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Es el diario escrito por el entonces Squadron Leader Mel James, quien se desempeñó como Jefe de Mantenimiento de los Vulcan en Ascensión.

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Keeping the Vulcans flying

The Vulcan Engineering Detachment on Ascension Island Diary

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The Vulcan ground support and engineering crew at Ascension Island

The diary is reproduced exactly as written by Sqn Ldr James' in order to best communicate the situation the personnel of No 195(A) Composite Squadron found themselves in on arrival on Ascension Island. The ground crew engineering team were taken from the Vulcan Squadrons at Waddington, Nos 44, 50 and 101, to form the combined 195(A) Sqn which maintained the Vulcans used in the Black Buck operations. This, as will be seen from these pages, was no easy task, with spares and equipment in short supply and the detachment being at the end of a long and protracted supply line.

Our thanks go to Sqn Ldr Mel James, Commander of the Detachment in 1982, for allowing us to use his personal diary in this feature, and for the insights he has recorded into how the Black Buck operations were supported in depth and what life was like on Ascension Island during the conflict.

27th to 30th of April 1982

Tuesday 27 April 1982

1. 5 Detachment Eng personnel (FS Packer, CT Murphy, Sgt Barter, SAC Chapman, SAC Lowery) departed Waddington at 1500 hours by Andover CC2 to emplane BZN VC-10 for ASI. VC-10 departed 1800 hours. Also on board Operations Team (S/L Montgomery and crew).
2. Remainder of ground party 25 personnel departed in 2 x C130K at 2230 hours and 0330 hours 28 April, RR4216/4897 respectively. First C130K RR4215 equipment only.
3. VC-10 staged via Banjul, Gambia and Dakar Senegal. C130Ks staged via Dakar, Senegal. On RR4216 food provided for first leg only. Stock of sandwiches and Coca Cola acquired from Air France, Dakar using local imprest of detachment Accountant Officer.
4. On arrival at FHAW, very limited arrival brief on pure administrative arrangements (pay books, post office etc.), Admin Office comprises tri-service clerks and RAF Admin S/L Graham Griffiths (ex SCA), 1 x Wg Cdr Admin. Base control is RN Capt McQueen AVM Chesworth 18 Group, Gp Capt Price (OC Marham). Supplies controlled by Sqn Ldr Neil Campbell, Engineering by Wg Cdr J Morgan 18 Group (former OC Eng Wing Waddo). Elements of FAA are omnipresent. 3 x Wessex HU5, 845 Sqn and 6 x Sea King HU5, 846 Sqn continually bring stores and personnel from ships offshore. Various companies of Marines and Army personnel also present. 34 Marines from SS Canberra were placed at our disposal 28/29/30 April for guarding armed aircraft. Some assistance also rendered by 3rd Battalion Paras before flying off to Canberra.
5. Personnel accommodation at Two Boats village, almost in the centre of the island near Green Mountain. Village of single storey SECO hut type dwellings. Natives extremely cooperative and helpful. They invited combines forces to use their village hall, club, pool etc. Accommodation for airmen/SNCOs in 6 man tents outside village hall on waste ground. (All ground here looks like waste ground - volcanic ash, cinders, charcoal, extremely dirty and dusty on the airfield.) Accommodation for Officers is 3 line astern SECOs on the south-west edge of village at the top of the slope looking down on English Bay, SS Elk, SS Canberra, HMS Hula(hospital), SS Uganda, HMS Intrepid, 1 x Type 21 Frigate etc, huts have showers, toilet, 2 x wash basins each end recently installed by DOE St Helena. Field telephones for inter-site comms installed by Cable & Wireless.
6. Message from HQSTC not to take LWB fortunately too late. LWB loaded at front of first C130K. On arrival MT very tight, LWB was only detachment vehicle. Following arrival of 2 x Sherpa by C130K, one allocated to Ops Crew for crew ferry etc.
7. Meals; field kitchen facilities on Victor line. RN providing food at Two Boats in Village Hall. Own fighting irons essential - glad we brought them!. Food also available on American base near airfield, Volcano Club, food drink plus BX open limited hours to UK personnel.

Accommodation and messing on Ascension Island



Thursday 29 April

1. XM607 and XM598 arrived approx 1800 hours. Both are saturated in condensation including bombs due to long soak at altitude followed by rapid descent into semi-tropical conditions. (Daytime temp varied so far 77°F - 95°F)
2. XM598 serviceable!! XM607 ARI 18146 can change R88 camera motor running continuously - NFF finger trouble, No 1 tank would not accept fuel. Not true, No 1 tank was full, only fault at top end reading 300 lb low.

The first two Vulcans arrive on Wideawake airfield



Friday 30 April

1. We're on! Both aircraft serviceable. 607 by 0300 hours. DSSS phone message passed at 0001 hours giving estimate of serviceability by 0500 then confirmation passed at 0300 hours. Both fuelled to 90% at this point and awaiting night for top up. Since 598 was serviceable, accepted as functional. 607 moved to enable functions at 1600 hours NB all moves to be coordinated with Ramp Manager, Lonnie or his assistant, Benjy. Eng control also book bowsers, tugs etc. 607 gave similar snags with Monty in control on No1 tank but situation explained on total contents. John Reeve not happy so elected to take 598 as primary. Functionals complete aircraft prepped for move to action stations as shown on diagram. With no pan markings and concept of spacing plus inexperienced tug driver, considerable hassle getting aircraft into position. (Ramp Controller complained that C130, VC-10 could not move safely - I offered to taxi them personally).
2. Ops crew arrived at 2100 hours to check carousel and bombs before crew-in. 2130 crew arrive at aircraft and dress for flight. Considerable noise on the pan with 60 KVA plus cabin cooler operating at 2500 rpm!! Crew in 2200 hours formally. 2230 hours engines start - ALL ENGINES. The pan is now a mass of anti-coll lights and engines, power sets and coolers running - the noise is incredible. Telephone/telex blackout on Island commenced 2100 hours. 2250 taxi sequence commences. 598 followed by Victor followed by 607 last out. All 11 tankers away without using reserves! Last aircraft airborne 2310 hours. 607 have a crew-in snag. No ECM pod run up. Fixed by Cpl Webb - CB tripped on X-band cheeseboard. Suddenly a silent empty ASP - that was the most incredible sight I've ever seen!
3. Reeve/598 returning, burning off fuel @ 20,000 lb/hr. 5000 ft airbrakes out and undercarriage down. 2 hr 15 min later 598 touches down. Problem is that John Reeve shut his DV window quickly as his turn to taxi approached, but in doing so trapped part of window seal. The noise produced by the leaking seal was too bad to cope with for 15 hours so they aborted. DV window problem rectified in 10 minutes. Also had 1st pilots intercom weak and variation in fuel consumption from tanks. First snag NFF headset serviced. Second snag diode failure in system - safety item not in use, removed and cables secured. Airbrake snag down to fuse problem. 598 recovered 'S'.
4. Victor turn rounds and refuels continued through the night. Stood down at 0630 hours 1 May when it became clear that the trail was working satisfactorily. Woken at 0815 by John Hathaway who reported strike successful and aircraft returning.

The aircraft and layout for the first mission, Black Buck 1



1st to 11th of May 1982

Saturday 1 May

1. 598 turned round on pan and refuelled to 90%. Browsers a problem particularly due to lack of adequate bulk facility. Aircraft states to be passed to OC Eng Wg nightly for simplified Opstat signal, namely tail number, serviceability state, time to recovery, hours to next servicing. At approx 1300 hours, 6 x Sea Harrier in pale blue scheme with 809 Sqn badges arrived. Tanker trail from Yeovilton to Banjul, Gambia (6 hrs), night stop, then Banjul to ASI (3 hrs 15 mins). They passed over the fleet on arrival to announce their presence. At 1445 hours XH672 landed (Sqn Ldr Milligan) in front of Martin - XH672 had stayed with Martin throughout the whole trip. At about 1452 Martin landed (no victory roll!). Quite a welcoming party for him. Crew whisked off for Int debrief followed by Eng debrief. Defects: No2 Frequency Changer, possible probe leak (no leaks apparent and probe test 'S'). 18146 no run up. (Fledermaus radar threat picked up, MK10 pod switched on and jammed the X-band signal!!!)

Night off!!

Black Buck 1 returns



Sunday 2 May

Very quiet day since no flying - awaiting full unit reports of raid. Seems to be good news. Spares delivery today. Box of spares on Belfast. Other small spares by Herc + S type trolley pm plus a complete window unit full to the brim!! (Who asked for that - no window used so far.) At 2340 21 x bombs arrived by Herc. Fuses etc taken on S trolley to bomb dump, 1¼ hour round trip with no springing on S trolleys. Bombs on carriers left on pallets forward of C130 parking area. Since it was dark, and against CO's instructions, decided to arm up the bombs in situ. Major problem getting fusing data, did not know what state bombs in 598 were left by Waddington. Attempts to contact 1 Group failed. Dragged Bob Wright away from the Exile Club to open Ops box to check. Checked but no gen. Eventually found signal in Nose Hangar Ops Room giving fusing details.

Arranged for hire of crane from Pan Am for 0300. Bombs on S types by 0430. Tails on and bombs moved by 0520. Just crutching up the last carrier at dawn when signal arrives changing fusing details. Waited to confirm with CO. Disappeared with Arm team for a break/shower/shave. Reappeared 1000 hours 3 May, aircraft stats now passed at 0600 and 1800 hours.

Supplies and arrivals



Monday 3 May

- 1000 Returned to airfield. Fuses to be changed. After a long arduous discussion with OC Eng Wg, Stn Cdr and USAF Base Cdr convinced them that it was safe to change fuses under the aircraft. Unfortunately being daylight created great deal of interest! In the meantime pitot head had been changed and leak checked before I returned.
- 1130 Thanks to help from Kinloss armourers, refusing now complete and bombs recrutched. I left a message for Galtieri on one of the time delay bombs from Denise and the boys.
- 1200 607 and 598 BF'd. I stood down for lunch with OC Eng, OC Supply, OC Regt at Exile Club. Returned to Two Boats for kip, returning to airfield at 2000 hours. First 1 Sqn Harriers arrive.
- 1300 VC-10 with 21 x 1000 lb bombs. UKMAMS delivered to dump.
- 1430 Functionals after aircraft moved into combat position - slightly different tonight.
- pm Cpl King taken to hospital with pain in kidney area - will be kept in. Aircraft refuelled to 100%.
- 2215 Ops crew check weapons. Food loaded on board.
- 2240 Crews arrive and change on the pan.
- 2230 Engines start. No crew-in snags.
- 2345 Taxi sequence commences. 607, 598 at slots 3 and 5 respectively.
- 0030 Return to Two Boats. 598 RTB after 3½ hours if all well.

Tuesday 4 May

- 0315 598 RTB no problems en route except John Reeve in 607 forgot to give the code signal for first hookup successful and Monty had to ask if all was well before RTB!! Alternator shut-down problem (finger trouble) and 6th seat parachute. Aircraft AF'd and 'S' by 0500.
- 1000 598 refuelled to 90%.
- 1030 Learned attack complete, 607 RTB also heard confirmation of first strike. 16 craters on airfield. Strung along centre of runway. Tower, POL and part of ASP destroyed. Arm team despatched to prepare bombs for move ie onto S type trolleys. Can't fully prepare until fusing details for next sortie known. Now have permission to prepare bombs on this side of runway on back road out of the airfield.
- 1533 607 land, Flight Time 15 hr 46 mins. Parked aircraft on opposite side of apron due to parked C141. Underestimated slope on pan. John Reeve had to use extra power to taxi into slot causing loose dust/gravel on taxiway to be blown into intakes of XL233 opposite. After vacuum of intakes no problems envisaged.

Bill Lloyd on 57 now has polythene over all his intakes!! Defects: Red Steer pressure caved in - looks as if the extra long sorties are too much for the Red Steer pressurisation system. Standby Artificial Horizon toppled - signal demand from Waddington. Cpl Webb also confirmed Westinghouse pod U/S - demand from UK. 18228 continual signals received typical of F-14 lock on. CU changed.

- 1800 Still no word on fusings for next sortie so bombs wrapped up for the night. Aircraft state on signal 598 'S', 52 hours to minor, 607 U/S ROS + 3 hours, 101 hours to minor.
- 2000 Trades of personnel required for extended duration at ASI passed to Monty, as follows:-

- 1 x NCO A Tech A
- 1 x NCO A Tech P
- 1 x NCO A Tech E
- 1 x SNCO L Tech AR
- 1 x NCO Supplier/Movements
- 4 man Weapon Preparation Team as per original nominal roll.

2030 Stack for the night.

New equipment, new working conditions!



Wednesday 5 May

0400ish Torrential rain intermittent until 0730!!

- 1000 Start work - late start at instigation of Monty. Red Steer arrived last night on 02 demand for Fly Away Pack. Changed by Reg Parkinson - awaiting standby artificial horizon and pod.
- 1200 No word of fuse settings so bombs returned to bomb dump on far side of airfield. Designed a little bomb motif which Chf Tech Dave Lindo is cutting out of cardboard as a stencil to be painted on port side of nose as below:
- 1500 OC Eng Wg and I bored with hanging around so we went up to Two Boats for a swim, returning in time for OC Eng to attend 1700 hour daily conference. Rumour from John Reeve that he has been asked to provide a fuel plan for a RTB. Options would appear to be as follows: 2 x Vulcan stage Ascension - Dakar - Lajes - Waddington requires no tankers. Stage Ascension - Lajes - Waddington requires 1 tanker each. Leave Vulcans at Ascension if possibility of returning to ASC. In any case FS Packer, Len Develin and John Devlin would remain behind to look after things. Only a rumour at this stage, Monty disagrees with it and C-in-C Task Force may also.
- 1710 Down to Georgetown via Two Boats to collect Reeve crew to see the Beating of the Retreat by the RM outside the Exiles Club at 1800 hours. Super evening and music of course. Hitched back to Two Boats with army land rover - you never walk for long around here before you get a lift. Monty gave me a signal from TF at 1710 requesting gen on fusing options available for 607.
- 1900 Down to bomb dump with Sgt Hancock to count up all fuses available as follows: No 947 Qty 57, No 79 tail pistols - Half hour delay Qty 8, 1 hour delay Qty 8, 6 hour delay Qty 9, 36 hour delay Qty 6. Sent signal to CTF at 2200 via Group Captain.
- 2200 Stood down - returned to Two Boats to find room absolutely crammed with beds, Herc crew + Nimrod crew + 809 Sqn + Monty crew and me!!!

Thursday 6 May

- 0700 809 Sqn blokes depart noisily - good luck to them, they are a good bunch. Monty has also moved out somewhere?
- 0930 In to airfield. Only messages concern change of SOP for pod being delivered for 607. 18 Sqn blokes met today include Tom Kinsella, Cherry Willingham and Martin Tokeley (Engines) - all ex 101. They've set up a MASH 18 Sqn (Mobile Air Support Helicopters) on the fringe of the pan - they're also setting up a black market in cheap cool drinks in competition with MT and cheap cigs!!
- 1500 598 is beginning to sit very heavily on its undercarriage now still carrying its original bombs and only about 4 inches of oleo showing. It desperately needs a trip of circuit bashing to recharge the oleos. Lots of chat about going home for a week or so but I've stopped believing all rumours now. More Red Steer spares in - just as well. They can't take a 15 hour trip. New ECM Pod arrived for 607 and loaded. OK. New stud 7 for additional ECM threat.

Friday 7 May

- 0900 Seems the Gp Capt has been looking for me. Message received that 4 pax coming from Waddington. I deny all knowledge though guess that they must be the bomb prep personnel.
- 1300 Both aircraft to return to the UK. Don't know which crews yet but 598 must be downloaded. 607 is more or less OK after RS change. Standby artificial horizon changed on 607 but the new instrument seems to have blown a transformer and the system is still U/S. Section 2 to fly agreed with Monty.
- 1400 Attempt to download S trolleys using Navy Iron Fairy failed. Had to book Pan Am crane through Lonnie. In the meantime 607 towed out onto the pan ready to crew in for 1630 departure. 607 apparently no charge up of EHPP for brakes but only needed a top-up - could have been a 2 hour delay.
- 1600 598 downloaded and bombs transferred to bomb dump. ECM pod remained on because it is not up to current threat requirements.
- 1700 Martin Withers taxi with 2 x Victor. Have been so busy no time to give Martin a message for home. Looking at a 1700 crew-in for 598 but tug is across at bomb dump towing S trolleys with bombs from 598. Eventually obtained Victor tug which was doing nothing!
- 1715 Attempted to move 598 but tow bar broke! Nosewheel is about 4" deep in the tarmac.
- 1730 John Reeve started up. Road behind pan blocked off. Clouds of dust and grit as John taxied out of the rut into the pan. CO not too pleased but nothing could be done about it.
- 1800 Following Victor crew-in problems. 598 eventually taxied out. The crew-in and prep was dangerously quick in my opinion - not sure the rush was necessary.
- 1900 New tow bar (normal type) ordered 01 by signal. Estimate 4ish hours to point of no return but I can't see them coming back here. It was hoped that Victors could land at Banjul in daylight apparently but that's just bad luck. Moved out of SECO hut into E14 bungalow, Travellers Road, Two Boats.

Saturday 8 May

Late up today. Obviously a day off. No expectation of Vulcans here just yet. Graham Packer had tow bar welded this am by USAF Support Unit!

- 0900 Confronted by Sgt Clive Atkey from Marham and his 3 merry men - they are

the 4 pax arrived 0500. Martel experts. Now know that 612 and 597 have been fitted out as Martel launchers. First successful firing of dummy Martel over Cardigan Bay on 6 May from 597!! Quick resume of requirements for Martel shows aircraft must be parked on safe heading so we will have to do a deal with the Nimrods.

- 1000 Long explanations to both OC Eng Wg and Stn Cdr that Martel crew are not capable of prepping 1000 lb MC bombs and vica versa. 4 Martel men can stay. Also talk of a Martel Flt Lt being sent out but no confirmation.
- 1300 Walk up Green Mountain. After 30 minutes picked up by Graham Packer in the LWB and taken up to the Red Lion. Walked the rest of the way to the top, past cattle pens, pig farm, vegetable plot, through lush vegetation past the 19th Century water trap and up through the bamboo jungle to the new pool at the very top. What a magnificent afternoon. On the way down photographed 18 Sqn (ZA707) dropping off parts for the new search radar. Soon the standard route up the summit will be blocked off due Radhaz. Must send a print of the op to 18 Sqn and JHSU (Plt Off N Cromarty) RAF Odiham. Photo of John Hathaway at the Two Boats en route down.
- 1700 Bar-B-Q at Two Boats Club. Excellent chicken and steak from the BX. Received my first letter from home while there about 2030 hours!
2 x Nimrod with flight refuelling probes arrived.

Views on the island



Sunday 9 May

- 0800 Awake and down to breakfast. Shower afterwards. Almost certainly another day off.
- 0900 Call in from OC Eng. Met S/L Johnny Walker ME2 from 1 Gp sent as Armourer expert by VC10. Stn Cdr/OC Eng convincing him he can't and needn't stay. Sgt McClellan from Coltishall (BL755 expert!) also arrived - another 4 man team. He will have to train up armourers already present on BL755 upload/download procedures. Apparently needs annealed copper lugs and an Armament Officer to release the SHUs Have to get round that using Armourer SNCOs, I'm certainly not qualified. Sgt Hancock helping Nimrod Armourer load 1000 lb bombs. Some talk of Vulcan authorised to carry BL755 but no schedules (even in draft form) and no training weapons to practice with! Nimrod also told they might get Harpoon - US sea skimming weapon for which no APs or notes held by RAF at all!!! Letter from Denise today posted 1 May!!
- 1330 Walk with Monty down to North East Bay - 3.2 miles. A little paddling, photography and watching 2 families building a beach cottage. Good afternoon. Fascinating watching the black fish going for scraps of dead fish and scores of crabs. Birds in abundance this afternoon - Canaries, Mynah birds, and South African pinkish bird not unlike a wren in size and general shape. Lift back in LWB. Can't be bothered with tea tonight.
- 1700 Heard that flight trials Victor/Nimrod held today. Nimrod sorties approx 9 hours. Belfast brought in 202 Sqn Sea King HAR3 X2593. Personnel lodged in our old block.

Monday 10 May

0900 Down to the line to see if any news. Refuelled one of our air coolers, built up the tow bar which arrived Sunday not much else to do. OC Eng Wg informed me that Gp Capt Price insists Martel-armed Vulcans remain at the side of the Nose Hangar for ease of guarding. Groundcrew are now doing all the cleaning fatigues at Two Boats to relieve Nimrod and Victor personnel. Spud Murphy organised a trip to NASA site this pm. Future visits possible (max 6 in party) - phone 8456 and ask for Pauline! 3 Harriers including XW919 and XZ129 now on Ascension CAP duties. Long range search radar on Green Mountain now active so the normal route up to the Dew Pond is closed off. Late pm aircraft control zone imposed around ASI as per normal large airfield. 2 Harrier pilots reprimanded for flying over the Governor's residence!! Long range Herc with refuelling probe also due in any time.

Tuesday 11 May

8 personnel loaned to Victors this morning to reorganise their GSE and bottle farm. Martel man Sgt Clive Atkey sorting out his extra GSE which arrived yesterday. Safety equipment tent being relocated today by Cpl Edmonston and GSE Cpls. Went up to Green Mountain with the aid of a TCW 4-wheel Mercedes truck. Walked around the top with Dick. Noticed a C-5A in today from the mountain but very little movement otherwise. Went to the Two Boats Club evening and watched BBC 1 News Sat/Sun on video and film "The Lady Vanishes" - very funny.

12th to 24th of May 1982

Wednesday 12 May

Visit to line am but no news and very little activity. Late morning call from Monty ref fuzes on bombs dropped so far for BD people going south - info already passed 2 days ago! Late afternoon info Sqn Ldr Sherlock/Flt Lt Turfrey, Waddington Ops, arriving VC-10 evening. Montgomery crew to return UK VC-10 13 May to keep up Vulcan currency. Learned on news that Argie POWs from South Georgia passing through Ascension tonight on way to Montevideo. Confirmed gen later - POWs brought to Wideawake from ships by Chinook. Aircraft on pans to be ringed by MT with headlights on to ensure Argies can't see aircraft on pan. Argies photographed in Eng Control hut and checked out by Red Cross. Put on Varig DC-10 and flown out. Sherlock VC-10 now delayed to 0200 ETA because of DC-10 movements. Letters from Denise, Mum, Dad posted 10 May received today. LWB up Cross Hill today back of Georgetown.

Thursday 13 May

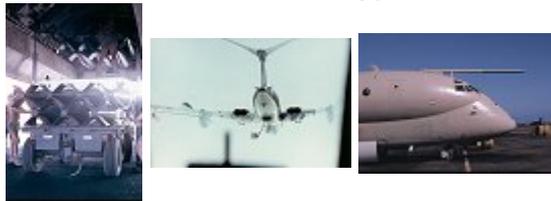
Woke up to sounds of Dave Stenhouse, Monty, John chatting to Sherlock/Turfrey - joint basic briefings. Appears options being looked at UK are

Vulcan tankers being pursued by BAe Woodford. 597, 612, 391 already to come out ECM/Martel equipped - studies on Sidewinder fit and also Pavespikes. Sorties could include Martel + bomb bay full of chaff only! Bill Perrins returns from duty on Night Ops to reveal signal arrived 0850ish 2 x Vulcan to deploy ASAP. Could be a 2100ish arrival. Must ensure groundcrew rest this pm. Currently all armourers including Martellites over at bomb dump, 9 on jetty helping Navy Catering Office unload fresh food supplies, rest on Two Boats fatigues. Have moved into Bill Perrins bunk in anticipation of their departure but they might stay now.
ETA now 0300 14 May!

Friday 14 May

Awoken by John Hathaway at 0045 - they will be one hour earlier, one aircraft only! At 0235 John Reeve arrived in XM612. 5 x hang up on centre bomb station having jettisoned because of fuel consumption, several other snags and list estimate for 5 is 1200Z. In fact the hang up is complicated one and OC Eng/OC USAF insist the aircraft is towed to the end of runway 14 to download - they can apparently spare the last 3000 ft of runway if anything goes wrong. With help of OC Eng and his land rover + Pan Am crane all complete by 1030. Aircraft towed back to pan and parked next to Nose Hangar with difficulty. Defects then rectified - Rudder feel, HRU, Red Steer (!), 18146, NBS markers, complete check of centre bomb station with carrier plugged in - no defects, must be a problem with carrier. Signal sent through OC Eng at about 1800Z. Aircraft still has Carousel snag so aircraft declared U/S - S at ROS +2. Monty hoping to fly it tomorrow. Aircraft refuelled to 85% normally then to 100% through probe then back to 85% - no problems except that with all tanks full total contents indication is low. Martel ARAM looks good although carrier is dreadful. Crew suspected Martel cause of 10% fuel increase but not that likely. 5 new sorties in UK with Martel increased consumption by only 1%. Must be combination of contents/tanker problem. Lots of rumours, news from UK. XM651 is undergoing conversion to tanker at Woodford (subsequently discovered to be incorrect should be XH561). Sidewinder/pavespike being looked at and aircraft with bomb bay full of chaff only. Stacked at 1900Z with estimate for Martin Withers arrival of 0500Z tomorrow.

Work and other types



Saturday 15 May

607 Withers arrived 0448. Fuel state as follows:

	Port Starboard	
No 1	1000	800
No 2	1300	1300
No 3	900	1000

No 4	1200	1100
No 5	900	600
No 6	1300	1400
No 7	1200	900
Total	7800	7100
Full	14900	
Total		

WBS x 2, tail chute stream, probe leak inside radome, 18228 noise, co-pilot's intercom. No ARAM fitted. No 1 port tank still under reading about 400 lb. Bombs still intact. Apparently no major problems. Carousel found to be U/S. Estimate ROS + 2 hours.

Spent afternoon recovering a turtle shell from a beach near north East Bay - the smell was indescribable but apparently 100 times better than when first discovered and separated from the rotting flesh!! Monty hoping to fly 612 tomorrow.

Sunday 16 May

0800 start with FLMs to B/F 612 for priority. Signal early morning reference fuel state of 612 and its maximum contents puts a stop to it. Attempts to explain John Reeves precarious fuel state on arrival from UK have led 1 Gp to ask whether aircraft tank has partly collapsed and the aircraft cannot be properly refuelled. A full analysis shows total content to be under reading by about 1000 lbs, the 4 Gp starboard group contributing the discrepancy. Defuelled 4 Gp and stage refuelled to prove the point.

Following figures are of interest:-

1 Tank		4 Tank		5 Tank		7 Tank	
Bowser	A/C	B	A	B	A	B	A
1000	1050	1000	1050	1000	1100	1000	975
2000	1975	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	1875
3000	2800	3000	2950	3000	2900	3000	2750
4000	3750	4000	3900	4000	3700	4000	3650
5000	4500	5000	4800				
Total Bowser 18,975				Total A/C Ind 17,900			

A full check made of all Groups going from 85% to 100% refuelling through the probe. Total 100% contents indicated as 73800 whereas actual is near 74800, about right. Only tanks in 4 Gp starboard which all run light show any discrepancy at the top end only. When empty tanks in 4 Gp Starboard show empty therefore trimming not necessary. Details notified to 1 Gp. Monty happy, John Reeve ? By pm it is clear there is a show on. In spite of a U/S C-141 and Victor attempts to shut us out, we managed to park the aircraft for functionals and start. 607 clear. 612 rear RWR head change. At 1900 called to see Gp Cpt Price. SASO on phone for me through Ian Fairhead - pylon for Martel to be removed immediately, Estimate 1½ hours for removal from Waddington. Set out immediately on both aircraft. Both aircraft completed in 1¼ hours but show delayed by 24 hours!!! Holes in wings covered in speedtape. Shutdown by 2200 hours and aircraft returned to Nose Hangar.

Pylons and missiles



Monday 17 May

Moved FAP tent down towards aircraft and obtained an extra tent for control/accommodation. 2 tents sent out from Waddington disappeared. 2 x Red Steer arrived by Herc to replace U/S items. No chance of trip tonight now - Nimrod/Ramrod trial.

Tuesday 18 May

Monty flying 612 today. Hoped to get a Victor playmate en route St Helena. After much fussing got away fairly smoothly at 1045Z. Sent for door seal - 2 NRVs require replacing. Left with 85% and returned 5 hours later as I was about to report overdue aircraft. Had taken on 10,000 lb fuel. In the process probe damaged. Rivets sheared on nozzle but nozzle still hanging on. Also canopy leak. Door seal replaced by 2015 and no joy changing probe - still leaks.

Wednesday 19 May

After probe change, fuel check flooded radome. Still cannot be aligned properly. After examination of S and U/S probes it is clear that inner pipe of U/S probe has been pulled forward about 1/2" causing distortion of the flange on the Y-shaped pipe in the radome. New Y-pipe demanded from UK. Colander also bent and knocked about during refuelling!! May have been the last straw after the Reeves trip down here. Also just to keep the pot boiling, RN investigation started with the "acquisition" of a fridge my blokes collected yesterday. It was left with stale food in in the old kitchen tent (rusty cat). Kitchen moved over the road nearer the sea and all gas cooking and refrigeration. It was assured by C/T Parkinson that bearing in mind the state of the fridge it was not required. Navy called in SIB, watch this space!! Notified that Monty will take 607 RTB tomorrow. McDougall will return on the same VC-10 he arrived in!!

2000 Informed by Monty that 607 departing 0800 tomorrow!! All groundcrew informed. FLMs/Armourers 0300 up to download and BF.

Thursday 20 May

0430 Up and down to airfield.

0520 607 just about ready, pushed out 0630 after departure of VC10 and arrival of C141.

0815 607/Monty depart.

1030 Air spares arrive. E7A probe spares 0500Z 21 May. Informed Withers/Crew + Sherlock+Turfrey departing pm on VC10. Reeve taking 612 tomorrow. No

details for us yet (ie groundcrew). Possibly leaving FRP and bombs behind.
Lunch in commissary.

- 1800 Message from Bill Sherlock. Called to see OC Det (Gp Cpt Price). Phone message that no Vulcans or personnel to leave ASI! Withers crew/Sherlock/Turfrey were packed and I had vacated the bungalow and moved up with Reeves crew. Moved back to E14 and expecting Herc crew in at 0000. All change! Passed message to Bill if 607 returns no bombs please! Met Pat Fitzgerald today - ex 3 Gp Herc pilot tells me he keeps in touch with Reg Malcolm, Rick Harland (also Herc pilot 30 Sqn). Bed at 2230.

Friday 21 May

- 0800 Met Herc crew in bungalow - they have no eating irons or sleeping bags.
0900 Signal confirms Vulcan det to hold at ASI. Y-trunking for 612 flight refuelling arrived but U/S - bashed in ends. OC Eng Wg sent off abrupt signal about state of packing and pre-examination. Re-demanded. No word of 607 returning. New probe fitted to cut down recovery time.
1130 Lunch and collect flying suit at 2B.
1235 Airborne in ZA707 "Bravo Papa" - 20 minute run to QE2 to download stores. Hovered over QE2's helipad at 1248. Down at 1255. S/L Freeman.
1330 Mail arrived - letter from Mum and Dad. Tents have eventually arrived from Waddington but no poles. Informed Waddington are buying 2 ice boxes from 2 Ton Club and sending them out. Saw Pat Fitz, Rick Harland passed through last night - sends his regards.
1630 Letter to Den written - mentioned Pat Fitz, Chinook trip. Must remember VC-10 lunch next letter!! Sgt Hancock down to airfield to see a Lt Col. Spent 3 hours discussing how to fit SNEB packs to Gazelles. The Army have never used SNEB and only had the manuals.
2000 To Exiles for the evening.

Chinook transport



Saturday 22 May

Day off!! Until informed 1700Z that tanker available to return 612 to UK at 0200 tomorrow. Everyone in by 1800 to download, BF change refuelling Y-pipe etc. Pipe in at 1830 and replaced satis but probe internal leak. Probe changed again. Aircraft moved 1950 and functioned by Withers crew at 2230. Withers crew + 3 Martel then depart by VC-10 RR2603 at 0100. Still no confirmation of remainder of groundcrew 18 Gp want 12 men to stay.

Sunday 23 May

Confirmation from Air Commander to Gp Capt Price that core of 12 personnel

must remain at ASI for 'possibility' of Vulcan return. Work out 12 bodies with Bill Sherlock, approved by Wg Cdr Morgan, as follows:

FS Packer	NCO
Sgt McErlain	ATA
Sgt Vincent	ATP
Sgt Hancock	ATW*
Cpl Tonner	ATW
Cpl Edmonston	SE Fitter
C/T Parkinson	LETA
Cpl Garside	LTAC/AR
Cpl Webb	LTAR
Cpl Lean	LTAR
Sgt Barter	ATE
SAC Lowery	FLM
Sgt Devlin	Suppl

* Later learned that Sgt Alfonso arriving on Flt 2608 to allow Sgt Hancock a 48 hour handover.

Further complication : during the night on return of personnel to Two Boasts after departure of 612, LWB caught fire at about 0315 hours almost certainly due to a lighted cigarette butt dropped in a rubberised mat. Vehicle damaged to extent that at least 2 rear bench seats and backs plus canvas roof require replacing. Vehicle taken to MTSS for recovery. Wg Cdr Morgan informed. Asked to conduct an Inquiry and submit report to Gp Cpt Price. Spent rest of day obtaining statements then typing up report. In meantime JD booked 15 remaining Vulcan eng party on Flt 2608 departing ASI on 24 at 0425Z.

Packed and changed by 2000. Signatures obtained on statement by 2100 passed to FS Packer for onward transmission to Stn Cdr.

Bill/Graham to bed 2330 but I stayed up reading. Sgt Hancock collecting me at 0215 in 3 tonner for ferry to airfield. At 0145 Herc crewman came in from Bungalow D23 to get Bill Sherlock to phone Wg Cdr Thornton in Ops (677). Woke Bill and went to phone with him. Apparently DSSS message from 18 Gp - possible deployment of Vulcan ETD 24 1500Z!! Down to Ops(with bags). Phoned 18 Gp who confirmed. Told them all detachment would stay to support Vulcan particularly as it was planned to deliver aircraft without bombs. At end of DSSS call, 18 Gp Wg Cdr Ops had received a fresh signal cancelling the Vulcan!! Proceeded to Nose Hangar.

Later visitors



Monday 24 May

Checked in at 0300Z. Boarded aircraft at 0345Z. Take off in VC10 XV101 at

0410 hours. Arrive Dakar 0720Z Flt Lt Johnston (same aircraft and captain as last week's luncheon!). Depart 0855 arrive Brize Norton 1430. Phoned Den. Chris Pye on 12 hour standby.

Monday 14 June

598 and 607 RTB Waddington. Heard only 3 Chinook lost on Atlantic Conveyor.

Following signals received 1 May

Vulcan Detachment from Officer Commanding and all personnel at RAF Waddington:

My sincere thanks for your efforts in support of a magnificent achievement. Warmest congratulations on a team effort which has been unsurpassed in the history of the aircraft.

From the Fleet:

It was extremely heartening to see the magnificent effort of your Vulcan Crew this morning. The courage and professionalism displayed in delivering a copy book attack in the face of heavy defences were in line with the highest traditions of the Service. Old Vulcans never die.

The Vulcan Engineering Detachment Nominal Roll

SER	NUMBER	RANK	NAME	FROM	TO
1	5201616	Sqn Ldr	JAMES	27 Apr 82	24 May 82
2	Y0588078	FS	PACKER	27 Apr 82	30 May 82
3	A8008505	Sgt	McERLAIN	27 Apr 82	15 Jun 82
4	F8011610	Sgt	VINCENT	27 Apr 82	15 Jun 82
5	H1962088	Sgt	BARTER	27 Apr 82	15 Jun 82
6	R8018763	Chf Tech	PARKINSON	27 Apr 82	15 Jun 82
7	D8079642	Cpl	LEAN	27 Apr 82	15 Jun 82
8	P8198724	SAC	LOWERY	27 Apr 82	15 Jun 82
9	D8087431	Cpl	EDMONSTON	27 Apr 82	15 Jun 82
10	L8020355	Cpl	GARSDIE	27 Apr 82	15 Jun 82
11	W4275730	Sgt	DEVLIN	27 Apr 82	17 Jun 82
12	A8095666	Cpl	KING	27 Apr 82	24 May 82
13	A8191532	Jnr Tech	CREBBIN	27 Apr 82	24 May 82
14	F8125088	Cpl	CAMPBELL	27 Apr 82	24 May 82
15	Q8014990	Cpl	KANE	27 Apr 82	24 May 82
16	Q1948947	Sgt	WILSON	27 Apr 82	24 May 82
17	H8182922	SAC	McGILL	27 Apr 82	24 May 82
18	H8179159	SAC	CHAPMAN	27 Apr 82	24 May 82
19	S8139438	Jnr Tech	SHAW	27 Apr 82	24 May 82
20	E8177047	Jnr Tech	GLEDHILL	27 Apr 82	24 May 82
21	H8129173	Jnr Tech	STURGE	27 Apr 82	24 May 82
22	Q8089862	Cpl	ALLSOP	27 Apr 82	24 May 82
23	S8116642	Cpl	GARDNER	27 Apr 82	24 May 82

24	S8199849	Jnr Tech	WOODHOUSE	27 Apr 82	18 May 82
25	R0684582	Sgt	HANCOCK	27 Apr 82	28 May 82
26	L8106014	Cpl	TONNER	27 Apr 82	30 May 82
27	G8091353	Cpl	WEBB (Honington)	27 Apr 82	05 Jun 82
28	F1944247	Sgt	ATKEY (Marham)	08 May 82	23 May 82
29	L8102654	Cpl	BARLOW (Marham)	08 May 82	23 May 82
30	R8188781	SAC	ELLIS (Marham)	08 May 82	23 May 82
31	Q8199121	SAC	ALLAM (Marham)	08 May 82	17 May 82
32	V0687431	Chf Tech	LINDO	27 Apr 82	20 May 82
33	J4278739	Chf Tech	PARKINSON	29 Apr 82	07 May 82
34	P1946854	Chf Tech	HONEY	15 May 82	24 May 82
35	F1961886	Chf Tech	WINKLE	14 May 82	24 May 82
36	C0686252	Chf Tech	MURPHY	27 Apr 82	23 May 82
37	B1936373	Chf Tech	DEVELIN	29 Apr 82	07 May 82

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