

Ready for a night sortie in a Javelin FAW.5 at RAF Leeming: Flt Lt A. J. Prosser (left) and Flt Lt Ray Hardy, both No 2 Sqn instructors

All-weather Training by No 228 Operational Conversion Unit

"FLIGHT" PHOTOGRAPHS



Learning at Leeming

A GREAT white swath of cloud covered the Pennines, a thick North Riding blanket from 2,300ft to 7,500ft. Above it, at 12,000ft, we sat in the sunshine. The rear cockpit of our Gloster Javelin T.3 was comfortably warm; with the starboard Bristol Siddeley Sapphire switched off to conserve fuel we were cruising steadily at around 290kt. The long perspex hood and the aircraft's delta wing configuration afforded splendid all-round visibility, except for directly downwards, where the view was impeded by the engine cowlings.

About 1,500ft below and somewhat to our right was a neat formation of seven aircraft: three Javelin FAW.5s in vic, accompanied by two Canberra T.11s and with two Meteor NF.14s filling the outside berths. Behind the formation came another Meteor NF.14, being used as "whipper-in" and photographic aircraft; for No 228 Operational Conversion Unit, which uses these types to train pilots and navigators as two-man crews for all-weather interception duties, was on this occasion sitting for an aerial portrait.

The formation, followed by the NF.14, with our T.3 bringing up the rear, had taken off some ten minutes earlier from RAF Leeming in the Vale of York. This station, commanded by Gp Capt K. P. Smales, has been the headquarters of No 228 OCU since May 1947. During the war years it was used for Bomber Command operations, first by the RAF and then (from mid-1942 onwards) by RCAF squadrons. The first Gloster Javelin course, to train crews for Fighter Command all-weather squadrons, started there in October 1957 (previously, training was done for operations in Meteors). In subsequent years, over 30 courses have passed out at Leeming, going from there to Javelin squadrons.

The mixed formation indicates the two-stream type of training

Gp Capt K. P. Smales, DSO, DFC (at right of front row), and his wing commanders at a night flying briefing. To his right are Wg Cdr V. S. H. Duclos, DFC, OC Flying Wing; Wg Cdr W. E. Thomas, AFC, OC Advanced Wing; Wg Cdr E. W. Deacon, DSO, DFC, AFC, OC Admin Wing; and Wg Cdr J. Harvey, OC Technical Wing



which is given at Leeming. Navigators receive their instruction aboard the T.11 Canberras before linking up with the pilots they are to operate with as crews; and the pilots receive their basic Javelin instruction on the T.3s, before going on to fly the FAW.5s. Until recently, pilots coming for courses at No 228 OCU have been "second tourists": they may, for example, have recently done a tour on Hunter day fighters; or alternatively, in the case of navigators, have been "retreads" who have served on all-weather squadrons but not yet been acquainted with the type of AI which is staple equipment for Javelin squadrons. Also, however, navigators have come to Leeming direct from training schools like Thorney Island and Topcliffe, and next month four are due to come from Cranwell. However, pilots are now coming through Leeming who are about to undertake their first tour in operational aircraft on Javelins. This change in emphasis says much for the thorough standard of training being given at No 228 OCU and also for the acceptable qualities of the Javelin as an operational aircraft.

Navigators do a preliminary course of 10 weeks' basic training, then after a week's leave join up with the pilots for a 15 weeks' course. Pilots and navigators are not put together in crews; they "tend to search each other out," and in over two years there has been only one failure in this system of self-selection. Teamwork, based on mutual respect and co-operation, is very important in all-weather fighters.

Leeming has been likened to an aircraft carrier, as a self-contained unit with its aircraft and their supporting aircrew, technical and administrative organizations. There is a total of 54 machines at the station: Canberras (one T.4 and the rest T.11s); Meteors (one T.7, the rest NF.14s); and Javelins (six T.3s and the others FAW.5s). The station is organized not on the usual three-wing basis but with four wings: Flying Wing (Wg Cdr V. S. H. Duclos); Advanced Wing (Wg Cdr W. E. Thomas); Technical Wing (Wg Cdr J. Harvey); and Administrative Wing (Wg Cdr E. W. Deacon). Wg Cdr Duclos is responsible to the station commander for supervising all flying at Leeming and also has responsibility for the supporting services, such as ATC, GCA, GCI, ground training centre and the crash services. (The GCI unit is a unique feature of Leeming equipment, existing to control the practice interceptions which are the ultimate aim of all-weather training. If the station did not have a GCI its aircraft would have to do their PIs elsewhere.) Wg Cdr Thomas is directly responsible to the station commander for crew training of pilots and navigators.

Training is divided between five squadrons. No 1 Sqn (Sqn Ldr A. C. Warren) has all the Canberras and Meteors and is responsible for the basic training of navigators. It can also operate some of its Meteors to tow targets for the Javelins. The other squadrons are all under the Advanced Wing, as follows: No 2 (Sqn Ldr D. Bish), 3 (Sqn Ldr J. A. Gilbert), 4, the handling squadron (Sqn Ldr G. H. Jarvis) and 5 (Sqn Ldr A. M. Durrant). The 15-week course is based on a five-weekly cycle, the pilots coming to Leeming to link up with navigators who have already been through No 1 Sqn for their basic tuition. There follows 2½ weeks of concentrated ground training, which navigators and pilots do collectively. Then the pilots are given dual trips in a T.3 before going solo in an FAW.5. The form of a pilot's first solo in a Javelin shows the intensity and thoroughness of training at Leeming. In a 50min sortie he takes off, climbs to 35,000ft, flies the aircraft straight and level at MO.9, tries the effect of trimming, deceleration and turns, carries out a max rate descent, doing a QGH followed by a GCA from 27,000ft, makes an approach

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