

Ref: EIR2026-005

13 April 2026

Dear [REDACTED]

We refer to your request for the following information:

“Under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) and the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I am seeking the disclosure of technical and radiological data regarding the missions and airframes used during Operation Antler (1957).

This request is specifically directed to the AWRE Health Physics archives and the Merlin/Blue Card dosimetry databases regarding the technical and isotopic data listed below.

Scope of Request: This inquiry is a technical audit of the missions involving Service Numbers 42270; 159878; 4085264 and 4135098 and the following operational assets:

1. *Canberra WH978 (Primary Sampler) – 14 Sept 1957:*
 - *Operational Logs: Technical mission logs for WH978 during Shot 1 (TADJE), including recorded mission timings and any notes regarding sortie duration.*
 - *Radiological Survey: Post-flight Airframe Contamination Survey, including all wipe, smear, or swab test results for the cockpit, engine intakes, and airframe.*
 - *Dosimetry: Any Calculated Dose or Master Tally entries for the crew (159878, 4085264, and 4135098).*
2. *Canberra WH207 – 15 Sept 1957:*
 - *Mission Profile: The Operational Tasking Order and Operations Record Book (ORB) entries for the transit of WH207 beginning 15 Sept 1957, including all stages of the journey from Maralinga to its destination.*
 - *Cargo Manifest: Identification of any scientific samples or isotopes (e.g., Cobalt-60) recorded as being transported on this airframe.*
 - *Radiological Safety: Technical specifications of the transit containers used, the recorded stowage location, and the recorded Cabin Dose Rate during transit.*
 - *Airframe Survey: Post-flight radiological survey or clearance certificate for WH207 following the unloading of scientific cargo.*
 - *Dosimetry: Official Film Badge results and QFD (Pocket Dosimeter) readings for the crew (159878, 4085264, and 4135098).*
3. *Whirlwind XJ726 (Survey) – 11 Oct 1957:*
 - *Scientific Objective: The Operational Tasking Order, Operations Record Book (ORB) entries, and flight profile for the sortie at 09:30 AM (Pilot 42270).*
 - *Radiological Survey: Post-flight Airframe Contamination Survey and radiological results for XJ726, including wipe tests for the rotor blades, engine air-intake, and cabin interior.*

- *Mission Dosimetry: Film Badge results and QFD (Pocket Dosimeter) readings for the pilot (42270), observer (4135098), and any additional personnel on the manifest.*
 - *Instrumentation & Calibration: Calibration Logs and baseline readings for the radiological survey instrumentation (including, but not limited to, Aerial Survey Equipment Type 1398 or Radiac Survey Meter No. 2).*
4. *Administrative & Primary Radiological Records:*
- *Grounding Orders: Copies of any Withdrawal from Flight Duties or changes in Medical Category for the mentioned service numbers between 14 Sept 1957 and 31 Jan 1958.*
 - *Dosimetry Archives: A full copy of the Blue Card (Radiological Dose Card) and all associated Dosimetry Ledger entries (including the AWE Merlin Database) for Service Numbers 42270, 159878, 4085264, and 4135098.*
 - *Health Physics & Decontamination: Copies of any Bioassay results (urinalysis/fecal) or Personal Equipment Decontamination Certificates for the mentioned service numbers.*
- Public Interest Statement: The 1985 McClelland Royal Commission identified the management of these trials as reckless and the Tadge shot as unauthorised and hazardous. This request seeks to verify the technical reality of the mission sequence and the resultant environmental hazards encountered by the crew.*

Your request has been handled as a request for information under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (the Regulations).

We can confirm that AWE holds some information in scope of your request. However, disclosure has been considered under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and the information is withheld as follows:

Regulation 6(1)(b) of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 states when the information is reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means, we are not required to provide the same information again in a different form or format. The information being withheld can be accessed via the links below.

Titles of documents being withheld under regulation 6(1)(b) are as follows:

1. [Operation ANTLE: airborne sampling of radioactivity | The National Archives](#)
2. [Health physics services | The National Archives](#)
3. [Operation ANTLE: Decontamination Group report; Parts 1-3 | The National Archives](#)
4. [Operation ANTLE: atomic trials August to October 1957; air task group report | The National Archives](#)
5. [Operation ANTLE: aerial survey of radioactivity deposited on the ground | The National Archives](#)
6. [Section B: services groups | The National Archives](#)
7. [ANTLE summary plan: sections F-L | The National Archives](#)
8. [Use of balloons for trials | The National Archives](#)
9. [Permanent atomic weapon proving ground for overseas trials \(Maralinga\) | The National Archives](#)
10. [AUSTC BK22 169.PDF | The National Archives](#)

Regulation 12(4)(d) (material in the course of completion / unfinished documents / incomplete data): certain material is scheduled for future publication or remains in draft/incomplete form pending internal clearance. Disclosure at this stage would prejudice orderly completion and effective publication.

Titles of the documents being withheld under regulation 12(4)(d) are as follows:

1. Reports - ANTLER Round 1.
2. Blue Books Ref: SFS/OEL/UAB/1(p) RAF Parts 1 and 2.
3. Decontamination and Servicing of Contaminated Aircraft.
4. Air Task Group Operation Antler Report on Air Operations.
5. Analysis of Samples of Fallout – extract from an unpublished report.
6. Health Physics Services Group Personal Daily Dosage Records 14th September - 11th October 1957.
7. Extract of Progress report on RAF Support to Operation Antler

In applying Regulation 12(4)(d), we have carried out the required public interest test and we can confirm the PIT has concluded that the files that are intended for future publication should be withheld in full. We have set out arguments for and against disclosure in terms of the public interest with the reasons for our conclusion.

In reaching a decision under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, AWE recognises the statutory presumption in favour of disclosure set out in Regulation 12(2). There is a strong public interest in transparency, particularly in relation to information concerning nuclear test veterans. Disclosure would further openness and accountability and would support public understanding about the subject matter and the decision making of AWE.

However, the requested material is intended for future publication and is in the course of completion within the meaning of Regulation 12(4)(d). The Merlin database is currently being transferred to The National Archives which began in Summer 2025 and is expected to be complete in Summer/Autumn 2026. Premature disclosure ahead of the established publication timetable would cause disruption to the timeline of the release. Piecemeal disclosure to an individual requester would amount to preferential access and risk presenting an incomplete or uncontextualised picture, in particular where the underlying records include personal data, thereby hindering coherent public communication by AWE and potentially misleading the public.

Having weighed these considerations, we consider that the public interest in maintaining Regulation 12(4)(d) outweighs the public interest in disclosure at this time. Protecting the integrity of the planned publication process will better support transparency through comprehensive and properly contextualised release to all users simultaneously. Given the preparation, review and administrative activity required to finalise and publish the material appropriately, the agreed timetable is reasonable.

On balance, we find that the public interest in maintaining the exceptions outweighs the public interest in disclosure in respect of the information engaging Regulations 12(4)(d).

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications. If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you are unhappy with the way your request has been handled you have a right to request an internal review within 40 days of receiving this letter, by writing to information.requests@awe.co.uk or our postal

address: Information Requests Team, AWE Aldermaston, Reading, RG7 4PR. If you are still unhappy after an internal review has been completed, under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Regulation 18 of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 you have the right to take your complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office. Please note the Commissioner will generally not consider a complaint until you have exhausted AWE's internal complaints process.

Yours sincerely,

AWE Information Requests Team