

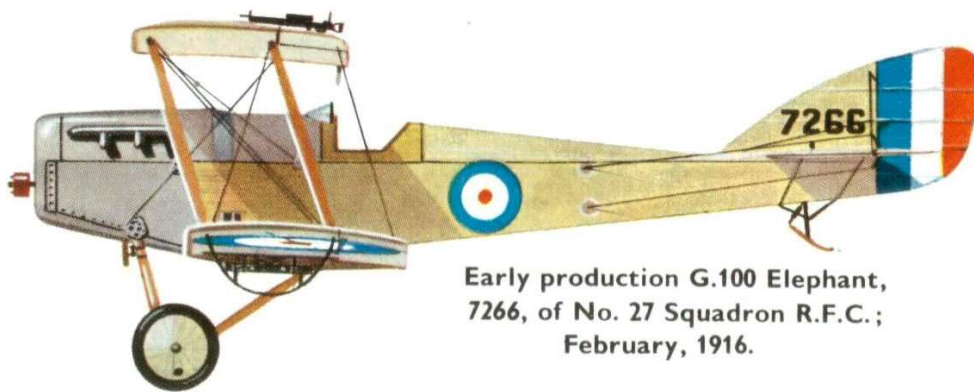
Number 27 and 32 Squadron Royal Air Force



27 Squadron Royal Air Force

Insignia

Squadron badge: An elephant, based on an unofficial emblem first used in 1934 and commemorating the squadron's first operational aircraft (the Martinsyde G100 Elephant) and the unit's association with India. Approved by King Edward VIII in October 1936.



Early production G.100 Elephant,
7266, of No. 27 Squadron R.F.C.;
February, 1916.

History

First World War

27 Squadron of the Royal Flying Corps formed at Hounslow Heath Aerodrome on 5 November 1915, being split off from 24 Squadron. Initially using aircraft borrowed from 24 Squadron, 27 Squadron moved to Swingate Down outside Dover in late November 1915, and in early February 1916, received its initial operating equipment, the Martinsyde Elephant fighter aircraft, hence the use of an elephant for the squadron badge. It transferred to France on 1 March 1916, serving as part of 9th Wing RFC. Initially the squadron was tasked with using its aircraft as escort fighters, but by the time the Battle of the Somme began, it was clear that the Elephant was unsuitable as a fighter. At the Somme, the squadron was initially tasked with mounting standing fighter patrols to protect British bombers and reconnaissance aircraft and with bomber-reconnaissance duties, taking advantage of the Martinsyde's good range and load carrying capacity, carrying out its first bombing mission on 1 July 1916. It was ordered to concentrate on bombing duties on 9 July.

The squadron continued to operate its Martinsydes into 1917, taking part in the Battle of Arras in April–May, the Battle of Messines in June, where the squadron attacked German airfields, and the Battle of Passchendaele (also known as the Third Battle of Ypres), where the squadron attacked railway targets and airfields, from July that year. It re-equipped with Airco DH.4s, which carried twice the bombload of the Martinsyde at greater speed and height, while carrying a gunner to defend against enemy fighters, from

between September and December 1917, but was still equipped with a mixture of Martinsydes and DH.4s when it flew in support of the British offensive at Cambrai.

In March 1918, the squadron moved to Villers-Bretonneux east of Amiens as part of a concentration of the RFCs resources against the likely route of a suspected German offensive. The morning of 21 March brought the start of Operation Michael, the opening part of the German spring offensive. At first the squadron was deployed against railway junctions, to slow the movement of German reinforcements. On 24 March, the squadron was forced to evacuate from Villers-Bretonneux, threatened by the German advance, to Beauvois-en-Cambrésis. On 25 March, as the Germans threatened to breakthrough near Bapaume, all available squadrons, including 27 Squadron, were ordered to carry out low level attacks against the German troops. The squadron continued to fly a mixture of low level attack against troop concentrations and high level attacks over the next few days, and on 29 March was forced to move airfields again, this time to Ruisseauville. On 1 April 1918, the RFC merged with the Royal Naval Air Service to form the Royal Air Force, but this had little effect on the squadrons at the front, with 27 Squadron continuing to operate against the German offensive. On 9 April, the Germans launched the second stage of its offensive, an attack near the River Lys at the junction between the British First and Second Armies. 27 Squadron was again deployed against the offensive attacking railway targets from 12 April. It started to receive DH.9 bombers in July 1918, but as these proved to be inferior to the DH.4, managed to keep some of its DH.4s until the end of the war. The squadron was disbanded on 22 January 1920.

Inter-war period

On 1 April 1920, No. 27 was reformed by re-numbering No. 99 Squadron RAF then in India, flying Airco DH.9A light bombers from Risalpur over the North-West Frontier. Operations included Pink's War, an aerial bombardment campaign against militant Mahsud tribesmen in South Waziristan in March and April 1925, the first colonial policing action carried out solely by the RAF, without the participation of the British Army. The squadron's DH.9As were eventually replaced by Westland Wapitis in 1928, when the squadron moved to Kohat. In December 1928, Flying Officer Tusk and Leading Aircraftman Donaldson (both of 27 Squadron), flew the first mission of the Kabul Airlift. Strictly a reconnaissance flight to ascertain the situation of the British Legation in Kabul during a civil war, they were shot at by local tribesmen and forced to land at a nearby airstrip. After this they managed to dash across no-man's land and arrived at the legation to set up communications with their home base of Risalpur.

War in the East

The outbreak of the Second World War in Europe in September 1939 saw part of the squadron deployed on coastal anti-submarine and anti-shipping patrols from Madras, before on 1 October 1939, the squadron became a flying training school training pilots for the Indian Air Force, operating de Havilland Tiger Moth and Hawker Hart biplanes as well as Wapitis, and based at Risalpur. Many of the squadron's former operational pilots were employed ferrying Bristol Blenheim bombers from Egypt to India and the Far East, and in January 1941, Blenheims started to be delivered to the squadron, allowing a Blenheim-equipped 27 Squadron to be split off from the training school in February and sent to Singapore. The squadron's Blenheims were Mk IF aircraft, fitted with an under-fuselage gun-pack for use as a long-range and night fighter, and were the only RAF night fighters in the Far East. The squadron moved to Butterworth in May 1941 and to Sungai Petani in August that year. Japan invaded Malaya on 8 December 1941, and 27 Squadron flew off eight Blenheims that morning to attack Japanese invasion shipping. Poor weather prevented them from locating any Japanese ships, however, and air attacks on Sungai Petani that day wrecked the airfield and left the squadron with only four airworthy aircraft. It was evacuated to Butterworth that evening. The remaining aircraft were pulled back to Singapore by 12 December, where they, together with a few Blenheim Is from other squadrons operated under the name of 27 Squadron. The remaining Blenheims based at Singapore, including those of 27 Squadron were evacuated to Sumatra from 23 January 1941, ending up operating from Palembang. On 14 February four of its Blenheims attacked Japanese ships invading Sumatra, with the loss of two Blenheims, with all airworthy aircraft evacuating to Java on 15 February. Here the squadron effectively ceased to exist.

A new No. 27 Squadron was formed at RAF Amarda Road India on 19 September 1942, although it initially had no aircraft, not receiving its first Bristol Beaufighter until 22 October and not having a full complement of Beaufighters until 21 December. It flew its first operation, an attack on Taungoo airfield in Burma, on 24

December 1942. The squadron moved to Kanchrapara in January 1943, and to Agartala in February, joining 169 Wing of 224 Group.] The squadron used its Beaufighters for ground-attack missions over Burma and anti-shipping strikes. In April 1943, the squadron received a number of de Havilland Mosquitoes for evaluation, and a flight was re-equipped with Mosquitoes in December that year. The glue-and-plywood construction of the otherwise excellent Mosquito proved to be less than optimal for tropical Burma, and the operations were plagued by technical problems. They eventually relinquished the Mosquitoes to No. 680 Squadron RAF, retaining the Beaufighters and continuing the Squadron's diet of ground attack and anti-shipping strikes, switching to air-jungle rescue in April 1945.

Following the Japanese surrender, it was deployed to Batavia during the Indonesian War of Independence, being disbanded on 1 February 1946.

Post-war service

On 24 November 1947, the squadron reformed at RAF Oakington as a Transport unit equipped with Douglas Dakota transports. It flew both routine scheduled transport routes and trained in glider towing and took part in the Berlin Airlift in 1948–49. It was disbanded on 10 November 1950. On 15 June 1953, No. 27 Squadron reformed at RAF Scampton as part of RAF Bomber Command, with Canberra bombers. It took part in the Suez Crisis in 1956, and was disbanded at RAF Waddington on 31 December 1957.

In April 1961, the squadron reformed at RAF Scampton as the first squadron to be equipped with the Avro Vulcan B2 V bomber and formed part of the UK nuclear deterrent strike force. The squadron's Vulcans were equipped with the Blue Steel one megaton stand-off bomb until 1969 when their eight aircraft were each re-equipped with a WE.177B laydown bomb of 450 kt yield. The squadron's role assigned to SACEUR in a low-level penetration role was tactical support for ground forces resisting a Soviet land attack into Western Europe by striking targets assigned by SACEUR, beyond the forward edge of the battlefield, and deep into enemy-held areas. By the end of 1971 the squadron had relinquished its nuclear delivery role, and stood down until in December 1973 it was reformed at RAF Scampton with the Vulcan B2 to operate in the Maritime Radar Reconnaissance (MRR) role assigned to SACLANT.

From 1973 to 1982 the squadron performed the duties of 'Strategic Reconnaissance' with onboard equipment to monitor the fall-out from air and ground-based nuclear tests being performed by emerging nuclear powers in the Indian sub-continent and SE Asia. The squadron's Vulcan B2s were modified (and re-designated as "Vulcan B.2 (MRR)") to carry underwing 'sniffer' and collection equipment to detect and collect samples of airborne contamination for later analysis at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment (AWRE) at Aldermaston. The samples were collected by flying through the high altitude dust cloud of a ground-based test or the downwind contamination of the upper atmosphere after an air burst. The squadron disbanded again at Scampton in 1982.

The squadron reformed again at RAF Marham in 1983 with twelve Tornado GR1 aircraft and eighteen WE.177 nuclear bombs, and once again assigned to SACEUR in 1984, the squadron's role was low-level penetration tactical support for ground forces resisting a Soviet land attack into Western Europe by striking targets beyond the forward edge of the battlefield. The squadron's allocation of eighteen WE.177 weapons was because of the greater carrying capacity of the Tornado, which could carry two weapons. The apparent mismatch between twelve Tornado aircraft and eighteen nuclear weapons was because RAF staff planners expected up to one third attrition of aircraft in the conventional phase, with sufficient aircraft held back in reserve to deliver the squadron's full stock of nuclear weapons if the conflict escalated to the use of tactical nuclear weapons. In September 1993, the squadron's Tornado aircraft and personnel moved to RAF Lossiemouth and took on the number plate of No. 12 Squadron which had recently disbanded at RAF Marham.

Helicopters

The No. 27 Squadron number plate was transferred to RAF Odiham and became No. 27 (Reserve) Squadron, the Chinook/Puma Operational Conversion Unit, formerly No. 240 Operational Conversion Unit RAF (OCU). It regained full squadron status in January 1998 equipped with Chinooks only. In 2002 the squadron's Chinooks saw service in Afghanistan as they transported Royal Marines from 3 Commando Brigade for Operation Jacana.

The squadron also served in a transport role during the 2003 invasion of Iraq and was stationed at Basra as part of No. 1310 Flight RAF, supporting Operation Telic. In July 2006, 3 Chinook helicopters of No. 27 Squadron deployed to RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus to evacuate British citizens from Lebanon. It deployed to Afghanistan for Operation Herrick in 2011.

In March 2020, the squadron was awarded the right to emblazon a battle honour on its squadron standard, recognising its role in the War in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2014.

Aircraft operated

Dates	Aircraft	Variant	Notes
1915			Various aircraft inherited from No. 24 Squadron RFC
1916–1917	Martynside G.100 and 102		Single-engined biplane fighter bomber
1917–1918	Airco DH.4		Single-engined biplane day bomber
1918–1919	de Havilland DH.9		Single-engined biplane bomber
1930–1940	Westland Wapiti		Single-engined general purpose biplane
1939–1940	de Havilland Tiger Moth		Single-engined biplane trainer
1939–1940	Hawker Hart		Single-engined biplane light bomber
1940–1942	Bristol Blenheim	IF	Twin-engined light bomber
1942–1944	Bristol Beaufighter	VIF	Twin-engined ground attack
1943	de Havilland Mosquito	II	Twin-engined light bomber
1943–1944		VI	
1943–1946	Bristol Beaufighter	X	Twin-engined ground attack
1947–1950	Douglas Dakota		Twin-engined transport
1953–1957	English Electric Canberra	B2	Twin-engined light bomber
1961–1972	Avro Vulcan	B2	Four-engined V-Bomber
1973–1983		B2(MRR)	
1983–1993	Panavia Tornado	GR1	Twin-engined ground attack/bomber
1993–present	Boeing Chinook	HC2,2A,3,4,4A,5,6A	Twin-rotor transport helicopter



32 Squadron Royal Air Force

The Squadron's crest is "a hunting horn stringed" which was approved by King George VI in December 1936. The horn signified the unit's ability to hunt the enemy and has the motto: 'Adeste comites' – 'Rally round, comrades'.

Number 32 (The Royal) Squadron (sometimes abbreviated as No. 32 (TR) Squadron) of the Royal Air Force operates in the VIP and general air transport roles from RAF Northolt in Greater London.

Originally formed in 1916 as part of the Royal Flying Corps, the squadron saw action during the First and Second World Wars with fighter aircraft, but was disbanded in 1969. The Metropolitan Communications Squadron, involved in the VIP transport role, was renamed as No. 32 Squadron at that time. In 1995, the squadron was merged with the Queen's Flight and incorporated 'The Royal' title into its name. At this time the squadron moved from RAF Benson to RAF Northolt, where it remains.

The merger ended the RAF's provision of dedicated VIP transport aircraft; the squadron's aircraft are available to VIP passengers only if not needed for military operations. Two flights within the squadron operate the Dassault Envoy IV CC1 and AgustaWestland AW109 aircraft.

History

Formation and First World War

No. 32 Squadron was formed as part of the Royal Flying Corps on 12 January 1916 at Netheravon and moved to France as a fighter squadron equipped with the Airco DH.2 in May. On 1 July 1916, its commanding officer, Major Lionel Rees, was engaged in a combat with eight German Albatros two-seater aircraft, and although wounded in the leg, managed to scatter the German aircraft, driving down two of the enemy, for which action he was awarded the Victoria Cross.

The squadron continued to fly patrols over the Western Front, including over the Somme and Arras battlefields, for a year before beginning to re-equip with the Airco DH.5, specialising in ground attack missions. These in turn began to be replaced by the S.E.5a in December 1917 which were flown for the rest of the war on fighter and ground attack missions. On 1 April 1918 the squadrons became part of the new Royal Air Force. In March 1919, the squadron returned to the UK as a cadre and disbanded on 29 December 1919. During the war, sixteen aces had served in its ranks. They included: future Air Marshal Arthur Coningham; Walter Tyrrell; Arthur Claydon; John Donaldson; Wilfred Green; Frank Hale; Hubert Jones; William Curphey; Maxmillian Mare-Montebault; and George Lawson.

Inter-war years

No. 32 Squadron reformed on 1 April 1923 at RAF Kenley as a single flight of Sopwith Snipe fighters.[6] A second flight was formed on 10 December 1923 and a third brought the squadron up to strength on 1 June 1924. Gloster Grebes were received at the end of 1924 and were replaced by Gloster Gamecocks two years later. Equipped in succession with Armstrong Whitworth Siskins, Bristol Bulldogs and Gloster Gauntlets, the squadron received the Hawker Hurricane in October 1938.

Second World War

In May 1940, the squadron flew patrols over northern France and took part in the defence of south-east England based at RAF Biggin Hill, but operating daily from their forward airfield at RAF Hawkinge, near

Folkestone, during the opening weeks of the Battle of Britain. The squadron moved to northern England at the end of August 1940. The squadron's Hurricanes saw little action throughout 1941, but did attempt, unsuccessfully, to escort the Fairey Swordfish biplanes of 825 Naval Air Squadron during their doomed attempt to stop the German warships Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Prinz Eugen during the Channel Dash on 12 February 1942. They then carried out a number of night intruder operations before being deployed overseas.

Following Operation Torch, the Anglo-American invasion of North Africa, in December 1942, the squadron deployed with its Hurricanes to Algeria, converting to the Supermarine Spitfire by July 1943. Operations included a deployment to Greece, where it took part in the Greek Civil War from September 1944 to February 1945.

Post-war

After the end of the Second World War, the squadron continued as a fighter unit, flying Spitfires, the de Havilland Vampire and de Havilland Venom from bases in Palestine, Cyprus, Egypt, Persian Gulf, Malta and Jordan. In January 1957, the squadron converted to the English Electric Canberra B.15 bombers at RAF Weston Zoyland, flying these from Cyprus, remaining there until disbanding on 3 February 1969.

VIP transport

The Metropolitan Communications Squadron was formed on 8 April 1944 for VIP air transport by the renaming of No. 510 Squadron. Simultaneous with No.32 Squadron being disbanded in Cyprus in February 1969, the Metropolitan Communications Squadron was renamed No. 32 Squadron. It operated a variety of aircraft, including Hawker Siddeley Andovers and Westland Whirlwind HC.10 helicopters.

The squadron acquired four HS.125 CC.1 business jets in 1971. These would be supplemented and then replaced by two HS.125 CC.2 delivered in 1973 and six BAe 125 CC3 delivered in 1982 and 1983. Aérospatiale Gazelle helicopters served with the squadron from 1976 onwards. These were replaced by initially two (later three) Eurocopter Twin Squirrels in 1996.

The RAF leased two BAe 146 in 1983 (designated BAe 146 CC1) as a test of their suitability to replace the Andover, which were operated by No. 241 Operational Conversion Unit. Two BAe 146-100 (designated BAe 146 CC2) were purchased in 1984 for the Queen's Flight as a result, with delivery in 1986. A third BAe 146 CC2 was purchased in 1989 and delivered in 1990, although it was subsequently sold in 2002. The BAe 146 provided a 60% increase in range compared with the Andover, and a larger interior capacity for more passengers.

On 1 April 1995, the Queen's Flight, equipped with these BAe 146 CC2, and Wessex HCC.4 helicopters, was merged into No. 32 Squadron to become No. 32 (The Royal) Squadron and moved to RAF Northolt from RAF Benson. Since then, No. 32 Squadron's aircraft have served as transports in several recent conflicts including Operation Granby (Gulf War), Operation Veritas (Afghanistan) and Operation Telic (Iraq 2003). This merger ended the RAF's provision of dedicated VIP transport aircraft: the aircraft of No. 32 Squadron are available to VIP passengers only if not needed for military operations. This was declared officially in 1999, with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) stating: "the principal purpose of 32 Squadron is to provide communications and logistical support to military operations; the Squadron's capacity should be based on military needs only; and any royal or other non-military use of ... spare capacity is secondary to its military purpose"

Following a review by the MOD, in 2004 the squadron's aircraft lost their distinctive livery inherited from The Queen's Flight, featuring red flying surfaces. This was due to the concern over the aircraft's vulnerability to terrorist attack.

In May 2005 the Defence Logistics Organisation's Helicopter and Islander Combined (HIC) Integrated Project Team (IPT) awarded AgustaWestland a five-year contract from 1 April 2006 to provide three AgustaWestland AW109E to replace the three Twin Squirrels. This contract was extended on 31 March 2011 to allow two of the AW109E to continue in use for a further year. Two preserved examples of the squadron's Wessex helicopters, originally operated by the Queen's Flight, can be seen at The Helicopter Museum in Weston-super-Mare and Royal Air Force Museum London.

Two additional BAe 146 were purchased in March 2012 from TNT Airways and were refitted by Hawker Beechcraft on behalf of BAE Systems for tactical freight and personnel transport use. The aircraft, designated as the BAe 146 C3, arrived in Afghanistan in April 2013.[20] On 16 March 2015, the squadron's final BAe 125

returned from operations in Afghanistan, and the type's retirement from the RAF was brought forward due to defence budget cuts. Of the final four operational aircraft, three were put up for sale by the MOD and one was placed on permanent display at RAF Northolt. The decision was made that the aircraft were to be retired from service seven years ahead of their original withdrawal date.

In late 2015, a single AgustaWestland AW109SP (serial number GZ100) was delivered to the squadron to replace the unit's earlier AW109E (ZR322), which was withdrawn the following year.

On 11 October 2017, the MOD announced that Her Majesty The Queen had approved the award of Battle Honours 'Iraq 2003–2011' and 'Libya 2011', both without the right to emblazon, to the squadron.

In 2020, the squadron's two BAe 146 C3 were modified for use in the medical support role, to carry patients and medical personnel into and out of smaller airfields than the RAF's Voyager tanker-transport aircraft.

BAe 146 fleet retirement

The Integrated Review has seen the fleet of four BAe 146 retired in March 2022. Shortly before in February 2022, Defence Equipment and Support announced that the four aircraft would be replaced by two Dassault Falcon 900LX.

One of the BAe 146-100s has been retired to the British Airliner Collection at Duxford, Cambridgeshire, the other joined South Wales Aviation Museum at St Athan in March 2022. The two BAe 146-200s have also been removed from service and sold to civilian airline Pionair Australia.

Squadron strength

'A' Flight

Two Dassault Envoy IV CC1

'B' Flight

One AgustaWestland AW109SP

Battle honours

No. 32 Squadron has received the following battle honours. Those marked with an asterisk (*) may be emblazoned on the squadron standard.

- Western Front (1916–1918)
- Somme (1916–1918)
- Arras (1917)
- Ypres (1917)
- Amiens (1918)*
- France and Low Countries (1939–1940)*
- Battle of Britain (1940)*
- Home Defence (1940–1945)
- Dieppe (1942)
- North Africa (1942-1943)*
- Italy (1943)
- South East Europe (1944-1945)*
- Gulf (1991)
- Iraq (2003–2011)
- Libya (2011)