



WK277/N of 2 Sqn at the Leconfield ROC open day on 3 September 1960 when Flt Lt 'Rimmy' Rimmington gave a virtuoso display of aerobatics almost continuously in reheat.

sockets. The voltage was then checked and adjusted as necessary, before disconnecting and reconnecting for the second voltage check – all done in the upside down position with the head touching the cockpit floor.”

Serviceability slowly improved with more spares and after technical support and modifications were provided by Supermarine personnel. Notwithstanding several engine problems and systems emergencies the squadron's pilots were mostly enthusiastic about the Swift, which made its debut in the annual *Royal Flush* NATO tactical reconnaissance competition held at Laarbruch in April 1957. Flt Lts Dick Green and Tony Winship represented 2 Sqn, the latter taking second place to Flt Lt Denis Laurence of 79 Sqn, with the Swifts winning their class and contributing to the overall victory by 2ATAF over 4ATAF for the Gruenther Trophy.

On 21 May '57 a more serious accident was narrowly averted when Flt Lt Lou Cockerill, formerly with 79 Sqn, suffered an engine flame out in XD930 during his first Swift sortie with 2 Sqn. After several unsuccessful re-light attempts he made an emergency forced landing at RAF Wildenrath without being able to lower the flaps or undercarriage. In this stressful situation he forgot to jettison the ventral tank, which happily helped to cushion the impact, from which he and his aircraft survived.

The 2TAF Swift squadrons practiced both air/ground and air/air firing as part of their operational training and in July '57 the squadron sent a small detachment to Odiham where air support and reconnaissance sorties were flown in an exercise with the Army over Salisbury Plain. Unfortunately the next month saw the first, and thankfully only fatal accident embracing 2TAF Swift FR.5 operations when 27-year old Flt Lt Richard Greenhalgh, an air firing instructor from Sylt on what was his third Swift familiarisation flight, was tragically killed while flying XD910 on 22 August. This aircraft had previously been used as a 'Christmas tree', stripped for spares and engine and had lain in the corner of a hangar bereft of parts for a while before being resurrected for active service. It had been air tested by the squadron's pilots after refurbishment, but on what proved to be its final flight the canopy became detached from the hood rail, lifted on one side, was caught by the slipstream and struck the pilot a fatal blow, causing loss of control resulting in the aircraft crashing into a hillside near Aachen in West Germany.

In September 10 Swifts led by the CO departed for Sylt and the

squadron's first APC since re-equipping with the FR.5. Results were commendably high with the squadron average of 16.7% helped by significantly better personal scores from Flt Lts John Whittam and Chas Bowyer, all of which helped to push the squadron's monthly Swift flying hours to 313. Derek Wellings recounts the preparations and journey to Sylt from the ground crew perspective:

“The equipment and tools required to attempt to keep the aircraft serviceable went in a road convoy which departed three days before the aircraft, while the remaining personnel, including some pilots either travelled by special train or in their own cars. The train journey from Geilenkirchen was overnight, reaching Hamburg at 0630 next day and arriving at Westerland Sylt by early afternoon, when we set about unloading the equipment ready to begin work the next morning. There was only one incident on the squadron at Sylt that I witnessed: a 30 mm cannon on a Swift was inadvertently fired during testing of the aircraft's firing circuit. The rounds were fired into the bank of a revetment, which was there as a safety measure. Of course, one didn't walk in front of the aircraft when the guns were loaded. Although Sylt was a popular German holiday resort, it was very quiet in those days, and only occasionally did you see a brave young girl on the nudist beach during warm sunny days!”

After APC the squadron moved base to RAF Jever on 10 October 1957 where it joined Nos.4 and 93 Sqn equipped with the Hunter F6 at this airfield, which had a shorter runway than Geilenkirchen, thereby adding a little more pressure on the squadron's pilots, since the Swift with its reheat Avon and brake boost, needed every inch for a comfortable take-off run. Derek Wellings' impressions of Jever were most positive:

“This ex-Luftwaffe airfield and its ambience seemed to suit 2 Sqn. It was surrounded on three sides by pine forest and our accommodation was of a high standard, with central heating that worked, effective double glazing, wood block floors, wash basin with hot and cold water in every room. There was even an outdoor swimming pool. The feeling on the squadron was that we were also rather unique working on Swifts, as it was the first and only RAF aircraft at that time that was equipped with reheat, though the feeling was tempered by the Swifts' unreliability.”

Derek was himself rather unusual among RAF personnel in 2TAF at that time inasmuch as he could speak fluent German and in his free time was therefore able to get out and about in the surrounding area and mix with the local population, among some of whom he maintained a lasting friendship.



Former 2 Sqn Swift FR.5 XD962/L at 60 MU, Church Fenton, in May 1961.



XD962/L was the personal preference of 2 Sqn's CO, Sqn Ldr C.S. Macdonald whose name and pennant decorated the port side of the nose.