

ROYAL AIRCRAFT FACTORY R.E.8-1 (REPLICA)

Aircraft Serial Number ZK-TVC/'A3930'

MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER X006-0350

This flying replica, in No. 9 Squadron colours, individual code B, was built in New Zealand by Wellington-based The Vintage Aviator Ltd (TVAL) in 2011, (constructor's number 0002) using original RE.8 rudder, wing and fuselage parts held by the RAF Museum as patterns. These parts of an unidentified airframe were found in a Coventry garage in 1966 and recovered by the Northern Aircraft Preservation Society. Presented to the RAF Museum the following year, they remain in store with the museum. Photos of replica under construction by TVAL – Aeroplane October 2012 p.52.

TVAL allocates nicknames to its aircraft during their build, pending agreement of the final 'identity'; the RE.8 was known as 'Rachel'

The original A3930 was a D. Napier, Acton, London W. built airframe from serials batch A3832 – A3931, built to contract 87/A/696.

No. IX Squadron flew the R.E.8 on the Western Front from May 1917 onwards, concentrating on corps reconnaissance duties, being engaged in artillery spotting and tactical reconnaissance, and contact patrols during the Battle of Passchendaele, during which it suffered 57 casualties.

The Squadron also took part in bombing raids from June 1918 during the Allied counter-offensive that led to the Armistice; the R.E.8s tended to carry 20lb bombs on all flights to attack targets of opportunity, and were also used for night bombing. From June 1918 the squadron had a roving commission and flew many short-range tactical bombing raids on targets behind the lines, and also developed a method of supplying troops with ammunition from the air, flying many such sorties during the summer of 1918.

After the Armistice the squadron formed part of the Army of the Rhine at Ludendorff from January 1919, operating the RE.8 until re-equipping with the Bristol Fighter between February and May 1919, being disbanded in December 1919.

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| 1 Dec 2011 | Registered with Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand as ZK-TVC, with a change of paint scheme recorded on 15 th December 2011. |
| 16 Dec 2011 | New-build RAF 4a engine (s/n 0015) installed; aircraft assembled at Masterton. Aircraft logbook opened. |
| 1 Jan 2012 | First flight; one hour 10 minutes, pilot Gene DeMarco. Flown again following day. |
| 11 Jan 2012 | Flown at Hood Aerodrome, near Masterton with RAFM Director-General AVM Peter Dye as its first ever passenger; total flying hours at the time 2.30. |

Further flights on 18/19 January 2012.

21 Jan 2012 Flown at the Vintage Aviator 'Joyeux Noel' WW1 evening Air Show, Masterton; flight time 20 minutes.

Also flown 11, 14 and 26 April 2012.

28 Apr 2012 Flown at the Anzac WW1 air show at Hood Aerodrome. Photo – Aeroplane July 2012 p.6.

Statically displayed with the 1914-1918 Aviation Heritage Trust collection at Masterton between flights.

12 May 2012 Fifty-minute flight.

2 Jun 2012 Final flight in New Zealand (flight time one hour 20 minutes); total flying hours to this point 7 hours 10 minutes.

10 Aug 2012 Following shipment by sea from NZ to UK, crated aircraft delivered to the Shuttleworth Collections' Old Warden aerodrome, Beds for assembly and flying trials.

14 Aug 2012 Photo during reassembly – Flypast October 2012 p.7.

29 Aug 2012 First UK flight, in morning (40 minutes), followed by formal unveiling at Old Warden press day, for which the engine was ground run. Photos – Flying M Autumn 2012 pp. 1-2; Air Britain Aviation World Winter 2012 p.192.

1 Sept 2012 Ten-minute flight.

2 Sept 2012 Flown at Shuttleworth Pageant Air Show, Old Warden – flight time 30 minutes. Photos – Aeroplane November 2012 p.87; Flypast November 2012 p.8.

3 Sept 2012 Flown by Gene de Marco at Old Warden – 20 minutes. Photo – Aeroplane November 2012 p.3.

6 Sept 2012 Flown at Old Warden – one hour.

8 Sep 2012 Flown at Imperial War Museum, Duxford, Cambs air show – 40 minutes. Photo – Aeroplane November 2012 p.87.

22 Sept 2012 Ferried from Duxford to Old Warden by TVAL pilot Gene de Marco (one hour) and then flown at the 'Shuttleworth Uncovered' display, (40 minutes) which was its final flight. Photo – Classic Aircraft December 2012 p.78. Final flying hours 14 hours 30 minutes.

21 Nov 2012 By road to RAFM Hendon for static display in Grahame-White building; re-assembled week commencing 7th January 2013.

The obsolete R.E.8 was rapidly withdrawn at the end of the war, and 'A3930' is probably the first R.E.8 to fly in the UK since 1919; none apparently joined the UK civil register.

The type last operated with the RAF in Egypt, at Ismailia with No. 208 Squadron in November 1920, and with 30 Squadron in Iraq for a month or so longer, although one with the Central Air Communications Squadron at Shaibah, near Basrah in Iraq was not reduced to spares and produce until March 1921, and, intriguingly, two more were recorded in Iraq with Air Park Baghdad/Westland Wapiti-equipped 30 Squadron as late as September 1930.

Two original R.E.8s survive – F3556 of 1918 with the Imperial War Museum since 1920 and now at Duxford, and one at Brussels Air Museum.

TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON

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