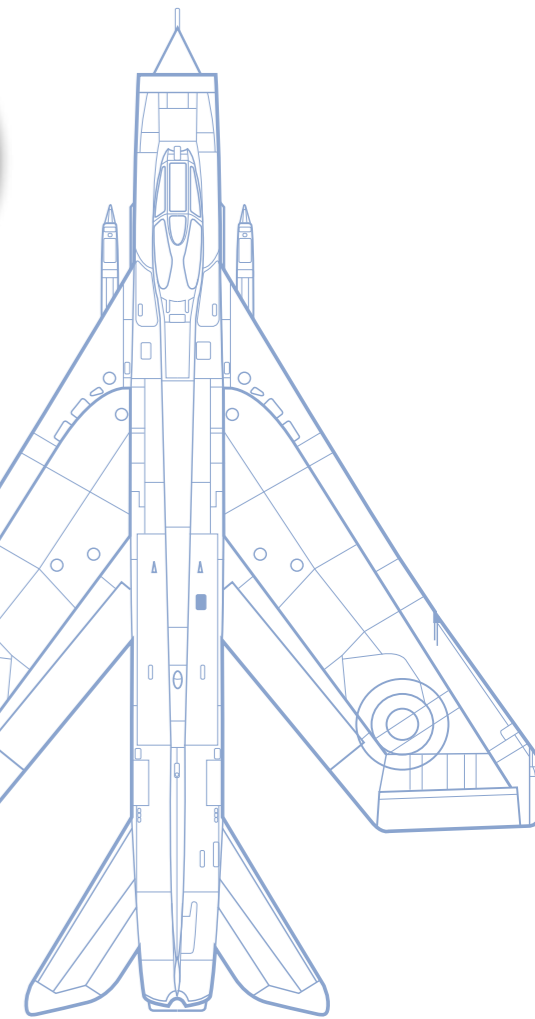


Lightning F.Mk53 (ZF588)



The Lightning was Britain's first true supersonic fighter aircraft, able to attain Mach 2.3 (1,520mph) in level flight. Its performance was phenomenal. From 'brakes off' a normally laden F.Mk2 took less than 150 seconds to reach 12,190m (40,00ft).

The Lightning's primary role was the defence of UK airspace, however for much of the Cold War two additional RAF Lightning squadrons based in Germany provided an immediate-response interceptor force, maintaining the integrity of the north German air defence border.

The development of the Lightning began back in 1947 under a team led by W.E.W. 'Teddy' Petter to study a Mach 1.5 aircraft. By 1948, a design configuration similar to the eventual Lightning was undergoing wind tunnel testing. A year later, a contract for two prototypes was awarded to English electric and the P1 aircraft was flown for the first time on August 4th 1954.

The design proceeded to the P1.A and subsequently P1.B prototypes before the eventual Lightning Mk.1 emerged at RAF Wattisham with No.74 Squadron in June 1960. Throughout the early years in service the basic design was enhanced, initially in the development of the F.Mk1A through to the F.Mk2, the F.Mk3 and finally to the F.Mk6 (very similar to the Aeropark's F.Mk53)

With the advance of such radical technology, the RAF also required a trainer version of the Lightning to provide adequate instruction for its new breed of pilots. The T.Mk4 and T.Mk5 were a two seat (side by side) version of the aircraft that were also fully operational.



Specifications

Dimensions:

Length (Including probe): 16.84m (55ft 3in)

Wingspan: 10.62m (34ft 10in)

Height: 5.97m (19ft 7in)

Powerplant: Two Rolls Royce Avon RA 24 Mk.302C turbojets each rated at 11,000lb static thrust

Maximum Speed: 1,520 mph

Service Ceiling: 18,290m (60,000ft)

Range: 1,287km (800 miles)

Armament: Two Red Top or Firestreak infra-red homing air-to-air missiles and two 30mm ADEN Mk.4 cannons

The Aeropark Lightning

A major export breakthrough came in December 1965 when Saudi Arabia placed a £125m order for air defence systems that included 34 Lightning Mk.53 aircraft with the addition of 6 T.Mk55 trainers.

Between December 1969 and May 1970 the Lightning saw actual service, countering Yemeni ground incursions. The aircraft attacked ground targets with bombs and rockets with devastating effect.

The last Saudi Lightnings ceased flying in 1985 by which time BAe agreed to 'buy back' the best survivors, ZF577 - ZF598 which included our own ZF588 which arrived back at Warton in January 1986. After the RAF plans to form a third Lightning Squadron at RAF Binbrook were abandoned the Lightning force began to decrease. The last Lightning flight from Binbrook (an 11 Squadron aircraft) took place on 30th June 1988, bringing to close a most dramatic chapter in the exploits of RAF Fighter/Strike command.

Lightning MK.53, ZF588 arrived at the Aeropark in XXXX and was painted to represent an aircraft of 74 (Tiger) Squadron.

