



THE LAST VULCAN

*In Britain, the last
airworthy Vulcan continues
to thrill airshow crowds.
However, this fabulous
Warbird's future is
uncertain.
Here's how you can help*

At a recent Ministry of Defence auction of "surplus" historic aircraft, a London businessman paid nearly \$40,000 for an Avro Vulcan B.2 bomber (s/n XM602) with plans to "incorporate it into a leisure and restaurant complex."

While this commercial ignominy may at least prevent aircraft from destruction, it speaks all too clearly of the possible fate of the last flying Vulcan.

XH558, the last flying Avro Vulcan B.2, is now maintained by a unique agreement between the Royal Air Force (RAF) and the British equivalent of a private, not-for-profit foundation, The Vulcan Association, may end its active airborne career as early as fall 1990.

In a statement of 29 June 1989, the

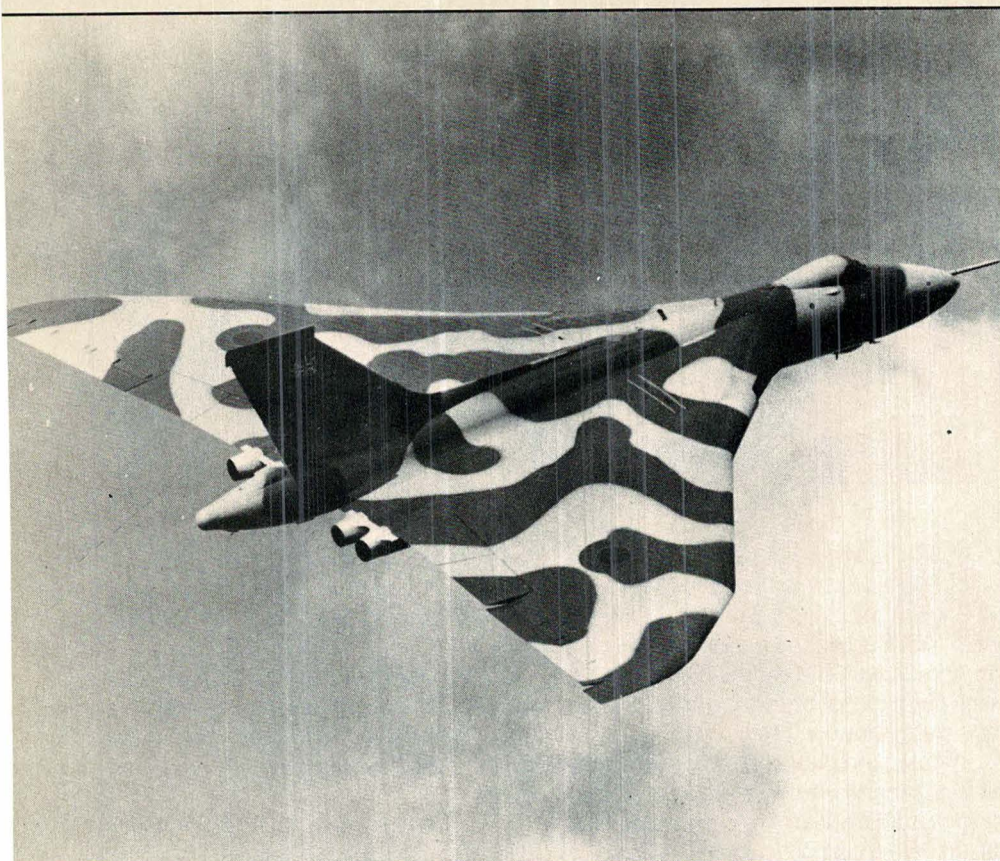
RAF stated "reluctantly" that "they can no longer commit the resources of operating the aircraft beyond the 1990 display season."

The statement called the decision "immutable" and one which was reached only after "exhaustive discussion" may mean that the great graceful delta may fly no more.

The Vulcan, the first model of which flew on 30 August 1952, is the last of the Royal Air Force's "V-Bomber" force (Valiant, Vulcan, Victor) of the 1950s and 1960s, the British equivalent of the US Air Force's Strategic Air Command. The "V-Bomber" force became the victim of a 1957 Ministry of Defense "White Paper" which cancelled almost every promising and futuristic military aircraft project in

BY THOMAS WM. McGARRY





favor of strategic missiles, either sea-launched or air-launched "stand-off" weapons.

The last flying Vulcan, XH558, was the first B.2 model. The plane first flew

AMERICA'S V-BOMBERS

The remnants of Britain's once-mighty V-Bomber force are difficult to find on the North American continent.

Only three of the great, graceful delta Vulcans are available for viewing at US air museums.

One of the trio, a B.2 model serialied XM606, was presented to the Eighth Air Force Museum at Barksdale Air Force Base, near Shreveport, Louisiana in June 1982 by the RAF in recognition of that force's close links with the Eighth Air Force.

Another Vulcan B.2, one which formerly served with No. 9 Squadron of the Royal Air Force, can be found at the Strategic Air Command Museum, Belleville, Nebraska, just south of Omaha, Nebraska, at SAC headquarters, Offutt Air Force Base. The Nebraska Vulcan is XM573.

Vulcan XM605 can be found on display at the Castle Air Force Museum in Atwater, California and is the only non-US bomber on display at the museum. The Castle museum received their Vulcan from the RAF in part because of the visits to Castle and other SAC bases during exchange visits or bombing or other competitions.

on 20 May 1960 and was delivered to the RAF on 1 July 1960. The aircraft flew operationally until March 1984, serving as a conventional strategic bomber, a maritime radar/recon aircraft and as a K.2 tanker prior to conversion back to B.2 status. The plane flew combat missions during the Falklands campaign as a strike aircraft. In 1968, XH558 joined the RAF Vulcan Flight as a replacement aircraft and, since June 1987, has been operated with the support of the Vulcan Association, which was formed in May of that year.

The Vulcan Association was formed to promote and encourage support for and interest in the Vulcan Display Team and XH558 and by doing so, to encourage the RAF and the British aerospace industry and public to keep the aircraft airworthy.

The Association also raises funds, through a variety of activities and membership fees, to assist the RAF in keeping the aircraft flying and to purchase items for use by the display team.

An analysis of the aircraft, which flies from RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire (with converted Victor K.2 tankers of 55 Squadron as stablemates) indicates that there are enough hours remaining on the airframe, particularly the spar work, to allow a full 1990 season and a number of 1991 appearances before major servicing

would be required. That work would, in the terms of The Vulcan Association appeal, "extend the life of the aircraft by a considerable amount."

XH558 is in high demand by airshows throughout the United Kingdom, often making as many as three appearances in a single day. The volunteer RAF air and ground crews fly a fatigue-avoiding flight plan to prevent unnecessary stress on the aircraft and have established not only a perfect safety record but an almost equally perfect record of on-time performances.

For all purposes, the RAF will turn over the aircraft to The Vulcan Association in a completely airworthy state.

At least immediately, there appears to be a healthy supply of spares, though some may have to be shared with sister aircraft XM603, which is held in near-operational status by British Aerospace, the corporate successor of the Vulcan's designer and builder, Avro. A recent decision by British Aerospace not to fly XM603, plus the aircraft-to-restaurant fate of XM602, confirms the availability of low-time spares.

The flying life of XH558 following the 1991 season depends on the success of The Vulcan Association both in raising funds for the rebuild and in convincing the RAF and the Defence Ministry to provide, even on a limited basis, the necessary air and groundcrews.

The Vulcan Association and its some 3500 members worldwide (including the family of Avro's chief test pilot who first flew the Vulcan and the son of the company's founder) have not set a particular dollar amount as a goal, though they clearly realize the enormity of their task. Their appeal will be made to the public as well as businesses, those who will share what they call "the allure of the Vulcan." They clearly recognize that their effort is the only feasible alternative to "the Vulcan disappearing from the sky forever" and if they cannot achieve their original goal, they intend to "ensure an honorable retirement of the aircraft."

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Author's Note: Membership in The Vulcan Association for those overseas is 15.00 pounds per year (the amount in U.S. dollars will vary with the current exchange rate, but is approximately \$20.00. Those interested in contributing to the "Vulcan XH558 Appeal" need not be members to contribute.

The mailing address for The Vulcan Association and The Vulcan Appeal is: The Vulcan Association, 207 Weoley Castle Road, Weoley Castle, Birmingham B29 5QW, United Kingdom. **WI**