



NF.11 WM171/N of 228 OCU in 1953. (Joe Warne)



Towards the end of the Meteor era 228 OCU also used AI.17 equipped Valetta T.4 radar trainers, such as WJ471/T also at Leeming 20 September 1958. (Tony Molyneux)

The main course at Leeming for embryo night fighter pilots lasted about 3 months in which approximately 50 flying hours would be logged. Increasingly the OCU also ran shorter conversion courses for pilots who had already completed one or more tours with Meteor day fighter squadrons, and there were refresher courses for those returning to flying after ground tours.

At Leeming pilots and navigators were teamed up into crews and it was usual for the same pilot and navigator to remain together throughout the course and subsequent posting to a squadron, although periodically specific sorties were required to be flown with a different pilot/navigator in the interest of inter-operability. Navigators reached 228 OCU having completed specialist navigational training at an Air Navigation School on Wellingtons, or Ansons before these types were replaced by Valetta T.3s, Marathons, or Varsities. After ANS those earmarked for night fighters were mostly posted to the Airborne Interception School at Colerne, which became 238 OCU on 15 June 1952. Here they were taught how to use AI.10 effectively, on Wellington T.18s, then Mosquito NF.36s, before these types were

replaced with Brigand T.4s (and later, T.5s fitted with AI.21). Balliol T.2s were later used as radar 'targets' for the Brigands. Course duration varied slightly over the years but generally trainee navigators spent about 6 months at an ANS and 2-3 months at AI School/238 OCU before being posted to 228 OCU Leeming and teamed with their pilot as a crew for the conversion course of about 3 months. In the years 1950-52 the Leeming OCU also operated Wellington T.18s, Mosquito NF.36s, and Brigand T.4s, all of which were phased out with the advent of Meteor NF.11 jet training.

Initial exercises on the OCU were primarily to convert pilots to the NF.11, and from then on the emphasis was on operational training as a crew with mainly mutual PIs under GCI control by day and night, with fairly frequent assessments by staff instructors. Peter Raggett, whose recollections of his first operational tour with 264 Squadron have already been detailed, was one of the first pilot students on NF.11s at the OCU in the spring of 1952 and he refers to an incident while the courses were temporarily moved to Coltishall, before returning to Leeming in July that year:



Valetta C.1s fulfilled the target role for the T.4 'fighters', including VW188/E of 228 OCU in October 1957.