

14th SEPTEMBER

# Battle of Britain Displays

by J. D. R. Rawlings

Organisation of such an enterprise is a tremendous task and begins some six months before the displays, when representatives from each station which is going to be open attend a conference at the Air Ministry with the central participation committee. At this stage broad lines of policy are drawn up and the representatives report back to their own stations where the bulk for the detailed planning takes place.

Whilst each station has its own methods of doing this much the same problems are tackled in much the same way as outlined below—which is the way in which Tangmere has been putting on its displays over the past years.

## How Tangmere does it

When the representative returns from Air Ministry a managing committee is appointed to work out the details for the display. Each committee member is given a part of the organisation which has to be worked up; this is in addition to his full-time operational task on the station, there being no persons set aside purely for "At Home" Day planning.

The display itself on each station divides up into a technical display (in one of the hangars), a static aircraft display, and a flying display. In addition different sections of the station will be open to the public and be putting on displays of their own—e.g., parachute-packing in the Parachute Section. Each of these will have its own committee member responsible, and in addition there will be members with other tasks such as publicity, catering, etc.

From April on each committee member works up his own particular task, reporting



*Appearing at many stations will be the College of Air Warfare's aerobatic team, three of whose four Meteor F.8s are here seen coming out of a loop*

EVERY YEAR IN mid-September the Royal Air Force stages one of the largest and most complex series of air displays throughout the country, commemorating that memorable period in 1940 when the fate of this country (and some aver of the free world) was in the R.A.F.'s hands—a responsibility which they discharged gloriously.

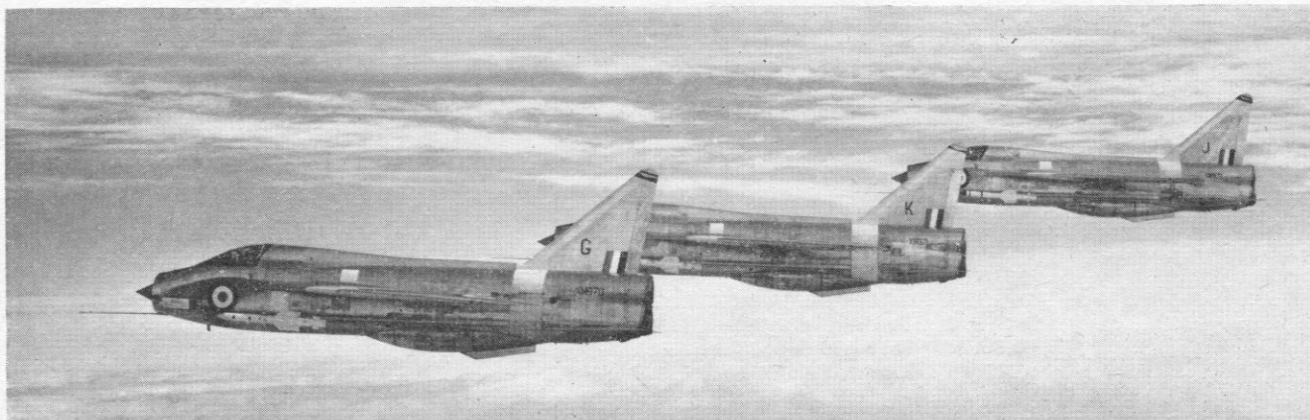
Today R.A.F. "At Home" Day provides an opportunity not only for looking back but also for acting as "good neighbours", by opening R.A.F. Stations to the public who can come and find out for themselves what goes on at the nearby airfield. It is also an opportunity for the R.A.F. to show its present equipment, and mettle, and even the smaller Air Force of today believes that the job it has to do and the equipment which it uses to do it are

worthy of the attentions of the nation. Finally the "Day" plays its part in assisting the recruiting programme, for nothing is more calculated to interest the young men needed than intimate acquaintance with current aircraft.

This year R.A.F. "At Home" Day falls on 14th September. Fifteen R.A.F. Stations will be open to the public and will be providing comprehensive air displays.

*Whirlwind HAR.10s of 225 Squadron, Odiham, will be at Abingdon, Colerne, Gaydon, St. Athan and Wyton (Author's photo)*





*Highlight of the display at Middleton St. George will be these Lightning T4s of 226 Operational Conversion Unit*

back to the committee from time to time. Meanwhile, the central participation committee has been dealing with problems common to all the displays such as souvenir programmes on the one hand, and aircraft for the static and flying displays on the other.

The technical display, in one of the station's hangars, is entirely planned on a station level and it is up to the station personnel to produce exhibits of the latest equipment and developments. The industry naturally co-operates as far as it can but with fewer companies than in past years there is not so much material available to go round the stations. Services allied to the R.A.F., such as the Royal Observer Corps, also come into the planning of the technical display, which of course will always comprise some of the technical equipment in use by the station's own units.

#### **Static display**

The static aircraft display, one of the greatest sources of interest to visitors, requires considerable planning. Apart from the acquiring of suitable hardware to exhibit, it is necessary to plan the display in such a way that the aircraft will be clearly visible and accessible, especially those in which the public will be allowed.

The static display starts around the station's own aircraft but in many cases this will mean only one or two types. These will be augmented by aircraft from the Command in which the station serves and most static displays are to some extent coloured by this; thus a Bomber Command station will generally have a better selection of bomber types than airfields in other Commands. Types outside the Command are allotted by the central participation committee, which endeavours to see that each station has a fully representative selection of the R.A.F.'s current types.

It is this committee too that allocates most of the "foreign" aircraft, such as the U.S.A.F., French, Belgian and other

visitors. Finally any interesting aircraft that are known to persons on the station and that can be brought along are usually included.

The flying display is of course the main attraction—and the one requiring the most intricate and detailed planning. If each station merely put on its own display nothing much could be accomplished for it would mean at best four or five items by one or two types of aircraft. So this is planned by the participation committee at Air Ministry. This committee lines up the various aerobatic teams in the R.A.F., the solo performers, representative formations and individual aircraft of each type in service; and then draws up a comprehensive schedule, routing a suitable selection of each for every station. These then have to be routed around the various stations, taking account of the various speeds of the different types and the heights at which they must fly, and ensuring that not more than one performer or formation is at any one airfield at any one time.

In touring the country these aircraft

have to be under Flying Control all the time and have to be routed across, over or under Airways so as not to conflict with civil traffic throughout the country. This major headache is the responsibility of Fighter Command.

Plans, especially those concerning the flying displays and the occupants of the static parks, are tentative right up to the last minute; and inevitably alterations have to be made to suit operational requirements. Consequently, although we list below what we consider to be the items worth looking out for at each of the fifteen stations open on Saturday, 14th September, there may be some changes since this issue went to press.

#### **ABINGDON, Berks**

*(Transport Command)*

Abingdon has for long been the principal base for Blackburn Beverleys of Transport Command in the U.K. and this is still its role; resident at Abingdon are two Beverley squadrons, Nos. 47 and 53. Also stationed there is No. 1 Parachute Training

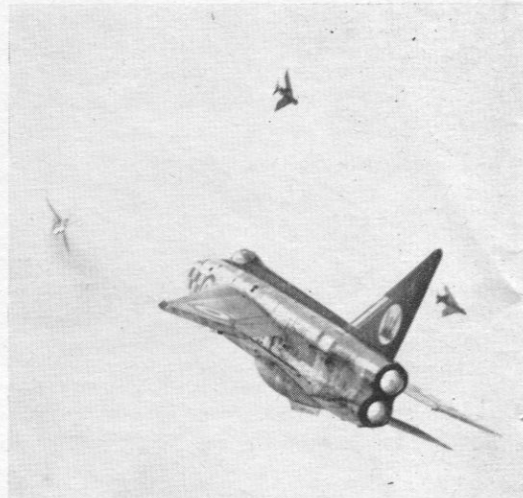


*Shackletons will be among the touring aircraft—shown here is an MR.3 from 120 Squadron, Kinloss*





ABOVE: Gnats from No. 4 F.T.S. (illustrated) and C.F.S. will give solo aerobatic displays. RIGHT: Seen here in a wing-over take-off are the Lightnings of "The Firebirds", 56 Squadron's aerobatic team



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School, which uses balloons and Hastings to train parachutists; this school has evolved a parachute display team carrying out freefall demonstrations. These units will provide the home-based components of the flying display.

For the static display, it is hoped to include one or two interesting aircraft in addition to the standard service aircraft: for example, the second production Vulcan B.1 XA890 from Farnborough; a Javelin FAW.9 from Geilenkirchen in Germany; a Belgian Air Force Fouga Magister (which will also give a flying display); and Yeovilton's Swordfish, LS426.

## ACKLINGTON, Northumberland

(Flying Training Command)

The home of No. 6 Flying Training School, this station will naturally be dominated by Jet Provost T.4s and they will be well to the fore in the flying

demonstrations. In addition there is a lodger unit from No. 228 Squadron, a Flight of their Whirlwind HAR.10 helicopters which will also be demonstrating. Aircraft to note in the static display will be one of the only two Viscounts in R.A.F. colours, from the E.T.P.S. at Farnborough; a Harvard T.2b from the A. & A.E.E. at Boscombe Down; a Belgian Air Force Magister and a Lockheed T-33A from the 20th Wing, U.S.A.F., at Wethersfield.

## ALDERGROVE, Northern Ireland

(Coastal Command)

One of the R.A.F.'s older airfields, Aldergrove is the home of No. 23 Maintenance Unit which repairs and modifies current service aircraft, amongst them Shackletons and Canberras, so it is likely that these will be on display. An operational unit at Aldergrove is No. 202 Squadron which flies Hastings Met.1's on weather reconnaissance out over the Atlantic as well as other duties. Bomber

types will be well represented in the static display, with a Valiant from 232 O.C.U. at Gaydon, a Vulcan B.1A from Waddington, a Canberra B.2 from Tangmere, and a Canberra B(I).8 from Geilenkirchen in Germany.

## BIGGIN HILL, Kent

(Flying Training Command)

This famous airfield, being the nearest to London, usually puts on the biggest of all the displays on R.A.F. "At Home" Day. Although a famous fighter base during the war, it now houses no military flying units, the R.A.F. contingent comprising the Officers and Aircrew Selection Centre and the Historic Aircraft Museum. This latter includes the following interesting aircraft: an Italian Fiat CR.42 BT474; Gladiator I K8042; Heinkel He 111H "CW:HV"; Junkers Ju 88C-6 PJ876; Messerschmitt Bf 109E "GH:12"; Messerschmitt Bf 110C-4 730301 "OL"; Wellington X MF628; Focke-Wulf Fw 190A-3 733682; S.E.5a "B4563" (G-EBIC); Sopwith Triplane N5912; a V-1, a V-2 and a Japanese "Dinah".

In addition to these aircraft, the outside display will include a U.S.A.F. C-130 Hercules from Evreux, France; an R.A.E. Sea Vixen FAW.1; a Hunter FR.10 and a Canberra from R.A.F. Germany; and a Gnat T.1 from C.F.S., which will also give a flying display.

## COLERNE, Wilts

(Transport Command)

Hastings from Colerne's two squadrons, Nos. 24 and 36, are engaged in flying all over the world on Transport Command's tasks and these machines will be in evidence on Battle of Britain Day. Also at Colerne is No. 24 Group Communications Flight flying Ansons. A resident aircraft to look out for at Colerne is the static Spitfire IIa P7350, a genuine 1945 machine that has been beautifully restored. Other static items of interest will be one

Resident units at Wyton are 58 Squadron (Canberra PR.7s and '9s) and 543 Squadron (Valiant B(PR).1s), represented here



of the few Sea Venoms still flying, coming from R.A.E., Bedford; a T-33A from the 81st Tac. F. Wing, U.S.A.F., Bentwaters; a 41 Squadron Javelin FAW.8; and an interesting hybrid Hunter from Farnborough.

### **COLTISHALL, Norfolk**

(Fighter Command)

Coltishall is the home of 74 Squadron, the R.A.F.'s first operational Lightning F.1 squadron, whose aerobatic performances at the last two Farnborough shows have been spectacular. In addition there is a flight of 228 Squadron, whose Whirlwind HAR.10s will demonstrate the rescue role on which they are employed. More static will be two types of V-Bomber, a Vulcan from Finningley and a Victor B.1A from Cottesmore; two U.S.A.F. fighters, an F-100 and an F-101 from Laon in France; also a Canberra from Boscombe Down which will demonstrate a target-snatch. At the main gate is a Meteor F.4 EE419, one of the few remaining examples of what was once a standard Fighter Command aircraft.

### **FINNINGLEY, Yorks**

(Bomber Command)

One of the pre-war bomber bases, Finningley still occupies this role today and houses the Bomber Command Development Unit, equipped with various bomber types, and No. 230 O.C.U. which is the operational conversion unit for all Vulcan crews and at present has Vulcan B.2s. Also there is No. 1 Group Communications Flight with Ansons and Chipmunks. American types will augment the full static display, with two Danish Air Force F-100 Super Sabres, a U.S.A.F. F-101 Voodoo from Laon, and a C-124 from Evreux. Also there will be a Lightning F.2 from 19 or 92 Squadron on public display for the first time.

### **GAYDON, Warwicks.**

(Bomber Command)

Gaydon was the first V-bomber base, when Valiants came into service, and it still fulfils the role of Valiant and Victor training, the unit concerned being No. 232 O.C.U.; this unit also trains a limited number of Canberra crews and all these



*Aldergrove, Northern Ireland, is the home of No. 202 Squadron, Coastal Command, whose Hastings Met.1s will be much in evidence*

types should be in evidence. Highlight of the static display is likely to be the Handley Page H.P.115 from R.A.E., Bedford; and it should be in the company of a Whirlwind from the Radar Research Establishment, and an F-101 from Laon as well as more usual types. Look out also for the Spitfire F.24, PK724, and a Messerschmitt Me 262 which until recently lived there.

### **LEUCHARS, Fife**

(Fighter Command)

Although a Fighter Command station—with the Javelin FAW.9s of 23 Squadron—Leuchars also houses a flight of 228 Squadron Whirlwind HAR.10s for rescue, and the Chipmunks of St. Andrews University Air Squadron, so it has plenty of variety in its own resources. This is to be augmented statically by, amongst others, a T-33A and an F-86K from the Norwegian Air Force and three U.S.A.F. aircraft, a B-66 from Alconbury, F-101 from Laon and a C-47. A Spitfire PR.19, PS915, is an interesting static resident at Leuchars.

### **MIDDLETON ST. GEORGE, Co. Durham**

(Fighter Command)

Lightning T.4 trainers will be predominant here for this airfield is the home

base of No. 226 O.C.U., the unit training pilots for the Lightning squadrons of Fighter Command. The Javelin T.3s of the Fighter Command Instrument Rating Flight may also be part of the display, adding to what promises to be one of the noisier open days. Twenty-odd aircraft are expected to be in the static display, including F-100s from the Danish Air Force, a No. 4 F.T.S. Gnat T.1, and a Canberra from Wildenrath, Germany. Keep an eye open for a historic aircraft by the main gate—Tempest TT.5 SN219, painted up in the markings of 33 Squadron and in the company of a Spitfire LF.16e, TB382.

### **ST. ATHAN, Glam.**

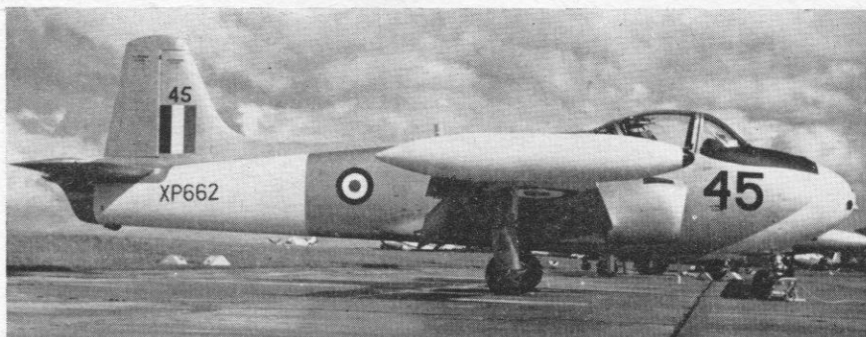
(Technical Training Command)

Although containing no flying units as such, St. Athan is full of aircraft as a result of the activities of No. 4 School of Technical Training and Nos. 19 and 32 Maintenance Units. The Technical Training School contains many interesting instructional airframes, including the prototype Britannia G-ALBO (now 7708M), early Valiants and Hunter F.1s. Also at St. Athan live two historical aircraft, the Defiant I N1671 and Junkers Ju 87D Stuka "RI:JK". The static display will include a Vulcan B.1A from Waddington, a Radar Research Canberra from

BELOW: *Varsities (W7940 illustrated) of 115 Squadron, Signals Command, will take part in Tangmere's display and fly past at many stations. RIGHT: Most displays will include a rescue demonstration by a Whirlwind HAR.10 of 228 or 22 Squadron—one of the latter's machines is seen here at Tangmere (Author's photos)*







Many static parks will contain a Jet Provost—such as this T.4 of No. 6 F.T.S., Acklington—and the type will also be used by several aerobatic teams (Author's photo)

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Pershore, and another Canberra from Laarbruch, together with Whirlwinds from both 22 Squadron at Chivenor and 225 Squadron at Odiham.

### TANGMERE, Sussex

(Signals Command)

As well as housing a Signals Command squadron, No. 115 with Varsitys, which will be very evident in the display, Tangmere has "B" Flight of 22 Squadron which will be putting on a rescue display from its dispersal on the airfield. Much will also be seen of the Beverleys, Hastings and Argosies of No. 242 O.C.U., Transport Command, based at nearby Thorney Island, and which use Tangmere's runways for "rollers". Not only is this the only Signals Command station open but the month after Battle of Britain Day Tangmere closes down, so all those interested in visiting this famous Battle of Britain base should take this last chance. In the static park, of note, will be a Javelin FAW.9 from Geilenkirchen, a U.S.A.F. L-20 Beaver from Laon, a Wessex HAS.1 from R.A.E., Farnborough, and an Alouette II or Scout from the Army Air Corps at Middle Wallop.

### TERNHILL, Salop.

(Flying Training Command)

Helicopter antics should be the main feature of Ternhill's day as it houses the C.F.S. Helicopter Wing which flies Sycamores, Skeeters and Whirlwinds. Its static display, too, will be predominantly Flying Training Command, although a Devon from the R.R.E. at Pershore and a Harvard T.2b from Boscombe Down are rarer visitors, the latter a particularly appropriate aircraft in view of Ternhill's long association with this type in the past. Also expected are an L-20 and a C-47 from the U.S.A.F.

### WADDINGTON, Lincs.

(Bomber Command)

Three squadrons of Vulcan B.1As reside at this famous R.A.F. bomber base, Nos. 44, 50 and 101, and carry on the traditions of its wartime Hampden and Lancaster squadrons, No. 50 amongst them. This V-bomber accent will be heightened in the static park by a Victor B.1A from Cottesmore, a flight-refuelling

Valiant from Marham, and a Vulcan B.2 from No. 230 O.C.U. at Finningley. In addition there will be a U.S.A.F. F-102 Delta Dagger of the 32nd Fighter-Interceptor Squadron from Soesterberg, Holland, together with an F-100 and a C-130, and a team of five T-33As of the Royal Netherlands Air Force which will take part in the flying display.

### WYTON, Hunts.

(Bomber Command)

Wyton houses the U.K.-based photographic-reconnaissance squadrons, which are No. 58 Squadron with Canberra PR.7s and PR.9s, and 543 Squadron with Valiant B(PR).1s. Also stationed there is 51 Squadron with Canberra B.2s and the Technical Training Command Communications Flight with Chipmunks, Ansons and a Devon. Highlight of the static display will be the Short SB.5 from R.A.E., Bedford, together with a Hunter from the same place; Alconbury, U.S.A.F. base, will provide a Douglas B-66 and T-33, and there will be a Gnat T.1 from C.F.S.

The foregoing gives some idea of what is expected of interest at each airfield open. In addition, as already stated, the flying displays will be largely made up of aircraft touring the airfields and will contain aerobatic teams, solo aerobatics, and flypast formations and singletons. In the latter all the more important service types will be represented; so most stations will see a Victor, Vulcan, Valiant, Javelins, Comet, Shackleton, Canberras, Meteors, Argosy, Gnat, Varsity and Britannia.

Of the aerobatic teams, the Belgian "Diabls Rouges" are expected at Abing-

don and Gaydon; the "Red Pelicans" (the C.F.S. team on Jet Provost T.4s) at Abingdon, Biggin Hill and Ternhill; "The Firebirds" (56 Squadron on Lightning F.1s) at Biggin Hill, Gaydon and Wyton. Other teams of Jet Provosts, probably from 1, 2 and 6 F.T.S.'s will give formation aerobatic displays at Acklington, Aldergrove, Colerne, Coltishall, Finningley, Leuchars, Middleton St. George, St. Athan and Wyton. The Hunter team from 229 O.C.U., Chivenor, will be at Acklington, Aldergrove, Colerne, Leuchars and St. Athan. The College of Air Warfare Meteor team at Acklington, Finningley, Middleton St. George and Waddington. The Dutch T-33A team will also perform at Finningley as well as Waddington.

The Fleet Air Arm will provide a single Buccaneer and Scimitar and a Sea Vixen formation amongst the touring items, and the U.S.A.F. its customary KB-50J refuelling display at most airfields, together with touring F-100s and F-101s; while the Wallis Gyroplane will appear at Biggin Hill, Coltishall and Finningley. Last, but in pride of place, the Hurricane and Spitfire will be seen in the air at Abingdon, Biggin Hill, Colerne, Coltishall, Gaydon, St. Athan, Tangmere, Ternhill and Wyton; and a Spitfire at Acklington, Finningley, Leuchars, and Middleton St. George.

All these and many other formations and single aircraft will be circulating in the air above the U.K. on 14th September, timed to reach each airfield so as to fit in with all the other events taking place; a truly prodigious task which is the culmination of the months of planning and itself a testimony to the skill and high standard of training and ability of the Royal Air Force of 1963.

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The author wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to the Information Division of the Air Ministry and R.A.F. Station, Tangmere, for assistance in the preparation of this article.

*Foreign military aircraft will visit several stations. At Leuchars, Fife, there will be an F-86K of the Royal Norwegian Air Force*

