

17th May 2011

60th Anniversary of Valiant's First Flight

First Flight 18th May 1951

Wednesday 18th May 2011 will mark the 60th Anniversary of the first flight of the Vickers-Armstrongs Valiant. Part of the Royal Air Forces V-Bomber nuclear deterrent during the 1950's and 1960's, the Valiant was the first of the V-bombers to make it into the air, when prototype WB210 took to the skies on 18th May 1951.

The Royal Air Force Museum Cosford is home to the world's only complete example, Vickers-Armstrongs Valiant B (K).1 XD818. The Valiant is on display in the Museums award winning National Cold War Exhibition, the only place in the world where you can see all three of Britain's V-Bombers: Vulcan, Victor and Valiant on display together under one roof.

This British four jet bomber went into active RAF service in 1955 and played a significant role during the Cold War period. With a wingspan of 114ft, over 108ft in length and a height of over 32ft, the Valiant had a bomb capacity of a 10,000lb nuclear bomb or 21 x 1,000lb conventional bombs. In total 107 aircraft were built, each carrying a crew of five including two pilots, two navigators and an air electronics officer. The type was retired from RAF service in 1965 due to structural problems.

RAF Museum Cosford Curator, Al McLean says:

"The Valiant was the first of the V-bombers to enter service, the first to drop a nuclear weapon and the first to go into combat. One of the few pilots to have flown all three of the V bombers also described the Valiant as being the nicest to fly of the three. "

The Museums Valiant B (K).1 XD818 was one of eight Valiant's specially modified by Vickers for involvement in Operation Grapple – the testing of Britain's first H-bomb. The modifications included measures to protect the aircraft and crew, instrumentation for scientific operations and the addition of extra and special equipment for navigational and bombing requirements. The modified aircraft carried the metal anti-flash screens for the crew and bomb bay cameras to record the bomb drop characteristics.

The Museum is open daily from 10am. Entry to the Museum is FREE. For further information please contact the Museum on 01902 376200 or visit www.rafmuseum.org

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Notes To Editors:

- Royal Air Force Museum Cosford, Shifnal, Shropshire, TF11 8UP
- Open daily from 10am
- FREE admission
- Archived photos available on request
- For further information and all media enquiries please contact
- Michelle Worthington on 01902 376212 or michelle.worthington@rafmuseum.org
- RAF Museum Cosford images & logo available at:
<http://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/cosford/media-enquiries/downloads.cfm>