



10th August 2008

Typhoon Goes Down a Storm

Training the next generation of fast jet pilots on the Typhoon aircraft is the responsibility of number 29 (R) Squadron of the Royal Air Force. The Squadron invited 10 Air Cadets from 134 (Bedford) Squadron to see for themselves how they operate and undertake this important front line role within today's Royal Air Force.

The Cadets travelled to RAF Coningsby, in Lincolnshire, the home of 3 Typhoon Squadrons, and upon arrival received a comprehensive briefing on the role of 29 (R) Squadron and the superb capabilities of the Typhoon aircraft.

29 (R) Squadron, whose motto is 'Impiger Et Acer' (Energetic and Keen) is one of the oldest Squadrons in the RAF having been formed at Gosport in 1915. It has a long and established history, having seen action in the First and Second World Wars, as well as maintaining an air defence role throughout the Cold War period. In 2003 it became the second RAF Squadron to operate the Typhoon aircraft.

Following the presentation, the Cadets were given a guided tour of the Typhoon simulator complex where they were shown a mock up of a Typhoon's cockpit used to train air and ground crews in how to use the ejector seat and associated survival equipment. They were then shown the multimillion pound, state of the art simulators used by the pilots. Cadet Sergeant James Tye, 19 yrs, and Cadet Tom Powell, 16 yrs, were given the rare opportunity to get some hands on experience of flying the Typhoon simulator and see for themselves just how manoeuvrable the aircraft was.

Sgt Tye, who himself has flown in both Tucano and Hawk aircraft, quickly mastered the Typhoons controls and was allowed to intercept two hostile aircraft and successfully engage them with two beyond visual range air to air missiles. The simulator was so realistic that the Cadets and Staff watching actually experienced the motions of the aircraft as it performed loops and barrel roles.

For lunch, the Cadets were hosted in the Officers Mess and for many of them they saw a completely different side of Air Force life than that normally experienced in the Junior Ranks Mess. The Cadets were able to hear from an

RAF Steward about her role within the mess and the many and varied opportunities available within that trade from working in a mess to the Prime Ministers residence at Chequers.

Next on the agenda was an informative briefing on the Typhoon aircraft by Flt Lt R P “Quiffy” Quaife, a Tornado F3 pilot, who is currently converting to the Typhoon. Flt Lt Quaife, a former Cadet Warrant Officer, delivered an excellent presentation on the flying clothing used by a Typhoon pilot and the capabilities of the aircraft.

For Cadet Jonathan Bell, 13 yrs, it was an opportunity for him to try on some of the equipment which included the survival vest, containing an emergency location beacon and flying helmet which, as the cadets noticed, was similar to that used by them when they fly in the Grob Tutor aircraft.

Having viewed the very latest in RAF aircraft and weapons systems it was time to reflect on the past with a visit to the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight which is based next to 29(R) Squadron at RAF Coningsby.

The Cadets were allocated their very own guide and shown around the Flight's, Dakota, Hurricane, Spitfire, Lancaster and Chipmunk aircraft. They were briefed on the history of each and every aircraft and were told real life stories from the Second World War to add to the experience.

What made a significant impression on them was the fact that young men of the age of the Squadron's Cadet Sergeants were in command of aircraft such as the Lancaster during the Second World War!

Finally, the Cadets were able to use the opportunity to formally unveil 134 Squadron's striking new promotional banner which proudly displays a Typhoon aircraft and the unit's award winning website address.

At the end of what was a most thoroughly enjoyable and informative day Mr Vladek Cirin, the Squadron's Training Officer said “ This has been an outstanding visit. The Cadets made the most of a unique opportunity to glimpse into the future of the Royal Air Force through the medium of the superb Typhoon, whilst acknowledging the past heritage and history embodied in the wonderfully preserved Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Aircraft.”

The Squadron would like to thank the Officer Commanding 29(R), Wg Cdr JJ Stringer for inviting us and Flt Lt Heather Ratnage-Black for organising and managing, so professionally, such an informative, interesting and totally enjoyable visit.

Bedford Squadron is currently recruiting new cadets and staff members, if you are interested please contact www.134.org.uk and get in touch with us.





