

Serial No.020 first flew on the 5<sup>th</sup> Jan 1966. The aircraft was delivered to Pan-Am on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1966 and was very shortly registered with General Electric. It was operated by GE as a company executive transport until 1972. It was then sold to Arkansas Aviation (Little Rock) for cargo conversion and it soon became a member of the Fed-Ex fleet.

At Fed-Ex she was registered as N5FE and was known as “Traci”, all of the aircraft were named after pilots wives. She was the oldest F20 in the fleet of thirty jets operating from Memphis. She also became the first F20 airframe to accumulate 10,000 flight hours whilst operating at Fed-Ex. She remained in service with Fed-Ex until 1984.

In 1984 Sir Michael Cobham formed a subsidiary of his Flight Refuelling company called FR Aviation (FRA). The primary purpose of FRA was to provide training to the Royal Navy utilising the Falcon 20 as an aerial platform with multi roles. A total of Ten F20’s were purchased from Fed-Ex and routed to Falcon Jet USA for some new modifications.

In 1986 N5FE became N903FR and she was now capable of carrying underwing stores in four positions. Extended range operations were possible with an added auxiliary fuel tank containing an extra 1000lbs of fuel in the aircraft aft cabin. Some additional racks were added to the cabin containing additional power supplies and radio equipment. Once within the UK FRA added further modifications and installed various types of underwing stores in support of training operations for the Royal Navy. Electronic warfare and threat simulation was now the primary role of S/No.020.



FR Aviation at RNAS Yeovilton 1986  
(N903FR third in row)

In 1990 a decision was made to register the cargo Falcon with the UK CAA and all ten of the aircraft went into a modification program before adopting British registrations. 020 was now G-FRAJ. Further modifications were installed through the 1990’s to enable the aircraft to operate as a communications jamming aircraft and with further extended range. The aircraft now carries an additional 2000lbs of fuel and is capable of MTOW

30,000lbs. In 2003 a cockpit upgrade program was performed on the FRA fleet including G-FRAJ, all fifteen aircraft received a Rockwell Collins Pro-Line glass cockpit.

Since 1966 the S/No.020 has been a fleet leader with regard to hours and cycles and as we stand today she has performed 27,960 flight hours & 21,643 landings.

In her time at FRA (now Cobham) we have performed six C inspections on this aircraft and she has provided us with a few engineering challenges. Serial No. 020 was a pre-production run aircraft and she is unique in our fleet in many ways. This does provide issues when performing structural repairs etc. In 2010 we performed some large skin repairs due to corrosion and since then she has continued with normal operations. During 2015 she was flown extensively and has proven to be the most reliable aircraft within the Cobham fleet of fifteen F20's.



G-FRAJ in her EW role (2015)

She has flown the world over from the USA to as far as Malaysia and she will continue to do so in support of our operations for many years to come. Our aircrews fly unique flight profiles for a business jet and we therefore monitor fatigue carefully. By their professionalism we have been able to extend the expected fatigue life of the airframes even further than originally expected.

As we celebrate 50 years of G-FRAJ we know that the F20 was the only airframe in 1984 that was capable of the work required by Sir Michael Cobham. We now know that any lesser aircraft would not have stood the test of time. She was the founder of the business jet market but we love her as a true work horse. The Cobham fleet still provide service to our original customer the Royal Navy, but now the customers include the Royal Air Force and NATO. The multi-role fleet also provide target towing capabilities around the world.

I have been around the F20 for 27 years and some of our team have been around them even longer. I love the challenges that working on an ageing aircraft present. Some days you feel more like a museum curator rather than an engineer but it is great to see a team of engineers still using real engineering skills to keep them operational. We support various other customers with the maintenance of their own F20's and it is great to know that others still want to fly these jets. We have a great relationship with the Dassault team, especially within the engineering structural repair division and it is great to meet people that also share the continued passion for this jet.

Happy birthday G-FRAJ, a golden anniversary to celebrate. We all look forward to your next birthday.

**Compiled by Neil Saunders – Chief Engineer Base Maintenance, Cobham**