

Vickers Varsity T1 (WL626 – G-BHDD)



The Varsity is a contemporary of the Vickers Viking airliner and the Valetta military transport. All three aircraft are in turn descended from the famous Vickers Wellington bomber, a design that was the brainchild of the inventor and aircraft designer Barnes Wallace.

The type 648 Varsity differs from the standard Viking by having an increased wingspan, tricycle landing gear and an under fuselage pannier to accommodate a bomb aimer and 24 practice bombs. A total of 163 Varsity T.Mk.1s were built for the RAF. Production ended in 1954.

The prototype first flew on 17th July 1949 from Wisley Aerodrome and the Varsity first saw squadron service at RAF Swinderby on the Nottinghamshire / Lincolnshire border.

The Varsity was used in principle as a pilot conversion and navigational trainer for multi-engined aircraft prior to transfer to such types as the Hastings, Shackleton, B29 Washington and Britannia. Varsities also took part in blind landing trials conducting research into automatic landings during the development of the Trident airliner.



Specifications

Dimensions:

Length: 20.06m (67ft 10in)

Wingspan: 29.15m (95ft 8in)

Height: 7.28m (23ft 11in)

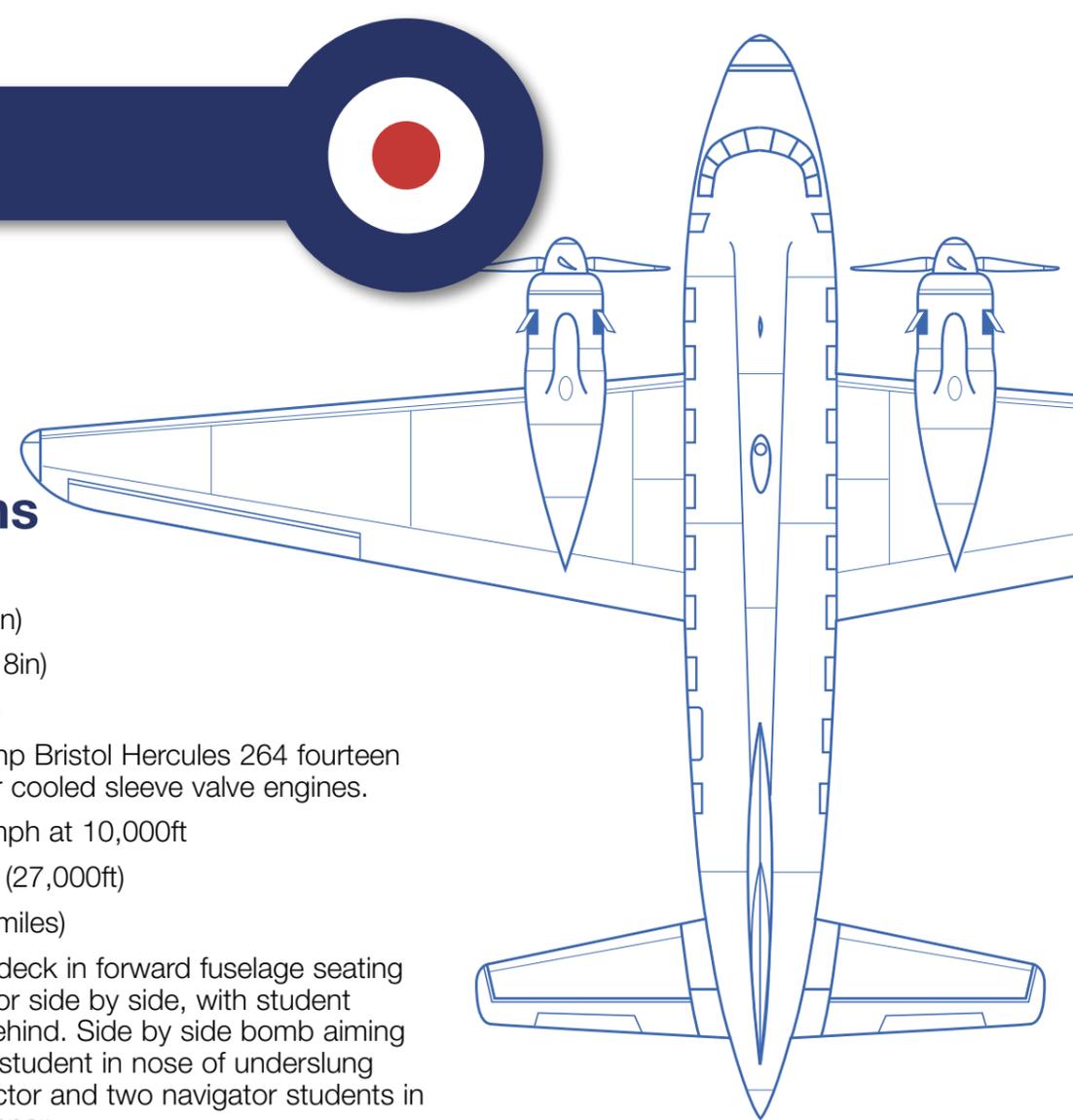
Powerplant: Two 1,950 hp Bristol Hercules 264 fourteen cylinder two row radial air cooled sleeve valve engines.

Maximum Speed: 250 mph at 10,000ft

Service Ceiling: 8,229m (27,000ft)

Range: 4,264km (2,650 miles)

Accommodation: Flight deck in forward fuselage seating student pilot and instructor side by side, with student signaller and instructor behind. Side by side bomb aiming station for instructor and student in nose of underslung nacelle. Station for instructor and two navigator students in rear fuselage aft of main spar.



The Aeropark Varsity

The aircraft was operated by No.201 Advanced Flying Training School, based at RAF Swinderby and took part as a static display at the Queens Review of the Royal Air Force at RAF Odiham on the 15th July 1953. It departed Swinderby for No.2 Air Navigation School at Thorney Island in 1955. After five years it moved to No.1 ANS at Topcliffe in Yorkshire. For a short period WL626 was stationed at Stradishall before arriving at RAF Finningley (now Robin Hood International Airport) on the Notts / Yorkshire border in 1970.

In April 1976 the aircraft was purchased by Mr G and Mr F.W. Vale from the Ministry of Defence and flown from Finningley to Coventry Airport. Three years later the Varsity arrived here at Nottingham East Midlands to complete its flying career.

