

BRITAIN'S FIRST JETFLIGHT – SIR FRANK WHITTLE THE JET PIONEER

This Sunday, 15th May, seventy five years ago at 7.30pm the first jet powered aircraft took off from RAF Cranwell. It was the realisation of a 12 year odyssey from concept, through patent, (unrenewed) fund raising, overcoming sceptics, eventual realisation and acceptance. Had Whittle received the support that the German jet engine pioneers enjoyed, it is likely Britain would have had a practical jet powered fighter around the time of the Battle of Britain. Development of high temperature resistant materials and their engineering was the key to success. Whilst the German pioneers were ahead of us, perhaps inspired by Whittle's patent more than Britain's scientific establishment, Whittles engine that powered the meteor was more reliable and had a longer life between overhauls, a key requirement for a fighting aeroplane. Whittles difficulties following his ambitions led to 3 nervous/overwork breakdowns but he left a legacy that Rolls-Royce can still be proud of today. In another sphere the Honeywell (ex Allied Signal ex Garret) TFE731 and The Avco Lycoming ALF502 and 507 engines that power business jets and regional aircraft respectively have the same reverse flow (through the combustion chamber) that Whittles design pioneered in that first of the Gloster E28/39.



LIGHTNING STRIKES (TWICE!)

Aviation history is set to be made in the UK this summer when, in a major airshow 'first', the Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II, the Joint Strike Fighter, makes its much-anticipated international display debut. Visitors to the Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford will be the first outside the US to see the stealthy, supersonic aircraft's state-of-the-art capabilities when it displays on all three days of the airshow (July 8-10). The F-35 was due to debut at Fairford in 2014 but didn't make the trip 'over the pond' due to the aircraft being temporarily grounded after an engine fire



Defence Secretary Michael Fallon said: "The F-35s are the most advanced fast jets in the world. Whether operating from land or from one of our two new aircraft carriers - the UK's largest ever - they will ensure we have a cutting edge and formidable fighting force. "The plan for F-35 aircraft to take part in air shows here in the UK this summer is a significant milestone - for our RAF and Royal Navy personnel training hard to fly the F-35; for British industry who are contributing an impressive 15 per cent of every aircraft; and for the British public who will have their first opportunity to see this remarkable aircraft in action."

Prime Minister David Cameron recently announced that he planned to speed up the purchase of 24 of the multi-role combat aircraft, a decision that will see two front-line squadrons operating from the UK's two new aircraft carriers by 2023. Air Tattoo organisers anticipate that examples of the F-35B, the short take-off/vertical landing version, will demonstrate the Harrier-like 'hover' capability required for operation from austere land bases and aircraft carriers.

Its appearance at RAF Fairford in July will be the latest in a long list of legendary military aircraft that have made their UK debut at the Air Tattoo. These have included the F-14 Tomcat in 1976, the MiG-23 in 1991, the Typhoon in 1995, the V-22 Osprey in 2006 and the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force Kawasaki P1 in 2015. Air Tattoo Chief Executive Andy Armstrong said: "No doubt, the sight of F-35s in the sky will be quite common for future generations but this summer, all those who attend our airshow will enjoy a first glimpse of that future. Over the years, the Air Tattoo has featured the UK and European debuts of some of the world's most iconic aircraft but few will have been as important to the UK's future defence capability than the F-35. I am sure many people will want to join us to witness this piece of aviation history being made."

US Marine Corps (USMC) Deputy Commander for Aviation, Lt. Gen. Davis said: "The US Marine Corps is looking forward to demonstrating capabilities of the F-35B Lightning II in the skies over the United Kingdom this July."

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