

**A/C SERIAL NO.WA634
SECTION 2B**

GLOSTER METEOR T.7 (mod) WA634
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 86/A/38

Built by Gloster Aircraft Co at Hucclecote, Glos. to contract No.6/ACFT/2982/CB7(b) as one of over 640 standard Meteor T.7 trainers built for various air arms between 1948 and 1954, including some 500 for the RAF. Serial block WA590 - WA639.

- 10 Nov 49 Awaiting collection.

- 11 Nov 49 Issued on Transfer to Gloster Aircraft Co. for test installation of cabin refrigeration system including flight trials.

- 8 Dec 49 Delivered to Gloster Aircraft Co. having flown 1.15 hours on test up to this time.

- 7 Mar 51 Allotted to Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment for tropical cockpit cooling trials, initially at Glosters' Moreton Valence airfield. Had still flown only 8 hours.

- 17 Apr 51 Ferried from Moreton Valence to Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment, Boscombe Down , Hants for further trials including hot climate trials at Khartoum in the Sudan.

- c. Aug 51 Earmarked for Type D auto pilot development flying.

- 26 Sep 51 Returned from A & AEE to Gloster Aircraft Co. for return to standard fit on completion of trials.

- 6 Dec 51 Allotted to Gloster Aircraft Co at Moreton Valence for measurement of undercarriage door and uplock hook leads flight tests.

- 18 Jan 52 To Martin Baker Aircraft Co Ltd at Higher Denham, near Uxbridge, Middx. for ejection seat trials. The company had asked for a Meteor T.7 to modify for testing of their Mk.3 high - speed ejection seat (intended for use in supersonic aircraft), replacing their Meteor Mk.III EE416.

- 7 Apr 52 Returned to Gloster Aircraft Co. at Moreton Valence for fitment of Meteor Mk.8 rear fuselage and tailplane to overcome 'snaking' at high speeds. It was thereafter referred to by Martin Baker maintenance staff as a 'Meteor 7 1/2 ' (officially a 'Meteor Special') and successfully completed 10 test flights in its modified state from 5 July 52 prior to return to Martin Baker. The rear cockpit floor was strengthened and all flying controls removed from the same position; the bulkhead between the two cockpits was replaced by a stronger structure and the hood framing and glazing over the rear crew location was cut away.

Flew in overall silver with type D roundels and black serials.
Photos - RAFM photo collection ref. P256; Air Britain Digest Dec 63 p.144;
Royal Air Force Yearbook 2002 pp.18-19. Colour Artwork - Aeroplane
Monthly May 96 p 41 showing the aircraft with original and modified
canopies.

- 24 Jul 52 Returned to Martin Baker at Higher Denham for ejection seat trials. Loan period extended several times.
- 31 Aug 53 Test flown for 25 minutes at Chalgrove to assess the aircraft's performance following the fitting of two Martin Baker ejection seats, with the rear canopy cut away to allow test ejections to be made from the rear cockpit which had a Mark 3 seat fitted and a Mark 2 seat was fitted in the front cockpit, making this aircraft the first T.7 to have such an installation for the pilot. 'George' the dummy and seat ejected over the airfield.
- 11 Mar 55 Dummy ejected at low level from the rear cockpit of WA634 at Chalgrove using the Mark 3 seat. Photo - Aeroplane Monthly May 96 p.43.
- Jun 55 Featured in a live broadcast by the BBC from RAF Benson with a commentary by Raymond Baxter.
- 3 Sep 55 Used for the first live ground level ejection; Squadron Leader John S. Fifield D.F.C A.F.C was safely back on the ground at Chalgrove six seconds after ejecting from WA634 as it travelled along the runway at 120 mph (145 knots), flown by chief test pilot Capt. John 'Scotty' Scott The modified Mk.3 seat took him to a height of 70 feet, and his parachute opened at 30 feet. Photos - Aeroplane Monthly May 96 p.42; Royal Air Force Yearbook 2002 p.20; Meteor from the Cockpit (Caygill).
- Oct 55 S/Ldr Fifield again ejected from WA634, this time from an altitude of 40,000 feet, using the same type of seat.
- 17 Oct 55 Aircraft suffered Cat 3 damage from bursting of ejection guns.
- 14 Sep 57 Ejection seat demonstrations at Battle of Britain Day displays at RAF Biggin Hill and RAF Benson. The aircraft had also appeared in the annual September Battle of Britain displays in 1955 and 1956.
- 14 Nov 57 Damaged when the aircraft struck a rook in flight, damaging the starboard mainplane; mainplane replaced.
- 5 May 58 Used for runway ejection by German pilot Rolf Bullwinkel at the Hanover Airshow at Langenhagen Airport.
- Oct 61 Loan to Martin Baker again extended for testing of new multiple stage rocket propelled ejection seats (intended to facilitate escape from high - speed aircraft at ground level and operational altitude), proving of seat modifications and testing of aircrew equipment assemblies by in flight ejection.

A 'bubble' canopy was designed and blown and fitted to the forward cockpit by Martin Baker so as to provide a 'through the canopy' ejection facility to the pilot and later transferred to ejection test Meteor WA638. Photos as fitted to WA634 - Aeroplane Monthly May 96 p.42; Meteor; Glosters' First Jet Fighter (016776) p.68; The Gloster Meteor (Shacklady) p.71. The rear cockpit area was again reinforced. The aircraft was capable of performing ejection seat tests at speeds up to 510 Knots.

- 13 Mar 62 Squadron Leader Peter Howard of the Institute of Aviation Medicine carried out the first of 50 live airborne rocket seat tests in WA634; he described the ride as 'very smooth'. The aircraft, flown by John Fifield, was travelling at 290 m.p.h. at an altitude of 250 feet.
- Apr 62 Withdrawn for major servicing following test flight at the end of the month. By 11 April the aircraft had flown 323.45 hours (935 landings) and made 670 ejections.
- 15 May 62 Engines inhibited.
- 31 Aug 62 Released from trials work.
- 6 Sep 62 Struck off RAF charge for spare aircraft use at Chalgrove, Oxon. With Meteor T.7 WA638.
- c.Sep 62 The aircraft was purchased by Martin Baker.
- 12 Dec 67 Final ejection seat test flight. Late 1960s view at Chalgrove with WA638; Flypast October 2005 p.31.
- Late 73 Noted lying dismantled on Chalgrove airfield marked 'MBA634'
- Aug 74 Moved to RAF St. Athan by road by No.71MU Bicester and displayed at the Station Museum there on behalf of the RAF Museum. Photo newly delivered, displayed at the 14 Sep 74 Battle of Britain open day - in 'MBA634' markings - Control Column Nov 74 p.170.
- 86 Aerospace Museum, RAF Cosford, Salop following the wind - down of the St. Athan regional collection. Photos - Meteor In Action (027670) p.38; Flypast October 2005 p.31.
- 2015 In store at RAFM Cosford.

Aircraft Servicing Documents for period up to May 1962 only held in DoRIS.

At the time of writing Martin Baker at Chalgrove still fly Meteor 7 1/2s WL419 'Asterix' and WA638 on ejection seat trials with Meteor T7 aircraft WL405 acting as spares ship.

TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON

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