at RAF Hendon.

    Dec 53      Purchased from Nash by the Royal Aeronautical Society.

13 Jun 54      Displayed at Royal Aero Society Garden Party at Heathrow.

13 Jul 56      Displayed at Royal Aero Society Garden Party at Wisley-normally stored with other Nash aircraft at Weybridge at this time. Photo at this or previous Wisley display – Propswing Summer 2011 p.15.

1957         Stored at No. 15 MU Wroughton, Wilts with other Nash aircraft

1957-59      Stored with other Nash aircraft in No.106 Bellman Hangar RAF Hendon; moved to Heathrow by 71 MU in November 1959.

1960         At BEA Hangar Heathrow with rest of Nash collection. Photo, Sep.1960-WWI Survivors (026001) p.34; See also Flight 20 April 1961 p.544.

1962         Nash collection moved to RAF Upavon for 50th Anniversary of Flight in UK Celebrations held 16 Jun 1962.

    May 63      To RAF Lyneham, Wilts for restoration. The fabric was rotten and the engine corroded and seized; new cowlings made.

    5 Mar 64      Completed aircraft rolled out at Lyneham following 2000 man-hours of restoration. Photos - The Lyneham Globe 14 Aug 1964.

    23 Mar 64      To RAF Henlow, Beds RAF Museum store.

    15 Jun 66      Displayed at Royal Aero Soc. Centenary garden Party at College of Aeronautics, Cranfield, Beds.

    Early 67      Undergoing further restoration at Henlow - photo Control Column Mar 67.

                Photos stored at Henlow-RAF Souvenir Book 1968 p.95; Scale Models Feb 76 p.70.

    May 69      Displayed at Biggin Hill. Photo – Lost Aviation Collections of Britain (Ellis) p.18.

    c. Jul 74      Moved to RC&RC Cardington, Beds from RAF Henlow by No. 71 MU Bicester, and underwent further restoration. Photos- Wrecks and Relics The Album p.7; Royal Air Force News April 13-26 1977 p.8.

- Oct 78            Moved from Cardington from RAF Henlow. Photo in main hall at Hendon-Preserved Aircraft (015234) p.9.
- c.1983            Fuselage only replaced BE2 frame in upper gallery -wings stored at RC&RC. Cardington, Beds, moving to the new RAFM facility at RAF Stafford in 2000.
- Mar 92            Purchased from the Royal Aeronautical Society along with the rest of the Nash Collection by the MoD and placed on loan to the RAF Museum.
- 19 Jul 93        Allotted RAF Maintenance serial 9202M.
- 4 Jun 01        Fuselage dismantled and moved by road to storage at RAFM facility at RAF Wyton, Cambs due to re-arrangement of galleries at Hendon.
- 9 Nov 01        To RAFM Cosford due to impending closure of RAFM facility at Wyton.
- 8 May 02        Fuselage to RAFM Stafford for continued storage, joining the wings, which were already there.
- 20 Oct 03        To Michael Beetham Conservation centre at RAFM Cosford for preparation for display at RAF Hendon.
- 17 Nov 03        By road to RAFM Hendon for continued display; moved to, and assembled in, Grahame White factory building 15 January 2004. Photos on display – Bleriot in Britain (Sanger/Air Britain) p.182.
- Sep 04            Gifted to the RAFM by the MoD along with the other former Nash Collection aircraft.
- 23 Nov 2010     Moved into adjacent newly reconstructed Grahame White Watch Office building for continued display.

**TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON**

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