

Vickers Valetta

The **Vickers Valetta** is a British twin-engine military transport aircraft of the late 1940s. It was an all-metal mid-wing monoplane with a tailwheel undercarriage.

Contents

Design and development

Operational history

Variants

Operators

Accidents and incidents

Aircraft on display

Specifications (Vickers Valetta C.1)

Notable appearances in media

See also

References

Notes

Bibliography

External links

Valetta



Role	Military transport aircraft
Manufacturer	Vickers-Armstrongs Ltd
First flight	30 June 1947
Number built	262
Developed from	Vickers VC.1 Viking
Variants	Vickers Varsity

Design and development

The Valetta was a military transport development of the Viking civil airliner. The 58th Viking (c/n 158) became the prototype Valetta, which was first flown from Brooklands^[1] by test pilot Mutt Summers on 30 June 1947.^[2] The Valetta differed from the Viking fundamentally in being fitted with more powerful engines, a strengthened floor and large loading doors.^[3]

Although named after the Maltese capital Valletta, the aircraft name is spelt with only one "l". The Viking and Valetta provided the basis of the Varsity. The Varsity, although similar, was slightly larger and had a tricycle landing gear and under-fuselage pannier.

Operational history

The Valetta C.1 entered service with the RAF in 1948, replacing the Douglas Dakota with RAF Transport Command and with transport squadrons in the Middle and Far East.^[2] The Valetta was used to carry out parachute drops in the 1956 Suez Crisis,^[4] and was used to provide transport support for a number of other British Military operations in the 1950s and 1960s, such as during the Malayan Emergency ^[5] and operations in Aden.^[6]

The Valetta C.2 was a VIP passenger transport and extra range.^[7]

The Valetta T.3 was built to provide a navigational trainer for service with the RAF College at RAF Cranwell and with No.1 and No.2 Air Navigation Schools. 40 were delivered from August 1951, with the last being WJ487 in September 1952.

18 Valetta T.3 aircraft were later converted to T.4 standard with a longer nose to fitted to accommodate a radar scanner in order to train crews in the AI (Airborne Interception) role.^[8]

Variants

- **Valetta C.1** - transport, 211 built
- **Valetta C.2** - VIP transport, 11 built
- **Valetta T.3** - aircrew trainer, 40 built
- **Valetta T.4** - converted from T.3 with radar fitted in nose.^[9]

Operators

United Kingdom



Vickers Valetta T.3 of the RAF College at Blackbushe airport in September 1956. Note the cabin-top astrodomes and aerials for navigational training



Valetta T.4 of No.2 ANS with extended radar nose

- Royal Air Force
 - No. 30 Squadron RAF
 - No. 48 Squadron RAF
 - No. 52 Squadron RAF
 - No. 70 Squadron RAF
 - No. 78 Squadron RAF
 - No. 84 Squadron RAF
 - No. 110 Squadron RAF
 - No. 114 Squadron RAF
 - No. 115 Squadron RAF
 - No. 167 Squadron RAF
 - No. 173 Squadron RAF
 - No. 187 Squadron RAF
 - No. 204 Squadron RAF
 - No. 215 Squadron RAF
 - No. 216 Squadron RAF
 - No. 233 Squadron RAF
 - No. 622 Squadron RAF
 - No. 683 Squadron RAF
 - RAF College
 - No. 1 Air Navigation School
 - No. 2 Air Navigation School

Accidents and incidents

- On 18 February 1951, an RAF Valetta made a forced belly landing near Stockholm-Bromma Airport following the failure of one engine and radio problems. Airframe icing compounded the situation. Of the 22 passengers and crew, one person was killed. The aircraft was totally destroyed.
- On 15 January 1953, Valetta C.1 VX562 collided in mid-air over the Mediterranean Sea with a RAF Lancaster, all 19 on the Valetta and seven Lancaster crew were killed.^[10]

- On 11 November 1953, VX490 disappeared while on air test after departing RAF Changi. All 7 on board died. It is thought the plane broke up in a thunderstorm.
- On 6 January 1954, Valetta T.3 *WJ474* crashed near Aldbury, Hertfordshire on take off in bad weather from RAF Bovingdon. The aircraft was carrying a rugby team, and 17 on board were killed, with one survivor.^{[11][12]}
- On 21 February 1954, Valetta C.1 *WJ494* Inbound from Hong Kong, crashed 2.4 km (1.5 mi) from Singapore's Changi RAF base during a single engine approach. It was alleged that the pilot feathered the wrong faulty engine whilst approaching the runway. The aircraft lost height and hit trees, bursting into flames; of the twelve occupants, three lost their lives.^[13]
- On 17 April 1957, Valetta C.1 *VW832* crashed at Queria, Jordan, five minutes after taking off from King Hussein International Airport, when the left wing separated after encountering turbulence. All 26 people on board were killed.^[14]
- On 22 August 1957, RAF Valetta *VX491 'Y'* crashed in the jungle near Tanjong Malim, Malaya. Three RAF crewmen were killed, four 55 Coy RASC AD servicemen survived and were rescued. Possible cause - engine failure.

Aircraft on display

- VX573 – Valetta C.2 in storage at the Royal Air Force Museum Cosford in Cosford, Shropshire.^[15]
- VX580 – Valetta C.2 on static display at the Norfolk and Suffolk Aviation Museum in Flixton, Suffolk.^{[16][17]}



A Valetta C.2 preserved at the Norfolk and Suffolk Aviation Museum

Specifications (Vickers Valetta C.1)

Data from *Vickers Aircraft since 1908*.^[18]

General characteristics

- **Crew:** 4
- **Capacity:** 34 troops or 20 paratroops^[19]
- **Length:** 62 ft 11 in (19.18 m)
- **Wingspan:** 89 ft 3 in (27.20 m)
- **Height:** 19 ft 7 in (5.97 m) (tail down)
- **Wing area:** 882 sq ft (81.9 m²)
- **Empty weight:** 24,980 lb (11,331 kg)
- **Gross weight:** 36,500 lb (16,556 kg)
- **Fuel capacity:** 724 imp gal (869 US gal; 3,290 L)^[20]
- **Powerplant:** 2 × Bristol Hercules 230 14-cylinder radial piston engine, 2,000 hp (1,500 kW) each
- **Propellers:** 4-bladed de Havilland (or Rotol) four-bladed constant-speed, 13 ft 3 in (4.04 m) diameter ^[20]

Performance

- **Maximum speed:** 258 mph (415 km/h; 224 kn) at 10,000 ft (3,000 m)
- **Cruise speed:** 172 mph (277 km/h; 149 kn) at 10,000 ft (3,000 m)^{[2][20]}
- **Range:** 1,460 mi (1,269 nmi; 2,350 km) at 10,000 ft (3,000 m) and 211 mph (183 kn; 340 km/h)
- **Service ceiling:** 21,500 ft (6,600 m)
- **Rate of climb:** 1,275 ft/min (6.48 m/s)
- **Take-off distance to 50 ft (15 m):** 3,750 ft (1,140 m)^[20]
- **Landing distance from 50 ft (15 m):** 4,275 ft (1,303 m)^[20]

Notable appearances in media

- A long sequence in the 1957 film *High Flight* shows the Valetta T3 used as a flying navigation classroom at RAF College Cranwell.

- A Valetta appears briefly in the film *The Captain's Paradise*, starring Alec Guinness.

See also

Related development

- Vickers Varsity
- Vickers VC.1 Viking

Aircraft of comparable role, configuration and era

- Ilyushin Il-12
- Sud-Ouest Bretagne

References

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20. Bridgman 1951, pp. 92c–93c.

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External links

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