

Gloster Meteor TT20 (WM224)



The Meteor was Britain's first operational jet fighter, designed by George Carter and the team at Glosters. On the 7th February 1941 an order was placed for 12 prototypes, the first of which were fitted with a Rover W.2B jet engine. Engine delays meant that the 5th aircraft was fitted with the deHavilland developed Halford H.1 engine and this aircraft was the first to fly from Cranwell on the 5th March 1943.

Meteor F.Mk1s joined RAF service with No 616 Squadron at Culmhead, Somerset in July 1944. Only days later the Squadron moved to RAF Manston in Kent to be in front line action against the incoming V.1 flying bomb threat. The first V.1 to be destroyed occurred near Tonbridge on August the 4th 1944 when a Meteor, piloted by Flying Officer Dean 'flipped over' a V.1 using the Meteors wing tip, thus disabling the V.1's gyroscope, forcing it to crash and explode well short of it's target (London).

In January 1945 one flight of 616 squadrons Meteors joined No 84 group in Belgium and in March, No.504 Squadron equipped with Meteor F.Mk.III became the second all jet unit to serve on the other side of the English Channel. However, during this time, no reports of contact with the Me262 (the German Jet Fighter/Bomber) were ever recorded. At the end of the Second World War the Meteor was regarded as the best fighter in the world.

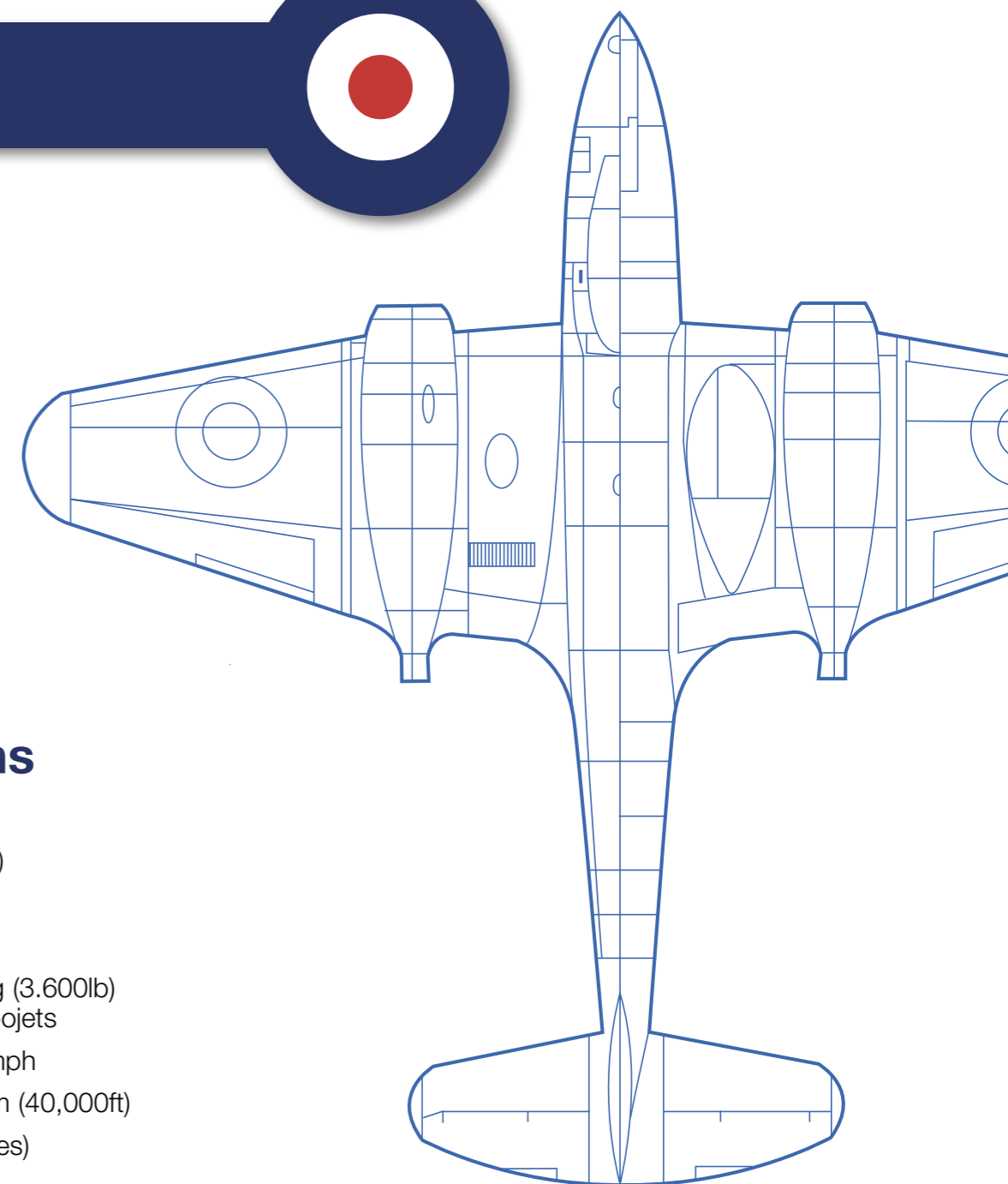
The Rolls Royce powered F.Mk4 had outstanding performance and few military strategist could doubt that jet power was the way of future fighter/interceptor development.

Pending the introduction into RAF service of a purpose-built all weather, jet night fighter the RAF developed the Meteor in this role. Gloster had already been developing a night fighter when specification F.44/46 was issued by the MOD. The Gloster design work was handed over to Armstrong Whitworth, a sister company in the Hawker Siddeley Group to develop and manufacture the NF11 Night Fighter. Distinguished from its predecessor by a longer nose, the NF11 also included the Mk.10 outer wing panels to accommodate four Hispano Mark V cannon and the more streamlined tail unit from the Meteor F.Mk 8.

Meteor NF11 (VW413) flew for the first time from Bagington, Coventry in October 1949 and it's success led to an order of 200 aircraft for the Royal Air Force.

After a successful front-line career, the Meteor continued to serve in a variety of support roles including the T.Mk 7 used by the Martin Baker Company for ejector seat trials. In the early 1950's, F.Mk 8's were used in Liquid Rocket engine trials and one aircraft known as the 'Prone Meteor' included a second pilot flying in the prone position for research into human beings resistance to g tolerance.

After a series of trials with Meteor Mk.8's for Target Towing, the NF11 was adapted to the role and designated TT20. All armament was removed to save weight and a wind driven winch was fitted to a pylon above the starboard inner wing root with a 1860m.(6.100ft.) cable for towing a target. The target itself could be detached from the winch assemble with an explosive charge.



Specifications

Dimensions:

Length: 14.78m (48ft 6in)

Wingspan: 13.1m (43ft)

Height: 4.22m (13ft 10in)

Powerplant: Two 1578kg (3.600lb)
Rolls Royce Derwent turbojets

Maximum Speed: 579 mph

Service Ceiling: 12,192m (40,000ft)

Range: 1580km (980 miles)

The Aeropark Meteor

The Aeropark Meteor was accepted into service on the 17th October 1952 and flew with 228 Operational Conversion Unit (OCU). In 1957 it joined No 29 Squadron before conversion to TT20 standard at Armstrong Whitworth's at Coventry in May 1961. It served as a TT20 at Exeter with 3/4 CAACU (Civil Anti Aircraft Cooperational Unit) until 1968, only completing a very low number of flying hours.

After a period in storage the aircraft became an instructional airframe at Swanton Morley and was then sold to the Kings Head Pub at North Weald in 1975. Later, in 1978 WM224 moved to the North Weald Airfield and joined the museum until its arrival here at the Aeropark on the 12th January 2003.