



Tornado ZA326 landing at Thurleigh 1983 (neg B6337C)



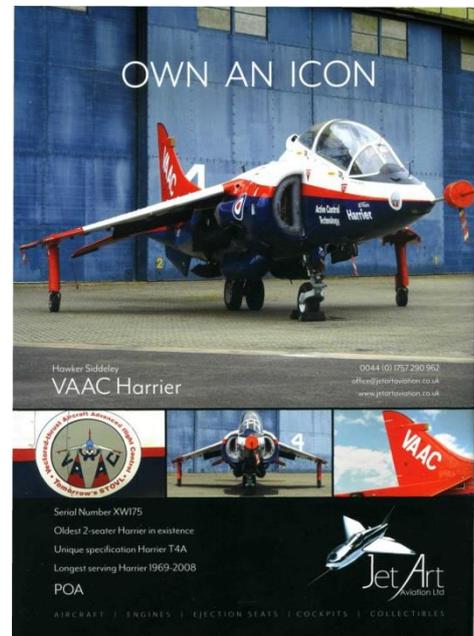
Harrier XW175 First flight in new VAAC paintwork 1993 (neg A9827)

News of RAE Bedford Aircraft Tornado ZA326 and Harrier XW175

Tornado ZA326 We recently had a message from the Panavia Tornado Preservation Group (www.ptpg.org) to say that our former Tornado ZA326 is now owned by this preservation group and has been moved from Bruntingthorpe (see report in newsletter Issue 14, May 2014) to the South Wales Aviation Museum (www.swam.online) at St Athan, near Cardiff. Significant restoration work is in progress. Updates on this restoration can be found at www.za326.com, which also includes a comprehensive interactive time-line summarising the life of ZA326, including its time at Bedford. And look for “Tornado ZA326 Preservation Group” on Facebook.

Harrier XW175 As noted in our October 2019 newsletter (Issue 35), Harrier XW175 has spent the last few years at RAF Cosford but has now been acquired by Jet Art Aviation (www.jetartaviation.co.uk), and has been moved to their location. They wish to sell it on to a museum or other collection. XW175 featured in a full colour “For Sale” notice on the back page of the recent February 2020 issue of *Aeroplane* magazine (see image right). We have no idea of the asking price.

The RAF Museum at Cosford would have been a very suitable location for XW175, alongside other RAE research aircraft - the Short SB5 and Fairey FD2 (WG777). However, the museum has (apparently) decided not to acquire the aircraft. It would be very sad if XW175, 50 years since its first flight, were broken up and its heritage lost. We would hope that there would be a major air museum which could provide accommodation for this iconic aircraft. Jet Art Aviation have stated that they could retain the aircraft.



The February 2020 issue of *Aeroplane* magazine also included two articles about RAE Bedford’s flight research, under the general heading “Legends of Flight Test” – “Proving a Point” about the BAC 221 WG774 and “Vertical Leap”, about the VAAC Harrier XW175.

Vertical Spinning Tunnel (VST) – Listed Building

The vertical spinning tunnel, part of the High Speed Laboratory complex located on the former wind tunnel site of the Royal Aircraft Establishment Bedford, now known as Twinwoods Business Park, has become listed by Historic England as a “Grade II listed building”. Prior to this, there were only three listed wind tunnels, and these are all at the former RAE Farnborough. The VST is unique in being a vertical wind tunnel, whereas most other tunnels are horizontal.

The official citation dated 19 Feb 2019 reads “The VST is a well-preserved example of a very rare building type that is significant for its pioneering construction and its place within the country’s aviation history. As such, it fully meets the criteria for listing and should be added to the List at Grade II. The former machine hall and laboratories and offices have lost their internal equipment and have been too altered to merit listing.”



Bedford Aeronautical Heritage Group

Don't forget, to contact us with any news or comments, please email (bahg-bt@hotmail.co.uk).

The VST, completed in 1954, was built to explore the problems of aircraft spinning using free-flying models but this was not pursued for long. Today, the VST is still active, being used as an indoor sky-diving centre for professionals and amateurs to hone their skills (see picture above). Formerly known as “Bodyflight”, it is now called “Twinwoods Adventure”.



The Vertical Spinning Tunnel and associated buildings (neg CL839, 1982) Meteor model under test in VST (neg M244 EH35 37895-34)

Archive Activity A major recent activity has been to sort out the cine film collection, more than 2000 35mm and 16mm films in cans, prior to transfer to our colleagues at the Farnborough Air Sciences Trust (FAST). Up to now they have been stored in a room in the 8ft tunnel office block but we do not have long-term security of tenure for the archive so took the decision to move them to FAST. The films had to be packed into some 87 storage boxes. FAST came with a van on Thursday 13 Feb 2020, and the team worked hard. Thanks to everyone. Further moves of the archive are expected to be necessary at some point.



Some of the 87 boxes ready to go



Loading up



Boxes in the van



The team of workers (Images: Barry Tomlinson)