

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

BAC JET PROVOST T 5A XW323 /9166M
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One of 110 Jet Provost T 5 aircraft ordered under contract no. KC/E/124/CB5(b) dated 29 July 1968; delivered to the RAF from September 1969, including the serial batch XW287 - XW336. 107, including XW323, were later upgraded to T5A standard. Constructor's number EEP/JP/987?

- 11 Dec 70 Awaiting collection from British Aircraft Corporation, Warton. Delivered to RAF College Cranwell, Lincs the same day.

When new the aircraft was used for the Pilot training of Flt Lt The Prince of Wales - codename 'Golden Eagle'-at Cranwell as 'Golden Eagle Two'; he held the rank of Flight Lieutenant. Two Jet Provosts (the other being XW322/1) were held at readiness for use by the Prince during his four-month course; he flew just over 92 hours in Jet Provosts, 23 ½ of them solo on the first Cranwell Graduate Entry course , from 8 March to 20 August 1971. Both had the Royal (Prince of Wales) Cypher on the engine intakes. They were locked under guard in a hangar each night with their own dedicated ground crew. All flights were over a specific airspace over Lincolnshire and monitored by a radar controller based at Northern Radar at RAF Lindholme.

Photo of XW322/3 flying together, May 1971 – Royal Flying A Pictorial History Wilson 2017 p.88

Prince Charles joined this first graduate entry at Cranwell, consisting entirely of post-graduates who had already received preliminary pilot training who would receive advanced instruction on Jet Provosts; Instructors were S/Ldr (later CAS) Richard E. 'Dick' Johns and S/Ldr John Robinson A navigator 'ghosted' Prince Charles on certain solo flights. Prince Charles received his wings from Air Chief Marshal Sir Denis Spotswood, Chief of the Air Staff, on 20 August 1971 at the passing out parade from Cranwell. Photo - Flight International 26 August 1971 p.313; Royal Air Force News w/e September 18th 1971.

- 28 Mar 72 To No.5 MU, RAF Kemble, Glos for major overhaul.
- 25 Sep 72 Returned to the RAF College at Cranwell; pilot S/Ldr John Robinson. Again allotted to the two-aircraft 'Golden Eagle Flight' with code '2'; Prince Charles had returned to Cranwell for a brief period of refresher training. The previous security arrangements were re-established. The Prince's first refresher flight was on 23 October 1972 for three days of flying.
- 6 Nov 72 To No.5 MU, RAF Kemble for storage.

- 24 Jul 75 To BAC for overhaul and conversion to T Mk 5A standard with additional avionics.
- 8 Jan 76 Re-flown after overhaul.
- 28 Jan 76 To No.5 MU for storage.
- 31 Dec 76 To RAF College, Cranwell Golden Eagle Flight coded '2'.
- 16 Feb 77 To No.5 MU for storage.
- 1 Nov 79 To RAF College, Cranwell Flying training School. Flown with nose/fin code '44' Colour photo; From Jet Provost to Strikemaster (Watkins 2017) p.202.
- 27 Apr 81 Pilot's Flying logbook of the late Flt Lt Graham Budden records 55-minute dual sector recce flight, with a 50-minute formation flight on 12th October 1981.

Colour profile as of 1981 with light blue rear fuselage band, outlined in dark blue with RAF College badge superimposed, and fin code '2'- BAC Jet Provost & Strikemaster (Balch) p.33.

- 19 Dec 84 To RAF St. Athan, Glam. for overhaul.
- 19 Feb 85 Returned to RAF Cranwell.

Whilst at Cranwell, the aircraft was flown by a resident flying instructor, then Flying Officer (Now Wing Commander) Sean Chiddention, MBE, RAF (Ret'd); he represented the RAF as Jet Provost display pilot in 1987 and 1988. As such, he selected two 'low fatigue' aircraft as his display jets, and they were painted in the colours of the original RAF Cranwell Jet Provost display team from the 1960s, 'The Poachers'; complete with traditional Cranwell blue band swept across the rear fuselage and tail, and on the wing undersides (this is still visible from the right angle beneath the top coat of paint on the aircraft today); the two airframes selected were XW374 and XW323. In the 1987 season, although XW374 was the primary aircraft, XW323 was used more towards the end of the season, and in 1988 it became FO Chiddention's primary aircraft. Over that period he flew it 147 times – 43 public displays, (including Cranfield on 20 September 1987) 13 practices and 68 transit sorties, the balance being normal instructional sorties. Colour profile – BAC Jet Provost & Strikemaster (Balch) p.33.

- 6 Nov 91 Transferred to No. 1 Flying Training School, RAF Linton-On-Ouse, Yorks with code '86'.- the final basic training unit to receive the replacement Tucano turboprop (from April 1992) Course length around 120 hours, the final unit flight with the Provost being on 22 July 1993.

- 12 Oct 92 Final flight, from Linton-on-Ouse; 5 minute teatime circuit - take off at 16.35 hours. Final flying hours 5113.50 (15,738 landings).
- 23 Oct 92 Allocated 9166M for ground instructional use.
- 28 Oct 92 Fitted with life-expired Viper engine from Provost XW416.
- 17 Dec 92 Delivered to RAF Museum Hendon from RAF Linton -On-Ouse.

Final RAF Jet Provosts retired from No 1 FTS on 20th September 1993, other than several retained in taxiable condition at RAF Cosford for several years for ground handling training until replaced by Sepecat Jaguar aircraft (themselves retired in 2016)

Servicing documents held - DoRIS ref. AC 92/10.

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