

So with losses of nearly £4bn how close did we get? The programme had one representative aircraft flying but the cost overruns had forced the order number down from 21 to 9 so each aircraft would have been vastly more expensive than planned. The life cycle training programme had included two Thomson full motion simulators. The attempt to save costs by the use of commercial off the shelf (COTS) equipment had failed its concept as the unique requirements of an MPA were not available in civil systems. The operating crew concept had been reduced from four to two by eliminating the navigator and engineer so computer systems were needed to achieve this with a reputed million lines of code for these and other systems. Apart from the writing of the code itself, the verification, validation and integration required enormous amounts of man hours.

Ultimately the realisation that we do need an MPA has meant the return to a two engine aircraft of less aero dynamic capability at low level – namely a modified B737. In November 2015, as part of the Strategic Defence and Security Review the MoD announced the procurement of nine Boeing P8 Poseidon aircraft, which are modified from the 737-800ERX.

GNAT IN SOUTHAMPTON

Whilst visiting Costco in the Millbrook area of Southampton recently, my eyes were drawn across the car park and through the chain link fence to the adjoining Blighmont Army Reserve centre, which also houses 424 (City of Southampton) Sqn, Air Training Corps. Displayed outside is a HS Gnat T1, XP542 wearing a spurious air defence grey scheme. It moved to Southampton from its previous home at the Military College at Shrivenham. It had started life with 4 FTS, at RAF Valley, Anglesey, Gnats serving with 4 FTS for 16 years. As a trainer, it had several obvious flaws, the most basic of which was down to its small size - some pilots simply couldn't fit in it and therefore had to train on Hunters! Apparently the cadets use it as a flight trainer, enabling cadets to learn cockpit instruments, pre-flight cockpit checks and pre-flight aircraft inspections and also use it for practical airframe instruction.



CHARLES ROLLS



There will be a commemoration to Charles Rolls of Rolls-Royce held at 12.30 on Tuesday 12th July at the memorial plaque which is not normally open to visitors just off Broadway on the way to Hengistbury Head. There is a talk on the Battle of Britain at 2.15pm. See the links page on the NFAg website.

2016 AIRSHOW DATES

28th July – RNAS Culdrose Air Day, Helston, Cornwall
11th – 14th August – Bristol hot air Balloon Festival
18th-21st August – Bournemouth Air Festival
27th -28th August – Wings & Wheels, Dunsfold, Surrey

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