



HAWKER SIDDELEY

NIMROD

Cold War Sub Hunter



Look beyond the bulges, antennae, winglets and other protruberances and you'll recognise a far older aircraft. The Nimrod is heavily based on the de Havilland Comet. Ask anyone what they know about the Comet and you'll get two common answers:

1: It was the world's first jet airliner

2: It kept crashing

So it may seem a strange basis on which to build a brand-new long-range bomber. In fact, the Comet was an outstanding design that was dogged by early - and still largely unidentified problems. The fuselage failure was put down to cracking around the corners of the windows, a problem that was resolved by changing them from rectangular to oval. However, the corner cracking that was demonstrated in tests didn't reproduce the failures found in the crashed aircraft. Many theories have been advanced, including the inevitable assertions of conspiracy and actual sabotage. Whatever the truth of the matter, by the time the Comet's problems were resolved it was never able to recapture its initial momentum.

But Avro, whose failures amount to a very small number indeed, knew that they had an outstanding aeroplane. When the RAF issued a requirement in 1964 for an aircraft to replace its ageing Shackletons, Avro's successor, Hawker Siddeley, turned to it as a proven design. Two Comet 4C airframes were pressed into service and extensively modified to create the first pair of Nimrod prototypes.

The Comet's Avon turbojets were replaced by Rolls-Royce Spey turbofans, giving a 20% power increase and greatly improved fuel economy. The latter was vitally important in an aircraft that would undertake 24 hour missions. The fuselage was extensively modified to accommodate an internal weapons bay, giving the distinct "double-body" appearance you see today. Outside, a science fiction array of pods, aerials, fins and booms equipped the new aircraft for its aggressive role as a hunter-killer.

Flying for the first time in May 1967, the Nimrod attracted an initial order for 46 airframes and the type entered service in October 1969.

Originally built as an MR1, our Nimrod was one of thirty-five designated to receive major updates to create the Nimrod MR2. Central to the upgrade was the somewhat overdue replacement of the relatively primitive ASV mark 2 radar set-up inherited from the Shackleton. An all-new EMI Searchwater installation, developed specifically for the purpose was installed, along with



HONKER'S STEW

This is the galley that sustained Nimrod crews on their long missions. It's where the time-honoured tradition of Honker's Stew was continued as the Nimrod took up the baton of its forerunner, the Avro Shackleton.

Honker's Stew was a unique mixture - unique every time it was made. The recipe was dictated by the contents of the crew's ration packs. There'd be several sachets of assorted meats, stock cubes, vegetables, apricots, crisps and numerous Mars Bars.

It was a powerful brew that fuelled Britain's coastal defence for more than half a century. And it tasted delicious. If you're feeling brave, you can usually try Honker's Stew for yourself in our café

improved sonic buoys and their associated detection equipment. Also new was the Yellow Gate Electronic Support Measures installation, whose sensors were mounted in the large wingtip pods that now appeared on the modernised Nimrods.

XV232 received further modifications for the Falklands War when she was despatched to Ascension Island. The distances involved required modification for in-the-air refuelling, and so an ex-Vulcan refuelling probe was added above cockpit, accentuating the "Flash Gordon's spaceship" appearance. Her first mission came on 15 May 1982. She was detailed to patrol a zone 60 miles from the Argentine coast, flying at 7-12,000 feet as a visual deterrent to opposing shipping. She made three rendezvous with Victor refuelling tankers to sustain the lengthy mission.

She was out again on 21 May, immediately before the British landings at Port Stanley, for what would become a record-setting mission. When she touched down nearly 19 hours later she'd logged 8,453 miles to set a record that still remains unbroken.

So far, the Nimrod had been undefended from aerial attack. She returned to the UK briefly for a minor modification to allow her to carry two Sidewinder air-to-air missiles. It was a fairly makeshift installation, but it must have given the crews some comfort to know that they weren't completely powerless to defend themselves. The characteristically bellicose tabloids of the period dubbed the converted Nimrod the "world's largest fighter aircraft".

On return to the UK, XV232 resumed her anti-submarine patrols over the North Sea. She remained in service until 11 May 2010, when she made her final touchdown at Coventry to join the Classic Air Force.



A fascinating view of a Nimrod on the tarmac at Wideawake airfield, Ascension Island, flanked by three Phantoms and a C130 Hercules, with a brace of Vulcans in the background.

Photo: Bob Shackleton

The Nimrod is being restored and maintained by the Nimrod Preservation Group, largely out of their own pockets. They'll be delighted to show you around this amazing aircraft but please offer them a donation to support their superb work.



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We'll keep you informed of our plans, forthcoming acquisitions and restoration progress, as well as giving you in-the-cockpit articles from our pilots. *The Meteor* is our acclaimed quarterly full-colour magazine, crammed with news, articles and first-hand memories of the people who flew in those pioneering, early jet-age days.



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