



THE LAST BEAUS

Photographs by NORMAN RIVETT

Twenty years after the Bristol Beaufighter entered service with the RAF in 1940 a couple of survivors were soldiering on in Malta and at Seletar as target towers. At Takali in Malta four Beaufighter T.T.10s were flying with the Malta Communications and Target Towing Squadron in the late Fifties. They were RD850, RD867, RD788 and SR919, the last Beaufighter to be built. All these aircraft were used for target towing duties in co-operation with the Royal Navy, flying from Takali after March 1958.

The RAF at that time used to work only until lunch time on three days per week, with a duty crew available to cover aircraft that arrived after normal work had ceased. Early in 1960 Beaufighter RD850 was one of those late arrivals and after the usual refuelling and post flight checks the aircraft had to be towed across the field to the hangar. Since it was rather a long way via the perimeter track and everyone concerned wanted to "knock off", it was decided to take a short cut across the grass. The runway was successfully negotiated but on rejoining the perimeter track on the other side the tailwheel stuck. Unfortunately the rest of the aircraft kept going, resulting in a damaged tailwheel attachment. As it was decided that the cost of repair was too great the aircraft was dismantled, as shown.

The last Beaufighter in RAF service was the T.T.10 RD761, which made its final trip on May 12, 1960 from Seletar, Singapore.

Heading photograph, Beaufighter T.T.10 RD788 of the Malta Communications and Target Towing Flight at Takali in March 1958. The three pictures at right show Beaufighter RD850, first, just after receiving damage to the tailwheel and then in a dismantled state. All pictures were taken in 1960.

