

PANAVIA TORNADO F3 ZE887
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER X005-2796

One of 152 Tornado F.3/F.3 (T) aircraft ordered, first production aircraft flew November 1985, entering squadron service from July 1987, initially with eight UK air defence squadrons. Manufacturer's serial number AS092.

- 1988 Built by British Aerospace at Warton, Preston, Lancs, constructor's number 753/AS092/3345; serials block ZE882 – ZE891.
- 30 Sep 88 First flight.
- Dec 88 BAE trials aircraft with A&AEE.
- 2 May 89 Delivered to RAF.
- Jun 89 Noted unmarked at RAF Coningsby, Lincs.
- Jul 89 Became fin code 'AN' with No 229 O.C.U.
- 1989-90 Served with No 229 OCU/65 (R) Squadron, RAF Coningsby. Colour photos Scale Models International May 1990 pp.235-238.
- Jan 90 To 43 Squadron as 'GE'.
- 14 Aug 90 To RAF Leeming; became 'DE'/11 (C) Squadron by 10 September 1990.
- 24 Sep 90 Returned to 43 Squadron, and had lost its code by 29 October 1990.
- 1991 Served as 'GE/DE' in the First Gulf War, Operation Granby, one of 18 Tornado F.3 aircraft detached to the Royal Saudi Air Force Base at Dhahran (where they were known as the 'Desert Eagles'-a combined force of Nos 29 and 43 Squadrons), squadron code 'E'.
Initially deployed from Leuchars to RAF Leeming on 14 August 1990 for readiness for transfer to the Gulf region; initially held as reserve aircraft for deployment; from Leuchars to Dhahran 11 January 1991, uncoded; coded 'E' in theatre; returned to Coningsby 13 March 1991.
- Used for Combat Air Patrols (CAPs) until 10 March 1991. No engagements with Iraqi Air Force during the actual conflict period, 17 January – 28 February 1991.
- Apr 91 Noted operating with 11 Squadron.
- May 91 To 'DJ'/11 Squadron.

- 1992 Served with RAF Leeming-based No. 11 Squadron until 2001 as aircraft 'DJ'; appeared at 1998 Royal International Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford with double eagle markings and squadron code 'DJ' on fin. Colour photo in this scheme being refuelled by VC10K; Fighter Command Yearbook (1993) P.6-7.
- Oct 92 Deployed to Nellis AFB, Nevada, USA for Exercise Red Flag 93/1
- 2001-2 Served as 'XJ' with No 5 (AC) Squadron at RAF Coningsby, Lincs, which disbanded at RAF Coningsby on 27th September 2002 due to defence cuts.
- 2003/5 Again serving with No 11 Squadron at RAF Leeming by June 2003, initially as 'DJ'; flew at 2005 Royal International Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford in special markings with black fin and anniversary markings of pair of eagles and XI 90 Years 1915-2005. Photo – Tornado ADV (Foster) p. 49. The Squadron disbanded on 1 October 2005.
- 2005-7 By November 2005 serving with No 111 Squadron, but back at Leeming in June 2006 and re-issued to Leeming-based No. 25 (F) Squadron, February 2007 and coded 'FX' by April 2007'; involved in Exercise Indradhanush. Photo – Tornado ADV (Foster) p.58. Given 25 Squadron 90th Anniversary commemorative scheme. Flew in Queen's Birthday Flypast, 16 June 2007. Squadron disbanded 4 April 2008 as the last Leeming-based Tornado F.3 squadron.
- As part of the Tornado F3 force drawdown, 43 (Fighter) Squadron and 56 (Reserve) Squadron, the Operational Conversion Unit (OCU), merged on 25 April 2008.
- This new merged squadron, retaining the name No. 43 (Fighter) Squadron, was significantly bigger than its predecessor and extended its front-line role to include the OCU's task of training ab-initio pilots and weapon systems officers. The new squadron was also to be responsible for other advanced training including, amongst others, the Qualified Weapons Instructor course. The 'new' merged squadron took on 26 aircraft, 30 pairs of permanent aircrew and about 260 engineering personnel.
- 2008 Serving with No 43 (Fighter) Squadron at RAF Leuchars, Scotland from May 2008.
- Given special markings with black spine and vertical tail surfaces with tail code GF in recognition of the squadron's Latin motto 'Gloria Finis' – 'Glory Is The End' and 'Fighting Cocks' lettering at top of fin. Appeared in these markings at the Kemble Airshow on 15 June 2008 and at the Waddington Airshow in July 2008.

The letters 'GF' were always allocated to the CO's aircraft, as these were, as mentioned, the initials of the Squadron's Motto. Colour profile – Air Forces Monthly May 2011 pull-out.

- 6 Jun 2008 Pilots Flying logbook of Sqn Dr B M Archer RAF (part photocopy on aircraft file) records 'role demo practice, land Biggin Hill' 1.20 hours. Two further role demonstration flights at Biggin Hill airshow 7th and 8th June.
 - 9 Jun 2008 Transit flight, Biggin Hill – Leuchars, 1.20 hours, Archer logbook.
 - 13 Jun 2008 Role demonstration flight at RAF Kemble prior to airshow; 1.30 hours, Archer LB.
 - 15 Jun 2008 40 minute demonstration flight at RAF Kemble – Archer LB.
 - 16 Jun 2008 Return flight, Kemble – Leuchars; Archer LB.
 - 4 July 2008 Leuchars – RAF Waddington and role demonstration practice ahead of Waddington airshow; 1.10 hours, Archer LB.
 - 5/6 July 2008 40-minute role demonstration flights on both public days of Waddington airshow. Archer LB.
 - 7 July 2008 Return flight scheduled Waddington – Leuchars, but lightning strike en – route necessitating a landing at Newcastle airport after 40 minutes flight time. Archer LB.
 - 30 Jul 2008 1.30 hour transit flight to Culdrose for airshow, followed by 1.30 hours of role demonstration and return to Leuchars. Archer LB.
- No. 43(F) Squadron disbanded on 13 July 2009. ZE887 transferred to the strength of No 111 (F) squadron, ('Treble One Squadron) also at RAF Leuchars.
- 4 Mar 2010 Final flight, still with No 111 (F) Squadron; sortie length two hours. Final airframe time 4966.40. Details in Forms 700A/C held by DoRIS.
 - 8 Mar 2010 Preparation for museum display commenced, with exchange of ejection seats for unarmed, unserviceable units.
 - 14 Jun 2010 Both engines removed for further use, along with other items spares recovered that month.
 - c. Sept 2010 Dismantled at Leuchars by JARTS team for road transport to RAFM.
 - 23 Sep 2010 Loaded at Leuchars for road movement to St. Athan and temporary storage there.

18 Oct 2010 Moved by road to RAFM Hendon by JARTS team from RAF St. Athan. Reassembly at Hendon completed 21 October 2010.
Photos on display – Aircraft Magazine January 2011 p.11; Flypast February 2011 p.12.

The final Tornado F.3s in RAF service were those serving with No 111(F) Squadron at RAF Leuchars, which disbanded on 22 March 2011. One aircraft however joined the QinetiQ fleet at Boscombe Down, Wilts two days later.

TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON

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