

**RIGHT** The Gemini nestles beneath a Vulcan at RAF Scampton in 1958 on the occasion of the author's visit to fly in a 617 Squadron aircraft. He was allowed to land on the perimeter track because of an unacceptably high crosswind component on the main runway.



**RIGHT** The Flight team poses for a photograph on the Warsaw tarmac during a visit in July 1961.



**"I flew to Scampton to fly in a Vulcan of 617 Sqn, and was allowed to land on the peri-track because of a high crosswind on the runway"**

Hawks, Sea Vixens and Buccaneers; golden days.

In the late 1950s the RAF introduced *ab initio* all-through jet training, and I flew up to Syerston in Nottinghamshire on October 15, 1958, to a press conference laid on by the Air Ministry to tell the aviation world about it. The Station Commander, Gp Capt J.H.L. Blount, was so intrigued by the Gemini that he flew across to nearby Swinderby with me. Sadly, not long afterwards, when he had become captain of the Queen's Flight, he was killed in a Westland Whirlwind helicopter which suffered rotor-blade failure.

My Syerston visit was to have influential consequences, but a more immediate one was that I flew from Swinderby to the V-bomber base at Scampton, Lincs, to fly in an Avro Vulcan of 617 Sqn, and was allowed to land on the perimeter track because of an unacceptably high crosswind component on the main runway. That night (October 17) I flew in Vulcan B Mk I XH499, captained by Flt Lt Thomas, on a 5hr 20min sortie; Exercise *Sunbeam* and routine training.

After the debriefing I took off in Hotel Charlie for Croydon, and from there drove into London, where I had breakfast with my father at his club

in Whitehall. I was able to tell him that only a few hours earlier I had been at 40,000ft in the cold night skies over Norway.

I used the Gemini for another RAF sortie of a different kind in March 1959. At that time Signals Command had come into being, and one of its stations was at Tangmere near Chichester, where 245 Sqn was based with Canberras for calibration duties, checking radar sites. As I was writing a series of articles about the new Command, I flew down to Tangmere and got airborne in Canberra T.4 WT488 with Sgt D. Brennan and Flt Lt J. Morgan for a calibration run, plus asymmetric flying and landing procedures. Unfortunately I was not allowed to reveal any details of our track in my article, for security reasons, but was able to highlight this role of the new Command.

On that visit I had the privilege of meeting Gp Capt Dennis "Hurricane" David, who had just taken over command after being Air Attaché to Hungary during one of the most dangerous periods in that country's history; the uprising against Soviet rule. Quite apart from his outstanding record as a Hurricane pilot in the Battles of France and Britain, he was a man of exceptional

**BELOW** The Gemini took Maurice Smith to Shoreham in April 1960 to take part in a Business and Touring Aircraft Competition. Here, he starts against a stopwatch; the Gemini came third in the twin class and made the shortest landing by twin-engined aircraft in 121yd.

