

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

HAWKER SIDDELEY HARRIER GR3 XZ997/9122M
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 1994/1342/A

- 78 Ordered as one of 24 new build Harrier GR3 aircraft with serials in the block XZ963 -XZ999. Built at British Aerospace, Dunsfold.
- 12 Feb 82 To No.4 Squadron, Gütersloh with RAF Germany, coded 'E'.
- 1 Apr 82 Argentine troops landed on the Falklands.
- 16 Apr 82 Transferred to No.1 (F) Squadron and flown to RAF Wittering together with XV789. Recoded '31' in red on fin and outriggers but minus squadron badge on nose.
- 19 Apr 82 Involved in ski-jump training at Yeovilton, Somerset.
- 22 Apr 82 Further ski-jump training at Yeovilton.
- 2 May 82 One of five Harriers flown to RAF St.Mawgan, Cornwall, departing Wittering at 10.15 am.
- 4 May 82 One of five Falklands-bound Harriers departing St Mawgan that day, flown non-stop to Wideawake Airfield on Ascension Island - 4,600 miles in 9 ¼ hours, carrying two 330 gallon ferry tanks and additionally refuelled by Victor tankers. Arrived at Wideawake at 18.30.
- 6 May 82 One of six Harriers embarked on 'Atlantic Conveyor' off Ascension Island. The aircraft were serviced and then put into 'Driklad' plastic covers to protect them from the elements during the voyage. Photo – RAF Yearbook 2007 p.22.
- 7 May 82 'Atlantic Conveyor' sailed for the 'Total Exclusion Zone' (TEZ).
- 18-20 May 82 No.1 Squadron embarked on Task Force flagship HMS Hermes, its initial six Harrier GR3s having initially flown to Ascension Island on 3rd May, where they transferred to the ill-fated container ship Atlantic Conveyor which took them to the South Atlantic for transfer to the Hermes. The aircraft flew from RAF Wittering to RAF St Mawgan in Cornwall on 2nd May, then a nine-hour flight to Ascension Island the following day. Six more Harriers GR3s followed later and all twelve transferred to the Hermes as part of operation Corporate - the naval task force sent to recapture the Falklands.

- 18 May 82 One of four Harriers transferred to HMS Hermes, flown by S/L Jerry Pook, who made the flight despite an electrical generator failure, leaving battery power only-to make his 'very shaky' first carrier vertical landing (Pook: RAF Ground Attack Falklands, 2007).
- 21 May 82 Initial British landings at San Carlos Water.
 Launched from the Hermes at 11.56, flown by S/L Bob Iveson, who had to abort the mission due to undercarriage problems and landed back on Hermes at 12.12.
 XZ997 was undamaged when it landed back on HMS Hermes after an armed reconnaissance mission, flown by Flt Lt John Rochfort, but bounced heavily and ended up with the port outrigger in the catwalk and had to be lifted manually back on deck. Photos - Falklands-The Air War (016864) p.374; Harrier At War (019037) p.94-95; RAF Yearbook 2007 p.24. Rochfort and one other Harrier pilot had flown off Hermes at 13.45 to reconnoitre the landing area at San Carlos at low level - no suitable targets were found and the aircraft returned with its bomb load at 14.50. It was his second ever carrier landing .The only damage was to the port cluster bomb, which in naval parlance had to be 'tested for buoyancy' (dropped into the sea).
 After lifting back onto the deck the undamaged aircraft made its third flight of the day at 19.00, flown by F/L Mark Hare on an hour-long mission.
- 22 May 82 One of four Harriers launched at 17.01 for an armed reconnaissance mission searching for Pucaras at Weddell airstrip, Darwin and Goose Green. Flown by S/L Jerry Pook. Using cluster bombs, bombed vehicles at Goose Green, despite intense anti-aircraft fire.
- 23 May 82 Taking off at first light (12.16) took part in a four - aircraft formation bombing attack (1000 Pounders) against the airstrip at Dunnose Head, flown by Wg Cdr Peter Squire, which resulted in the destruction of some of the settlement and injury to a local inhabitant. The airstrip was undamaged in the attack. During the campaign the GR 3s generally performed ground attack and reconnaissance sorties, Sea Harriers the Combat Air Patrols to provide air cover.
 One of four Harriers launched at 18.54 to attack the airstrip at Pebble Island, flown by Jerry Pook, who dropped cluster bombs in the centre of a group of aircraft.
- 24 May 82 Flown by Sqn Ldr Bob Iveson, participated in No.1 Squadrons' first attack on the runway at Stanley Airport, armed with retarded 1,000 lb bombs. Returned to Hermes at 13.00.
- 25 May 82 One of four Harriers launched from Hermes at 14.20 to attack the runway at Stanley Airport. Flown by John Rochfort. Launched again at 16.31 (same pilot) for another armed reconnaissance, only 90 minutes after the return from Port Stanley.

- 28 May 82 Flown by Flt Lt Tony Harper, took part in a successful three - aircraft attack on enemy gun positions at Goose Green, playing a crucial part in the Argentine surrender there the following morning. Advancing British troops had requested air cover.
- 29 May 82 Mark Hare, accompanied by another Harrier pilot, made a rocket attack on the Mount Kent area.
- 30 May 82 Flown by Tony Harper, took part in a two aircraft bombing attack on Mount Round, north of Port Stanley airfield, taking off from Hermes at 14.35. The attack was unsuccessful due to the lack of a forward air controller and the aircraft landed back on Hermes at 15.40.
- 31 May 82 Morning sortie flown by John Rochfort, carrying rockets. The intended attack on Stanley Airport was again frustrated by the lack of a forward air controller. At 14.52, flown by Mark Hare, took off to make a rocket attack on aircraft reported at Stanley Airport. Returned about an hour later having suffered battle damage leaving it temporarily out of action.
- 5 Jun 82 After flying was disrupted by bad weather for several days, XZ997, flown by Peter Squire, plus one other Harrier, and two Sea Harriers launched from Hermes at 18.50 to search for ground - launched Exocet missiles south west of Port Stanley, but none was found.
- 10 Jun 82 Flown by Nick Gilchrist as one of one of two Harriers dispatched from Hermes to the Forward Operating Base at Port San Carlos to await instructions but not called upon. Returned to Hermes and took off at 16.31 (Gilchrist) together with three other Harriers but all returned fully armed as there was no forward air controller to illuminate a target for them. Launched for a third flight at 18.54 flown by Peter Squire together with another Harrier to attack troop concentrations west of Stanley, and were met by intense small arms fire.
- 11 Jun 82 Tony Harper and one other Harrier took off from Hermes at 11.22 to attack Port Stanley, carrying Laser Guided bombs, which were launched unguided at a secondary target. Flew off again at 18.10, flown by Nick Gilchrist, to again attack the Port Stanley area.
- 13 Jun 82 Carried out the first successful Laser Guided Bomb (LGB) sortie during the Falklands conflict when Wg Cdr Squire attacked an enemy Company HQ on Mount Tumbledown, scoring a direct hit with his second bomb, returning to Hermes at 15.30 after an hour long mission.
- 14 Jun 82 Argentine forces surrendered. At this stage XZ997, coded '31' (from a total of 31 Harriers despatched) carried several patches on the upper surface of the port wing covering damage from small-arms fire. On this date XZ997 took off from HMS Hermes at 15.00, flown by Peter Harris, for an LGB attack in the Port Stanley area, accompanied by Harrier XZ133.

The attack was called off by the Forward Air Control when white flags were seen in Port Stanley at 15.55 and the aircraft landed back on the Hermes at 16.25. Photo on board Hermes around this time – RAF Yearbook 2007 p.21.

- 4 Jul 82 Disembarked to RAF Stanley with No.1 (F) Squadron. Served with the unofficially titled Harrier Detachment (HarDet) at RAF Stanley as the airport had been renamed.
- 28 Jul 82 Suffered minor storm damage during a gale.
- 6 Oct 82 To No.1 Squadron, RAF Wittering.
- 21 Feb 83 To No.4 Squadron at RAF Gütersloh, again coded 'E'.
- 14 Jun 84 Returned to RAF Stanley with No.1453 Flight, formerly the Harrier Flight for Air Defence of the Falklands.
- 14 May 85 To RAF St. Athan, Glam. For modifications. The official opening of the new airport at Mount Pleasant on 12 May 85 enabled No 1453 Flight to be disbanded and its aircraft were returned to the UK.
- 14 Oct 85 To No.233 Operational Conversion Unit at RAF Wittering.
- 14 Jul 86 To No.1 Squadron, also at RAF Wittering.
- 25 Jul 86 Returned to No 233 OCU at Wittering, coded 'E', changed to 'J' by March 1988.
- 6 Dec 88 To No.4 Squadron at RAF Gütersloh, Germany.
- 89 Still at RAF Gütersloh, Germany.
- 21 Aug 90 Last flight. Flying hours 2200, landings 6050.
To RAF St. Athan, Glam. For storage.
- 17 Sep 91 Allotted to RAF Museum for display
- 25 Nov 91 Allotted ground instructional 9122M.
- 4 Dec 91 Delivered by road from RAF St. Athan to RAFM Hendon by team from RAF Abingdon - Photo - Flypast Feb 1992 p.70. Engine had been removed for re-use by the RAF Sep.1991.
Form 700 with archives, ref. B3376.
- 30 Apr 2003 Moved to new Milestones of Flight Building at Hendon for public display from December 2003.

The move involved lifting the aircraft, placing it on a special wheeled trestle, craning off the entire mainplane, towing the fuselage round to the new building, then craning the wing back onto the fuselage and the aircraft off the trestle and back onto its wheels. Photos on display; Wingspan International 20 pp.64-65; Flypast December 2004 p.41; Aeroplane February 2007 p.27.

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