

Serial	Codes	Arr	Dep	To
XB736	X	23/07/53	16/05/56	AGT
XB738		23/06/54	07/07/54	AGT
XB740	M	28/05/53	08/03/56	Westlands
XB744	A	28/05/53	03/01/56	AGT
XB745		10/04/56	17/05/56	Westlands
XB747	B	15/07/53	13/03/56	AGT
XB749	A	19/03/56	13/06/56	AGT
XB790	M	21/12/55	06/06/56	AGT
XB792		17/05/56	18/06/56	AGT
XB858		14/04/54	02/11/54	AGT
XB859		18/05/54	27/02/56	Westlands
XB871	E	20/01/56	13/06/56	Westlands
XB913	L	21/03/56	18/06/56	Aviation Traders
XB938	D	29/07/55	18/06/56	AGT
XB949		03/03/54	04/03/54	234 Sqn
XB953		01/03/54	02/04/54	Sabre C/F
XB957		01/03/54	23/03/54	112 Sqn
XB973	U	29/07/55	13/06/56	AGT
XB984	K	22/02/55	16/05/56	Aviation Traders

- (a) Failed to get airborne and overshot runway at Eindhoven.
- (b) Struck ground after abortive GCA at Henri-Chapelle, Belgium, (Fg Off John Alexander Adair, 23, killed).
- (c) As Above, (Fg Off James William Tate, 23, killed).
- (d) U/C raised on landing at Geilenkirchen.
- (e) Dived into the ground at Lontzen, Netherlands, (Fg Off Roger Norman Taylor, 22, killed).

## 4 Squadron

Jever (detached to Ahlhorn 12 March – 5 April 1954, and to Wünstorf 15 October – 15 November 1955)

The replacement of the squadron's Vampires with Sabres began with the delivery of the first four aircraft to Jever at the beginning of March 1954 while most pilots were in the process of being converted at the SCU, Wildenrath. At 6,000 feet Jever's runway was inadequate for the safe operation of Sabres and therefore a belated programme to extend and resurface the runway was hastily implemented. This resulted in the temporary move of the squadron's remaining Vampires on 12 March to Ahlhorn, to where the next Sabre deliveries were made. Enough reconstruction had been completed at Jever to permit the squadron to return there on 5 April, with a dozen Sabres and its sole remaining Vampire, FB.9 WR184, which was transferred to 11 Sqn four days later.

From the outset it had been decided that 4 Sqn should standardise on 6-3 wing Sabres and with these the unit rapidly resumed its operational training under the leadership of CO, Sqn Ldr Peter W. Gilpin, initially suffering low serviceability attributable to a combination of unfamiliarity with the aircraft and its systems, snags and modifications, and lack of spare parts. Tony Pearce was among the new pilots joining the squadron at this time, having been holding on Vampires with the CSU at Buckeburg from January to May, and then completing the conversion course with the SCF:

"The Sabre was a lovely aircraft but surprisingly difficult to go supersonic; you had to be in a vertical dive and have plenty of height. It was also hard to plant your bang accurately on whatever 'target' you had chosen – until



4 Sqn Sabre XB921 B-B flown by Fg Off Bert Sanders in 1954. (Bill Simms via Mick Ryan)

bangs were eventually banned. There was a radio station in Bremen called Nord West Deutche Rundfunk, based in a new multi-storey building with lots of glass. At lunchtime the station had a programme called 'Duffle Bag' that played popular music. At that time when flying Sabres you could listen to the station very clearly (you couldn't do that in Hunters), and we used to aim our bangs at the studio on the third floor of this glass house, and if your bang was on target you could hear the record jump on the turntable!"

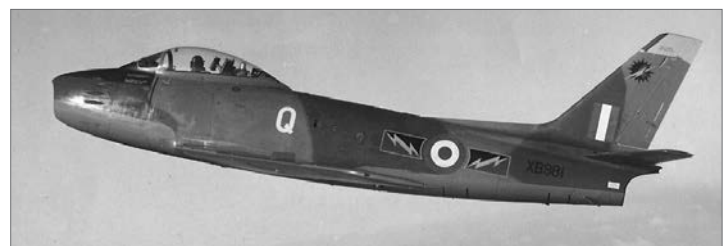


Sabre F4 XB773 with early unit coding B-C of 4 Sqn high over northern Germany in 1954. (Norman Griffin via Mick Ryan)

Unfortunately the squadron suffered two early aircraft losses, the first on 22 June when Fg Off Ron Gray flying XB940 lost contact with the rest of his section in cloud during a snake climb, was blown off course by a jetstream to the GDR border until warned by Air Traffic, and when low on fuel made an emergency landing on the Hamburg-Lübeck autobahn; this went well until his wing struck an untrimmed young tree on the right-hand side of the carriageway which inflicted Cat.5 damage. The second accident, on 8 July, had a tragic outcome for Fg Off John Jack in XB647 which overshot after a controlled descent with undercarriage retracted but dive brakes extended, then flicked and dived into the ground a few miles south of Jever, with fatal result.

Later in the month the squadron participated in *Dividend*, contributing sections to simulate high-level raids on the UK, on at least one occasion led by the 122 Wing Leader, Wg Cdr 'Hammer' C.J. West DFC, about whom Tony Pearce recalled an amusing experience:

"The Wingco asked me to fly him to a meeting with the DFLS at West Raynham in the Station Flight Vampire T.11, as I was among the few at Jever who at that time had



XB981/Q climbs away clean displaying 4 Squadron's colourful markings