

RAF COLLEGE CRANWELL “THE PIOT YEARS”



1985 - 1987

Compiled with the welcomed assistance of Gp Capt Rob O'Dell

In its electronic form, this document contains underlined, hypertext links to additional material, including alternative source data and archived video/audio clips.
[To open these links in a separate browser tab and thus not lose your place in this e-document, press control+click (Windows) or command+click (Apple Mac) on the underlined word or image]

Preface

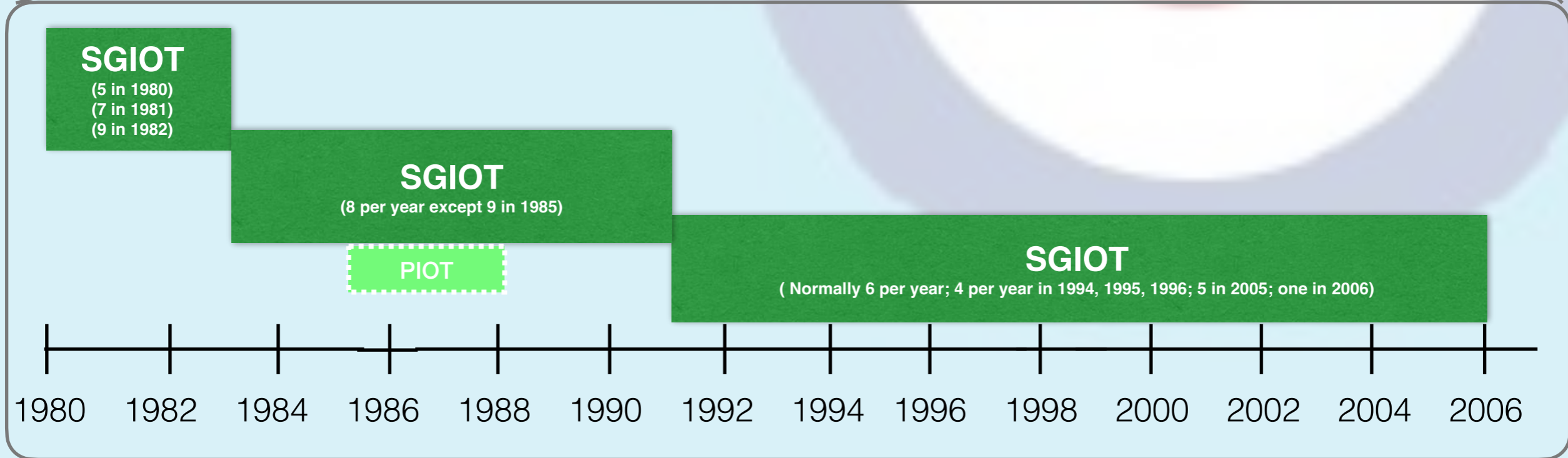
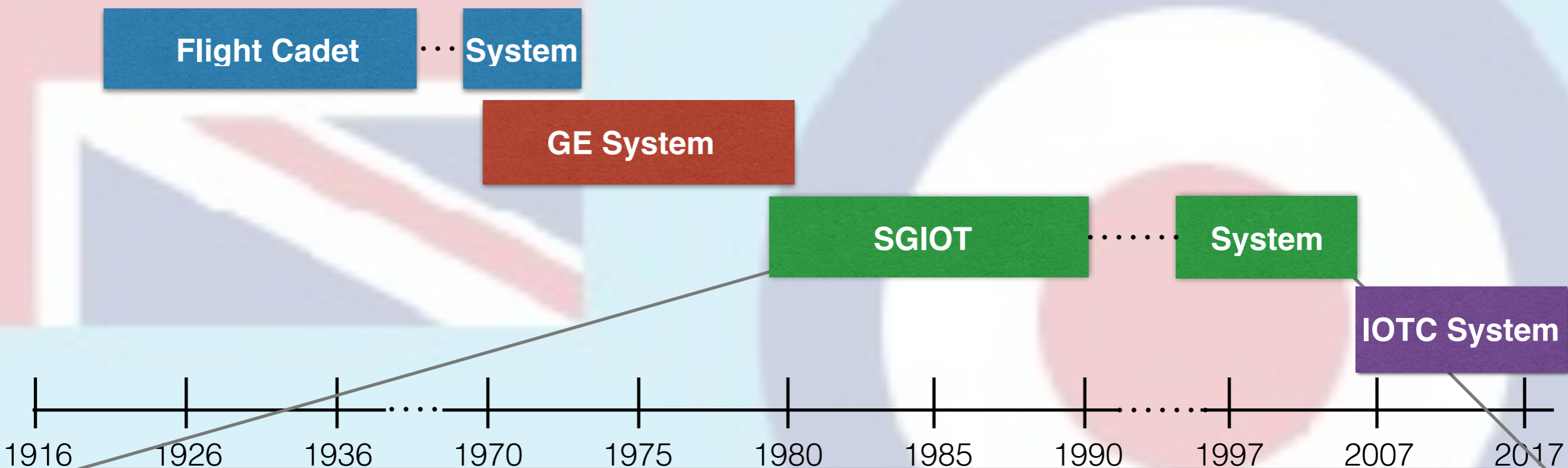
During preparations for College 100, the Cranwellian Historical Society (CHS) created a comprehensive suite of alumni albums, drawing on the information found primarily in the College Hall Library Archive and verified by data from other public sources. Much of this information had been diligently maintained by dedicated Library staff until c1973, at which point defence savings measures resulted in inevitable reductions in Library resource and, as a consequence, the commitment to maintain up-to-date records in a vast archive spanning 100 years of history.

As the readership of this CHS website increased, we started receiving helpful feedback and donations of memorabilia from serving and retired Cranwellians, and their relatives, which increased our knowledge and understanding of College graduations and associated alumni, thus helping to preserve the College Heritage to which many had already contributed. For example, we significantly increased our knowledge of flying training courses and operations at the College during WWII and of war time lodger units such as 2 CFS and 3 (C) TU. More recently, we have received feedback from College alumni through the RAF Galaxy Alumni Network, enabling us to better understand the transition from the Flight Cadet and Graduate Entry era (1947-1979) to the IOT and IOTC era (1980-2019).

The subject of this album - the PIOT Years - draws heavily on the memorabilia and notes kindly donated by Robert O'Dell, himself a graduate of 100 PIOT and 100 IOT of 1986/7. Very much reflecting a 'personal' account of Rob's experience and understanding of his PIOT course, it presents the only records we have seen of the short-lived PIOT programme and adds fundamentally to our knowledge of a significant, early phase of the IOT era. Moreover, it spotlights the significance of the most transformational change in officer training undertaken by the RAF College since its inception on 5 February 1920.

We are most grateful for Rob's help in "filling in the gaps" in our knowledge and preserving a record of the PIOT years.

1980s in Context of other RAF cadet training systems



Context

As articulated in other albums on the CHS website, the Graduate Entry (GE) training system replaced the Post-WWII Flight Cadet system in the early 70s, itself metamorphosing into the IOT system fully established by 1980. This “new” IOT training system was a product of the Single Gate IOT (SGIOT) initiative of 1978 - see Page 8 of the 1978 College Journal at <http://www.cranwell-college.life/Journals/500/mobile/index.html> - which included the closure of RAF Henlow and the transfer of *all* officer cadet training, regardless of branch, to the RAF College. Within two years, throughput at the RAF College had increased dramatically, from three graduations a year of no more than 60 cadets per course, to eight or nine graduations a year of some 120 cadets or more per course - representing an unprecedented demand on limited training resources at the College.

Doubtless this increase created considerable transitional issues. Amongst these, there is the suggestion that the IOT pass-out rate achieved in the early 80s was not as high as had been planned, understandable given the intensive demands of the College’s new remit. It is thought that this might have created the need for a PIOT, to offer some young (between the ages of 18 and 21) male recruits more time to adapt to the disciplinary regime of a Service environment, thereby increasing their chances of success on the main IOT course. It worked for a while.

Pre-IOT was by no means a new concept at the College. In the preceding GE era, for example, some engineer recruits received informal technical training, of varying duration, ahead of their IOT principally to counter the threat of any “late” job offers from industry. However, the four-week PIOT introduced around 1985 was likely the first formal training programme to better prepare younger recruits, regardless of branch, for an intensive period of IOT. Despite some initial success, the PIOT initiative was abandoned in 1987; the reasons are not recorded.

The PIOT Syllabus

Specifically that of 100 PIOT

From the College Journal extracts of the day, it is clear that the main IOT course was training men and women of a considerable age range, typically 17 to 40+, and from very different backgrounds. Add to this, the number within any one cohort and the intensity of the 18-week course, it is not surprising that some struggled to meet the demands of IOT. Enter the PIOT. Rob O'Dell suggests the PIOT was restricted to male recruits under the age of 21. His own PIOT started on 10 November 1986, comprised 24 recruits, the youngest being 17 years of age. The majority of his cohort were 18 or 19, joining with sixth-form scholarships; older members were SNCOs between the ages of 35 and 45, selected to receive Branch Commissions.

It is clear that SGIOT had introduced arguably the most significant change since the RAF College began training operations on 5 February 1920. The academically based Flight Cadet system, with second/third year cadets awarded SNCO cadet ranks, had been abandoned. So had the 'GE' system geared exclusively towards University Graduates trained as junior officers (i.e. Pilot Officers) with some receiving antedates for seniority for the degrees they had attained, resulting in rapid 'time based' promotion to Flying Officer or Flight Lieutenant during IOT. In their place was the OCTU type training of 'Officer Cadets': non-graduate 'Direct Entrants' graduating as Acting Pilot Officers; ex-SNCOs (or "Hairies") graduating under the 'Branch Officers' scheme in their former specialisation as Flying Officers; University 'Student Officers' graduating in the rank of Flying Officer or Flight Lieutenant of their chosen profession.

The four-week PIOT syllabus was a 'mini' version of the main IOT and included:

- Basic leadership exercises;
- Camp craft and navigation;
- Service writing;
- Personal admin (ironing and regular 'bull' nights).



'Bull' night - Rob O'Dell wearing headphones

RAF College Main Gates and SHQ 1985

Kindly Donated by Clive Montellier of 86 IOT



The introduction of the PIOT initiative coincided with a major refurbishment of College Hall, probably restricting its use for an already busy IOT. As we shall see, PIOT cadets and first term cadets on the main IOT course - the Junior Squadron - were accommodated and underwent most of their 'square bashing' on the other side of College Avenue, in the vicinity of station headquarters.

Junior Squadron IOT and PIOT Accommodation

As Rob O'Dell recounts:

"We lived 'National Service style' in a large barrack block as can be seen in the photo. That block still stands and is opposite the current HQ P&SS (formerly Education Centre) building.



Off duty, we used the old 'No 2 Officers Mess' canteen and bar (opposite the new SLAM blocks, and now used for storage) and the 'public rooms' which were in a now long-gone portacabin on the car park near East Camp Gym.*

These facilities were shared with the Junior Squadron on the main course (so in our case 99 IOT)."

*Single Living Accommodation Model (SLAM) blocks were introduced in a 1990s programme to replace old (often c1930s) multi-occupancy rooms across the military with modern, ensuite single rooms in a bid to improve retention.

The Practice Parade Square 1985

Kindly Donated by Clive Montellier of 86 IOT and Rob O'Dell of 100 PIOT



“.....there was a LOT of physical training - as we were all young, we were expected to be very fit - and drill. The latter included rifle and bayonet parade drill with the SLR, something which was unique by that stage for officer cadets.” - Ed’s Note: Shades of the 1920s, see <https://www.britishpathe.com/asset/120560/>.

Each PIOT was run by two Flight Lieutenants and two RAF Regt (Flight Sergeant) Drill Instructors.

PIOT Leadership Camp

On the final week of PIOT, cadets attended a Leadership Camp, to consolidate the physical education, basic leadership exercises, and camp craft and navigation phases of PIOT.



100 PIOT Leadership Camp was held at Anzio Army Training Camp near Leek in Staffordshire and included a night in a local barn

Reviewed by the 'Wg Cdr Cadets', each PIOT would formally graduate on the parade square (previous slide) outside No 1 Officers Mess, cadets wearing No 2 uniforms and completing SLR rifle drill with fixed bayonets - very reminiscent of Pre-WWII IOT graduations.

The Main IOT Syllabus

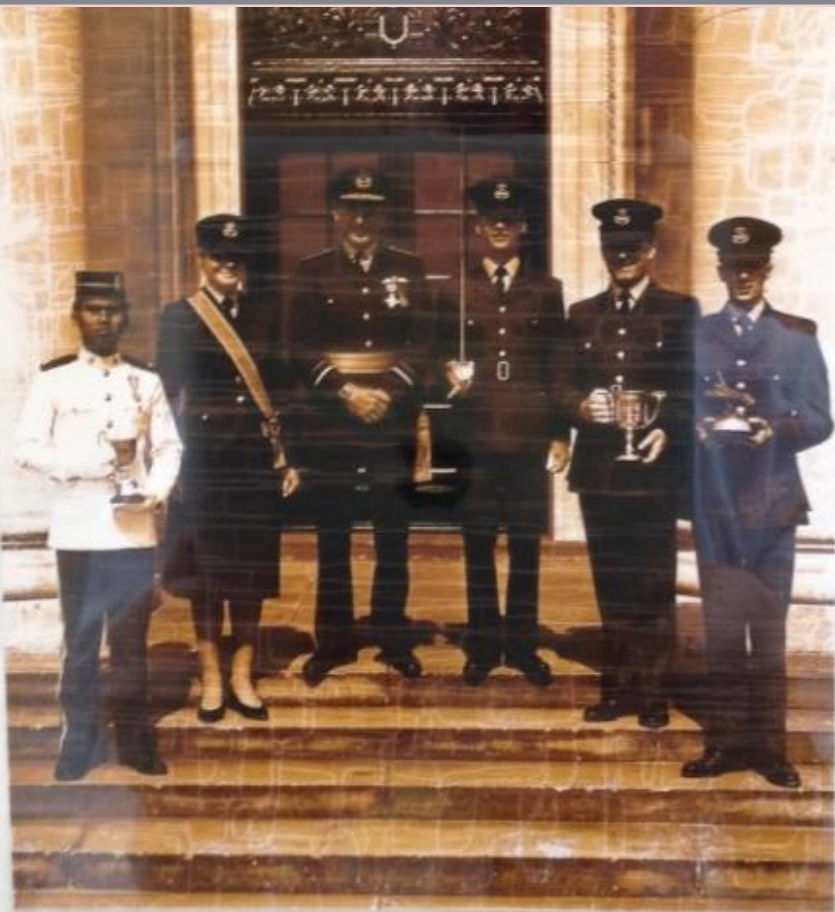
Our earlier research suggests that the impact of SGIOT on the College was to abandon the training model employed for the earlier Flight Cadet and Graduate Entry Schemes at the College - for pilots, navigators, engineers, supply and secretarial trainees - and to adapt the Henlow Officer Cadet Training Unit (OCTU) training model that had evolved during Post-WWII years to prepare officer cadets for commissions in a much wider, diverse range of air and ground branches. We know from Cadets' first impressions recorded in the College Journals of the time - see several accounts at <https://www.cranwellian-ian.com/college-life/ewExternalFiles/Impressionsv0.5NOV23.pdf> - that the "new" IOT comprised:

- A "physically demanding" 18-week course;
- Three fields of instruction and training: Physical Discipline; Practical Leadership; Officers' Responsibilities & Communications;
- Three phases, each lasting approximately six weeks and covering theory, practical application and simulation of both office and battle environments.

In stark contrast to earlier 'GE' days when there were two squadrons of four flights each, the 'new' IOT era at its peak employed four squadrons, each of 13 flights. There was even the occasional 'R' Squadron of 'recoursed' cadets - for example, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDY8aTMX-2o>. From these figures, we conclude that most IOT flights contained approximately 10 cadets, slightly less than the 'GE' days. However, it is clear from the cadets' first impressions of the 1980s that the College was still coming to terms with training "mature" university graduates, in quick time, as distinct from the former school pupils destined to spend two, sometimes three, years at the College during the Post-WWII Flight Cadet era. The PIOT, we suspect, was an attempt to better accommodate a proportion of much younger male cadets being recruited in the mid-80s, preparing them for the strict regime and expected standards assumed of their older counterparts.

100 IOT Prizewinners & Graduation

Rob O'Dell, to whom we are most grateful for this insight, successfully graduated 100 PIOT and 100 IOT. He continues in Service to this day in the rank of Group Captain, together with three others of his cohort, also of senior rank.



100 INITIAL OFFICER TRAINING COURSE - 23 APR 87

PRIZEWINNERS

AvM G C Williams AFC FRAeS
Reviewing Officer

- L to R

2nd Lt R Karim RMAF
The Overseas Students' Prize

A Plt Off M W Connard
The Sword of Honour
- Plt Off D Pearson BSc
The Sash of Merit

Fg Off D Milligan
The Hennessy Trophy and
Philip Sassoon Memorial Prize
- Plt Off P T G Lester
The BAC Trophy



No. 100 Initial Officer Training Course — C Squadron 23 April 1987

<i>Back Row</i>	Pt Off S W Hall BSc Pt Lt D G Overton BA Pt Off G M Graham BSc Pt Off G G MacLennan Pt Off A Butler	Pt Off D Lewis Pt Off S B Bennett BA A Pt Off S C Bennett Pt Off S B Collins Pt Off J L Donohued BSc	A Pt Off A M Mann Pt Off M W G Lamb BA Pt Off A L Sauer WRAF Pt Off C D Flinn Pt Off C Best	A Pt Off D R Johnson A Pt Off M L Large Pt Off C L Lupton WRAF Pt Off S L S Curry BSc Pt Off A D Elcock	3 Lt G M AJ Daniels OCAF A Pt Off N Cooke Pt Off N R Astrow BSc A Pt Off D A Harrow Pt Off C A Tomes BSc	A Pt Off B R Duguid Pt Off C P Thomas BSc Pt Off D V W Siddington A Pt Off J J Caine Pt Off A D Fuller
<i>Fourth Row</i>	Pt Off S M Karim BA A Pt Off P M Langton Pt Off S Bisset Pt Off D A King BSc Pt Off M E L O'Brien BSc	A Pt Off D K Phair Pt Off S B Swainson BSc A Pt Off S Bond A Pt Off S P Webb Pt Off S H Adams BEng	Pt Off M S J Ruggens Pt Off C P Davies A Pt Off M D Wilson Pt Off L J T Davison BSc Pt Off B T Richardson	A Pt Off B C Owen Pt Off M S Miles A Pt Off M J M Edwards Pt Off J R Broadbent Pt Off A J MacIntosh	A Pt Off I D Hayworth A Pt Off T Mackie Pt Off P S Laidler Pt Off P E Owen Pt Off S D James BA	A Pt Off S M O'Dell A Pt Off T J Mearns Pt Off M D McCaughey BSc Pt Off C B Warriner BSc
<i>Third Row</i>	A Pt Off M G Wootton Pt Off D F Smith Pt Off A AJ Palmer SOAF Pt Off L M Innes BSc	Pt Off D R Williams BSc Pt Off M Johnson Pt Off A A M AJ Sales SOAF Pt Off M A Allen BA	Pt Off M J Ryan BA Pt Off C D Jarrett Pt Off P J Watson BSc Pt Off A D Callender	Pt Off M Skelton Pt Off B B Whelan Pt Off P A Smalton Pt Off D Clarkson	A Pt Off C J Fraser Pt Off M M AJ Bussell SOAF Pt Off G D Griffiths Pt Off N Strickland	Pt Off P J M Newson BSc Pt Off M M W AJ Neary SOAF Pt Off J A Sykes Pt Off D P McCulloch
<i>Second Row</i>	Pt Off A C Ingham Pt Off D W Wilson Pt Off D L Styrac BSc WRAF Pt Off K V Newson WRAF	Pt Off A G M Reid Pt Off M S Beach BA Pt Off C Y Lawson BSc WRAF Pt Off C J Mills BA	Pt Off P B Horton Pt Off D Bottomley Lt H O N AJ Daniels OCAF Pt Off P B Howcroft	Pt Off B T Drummond Pt Off M AJ Sauer RCAF Pt Off P G Adam BSc Pt Off D J Alexander BEng	Pt Off J R Ellis Pt Off A G Paterson BSc Pt Off G R Huggins BSc Pt Off C J Byrne	Pt Off G B Macdonald Pt Off S C Griffiths WRAF Pt Off I D King
<i>Front Row</i>	Pt J T Linn Pt Lt P S Doughty Sgt Lt P B Keir Pt Lt A V Pether Pt Lt R W Jennings	Pt Lt A C Mann 2 Lt R A Karim RMAF Pt Off D Pearson WRAF Pt Lt L J Clark BSc Pt B J Graham	Pt Lt N A Pugh BSc Pt Off D Milligan Pt Lt C A James Pt Lt J C Smith	Pt R A Holloway Pt Lt A P McPhee BA Pt Off P T G Lester Pt Lt A Campbell	Pt Lt M C B Stannard Pt Lt J J Perry Pt Lt M G Warrington Pt Lt G C A Canning	Pt Lt C M Taylor A Pt Off M W Connard Pt Lt M S White OCFeeble WRAF Pt Lt W Jones BSc WRAF