

PERFECT 10

(Not) naming the VC10 in RAF service

Continuing his occasional series on the frequently knotty issue of deciding on a name for aircraft types entering RAF service, **CHRIS GIBSON** uses contemporary documents to reveal the dozen names thrown into the ring by various ministries, members of the RAF brass and manufacturer as potential monikers for the Vickers VC10 in military uniform



ABOVE The first of the RAF's VC10 C Mk 1s to be delivered (along with XR808), XR806 undergoes pre-delivery preparatory work beside the test hangars at Wisley in 1966.

MAIN PICTURE Having made its first flight on March 25, 1966, the second of the RAF's VC10s, XR807, alights on the Farnborough runway at that year's SBAC show.

BAE SYSTEMS

IN SEPTEMBER 1961 the UK Air Ministry placed an order for five Vickers VC10s for the RAF, with another six ordered the following August. These were supplemented by an additional three from a cancelled BOAC order in July 1964. As always with new types, there was the question of a suitable name for the aircraft in RAF service. "Vickers Type 1106 VC10 C Mk 1" was a bit of a mouthful.

Air Marshal Sir Geoffrey Tuttle had retired as Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (DCAS) in 1959, going on to become General Manager at Vickers-Armstrongs (Aviation) Ltd. It was in this capacity on October 17, 1962, that he wrote to the incumbent DCAS, Air Marshal Sir Ronald Lees, with a question — what was the RAF going to call its VC10s? Tuttle informed Lees that BOAC had shown no intention of naming its VC10s and that Vickers would prefer that all VC10s were so called in the interest of its sales campaign. Tuttle asked that the RAF also call its aircraft VC10s, but appreciated that "there may be overriding considerations which would lead to the Air Ministry naming it and of course, it is entirely their prerogative". Tuttle signed off with one final request that if a name was being decided, "we would like to be consulted, because we have some views on suitable names".

Eliminating the unsuitable

There was no precedent for not naming an RAF aircraft, which was the job of the Air Council; apparently the Ministry of Aviation (MoA) was "very touchy" about not being consulted before any decision was made by the Air Council, the governing body of the RAF. The department tasked with finding a name for the VC10 was S.6 at the Air Ministry, led by E.F.C. Stanford, who had to ask the MoA, RAF Transport Command and Vickers for their suggestions.