

RAF COLLEGE CRANWELL

“College 100 Memories”



A Summary of College Items - Chapter 1
College Life from 1920 - 2019

Prologue

If ever you are required to research something on the heritage of the RAF College - it could be looking up details of a relative who might have been trained at the College, or it could be a more complex review of specific trends throughout its 100 year history - inevitably you will be encouraged to explore the Library's holding of College Journals.

In addition to many other records held within the College and other, third party archives, these journals contain a wealth of information on the milestones, the events and the thinking that underpinned College operations. They are essential reading for anyone who wishes to gain an understanding of how the College evolved and took on the challenges that confronted the world's oldest air training academy throughout its marvellous history.

As its contribution to "College 100" - the celebration of 100 years of officer training at the RAF College - the Cranwellian Historical Society created a suite of albums intended to capture RAF Cranwell's heritage, one album for each year of the College's existence and containing authentic extracts from the College Journals.

One of six chapters that portray 100 selected topics - 'memories' per se - this album draws on chronological Journal extracts in an attempt to summarise life at the College throughout its history, from a variety of perspectives. They are extracts of the original articles in the Journals and so their accuracy is dependent on the authors of the day; the dates in each slide title indicate each article's date of origin.

We hope "College 100 Memories" gives you an enjoyable insight into life at the College between 1920 and 2010. Happy reading.

Memories that Symbolise College Life in 100 Years

To start any specific article:

1. Click on the slide number shown in red on this page;
2. To return to this contents page, click on 'Return to Contents List' at the bottom of each slide.

- [4.](#) Early Days at RAF Cranwell (1920)
- [7.](#) The Cranwell Beagles Articles (2) (1920 & 1962)
- [10.](#) Cadet Impressions (21) (1920, 1964, 1997, 2006/7 & 2010/11/12/13/16)
- [49.](#) College Contribution to Coronation Day (1953)
- [52.](#) Cranwell in the Early 20s (1955)
- [54.](#) Life at Cranwell (1955)
- [58.](#) Cranwell in the Early 30s (1955)
- [60.](#) Three Ages of Cranwell (1956)
- [61.](#) Cranwell in Retrospect (1957)
- [63.](#) Cadet Wit (1958)
- [65.](#) The Legend of Byard's Leap (1962)
- [66.](#) The College Band (4) (1964, 1970, 2012 & 2016)
- [71.](#) The College Library (2) (1964 & 2016)
- [73.](#) Cranwell History by AVM Lyne (1982)
- [75.](#) Battle of Britain Sunday Service (2007)
- [76.](#) Cranwell 60 Years Ago (2011)

September 1920 - Early Days at RAFC (1)

R.A.F. CADET COLLEGE MAGAZINE

31

THE DULL ROUTINE OF PEACE.

BY AIR-COMMODORE PHILIP GAME.

MANY of us in France, and I have no doubt it was the same in other theatres, used to comfort ourselves when the prospect of an early victory seemed somewhat remote by an inward vow to have a real good spell of leave once the war was really over before we settled down again to what we fondly imagined would be the dull routine of peace.

We might have known better then if we had had time to think about it and had not been rather glad to hug the illusion.

We certainly know better now.

There is not going to be any dull routine of peace for the Air Force for many years to come, if ever, and for two reasons.

In the first place, even if we are at peace with the rest of humanity, a desirable state not yet realized, we are still left to struggle with the weather, the law of gravity, and other limitations of natural science, and with all the problems that confront man when he aspires to pursue his activities in an element totally different from that for which nature intended him.

Doubtless all these problems will be solved eventually as the growth of scientific knowledge and research enables us more and more to subdue the forces of nature to our needs, but they will provide arduous and intensely interesting work for many generations of airmen, and as they are solved fresh problems will inevitably arise to take their place.

The second factor which will preserve us from dulness and ennui may not be so lasting, but will be present in an acute form for the next few years. The older services have grown up through the centuries from small beginnings, moulding themselves in a comparatively leisurely fashion to meet changing conditions and needs. Even great advances in science, such as the invention of gunpowder or of the steam engine, did not cause sudden and violent changes in the constitution of our Army or Navy. The conquest of the air would in all probability have pursued a similar course as regards its military application had it not been for the war, though the writer remembers vividly how at the conference at the end of the 1912 Army manoeuvres, at which the opposing armies for the first time had aircraft at their disposal, Sir James Grierson, who commanded one side, began his narrative by insisting that aerial reconnaissance had revolutionized the whole business.

The war found aviation in the embryo, and compressed its birth, childhood, youth, and early manhood into four strenuous years.

The Armistice left us with an Air Force which had expanded a hundredfold, and had bequeathed to us an undying example of courage and staying power on which

32

R.A.F. CADET COLLEGE MAGAZINE

to build, but it had been raised almost entirely on a temporary basis, and what remains can only bridge the gulf for a short time, while we fashion the permanent force required in times of comparative peace with the necessary expansive power in the event of war.

It is a big business if you sit down to think it out—to create a complete fighting service in a year or two out of nothing but a grand example, four years' war experience, and a very temporary legacy of men and material. Minerva is reported to have sprung fully armed from the head of Jove; but even granted that the story is correct, the armament of a goddess in prehistoric times can have been nothing as compared to the equipment of even a single squadron of modern aeroplanes. Think for a moment of some of the problems that have to be tackled and solved. There are the bedrock problems of organization, expansion, terms of service of officers and men, and their initial and higher training, accommodation, equipment, storage, and many others. All these have to be decided and decided quickly, and in a highly technical service mistakes are apt to be costly and far-reaching.

We must also expect to be criticized, and it will do us no harm. As a race, we are intensely conservative and slow to accept novelties. The average man takes the Army and Navy for granted—he has known them more or less intimately all his life; but the Royal Air Force is a new creation. A great many people don't even know that it exists as a separate force. Others conceive of it as consisting of a certain number of aeroplanes and a vast amount of motor transport, both obviously expensive, and of little else. If they look a little deeper, they find we require considerable areas of ground for aerodromes, large hangars, and much workshop accommodation. These, too, obviously cost money, and as the financial aspect looms large on everyone's horizon nowadays, we are certain to be assailed on the score of expense. Again, we are bound to be compared in all we do with the Army and Navy, and must do everything not only as well as, but even better than, they if we are to overcome the handicap inherent in being something new.

All these are difficulties to overcome, but overcoming difficulties is, after all, the essence of existence and if we look on the other side of the picture there can be no doubt that aviation has come to stay. Be future developments what they may it is self-evident that no naval or military commander who has once enjoyed the advantage of "seeing the other side of the hill" is going to forego that advantage willingly in future.

Therefore whatever our initial troubles may be we have got to succeed and we can if we mean to. Organization, training, accommodation—all will come if we buckle to with a will; and the mere fact of making good will silence our critics, or, better still, turn their endeavours into useful channels.

The whole secret of success in the future lies in realizing what a tremendous

[Return to Contents List](#)

September 1920 - Early Days at RAFC (2)



MESS ENTRANCE HALL.



MESS.

proposition we are up against, and in taking off our coats and really getting down to work, and we must all do it, and all do it equally, from the Chief of the Air Staff to the last-joined boy-mechanic. The Air Force at this stage is no place for the half-hearted. It embraces officers of many categories and men of many trades, but each one is essential to the efficiency of the whole, and in so far as his heart is or is not in his job he reacts on the complete machine.

Another thing we must all remember is that we have got to make the best of what we have. There is no harm in asking for something better—more efficient machines, improved training facilities, or whatever it may be—and in continuing to ask for it, but that must not prevent us from doing our utmost with what we have. We must always guard against the tendency to say that if we had so-and-so we could do this and that, and to do nothing in consequence. There is a great deal of truth in the saying that “the best is the enemy of the good.” When the four original R.F.C. Squadrons went to France in 1914, they left behind them at Farnborough one unserviceable motor car and precious little else, but the officer left in charge there (the present C.A.S.) made the best of nothing, and within a few weeks mobilized and sent overseas a fifth squadron at twenty-four hours’ notice. That is the spirit we have to cultivate.

Apart from the actual professional work, we have also to develop the social and recreational side of Air Force life. These, rightly regarded, are a help and not a hindrance to professional work, and are of the first importance if we are to take our due place in the national life, and are not to become a more or less narrow professional force only dimly realized by the majority of our countrymen.

By the social side it is not intended to convey only such functions as dances and garden parties, but also the demand we must meet for the general education of all ranks with a view to sending them back to civil life at the expiration of their service better men and citizens from both their own and the national point of view.

We have one inestimable advantage. One of the world’s great military commanders—Napoleon, I think—said that he would always prefer an army of asses led by a lion to an army of lions led by an ass. Well, we have the lion (with, if rumour is correct, a well-developed roar and bite), and let us hope that the rest of us are not all in the other category.

September 1920 - Early Days at RAFC (3)



1. BILLIARD ROOM.
2. READING ROOM.

3. WRITING ROOM.
4. SWIMMING BATH.

[Return to Contents List](#)

September 1920 - The Cranwell Beagles (1a)

R.A.F. CADET COLLEGE MAGAZINE

17

THE CRANWELL BEAGLES.

THERE are some people, good sportsmen too, who can get no enjoyment at all from a day's shooting unless the bag almost reaches four figures, and will not fish a stream unless they can be tolerably certain of catching three or four brace of big trout in the day. There are, fortunately, others who will walk twenty miles over the wilds of Skye and come home happy with a couple of snipe, and will enjoy themselves with a rod by any stream or lake, though the chances of a fish are too small to thread on drawn gut.

Most of the followers of the pack last season must have been of this last type. How many miles the enthusiasts ran for every hare they saw killed no one will ever know, but it cannot have been less than a hundred, and may have been more. Those who were new to beagling, and expected hare hunting to result always, or even often, in hare catching, must have been very disappointed. In a certain sense it was a very disappointing season, however much we enjoyed it. Day after day and week after week the pack were robbed, by the untimely appearance of a fresh hare, of a well-deserved kill. Good though parts of our country undoubtedly are, there is no place where one can hunt a hare for an hour (and a 13-inch pack will hardly kill a Lincolnshire hare in less) without getting into some field which seems to be a sort of club where every hare from miles round comes to spend the afternoon.

In all forms of hunting, and in beagling most of all, a good hunt is a good hunt, and loses none of its goodness by ending in favour of the pursued; but it would be futile to pretend that we would not have liked to kill far oftener than we did. Two hares killed out of perhaps 70 hunted cannot give any hound a very good impression of the season, and in our case it was undoubtedly want of blood which caused the very noticeable loss of style towards the end.

The season began in rather an inauspicious way during October. Very few followers turned out, and the hunting was mostly done on the Aerodrome and near Sleaford. When the Cadet College was formed the pack was soon put on a sound footing, and regular meets took place twice a week from then till nearly the end of March. The hunt servants were put into uniform, which probably raised the prestige of the pack not a little; transport was provided for hounds and followers, and the success of the season was assured as far as was humanly possible.

The pack, which is the old "New Forest," numbered eight couple of old hounds and a few puppies, and was quite large enough until the usual thinning of the ranks took place in the early spring. Almost every hound was useful, some were very good, while one or two had periods of brilliance which gave the huntsmen an exaggerated idea of their reliability for weeks after they had relapsed into mediocrity.

The country over which we hunted lies in a half-circle to the east, south, and west of Cranwell; there are too many hares to the north. No meet lay more than

B

18

R.A.F. CADET COLLEGE MAGAZINE

eight miles off, and most were but half that distance. To mention by name every landowner and farmer who entertained us would be to write a small directory of the district. Our difficulty was not to find meets, but days enough to allow us to accept the invitations which were so generously given. Even though the heavy stock of hares was against us wherever we went, any day with a vestige of scent saw an excellent hunting run, while on a good day only those blessed with good legs and lungs saw anything at all. We generally started well, and ran our hare with scarcely a check till one of the fatal fields was reached from every corner of which hares, big, small, light and dark, could be seen fleeing from our approach. Then followed horn-blowing, whip-cracking, hard running, and, one fears, a little hard swearing, for it was generally useless to start hunting again. There were some well-remembered exceptions, days when no hound had a thought for any but the hunted hare, when the huntsman cast right first shot, and whippers-in always happened to be where they were wanted. One such day was November 25th, when our never-to-be-forgotten first kill was scored at Asgarby. Our hare on that occasion considerably ran a ring on the low ground, where other hares were scarce, and avoided the high ground above the village, where they swarmed in every field. Beginning at a great pace, the pack ran almost without faltering for an hour and seven minutes, and eventually pulled her down in full view of the whole field, and within 200 yards of where she was found. We also had an excellent hunt at Culverthorpe just before Christmas, and also at Quarrington in January, and Dorrington a little later. This last was the longest hunt of the season, and lasted an hour and three-quarters. The pace was good throughout, and only the failure of scent saved a very plucky hare at the end. Space will not allow even a mention of many other fine hunts; almost every day was a good one, and many produced two or more excellent runs.

Since the close of the season, which was wound up by a fine hunt from Bloxholm Hall, bad luck has dogged us. Of fifteen puppies born, only two are now living. Beagles seem to be the very poorest of mothers, and this, coupled with atrocious weather in April, and other misfortunes too numerous to mention in detail, has almost ruined our prospects for the present breeding season.

Next season we hope to start early and steal a march on some of the inexperienced young hares, and if we can blood the pack once or twice at the start we ought to have a first-rate season. We have discovered the best parts of the country, and we shall have quite enough thoroughly good hounds to show excellent sport. We can only hope that everyone will turn out at least occasionally, remembering that it is not all hard running and cold waiting. A bad day can be quite good fun if there are enough people out to amuse one another.

C. A. P.

[Return to Contents List](#)

September 1920 - The Cranwell Beagles (1b)



[Return to Contents List](#)

Spring 1962 - The Cranwell Beagles (2)



BEAGLING

“WHAT pleasure do you get from chasing a poor little hare all over the countryside?” I have been asked this question many times whilst I have been at Cranwell. The answer is that beagling does not consist of chasing a hare all over the countryside. Beagling is a sport in the truest sense of the word. It combines all the skills of hunting a wild animal and all the health-giving exercise of rugger or soccer. Added to this the day almost always ends with a delicious tea, which should attract all those who have to endure the rigours of high tea on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

On the North Airfield at Cranwell, just beyond Married Quarters, is a collection of wood and corrugated-iron buildings. These are the kennels of the Per Ardua (R.A.F.) Beagles. This pack was formed in 1951 by the present Master, Air Commodore L. G. Levis. The pack consists of 20 couples, which are expertly looked after by Mr Jack Pipes, the Kennel Huntsman. The post of Kennel Huntsman is far more important

than it seems at first sight. If you have kept a sporting dog, you will realise that the work involved in keeping 40 dogs in the peak of physical fitness is a full-time job. The Kennel Huntsman has to get to know every hound as well as a normal person would know their family pet. He has to grow equally fond of all of them, and have no favourites. Hounds can be very jealous animals. It is the Kennel Huntsman's job to feed and nurse them throughout the year.

The Master, however, is virtual owner of the pack. They are his responsibility. In a pack of beagles the Master is usually the Huntsman as well. That is, he is in charge of the pack in the hunting field. He decides where to draw for the hare and he controls the pack throughout the day's hunting. He does this by means of his voice and by sounding different calls on his horn. He will convey his wishes either directly to the hounds or to the whippers in, who are usually known as “whips.” The whip's job is to carry on the Master's orders, in turning

the pack, stopping them hunting a certain line and various other tasks. Whips must be fit and know the hounds and country nearly as well as the Master.

So far it sounds like hard work, without any fun. This is not so. Hounds, and beagles especially, are charming animals. They have a great deal of character, and are very intelligent. Their keenness could well be a lesson to some humans. It can't be argued that they hunt for food because they are hungry. It is true that they eat the hare once they have killed it. However I believe that they chase the hare mainly for the pleasure of following the scent. This can best be shown by the case of a puppy, who on coming upon the hunted hare completely exhausted did not kill it, but nudged it with his nose, as if to say “Come on, you are ruining my sport by just sitting there.” The sound of hounds in full cry after their quarry is one that would excite even the most unmusical ear, and the sight of them casting about to pick up a line which they have lost, amazes even those who have hunted for years.

Now to the “poor, helpless little hare.” The hare is an animal whose numbers have to be kept within limits. Anyone who has hunted the hare at all, would tell you that

she is neither poor nor helpless. She is one of the most nimble-footed animals in the British Isles. Added to this, nature has endowed her with cunning equal to that of the proverbial fox. A hare was seen to run out into the middle of a field, turn around and run straight back to the hedge, and then take a tremendous bound to one side. When hounds followed the scent into the middle of the field they were at a total loss. Another hare was seen to run in a complete circle in the middle of a field and then jump well to one side. This also baffled the hounds for a good time. The hare is not a timid animal either. Some of the feats of sheer foolhardy valour which they perform are beyond comprehension. One hare, having been put up, was seen to indulge in a fierce fight with another hare until hounds were nearly on top of her, and only then did she make good her escape.

An added enjoyment to be gained from beagling is that it gives one a chance to meet some of the local population. Yes, there is some local population in Lincolnshire. What is more some of the local population even have daughters!

So you see beagling is more than just a blood sport, it is a form of recreation, and a very pleasant one at that.



“Moving off at Fulbeck”

[Return to Contents List](#)

September 1920 - First Impressions (1a)

CRANWELL : AN IMPRESSION.

It depends so much upon your point of view : from that of the Fleet Street journalist so anxious to save his country's money it looks like one of those gorgeous, cloud-capped palaces in "The Golden Age" or "Dream-Days"; from the point of view of a man walking out from Sleaford or Ancaster on a bleak March morning it represents the nadir of existence, something unbelievably harsh and ugly and inaccessible . . . that lighter-than-air shed gets up and walks towards you and away from you like some ogre with a perverted sense of humour; to the hunting man riding over the soft down in the fast fading light after a day of heaven in the open it means a hot bath, comfort, food and drink, someone to tell the day's wild joys to; to the unimaginative—if the unimaginative can see at all—it looks like a joke, a lot of brick buildings dropped on one side of a wood, a lot of black wooden huts on another side of a wood, a modern country house in a wood, a grotesquely large black shed (you can never fail to see that) well away from a wood, a target, a haystack, a railway station, a lot of signposts, a post-office, and a running track. It is just a ridiculous toy bought by some unthinking Olympian for his giant or Titan babies to play with; the aeroplanes are, of course, his clockwork dragon-flies—every journalist has to say that sooner or later, so I might as well let it slip out now while I remember it.

From the point of view of— But I might go on like this for ever. What is the point of view of every man you have ever brought to it? Isn't it (sickeningly) the same?

"My hat!" he says. "This takes me back; this is an Indian hill station. . . . I can smell —"

"What can you smell?" you ask suspiciously.

He forgets to answer.

"But, my God! what a wind! Can't you fly without an accompanying gale?"

You point out pityingly that it is just possible. He doesn't listen.

"But healthy," he goes on. "Good heavens! you ought to be 'full out' here."

You tell him acidly that this is not Maidenhead, Ascot, or even Goodwood.

"You won't see the cream of England's youth lying in perfectly creased flannels on the greensward fanning themselves in the shimmering heat, if that's what you want," you grunt.

"A bit away from things, isn't it?" he goes on, soaring from platitude to platitude.

"It depends upon what you mean by 'things,'" you retort. "There are quite a lot of aeroplanes."

"Yes, I suppose you come here to fly," he continues.

"Well, as the fishing here isn't frightfully good, we do that sometimes," you moan.

"Yes—but after work . . . you can't fly all day."

By this time you are tired of answering questions.

"Follow me," you say.

He follows; after two hours' steady walking he sinks to the ground.

"I must have a drink," he gasps.

"But I haven't shown you anything yet: there are the swimming-baths, the squash courts, the fives courts, the tennis courts, the hard courts, the billiard-room, the wireless place, the canteen . . ."

"Oh, shut up!" he replies irritably. "We have lifts in London . . ."

"Which reminds me that I forgot to show you the kitchen and the parade ground."

"All right! all right!" he says. "I retract everything: this is a service flat with all modern conveniences; this is . . . oh, anything you like—but why do you try to pretend that you are in a wilderness when you're really a completely organized and very flourishing city?"

"I've not pretended any such thing," I said. "It's the country."

"Yes," he muses; "I believe you're right. They told me Lincolnshire was dull and flat."

"If by dull you mean a county which never looks the same for two minutes . . ."

"And flat with that pull up from Caythorpe . . . yes, we're an inaccurate race."

He settles down to his drink, and falls asleep in the middle of his next question. But what do they know of Cranwell who only Cranwell know?

To realize the endless variety and charm (yes, I repeat, charm—I hated it once) of Cranwell you must explore.

You must go out with the Beagles and the Blankney and the Belvoir, and get lost. If you have any historic sense, you'll rush through the centuries at incredible speed; you'll dash across a road, and see right and left a wide grassy straightness as far as the eye can see either way—Roman—you'll catch sight of a name on a signpost, "Skirth" or some such quaintness—Danish, pure Danish. You'll see an aged face of a workman standing as still as a stone as you flit past. One look, and your mind will hark back—hark back to something remote and precious, and well-nigh lost elsewhere. You may not be much of an archæologist, but in so far as you love this land at all you can't help being proud of something that Time hasn't changed and foreigners haven't spoiled. Lincolnshire is pure England.

Comes summer-time, and you wonder (you can't help it) at the wanton riot of colour in front of the Officers' Mess. This a wilderness? It's like Devon.

September 1920 - First Impressions (1b)

You push out on foot, on "stink bike" or "push bike," and rediscover the villages, once clipped like a sheep, and bare to all the winds that blow (and there isn't one which spares Lincolnshire), now nestling among full-foliaged trees, their gardens prolific with the good things of life, their inhabitants pleasure-loving and energetic, unspoilt rustics. . . . Have you noticed how they dance in Lincolnshire? Can you ride ten miles on any evening in the week without seeing a game of cricket in progress?

There is hope for England yet if all her countryside is like this countryside . . . and what is it all due to? The wind! So that is why Cranwell is where it is, and why we are what we are. The wind!

CRANWELL: ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW.

THERE is an undercurrent throughout the history of a locality which deeply affects those who are connected with the place, and leaves an impression on their memories which remains more deeply rooted than any visual details, though these all combine to produce the spirit of the place. This undercurrent is evolved from the ideals and enthusiasm of the inhabitants and their scenic surroundings, in which they endeavour to attain the collective and individual desires of the community to which they belong.

When we arrived here early in the year, the scene of grey corrugated iron and large open spaces, whose immensity seemed limitless in the sea of damp fog which surrounded the camp, must have made impressions on us which differed from each other as widely as the individual ideals with which each of us set out. The only thought which appeared to be in any degree common to us all was a red-hot enthusiasm to prove the right of our choice of profession, and to have a share in the building up of the institution of which we were the first members.

Most of us had had difficulties of many kinds in getting to Cranwell, and a feeling of relief was evident in those who collected round the mess fireplaces on that first evening.

During the first few parades by early morning moonlight we must have had the appearance of secret detachments of the Bolshevik army in training, since at first, and for several weeks to come, we paraded in an unbelievable variety of mufti intermingled with naval uniform. Such minor drawbacks as our unairmanlike appearance did not, however, damp our keenness to do our occasionally ludicrous best to assist those officers and instructors who began our training.

The countryside round Cranwell makes a fitting background to the discipline of camp life, its strength and restful relief being typical of the country which we hope to serve. In the winter it is bleak and expansive; the winds and mists give a touch

of northern hardness to the scene, as do the severe and rugged stone walls which are common to this part of the country. There are few evergreens round here, but beech and elm trees wave their naked arms over Cranwell village, and sometimes shake the snow in heavy clouds over the roofs of the cottages.

The Lincolnshire cottages are more often built of grey stone than of red brick; in the winter they are externally chilly and hard to look at, but inside are very habitable.

Even as we have a real winter at Cranwell with rain, wind, and snow, so we have a real English summer. Over what were broad expanses of plough a warm breeze sends green and golden waves over the ripening corn. The landscape appears to be more thickly wooded than in the winter, the thick foliage strengthening the outline of clumps of trees; laburnums and other flowering shrubs blaze from the cool green and restful copper colour of shady trees in garden and wood. Grasslands assume a fresher green, sprinkled with daisies and flooded with buttercups, while small wild roses and honeysuckle hide themselves in the hedges. Even the old stone walls are alive with small flowers peeping from crevices, and insects running over their hot and dusty slopes.

There are places round here full of possibilities for all—those who pursue elusive history along the old Roman road, Ermine Street; those who pursue the still more elusive golf-ball on the Rauceby links; and others who prefer to sit in the shade of hedge or wood, and do nothing more energetic than pursue their own thoughts.

The country gives us fox-hunting and beagling, and the hard, smooth roads unwind beneath the wheels of many motor cycles. In the representative sports we are at present few and inexperienced against the many and experienced, and as yet have our traditions at games to make.

Our camp life may be summed up quite shortly: more opportunity for games than we have time to play, rather more work than we think we can do, the whole leaving us barely sufficient time to tie our G.S. ties for dinner.

We are being trained to make the most of every minute, and our surroundings offer about ten times as many opportunities as those minutes will hold.

The country is a relaxation from, and at the same time a stimulant to, our life in the camp. Those of us who walk, ride, or motor-bicycle round the country are often able to recognize features of the landscape from the air, as old friends whose closer acquaintance we have made before.

Up here we have an "all-out" winter, an "all-out" summer, and the place itself, with all those living in it, is "all out" to be proved and to attain its ideal of adventure and efficiency.

Spring 1964 - Cranwell Past & Present (2a)



CRANWELL PAST and PRESENT

*The following three articles represent
the views of three generations and
their impressions of life at the College.*

[Return to Contents List](#)

Spring 1964 - Cranwell Past & Present (2b)

Recollections of 'X' Entry 1930

When I was a cadet, and perhaps this still applies, the Squadron you were in was more important than your Entry. Now, however, after many years, the ex-cadets with whom I keep in touch and those best remembered are not the ones who were in 'A' or 'B' or 'C' Squadron, but those who arrived at and left Cranwell at the same time as myself — "X" Entry.

A few reflections on our antics may be of interest to the present generation at Cranwell because, in spite of changes over the years in syllabi, types of aircraft, makes of car etc., what cadets think and what they get up to probably has not really changed very much. If some very senior officers recognise themselves in what follows I hope they will not take offence, and perhaps the use of first names only will provide sufficient anonymity to preserve the dignity of their present ranks.

Like the current syllabus, training was divided into flying, officer training and academics and, to cadets ancient and modern, that remains the order of their importance.

One's first solo is always a great occasion, but I remember feeling somewhat disappointed. My instructor had got me (in seven hours — rather a long time then) to a state where there was little chance of anything going wrong, and all I remember about it was faint surprise at not seeing his head in front of me. Otherwise this epic occasion passed off quite uneventfully and I do not recall any noteworthy incidents. From first solo onwards, Dicky was the best pilot on the course and I think everyone knew this and it was no surprise when he won the flying prize. However, most of us looked on ourselves as the next best pilot! For two years I shared instructors, aeroplanes, flying lockers, cars and even, on occasions, girl friends with John. It followed therefore that, whenever we were flying solo at the same time, we would try a dog-fight, or some rather floppy formation flying. It was fairly harmless, but not always so. One of the tricks was to come in low over the hangars and see who could land in the shortest space. The excitement made us forget the lethality of a hangar when hit by an aeroplane and some of our approaches could not have missed by more than a couple of feet. It was very exciting until we were caught and given an imperial rocket by the C.F.I. Low flying was always the best fun, of course, then as now. The low flying area was bounded by Ermine Street, the railway from Ancaster to Sleaford and the Raucebys — very small by present day standards but quite big enough for our Tutors.

Instructors then, as now, varied greatly. I was lucky and had a Flying Officer not long out of Cranwell. He nursed me along gently and seemed to enjoy it as much as I did. Others, having clambered in, would tell you what to do and the whole sortie could go by without another word being said. Yet others used to roar down the gosport tubes using language that even we cadets hadn't heard before. I for one, used to be quite overcome and the louder the roar the worse I flew. However, he happened only when Duggy was on leave or Orderly Officer or something, and so I survived. So did he and now he's an Air Marshal, and mellower than of yore. My most embarrassing moment occurred just before taking off on my first cross country. I opened the throttle, but instead of moving forward the aircraft tipped gently on to its nose — just in front of the hangar. Even now I have a picture, taken by Monty from inside the hangar, of Louis Dickens and Arthur Sweeney pointing wildly at my aircraft, the latter's large moustache slightly blurred — presumably because it was quivering with rage. I need hardly add that I had tried to take off with the brakes on.

Advanced flying in the Hart and Audax was much more exciting than the Tutor, but best of all was the Fury, on which we all did about 10 hours. Chasing round cu-nims in any aircraft is wonderful but in a Fury it was pure joy and more than confirmed for me that flying was, at that time and for many years to come, all that really mattered.

Towards the end of the last month the main excitement was, of course, postings. The choice was Army Co-op, light bombers, flying boats or fighters. Then, as now, most cadets wanted to go on fighters, and most were disappointed. John and I both plumped for light bombers and found ourselves posted to an airfield about 30 miles away — so the lights of Nottingham continued to beckon us on Saturday nights as they had done for the last two years. I never had cause to regret the choice of either role or location.

In the middle of our last term we all went to Penrhos for practice camp — a wonderful month with splendid weather. The camp was marred only by the death of an airman, who had wandered behind a target when one of us was firing, and by the non-availability of Dilys, in the Veynol Hotel at Abersoch. We had been warned off her on arrival by the M.O. However we discovered later that the warning was not due to any weakness in Dilys's health, but because he had lined her up himself and didn't want any cadets snooping round. As far as I remember we found that Dilys was not the only pebble on the beach.

Officer, or Leadership, Training was characterised mostly by drill, or rather that is what I remember most. As if we didn't have enough, I foolishly added to the total by spending quite a few hours on jankers for various misdemeanours but never, I might add, because of faults in uniform, or dirty boots or wrongly tied puttees. George Priestly was an "ace" batman and I don't recall an occasion when he let us on to parade with a fault in our dress. But, as with the other batmen, his value didn't stop there. I think I learnt as much about the Service and about how to be a good officer from George as I ever did from any lecture or any instructor; in fact it was probably due to his efforts that I became a Corporal. There must be many hundreds of ex-cadets who have every reason to be similarly grateful to the College batmen and staff, and one must pay a very sincere tribute to them for their devoted service.

Sport, of course, has always played a very great part in the syllabus and apart from the rugger, which was the main interest, and all the other games, few of us are likely to forget the cross country or first term boxing. I was never any good at either and dreaded both. In the event the cross country wasn't too bad as I wasn't last, as I thought I would be, and thinking back, perhaps the boxing was quite good fun too. At the time, though, the excitement and nervousness weren't pleasant; moreover it was quite apparent that Denis could box whereas I couldn't. Naturally he beat me up but I well remember the feeling of relief when at the end I was still on my feet and none the worse except for a red nose.

The high light, of course, is the final passing-out parade, which in those days was held in the most unsuitable circumstances, on the morning after the Graduation Ball. For this reason there are probably few of us who recall very much about it, except the waves of nausea, and certainly I can't recall who the Reviewing Officer was, or what he said. However, there were other memorable parades too; between them Flt. Lt. Halahan and Mr. Digby saw to that, but perhaps the most memorable was the one when the Commandant turned up on a horse, wearing mess kit trousers. It was all very impressive. In those days the flag pole was on the Orange instead of up by the clock tower and I suppose the change was brought about because of the strange objects which regularly appeared at the masthead.

In academics, I was always struggling, especially in Physics and related subjects. Perhaps if we had paid more attention to "Coulomb" and to Mr. Pytches we would all be much cleverer but there was too much diversion in the form of ink pellets, seeing how many times you could walk round the room in a period, and things like that, to be able to concentrate. My interests were more on the "Prof.'s" side of the house and the appearance, in recent years, of films, plays and books about Lawrence of Arabia bring to mind the intensity and the frequency of "Prof.'s" lectures and discussions about this gentleman. It was not long after "A/C Shaw" had been killed and possibly he was still hot news at the time. Anyway we certainly had our fill of him. The other instructor whom few will forget is the one who taught in Eddy Steddy's empire, the instructional workshops. His lectures and demonstrations were so liberally larded with pornographic references that it was difficult to realise that it was lathes, or engines, or patching a flying boat's hull, that we were supposed to be learning about. The workshops were the scene of another of my more unsuccessful accomplishments. We used to be given a large lump of metal and told to machine it into a perfect cube. The number of times I had to throw away a thing that looked like a rather withered pea and ask for another lump led the instructor to suspect me of hoarding.

It is natural perhaps that many of one's recollections concern off duty activities. Apart from flying, the main preoccupations of most cadets are cars and girl friends and we were no exception. My first car was a 1929 Austin 7 "Chummy" — open of course. It cost £25, quite a lot in those days, and I took delivery on the last day of the first term, intending to drive with Michael down to his home in Halberton, near Tiverton in Devon. My father suggested that we should stop off at my home, 60 miles away, for the night but much to his consternation we

[Return to Contents List](#)

Spring 1964 - Cranwell Past & Present (2c)

decided to press on. With hood down, flying helmets and goggles on, and wrapped in rugs we bored on through the night at a steady 30 knots arriving, to our surprise, sometime before dawn. It was an epic journey and the first of many in that splendid car. It did a routine run, for instance, to Nottingham on Saturday nights and lent John and me considerable prestige in our efforts to impress in the "Vic." and the "Palais." The girls we talked into a spin are probably married by now and wondering when they are going to be grandmothers, or warning their younger daughters not to go out with cadets. The diminutiveness of the car did pay off once. At 2 a.m. one morning John and I ran out of petrol five miles from Grantham and we had to push it into the town. I slept through the sermon in Church next day.

My next car was the same model but the mudguards had been replaced by the cycle type, the back had been cut off in a slope and the whole painted scarlet and silver. It was beautiful. I went to London with Peter to collect it. By the time we got to Hatfield, one mudguard had fallen off; by Biggleswade the other was lying with it on the front seat, and the rear lights had failed. In Stamford the car stopped and nothing we could do would get it going. Having to be on Church parade in a few hours time, I removed my scarf and Pete used it as a tow rope to haul me ignominiously back to Cranwell. I still have the scarf — or rather my son has — and it's about ten feet long instead of its original five.

The more wealthy cadets used to indulge in proper sports cars and some of them were gorgeous to behold. Neddy's Amilcar for one, or Jim's Triumph, or the more home made ones. Unfortunately many of them ended upside down on top of their owners and, thinking back, it is incredible that there were not many more serious injuries than there were. The Leadenham straight was ideal for speed runs and on one occasion we had a splendid hill climb in Belton Park. What with these, the normal hazards, and the result of Saturday night swoops into Nottingham, Byard's Leap and Troop's Garage in Leadenham were seldom short of trade.

In the College anterooms in those early days, it seemed to be the custom to spend most of the time wrestling on the floor, or throwing people up to the ceiling in a carpet. Each entry had one half of an anteroom and if you strayed into the half that wasn't yours you were for it. We used to dine in, in mess kit, on four nights a week. Naturally these became rather a bore and we had to resort to various methods of relieving the tedium. One seemed to consist, as far as I can remember in hissing Mr. Curt when he stood at the end of the table and rolled up the long felt mat on which the plates were laid (no dinner mats and candelabra in those days!). Another was to heat the handle of the sugar spoon under the cigarette lighter and pass it hurriedly down the table. It was all fairly childish, but without malice, and the jokes played now are probably far more enterprising, if equally without malice.

The foregoing reminiscences may have given the impression that life at Cranwell, in those days was all play and very little work. This was not so, of course. We had to work jolly hard, but lectures, private study, exams, and the like are not the sort of things which you recall years later, so it is difficult to write about them. However, one thing is quite clear. Cadets today have much more to learn and they learn it much better than we did. And anyone who says that Cranwell cadets are not what they used to be is quite right — they're a great improvement on their predecessors.

And now as I look at the Entry photograph I see that of the 31 cadets in the Group, 15 were killed in the war, 8 have retired since and only 8 remain in the service, 4 of whom have reached air rank. I sincerely hope that entries now at Cranwell do not lose so many of their friends, and that more of them are left to "reach the highest ranks."

First Impressions of Cranwell

1963

Like characters in an ancient gods play, the group at the doors of Sleaford railway station stared gloomily at the dirty piles of snow, at the locked public house, and at the lifeless grey coach parked at the side of the road. All wore hats. Some smoked. Small knots exchanged names and backgrounds around one of the group, otherwise similar but infinitely superior by virtue of one term's lifetime of experience, and listened agog to his horrific descriptions of what lay ahead for them.

The leaden blue-grey coach received them, two pairs of eyes within studying them intently. The coach drove off into the gathering dusk. As they travelled towards Cranwell, the darkness, the snow, and the endless twist of the road destroyed all sense of directions. During the next six weeks few of them left the camp, and this first journey left them without geographical references — they remained "somewhere in Lincolnshire." During this period of isolation, their attitude changed from that of civilians, for some reason unknown to them dressed in blue, to that of members of the Royal Air Force. At first they were hurt when, in traditional fashion, an N.C.O. looked them up and down: "Gentlemen, you're wearing a blue uniform, cap, a nice pair of shiny boots," (what cruel thanks for those painful first steps in 'bulling'), "in fact, you look like flight cadets — but you aren't!" Later, they came to realise the truth of this, when they ceased to resent the ceaseless, omnipresent, omniscient 'system'; when they passed from resentment to resignation to the indignities of 'crowing' (though this process was to drive a long-lasting wedge between the two junior entries); when they were finally deemed to have passed through the initiation into this complicated little society.

Perhaps the greatest impression made upon the group was the intermittent tempo of their first two weeks. Short periods of violent activity were separated by long periods of inactivity made the more agonizing by the thought of what still remained to be done in that far-off "other side of the camp." Other fleeting memories: the first ceremonial parade, the wind so cold that the music was a hideous torture and the apparently immaculate drill which yet left seasoned N.C.Os. replete with fury; the first 'Guest Night' — an hour of stilted, music-accompanied small talk followed by several hours of unbridled and bloody hooliganism, mess games which are horrifying in the chill of the morning after, but which in the heat of the moment seem the only natural expression of the cheerfulness of the occasion; the start of the academic programme, received with mixed feelings ("surely we left this behind at school" or "at last we have something definite to do, a target to aim for"); the first sight of jets streaking over the airfield stirring the deep-seated longing for the air which has excited every generation from the ancient world up until now. (Why else does man traditionally site his gods in the sky, and identify his hell with the downward pull of gravity?); sport at Cranwell associated with the eager recruitment by sports captains keen to pin down an extra head to their 'captain's lists'; the Junior Mess — meals taken in haste to the eternal cacophony of the gramophone.

All this time the strange conflict of feeling: "We are made to jump around at anybody's behest; we are the lowest of the low, and are treated as such; by all logic we should hate this — but we are enjoying it: why?" The answer lies somewhere in the fact that we were all working together to achieve a definite end; we were all part of a larger, far larger, organisation than the Royal Air Force College, but an organisation just as closely knit, and with the same over-riding purpose viz. the protection of this irregular splash of green on blue whose sons we are, and whom, with the help of our experience and whatever deity may exist, we wish to serve as loyal sons. Cranwell is a form of human production line: we arrive as the raw materials, and leave as the finished product. Not for many years will we know the meaning and significance of each and every process, but when we do we shall be grateful for them.

[Return to Contents List](#)

Spring 1964 - Cranwell Past & Present (2d)

1919
to
1963

For 44 years Mr. Frederick Green, B.E.M., known to hundreds of flight cadets as "Jimmy," was head batman of "B" Squadron Royal Air Force College, Cranwell. He retired in January and, in an interview with AIR CLUES, gave a few of his impressions of life at the College.

The other day as we talked in "Jimmy" Green's pleasant bungalow in Cranwell village, Provost T.4s were overhead on their approach to the airfield just a stone's throw away. The noise of the aircraft reminded Mr. Green and his wife, Dorothy, of the "hairy" days of the 1930s when they had the bungalow built. Then the pilots would often seek out Jimmy at the College and suggest that he warned his wife to take in the washing which they had spotted on Finals — rain was on the way.

It was typical of the friendly relations which existed between the head batman and the young cadets. In fact, that mutual friendliness is one of his main impressions of life at Cranwell over the years. It still gives him pleasure to know that he was able to help so many cadets over their first hurdles of Service life; and the cadets have always looked to him as a friend and guide. Many of his "charges" have risen to high rank in the Service and the many letters he has received from them over the years show how much they valued his early care.

Were those cadets of the early thirties any different, as viewed by their batman, to the cadets of the jet age? "No different, really," emphasises Jimmy. "They are still a gay crowd and a great company of men. They all have their own little ways, which we have to get used to while they settle in, and you couldn't hope to meet a fitter bunch of chaps anywhere."

So many cadets have passed through his hands that today he finds it hard to recall many by name. But he never forgets their faces. Some return to the College for Reviews and special ceremonial occasions. "They all remember me and ask how I'm getting on," he confided. "They are just as friendly as they always were no matter how high their rank."

It was on 2nd February, 1920, that Mr. Frederick Green, recently released from service with a famous British cavalry regiment, presented himself for duty at the College. He was one of 11 civilians who had applied for jobs at Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, and were sent on to Cranwell for duty.

Three days after his arrival, the Royal Air Force College was opened, on 5th February. There were 50 flight cadets in the first intake, he recalls, made up of 25 Sub-Lieutenants and Midshipmen and 25 new R.A.F. entrants.

A feature of the training was that the Royal Navy personnel spent only a year at the College before being posted to squadrons, while the course lasted two years for other cadets. Aircraft in use at that time included the Avro 504J, popularly known as the Mono-Avro (it had a 100h.p. Gnome Monosoupape engine), and two famous aircraft he had first seen on active service with the 11th Hussars in France — the Bristol Fighter and the Sopwith Snipe. Total flying time up to wings standard was 60 hours.

In place of today's impressive buildings there were the original hangars and tin huts put up in 1915 for the Royal Naval Air Service, when the airfield was known as H.M.S. Daedalus.

Mr. Green recalls that cadets had a small room at the end of each hut which was used as a study. There were also rather down-to-earth washing facilities, and one of the batman's duties, he remembers, was to keep the fires in the huts going all night during the winter to prevent the water pipes from freezing. It could be pretty cold and many times he found cadets' shoes frozen to the floor when starting his duties in the morning.

In the tradition of good batmen, Mr. Green was suitably reticent about some of his more amusing recollections of cadet life. "Some of them might not like to be reminded of them

today," he said with a chuckle. But he did pass on one story of the time when 50 hurricane lamps went missing from road works in Boston one evening. Unaccountably these turned up in the cadets' rooms. Trouble ahead, thought Mr. Green, and decided to take action. Unknown to the sleeping cadets the lamps found their way in the dead of night to a disused stores hut. The odd thing about it, Mr. Green assured the police next morning — nobody seemed to know how they got there!

One of his most treasured memories is of the laying of the foundation stone for the new College building in 1929 when Lord Trenchard officiated. Mr. Green had a ringside view of the ceremony from a ground floor window.

In 1940 Mr. Green felt he should do his bit in the war, so he joined the R.A.F. — as a batman, of course. But the College decided it could not do without him and he was promptly posted to Cranwell, this time as Corporal Green. When the war was over he continued to do the same job as a civilian.

He is particularly proud of the fact that two of "his" cadets became Chiefs of the Air Staff — Marshal of the R.A.F. Sir Dermot Boyle, G.C.B., K.C.V.O., K.B.E., A.F.C., and Marshal of the R.A.F. Sir Thomas Pike, G.C.B., C.B.E., D.F.C. Other of his "charges" who rose to high rank include Air Chief Marshal Sir Edmund Hudleston, G.C.B., C.B.E., Air Chief Marshal Sir Theodore McEvoy, K.C.B., C.B.E., Air Chief Marshal The Earl of Bandon, D.S.O., G.B.E., C.B., C.V.O., Air Marshal Sir Douglas McFadyen, K.C.B., C.B.E., and Air Marshal Sir George Beamish, K.C.B., C.B.E.

At a presentation ceremony on 24th January Air Commodore M. D. Lyne, A.F.C., the Commandant, presented a silver salver to Mr. Green on behalf of the Old Cranwellian's Association. It is inscribed: "With affection and gratitude for 44 years loyal service to the Royal Air Force College." Mr. Green was also presented with a barometer from the cadets of "B" Squadron and a gold watch from the civilian staff.

Marshal of the R.A.F. Sir Thomas Pike sent the following signal to Air Commodore Lyne: "Please pass the following message to Mr. J. Green. On the occasion of your retirement after such long and splendid service with the Royal Air Force I join with the many officers serving in this Command in sending you our thanks for all that you have done in the past and every good wish for your happiness and prosperity in the future."



March 1997 - Personal Reminiscences (3a)

“WHEN I WAS AT CRANWELL”

EIGHTY YEARS OF PERSONAL REMINISCENCES

Group Captain P J Dye OBE BSc(Eng) CEng MRAeS ACGI

The history of Royal Air Force Cranwell has been recounted many times, not least of all in the comprehensive account prepared by Group Captain E B Haslam¹. This is one of a series of official and semi-official histories of the College and the Station published over the years². It would be fair to say, however, that they all lack a certain passion and immediacy that characterize the many personal reminiscences of those who have served or been trained at Cranwell. Whilst these individual accounts may provide a narrow, if not slanted, perspective they also convey a freshness and colour that the formal histories inevitably lack. For those who would like a better feel for what it was really like to live and work at Cranwell over the last 80 years, I offer this survey of the material available. I have restricted myself to published sources - if only to keep the length of this article within bounds.

Cranwell has a reputation for raising passions. As a training establishment it undoubtedly has generated those mixed emotions that all ex-pupils experience when they recall their formative years. As an institution, it occupies a place in the Royal Air Force's traditions and ethos that cannot be underestimated; but like all institutions it has attracted its fair share of iconoclasts. Finally, for those officers who did not train at Cranwell under the cadet scheme, it has often been seen as the archetypal bastion of elitism and privilege. As a graduate entrant I may be free from some of these prejudices, but I will also readily admit to leaving Cranwell in 1977 vowing never to return!

It seems appropriate, therefore, that the earliest personal account I can find is a somewhat scurrilous, but anonymous poem printed as a postcard during 1916. This seems to have been

quite popular and produced in large numbers - if only because it contains some acidic words about the conditions experienced by the naval ratings billeted in the temporary huts of East Camp. Construction of the airfield and camp had commenced in late December 1915 but it was not until April 1916 that the first student pilots arrived, anticipating the many thousands of aircraft, airship and kite balloon crews and ground tradesmen that would be trained at Cranwell before the end of the war. The earliest narrative from this period to have been published is the autobiography of Eric Crundall, who arrived at Cranwell in the summer of 1916 for advanced flying instruction - having already gone solo at Eastbourne. He describes, in 'Fighter Pilot On The Western Front', how the station after less than nine months existence felt like a small town because of its size and the numbers of officers and other ranks in occupation. He adds that the students were accommodated in huts with every comfort - despite the anonymous poet's jibes - although he is less complimentary about the bitterly cold winter nights and the role of Officer of the Watch, which required him to spend a two-hour duty in a tall tower during the middle of the night. Four months later, unscathed, unlike many of his contemporaries³ and having completed his training, he was posted to Freiston for a machine gun and bombing course before joining No 8 (Naval) Squadron in France. However, like many in later years, he was destined to return to Cranwell, serving as a flying instructor for a further six months at the end of 1917. By this time, all aeroplane flying was under the command of Wing Commander Sidney Smith who, although a great enthusiast, was not a good pilot and was thus commonly known as 'Crasher' Smith. Eric Crundall soon discovered why the sobriquet was well earned. "..... One day 'Crasher' told me there

was a new Bristol Scout in workshops which I could have. "I know you are busy," he said, "I will deliver it to you myself." Soon a Bristol Scout made a rough landing and turned on its nose. 'Crasher' climbed out of it. "I am afraid that machine will have to go back to workshops," he said. "Not to worry, I will give you two new ones in place of it"⁴.

his time at both Cranwell and Freiston and makes much of the 'luxurious' conditions. ".... Our dining room was a many-windowed, massive affair, a gleam with crystal and silver and sterile with fine linen. The permanent staff sat at the 'top table' where bouquets of flowers were arranged in glass or silver vases. The base band provided music, while neat, dainty WRAF waitresses attended our every table need..... once the main course was out of the way, the WRAFs tempted us with several forms of dessert, while we made highly improper advances and begged them to meet us along nearby country lanes after dark. Most of them put on a brave show of ladylike dignity and held us off - for several days.....". Whitehouse subsequently became a prolific aviation writer, but with something of a reputation for gilding the lily. Nevertheless, his recollections seem a far cry from the conditions experienced by the naval ratings in 1916. Perhaps this merely serves to underline the very different perspectives that can exist between officers and other ranks - a phenomenon hardly restricted to Cranwell. It was a gulf that could, of course, be crossed, as Phyllis Chambers who was employed as an airwoman in the telephone exchange recalled "....We used to have dances where the officers mixed with the girls. Then of course, some of the officers started to go out with the girls, so it was given out that girls were not to be seen with officers in uniform. I was going out with an officer at the time, so I phoned him to tell him I wouldn't be allowed to see him on Sunday. But he borrowed his batman's suit and we went to his cottage. His batman was supposed to be on weekend leave, but he came back unexpectedly and there we were having tea when he walked in....."⁵. It is perhaps instructive to note that Phyllis Chambers' views on the food at Cranwell are far removed from Arch Whitehouse's glowing description. Indeed, she comments that "..... the food was bad, a lot of us couldn't eat it, so when we got paid, we'd catch the steam train into Sleaford and eat a meal" At this distance it is probably unwise to conclude that Cranwell was different from any other large training camp of this era, moreover, it was, (and still is) the

CRANWELL CAMP.

There's an isolated, desolated spot I'd like to mention,
Where all you hear is "stand at ease," "quick march,"
"slope arms," "attention."
It's miles away from anywhere, by Jove it is a run-in,
A man lived there for 50 years and never saw a woman.
There's lots of tiny huts all dotted here and there,
For those who live inside them I have offered many a
prayer.
It's mud up to your eyebrows, it gets into your ears,
But into it you have to go without a sign of fear.
There's a miller living in the huts, it fills my heart with
worrow,
With dimmed eyes they say to me, it's Cranwell Camp,
to-morrow.
Inside the huts live rats they say as big as any goat;
Last night a sailor saw one, trying on his overcoat.
For breakfast every morning it's just like Mother Hubbard,
You double round the hut three times and dive into the
cupboard.
Sometimes they give you Bacon, sometimes they give you
Ulster.
Which "marches" up and down your plate, "slope arms"
and "stands at ease."
At night you sleep on straw and boards, just like a herd of
cattle,
And if by chance you should turn round, your bones begin
to rattle,
And when you hear "Reveille" blown, it makes you feel
unwell.
You knock the icebergs off your feet and wish the Bagler
in hell.
Now when the War is over, and we've captured Kaiser
Billy,
To shoot him would be merciful and absolutely silly,
Just send him up to "Cranwell Camp," among the rats and
clay,
And let the Crown Prince watch him as he slowly fades
away.

*Anonymous poem, privately printed in 1916,
extolling the 'quality environment' of Cranwell camp*

One of the many students at Cranwell was Arch Whitehouse, an American who had served as an observer/gunner with No 22 Squadron on the Western Front and returned to England in 1918 for pilot training. In 'The Fledgling' he details

⁴ Eric Crundall returned to France as a Flt Cdr on No 210 Squadron and ended the war credited with 7 aerial victories, having been awarded the DFC and AFC. A fellow student was Leonard Rochford who was subsequently credited with 20 aerial victories. His autobiography was published as 'I Chose The Sky'.

⁵ Quoted by Max Arthur, *There Shall Be Wings*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1993.

¹ The History of Royal Air Force Cranwell, E B Haslam, HMSO, 1982.

² These include: A History of the RAF College Cranwell, R De La Bere, Gale & Polden, 1934; RAF College Cranwell, College Secretariat, 1988; The RAF Cranwell Railway, A J Ludlam, The Oakwood Press, 1988; Cranwell - RNAS & RFC Photographs, Green & Hodgson, Midland Publishing, 1993.

³ There were over 40 casualties in training accidents at Cranwell during the First World War.

March 1997 - Personal Reminiscences (3b)

prerogative of the British Soldier to complain about his food!

By this stage of the war, the station was under the command of a colonel in the Royal Air Force, who was still referred to as 'The Captain'. Sholto Douglas⁶ records, in 'Years Of Combat', how the whole atmosphere was strongly impregnated with the influence of the Navy and that a large proportion of the men and officers still wore naval uniforms. He had arrived at Cranwell shortly after the Armistice, to command the Flying Training Wing, and at a time when many servicemen were unhappy at the speed of demobilization. "..... when this disaffection struck it caught me in a mood for strong action, and action I took. One morning the men refused to appear on parade, some even skulking in their huts. I harangued them and reminded them of their duty, telling them that I would do my best to help to get a move on with their demobilization. And then I suddenly remembered that there was to be a pay parade that afternoon. How legal a step it was from the point of view of military law I did not know, but I told them that if they did not appear on parade that afternoon they would not get their pay. No doubt it seemed to them rough justice, but it won the round for me. They appeared on parade and continued to parade without further trouble.....". So ended Cranwell's only recorded 'mutiny'.

Cadet and apprentice (boy mechanic) training both commenced at Cranwell in 1920, in line with Trenchard's 1919 Memorandum on the future structure and organization of the Service. There are several accounts from these early years, before the main College building was erected and whilst the cadets were accommodated in huts to the south of the Sleaford road and the apprentices in East Camp. Perhaps the most controversial are the memoirs of Stuart Mais, who was recruited as Professor of English in 1920 and saw the birth of the College at first hand; before being dismissed in 1921. His bitter-sweet, if not jaundiced, recollections published as 'All The Days of My Life' include some fairly damning words about the cadets, the working conditions and the way the

College was organized. In describing the cadets, he states that their conversation ran to two subjects, namely motor-bicycles and grievances against the 'Cranwell system'. As to their writing, it was "..... slovenly, their spelling unbelievably bad, their arrangement non-existent, their structure of sentences like a bombed row of cottages, their choice of words more limited than that of a city clerk" . Equally sharp criticism is directed at those who were supposedly to help him in the production of the first College Journal. He recounts how as editor he was supposed to have no less than 20 subordinates - of whom in the event only one did anything. Apparently, no cadet submitted a readable or feasible manuscript, and all the articles had to be provided by the staff or external contributors. Finally, when the Journal appeared it was heartily criticized by the cadets as having nothing of interest to them in it - a problem, of course, which the present editor would not recognize! It would be wrong, though, to conclude that Mais saw no good in anything at Cranwell. He actually speaks highly about the permanent staff and, indeed, about the second cadet entry but there is also no doubt that he found the experience of a year at Cranwell to be less than congenial.

It would be helpful to be able to balance Mais' reminiscences with those of a cadet from the first entry, but I have been unable to locate any published accounts. There are a few paragraphs by Gerald Gibbs⁷ and Sidney Vincent⁸, who had been posted to the College as flying instructors in 1920, in their respective autobiographies 'Survivor's Story' and 'Flying Fever'. Gerald Gibbs does not address any of the issues raised by Mais, although he mentions how fortunate they were to have such a fine officer as Charles Longcroft for the first commandant. As to the working environment, he notes that ".....hardly any of the officers and men who came to Cranwell had ever served on an air station which had any brick buildings at all.....rough though they were, they gave us a most inspiring feeling of permanence and we buckled down to the new and unfamiliar job as to a crusade.....". In turn, Sidney Vincent speaks of the many interesting and excellent cadets (including a future Marshal of the Royal Air Force)

that passed through his hands, but adds very little by way of personal observation⁹.

The cadet mentioned was, of course, Dermot Boyle¹⁰ who had arrived at Cranwell in September 1922, travelling on the famous 'Cranwell Express' that ran from Sleaford to the Main Guardroom. In 'My Life', he provides an affectionate picture of Cranwell in the immediate post-war period and it is clear that he could not have wished for better training and inspiration. There is little indication of the unthinking military bureaucracy portrayed by Mais, nor of the makeshift arrangements of two years before. Indeed, the ex-RNAS huts used by the cadets were comfortable and extremely clean, while each cadet had a personal batman with whom a strong if not lifelong friendship often developed. Flying was an important part of the cadet's life, and coupled with motorcycles, was Dermot Boyle's primary interest. The issue P&M motorcycle (together with an occasional free gallon of petrol) provided to all cadets was, according to Mais, a waste of time because there were no spares and nowhere to go - Sleaford being out of bounds. To Dermot Boyle, however, it was a brilliant way to teach the cadets about the internal combustion engine. Another important influence was Sergeant Major Gorwood, their drill instructor. Cadet Wing parades were held on the West Camp square, with the apprentices from East Camp, giving rise once to the following comment from Gorwood ".....All right Mr Boyle Sir, I'll keep your secret Sir, just you and I will know who has dropped your rifle Sir" and this in front of about a thousand people" .

One of the watching apprentices may well have been Bill Pegg¹¹, who had arrived the previous September, also on the 'Cranwell Express'. He recalls, in 'Sent Flying', that their reception was very pleasant but it was not the sort of treatment that continued! In company with his brother, who was in the previous entry, he wandered around the camp, observing that ".....most of us found it a very bleak outlook. It was situated on a flat windswept plain miles away from any other form of habitation. There were rows and rows of barrack blocks, in

each of which were four so-called dormitories holding thirty or forty boys.....". Discipline was strict, but there was plenty of exercise and a healthy diet - although hunger was an almost permanent affliction among the apprentices who spent most of the 5/- a week allowance they received on extra food. Lacking the transportation available to the cadets, recreation was limited to smuggling runs for cigarettes and a single weekly 'late' pass to Sleaford. Bill Pegg observes that not only did the 'late' pass expire at 8.30 pm but, for a healthy and vigorous boy of 16 years or so, Sleaford was not exactly an inspiring town. Given his future career as a test-pilot, it is perhaps also significant that it was at Cranwell that he was given his first flight, in a Vickers Vimy. In summing up the three years he spent at Cranwell, Bill Pegg describes them as hard, but not unhappy, and undoubtedly of great benefit. Having completed his training he left, as a Leading Aircraftman, for No 9 Squadron at Manston where his first job was to scrape the carbon deposit from the cylinder heads of Rolls-Royce Eagle engines fitted to the squadron's Vickers Vimys. In theory, a simple task as he knew a lot about this particular engine from having dismantled and assembled them often at Cranwell, unfortunately, the Cranwell engines were clean and bright and he had never seen any carbon before! I suspect that this will not have been the first, nor the last, time that a Cranwell graduate found the real world slightly at variance with his previous experience.

Another of the early apprentices was Geoffrey Ellis, who arrived at Cranwell as a boy mechanic in September 1923, aged 15 years and 9 months. He devotes considerable space in 'Tool Box On The Wing' to the traumatic experience of the first few weeks, particularly the haircuts and the food. His day started at half-past six with a quick cup of cocoa and PT (irrespective of the weather). Breakfast followed at half-past seven and then colour hoisting, inspection and drill. The remainder of the day was taken up with school studies, sport, and workshop practice. As ever in the training environment, there was a constant game of wits against the 'system' and its rules. Ellis recalls that

⁶ Later Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Douglas of Kirtleside GCB MC DFC

⁷ Later Air Marshal Sir Gerald Gibbs KBE CIE MC.

⁸ Later Air Vice-Marshal S F Vincent CB DFC AFC DL.

⁹ There are also some brief recollections by Air Cdre Patrick Huskinson and Lord Balfour in their respective autobiographies. Although not strictly covered by the terms of this article the biography of Lord Portal, Portal of Hungerford, by Denis Richards provides some additional observations on the early history of the College.

¹⁰ Later Marshal of the Royal Air Force, Sir Dermot Boyle GCB KCVO KBE AFC.

¹¹ Later Chief Test Pilot Bristol Aircraft Company.

[Return to Contents List](#)

March 1997 - Personal Reminiscences (3c)

".....our dormitories were often raided by the Service police in search of smoking material. We suspected that this happened whenever they became hard up for smokes, for any that were found were confiscated. As soon as we got wind of a raid - and we seldom failed - all smokes and matches were secured to a cotton thread one end of which was fixed to the window sill. As soon as the police squad was sighted, the boxes would be lowered out of the window and would remain there until the squad left.....". Nevertheless, when he left in 1926, to join No 24 Squadron at Kenley, it was with some regret - notwithstanding the early rigours of his training. He concludes this part of his reminiscences by saying ".....The smell of castor oil must evoke memories in all who were in aviation in the early days and to me it brings a picture of an Avro 504 coming close-by as we lay in the long grass on a sunny day at Cranwell, truant from the drill squad and out of bounds into the bargain.....".

On the same entry as Geoffrey Ellis was Frank Whittle.¹² He had less fond memories of this period, indeed he states in his autobiography 'Jet' that ".....I cannot pretend that I enjoyed my three years as an aircraft apprentice my dislike of the strict discipline and barrack-room life was tempered by my association with the Model Aircraft Society to which I devoted hundreds of hours, often when I should have been elsewhere.....". As one of 5 apprentices offered cadetships, Frank Whittle was also uniquely placed to comment on the differences between the two 'camps'. In describing the 'step up' he explains how a few hours before he went on leave for the last time from the Apprentices Wing ".....I encountered the Squadron Sergeant Major who was convinced that I had a long record of undetected crime and who had tried to catch me out many times. He gave me a look which would be hard to describe, and growled "I suppose next time I see you I shall have to stand to attention and say 'Sir'". I deemed it wise to make no comment and just responded with a happy grin.....". During the first two weeks of the first term, and pending receipt of their new uniforms, the prescribed dress was dark lounge suits and bowler hats. ".....The bowler hats were natural targets for the members of the senior terms, and it was not unusual to see the somewhat ludicrous sight of the first term marching

heads up, swinging their arms, chest out, and so on, but with battered bowler hats, some with their crowns almost detached and flopping up and down in rhythm with the step.....". Life as a cadet was extremely busy, as Frank Whittle soon found out. His interest in model-making quickly faded because of the pressure on his time and, more importantly the attraction of the real thing. The broad curriculum clearly favoured his talents, although it could not be said that he was either a keen or a proficient sportsman. Such was his reputation that, on one of his early cross-country flights in an Avro 504 ".....I got lost in conditions of poor visibility and landed to find out where I was. On taking off again, I struck a tree on the boundary of the field, and the aeroplane was totally wrecked. However, I escaped without injury. Many of my fellows took some convincing that I had not wrecked the aeroplane to avoid the annual cross-country race.....".

In the engagingly titled 'Pilot-Diplomat And Garage Rat', Toby Pearson¹³ provides a slightly different perspective to College life in the 1920s, insisting that he was an average cadet - unlike his contemporaries Frank Whittle and Douglas Bader. He makes the point, echoed in other accounts, that, exciting as the flying was, all the cadets understood it was not the be-all and end-all for their presence at Cranwell. In fact, 70-80 hours of flying spread over the two years were not unusual (Dermot Boyle completed a total of 68 hours and Frank Whittle a grand total of 80 hours 10 minutes). Denied more time in the air, and to compensate for his lack of sporting prowess or academic ability, he dedicated himself to motorcycles, including the ubiquitous P&Ms. The latter were not very reliable - no doubt ten years' hard driving and haphazard maintenance by successive cadets had taken their toll. The cadet's workshop, where they were given practical engineering instruction, was kept open for engineering projects and in making full use of the facility he fairly earned the title 'Garage Rat'. This tradition, in the form of the Cadet Motor Club continued through to the late 1960s using one of the remaining RNAS hangars - today, still in use and refurbished for officer and aircrew selection.

Motorcycles were, of course, the passion of T E Lawrence, otherwise known as A.C. Shaw 352087,



Avro 504k with instructor, student and groundcrew at Cranwell, circa 1918, in front of the South Airfield flight sheds

who served as an airman at Cranwell between 1925 and 1926, when he requested a transfer to India. Lawrence's time on the strength of the Cadet College seems to have been an amicable arrangement - or at least more pleasant than his sojourn at the Uxbridge Depot. There is no doubt that he 'vamped up' (as he put it) the experience in his memoirs subsequently published as 'The Mint'. There is also every reason to suspect the veracity of some incidents and conversations, but he has left us with some memorable scenes. ".....After breakfast we go on parade: about two hundred of us men, and one hundred cadets, would-be officers. We form three sides of a hollow square. On the eastern, open face is a flagstaff. We face this, after some shifting back and forward. The RAF colours are broken at the peak: the trumpeter (imported for the ceremony from East Camp) blows a royal salute: the cadets, who have rifles, present arms. We who have nothing, stand still. The salute is the shrillest note a trumpet can sustain. It goes through us, however densely we close our pores. Everything else upon the square, a huge asphalt place, hut-circled and echoing, is deadly still. Imagine a raw wind, and a wet early sunshine, making our shadows on the tarred ground the exact blue colour of our clothing.....". Lawrence had in effect made the opposite transition to Frank Whittle, although he could hardly be regarded as a normal airman (unless regular meetings with the commandant and personal correspondence with CAS are seen as normal). His views on Cranwell as an institution are somewhat ambivalent - preferring to subscribe to the notion

that technicians are the natural autocracy, that airmen call the tune and that the soldier and the mechanic are mutually destructive. He further observes that ".....The airmen of the future will not be so owned, body and soul, by their Service. Rather will they be the Service, maintaining it and their rights in it, as one with the officers.....".

'The Mint' has earned a reputation on account of its expurgated (or to be more precise, its unexpurgated) language. It is also more a collection of jottings than a proper narrative, but in places it has the power to recreate events that seem as fresh today as they were 70 years ago. I can't help but quote one more extract; this time about

the flight line hangars. ".....At night it looks a palace. We switch on lamp after lamp, high in the roof, and a wedge of golden light pours through the open front across the illimitable aerodrome which runs up, saucer-like, to a horizon like the sea, and sea-coloured, of waving grey-green grass. In this stream of light puny figures, eight or ten of them, swim, at a game of push and pull around the glitter-winged Bristol Fighters or Nine Acks (DH 9As). They drag them one by one into the lighted cave: then the doors clang shut, the lights go out: and the dwarfs trickle out from a dwarf-door in rear, across grass and gravel, bedwards....." 'The Mint' is not everyone's cup of tea but, on the whole, is worth the effort to track down.

Lawrence left for Karachi in 1926 after little over a year at Cranwell, although to judge from subsequent accounts his influence, if not his reputation, persisted for a good few more years. Hamish Mahaddie¹⁴, who arrived at Cranwell in 1931 as an airman on the College strength, quotes several tales of Lawrence's exploits - even though the latter had left five years earlier. Mahaddie recalls how the winters were exceptionally cold, but that the ration of coal took little account of the nature of the temporary huts used by the airmen ".....now the ration per airman, meagre as it may have been, was four times for an officer. The coal compounds were side by side, and whilst the officer's compound was generally well filled, I can recall sweeping dust from the airmen's compound floor to get a wee bit extra for the billet. The Shaw

¹² Later Sir Frank Whittle KBE CB FRS LLD.

¹³ Later Air Cdre Toby Pearson CBE.

¹⁴ Later Gp Capt T G Mahaddie DSO DFC AFC CZMC CEng FRAeS.

March 1997 - Personal Reminiscences (3d)

solution to the inequality of the coal ration was simple: just change the signs on the compounds.....". Whether the incident really happened is perhaps irrelevant, what is important is that, for the airmen, Lawrence was their talisman against the 'system'. In view of this role, if not his long-term reputation, it was perhaps fortunate that the Old Cranwellian Association decided in 1935 not to offer Lawrence honorary membership on the basis of ".....his insufficiently close connection with the College.....".

Arthur Longmore, one of the most distinguished commandants, who served at Cranwell from 1930-33, has left us his own observations on these years. His autobiography 'From Sea To Sky', understandably lacks the intimacy of other reminiscences but, to compensate, gives an unique insight into some wider issues. He acknowledges that the production of just 60 cadet officers a year sounded a ridiculously small number, and that Cranwell was regarded by some as a waste of money. Moreover, the limited flying hours, compared to that achieved by the flying training schools in producing short-service pilots, continued to put great pressure on the syllabus and hence the entire Cranwell concept. Even so, it is quite clear he regarded the young officers trained at Cranwell to be outstanding and that they, together with the apprentices from East Camp, formed the backbone of the Service. On a slightly lighter note, he also provides his own perspective on the issue of cadets and motorcycles ".....Cadets were allowed motor-bicycles whilst at the college, and the casualties which resulted were far higher than the accidents from flying. It became a serious problem which we attempted to cure by restricting horse-power, permitting three-wheelers, and finally small cars. However, accidents still continued and it was apparently as easy to roll a three-wheeler as to fall off a bicycle.....".

Peter Townsend's¹⁵ cadet training commenced in 1933, the same year that Arthur Longmore left Cranwell to become AOC Inland Area. As he recalls in his autobiography, 'Time And Chance', all he yearned for was to fly and ".....the

RAF enjoyed, deservedly, the reputation of being the best flying club in the world.....". He certainly enjoyed the flying but he also enjoyed the technology, the sport, the drill and the ceremonial. In regard to the latter, his batman Mr Blanchard often saved the day ".....a frail, elderly little man invariably dressed in dark blue regulation serge and a green baize apron. The salient features of his pink face were a white moustache and a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles and these were crowned with a neat little cloth cap which he wore as a permanent fixture. Blanchard lived in a world where everything shone. He polished my buttons until they gleamed like gold; he burnished my boots and my bayonet scabbard until they took on the lustre of ebony. He was a totally dedicated professional.....". Discipline was stringent but just, the tone set by the new commandant, 'Ginger Mitch' Mitchell, a stocky, rubicund, jovial Australian ".....One day, he telephoned to Flight Cadet 'Queenie' Cairns, who was the frequent target for practical jokes. When Cairns heard a voice at the other end of the line saying: "This is the commandant, I'd like to see you at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning," he replied jauntily "The commandant, eh? Well, balls to you!" and hung up. Shortly afterwards an orderly handed him a message: 'Report to the commandant at 10 am tomorrow'. Next morning Cairns stood stiffly before the Air Vice-Marshal. "Cairns", the latter asked him, "when I called you yesterday you replied,



A Red Arrows Hawk and groundcrew pose for a comparison photograph some 80 years later. The 2 'C' Type hangars at the left replaced 2 of the original 1916 sheds during the 1930's. Otherwise, little has changed!

if I am not mistaken, balls to you?" "Yessir" replied the petrified Cairns. Ginger Mitch eyed him coldly. "Well balls to you," he snapped. "Good Morning".....

Tony Dudgeon¹⁶ and Reginald Gibbs¹⁷ both arrived at Cranwell as cadets in 1934, the first entry to start full-time in the new College building. Reginald Gibbs' recollections of this period were published in 1943, as 'Not Peace But a Sword', and are somewhat more restrained than Tony Dudgeon's account of his experiences published some 30 years later as 'The Luck Of The Devil'. Reading the latter, it would be difficult to avoid the conclusion that cadet life between the wars was rarely a serious affair and that the curriculum comprised either flying or sport - complemented by an active social life and a casual approach to death. There is a deep passion in Tony Dudgeon's description of his flying training that is only tempered by a sense of foreboding about the war that lay ahead. Typical of his experiences is the occasion when, flying in an Avro Tutor with his instructor, Flight Lieutenant Wallace, their engine cut out just as they got airborne. ".....I heard him shout, "I've got her!" With consummate skill he nosed down, turned slightly, did a savage sideslip and swishtail to kill the remaining speed, and dropped the machine undamaged just over a stone wall and into a minuscule field. I climbed out and looked around. The field was indeed very small. Other aeroplanes were flying past overhead, the occupants' heads craned over the side in curiosity. It was rather fun to be the centre of attraction. Wallace, having turned everything off, slowly climbed out. I grinned at him. He looked at me incredulously for a few moments, I smiled back pleasantly. "W-weren't you s-scared?" he stammered. "What? Me? Scared?" I answered; "Why should I be? You'd got her". "Good God", he said, "Look at me!" He held out a hand and it was shaking like a leaf.....".

Entertaining would probably be too mild a word to describe Tony Dudgeon's other tales about the College. A further quotation should suffice to give the full flavour. On this occasion he is describing his return from a night out at 'The Generous Briton' at Brant Broughton. It was a favourite game, apparently, for the cadets to drive back side by side

along the Leadenham Straight and swap passengers and drivers. "..... considering the bumpy road, the dark, and the beer, things went surprisingly well. The new drivers were in position well before half-way and the shambolic switching of passengers began. People were on both running boards, trying to climb in or out of either car, laughing uncontrollably and offering gratuitously unheeded advice. Suddenly both drivers banged down on the horn buttons and held them down. There, standing right in the middle of the road, his dark uniform barely illuminated by the miserable headlights, holding his hand up to signify 'Stop', stood a policeman. Instinctively, each person grabbed the edge of the car he was standing on..... the reaction of the drivers was just as prompt, they parted in the nick of time, one going to each side of the road. Someone, reported that the figure disappeared behind us into the night, standing frozen to attention with his arms clasped rigidly to his sides, facing woodenly towards Leadenham and never turning to look after us..... At least we could be sure he did not read our number plates.....".

Reginald Gibbs' account of this period, penned in wartime, is somewhat more dispassionate, but he still conveys an impression of halcyon days that ended all too soon. Recalling them he says ".....a backward glance still brings a tinge of regret at the passing of the former individual touch on flying, when the aircraft and pilot were one entity. In those days of leisurely instruction at Cranwell we could afford to have other gods which our easy and simple aircraft did not deny us.....". Of course, flying could not occupy more than a limited share of the cadets' time - given the many subjects they had to master - but it was clearly the dominant theme in their life at the College; it would be fair to say that they lived and breathed flying. Reginald Gibbs describes his own first flight (in an Avro Tutor) in meticulous detail, carefully noting the preparations and then the feeling of wonder once airborne, recording how "..... The College building, with its white facade of vertical pillars, could be seen almost in plan view below; the enormous south and smaller north aerodromes were dotted with aircraft crawling like insects over their surface, and the sky itself seemed filled with flying activity. The countryside extended open and flat as far as

¹⁵ Later Gp Capt P W Townsend CVO DSO DFC*.

¹⁶ Later AVM A G Dudgeon CBE DFC.

¹⁷ Later Wg Cdr R P M Gibbs DSO DFC*.

March 1997 - Personal Reminiscences (3e)

the eye could see, looking like a beautiful three-dimensional map in life-like colours". Two years later, when it came time to leave, he noted that ".....we were all filled with anticipation on our new life in squadrons, an independent life, free from school-like supervision, with a sky of almost boundless flying. I passed through the last parade hardly realizing that we stood for the last time together on the parade ground on which we had stood daily for two years, when, watching the blue ensign ascend slowly to the mast against an equally blue sky, every Cadet had wondered silently if the weather would hold fire for his flying period!.....". It is perhaps worth including one further observation by Reginald Gibbs ".....if the College had taught us cadets a hundred things about their Service, it had imparted only the theory.....if the cadets left the College finally full of learning, they still knew nothing of what they were to find outside in reality.....when eventually the true situation was appraised and Service life accepted at its own valuation and not that of the College, initial disappointment might fade away, but the first discovery of this misconception, fondled for two long years, seemed something of a foul blow, and one from which some cadets never quite recovered.....". The argument may be exaggerated, but there are clear echoes here of Bill Pegg's experiences some 12 years before.

Hugh Lynch-Blosse graduated from Cranwell in 1937, one of the last entries before the war to complete the full two-year cadet course. In 'Wings And Other Things', he goes to some length to dispel the suggestion that all ex-Cranwell officers were from the same mould, pointing out how varied were the personalities involved. On the other hand his tales of cadet life, particularly their flying and motoring experiences, all have a familiar ring. He also makes a telling point about the value of his batman ".....I think I learnt as much about the Service and about how to be a good officer from George as I ever did from any lecturer or any instructor.....". Finally, he indulges in a little comparison with today's (1966) cadets ".....the foregoing reminiscences may have given the impression that life at Cranwell in those days was all play and very little hard work. This was not so, of course. We had to work jolly hard, but lectures,

private study, exams and the like are not the sort of things which you recall years later.....anyone who says that Cranwell cadets are not what they used to be is quite right - they're a great improvement on their predecessors.....".

Cadet training ceased on the outbreak of war and would not recommence until 1946. Meanwhile, the station became a major flying training unit, for both ab initio pilots and flying instructors. Several accounts of this period have been published, albeit that given the circumstances and length of the courses there is not the same detail nor indeed the same affection to be found in the inter-war reminiscences. Jim Bailey ('The Sky Suspended') and James Roberts¹⁸ ('Twenty Years In The Air') were both trained to fly at Cranwell between 1939 and 1940, while John Newton Chance ('Yellow Belly') trained as a flying instructor at Cranwell in 1941. Perhaps, the most interesting account is by Gordon Levett¹⁹, who as an airman on the College strength saw the transition from cadet courses to the urgency of wartime flying training. As he says in 'Flying Under Two Flags' he had arrived just in time to participate in the end of an era ".....I cherish the memory of the day I walked for the first time down to the aerodrome and reported to 'D' Flt. It had taken a long time but there it all was and I was part of it. At last! All the paraphernalia of flying. Hangars, aeroplanes taking off and landing, the roar of engines, the blast of slipstream, windsocks, erks oil-streaked and black-nailed in greasy blue overalls, cadets in spotless white flying overalls and imperious flying instructors, with the peaceful counter-point of the grass aerodrome stretching far towards the horizon.....". It would be wrong to suggest that Cranwell's ways changed immediately, indeed, the routine seemed oblivious to the approaching Luftwaffe. No aeroplanes flew on Wednesday afternoons or from noon on Saturday until Monday morning. Weekends and sport were still sacrosanct. After Dunkirk, some training aircraft were fitted with bomb racks and a Lewis gun but fortunately they never encountered the enemy. The sense of unreality is heightened by the description of Cranwell's ground defences ".....although the guards were doubled, the arms were not and Cranwell aerodrome was guarded against airborne invasion with two First World

text from another story...

demonstrations we had was of this torque stall (carried out at a respectable height, I hasten to add). The Balliol was a handsome aircraft, whose blue-spitting exhaust at night was most impressive. It could also cause the adrenalin to flow; after an illicit solo trip south to reconnoitre my home town of Stamford, I set forth north again, opened the throttle to meet my circuit time, and nothing happened; there was no response to throttle movement at all, but mercifully, the engine continued to run peacefully on, and a very chastened Flight Cadet landed on the East/West runway, a mite too fast, but all in one piece. A subsequent test flight finished up with a 'no fault found', but I suspect the Balliol had a built-in glitch to sort out wayward pilots!

In our final term, we were the first Entry to graduate on Vampires, both T11s, 5s and 9s. No swing on take off; an uncanny silence in cruise; and ejection seats! but don't expect a lightning engine response to throttle - a dyspeptic bad-tempered grumble was all you could expect to a panic demand for more airspeed. I had 2 memorable trips in the single-seat Vampire 5. The first was my first solo. My instructor sat on the tail boom to show me the correct landing attitude; unfortunately, my head was deep inside the cockpit searching for some switch while he was doing it, and

I was far too embarrassed to ask him to show me a second time. Fortunately, that side of the trip did not matter. What did, was the location of a catch on the undercarriage lowering lever, to prevent the undercarriage being lowered instead of the air brakes, also actuated by an almost identical level right next door. No one mentioned this clever device and, as I sped downwind in a crowded teatime circuit for the fourth time, I finally found this cunning piece of technology, and obtained my 3 green lights before all the sticky buns were cleared from the tea table. The second interesting performance also involved this clever catch. We were tasked to carry out a high-speed run in the Vampire 5. No sweat; lower the nose, pile on the coals, wait for the magic limiting Mach No, close the throttle, air brakes out and ease out of the dive. But why was the speed continuing to fall so rapidly, and what were those 3 green lights glaring accusingly at me?! Fortunately, no damage was done, but Murphy introduced himself to me in no uncertain manner on those 2 occasions.

About 10 years ago, it was suggested to me by a contemporary that we should write our memories, and I have found it a sobering but enjoyable experience. If you should read this Paddy E, it is now your turn!

18 Later Wg Cdr J G Roberts DFC DFM AE.

19 Later Sqn Ldr G R Levett.

not the completed story.....

Error as appeared in the Journal

[Return to Contents List](#)

March 2006 - Cadet Reflections (4a)

CADET REFLECTIONS



A SQUADRON 2005 By Acr Cdts Howard and Searle



Acr Cdt J O Howard is training to be a WSO and is on No 225 NCAITC.



Acr Cdt A P Searle is training to be a WSO and is on No 225 NCAITC.

NCAITC is the primary course undertaken by all Non-Commissioned Aircrew (NCA). The course lasts for 10 weeks and aircrew cadets pass out with the rank of Acting Sergeant. The course is very compact and demanding and is designed to give the cadets a foundation in the skills required to be a credible SNCO in the RAF which in other trades can take many years to attain. As part of the training they undertake several activities to aid in their development. These activities include a project weekend, a resource and initiative week and a visit to London taking in St Clement Danes, the RAF Church, and the RAF Museum, Hendon.

All activities throughout NCAITC are organised and run by nominated cadets as part of their development. These leads are a very important aspect of the training and assessment. Working from terms of reference (TORs) provided by the Directing Staff (DS), the event IC is responsible for making all necessary arrangements. Tasks undertaken by the IC include: delegating appropriate tasks to other members of the course as they see fit, transport, equipment and ensuring the smooth running of the event itself.

Project Weekend (Week 2)

The NCAITC carry out a project weekend at the end of the second week. Its purpose is to assist in bonding the course together early on whilst at the same time doing something worthwhile in the community. Course 225 this year took on the challenge of rejuvenating a local school's conservation area and improving various other areas of the school grounds.



The primary task was to clear out an old pond and replace the split liner. Three further tasks needed carrying out, these were laying a path to the pond, gravelling a section of the school front and tidying up a flower bed. Work started at around 0900 on Saturday and the day ran fairly smoothly, the weather was on our side and spirits were high. We finished work at around 1700 and headed back to Cranwell to get ready for the project weekend night out. The course were joined by the Course Commander for a typical lads' night out to celebrate Acr Cdt Macleod's 28th birthday, that somehow involved a tiara and earrings! Understandably, the next day started slightly later and less highly spirited than the day before, however we soldiered on, up until just before lunch when Acr Cdt Lee upset a wasps nest with a half moon hoe. The ensuing drama gave many of us sharp pains as our sides split at the sight of Acr Cdt Lee running around and stripping off to get wasps out of his clothes. Four wasps were later found in his boot. Other courses this year have done such things as rebuilding a Neolithic cairn, constructing a bridge on the ranges at Otterburn, and on more than one occasion carrying out maintenance and gardening at Rothbury House, a RAFA house that caters for both permanent residents and a number of short term guests. Rothbury House is one of A Sqn's nominated charities, for which it regularly raises money.

Resource and Initiative (R & I) Week (formerly week 4)

R & I was removed from the programme due to cost and time restraints and has now been replaced with navigation training in the local area. However, it used to be a four day package of exercises which took place in the fourth week of NCAITC. The package was designed to develop navigation skills, encourage teamwork and test the cadets' courage and determination. Day one involved instruction on basic navigation, briefing and team leading. Day 2 was the navigation consolidation day designed to build confidence in map and compass work. The last 2 days were the adventure training phase with activities on offer including rock climbing, caving, canoeing and mountain biking: During Course 220 many people discovered sports they would like to take up in the future. Acr Cdt Pringle and Wadson particularly enjoyed the Mountain

Biking, racing down the hills like madmen. At the other end of the scale Acr Cdt Cabot, a mountain goat on the way up the hill, could be seen, fear in his eyes down hilling very slowly. Despite the time of year the weather was generally good however, the ground was very muddy which I think added to the fun. Canoeing is not a sport many people look forward to in January when the maximum ambient temperature is 3°C, but their usual high level of enthusiasm, most managed to stay in their Canadian canoes for the lesson, only Acr Cdt Dowds taking an early, rather fresh, bath. It was a surprise for many when at the end of the lesson we started extreme cross training combining canoeing with circuit training. Two cadets sat on the side rails of the canoe facing each other, they then began sit-ups dunking their heads in the water with each repetition. It was not long before Acr Cdt Turner and Wadson rolled their canoe. In a foolish act of teamwork the rest of the group joined them in the water. This part of the course was a great way for individuals to experience something new and for the course to bond as a team. Sadly, course 222 was the last course to undertake R & I week.



London Visit (Week 6)

The London visit includes a trip to St Clement Danes, the RAF Church and the RAF Museum, Hendon. The purpose of the visit is to introduce cadets to the history and heritage of the RAF and also to instil in them a sense of pride for the courage of former members of the RAF. We started early with a coach ride to St Clement Danes in Central London. The course being relatively resourceful, made the most of this good opportunity to catch up on some sleep. Once we arrived we were given a brief history of the church by one of the stewards and were greeted by the resident Padre over tea and biscuits. We were then given the chance to roam the church and admire its architecture and history, such as the books of remembrance and the bomb scars up the walls. Given the time of year course 225 attended, which was the day before Remembrance Day, the time spent at St Clement Danes was particularly solemn and it was a good chance for us to reflect on the commitment we had made and the sacrifice of those

who have gone before us. Once we finished at the church we moved onto the RAF Museum Hendon. This was a good opportunity to browse the museum in our own time and without a set programme, it allowed us to focus on the parts that were of interest and was a great way to learn more about our heritage as a nation and as an air force. We were feeling particularly generous by this point and were keen to assist the museum by purchasing generously priced refreshments in one of the 3 cafes. After a couple of hours at the museum we re-boarded the coach for the flight out of London back to RAF Cranwell still managing to just about muster enough energy for one last nap.



Conclusion

Over the course, these activities have given the Aircrew Cadets of courses 221 through to 225 the opportunity to develop their teamwork and leadership skills. At the same time we have been able to give something back to the community and expand our awareness of RAF culture and ethos. The course has changed with the removal of R & I week and the addition of the London visit, enabling a more focused approach to producing the NCA of the future.



March 2006 - Cadet Reflections (4b)



B SQUADRON

NO 214 IOTC 6 FEB – 22 JUL 2005

By Student Officer Paul Tolley



SO Paul Tolley graduated from B Sqn on 22 July 2005 and is training for the Fly(P) Branch.

B Squadron, 214 IOT. The last of the Tigers, and a very unique course. The 24 week IOT course has been a long and individual journey for every cadet and this article will take you through some of the defining moments and events that made 214 IOT such a special course. Everyone has had their own ups and downs, but the Squadron has developed its own style and spirit as the period has progressed due in part, no doubt, to the small size of the cadet body, the characters within it and the Directing Staff.

Despite some dubious tactics from the 'Dolphin' teams, such as practicing, we managed to force the afternoon into a tied lead before the final event, known as Superstars. In this event a selection of fine athletes are pitted against each other in a relay race of strength and endurance, encompassing everything from sit-ups to step machines, with the first team to the podium taking the trophy and the glory. Or at least that is how it is supposed to work. In this instance C Squadron ended up walking away with the trophy by a matter of mere seconds, but it was the Tiger Squadron Commander, Squadron Leader John Jackson, who exited the hall with a smile on his face. He had just watched his Squadron, despite being heavily outnumbered, not only come very close to victory but also drown out the cheers of the Dolphin supporters. This was perhaps the first occasion at which the very unique and colourful spirit of the 214 Tigers was shown, although it was certainly not the last.

During Basic Phase we became renowned for not being able to get things right first time, whether it was uniform, block inspections or saluting officers. The culmination of this was a 'Change Parade' on the Wednesday lunchtime of Week 3. For those not in the know, a Change Parade involves the entire Squadron changing from greens into blues, then into PT kit, civilian clothes and back into greens, each within the space of 3 minutes, before having a one-way conversation with the Regiment Training Squadron Training Officer on the Parade Square, with the added bonus in our case of driving snow. As a consequence, a very late night followed as cadets attempted to resurrect their inspection lockers from clothes strewn across the room. Many of us were sceptical when it was briefed that a Change Parade was "not a punishment but a training aid", but the truth of it was that it worked. The next day we were smarter in both dress and deportment, and looked more like a military body. It was a turning point for 214 IOT, and things slowly began to pick up from there.

Once we had overcome the hurdle of Basic Phase and moved onto B Squadron, it swiftly became clear that the size of the Squadron did not mean we had less character or spirit than other Squadrons. Nowhere was this better seen during those initial weeks as Tigers than in competition against C Squadron during our first inter-Squadron sports afternoon.

Outside of the Leadership Phase of the course with its routine of classroom lessons, practical exercises and PT there was still time for several social and sporting events and our Sports Committee came up with the novel idea of a Dodge Ball tournament for an evening's merriment. A minor American sport made famous a couple of years ago by the film of the same name, Dodge Ball involves a team of 5 throwing something akin to a volleyball at the opposing team to try and eliminate opponents by hitting them. With flights competing in fancy dress ranging from Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles to fairies the night was a resounding success, ending with 10 Flight being declared the winners and more importantly, the 6 Flight cheerleaders winning the fancy dress competition. The tournament was one of the first events to be reported in the Tiger Times, the new B Squadron fortnightly newspaper which has kept Squadron members abreast of news, events and gossip throughout the Course. Credit must go to all the committees and their members for making the course so successful outside the learning arena: being such a small squadron cadets ended up with several secondary duties and tended to take to them all with a passion.

Field Leadership Camp (FLC) passed with the usual long distances, wounded pilots, radioactive isotopes (which always seemed to be unnecessarily heavy), pine poles and shark-

infested custard. The FLC dinner was a merry affair, due in part to the modest amounts of alcohol consumed but mostly to the sheer exhaustion of the cadets when combined with that alcohol. It was sad to lose some of the most colourful characters to 215 IOT after FLC, with our loss of 12 cadets being very definitely their gain. We are proud of the philosophy "Once a Tiger, always a Tiger" and maintained close links with those cadets throughout the second half of the course.

The 2 weeks after FLC were laden with social events, from a training Dining-In Night during which a senior officer's glass was smashed from his hand with a pole that had just snapped in half as a result of an over-exuberant Tug-O-War, to a Mid-Course Reception and party which lasted until around 4.30am. The charity Stars In Their Eyes night saw some good, bad and just ugly performances from members of the Squadron and the competition ended with a victory for Officer Cadet Jo Whalen singing Perfect by Fairground Attraction. The auction, bar profits and raffle raised nearly £2500 for the 2 Squadron charities, Canine Partners for Independence and Hazel's Footprints Trust, an amazing total from fewer than 70 people, and it was hoped that over £4000 would be raised by the end of the course. Entertainment during the evening was provided by the resident Squadron band, Direct Moulded Soul, along with karaoke for the less musically-gifted.

After the merriment of so many social events, the Tigers began to settle into Academic Phase and Week 17: Exam Week. With 1 week to go, things were not looking hopeful for the dreaded Operational Studies (OS) exam. In fact, things were looking so dismal that members of B Squadron staff were taking bets on how many would fail! Who the optimist was that won the pot was never disclosed, but after a weekend of cramming, 214 IOT became the first course in at least 10 years to have a 100% pass rate for the OS exam, a feat that was repeated during the Essential Service Knowledge exam later during the week.

After the 3 week Carousel Phase attention was turned to Exercise PEACEKEEPER, the final challenge of IOT and a culmination of 21 weeks of teaching and learning. As a small squadron the shift pattern was changed to two 8-hour shifts per day with 8 hours off, rather than the traditional 12 on, 12 off pattern. The resulting loss of time off-duty was taken well by the Tigers, with a strong sense of teamwork helping leaders and teams alike to get through the days in good spirits. Nowhere was this better seen than when ENDEX was declared 24 hours early as a result of the London Underground bombs on 7th July 2005. Squadron members came out of scenario to meet a rapidly unfolding series of events and the possibility of being deployed in support of increased security measures. In the end this did not occur and we returned to RAF Cranwell for our final assessed event: the aptly-titled Ultimate Challenge. This race involves each flight running around the North Airfield collecting equipment with which to build a chariot before transporting it 9km around Cranwell and then completing a 3.2km individual best effort run. The top 5 run times are added to the chariot race time to find the winning flight time. Determination and teamwork once again came to the fore, and when Group Captain Chambers announced the results it emerged that 4 of the 6 flights competing had broken the previous record with 9 Flight winning in a time of 2 hrs 49 mins, over 5 minutes faster than the previous record.

So there it is: a picture of B Squadron, 214 IOT, the last of the Tigers. The resounding theme from the Directing Staff has been the uniqueness of the Squadron, and its development from an average squadron to a determined and motivated team which has set several firsts and records throughout the course, no mean feat in view of the size of the Squadron. We are very proud of what we have achieved, and look forward to carrying these accomplishments forward into the wider RAF.



[Return to Contents List](#)

March 2006 - Cadet Reflections (4c)

C SQUADRON

NO 216 IOTC - 29 MAY - 24 NOV 2005

THE LAST OF THE "OLD" SCHOOL

By Student Officer Gerard Shaw



SO Gerard Shaw LLB graduated from C Sqn on 24 November 2005 and is training for the Fly(P) Branch

It all began in some distant day back in May, with the arrival of approximately one hundred cadets heralding from the far southwest to Scotland. Various acquaintances from the selection boards and Familiarisation Visits were re-made. We were then separated into the small flights that would be our 'home' and launched into the first basic phase. This phase broadly equates to the Common Core Skills course, involving weapon drills, theoretical and practical first aid as well as a heavy militarization aspect through the use of regular inspections of both kit and rooms. Emphasis was also placed upon several key military doctrines, particularly the use of the chain of command; several unfortunate ex-rankers endeavouring to cope with the younger cadets unschooled in such comprehensive communication skills. Use was occasionally made of "training aids" such as Show Parades and Restrictions to aid

On the 24th November of this year, over two decades of RAF history will come to a close with the graduating cadets of 216 IOT marching through the famous front doors of RAFC Cranwell. The 24 week IOT course undertaken by us and many others before us will cease, and in its place will arise a new, 30 week course. It will be a challenge for the planners of the new course to sustain the challenges we have faced and are yet to face in this, the last of the old style.

those slipping beneath the prescribed standards! Not all the initial training was given by the Directing Staff, however; we have learned many lessons through our own endeavours: one cadet teaching us that not only is Sprite an unsuitable filling for irons, but also that superglue is wholly inappropriate for retaining creases in our newly ironed uniforms. Finally, despite the broadly fit standard of the course, extended periods were spent in the gym, pool and running round the north airfield of Cranwell, beginning our attempts to prepare ourselves physically for the rigours later in the course; in particular, the Field Leadership Camp.

An inescapable element of IOT is that wherever in the course you may be, there is always a forthcoming assessment or examination to put pressure on you and concentrate your mind towards the next set of goals. The first of these were the Basic Phase exams and practical tests, and there was suitable relief for all concerned upon successful completion of these, as well as the suitable reward of being moved onto Squadron and receiving the blue coloured tabs of our C Squadron.

Immediately, the challenges of Basic Phase forgotten, the ominous challenge of the Leadership Phase and ultimately FLC entered the cadets' minds. Having been re-flighted following the Basic Phase, the first hurdle was to bond with our new flight members. Various teamwork exercises have been developed in order to expedite this process; the most interesting two being the blind backwards fall from height into the arms of our new flight members, and the individual trust exercise: don a blindfold, and sprint undaunted towards a solid concrete wall, trusting your new team-mate to call out "stop"



in time. Perhaps unsurprisingly, some cadets were hesitant to co-operate quite so willingly/recklessly with their new peers, but the exercise proved invaluable for developing the necessary trust needed for the leadership phase, and we were assured that come graduation, the shared tribulations of the course would mean that we would indeed trust one another sufficiently to run undaunted towards the wall. Whether this will actually be tested remains to be seen!

The practical leadership exercises prior to FLC done, the cadets were bussed to Otterburn for their next major test. Although assessment had been carried out prior to this, Otterburn was where it counted, and over the 8 days of log-carrying, tripod building, navigation, bridging and code-breaking the cadet body was tested to its limits both mentally and, in particular, physically. Many a cadet would have been grateful for the 12 previous weeks' worth of PT! Morale in the camp remained high throughout though, particularly with the mercifully dry weather (a fact for which I remain thankful.) On completion of all exercises, the cadets were able to relax briefly at the FLC dinner; the alcohol on the night causing an unusually disproportionate response following the rigours of the previous 8 days.

The elation after the successful completion of the leadership phase soon subsided with the realisation that the academic phase was upon us, and, in particular, the Operational Studies and Essential Service Knowledge examinations. With various Oral



Communications lectures and presentations to be prepared, committees and Dining In nights to attend, as well as myriad social functions outside the IOT programme, revision time was at a premium, and the stress levels of the cadets rose proportionately to the decreasing amount of time before the exams in Week 17. Happily, the exams were largely successful.

On completion of the academics the course began a three week "Carousel," rotating between a week's adventurous training in Grantown-On-Spey, a week attached to an RAF station, and a week comprising two days' counselling training with RAF padres in Amport House in Hampshire and three days on a Station Management Simulator back at Cranwell. Perhaps more than any other training, these three weeks proved to be of obvious application to the jobs we will be paid to do in the RAF, and highlighted the far greater magnitude of responsibility we will face having left Cranwell. Indeed, the difficulty of the training will not cease to rise once past IOT; my eye-opening (and ear-busting, to my colleagues' amusement) experience of a tail chase in a Tucano during my visit to RAF Linton-On-Ouse making it only too clear that my pilot training will hold new and greater challenges.

So for 216, the final hurdle awaits: Peacekeeper. Although ominous in itself, and undoubtedly warranting the effort that has got the course thus far, it is but one stage in the process of becoming an officer, and when the doors shut behind the last cadet of the last course, our job really begins.



March 2006 - Cadet Reflections (4d)



D SQUADRON NO 215 IOTC - 3 APR - 29 SEP 2005 THE LAST DANCE OF THE DRAGON By Student Officer Toby Steward



SO Toby Steward graduated from D Sqn on 29 September 2005 and is training for the Ops Spt (Regt) Branch.

Lock up the offices on the top corridor; the Dragons have left the building. 'D' Sqn's last cadets in the guise of 215 IOT graduated on the 29th September and did so in some style. The graduation parade itself, lauded as one of the very best of recent years, encapsulated, as drill should, so much more: the pride, the attitude, the swagger, and most of all the determination of the whole Sqn. It is worth stressing from the outset that from the beginning this was no ordinary D Sqn. It was a Sqn that had no time for dwelling on the reputedly poor performances by previous D Sqns,

while at the same time wanting desperately to leave its own positive mark, and a lasting legacy as such. This is the story of the last 'D' Sqn.

It never fails to amaze me how different places can become after initial impressions. And so it was that the windy barren parade square of No1 Mess that had seemed so enormous on our familiarisation visit shrank quickly to be our home, for the first eight weeks. We took our first tentative steps of drill there, most of us very much the military fledglings learning to walk.

Basic Phase passed swiftly though, thanks in part to the myriad of lessons, covering Weapons Training, First Aid, NBC, Drill and PT, but thanks also to the weekend break spent in Breda, Holland, where about 15 members of Course 215 competed in the Inter-Collegiate Games, representing RAFC Cranwell in sports including swimming, cross-country, rugby and the Dash. Returning home, weary yet happy, our next weekend could not have been any more different as we were treated to the joys of the Respirator Test Facility at RAF Digby. Coughing and spluttering our way into Week 4, the cadets all took part in short tests, covering the Common Core Skills which we had learnt so far, and spent 2 nights bivvying out in Reeve's Plantation. It was here that we enjoyed our first taste of 24 hour Ration Packs and pledged our allegiances to either the Brown corner or the Fruit corner when it came to scrounging extra biscuits.

It was not impossible but it was testing, and there was something for every person, every week at least, that was challenging, and the glow of a satisfaction that you can only achieve from completing something that even if only for a spilt second one might not have thought possible. For some it might have been surviving those damp nights in the dense forests of Reeve's Plantation, for others the deceptively high diving board in the pool. It might have been the final straw-4 hrs night sleep after wrestling with ironing and bulling shoes, a good time on a gut-busting mile and a half effort, or perhaps even learning to love CS gas!

D Sqn never saw one of the dreaded and much talked about change parades; the bogey monster of Basic Phase, but few people will forget the sight of our colleagues show parading their room chairs early one morning in May. I for one though will miss the extraordinarily close little communities that can only be formed in such tight and sparse surroundings, which along with the warm and welcoming mess staff really make those formative few weeks.

With a complete reshuffle of flights we were introduced to our flight commanders for the next stage of the course and the 'D' Sqn corridor. Once we had all mastered the art of entering a room and saluting with out mishap (banging one's hand on the door frame for example), the course moved up another gear and we were off, into the leadership stage. Room inspections continued apace, but the benchmark now was higher, and we set ourselves the goal of making the name of D Squadron one to be proud of. Through Group Dynamics, Leadership training and 2 Navigation exercises we rapidly progressed through the training, forming bonds which were to stand us in good stead for the more trying moments still to come. These bonds were further enforced by social events, such as each Flight's participation in a 24 Hour Charity Drillathon, and a good indication of the DS' dedication to mentoring the cadets through to Graduation could be seen when Flight Commanders opted to join their Flights on a freezing cold Parade Square at 3am on a Saturday morning, rather than stay tucked up in bed as they could have done.

Leadership Phase continued with 2 weeks of UPEX on the North Airfield and some weird pine pole constructions could be seen, as cadets struggled to cross shark-infested waters

and minefields. This was followed by APEX 1 at RAF Cranwell and APEX 2 at Proteus Training Area in Sherwood Forest, during which the intensity and difficulty of leads increased, but the resolve of the cadets never diminished. We left for FLC confident in each of our abilities to save the day at least three times in a day, for extended periods.

It was during this part of the course that D Squadron discovered their love of winning all things sport-related, beating B Squadron in the Inter-Squadron games not once but twice, and winning the College Dash Trophy. Cadets from D Squadron also took part in the Old Cranwellian's Weekend, playing a variety of sports on the Saturday and parading on the Sunday before the church service in St. Michaels. They received much praise for their efforts, especially since they had to leave for FLC at Otterburn immediately after the parade.

Unfortunately an apparent intelligence leak meant that our deployment to Otterburn was compromised, and demonic savages were waiting to ambush us as we got off the bus. No, nothing to do with the Belgian Army we were to share the camp with (interesting looking as they were with their many strange beard combinations), but rather the far more coordinated attacks of the fiendish summer midges of Scotland. FLC brought many more challenges of course - physical and mental tiredness, and the strain of some pretty intense exertion in very hot temperatures. As an acclimatisation exercise for work in the Middle East it was perfect.

A dozen members of Course 215 were lost to R-Flight, but they have subsequently passed FLC second time round and are looking forward to graduating with Course 216. After FLC came the academic phase and a whole host of social functions. D Squadron enjoyed the Training Dining-In, Partners Day and the Mid-Course Function, dancing away at the disco until the early hours. Our Back-to School Karaoke Night was enjoyed by all and the sight of OC D Squadron singing Sonny and Cher's 'I Got You Babe' with the Squadron Adjutant was worth the entry fee alone. But it was not just informal events that we participated in - twenty cadets attended the VJ Day services in Lincoln Cathedral and I myself was afforded the privilege of reading one of the lessons that day.

The fierce attitude with which we won our first inter-squadron games has set us of on a roll of success, the feeling of which fed back into the whole Sqn infectious. Our impressive Grand slam of inter-squadron games was no accident. Even

when 'up against it' facing a far larger and extremely strong 'C' squadron in our final tournament, we still powered to another win.

After the mental strain of OS and ESK exams, and a well-deserved two week break during Block Leave, we moved onto Carousel, 3 weeks of Adventurous Training at RAF Grantown-on-Spey in Scotland, the Station Management Simulator at Cranwell, and Station visits which ranged from RAF Aldergrove to RAF Uxbridge, to, wait for it... RAF Digby.

The very real mystery element to our final hurdle, Ex PEACE-KEEPER, was what to expect. Was it a DW exercise? Was SO (dev-flight) Palik going to be hounding the gates as our simulated refugee? Was it going to be utterly exhausting, and most importantly, were we going to get to fire lots of 'blanks'? The answer; that it was such an enjoyable and absorbing exercise, in which one forgot almost instantly about any apprehensions regarding our qualifications to be in the driving seat of a Peacekeeping mission. Thrown right in, but with the subtle support of the DS, and the less subtle direction of the RTS, one soon felt entirely believable as an OC Engineering responsible for the servicing of Harriers with deadlines for very real missions, or issuing tactical orders in the event of an ambush as a commander on the ground.

One morning's duty Combined Incident Team were lucky enough to lead an assault on CHOM, 'bomb-bursting from the back of a Puma. The chilling sight of seeing colleagues streaming over the bank through simulated gas down to the air-raid shelter, silhouetted by the moonlight, wrestling half asleep with respirators was a powerful experience to remind all of us of the relevance of our NBC lessons. The confidence with which people left, the vast majority having consolidated so much of what they had learnt over the last 6 months during their leads, was clear. D Sqn were ready to overcome Ex ULTIMATE CHALLENGE and take their privileged places on the Graduation Parade Square.

To return to benchmarks far less tangible than the results of any one event, the feeling of being on D Sqn has been something special. From the very first week, long before the Sqn's motto of 'Determined' was etched into the consciousness of all of us, the unspoken attitude of our Sqn was just that - Determined; Determined to leave a legacy as the best 'D' Sqn ever, Determined to help each other, and Determined now to meet the exacting standards required of a Junior Officer.



March 2006 - Cadet Reflections (4e)

SPECIALIST ENTRANT AND RE-ENTRANT (SERE) COURSE

By Rev (Flt Lt) Ruth Jackson MA (Cantab) BA



SO Ruth Jackson MA(Cantab) BA graduated into the Chaplaincy Branch from 285 SERE on 29 September 2005.

What do you get if take 14 doctors, 1 vicar, 3 nurses, 1 RAF re-entrant and a dentist, throw them all into eight intensive weeks of training at OACTU and then unleash them out into an unsuspecting world? The answers could well be many and varied, but in the case of 285 SERE the correct answer is 19 Flight Lieutenants and a Squadron Leader....

The SERE course is a condensed version of the main IOT course, which is specially designed for those who come into the RAF with specific profes-

sional qualifications, or who have previously held a commission in the Armed Forces and are coming back into the fold. Obviously time constraints mean that a lot is asked of the course members, and some aspects of IOT have to be reduced, or even in the case of weapons training, missed out altogether. These elements will however be covered at a later stage, and the course certainly isn't an easy ride!

There is in fact quite a substantial amount of integration between SERE cadets and the main IOT squadrons, especially in the second half of the course. 285 was the last SERE course to run before the new course format comes into play next year. We were therefore privileged to deploy alongside C Squadron for the last Field Leadership Camp (FLC) of the current IOT system, at Otterburn. We were extremely proud as a course of our positions (2nd and 4th) in the 'Pilot Down' exercise, although we were constantly told that it was *not* in fact a race.....

The hectic pace of the SERE course was then brought home to us, as we then had only three days back in the classroom to draw breath, before deploying with D Squadron on Exercise Peacekeeper. This is an exercise based on a peace-keeping operation in the Balkans, and provided us with many new challenges and a very steep learning curve, but also many new friends from D Squadron.

There have been some great highs and some deep lows on the course, not least the disappointment of losing members of the course to injury and further training. Some of the highs were shared by all, others were more personal moments of triumph, however, for some inexplicable reason, getting to Burger King on the way back from FLC, appears to have been a fairly universal high! On a more serious note, being pushed

outside of our professional comfort zones, and facing new and unexpected challenges has been tough at times for all of us. However we leave with a genuine sense of satisfaction and achievement at having overcome all those challenges and a greater confidence as we head off into the wider RAF.

The final two weeks of the course was mainly dedicated to practising our Drill for the graduation parade, at one point even practising in the dark, in order to make sure that we were up to scratch on the big day. By all accounts of those who were watching, it was worth the extra effort, we certainly thoroughly enjoyed the day, and were extremely proud to graduate alongside our friends and colleagues from D Squadron.

[Return to Contents List](#)

March 2007 - Reflections from IOTC 1 (5)

REFLECTIONS ON NUMBER ONE IOT FROM THE SHOP FLOOR

by FS Andy Greenhalgh, OACTU Deputy Flight Commander

It does not seem possible that 32 weeks of training have gone by so fast and B Sqn is ramping up for IOTC4. After the frenetic activity of the last few weeks of the course, a huge sense of anticlimax followed as the corridors of Whittle Hall fell silent over the block leave period. All the men and women having had so much time, energy and emotional commitment invested in them finally departed through the College gates. Those of us who experienced the roller coaster of IOT for the first time can now draw breath and do what we have been encouraging the Cadet body to do and reflect.



In the week between terms 1 and 2, a group of OACTU staff went on a ski expedition to Cervinia in Italy. The majority of the group had many hours of skiing experience and had become quite proficient at navigating the slopes. However over the last few ski seasons, developments in ski structure and design have necessitated a change in skiing style to get the best from the new equipment. Here lay the challenge for our skiers: no longer could they rely on the tried and tested techniques learned over years of painstaking practice; now they had to put aside these methodologies and put their faith in this new approach if they wanted to progress. To get the benefit of the superior equipment our intrepid snow-bunnies would have to swallow their pride, ski in a more basic manner and even take the odd tumble or two in order to advance. Trying to unlearn something appeared to be more challenging and frustrating than developing a new skill and it was all too easy to default to old techniques when the terrain became steep or unfamiliar. The resultant effect would be deterioration in performance and having to fight against the new equipment rather than allowing it to work with you.

As the week progressed the skill level of the whole party improved, as individuals first tried and then began to trust the new techniques. Each day would bring gleeful reports of enlightenment as the true value of the new design of skis was appreciated. By the end of the expedition everyone was talking of the next trip and how they would take forward what they had learned into the future.

This drew many parallels with my experience of IOTC1. All of us joined B Sqn, bringing with us our differing experiences of training and teaching but all with one common dilemma. This was Number One.

All of us were proficient in navigating the slopes of our varying training worlds but none of us had visited this mountain before. Over the last few years the tried and tested methodologies of training had been redesigned and updated and required us to adopt a different stance if we were to achieve optimum performance.

Each stage of the course brought with it equal shares of excitement and frustration, as the new terrain was explored. Each milestone of the course, Exercises Dynamics 1&2, Military Aid, Decisive Edge 1&2 and the Graduation, brought with it encouraging reports of how the new design was achieving the aims of the Officer Cadet Training Review (OCTR). This mountain set many steep challenges for the staff and it was all too easy to revert to previous techniques to deal with more difficult territory. Fighting against the new design brought with it the same tumbles, falls and frustrations experienced in Italy.

Skiers that have experienced and embraced the new design of ski equipment, now enthusiastically report the advantages and improved performance they are achieving and would never advocate a return to the previous thinking. Indeed, you would never see a World Cup racer trying to compete on his old skis. The ski world has moved on and changed.

In the last week of IOTC1, I read through the final report of the OCTR and reflected on the graduating cadets. It certainly had been a tough mountain to ski but having experienced it and seen the results marching up the steps of CHOM, I am convinced that there is no looking back and trusting that working in harmony with the new way is going to produce equally if not better results in the future.

[Return to Contents List](#)

March 2007 - History of IOTC 1 (6a)

B SQUADRON THE HISTORY OF IOTC 1 21 NOV 2005 – 13 JULY 2006

by Officer Cadet Carol Walker

On 21 November 2005 a new chapter in the history of RAFC Cranwell began with the start of the eagerly awaited IOTC 1. Spearheaded by our leaders Sqd Ldr Claire Taylor-Powell and Flt Lt Jez Batt, this new and improved 32 week course concentrated on producing officers who are able to handle the challenges of the modern Air Force.

The course began with the arrival of over 100 cadets eager to begin their career as RAF officers. We were organised into flights of around 30 and again into smaller sections of between 8 and 10 cadets. Each flight was assigned a Flight Commander and a Flight Sergeant Deputy Flight Commander, and for the first 2 terms a Leadership Instructor.

The first 4 weeks introduced us to military life. We spent the majority of our time with the RAF Regiment who had the thankless job of turning this group, who ranged from 18 year old direct entrants straight from school to 40 something ex-rankers, into military minded leaders with a courageous and determined fighting spirit. Our days began watching the sun rise over No 1 Mess as we anxiously awaited room and uniform inspections, hoping our hours of toil with irons and Brasso would not be ruined by a stray piece of fluff. Beyond inspections and 'training aids' such as restrictions and show parades we were trained in Common Core Skills, learning weapons drills, NBC drills, theoretical and practical first aid and land navigation. And of course we learned how to march, accompanied by frequent hollers of 'you buffoon' from the quiet and unassuming Sgt Burton! As well as the military skills training we had daily physical education sessions ranging from runs to pool circuits and battle fitness to improve our physical robustness. The Operational Studies staff educated us on RAF history and Essential Service Knowledge to ensure we were both mentally agile and politically and globally astute. This education continued throughout Terms 1 and 2, and the power point presentations were backed up by Syndicate Room Discussions on the lectures we had been given. This package of training filled our time and by the end of the 4 weeks and the arrival of Christmas we were all thankful for a break.

Term 1 concentrated on the fundamentals of leadership. From the OASC hangar we moved outside to the North Airfield and the wonders of pine poles, utilising the concept, if all else fails build a tripod! We improved upon our briefing styles using Situation, Mission, Execution, Administration, Command and the sections strengthened their bonds through group reviews of the leaders performance. This feedback was invaluable to back up the training



and let the cadets see how their decisions affected those working below them.

Week 7 brought with it Fairbourne. The outdoor activity centre introduced us to SDI and ensuing discussions on how 'blue', 'green' or 'red' we were. After these classroom based lessons which taught us about our personality types we progressed outside to stretch ourselves. From 'Friog' quarry with its abseiling and rock climbing to the high ropes course the cadets flourished in the more relaxed atmosphere and had a lot of fun scaring themselves.

Returning to Cranwell, and an unexpected room inspection that brought a day's restriction for the entire course and a number of '5 days' restrictions for those whose rooms were far below the expected standard, we were reminded we still had a very long way to go until graduation. Our leadership training moved on into the Dynamic phase, still on the North Airfield at Cranwell, the problems we had to deal with involved split teams and covered a larger distance.

Every training system requires assessment and the final 2 weeks of term one brought just that. Stress levels rose as everyone studied for both written and practical tests of the military skills that we had developed over the previous weeks. Further to this we had our first tested leads in the form of Dynamic 2. This took us to the Proteus training area in Sherwood Forest and tested our basic leadership ability to Plan, Initiate, Control, Support, Inform and Evaluate.



The end of the term brought with it the first review board and, although the majority of us celebrated progressing into Term 2 and the luxury of CHOM, there was the reality that some of the course had not reached the required standard and numbers fell below 100.

We returned to Cranwell after a week's leave refreshed and ready to begin a more relaxed phase of the training living in CHOM. How mistaken we were, and the first inspection resulted in us spending an evening Brasso-ing kick plates and radiators. We may have moved to CHOM but the standards could not be dropped. Further to this we had the bad news that our sports teams had returned unsuccessful from the French intercollegiate games.

Work began in earnest and our academic phase moved onto Air Power. Week 2 of Term 2 saw us deployed to Stanta on Exercise MIL AID. This exercise consisted of 3 different scenarios in rotation and saw us chasing escaped convicts, fishing dead dummies out of rivers and rescuing downed pilots, amongst other things. The week finished off with Pilot Down and then the Rocket Race, with C Flight returning to Cranwell the victors with the 'H for Hero's' trophy. Exercise MIL AID is untested and gives the cadets their first real opportunity to explore their leadership style without fear of failure and re-course. For many this exercise was one of the favourite parts of the entire course, and is a welcome escape from pine poles and shark infested custard. With the assistance of Trg Support Flt and role players the scenarios had a realism that helped the cadets explore how they would really react under pressure.

On returning to Cranwell the academic phase continued with Operational Studies, Essential Service Knowledge, written comms, oral comms and writing a Bandar Essay. Our leadership classes moved on to consider Transactional and Transformational leadership styles and we explored the Estimate Process of planning. There were the associated exams with each of these topics along with practical and theoretical NBC tests.

The Cranwell experience would not be the same without the sports competitions the cadets regularly participate

in competitions. Week 3 saw RAFC Cranwell pitted against the best from RMA Sandhurst, with Cranwell coming out victorious in the overall competition. Later in the term, Cranwell also won against the Dutch teams demonstrating our sporting prowess.

Partners' Day brought our loved ones to Cranwell. They were shown what we had been doing for the last 15 weeks and what the rest of the course involved. The following night was the Training Reception and mid-course function, our first formal event in CHOM and a great evening was had by all.

This led us up to planning and preparation for the first Exercise DECISIVE EDGE (DE). Generally DE runs with the senior course in charge of the Combined Operations Centre, however with no senior course we relied on our staff working twice as hard to fulfil this role. We set up the Deployed Operating Base, becoming experts at erecting tents, taking them down, moving them, putting them up, moving them □ □ DE concentrates on the Force Protection element of the base and assessed leads included Guard Commander, Combined Incident Team commander and Sector Adjutant. We had to deal with scenarios such as dealing with refugees and enemy attacking our base, as well as real time issues including sleep deprivation (with cadets getting on average about 4 hours sleep a night) and the cold. Here shift rotation became really important, but with limited numbers, when an attack took place it often saw us on guard for hours without relief. We all found out a lot about ourselves and each other in that week. Pushed to the extreme we returned to Cranwell exhausted but with a huge amount gained from the experience.

Term 2 ended with a second Review Board and a potential recommendation to graduate. This stated that we had reached the required level expected of junior officers and subject to continued performance we would be graduating on 13 July 2006. This brought happiness for most and tears for some. For many of us losing a member of our flight was a hard thing to deal with, having grown so close over the past 20 weeks working so closely together.

After a week's leave we returned to Cranwell for the final 10 weeks. We were now treated as junior officers and were given the freedom to prove that we did indeed deserve to graduate. No more marching when walking alone outside and we could remove our head dress when we entered Whittle Hall. These little symbols of the progress meant a great deal to us and we were all careful not to mess up and have to return to Term 2 treatment, or a worse fate of losing our duvets.

Carousel took us away from OACTU for 4 weeks. This was a busy time. We travelled to Amport House for Care in Command training with the padres. This reinforced the fact that as officers we would have a

[Return to Contents List](#)

March 2007 - History of IOTC 1 (6b)



48th International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes

duty of care for all those around us. Most of the course went on Station visits for a taster of what the wider Royal Air Force was like. For many this was the first time on an operational base. During this time 12 of us accompanied by Father Marcus Hodges, the RC Chaplain for Cranwell, travelled to France to take part in the 48th International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes. This was an excellent experience for all of those involved. For some it was a time of spiritual discovery, for others simply a time to reflect on our training so far. For most of us the trip was an opportunity to meet members of military organisations from other nations and to be proud to represent the Royal Air Force. The interaction with cadets from both Sandhurst and Dartmouth was significant, and gave us an opportunity to talk in a non-competitive environment. It was extremely interesting to discover the similarities between the courses and to discuss experiences and share stories between the services. It was good to have this time with our fellow Services, as we are increasingly moving towards Joint and Combined operations.

With carousel over we returned to OACTU for exercise planning for the second DE. This time we would be running the exercise from the Combined Operation Centre. The day before deployment we took part in 'Ultimate Challenge', an inter-flight competition testing both mental and physical agility. The morning began with various physical challenges from the swimming pool to the confidence course. On completion of these and some planning we launched into the chariot race around the base

finishing in a 'race' around the orange. With C flight finishing a good 5 minutes before the other flights the winners were clear!

At DE, as the senior course, we fulfilled the A1 to A9 roles in the Combined Operations Centre. Leads this time tested our ability in roles as diverse as OC Admin, OC Force Protection (FP) and OC Operations. The tested period was 12 hours, after this we had a 6 hour shift of FP before having 6 hours personal admin time. For most of us the second DE was less physically arduous than the first, but stretched us more mentally. It felt good to be utilising much of what we had been taught in the last 28 weeks and to get a feel for Out of Area Ops.

With the final challenge of IOT over we returned to Cranwell to embark on our final two weeks, lovingly referred to by the cadets as 'drink and drill'. Starting off on Champagne Monday when we found out if we had maintained the standard in the final term and performed well on DE. Spirits were high as we celebrated the fact we would be graduating in just over a week, and inevitably drill practice the next day was an interesting affair.

And so IOTC 1 came to an end. As the first new course we could be considered guinea pigs or trailblazers. With the hard work and determination of both the DS and the cadets I feel it was undoubtedly the latter. This will be reflected by the calibre of junior officers leaving the gates of RAF College Cranwell keen to join the front line and experience everything that the Service has to offer.

[Return to Contents List](#)

March 2007 - IOTC 2 Memories (7a)

C SQUADRON IOTC 2: SETTING THE STANDARD 19 FEB – 5 OCT 2006

by Officer Cadets Chris Tomlinson and Carl Pettitt

5 October 2006 marked the end of a very successful 30 weeks for the first C Sqn through the new Initial Officer Training Course. The new course, still in its infancy, provided challenges for everyone and improving on the foundations created by IOTC 1, C Sqn set high standards for future courses to uphold.

Students arrived at the college on 19 February 2006 from places as far a field as Bermuda, South Africa and Oman. After months of individual preparation we hit the ground running, straight into an intense training program from day one. The course began with initial kitting and the squadron then settled into a month of militarization by the Regiment Training Flight. This month was aimed at bringing the cadets, who were from a vast variety of backgrounds, to the same standard. Naturally this period was a dramatic lifestyle change for cadets with no previous military experience. Although our arrival at the college was a cold winter's day, and No 1 IOT Mess was a very daunting place, C Sqn had some great personalities and cadets soon settled in to their new style of living.

From the word go, C Sqn were committed to the physical side of IOT, and competed alongside B Sqn in convincingly defeating Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in an Intercollegiate Games sports event. Notably, on what was a miserable day, a sizeable crowd turned out to witness an impressive victory in both the Rugby tournament and the Blue Ribbon event, the Superstars competition. This sporting success was the first of many for C Sqn who remained undefeated throughout their time at the college, beating both their junior and senior Sqn's on more than one occasion as well as being victorious over the Dutch military academy KMA, Breda.

On completion of the first 4 weeks of training, C Sqn commenced their leadership training phase. Classroom lessons were put into practice in both



static and dynamic exercises in arduous conditions. Although cadets were not under assessment during these exercises, they were a great opportunity to highlight learning points that assisted the cadets in rapidly improving, building on their foundation leadership skills. This was all in preparation for the Dynamic 2 Leadership assessment that completes the first term of the syllabus.

Prior to Exercise Dynamic 2 the cadets had the opportunity to get involved in some adventure training at FDTC Fairbourne where a thoroughly good time was had by all in a range of activities including mountain biking, canoeing and rock climbing. Alongside the adventure training the cadets were also taught the SDI approach to understanding how different people deal with pressured situations. Exercise Dynamic 2 provided the climax to the leadership training so far. Some cadets from the French air force academy joined the squadron. The crisp good weather along with high morale post Fairbourne led to good performances across the board. The success of Dynamic 2 alongside the move to the impressive College Hall accommodation provided closure for the first term of our initial officer training.

After a well deserved week's leave the cadets returned to face Exercise Mil Aid. This exercise was designed to stretch the cadets' leadership skills beyond the functional approach from term one as well as to push the cadets physically. C Sqn again rose to the challenge and after three positive days of leadership in the field, the Sqn competed in two physically strenuous exercises, Rocket Race and Pilot Down. The exercise culminated with Puma helicopter rides for many of the cadets, courtesy of 230 Sqn.

The next stage of the term concentrated on academics. Along with keeping up a vigorous fitness programme the cadets spent many daylight and evening hours preparing for academic exams and writing a Bandar Essay. In the run up to these exams,

C Sqn had their mid course function. This was an excellent opportunity to invite partners to the college to have a tour round and enjoy a social evening with the course. Shortly after, the Old Cranwellians Association had their annual reunion at College Hall, and C and B Sqns competed against them at numerous sports. C Sqn were then straight into their exams, before deploying to RAF Syerston (aka "Moltovia") to take on the challenge of Exercise Decisive Edge 1, a 10 day leadership assessment exercise encompassing pre-deployment training. This was an exciting time for the college as it was the first time the exercise had been run with both a senior and intermediate Sqn.

The numerous challenges met by cadets on DE 1 made the exercise the hardest so far. It was our role



to maintain Force Protection on the Deployed Operating Base at RAF Syerston. 18-hour shifts meant cadets endured a tough schedule, but the strong camaraderie amongst C Sqn kept morale high and prevented any sense of humour failures. Exercise Decisive Edge was another success story for C Sqn, and the final part of the second term was then dedicated to providing graduating support for the departing B Sqn.

In week one of term three the cadets had their first taste of some of the traditions involved in being an officer with our training dining in night. The evening was a real eye opener with good food and a great atmosphere. Term three provided a transitional period from being officer cadets to junior officers. Numerous changes between term 3 and the previous



two terms ensured cadets really got a sense of what life may be like post Cranwell.

In the first four weeks of the final term the Squadron was split between the Basic Air Warfare course (BAWC), FDTC Grantown on Spey and the Station visit. The objectives of the BAWC were to increase cadets' awareness of the real time issues faced by the RAF in today's environment. It also provided an insight into how command and control functions worked and their decision-making procedures. Grantown on Spey was another opportunity to get involved in some adventurous training. The focus of this trip being centralised around mission command, the adventurous training was able to provide the necessary unfamiliar environment. With cadets having the opportunity to visit another RAF station, they were able to experience the air force outside the confines of the college.

Now half way through their final term, C Sqn's next focus was preparation for Exercise Decisive 2, the final challenge faced by the cadets. As the senior Squadron it was our responsibility to run the command and control centre for the DOB as well as to ensure that the intermediate squadron were provided for and could maintain an effective force protection footprint around the DOB. The preparation work for Exercise Decisive Edge required a concentrated effort from the Sqn, and once again the cadets proved their worth in ensuring that the deployment and functionality of the DOB was to a very high standard. Being the senior squadron, this exercise was also an opportunity to lead the intermediate squadron by example. With both squadrons having enthusiastic personalities in abundance, the two meld together and worked towards a very successful deployment. With almost the whole of C Sqn having a positive result from this final challenge, celebrations were high-spirited at a well earned champagne Monday.

As C Sqn's time at the college drew to a close and with the drill practice for Graduation dominating the timetable, the squadron had their Dining in night. The evening had a great atmosphere with a series of upbeat speeches, notably Sqn Leader Herbetson gave a moving speech about his time with the Royal

[Return to Contents List](#)

March 2007 - IOTC 2 Memories (7b)

Air Force as this night marked his retirement from the Service. Prior to graduation C Sqn had their End of Course Revue; the night was a series of sketch shows performed by the cadets, reminiscing on the humorous aspects of training. As the final week continued, the realisation began to set in amongst the cadets that it would soon be time to leave the college, creating an air of excited anticipation.

As H hr hit us, we woke to a miserable and overcast day. Parents and friends arrived at College Hall to be greeted by our directing staff. The Cadets prepared themselves for the parade itself; shoes gleaming and uniform pressed we braved the weather outside which was deteriorating rapidly. Guests watched on from the stands huddled under blankets as the rain continued to fall; even so the C Sqn spirit could not be dampened. The graduation day was a very proud moment for everyone involved, which was capped off by the party of all parties. As the scroll of graduating officers was read out at the stroke of midnight, C Sqn felt an immense sense of



achievement in what they had done. This 30 week course of intense and arduous training had reached its climax; no cadet will ever forget their time at the college, and will find many fond memories as they reflect back on Initial Officer Training Course No 2.

[Return to Contents List](#)

March 2007 - IOTC 3 Memories (8)

D SQUADRON IOTC 3: THE DRAGON LIVES ON 7 May - 21 Dec 2006

by Flying Officer Rich Gray

On the face of it, you wouldn't think that a bunch of university students, recent 6th form leavers, some teachers, firemen, police, and a handful of current serving Non Commissioned Officers had all that much in common. As we all gathered nervously at Number One Mess in May 2006, neither did we.

But within weeks, having been divided into 3 flights of approximately 25 cadets, we were on our way to learning the skills that would transform us into Officers of the Royal Air Force.

The RAF had identified the need to modernise the existing Initial Officer Training Course (IOT), in order to reflect the environment that the RAF is currently operating in today, with emphasis more towards expeditionary warfare. The course was extended from 24 weeks to 30 weeks, and divided up into terms of 10 weeks.

Each of the 10 week terms had a slightly different emphasis. The first 10 weeks were used to get the Officer Cadets up to the required military standard; with lessons on drill, first aid, weapons, and NBC.

There were also daily lectures from Kings College London on a range of military topics – who could forget the “Comfy Chair Challenge”? Dare you sit in the comfortable arm chairs down the front of the lecture hall, after a late night of cleaning and ironing,

and an early morning start with Physical Education and First Aid theory? Many a brave cadet tried, and failed!

Whilst many of those who had been in the Armed Forces before found the opening 4 weeks comparatively easy thanks to their basic recruit training, those that had come from straight from university or 6th form found adjusting to the military way of life somewhat more difficult. Getting up at 5.30 in the morning, what's that all about? I didn't even realise 5.30am existed; I thought it was just a story told by parents to scare their children. The tables would soon be turned however when the cadets entered Term 2.

D Squadron also enjoyed a week in Fairbourne undertaking Adventure Training and Self Awareness Classes. Make no mistake, the time spent at Fairbourne should not be considered a jolly holiday at the RAF's expense – for many of the cadets of D Squadron it was the hardest thing that they had done, physically, mentally and emotionally (up until that point anyway...). For those uncomfortable at heights, it was at times an extreme challenge to get them to climb a vertical pole and jump off, many praying that they could fly – or at the very least that the safety rope they were attached to would take them safely back to ground. No-one who saw the faces of the relieved cadets as they touched ground

could doubt the mental anguish that they had been through.

Fairbourne was considered by some to be one of the best aspects of the course. We had the good fortune to get some fantastic weather (or at least the second group who went did), the odd pint down the local, and a number of games of Frisbee down on the beach. It was a great opportunity to build friendships and teamwork skills that would be later relied on whilst on exercise.

The final few weeks of the first term involved preparation for our end of term leadership exercise Dynamic 2. Fortunately, 95% of D Sqn passed this test and progressed onto Term 2.

The priorities in Term 2 changed from basic military skills to academics, defence writing, the estimate process, and leadership theory. It also involved a move from Number One Mess to College Hall Officers Mess. Moreover, what this meant in real terms was a room to yourself, a bit more responsibility and freedom, and being 15 minutes closer to the lecture halls – which very nicely translated to a few more minutes in bed or a bit of extra studying time, depending on the individual cadet's inclination.

One week into the new term and the cadets found themselves going on Exercise Military Aid. Whilst the exercise was “un-assessed”, feedback was given on every lead by their Directing Staff. It was also the first time cadets were exposed to 3 hour leads. These ranged from containing a Virus in the countryside, to apprehending dangerous criminals at large. The cadets were encouraged to try out various types of leadership style, to find the method that suited them best. As part of the scenarios, the cadets were often invited to act in a certain way to provoke a response in the current leader. Several learning points arose from this; no one on IOT 3 is ever going to make it as a Hollywood actor/actress, and it's very easy to wind the person in charge up if you know how to push the right buttons!

With all the academic studies, Term 2 seemed to fly past for D Sqn and before we knew it exercise Decisive Edge (DE) was upon us, DE being the main exercise of the new course, and replacing Exercise Peacekeeper. One of the main differences between DE and Peacekeeper is that cadets take part in the exercise twice. The first time around involves taking a more tactical role, in charge of a Guard or Combined Incident Team, and the second time around taking charge of a role in the Combined Operations Cell at a more strategic/operational level. Cadets now also have to do 18 hours on, 6 hours off per shift, testing the individual's ability to make decisions when tired as well as under pressure – reflecting the current operational environment.

We had the good fortune to get relatively good weather. This made living out in the field that little bit easier. What it did not do however was make life easier when in full NBC kit (Dress Cat 4R). It was like being inside a steam oven; you could feel yourself slowly cooking! It's best not to talk about the sweaty conditions inside the respirators.

With DE over, it was time for our final 10 weeks at IOT. Whilst many looked forward to the end of initial training which was almost in sight, many were saddened with the knowledge that our exciting and challenging journey would soon be over.

The opening week of Term 3 consisted of many a leadership lecture and a return to our beloved PEd sessions – these would be our last for the next 4 weeks whilst the cadets undertook a Basic Air Warfare course, went to sunny Scotland for some Adventure Training, and made a visit to a station. The AT took place in Grantown in Scotland and had a different emphasis to Fairbourne in the first term. This time around the cadets were given a map of Scotland and told “plan an expedition”. Apparently kayaking to Ireland and taking the Guinness brewery tour was not “realistic” within 3 days so alternative trips had to be planned. Cycling, walking, canoeing and kayaking trips were all planned and all a success with a number of humorous stories as well which makes the experience all the more memorable.

All that was left now was to plan and pass Decisive Edge 2. Not the easiest task in the world but everyone was up to the challenge. The weather was against us this time around at DE, and to make matters worst there was a power cut for a number of days – that meant no more field kitchen, so back to those nourishing ration packs. Back to working by Cyalume and torch light, this made things in the COC even more interesting. At the time it was a nightmare, but as often is the case with IOT, looking back you can't help but laugh!

The final two weeks consisted of a lot of drill in preparation for graduation, a small amount of time in the bar, and tying up any loose ends with regards to leadership training and admin prior to getting our results on “Champagne Monday”.

Upon reflection my time on IOT 3 was an enjoyable one. Sure there were difficult moments and often I

asked myself “Why am I doing this?” but the friendships that I made, the training that I received and the countless moments of hilarity all made it worthwhile in the end.

Officers of IOT 3 I salute you, may your exciting and challenging journey continue for years to come ☐ ☐



March 2010 - Recollections of IOTC 16 (9a)

Personal Recollections of IOT Course 16 Along With Recommendations of How to be Successful

Officer Cadet Babalola, B Squadron, OACTU, Belize Defence Force

My name is Mark Babalola. I represented Belize Defence Force on Initial Officer Training Course 16. This article is my personal recollection of a worthy journey through Initial Officer Training. The aim is to provide potential international and national cadets whose dream is to get commissioned at RAF College Cranwell an insight of what to expect. Furthermore, this article will provide valuable information and recommendations of how to be successful throughout the Course.

On the 16 March 2009, I stepped off British Airways at Heathrow Airport – my destination RAF College Cranwell. This was a dream come true. I had been longing for this Course ever since I became a member of the Belize Defence Force Air Cadet Corp (BDFACC) in the summer of 2006. The retired Brigadier General Lloyd Gillette initiated BDFACC in order to promote aviation interest in Belize. I would not have been here if it had not been for that vision becoming a reality. The College was the first Military Air Force College in the world; this was enough for me to have remained consistent in my goal of coming to the College.

I arrived at Grantham after a long train ride from Heathrow Airport. Once at Grantham, I made a call to my point of contact in order to be picked up. One thing I did not realize was my visit was prepared for in advance; transportation was already on standby

The standards expected for inspection.



for me along with other potential officer cadets who were heading to the College. The administration care of my arrival was handled very diligently.

When I arrived at RAF Cranwell I met my point of contact and the other two international cadets, Al-Harthy and Al-Wahshi, who were from the Oman Air Force. From there on, our induction week started. The induction week comprised of several activities. During that week we got a tour of the Station and met Wing Commander Allport who is the Commanding Officer of the International Training Office. Wing Commander Allport gave us a general overview of what to expect during the Course. In addition, he made us feel welcome to a new community and offered us advice on how to cope with things during the Course. I personally appreciated the honesty portrayed toward us during the initial brief and have maintained communication with Wing Commander Allport throughout my time at Cranwell. The first impression I received made me very comfortable to approach him with any problem.

The induction week was a huge advantage from my perspective. Techniques for getting our kit sorted were shown to us over and over again by our host. There was no excuse to have not understood anything we were shown throughout that week. There were only three of us compared to a hundred plus cadets the

Can you spot the cadets?

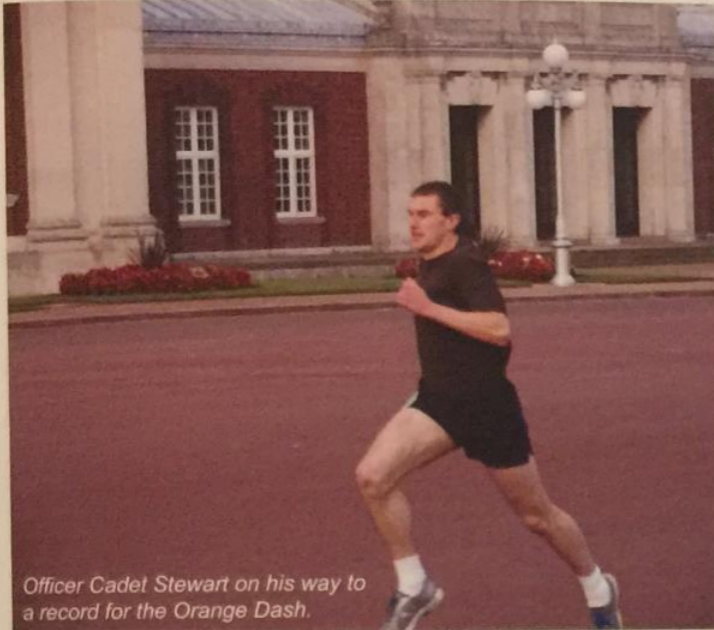


following week when Initial Officer Training Course 16 started. As a result of the techniques shown during our induction week and by our Squadron staff, I managed to avoid restrictions! The other reasons the induction week was an advantage was all the other 'admin' we had an opportunity to sort out – all three of us had collected all our kit and were taken to Grantham to purchase mobile phones, toiletries, stationery and cleaning materials which were essential to get our room up to inspection standards.

Flight staff and cadets.



March 2010 - Recollections of IOTC 16 (9b)



Officer Cadet Stewart on his way to a record for the Orange Dash.

On 23 March 2009, IOT 16 under B Squadron started with approximately 130 officer cadets. The Course resulted in forming four flights. Initially, our Squadron Commander was Major Wilkins who was the Army Exchange Officer. He was a very influential Commander who always conveyed the reality about the journey we were all on. He made it clear from the start that the road was not going to be easy but despite that, it was achievable. The Deputy Squadron Commander was Flight Lieutenant Scott. By the end of second term, Flight Lieutenant Scott took over as Squadron Commander and Flight Lieutenant Robson became the Deputy Squadron Commander. The structure is very easy to understand. B Squadron is comprised of one Squadron Commander, one Deputy Squadron Commander, four Flight Commanders and four Deputy Flight Commanders.

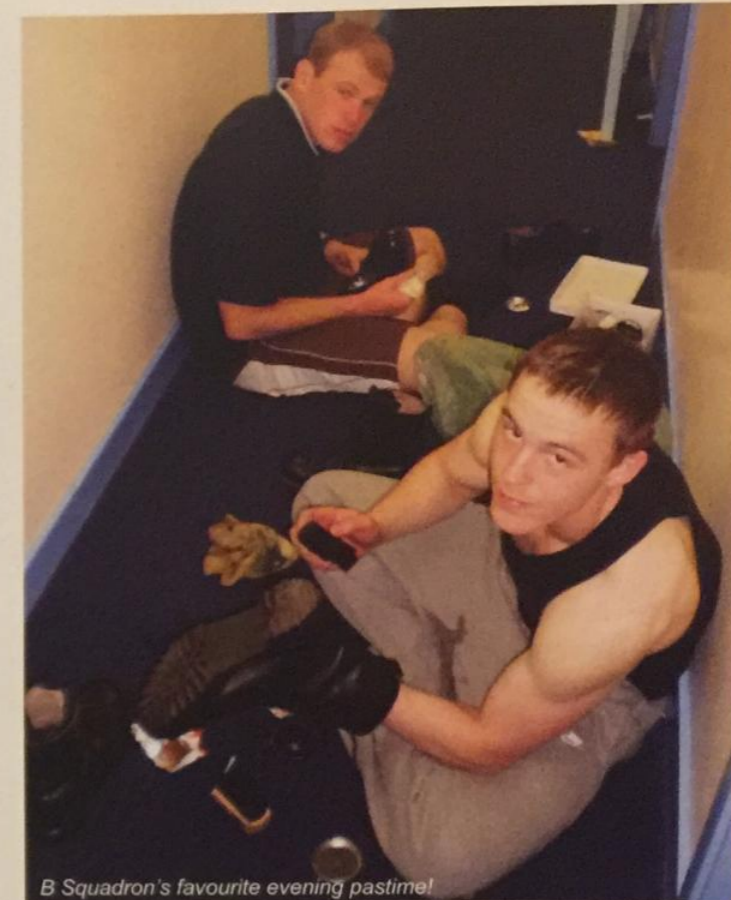
A Flight was "my family to be" for the next 32 weeks. Flight Lieutenant Sheppard and Flight Sergeant Sinclair were my Flight Staff; they nurtured me throughout the Course along with other staff members. I would not have made it through the Course without their support. I must stress that it is very important to keep your Flight Staff informed; doing so will enable them to know where you are struggling and as a result they will be able to help where necessary. My other fellow international cadets went to their respective flights. Officer Cadet Al-Harty went to C Flight and Officer Cadet Al-Wahshi went to D Flight.

I was fortunate to be in A Flight from the start. A Flight won the Squadron's drill competition in Term One. Furthermore, A Flight had Officer Cadet Stewart who was the fastest runner in OACTU. He even managed to set the new record for the Orange Dash at the Inter-Squadron Sports Competition during Term One. Furthermore, he won the Inter-Squadron Sports Cross Country on four occasions. He was the only male on our course to score 300 points on his fitness test. In addition to this, we had Officer Cadet Woodcock who is a member of the Royal Air Force Rugby Team. During the last week in Term Two, he represented the RAF in the International Sevens Tournament held in Denmark. All members of A Flight bonded together very well from the very start.

A lot of cadets found Term One physically and mentally demanding. Our Flight lost two credible cadets due to injury. I was at an advantage due to my Basic Training background. I was used to less sleep, bulling shoes, polishing boots, drill, ironing, block jobs and constant muscle soreness as a result of daily physical education. One thing worth mentioning at this point was how the ex-serving airmen helped a lot of cadets who had no form of military experience. Even though the Flight Sergeants helped with extra lessons, having the ex-serving airmen to aid at any given time made progress easier for a lot of cadets.

During the first five weeks of Term One we spent the bulk of our time with the Regiment Training Flight, Training Support Flight, Leadership Training Squadron and the Physical Education Squadron. Regiment Training Flight is responsible for providing Initial Ground Defence Trg (IGDT) for all IOT cadets, including instruction in First Aid, Weapon Training, CBRN, and Skill at Arms, Recuperation and Live Firing. Training Support Flight instructors were responsible for teaching Land Navigation skills, and for developing the cadets' personal standards regarding their uniforms, equipment and accommodation. All knowledge learned during these periods was put into practice during Fieldcraft Exercises also known as 'Bivvy weekend' at the end of Week 3. The Bivvy weekend was an introduction to the standards expected whenever in the field. In addition to that, we had a chance to practise all the navigation and personal care lessons that we were taught.

By Week 5, we had Ex STATIC which was designed to put all lessons learned in leadership to the test in the OASC Hanger. The rewarding aspect of this exercise was the introduction of Action Plans and group discussion. Each leader had to articulate an



B Squadron's favourite evening pastime!

Action Plan after he completed his lead. The Action Plan was an effective tool to help recognize what had gone wrong, what needs to be improved, and what plan the leader hopes to implement to make things better for future leads. Furthermore, as a result of the group discussion, several things that the leader might have overlooked could be voiced by his followers. This enables the follower to offer the leader advice that can assist in future leads. This technique was used throughout the exercises leading up to Exercise DECISIVE EDGE I. Additionally in Week 5, we had our first Initial Officer Training Fitness Assessment – the IOTFA – which is a 'pass or get re-coursed' assessment. The daily Physical Training sessions had boosted our fitness level.

Force Development Training Centre Fairbourne in Wales during Week 7 introduced me to an important self awareness tool known as Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI). SDI aided my performance throughout my time at Cranwell. The SDI is designed

March 2010 - Recollections of IOTC 16 (9c)



The CBRN conga.

to help individuals identify their strengths in relating to their subordinates under two conditions. The conditions are firstly when everything is going well and secondly when they are faced with conflict. SDI can be used so that one's personal strength may be used to improve relationships with others. It is also an inventory for taking stock of motivational values (the basis for how you feel and act in different situations), and I recommend you grasp the understanding at the initial stage because it will help you to be successful in your leads. Having a basic knowledge of how your peers react during different situations will empower you to be able to deal with them effectively.

We concluded Term One with Ex Dynamic II. For the first time, we conducted a 3-day exercise off Cranwell grounds. The most important advice I have is always keep your personal admin squared away. Follow the instruction given by the Regiment Staff at Bivvy Weekend thoroughly, or else you will suffer the consequence at the most crucial time!

Operational Studies are taught in Term One, however the main bulk of the workload is delivered during Term Two. Air Power Studies (APS) are delivered by King's College London staff; Staff Studies are delivered by ex-Service lecturers that are in the RAF Reserves. I must admit that prior to coming to Cranwell I had no sound knowledge of Air Power or the detailed chronology of how the major wars transpired and I now have a sound foundation knowledge. My advice to all potential or present candidates out



A short rest before more activities.

there is put in the maximum effort at all times, avoid distraction during lectures and furthermore, do not hesitate to ask questions. Although I was new to the topics and style of teaching, I did manage to pass all my assessments. Therefore whether you are a foreign cadet or not, there is no excuse to fail!

In Term Two, Officer Cadet Falih from Iraq joined our Course. This resulted in a total of four international cadets. As I mentioned before, the vast majority of the Operational Studies occurs in Term Two. The first weekend after leave, we had Exercise MILAID. I viewed the Exercise as the most exciting exercise compared to all the previous exercises. I do not want to spoil the surprise for you. All I can do is, assure you if you put in the work, you will reap the benefit. Just keep in mind that 'field admin' is very important. You can only be effective if you are healthy!

Term Two was referred to by Flight Sergeant Sinclair as the pressure cooker. If your time is not managed properly, you can be a victim of the system. Whatever you volunteer for or are tasked with, always take time out to organize yourself! You will be surprised how quickly demands are made from all corners. It is up to you to deal with it in an orderly fashion that will suit your schedule. Term Two was indeed a pressure cooker; Flight Sergeant Sinclair was right after all! My Flight lost a total of five people due to failure on Exercise DECISIVE EDGE I (Ex DE I), one due to injury while on Ex DE I, and one more by the end of Term Two due to not meeting the required standard that would



The hazards of exercises.

Ex MILAID - who knows what we will find next.



March 2010 - Recollections of IOTC 16 (9d)



Officer Cadet Babalola, bottom right, at Granttown-on-Spey.

Amport House.



enable him to progress. The demand is there and as I mentioned earlier, it is up to you, as potential leaders, to be able to deal with ambiguity because at some point in your career, that will arise! Be a team player in everything you do. Help others who are struggling whenever possible, I can guarantee that you are going to need them at some point further down the line!

Term Three flew by pretty quickly. We were all treated as Junior Officers. The daily mentoring and advising had ceased.



Cadets off on another mission.

Everyone was aware of the standard expected therefore there was no excuse for any mistake. "We were all given enough rope to hang ourselves". Basically the only thing stopping you from graduating at this stage is you! The way you present yourself, your actions and most of all, your attitude indicates a lot to the Staff. Weeks 2 to 5 of Term Three were the Carousel phase. The phase consisted of different activities such as Station Visits, Force Development Training at Granttown-on-Spey, Amport House for Care in Leadership training and the Basic Air Warfare Course taught in Trenchard Hall, Cranwell. The entire Squadron was split into four groups for the duration of the Carousel Phase. It seemed odd because it was the only time at this stage in our training that some of us got a chance to work with other members from different Flights. This bonding was necessary because each group consisted of personnel who will be working together in the same Expeditionary Air Wing (EAW) in the Combined Operation Centre (COC) when we deploy to RAF Syerston for Ex DE II in Week 7 of Term Three.

Each group visited selected RAF stations for a familiarization programme. The purpose of the visit was to get a basic understanding of how a Station operates, what life as an Officer in the wider Air Force is like and also to interact with serving personnel either commissioned or non-commissioned. I was overwhelmed with knowledge gained by the end of my group's visit to RAF Wittering. It was a great opportunity to have acquired

such information at first hand. The purpose of the training at Granttown-on-Spey was to practice Mission Command in a risk environment. One cadet was appointed as leader and they had a mission to complete and were able to dissect and disseminate the tasks within the group in order for the optimum performance to be achieved.

The visit to Amport House was very productive. There we undertook the Care in Leadership Course. The Course was geared to empowering us (potential officers) with skills that will help us to look after the wellbeing of our subordinates. We spent a lot of time listening because as an officer, it is a critical skill that will enable a leader to know what his or her subordinates is feeling and how the individual emotional state will affect his or her operational effectiveness. We concluded the Carousel with Basic Air Warfare Course. I truly enjoyed every bit of time I spent over at Trenchard Hall for the duration of the two weeks. I learnt a lot about the capability that the RAF brings to the table. Furthermore, the Estimate tool was reinforced to a comprehensive standard. The knowledge gained completely exceeded my initial expectations.

The next big challenge ahead was Ex DE II. What makes it more challenging was the fact that Term Three was responsible for the planning. Everyone had a role in the COC. Due to that role, there was a lot of planning sessions. I thought the operational studies were demanding in terms of personal allocated hours of reviewing

March 2010 - Recollections of IOTC 16 (9e)

documents, however I found out otherwise. Term Three took me out of my comfort zone in terms of applying knowledge gained through my personal study. Even though mentors were available, large amounts of information had to be personally acquired and digested. Only through solid preparation can one be productive in the COC. B Squadron was known to execute good exercises and, as a result, everyone worked hard to maintain the standard of the Squadron. I fully enjoyed every bit of time I spent in the COC.

I have been blessed throughout my time at the RAF College. The weather could not have been better; all the exercises had good weather despite a few showers every once in a while and the personal kit provided was excellent. It is worth noting to make proper use of the layering system. There will be times especially in the night while on exercise when it will be very cold. That is when the layering system is very important and necessary in order to be protected. Only through proper maintenance will you be able to carry out your duties appropriately and concisely. It pays to be a team player no matter what situation you find yourself in. There will be times when you feel a bit down, I recommend you talk to your peers. There will always be someone who will be able to help you out directly or indirectly. Honesty is the best policy; that said, do not hesitate to seek assistance, whenever necessary.

Graduation is a couple days away and I cannot wait to be a commissioned officer. I have a long road ahead and I know for sure that I will be an effective leader who can be looked up to by others for inspiration. The training here at Cranwell has laid a solid foundation in my career and my intent is to maintain what has been instilled in me, and continue to grow. I hope by reading this concise article, you now have a better idea of what to look forward to. I would like to conclude with one of my famous phrases "Life is what you make of it, if you put in the work, most definitely will you reap the benefits. Opportunities exist, therefore, it is up to you as an individual to grab what you want and make the most of it!"



Sunrise on Ex DECISIVE EDGE.



Waiting to deploy on Ex DECISIVE EDGE.

March 2011 - IOT Lessons Learnt (10)

Initial Officer Training: Do the Lessons Learnt Apply to the Wider Air Force?

Flight Lieutenant Alexandra Sheard, 31 Squadron, Royal Air Force Marham

July 2006, RAF College Cranwell parade square, the moment we had spent months working towards had arrived. As we marched up the steps to throw our hats in the rotunda there was a great feeling of jubilation; we were graduating officers, ready to take on the challenges that the wider RAF had to throw at us. We had completed the academics, the leadership exercises and the PT sessions. Ultimate challenge had been conquered, the last door plate polished and we had ironed the perfect shirt. We packed our shoeboxes and duvets into the car, discarded empty Brasso tins and flash wipes and set off to our various posts within the RAF, but how many of the lessons that we had learnt would come along with us?

We graduated IOT with a firm base of knowledge: a knowledge of Air Power, historic and current, learnt from the academics, where we developed the ability to debate and back up our argument; a knowledge of how the RAF works, how all of the cogs fit into place; the Ethos and Core Values expected of us to uphold not just as officers but as members of Her Majesty's Forces; and a foundation of leadership, how to lead, how to follow, when to be a transactional leader and when being transformational would be more appropriate to the situation.

We developed and learned how to use our individual strengths and skills to our advantage and experimented using a variety of leadership styles. We learnt to understand the value of working as a team and the benefit and support that can be gained from working together. We all graduated with a solid base knowledge of the key attributes required by an officer in today's modern RAF, taking part in an ever-changing world in an age of expeditionary warfare and asymmetric threats.

Reviewing the time since graduation nearly 5 years down the line, I'm asked to look back over my early years as a Junior Officer and consider how the lessons which were learnt have been applied and developed and how they apply to my role within the RAF.

Since graduating from RAF Cranwell, my path has taken me through flying training and to the front line as a pilot on the Tornado GR4. Following IOT graduation I went to RAF Linton-on-Ouse in Yorkshire to fly the Tucano. From there it was to RAF Valley on Anglesey to learn how to both fly the Hawk and how to use the aircraft tactically, before going to RAF Lossiemouth in Moray, Scotland for the GR4 Operational Conversion Unit (OCU). Graduating from the OCU, I

Flt Lt Sheard receives the Sword of Honour for IOTC No 1



am now a member of 31 Squadron (the Goldstars), RAF Marham in Norfolk. Since graduation my time has also encompassed a couple of holds at Shrivvenham and RAF Scampton in Lincolnshire and a few outdoor survival courses along the way. I haven't served out of area yet and I don't pretend to know what it is like to do so.

In this short article I am aiming to evaluate the attributes which were taught at IOT and their relevance beyond RAFC Cranwell. The list of leadership attributes were laid down by the Officer Cadet Training Review which led to the formation of the new IOT Course. They are as follows:

- Warfighter
- Courageous
- Able to lead tomorrow's recruit
- Emotionally intelligent
- Flexible and responsive
- Willing to take risks
- Politically and globally astute
- Mentally agile – physically robust
- Able to handle ambiguity
- Technologically competent

As I consider the attributes from a personal viewpoint I am considering what I have needed to call upon since IOT to progress through flying training to the frontline. Each of the above attributes have been required at different times as I have advanced through training. Going through flying training there was the underlying element of aiming to pass a course to the highest of standards and learning as much as possible to help in the future. There were different sizes of goals; small scale daily goals to pass each trip and large scale to pass the course. On top of this was the further development of officer qualities; short talks and presentations, leadership days and secondary duties.

Obviously there were no more inspections but the need to uphold military standards was ever present. On the face of it, flying training may appear to be just that. My experience, however, is that many of the other attributes developed at RAFC Cranwell are required throughout, both as a pilot and an officer. As with all professions and branches within the RAF there are required personal attributes, qualities which were seen during selection at the Officer and Aircrew Selection Centre (OASC), established and honed on IOT and put to use across the breadth of officers throughout the RAF.

Warfighter, Courageous

The adage through IOT is that all RAF personnel, commissioned or non-commissioned are 'Warfighters first, specialists second, though they may be second to none in their specialisation' (Leadership; An Anthology, 2009). It seems pertinent to open with an attribute so relevant to our current military situation and so iconic of serving in the military, and I look at this with particular focus on courage.

We don't test physical courage every day but moral courage is always demanded. With any training which is inherently dangerous, an open culture where blame is not attributed is vital. This underlies all flying training. We are actively encouraged to speak up if we have messed up, however large or small the incident, knowing that someone else can learn from our mistakes, as we can from them. There is a culture not just for open honesty, but also the ability to accept responsibility for what you have done and consider how to not let it happen again. To have the moral courage to speak up when something is not right, no matter how hard it is to do, can earn respect, as honesty always does.

Being open and honest improves trust which is a vital link not just between the aircrew but very importantly, between the aircrew and the ground crew; a relationship which directly enhances the effectiveness of a squadron.

Technological Competence

The application of technological competence throughout training has been vital. Ground school, exams, boldface tests and briefs ensure that the knowledge is present and accessible. There is no escaping the fact that knowing about your aircraft will save both yourself and anyone who is flying with you. Weapons knowledge and competence when using the kit and systems can provide a vital contribution to



the troops that we are supporting on the ground, our primary role on the GR4 in Afghanistan; indeed, understanding weapon effects and characteristics can make the difference between life and death.

Flexible and responsive

In the 2010 RAFC Journal, Flt Lt Artus wrote about the results of a survey at the Officer and Aircrew Cadet Training Unit (OACTU) which investigated which attributes the staff and cadets felt were most important to be a RAF leader (Attributes for RAF Leaders: What does OACTU believe is important? Flt Lt Artus 2010). The combined staff and cadet result indicated that the most important attribute was being 'flexible and responsive' and the second 'mentally agile'. As the famous quote goes 'Flexibility is the key to air power'. Any role in the RAF needs to be flexible and responsive in order to adapt to an ever-changing world. This is relevant through the flying training system, but it has been proven essential for an officer to have a positive attitude to change.

Overcoming problems by finding an alternative way and not just stopping at a brick wall has been an element called upon time and time again since graduating IOT. Challenges range from everyday issues: changes in flight profiles and the weather, to life-changing moves; the decision about where you are going to be based and

future tours. The ability to constantly look for the other options, opportunities, or silver linings that emerge is vital. Equally, coping with the effect, good or bad that change can bring, highlights the importance of flexibility and responsiveness.

Mental Agility

Mental agility is my final point of main leadership attributes which I feel has been transferred throughout IOT and needed consistently since then. From the Royal Air Force Leadership: An Anthology (2009) there is a definition of mental agility and physical robustness that I feel pertinent to both IOT and future training. 'They must be physically robust and able to withstand the strain of operations, so that their mental capacity does not fail them under stress.' On IOT it was obvious that the fitter you were the less you had to focus on fitness and the more energy you could spend focussing on the job in hand, namely the leadership task you were performing. There is a need to be physically robust to fly, but more so, is the need for mental agility.

Going through flying training you are pushed further and further at each stage to build up the capacity required. There are various ways of doing this: it can start in the planning cycle where 'injects' are put in, or time constraints enforced; it can be when airborne with re-tasking and maintaining control of the situation when everything is changing.

It is all with the aim that ultimately one day when on operations, mental capacity does not fail when it is needed most when under stress and in an adverse situation. The flying training system acts as a series of stepping stones, building up capacity bit by bit, developing new skills on each aircraft that you progress to. The aim is that one day, something that you could never imagine doing (flying 550 kts, 100 ft and dropping weapons, which seemed unheard of when on the Tutor at 120kts) is within your reach and you feel comfortable performing that task.

In conclusion, did the skills that I graduated with from IOT prepare me for flying training and my responsibilities as an officer? In short, yes. The skills laid down in the attribute list I feel are vital to any officer or leader. From my personal view, the attributes which I feel that I have called on the most through training are Warfighter, Courage, Mental Agility,

Technological Competence and Flexibility and Responsiveness. I feel that elements of the other attributes have also been needed, some to a greater extent than others and some will inevitably be further developed in the future.

The attributes of a leader are in the individual to begin with, it is recognised by OASC, developed on IOT and further developed throughout our careers. In writing this I have considered those areas I feel are personally relevant, both as a pilot and an officer.

Each of us should be able to see in our own job what attributes we use and develop. In every branch in the RAF different attributes are needed but our broader responsibilities as officers stretch beyond the boundaries of individual branches. IOT is the first of a series of stepping stones, setting the beginning of a career journey where each stage challenges and highlights the use of different leadership attributes.

[Return to Contents List](#)

March 2011 - IOTC 23 Reflections (11)

IOT 23: Reflections of Term One

Officer Cadet Buchanan, C Squadron: Initial Officer Training Course 23, OACTU

It is with mixed emotion that we approach the end of the first term of Initial Officer Training. No. 1 Mess will no longer be our home and we, C Squadron, will be heading to College Hall Officers' Mess (CHOM) to spend the next two terms. We are full of anticipation for the lessons and a healthy respect for the challenges to come. Though the buildings and fabric of No 1 Mess have become an integral part of our routine and have thus shaped our time so far, I can safely say that the comforts of CHOM that lie ahead look very attractive.

On our first day we could see in each other the potential to command; however, it was also clear that we would all need some refinement before we would become the leaders of tomorrow and meet the expectations placed on us. The Leadership Instructors were there to provide theory and practical exercises to develop our style of leadership, congruent to those expected of a Royal Air Force Junior Officer. The RAF Regiment were also a major influence in our first term; their role was to turn us from civilians to well drilled military personnel.

The RAF Regiment staff of Regiment Training Flight (RTF) within Force Protection Training Squadron (FPTS) guided us for the first few weeks of the course; their role was to teach us basic military skills. We have been taught the necessary skills to survive in a theatre of combat. From learning to administer first aid to keep a fellow airman alive in that crucial 'Golden Hour', to how to strip, clean, make safe, load and eventually fire a rifle. With a certain degree of patience and a large proportion of humour, they have supported us in our transformation from the bewildered first week cadets to the well-prepared officer cadets we should be. The virtues of comradeship, humour and the ability to switch from light-hearted to deadly serious were instilled in us alongside those basic military drills and skill that will be used throughout our careers.

A few feet away from Block 78 lies the No. 1 parade square and whether the skies are as clear as the ground is cold or the air is so thick with snow that our drill instructors are barely visible, we are taught how to march. Various officers passing by have often indicated that our displays of drill have brightened their mornings. Our gradual progression from not being able to keep time and move as a unit, to being capable of switching between Slow Marching and Quick Marching seamlessly is largely due to the tenacity of the Drill Instructors who were rigorous in their reinforcement of understanding. Though it may have been a difficult journey at the time, the sound of our shoes striking in unison on the parade square come graduation will make it all worthwhile.



No.1 Parade Square in relatively tropical conditions

Phrases and acronyms such as 'The 7 Question Estimate', 'PICSIE' (Planning, Initiate, Control, Support, Informing and Evaluation) and 'SMEAC' (Situation, Mission, Execution, Any Questions and Check Understanding) are probably common parlance for most commissioned officers however, these were largely foreign ideas and concepts to the majority of us in the beginning. Through the use of the practical field Exercises STATIC, DYNAMIC and ACTIVE EDGE, these ideas became, and continue to be, familiar and useful tools. These exercises also provide great opportunities to depart from the classroom and spend time doing what the majority of us envisaged training would be like. Carrying out patrols, practising the correct methods of moving as a unit and living under a bivouac (a shelter made generally from a waterproof sheet suspended by bungee cords) may seem like hardships to some, but to us they were welcome breaks from classroom lessons; more importantly, it allowed us to put theory into practice.

Air Power Studies is the study of military tactics, politics and the fundamentals of Air Power. This subject is taught by lecturers from Kings College London and takes us away from the disciplined military world. It encourages us to contemplate and analyse our future roles in an academic forum and helps us understand our position within a wider context. Our lessons have taken us, step-by-step, from the basics of why we have the military, how militaries are used and why we use them, to how the actions of one man on a battlefield can affect the entire outcome of a campaign. This puts much of the training into perspective and explains why various activities, that may seem dry at the time, (for example, the rigorous, exact movements of rifle drill or having an understanding of global politics and how our responsibilities as a nation influences our foreign policy) are so necessary. Our lecturers take great pains to ensure that as officers of the future we understand exactly why we do what we do and the repercussions of decisions made.

To prepare us for the exercises to come and military life in general, physical education training has become part of our daily routine. Throughout, from swimming, to circuits, to the drive and determination in aero runs, to the regimented static strength of Battle Physical Training, the firm guiding hands of the staff have kept us free from injury and embarrassment, but they have also pushed us to achieve our best. As a Squadron, we have earned, if not the respect of the staff, then at least the begrudging acceptance that we are making progress. It is with great pride that I look upon my fellow cadets and how they have changed from being merely fit to being fit enough to run 6km with a full backpack and still have the drive and energy to sprint another 200m.

All of the attributes that have been taught were built upon at our most recent excursion out of RAFC Cranwell to the Force Development and Training Centre (FDTC) at Fairbourne in North West Wales. We suffered a great deal of dislocation of expectation (a useful phrase provided for us by our Flight Sergeant) due to having been provided with a summer schedule for a winter course. Despite this, the growth and enjoyment that resulted from attending the course were substantial; perhaps this was due to us completing a tough course in adverse conditions. It gave the Squadron a chance to apply the physical education and leadership training we had received in an environment



Exercise ACTIVE EDGE

beyond the military. Waking up to find the tents under snow tested the cadets' physical courage as they had to leave their beds and break camp in terrible conditions and then carry out another day hiking in the snow. Raising our morale was vital!

These activities may seem average, even leisurely to some of you, but I have intentionally left one of the greatest challenges and time-consuming activities until last. It would not be possible to give a fair summary of IOT Term One without mentioning inspections. From the very first day, the uniform and block inspections have been a focal point for most cadets. The regularity, with which the Directing Staff visit cadet's rooms, day after day, instils a sense of routine and discipline into the Squadron; as the term progressed and we improved, there were even signs of pride. It is this that I feel we will take to our future careers once the staff are no longer there to look over our shoulders. But not all inspections were a roaring success and we had to learn how to get things right first time. The additional development opportunities provided in the event of defaulting became a chance to regain lost pride for a flaw in inspection and in some notable cases we surpassed expectations. Standardization across the Squadron was difficult to master and often led to problems. Communication was crucial amongst the cadet body. Our initial Flight

meetings informing us of upcoming opportunities would last up to 40 minutes as we each attempted to express our own opinions and ideas concerning a specific problem. However, it is with a sense of pride that I say our meetings now last 5 to 10 minutes at the most and deal with everything essential for the days ahead. Hopefully, this shows that our Leadership training is having a positive influence on our ability to make decisions and our willingness to work as part of a team! Let this be a sign that our transition from civilian to military life is definitely taking place.

To sum up, throughout all the activities undertaken during the first term of Initial Officer Training, the encouragement has been there for us to excel. I believe that the greatest thing taken by many from this term is that it is important to be professional and assimilate, but also to remain human. The application of our own personal experiences to the lessons we are taught is how we become the most effective leaders of tomorrow. Furthermore, and I believe I speak for the whole Squadron when I say, the people we have met throughout our time so far, the friends we have made and the lessons we have learned, will be firmly embedded in our memories and will remain with us throughout our careers and beyond.



Inspections!

[Return to Contents List](#)

March 2011 - IOTC 21 Reflections (12)

IOT 21: Reflections of Term Three

Officer Cadet Dodgson, Initial Officer Training Course No 21: D Squadron, OACTU

It was the start of Term 3 for the cadets of Initial Officer Training Course (IOTC) 21. Twenty weeks had passed since 70 or so fresh faced individuals arrived at the main guardroom eager to begin their training. So far we had completed Terms 1 and 2 which had been hard work but extremely rewarding.

Starting Term 3, morale was high. We had recently returned from Exercise DECISIVE EDGE (DE) which took place at RAF Syerston. For this exercise we had deployed as a Sqn to the fictional country of Moltovia to conduct peace keeping operations. During the exercise cadets are tested on their leadership in a number of roles, all leading a small team consisting of fellow cadets. Throughout the Exercise, the Sqn achieved excellent results and we were looking forward to the last 10 weeks before the long awaited finishing line - graduation.

Term 3 of IOT was a chance for the officer cadets to really prove that we were ready to become Officers in the Royal Air Force. Some changes in protocol made a big difference in feeling like you were really progressing towards becoming a junior officer. Cadets were able to walk smartly outside as opposed to marching and could remove their headdress when inside.

The Term consisted of some preliminary planning for Ex DE II, and then the cadets were split into 4 groups for the 4 week carousel phase of IOT. During this period, cadets alternated between 3 different activities.

The first activity was a 2 week Basic Air Warfare Course in Trenchard Hall at RAF Cranwell. There, we consolidated our learning about the basic principles of Air Power and the foundations of the RAF. The Course was based around the 4 fundamental air and space power roles, which was enhanced with the various means of delivering these operations in an effective manner. The Course culminated in a test of knowledge which all cadets passed thanks to the excellent tuition at the AWC.

The second activity was a week at the Force Development and Training Centre at Grantown-on-Spey in the beautiful Scottish Highlands. Cadets were given the opportunity to practice Mission

Command and responsibility in a real-time environment. Cadets had to plan a 3 day expedition in which they were to cover the greatest distance and/or height gain possible. The activities that were available included canoeing, mountain biking and hill walking. Being in Scotland in December meant that the weather at times was extremely cold which made the expeditions very challenging. Despite the conditions, the cadets persevered and endured the elements resulting in a very satisfying and enjoyable week.

The final week was split into two halves. Up until Wednesday cadets undertook a station visit at various locations around the UK. Each section visited various departments around the station to broaden their Service knowledge and learn about units on an operational RAF Station. On Wednesday cadets moved to Ampert House in Hampshire to complete a Care in Leadership Course. The 2 days were designed to educate the cadets in some of the issues they could face as future officers within the Royal Air Force; dealing with family bereavement or welfare problems. The Course finished on Friday morning with some actors coming in from London to give cadets the opportunity to use the techniques they had learned and understand the Emotional Intelligence required of a junior officer.

Once back at RAF Cranwell, cadets had one week to prepare for Ex DE II; the final major hurdle faced prior to the end of Course.

On a frosty Wednesday morning we collected our weapons from the armoury prior to deploying to RAF Syerston. As Term 3 cadets our main effort for our second visit to Moltovia was to run the Combined Operating Centre (COC) 24 hours a day until the end of the deployment.

The COC was a hive of activity and we quickly learned to multi-task whilst dealing with a myriad of issues. The planning time we had been allocated in the previous weeks helped immensely as real-time and exercise problems came flooding in for solutions to be found. This was a great opportunity to test all of the leadership, command and management tools that we had been given throughout the previous 27 weeks in a risk-free environment.



It does not matter how good you are at leadership, if you loose kit, Flight Sergeant Guthrie will take you to task

Each cadet spent 48 hours in the COC. It was an extremely tiring and challenging period, but overall it was an enjoyable 2 days of hard work, operating as part of a large team to achieve a common goal.

After our shifts in the COC, cadets carried out other duties such as guard, patrols or exercise support tasks. The Exercise was conducted during a cold snap which meant that we again had to endure sub-zero temperatures. This made our duties much more challenging, but all the more rewarding on completion and we can now look back with fond memories of a job well done despite the elements.

Having returned from Syerston, cadets had 2 days before the Progress Review Board. This was when we would find out if we had met the required standard to graduate from IOT and become Officers in the Royal Air Force.

After receiving the good news, the final week was mostly spent on the CHOM parade square, practising our graduation parade in front of the ever watchful eye of the College Warrant Officer.

IOT had been full of personal challenges, but thanks to the hard work of cadets and the support from the Directing Staff at OACTU we persevered and achieved our dreams.

After 30 weeks at IOT I understand a lot more about myself and other people and how to get the best from whomever I meet. At times we make mistakes but rectifying these and upholding the core values expected of Officers will make us credible individuals - something which needs to be earned and not just acquired.

IOT has been a very demanding but rewarding Course and has provided a solid foundation as we progress as junior officers. I, for one, am proud of what I have achieved as are my fellow cadets of IOTC 21.



Sector One and COC: What a difference 24 hours makes!



[Return to Contents List](#)

March 2011 - IOTC 22 Reflections (13)

IOT 22: Reflections of Term Two

Officer Cadet Hopkinson, Initial Officer Training Course No 22: B Squadron, OACTU

After the intensity of the 10 week militarisation phase that is Term One the sheer volume of examinations and tested elements of the course which lie in Term 2 makes the next 10 weeks seem an equally, if not more, challenging prospect. In this overview I will convey my experiences of Term 2.

After returning from a week's leave at the end of Term 1 the first week of Term 2 eases cadets back into things as they try to shake the luxury of their previous week away. However, the imminent prospect of deploying on Exercise MIL AID soon has everyone back in the swing of things and 'week one' is essentially geared towards preparing for this deployment.

Exercise MIL AID takes place during the second week of Term 2. It is an exercise designed to allow cadets to practise and hone their leadership skills. Where Force Protection is usually the vehicle used for this Ex MIL AID has cadets aiding the civil authority in handling situations as the milieu in which to use their training. For this Exercise we were transported by coach to Stanford Training Area (STANTA) where accommodation came in the form of a barn. The conditions were cold, with the bivvy night proving to be one of the warmer ones!

Ex MIL AID Briefing at the ICP



However, despite the worsening conditions, we thoroughly enjoyed this exercise and looking back, feel that it was the best I have been on during IOT to date.

The leads were more like those in Exercise DYNAMIC, but with little timing afforded for planning. There was also a large level of collaboration with other cadets on their leads being encouraged, something which many found beneficial. The highlight of this week, however, must be the highly competitive, 'Rocket Race' a points based race come inter-flight competition. Everyone gets swept along

Lynford Home Farm: Home for Ex MIL AID



Back to the classroom

in the intense rivalry and overwhelming desire to win and I am proud to say, my flight, B Flight, proved to be triumphant.

Once back from Exercise MIL AID we were straight into an academically focused few weeks, with the number of Air Power Studies (APS) lectures and Syndicate Room Discussions building up in preparation for the coming APS 2 Examination. We found these

lectures more enjoyable than some of the earlier ones as they were now beginning to look at Case Studies which allowed us to apply what we had learnt about Air Power theory to specific historical scenarios rather than being purely theoretical. We also found, as in Term One, that we particularly enjoyed the Syndicate Room Discussions as they proved very stimulating, having an opportunity to voice our own opinions as well as hear and discuss those of other cadets. This academic phase concluded with the APS 2 examination, formatted in a similar manner to APS 1, taking place just before deployment on Ex DE.

Running parallel to this is the Bandar Essay. The Bandar Essay is a 1500 word essay written as part of the APS curriculum. Cadets are allowed to choose their essay subject from a series of options and the best essay of the calendar year is awarded the Bandar prize. The essay must be submitted by the Wednesday of week 5. I personally enjoyed writing my Bandar essay as, due to the number of choices available, I found a question which particularly appealed to me, 'Compare the leadership styles and key decisions of Napoleon and Wellington in the battle of Waterloo'.

Once we had made our way through this academic stretch we moved onto theory and practical Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) lessons. These lessons were both to teach us the importance of, and gain confidence in, the kit we would be using

CBRN Training



while working under CBRN conditions and also to prepare us for using it on Exercise DE. The lessons were a welcome return to the Regiment Training Flight (RTF) for a lot of the Squadron who enjoy the RTF staff's sense of humour and teaching style. These lessons culminated in a practical and theory examination.

The theory part of the CBRN exam was a multiple choice paper and the practical being two visits to the Respirator Training Facility. These visits were generally approached with trepidation, but did not prove as terrible as anticipated, albeit they were still unpleasant. In the first we were instructed to remove our respirators and provide the Regiment Sergeant with our name, service number and where we were from. This was to allow us to experience the affects of CS gas, to make us appreciate that our respirators did work and the benefit of carrying out good drills. The second test involved carrying out decontamination drills, eating drills and changing canister drills in the chamber. When these drills were carried out correctly the experience of CS was limited and the whole experience much less stressful.

After passing the necessary CBRN tests we were now ready to be deployed first to RAF Barkston Heath and then RAF Syerston on Ex DE. Our deployment to RAF Barkston Heath was for two days of pre-deployment training with the RTF to prepare us for Ex DE. Although it was becoming increasingly cold these were two largely enjoyable days where we re-capped on how to build sangers, set up razor wire, carry out combat manoeuvres and give accurate fire orders. We were also allowed an increased amount of down time which cadets took advantage of to gain sleep and finish cleaning their rifles and arranging their kit in preparation for our 18 hour working day on Ex DE. From here we set off to Deployed Operating Base (DOB) Syerston in 'Moltovia'.

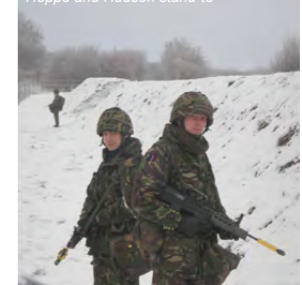
Exercise DE is the tested leadership element of the IOT course. In the scenario we are an Expeditionary Air Wing being deployed as part of CADEFOR to DOB Syerston in Moltovia in a bid to secure peace and stabilise the situation between Moltovia and neighbouring Lovitzna. In real terms we are deploying to RAF Syerston where we will carry out two tested six hour leads (with a third available should we fail one) acting as either; Sector Adjutant, Guard Commander, Combined Incident Team Commander or Patrol Commander.

Sanger position in Sector 2



These leads are assessed by Directing Staff from all areas of OACTU. To pass the Exercise each cadet must pass two different leads being tested by two different instructors on John Adair's Action Centred Leadership model, balancing the requirements of the 'Task', with the development of the 'Team' and the needs of the 'Individual'.

Hoppo and Hudson stand-to



Unfortunately, I failed my first lead. I was Guard Commander on Sector One and I had not balanced the three areas of need to a satisfactory standard. I found this failure quite demoralising; however, as I look back the support and encouragement I received from both my peers and my own Squadron Directing Staff was immense. The work ethic among the cadets to do what they can for one another to try to ensure that everyone passes their leads is incredible and this, along with the training I have received to this point played no small part in me going on to pass my following two leads with an A and a B.

The adverse weather conditions we faced whilst on Ex DE added an extra element to the scenario. The cold and snow covered ground tested the limits of our mental and physical robustness. As a member of the B Sqn DS stated they were the worst weather conditions he had ever seen on Ex DE. However, when the 10 days were over we proudly marched away from DOB Syerston having accomplished a significant amount.

Now we are back from what seemed a lengthy, mentally and physically demanding part of the course, cadets are left feeling a certain amount of relief, a feeling that we have 'broken the back' of the course. However there is no time to rest on our laurels as we must now turn our attention to our Essential Service Knowledge exam and, subject to being found ready, to progress to Term 3 and

[Return to Contents List](#)

March 2011 - SERE 15 Reflections (14)

Attestation to Graduation: an Introspective Journey

Officer Cadet Cox, Special Entrant and Re-Entrant Course 15

The Special Entrant and Re-Entrant (SERE) course, not to be confused with Search Evade Resist and Extract training; is an 11 week, condensed, sleep deprived Officer Training marathon, designed for the life experienced and strong hearted professionals.

Whilst the pervading and historical myth suggests that SERE is merely an attendance course, I would like to dispel such derogatory notions. Officer Cadets on SERE have just 11 weeks to learn and assimilate the skills and military knowledge required to perform well as Officers in the Royal Air Force.

Great expectations...

SERE Officer Cadets can be an interesting cohort, often with vast life experience, professional experience and skills. There is generally a mixture of healthcare professionals, lawyers, chaplains and ex-servers, combining in varying proportions to provide a vocal confident cohort with a bottomless pit of dark humour. SERE 15 comprised 10 Doctors, 2 Nurses, 2 Physiotherapists, one Dentist and a Padre and was unusual in the disproportionately large number of young Doctors. Many of the Doctors have been sponsored through medical school by the RAF; therefore have approached SERE armed with more insight than others. Despite differing military exposure and experience our expectations of SERE Officer Training were quite similar.



We expected to be challenged and pushed to extremes, both physically and mentally. To be extracted from our comfort zones, placed under pressure and continuously assessed through close observation and overt testing. Academically we expected to learn about the culture and history of the RAF.

Having seen the documentaries about Officer Training we nervously anticipated 11 weeks of constant reprimanding, derogation, shouting and punishment (basically purgatory). Through hardship we expected to learn new ways of thinking and behaving; gaining not only military bearing and core skills but also an appreciation of personal management and leadership.



Ex DE: Pack light! SERE 15 start the one mile walk across the airfield

Lastly but by no means least, we hoped to enjoy (a proportion of) our time at RAF College Cranwell; to become part of the historic and awe inspiring club and during the process of training make friends for life.

Challenging Learning

One of the toughest challenges encountered during SERE is tiredness and fatigue; for the medical audience be prepared to feel worse than following 2 weeks of A & E nights. The fatigue is not due to intense physical training sessions, but due to the seemingly never ending days; every minute of the day is accounted for, leaving very little time to reflect, assimilate and consolidate on knowledge and no time for personal administration. The continuous bombardment with new skills and information make the course mentally exhausting. The evenings are consumed by mass ironing and bulling corridor parties. The mornings begin with inhalational breakfast followed by buddy-buddy checks, burning of loose threads and hiding of toggles to ensure uniformity, prior to the daily ritual of inspection!

For some, the prospect of physical fitness is the most dreaded curricular item, dependent upon baseline. However, physical training sessions become revered lessons providing a welcome break from the classroom and respite from thought, in addition to the elation of endorphin release. The high physical intensity of SERE combined with the lack of time to recover can unfortunately predispose to unsatisfactory performance and injury. On most SERE courses a team member or more may be re-coursed as a result of fitness and injury. This is disappointing and sad for the individual and the whole team; it is hard to know what to say to offer comfort when internally the thought process is selfishly thinking "that could be me".

Throughout SERE and leadership training, we are provided with continuous constructive criticism and peer group critiques, in addition to this we utilise the Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI) tool all of which raise self awareness. Through self recognition SERE offers techniques and skills to alter our approach to a situation.

Militarisation

During SERE you learn about military technique and RAF culture and in so doing, develop a group of civilian professionals into the semblance of a team of military personnel. Uniform worn from day one is a visible sign to external observers of military status, much like a stethoscope or cassock and surplice are tangible signs that signify to the world of one's vocation.

You are taught the chain of command, much like a hospital or ministerial hierarchy, but respect and organisation is enforced with sanctions. The importance of timings becomes very apparent, particularly when, as course leader you are to ensure all cadets are marched from field to classroom with timely precision and vitally 5 minutes before schedule. This may sound incredibly simple; however, when you



put together a large number of vocal, intelligent people, a simple task becomes an arduous overcomplicated affair! Particularly when collective responsibility means negative sanctions applied to all SERE cadets for individual misdemeanours.

Uniformity and "attention to detail" become your daily mantras, as you work together to ensure each cadet's room is uniform, down to the position of identical notes on the notice board and the position of the plug in the sink. Throughout your training you will recognise that dust is your enemy and you must be vigilant at all times in order to combat this ruthless opponent.

The fundamental tool in survival is good teamwork. The intense environment of SERE fosters this from an early stage, strengths and weaknesses are highlighted and developed upon. For those who consider themselves "lone operators" patience can become an issue, however, living in such close quarters, sharing experiences and collective responsibility form a cohesive team and effective team players.

Standards

As immortalised by one of our female officer cadets wearing make up whilst on bivvy night, "it's all about standards". Standards are pivotal to the core values and the functioning of the RAF. From day one we have standards drilled into us; standards of dress



code, punctuality, fitness and uniformity to mention but a few. We have been taught how to iron all uniform items correctly; these lessons have been invaluable, even to those who believed their ironing skills to be above par; for in the RAF uniforms are designed for the sole purpose of showcasing the skill of or lack thereof ironing; particularly with sleeve box pleats, pleats of precision and the notorious female quadruple pleated blouse! We have been indoctrinated to strive for excellence in everything, causing widespread frustration, and wearing some cadets to nervous disaster over attaining the sharpest well placed creases and the crispest shirts!

To fall short of perfection has earned each of us Restrictions or more entertainingly Show Parades. For those ignorant of these negative sanctions, attend the parade square of College Hall Officers' Mess; and 3 times daily you may have the opportunity to witness the misery of those cadets on Restrictions Parade who have fallen short upon expected standards.

Have expectations been met?

Overall SERE has met the majority of our expectations, I am relieved to state that it has not been pure purgatory! Whilst it has not necessarily changed individuals, it has equipped us all with the tools, confidence and capacity to deal with situations more effectively, both as a leader and a follower. We have been pushed to extremes and learnt to focus under pressure. The majority have found SERE emotionally harder than expected, with the unremitting, relentless hard work coupled with a lack of personal space; resultantly cadets have improved upon their physical and mental stamina. SERE has been more fun than



expected, for many of the wrong reasons, we have been brought together by the ridiculousness of situations and inspections, with multiple in-house jokes. Some have struggled learning the military core skills, but all have gained new capabilities and confidence be that in their own capacity or in their issued respirators following CS chamber test! SERE has offered insight into the roles of our future comrades, patients and flock. We will all be able to take forward the discipline and leadership methods learnt into military or civilian environments.

TOP TIPS FOR SURVIVAL

Come with a positive attitude and try to get into the military mind set early, you will be taking orders from day zero and receiving feedback from all directions.

- Work as a team to help each other, develop a washing rota, pre inspection room inspection rota whatever it takes to keep morale up and achieve uniformity.
- Come with a decent level of physical fitness, mental stamina and a good supply of multivitamins!
- Enjoy a slice of CAKE... Concurrent Activity, Anticipation at all levels, Knowledge...the rest to follow.



... another journey almost over

[Return to Contents List](#)

May 2012 - IOTC 26 Reflections (15)

Term 2 Reflections

Officer Cadet M A S Deri, C Squadron, Initial Officer Training Course 26, OACTU

Term one flew by. Even though I was there for 20 weeks due to injury it seemed to pass in a flash. Setting my sights on term 2 and the privileges that came with it, a room in College Hall, wearing "blues" and the permission not to march in the corridors in Whittle Hall seemed an unachievable goal, but now they were upon me and it felt good, a real feeling of progression.

The term started quickly. Having been fortunate enough to have 2 weeks at home, getting back up to speed had to be done fast, and the Directing Staff (DS) ensured that happened. Daily inspections, not all of which were announced in advance, were the norm and we jumped straight into preparing for deployment on Exercise Military Aid (Ex MILAID).

Ex MILAID was held at the Stanford Training Area (STANTA) and was very different from all of the other exercises that we had experienced up to that point. From the outset we were put into scenario receiving a briefing from the Chief Inspector of the Norfolk Constabulary. This role, played by a member of the DS, demonstrated that the enthusiasm and effort put in by the staff was going to be second to none. The Chief Inspector informed us that two (fictitious) local schoolgirls had gone missing and we were to be drafted in to help with the search. To reinforce the brief we were shown some BBC news footage that reported the story. From that point in, Ex MILAID had my full buy-in.

On the bus ride to STANTA I truly felt as if I was going to help the two girls and this helped me to conduct my lead successfully. I was appointed Bronze Commander, the overall commander to the cadet force. Unlike the previous exercises, Ex MILAID had no set timetable. We were not told when to eat, when to be ready to move and when the leader of any given section would change. As a result, I wasn't surprised to find that I'd clocked up 9 hours as Bronze Commander before the team was called in to review my performance. This type of lead had intrinsic advantages in that there was no forced leadership, what the DS saw was my natural leadership style coming through, enhanced by term one's 10 weeks of leadership tuition. By the end of Ex MILAID it was agreed by all of the cadets that this had been the best exercise by far and, although it had its lows - a covert Observation Point at 2am at minus 1°C springs to mind - it had also had its highs and everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

Academics feature highly in term 2 and the information comes thick and fast. Defence Writing (DW) and Essential Service Knowledge (ESK) take up a lot of time and Air Power Studies (APS) lectures are delivered daily, in preparation for the second APS exam. Lecture topics range from terrorism to ethics and there are a number of case studies covering the Battle of Britain right through to Gulf War 1. This worked out nicely for me, as the information in one of the case studies on the Falkland Islands helped me to write my Bandar essay. The Bandar essay is a 1500 word piece of academic writing that has to be submitted exactly half way through term 2. Having already served a number of years in the as a Junior Rank, I had just come off the Basic Engineer Scheme at DCAE Cosford where I'd had some exposure to writing this style of essay. For this I was very grateful as it was a new experience to some of the cadets on the squadron.

The intensity of the Physical Training (PT) increased too. I always thought of myself as having a respectable level of fitness having always achieved a good pass in my RAF Fitness tests. However, the PT staff really put us through our paces here. Some minor side effects may include tired legs, a bright red face and the loss of a stone or two in weight! With all of this hard work comes reward and just after submission of the Bandar essay came our partners' day, which was an opportunity to show our friends, family and loved ones what we had learnt during IOT and how far we had come in 15 weeks. This felt really worthwhile as the pressures experienced during the course can't always be translated to the people around you, over the phone or on a weekend.

Unfortunately in life, we are always assessed, and RAF Cranwell is no exception to that rule. In a very short period during the term, multiple

exams, assessments and tests are set in order to determine the amount of information you can assimilate. As mentioned above, the APS and ESK lessons were daily, but now the tests begin. Add to that the most pivotal exercise, Operation MUCRONIS, which looms ever closer testing your time management and prioritisation skills as much as anything else.

The culmination of all the leadership lessons and practical exercises are tested over a 10 day period during which you deploy on Operation MUCRONIS 1, set in the fictitious country of Moltovia. The exercise is designed to be as realistic as possible and, having served on multiple operations as an Airman, I can honestly say it succeeded in its task. The basis of the exercise is to test your leadership over 2 six-hour shifts, or leads, during which you will command a patrol, guard shift, the Combined Incident Team (CIT) or the hub of the sector, the Adjutant role. I had to wait 3 days before my first lead came up. This had its blessings as well as its negatives. On one hand, it would have been great to just dive in and get

one 'under my belt'; however, it was really beneficial to get the lie of the land and settle in to the exercise before being assessed. I was appointed Guard Commander and, in nearly freezing temperatures, with up to 7 of my troops out on the Control of Entry points around the base I had my work cut out looking after the needs of the guards, whilst maintaining focus on the task and my commander's intent. After six hours of running around, planning and generally being in charge, the shift was over and my fate awaited me. The DS who had been testing me approached and I was asked to step over to somewhere a little quieter, this did my nerves no good whatsoever! Thankfully though, it appears the DS just wanted some peace and quiet because he started to read "Deri has produced a good performance and is awarded a pass." If I am quite honest, the relief started washing over me and the rest of the report didn't sink in at all. Luckily, I was due one of the 4 enforced meals per 24 hour period and this gave me time to read over the rest of the report.

I didn't have to wait long for my next lead, this time I was Patrol Commander. I saw this as a real opportunity to shine as we'd been given chance to have a go at this role before in a previous exercise. The lead went well, with the team managing to rescue a casualty, find an

Improvised Explosive Device (IED) and keep Dimitri, our host nation EOD expert, safe. All told, a typical 6 hours in Moltovia. Luckily I was again awarded a pass and for the first time in the 10 days, the pressure really felt as if it had lifted. Of course I still had to put in the effort as a follower for my fellow cadets' leads, so there was no time to relax in Moltovia. Towards the end of the exercise, I was offered the chance to take a third lead, completely un-assessed, so that I could further hone my leadership skills. I jumped at the chance and, to my surprise, I was offered the role of adjutant. I really enjoyed my time as the "Adj"; I'd even go as far as saying it was fun!

During this shift, one of the DS informed me that we had a scenario where we had to rehearse leaving the sector via helicopter. This was not a drill; a Chinook was due in 20 minutes and we would all get a flight. We transited to RAF Cranwell, practiced disembarking the aircraft, then re-boarded to fly back to Moltovia. As the DS said afterwards, "it's what we do, it's what the RAF is all about," and despite that fact I'd already flown in a Chinook during my previous service, it was a really good way to end an extremely good exercise.



[Return to Contents List](#)

May 2012 - IOTC 27 Reflections (16)

Robustness, Readiness And Rising To The Challenge

Officer Cadet V H Garrad, D Squadron, Initial Officer Training Course 27, OACTU

Arriving at RAF College Cranwell on day one, I knew that the weeks that lay ahead would be testing. The physical challenge however, was what I relished most and, over the first few weeks, the IOT programme did not disappoint. D Squadron was marched from place to place, undertook military drill lessons, completed physical training (PT) and testing, and developed their fitness and robustness on exercise. D Squadron's constant activity and exposures to the rigours of military life has meant that each member has become fitter, stronger, more competitive and, in line with our Squadron motto, 'Determined' to succeed.

To enable us to cope with the relentless pace at the College, PT is part of D Squadron's daily routine. The programme is varied and has something that everyone can enjoy and excel at, from swimming circuits to cross country running, and for those who prefer training with a more military emphasis, Battle PT.

From the first day, the Physical Education (PEd) staff have taught us to push hard in order to get the best out of ourselves and to leave the gym, pool or field with a sense of achievement. For many, PT provides a release after a period of focused academic study. That is not to say that it does not have its own areas of focus and challenge. Every session has a military bearing and staff expect cadets to adhere to the strictest standards, especially when completing drill 'with a jump,' or catching breath after an effort.

Hands on hips will almost certainly lead to twenty press ups for the entire Squadron and cadets must thank the offending individual in unison, who is required to reply "you're welcome D Squadron!"

There are numerous opportunities for cadets to test their physical development throughout term one. After the first few weeks of PT, D Squadron was able to partake in the Inter-Squadron Sports afternoon and pitch their sporting talents against those of the C Squadron cadets. Following tradition, the intermediate Squadron carefully planned and selected their strongest sports – volleyball, swimming, the Orange Dash, cross country and superstars. With an all inclusive attitude, every member of D Squadron took part in the quest to beat the intermediate Squadron, but unfortunately, despite some impressive efforts in each sport, all out success was not to be and C Squadron took the victory.

The silver lining, however, was that D Squadron were able to claim the cross country trophy meaning that C Squadron could not celebrate a clean sweep.



RAF Cadets compete against cadets from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst at the Intercollegiate Games.



The Superstars competition forms a crucial part of the Inter Squadron games.

Soon afterwards, cadets competed against those from the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst and the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth at the Inter-Collegiate Games. The Army and Royal Navy cadets proved to be challenging competitors but overall victory was seized by the Royal Air Force cadets. All cadets showed support for their representative competitors throughout the day. The volume of the chants and claps from the side of the volleyball court belied the small crowd, and cadets and staff alike were animatedly cheering throughout the Orange Dash. The physical challenge of beating the Army and Royal Navy brought the RAF cadets from each term closer together, a point proven later in the bar as all cadets enthusiastically talked over the day's events and got to know each other better.

Physical challenges throughout term one have not only been present in the form of PT and sports days, but also in other areas of training. For those without any previous military experience, Exercise First Step was a short but nonetheless testing introduction to life in the field. D Squadron were formed up outside the block on a cold and wet October morning before first light, each individual waiting with anticipation for their meticulously packed Bergen to be inspected. Formed in a hollow square, each flight was instructed to empty their Bergen quickly, lining each item up in accordance with a photograph of ideal kit arrangement. The RAF Regiment staff gave the Squadron an insight into the standards expected of us over the coming days, and when we were not quick enough to remove our kit from our Bergen, we were required to re-pack them then re-empty them until the standard was met. By the time we were finished, daylight had crept in and the coach was ready to take us to Beckingham training area, where we were to undertake the Exercise.

The next 2 days would be D Squadron's opportunity to put into practice the skills that the RAF Regiment staff had taught us over the previous weeks, from weapons handling to land navigation. Without delay we began a one mile march to our base which set the pace for the rest of the day, and although difficult, each cadet worked hard not to lose the pace. The RAF Regiment staff had meticulously planned a variety of lessons to develop our military skills. With good humour, they taught us skills such as leopard crawling with our weapon, patrol formations, and how to camouflage ourselves and our kit. Covered in camouflage paint and pumped

with excitement, we completed a course in the woods in which we patrolled and took cover to fire when commanded to do so. It proved easy for cadets to get into scenario and by the end of the course, cadets were ferociously shouting commands at one another. Many of D Squadron had already experienced spending the night in a bivouac (bivvy), but for those who had not, Exercise First Step provided them with an opportunity to do so and to manage themselves in the field. After a tough day of physical exertion, cadets enjoyed preparing their ration pack meals and cleaning kit for the following day before climbing into their sleeping bags alongside their rifle.

Cadets were able to experience a slight change of pace when they were tasked with completing Adventure Training at the RAF Force Development Training Centre at Fairbourne in Wales.

For many, the activities undertaken provided huge mental and physical challenges, but nonetheless, the team had fun and were brought closer together through shared experience. Cadets were provided with the opportunity to go down into a mine and in complete darkness, locate one another before completing a realistic scenario in which they located and rescued a casualty.

Their initial inexperience with such tasks and methods used to locate one another provided much amusement for the instructors. Perhaps the most challenging training undertaken at Fairbourne was a two day expedition in which cadets navigated a route they had pre-planned, and scrambled, waded and walked over technically difficult terrain. The physical robustness of some cadets was put to the test when navigational inexperience led to them becoming lost in darkness and fog, and using head torches for visibility, struggling to locate the camping area where another team waited. After several hours of cautiously scrambling up and down crags through the harsh weather conditions, the site was reached and the team battled the elements to construct their tents. The following morning, a huge sense of achievement was felt when broad daylight on the crags demonstrated the difficulty of the terrain the group had taken on.



D Squadron Cadets canoeing at Fairbourne.

As we neared the end of term one, D Squadron could reflect and see that the physical challenge had been difficult but varied. The challenges laid out before each cadet had demonstrated what we as individuals are capable of achieving, but perhaps more importantly, how much more we are capable of achieving when acting as one strong unit. Mental and physical tasks are inextricably linked and, as a Squadron, we learnt that there is definite truth in the phrase, 'mind over matter.' Difficulties during physical tasks have inevitably brought us closer together, allowing an insight into the team spirit that the Royal Air Force fosters outside the training environment. During term one, the D Squadron cadets developed a sense of achievement and pride which will need to be carried through to term 2 in order for us to face the tasks and challenges ahead – and each cadet very much looks forward to doing so.



Cadets stretch off on the Orange.

[Return to Contents List](#)

May 2013 - IOTC 30 Reflections (17)

IOT – The Term 3 Perspective

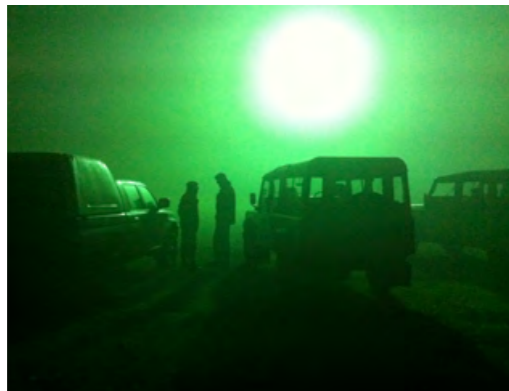
Officer Cadet A I Gray, B Flight, D Squadron, Initial Officer Training Course 30, Officer & Aircrew Cadet Training Unit

The entirety of the third term of IOT is dedicated to transformation: transforming from a cadet to a junior officer; a change from a strict structure to one's own 'battle rhythm'; from transactional leadership to a transformational style in the very best cadets. Throughout this term, the cadets have been put in a variety of situations to instigate these changes, from visits to exercises, to physical and mental challenges – this article will detail their experiences and lessons learnt.

One of the most difficult aspects of Term 3 is moving from the thought process of a cadet, into the mindset of a junior officer. The freedom given can be daunting, as well as the constant reminder that in just 10 short weeks, one will hopefully commission. In the first 2 terms, cadets tend to take each day as they come, and try not to get into too much trouble, then all of a sudden you are shown a world outside RAF College Cranwell. The Basic Air Warfare Course was an excellent opportunity to take the 'blinkers' off and see the wider Air Force. Looking at how each of the cadets' branches fits into the wider context of the RAF, and how that fits into the bigger defence picture. Also, being able to defend the attributes of what air power can offer, and understand the difficulties that it faces means the cadets can feel prepared to defend the vital role the RAF plays. Promoting the RAF will be one of the most important tasks that a junior officer will have, and that promotion will not just be aimed at other services, but increasing the knowledge and understanding of airmen in the future. Understand this important element of the cadets' career is key in moving from cadet to junior officer. Making our own brews and carrying them to a classroom was also a real treat.

Visiting Amport House was a sobering experience for all of the cadets. The realisation that you could be informing a family of a bereavement as a 'notifying officer' is a stark reminder of the responsibility that all of the cadets could soon hold. It puts into perspective not being about to 'bull' your shoes very well. In addition to this, role-playing various interview situations from bullying and harassment, to underperforming personnel, showed all cadets just a few of the myriad of complex topics that could be covered every day, alongside your primary role.

In contrast to these very charged topics, we followed a programme of visits in London, where all cadets were expected to delve into the RAF's identity, culture and history. The atmosphere and the facilities of the RAF Club were impressive, and the feeling imparted on the cadets by the end of the visit will ensure that the membership will swell in the aftermath of our graduation. Being a part of the impressive history and culture of the RAF means a great deal to all cadets. St. Clement Danes Church reinforced the depth of the RAF's short history, with every Squadron ever created, forming a part of the church, as well as all the names of those who have given their lives in service with the RAF. It made us all feel proud to be there, and passionate to move forward in to active service



Directing Staff discussing the upcoming night training serials during Ex DECISIVE EDGE, March 13.

as officers outside RAF Cranwell, conducting ourselves in a manner that does credit both to the fallen and the wider RAF. The lessons that are given throughout IOT regarding the importance of an officers' conduct, bearing and moral courage seemed to grow and become more visceral after the London visits.

Structuring our own workload and timeframes will be essential in the future careers of the cadets, and as such Ex DECISIVE EDGE preparation and planning was one of the biggest transformations for the cadets. Term 1 & Term 2 is a test of perseverance, leadership, concentration and hard work. There is, however, a great deal of emphasis on following a structure and timetable to the absolute minute. In Term 3, there is a significant amount of time which is allocated for planning. When seen through the eyes of the Intermediate Squadron, it appears that the Senior Squadron have little to do. The 'lost gazes' on the faces of the Term 3 cadets has far more to do with their puzzlement as to how to make a 25-hour day work, as opposed to wanting something better to do. Balancing the preparation for the final exercise of IOTC 30 with presentations, committees, social events or any other delightful treats unleashed by the Directing Staff, is an art at which the cadets of IOTC 30 became wholly proficient. The cliché-bound senior officer's favourite expression about crocodiles and canoes is particularly relevant on Term 3 of IOT.

Grantown-on-Spey was an opportunity to let the cadets loose with a map, compass, some excellent kit, and some seasoned Adventurous Training (AT) Instructors. Once again, this was a change from the previous AT timetable of strict periods of activity and training. The cadets were given parameters, and left to plan and deliver an expedition that covered the 3 major elements of 'risk, rigour and robustness'. Taking care of our own battle rhythm in this way, allowed us to make informed decisions on the routes and contingencies we had planned. This had 2 outcomes: firstly, a sense of freedom, with which the Squadron could explore its own leadership style; secondly, it offered a sense of trepidation and responsibility, as the decisions and the structure that the cadets put in place had real-time consequences in an unforgiving environment. It is fair to say that all cadets were stretched and learnt a great deal from the experience.

In the first 2 terms, the course taught us the principles of transactional leadership, how to supply a 'carrot' for a job well done, and a 'stick' for a poor performance. The focus of leadership in Term 3 moves towards Transformation. This is not to say that the lessons from the first 2 terms are disregarded, but the cadets are encouraged to utilise the most effective blend of these types of leadership to fulfil their potential. The change, however, is a big one. No longer could the cadets do a 'lead' then slip into the relative anonymity of a group within the scenario. From the very first day, the Squadron, were informed that, as the senior group, we would be looked at even more closely, to set the example to the other cadets at OACTU. Throughout the term, there were many opportunities to try out this style of leadership, and observe the results. The establishing of a Combined Operations Centre (COC) accommodation, washing facilities and storage areas at the scenario Deployed Operating Base (DOB) for Ex DECISIVE EDGE was a challenge that the Squadron completed successfully. Within the 12 hours of work during the set-up phase of our deployment, we achieved a great deal, not because we necessarily had to, but because the cadets wanted to give the Intermediate Squadron the best possible arrival 'in-theatre'. Showing what could be achieved in a relatively short space of time encouraged the Term 2 cadets to have a successful time 'on operations'.

Throughout Ex DECISIVE EDGE, it was obvious to all the D Sqn cadets that being able to remain almost constantly upbeat, alert and enthusiastic



D Sqn digging into new mental depths to find extra power and commitment during 'Ultimate Challenge' – the faces say it all.

(Flt Lt Jim Smith) throughout IOT, tasted variously throughout the course by the cadets, and then brought to life on that one historic morning from the depths of the cadets' character and endurance.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, 'Transformation' is a marked change in nature, form or appearance. All of this is true when applied to the cadets completing Term 3 of IOTC 30. The natural thing to do when you are tired is to sit; the natural thing to do when you are unhappy is to look sad, and finally the natural thing to do when you are fed up and you have had enough is to give up. It is fair to say that all of these 'natural' things have changed for the cadets after Term 3. They are prepared and aware of how to 'over-ride' these instincts and continue to deliver strong leadership at the lowest of points. The form for the cadets in their first 2 terms

would inspire the other cadets, who were having a tough time with very little sleep, in extremely cold conditions. The same standard was applied at the breaking of the camp, where a small group of cadets cleared much of the base between the hours of 0100-0630, with constant rain and wind. When the sleeping cadets awoke the next day, their unanimous response was to be impressed, but also to get involved as soon as possible with the collapse of the base, in the same efficient manner as their overnight counterparts.

is to be the best cadet they can be. The form in Term 3 is to transform from a cadet with potential, into a junior officer with promise. Finally, in terms of appearance, the cadets all seem that little bit taller towards the end of Term 3, holding their heads high with pride at what has been achieved, and with a spring in their step as they look forward to what can be achieved in their futures with the RAF.



B Flt, IOTC 30 - victors of Ultimate Challenge.



The Graduating Officers of Initial Officer Training Course 30 – 'Hic Sunt Dracones'!

[Return to Contents List](#)

May 2013 - IOTC 31 Impressions (18)

IOT – The Term 2 Perspective

Officer Cadet A C Williams - B Flight, B Squadron, Initial Officer Training Course 31, Officer & Aircrew Cadet Training Unit

Officer Cadets on B Sqn were welcomed into Term 2 with a bang. After 10 long weeks (and in some cases more) of eager anticipation, we were finally in the plush surroundings of College Hall Officers' Mess. We had had a brief interlude in the early days of Term One due to a heating malfunction, but now we had earned our place in CHOM. We no longer had to go outside to reach our bar and we had earned our Term 2 privileges such as having quilts on our beds and being able to wear our blue uniform during the working week.

Our first weekend of term was spent on a Force Development exercise in Nottingham: Ex OUTLAW. The purpose of this Ex was to develop our teamwork and bargaining skills as well as individual initiative by completing a series of tasks in and around the city centre. These included getting airborne, getting waterborne, sitting in the most expensive seat and, bearing in mind the city's Robin Hood connections, take from the rich and give to the poor! The Ex was thoroughly enjoyable and it was good to have the opportunity to practice our leadership and teamwork skills in a non-military environment. The next day we had to present our adventures to the rest of the course. The team with the best presentation and the most completed tasks were rewarded with a small token of chocolate - this went to the team that managed to get themselves a flight at the local airport as well as test-drive a brand new car around town.

However, Monday morning was just around the corner and waiting to greet us with fresh academic pressures. We were faced with Air Power Studies lectures almost every day about the various Air Power campaigns ranging from WWI to the Kosovo Crisis, and beyond to contemporary conflicts. These lectures were enthusiastically received by many cadets who were glad to have moved on from some of the heavier, theory-based lectures of Term One. Cadets had the opportunity to let their passion and enthusiasm for certain battles or eras shine through both in lectures and in Syndicate Room Discussions (SRD), which were now witnessing more lively debates on a regular basis. These SRDs were hosted several times throughout the week by the Academic staff at OACTU, who are now working in conjunction with Portsmouth Business School. Cadets

were put through their academic paces towards the middle of Term 2, with exams on Essential Service Knowledge (ESK), Defence Writing (DW) and Air Power Studies (APS) to pass. On top of this, the infamous Bandar essay was also due in Week 5, a pass / fail element of the course, set in the latter part of Term One. The 1,500 word essay can be written about a number of different military or leadership topics, as well as Air Power campaigns from WWI onwards. The best essay of the year is awarded the Bandar Essay Prize so the pressure was on to win!

Shortly before our deployment on the first exercise of term, Exercise MIL-AID, a number of cadets were selected to represent RAFC Cranwell in the Inter-Collegiate games against Officer Cadets at the French Air Force Academy, in Salon de Provence. We competed against our French counterparts in Athletics, Cross Country, Swimming, Rugby, Volleyball and Superstars. Overall, it was a 4-2 victory to France but term 2 cadets made a great contribution to the efforts. Whilst not enjoying a victory over the French, Term 2 cadets were able to enjoy the local town of Provence and learn about the French military training system via our French hosts.

Before we knew it, Ex MILAID was upon us. The UK was covered in a thick layer of snow and the Stanford Training Area (STANTA) was no exception. Cadets were deployed for 5 days as Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA), assisting in the search for 2 missing girls from the Thetford area in Norfolk. This Ex was our last real opportunity to practice our fundamental leadership skills, or in some cases refine them, before the big test of Ex DECISIVE EDGE later in Term 2. All our leadership tuition from the past 15 weeks at OACTU was in the forefront of everyone's mind as we were faced with a fresh challenge every 3 hours throughout the day. It was a busy week for deployed cadets, with various situations to deal with such as media coverage of the search, working in a joint environment, aircraft crashes, search & recovery and road traffic accidents. The Ex finishes off with a 'Rocket Race'; 4 Sections racing across STANTA, in what can only be described as an epic game of hide-and-seek. This was a competition between the 2 flights and each was determined to win the ultimate prize, the B Squadron Tiger mascot.



The Officer Cadets test their fitness against the RAF standard.

Officer Cadets establishing a base of operations in the snow during Ex MIL-AID.



If Term 2 wasn't challenging enough, a PE'd session almost every day appeared in our timetable to keep us on our toes. On top of this, a small group took on the extra challenge of '24x24x24' - a 24-hour endurance event with 24 cadets completing 24 RAF Fitness Tests every hour for 24 consecutive hours. This charity event was put on to raise money and awareness for Home Start UK, which is a charity organisation that supports families and children in times of crisis, bereavement or illness. B Squadron set themselves a fundraising target of £1,000, and 71 donations later, the total amount raised had surpassed our target and stood at £1,500! After a few gruelling weeks of Aero Runs and Battle PT in the snow, the sporting event that all of B Squadron had been waiting for - the Inter-Sqn sports competition - finally arrived. Our opponents were C Sqn cadets in Term One, who were very confident of an impending victory if their cheering at the opening ceremony was anything to go by. However, after going head-to-head in Netball, Volleyball, the Orange Dash, Uni-hockey and the infamous 'Superstars', B Squadron came away with a 5-0 win under their belts. It was a brilliant feeling, especially after our 3-2 defeat the previous term to the undefeatable D Squadron.

The weekend following Inter-Squadron Sports was 'Partners' Day'. This was our first opportunity to demonstrate to our friends, families and loved ones everything we had learned and achieved over the past 15 weeks. Not only was this an opportunity to show them around the College and give them an insight into daily life at IOT, but we were able to entertain our guests in our first practice Mess function, with top-table complete with the PMC and Mr. Vice. This was highly entertaining and enjoyable for all, and built up excitement for future Mess functions to come.

With the ESK, DW and APS exams completed, as well as the Bandar essay handed in, preparation for our deployment on Ex DECISIVE EDGE became our primary focus. Term 3 cadets, who organise and run the Exercise, were sending a mountain of information our way by e-mail or in briefings squeezed around our busy timetable. The operation is set in the fictitious country of Moltovia in Eastern Europe, and simulates the early stages of a deployed operation, in particular the austere conditions of such a deployment. Cadets have to build, sustain and protect an operating base over a period of 10 days, 24 hours per day. The day was broken down into 6-hour shifts, with 4 meals per day provided by the Field Kitchen punctuating the end of each shift. As well as cleaning our rifles and boots, we had to eat 2 meals, administrate ourselves and get some sleep in the one 6-hour shift we had off per day. It was fair to say that sleep deprivation had set in by day 3, never mind by day 10, but this operation was designed to be as realistic as possible for Term 2 cadets - this was the culmination of all our leadership and Force Protection (FP) lessons in one long assessment period. Our leadership abilities were tested over 2 separate 6-hour shifts, during which we could be faced with the leadership challenge of taking on the role of Guard Commander, Patrol Commander, running the Combined Incident Team (CIT) or being the base Adjutant. To pass this assessment, cadets had to demonstrate their leadership abilities alongside FP skills to be awarded a pass from the Directing Staff (DS). Overall, the realism of what actually happens on ops was highlighted by many of our operationally-experienced DS and it reinforced the changing nature of the RAF - from enduring ops to an expeditionary force - to all B Squadron cadets.

[Return to Contents List](#)

May 2013 - IOTC 32 Reflections (19)

IOT – The Term 1 Perspective

Officer Cadet M J Pickford - A Flight, C Squadron, Initial Officer Training Course 32, Officer & Aircrew Cadet Training Unit



Marching down a snow-laden Queens Avenue, from Number 1 Mess towards College Hall.

uniform completely covered in snow. Following completion of a long day, the squadron would trundle back past the illuminated grandeur of College Hall, towards an eagerly anticipated dinner in the more humble surroundings of No. 1 Mess; the College representing an inspirational reminder of things yet to come. Relaxation did not begin here however, as immediately after dinner, the Mess would empty as the Squadron filed off to begin the nightly ritual of ironing, cleaning and preparing for the following day's activities, long into the early hours.

By the 3rd and 4th weeks of the course, the physically demanding nature of the training, combined with long hours and little sleep began to take their toll on the Squadron, both physically and mentally. Staying awake and alert during lectures soon became a real challenge and I frequently had to make the decision to stand at

the back of the lecture theatre, not trusting my sleep-deprived body to stay awake. I was not alone in the battle to remain conscious with some cadets outright losing the fight and suffering the indignity and embarrassment of being caught by staff, having nodded off during the lesson. Others' minds switched off during other routine tasks. My neighbour in the block spent 2 days confined to quarters due to severe blisters from spilling a boiling flask of tea over his bare foot whilst ironing. Also, whilst stencilling our names onto the front of our PT kits in large white letters, one cadet unwittingly spelt his own name wrong, much to the amusement of the rest of the Squadron when it was noticed the following day. However, a more serious and sobering toll was felt when we lost 3 cadets from our Squadron to injury and failed fitness tests, no doubt the gruelling nature of the course being a major contributing factor in this. Entering the Royal Air Force as a Graduate Direct Entrant with a nonexistent military background, I did find this initial phase of training a complete shock to the system. However despite the negative effects of cumulative fatigue and constant pressure, my motivation and that of those around me remained steadfast. The journey to IOT for me began a long time ago and to just be here is a culmination of years of hard work. The daily march down Queens Avenue towards College Hall surrounded by snow is a sight that cannot help but inspire you and put your hard work into context.

The long days of training and lessons during this first month of IOT are designed to prepare us for the 4 main Exercises of Term One. It was these Exercises that gave the experience a real edge, taking us away from our usual daily routine and outside our comfort zone. The first was these was Ex FIRST STEP, in which classroom-taught principles of land navigation, weapons handling and fieldcraft were given practical emphasis, with 2 days spent on the Beckingham Ranges away from our Flight Staff, in the hands of the Regiment Instructors. We had field-based lessons in camouflage and concealment, battlefield movement and targeting, land navigation and fieldcraft. Two days of actions such as Leopard-crawling through muddy fields intersected by cooking our dinner from 24-hour ration packs over a 'hexi-stove' and sleeping out in the elements with nothing but a sleeping bag and bivvy sheet on a cold January weekend, came as a welcome shock from the routine life at the College and gave us much needed time to practice lessons learned over the first few weeks.

On our return from Ex FIRST STEP, our time with the Regiment Training Instructors began to decrease and a noticeable shift began from basic

militarisation toward the underlining reason we are all going through IOT; development our leadership potential. This was first really tested on Ex KINETIC EDGE, where classroom-based leadership theories and styles were put into practise in the familiar surroundings of the OASC hangar. Every cadet going through IOT had been through the stress and pressure of performing in that hangar, desperately trying to impress the selection board with leadership potential. To be back there months later was a very surreal experience and as I walked around the different tasks, the memories of nerves and pressure I had felt during selection came rushing back. However this time, the experience proved a thoroughly more enjoyable and rewarding experience. My chance to lead the group came and as in my lead at OASC, I was unable to complete the task in the allotted time; rather than having to wait a tense 3 weeks to find out if this had affected my chances of selection, I was immediately debriefed with constructive criticism and advice from my team. It was very rewarding to see how the time spent at Cranwell had already impacted on my own self-confidence and leadership style from OASC only a few months previous, and it gave me a real boost of confidence moving into the second half of Term One.

Lessons drawn from mistakes made during Ex KINETIC EDGE had to be learnt very quickly, as the following week the Squadron swapped the relative luxuries of Mess life for the not so distant windswept North Airfield of Cranwell for 3 days of leadership tasks as part of Ex SHARP EDGE. The lead times were tripled from the previous exercise and were made far more realistic, physically demanding and mentally challenging than anything we had come up against previously. Over the 3 days we each had a turn at leading our section of 9 cadets in a scenario briefed to us by a member of the Directing Staff. This was followed by half an

hour of careful planning and briefing the team before setting off to execute the task. I was given the task of setting up a camera calibration zone for a fictitious overflying UAV. As new information was picked up, I soon had my team running down the airfield at double-time in a race to reach the co-ordinates and gather essential equipment. Despite the watchful eye of the Leadership Instructor being ever present, I found myself completely buying into the exercise and leading my team as though the scenario was genuinely happening. After a long day of charging around the airfield with equipment in tow, we moved into the nearby woods to set up our familiar temporary homes of bivvy sheets stretched between trees. As I sat under my hastily constructed bivvy sheet, trying to get warm by creeping ever closer to my hexi-stove as it cooked my rations, I felt a real sense of accomplishment. Everything we had learnt in a demanding 6 weeks at Cranwell had been put to use on the airfield. The leads had incorporated and tested everything from fieldcraft, navigation, teamwork and followership, fitness and more importantly leadership. It was very satisfying to realise how the sometimes long and tiring lessons had all been done to prepare ourselves to that point.

At the time of writing, 6 weeks of IOT have passed and we face far more challenging times ahead in Term One alone. Following an upcoming week of Adventurous Training in Fairbourne, my Squadron will sit academic exams in Air Power Studies and face a week in the field, further testing our leadership and military skills on Ex ACTIVE EDGE. However, as I look upon my personal development and recognise the development of those around me and how the squadron has bonded together in just 6 weeks, I look forward not with nervous anticipation but with eagerness and excitement to the challenges thrown down by RAF College Cranwell.



Cadets practice their battlefield manoeuvres during Ex FIRST STEP.

[Return to Contents List](#)

August 2016 - Flying First Impressions (20a)

ELEMENTARY FLYING TRAINING – A STUDENT’S EXPERIENCE

by Flying Officer Jamie Bunting MEng RAF

After completing a gruelling nine months of Initial Officer Training (IOT) at RAF College Cranwell trainee pilots are thrust into the world of flying training. Selected to join either 57(R) Sqn or 16(R) Sqn they must first complete Groundschool and Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Extraction (SERE) training before being allowed near an aircraft. After completing Elementary Flying Training (EFT) they are streamed Fast Jet, Rotary or Multi-Engine and move on to the next stage of their flying career.

WHERE’S MY AIRCRAFT?!

Not all of flying training takes place in the cockpit; SERE training prepares pilots for the less desirable times when they have had to abandon the aircraft. The highly qualified instructors at Aircrew SERE Training Centre (ASTC) at RAF Cranwell teach students the physical and psychological skills needed to preserve life, improve their condition and facilitate recovery. The first week is classroom and site-based. Students are taught how to build their own shelters: these can then be customised with heat reflectors and drying racks; however, interior decoration is strictly limited to what can be found on the forest floor. A highlight of the first week is the day in the environmental pool: students learn how to enter water from height and set up life rafts, all while being buffeted around in complete darkness, driving rain,

gale force winds and sea state six. Fortunately, sea sickness tablets are handed out at the beginning.

SQUIRREL À LA CARTE

The second week is the field phase - Ex MOORTREK. Students have their new knowledge put to the test demonstrating they can build shelter, signal for help, collect water and make fires. Psychologically, the hardest part is doing without three meals at the Mess every day. Culinary skills learnt include: how to make infusions and teas from various plants, preparing rabbit and making squirrel jerky. Some skills are more transferrable to the kitchen than others!

BACK TO THE CLASSROOM

The students gladly return to their warm beds and regular meals during the six weeks of Groundschool where they learn the academic side of aviation. Those who have had some previous flying experience with a University Air Squadron have a familiarity with the flight instruments and navigation; however, *ab-initio* students need to learn the ‘lingo’ and the inner workings of devices they have never seen before. Fortunately, each experienced instructor is more than willing to pause the teaching for a tale “when I was flying...”, which helps keep things interesting. After weeks of learning, revising and testing the students are glad to slip the bonds of groundschool,

[Return to Contents List](#)

August 2016 - Flying First Impressions (20b)

don flying suits and join either 57(R) Squadron at RAF Cranwell, or 16(R) Squadron at RAF Wittering.

GETTING WHEELS OFF THE GROUND

Once at Rauceby Lane the students meet their instructors and quickly settle into a life of mass briefs, studying, flying and debriefing. It is here that all of the knowledge from groundschool is put to the test. It is often said that once the helmet is put on, half of the student's brain is left on the ground so it is extra important to learn those checks! The pressure is on and the pace never lets up: students start with effects of controls and basic handling. At the same time they are expected to remember how to get to and from Cranwell, do the checks, work the radios, fix the aircraft's position both visually and using the radio aids and look out for other aircraft!

"BUT THE INSTRUCTOR WILL STILL BE NEXT TO YOU?!"

In a shorter time than it takes some people to pass their driving test, EFT students are sent solo on trip 13. A memorable experience in any pilot's life: before the trip a slightly anxious mother asked her son "although you are 'going solo' will the instructor still be sitting next to you?" In some cases it is hard to tell who is more nervous: a parent, the instructor or the student. Nevertheless being able to enjoy a peaceful flight in the circuit without any interjections from the left hand seat is definitely one of the highlights. Once all of the course members have completed their solo sorties they are entitled to wear a 'solo badge'. As it is a cause for celebration, the students go head-to-head against their

instructor on some kind of inflatable assault course in order to 'win' their 'solo badge' and wear it with pride.

GENERAL HANDLING PHASE

The first half of the course is General Handling and this is the foundation upon which the Applied Phases are built. It is all about learning how to control the aircraft when it is doing what you ask of it and also when it is not! As soon as the student thinks they have it under control another "Emergency" will crop up and before they know it they are doing a Precautionary Forced Landing into a large farmer's field. Many sorties are spent doing circuit consolidation where the students quickly collect two more hours solo time. Once out of the circuit and into the local area the instructor and student push the aircraft to its limits performing spins and aerobatics. No matter how dynamic the manoeuvre it is still the student's responsibility to quickly perform the next "aero" in the sequence all whilst monitoring fuel consumption, looking out for other aircraft and planning their recovery to Cranwell. The most enjoyable sortie in the General Handling phase is sortie 29 – Solo Aeros. Once they have mastered their sequence they have one hour of solo time to refine their display pilot skills and brush up on techniques before the Initial Handling Test.

FAST EYES, SLOW HANDS

Race horses have 'blinkers' and student pilots have an 'instrument visor' for the Instrument Flying Phase. The instructor has the luxury of normal vision; however, the student's vision is restricted to inside the cockpit to focus on the instrument panel. Used to practice

flight in cloud, it is all about having "fast eyes and slow hands". It is easy to let the aircraft get away from you but by using known power settings and attitudes the pilot can maintain straight and level flight while his eyes are darting around the cockpit monitoring attitude, heading, speed, height and everything else.

NEVER LOST – ONLY GEOGRAPHICALLY DISPLACED

Every EFT student's abiding memory of the Navigation Phase is the hours spent pouring over maps searching all over Lincolnshire for suitable turning points and fixes. It is a battle between man and paper using the folding techniques to compress the map to a usable size. The first Navigation sorties are flown at Medium Level around 3,000ft and Low Level at 500ft. Navigating an aircraft consists of measuring the bearing and distance from A to B, adding the magnetic variation to produce the 'track' and using mental arithmetic to calculate the time at point B. However, no plan ever survives first contact with the enemy and in this case the enemy is the weather – or more specifically the wind! Pilots use 'fixes' to keep on track and the wind is rarely as forecast so use a variety of methods to regain track and update their estimated time of arrival.

THE MOST FUN YOU CAN HAVE WITH YOUR TROUSERS ON

The four formation sorties are a welcomed change for the students – no maps necessary. This time it is all "stick and rudder" to stay on the primary references of the lead aircraft – pure flying. Doing 45° banked turns in close formation over Lincolnshire is a great way to spend an afternoon. On the fourth formation trip students get to fly solo and there is no better feeling than looking the short distance across to the other aircraft to see a fellow student with a face that shows total concentration and enjoyment simultaneously. The course comes to a close with the Composite Phase; six trips in which anything can happen. By this time the students are totally independent in the planning and preparation required for each sortie. They plan a route and what to include in the profile. The instructors push each student to the limit in order to test their airmanship and mental flexibility. Each gruelling composite flight will have multiple emergencies, which may

lead to precautionary forced landings; it is down to the pilot to show he can prioritise and deal with each problem while keeping a cool head. The flying culminates in the Final Handling Test where each pilot gets to prove his worth and finish the course – 56 flying hours under his belt.

ALL WORK AND NO PLAY?

Of course not! With Army and Navy EFT Squadrons at RAF Cranwell there are plenty of opportunities for Dining-in nights celebrating each Service's aviation victories. Taranto Night, hosted by the Navy, was particularly memorable as it contained historically (in)accurate re-enactments, including very dodgy accents and exploding model ships. With the constant assessments it is easy to become caught up in the 'EFT bubble' especially as everyone has a day when things don't quite go to plan and the social events are the best way to let off steam. The first milestone of EFT is 'going solo' and once each course member has achieved this they celebrate with a 'solo barrel'; a barrel of locally produced ale is bought for the students to enjoy responsibly at the bar. After completing the course the students have their 'streaming' night; normally in the style of a game-show the students must complete a series of entertaining challenges to win their 'prize' which is finding out onto which aircraft type they will progress.

WHERE NEXT?

The 'streaming' night is an emotional rollercoaster. After six months of living and socialising together it is time to find out who goes Fast Jet, Rotary or Multi-Engine. Students submit their preferences but spaces are dictated according to Service requirement. Whilst some celebrate being awarded their first choice, the disappointment of getting their second or third choice is a necessity with which they have to deal. Those selected for Fast Jet move to RAF Linton-on-Ouse to fly the Tucano for 29 weeks before progressing to RAF Valley for Advanced Training. Rotary pilots move to RAF Shawbury to fly the Squirrel and Griffin Helicopters. Multi-Engine pilots remain at RAF Cranwell to fly the King Air. Wherever they go each student shares the experience of EFT and all of its 'highs' and 'lows'. Whilst there were times when it seemed less than enjoyable, looking back on it as one's foundation in military flying, it is unforgettable.



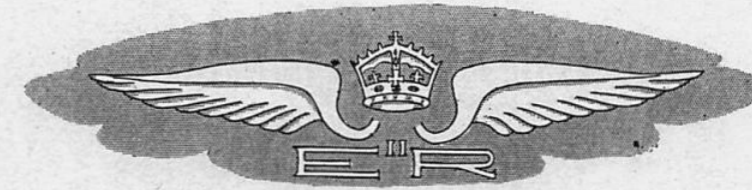
[Return to Contents List](#)

June 1953 - Coronation Day (1)



THE DAY OF THE CORONATION
2nd JUNE 1953

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second passes in the Coronation Coach between lines formed by flight cadets of Cranwell in Parliament Square under the shadow of Westminster Abbey



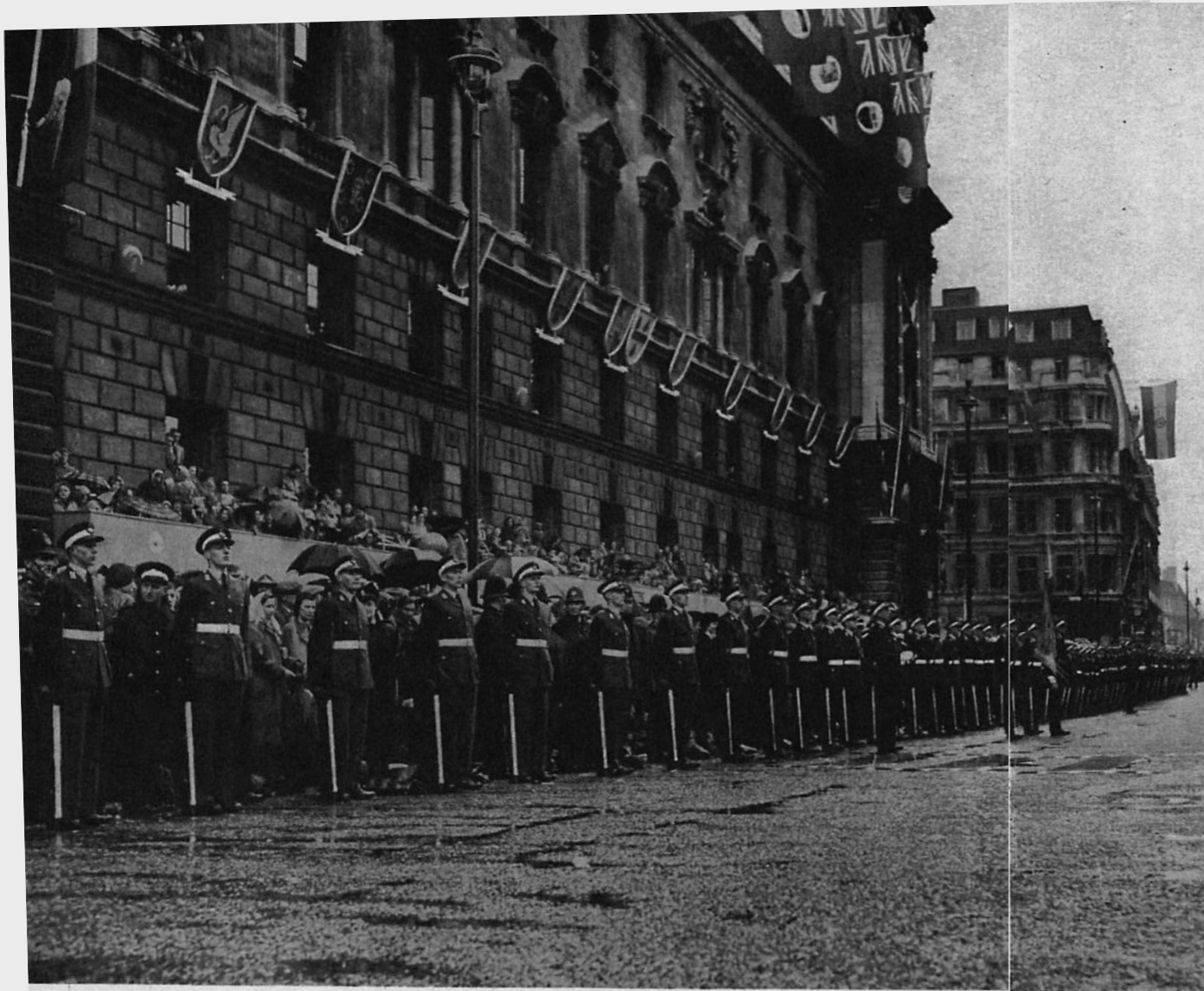
Cranwell's Part in the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth the Second

THE memory of the gracious presence of Princess Elizabeth as the Reviewing Officer at the Graduation Parade of No. 53 Entry and No. 4 (Equipment and Secretarial) Entry has become a living part of the Cranwell tradition, and we are proud to learn from her conversation during the evening reception at the Palace on 12th June that the Queen herself recalls this visit with pleasure. To Cranwell, therefore, the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth the Second was more than an occasion for the display of an impersonal national loyalty; it was the occasion for the re-declaration of a very real and personal devotion.

As far as the Station was concerned, preparations started with the selection and initial training of the Cranwell contingent of the Flying Training Command Coronation Wing. This Wing, some 700 strong, arrived in East Camp in May for a period of kitting and training. As the Royal Air Force College Band had left early in May to practise with other bands marching in the procession we were doubly glad to welcome the members of the volunteer band from Royal Air Force Hednesford who, in addition to their primary duty, managed to provide music for Cranwell occasions. An account of the activities of the Wing and the Band is given elsewhere. On Whit Sunday a special pre-Coronation service was held and Coronation Day itself was fittingly celebrated on the Station.

To the flight cadets fell the honour, for the second time since the foundation of the College, of holding part of the final approach of the Coronation route to Westminster Abbey. Two hundred and eight flight cadets and eight flight cadet under officers (four specially and temporarily created for the occasion) lined the north-west corner of Parliament Square. For the first time on such an occasion the Queen's Colour was paraded, the ensigns being Flight Cadet Sergeant Loveday and Senior Flight Cadet Weaver; the escorts were Flight Cadets Tucker and Letchford, Blockey and Briggs.

June 1953 - Coronation Day (2)



The day of the Coronation. The Sovereign's Squadron, with the Queen's Colour, at attention on the Home Office side of Parliament Square

Much preparatory work was put in at Cranwell, culminating in a full four-hour rehearsal on Whit Sunday. On Friday, 28th May, the detachment left by bus for Sandhurst, where final rehearsals and briefing were carried out, and where each individual cadet host looked after his allotted guest in the traditional Sandhurst style.

On Coronation Day the party was called by loudspeaker van at quarter-past three. A special train brought flight cadets to Vauxhall and breakfast was taken at Millbank Barracks. By eight o'clock the markers were getting into position through a final flurry of peers of the realm and by ten past eight the route-lining party was in position with

Colour uncased under the eyes of a huge crowd. (At this stage the crowd was viewed as something ominous and critical which might have to be held back with rifles.) Along the route tension grew steadily until the passage of the Queen. By quarter-past eleven the crowd were settling down to listen to the service over the loudspeakers.

The Queen's words of self-dedication were clearly heard. They evoked memories of her address to the Cadet Wing on 1st August, 1951. Her Majesty then spoke of the weight of responsibilities which flight cadets would have to bear in their sphere of service; responsibilities properly borne, however, should not oppress the spirit like a deadweight; if treated as an honourable charge, they would strengthen and uphold. Faced in so fine a spirit and with so high a heart, even the vast responsibilities laid upon, and cheerfully accepted by, the Queen might prove supportable. *Portatur leviter quod portat quisque libenter*. No subject can have heard the firm acceptance of the oath without resolving, however incoherent the thought, to fulfil more exactly his own far lighter duties, and to ease by all means possible the Queen's burden.

Meanwhile, outside the Abbey the route-lining parties continued to stand and wait. During the service each flight cadet fell out for ten minutes and had the opportunity to eat a packed lunch before the main burden of the day began. No sooner was the Queen crowned than the rain began in earnest. Soon, however, capes were laid aside and the head of the return procession began to pass. For one and a half hours the detachment was at the slope or at the present as contingent after contingent, including the Royal Air Force College Band, marched past.

By this time the crowd was on intimate terms with the route-liners. Every movement was followed with applause or banter. In places it had pressed forward and some flight cadets at the present, already troubled to retain their balance while squinting at a constant stream of marching troops moving across their front, were further discommoded by the hot breath of cheering mothers down their necks and flags waved by the children in arms under their noses.

By a quarter past three the party was formed up again with a final burst of applause from the crowd and the police. A single stentorian shout arose from an unidentified bystander, 'Well done, Cranwell!' The contingent returned to Sandhurst, marching from Camberley station, soaked and dishevelled, but conscious of an historic duty admirably performed.

The only flight cadet casualty throughout was one graze from a bayonet, though the rumour goes that our Senior Ground Combat Training Instructor was bitten to the bone during a rehearsal by a convulsed Sandhurst cadet. The cadet, we understand, has not permanently injured his jaw.

Not content with a seventeen-hour day including seven hours of route-lining, nearly all flight cadets, feeling bound to make a further display of loyalty, changed and returned as fast as possible to the West End.

Cranwell can look back with pride upon its share in the inauguration of the new Elizabethan era, in which it will undoubtedly be called to play so great a part. In

June 1953 - Coronation Day (3)

recognition of the contribution of the College, the presence of two flight cadet under officers at the Palace at the evening reception of 5th June was commanded by the Queen, and two at that held on 12th June. At the reception on 5th June, Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fraser of North Cape, formerly First Sea Lord, took particular interest in Flight Cadet Under Officers Henderson and King and recalled his two visits to Cranwell. On 12th June, Flight Cadet Under Officers Cock and Parker had the honour of being engaged in conversation by Her Majesty.

A Message from the Chief of the Air Staff

The following signal was sent by the Chief of the Air Staff to the Commandant on 3rd June, 1953:

'I noticed myself, and have since heard from all sides, of the splendid bearing of the flight cadets from the Royal Air Force College Cranwell who lined the route in Parliament Square. I was particularly glad to learn that the public showed its special appreciation at the end of the day when the cadets marched off parade. Well done, Cranwell.'

Award of Coronation Medals

The following flight cadets were awarded Coronation Medals: Flt Cdt U.Os S. E. King, J. M. Henderson, P. G. Cock, N. A. Parker; Flt Cdt Sgts C. T. B. Peile, R. A. Lees, D. Burles, A. Denny, E. C. Loveday; Flt Cdts R. Hoare, L. A. Jones, J. A. Tucker, E. S. J. Whitwam, J. E. Cooper, D. G. Letchford, K. Bichard, A. MacGregor, G. F. Poyser.

The Parade

The following were selected to line the Coronation route in Parliament Square:

No. 1 FLIGHT

Flight Commander: Flt Cdt Sgt Burles D. R. *Markers:* Snr Flt Cdts Baker G. H. and Chamberlain C. A.

Flt Cdts Dines M. J., Allison D., Gratton J. V., Maitland J. C., Vickers D. D., Whitwam E. S., Anstee P. J., Brown R., Hoare R., Marsh M. N., Champion J. H., Langley J. D., Saywell D. J., Mallett F. A., Cox B. G., Moseley E. P., MacDougal J. C., Tuckey J. T., Champniss P. H., Denson E. S., Dymond J. M., Mcleod J., Martin I. R., Combe B. A., MacGregor A., Owen L. T., Bichard K., Burnett D. A., Pearson C., Keppie I. H., Gubbins R. B., Whittaker A. J., Ablitt B. R., Wright J., Robey M. V., Courtin D. M., Cousins D. M., Jackson R. A., Papworth P. M., Bruce B. S.

No. 2 FLIGHT

Flight Commander: Flt Cdt U.O. Henderson J. M. *Markers:* Flt Cdt Sgt Lewis A. R., Flt Cdt Sgt Mumford G. S. C.

Snr Flt Cdts Brand G. J., Butt W. A., Fitzpatrick J. B., Gilpin R. C., Hartnoll T. J., Neale A., Pugh A. C., Selway D. S., Flt Cdts Brown J. C., Chippendale M. J., Close W. E., Edwards R. A., McEntegart J. R., Whitson A. C., Allison D., Carse B., Dixon J. P., French T. J., Hymers J. N., McIntosh I. C., Newby J. G., Reader B. A., Briggs K. R., Brimson I. D., Cannon J. B., Crook M. A., Murman R. H., Richard D. M., Taylor B. E., Turner G. M., Barrow P. A., Campbell J. R., Goslin E. W., Herbert C. A., Jonklaas N. L., McLeod C. X., Parsons D. L., Rogers B. A.

Relief Flight Commander: Flt Cdt Sgt Lees R. A.

SOVEREIGN'S SQUADRON

Colour Party: Ensign—Flt Cdt Sgt Loveday E. C., Escorts—Flt Cdts Tucker J. A., Letchford D. G. *Relief Colour Party:* Ensign—Snr Flt Cdt Weaver J., Escorts: Flt Cdts Blockey R. S., Briggs D. A.

No. 3 FLIGHT

Flight Commander: Flt Cdt U.O. King S. E. *Markers:* Flt Cdt Sgt Witty R. F., Snr Flt Cdt Molesworth D. W. Snr Flt Cdt Organ P. D., Flt Cdts Bowes J. M., Boyce T. S., Hancock R. M., MacNicol N. R., Reynolds S., England D. C., Grierson G. S., Holmes R. L., Kelly M. A., Lees M., Lewis P. J., Miller J. I., Southgate M. R., Bates R. D., Dobson J. B., Eden D. F., Edwards D. G., Food A. R., Hardy M. J., Kearn I. M., King P. J., Miller C. J., Sheppard T. H., Stanning P. H., Ball M. J., Bond T. A., Curtis M. L., Green L. J., Johnson D. R., Kent B. R., Abeysinhe J. M., Burrage D. J., Cresswell J. S., Hines F. M., Horsfield R., Lea N. G., McArthur D. A., Meeks A. D.

No. 4 FLIGHT

Flight Commander: Flt Cdt. U.O. Parker N. A., *Markers:* Flt Cdt Sgt Quayle C. E., Snr Flt Cdt Ilsley D. J. Snr Flt Cdt Neves R. E., Green G., Taylor D. J., Cash P. B., Lim C. S., Flt Cdt Bright A., Pringle R. B., Vella J. F., Watts J. R., Woods D. J., Barnard J. B., Bourne D. R., Cooper J. E., De'Ath J. G., Green R., Rehan A., Allisstone M. J., Dufton A., Gale R. A. A., Howells M. A., James C. P., King C. E., Kerrigan J. G., Tierney J. E., Welby P. J., Wilkinson I. D., Austin K. P., Chandler A. M., Craig A. R., Hollis D. J., Sandle J. R., Scroggs T. W., McLelland-Brown A. J., Serrell-Cooke A. J., Stables D. P., Whitman D. C., Weight A., Weeden B. A.

Relief Flight Commander: Flt Cdt Sgt Denny A. C.

No. 5 FLIGHT

Flight Commander: Flt Cdt U.O. Cock P. G. *Markers:* Flt Cdt Sgt Ayres J. R., Flt Cdt Sgt Reypert. Snr Flt Cdts Foster D. J., Newton B. H., Nowell J. W., Pickersgill J. W., Flt Cdts Coleman A. K., Drummond J. M., Field G. P., Goodall M. J., Moors E. H., Morgan J. A., Taylor C. C., Harding W. K., McInstry P. E., Naismith D. J., St. Aubyn B. J., Seneviratne B. D., Sinel M. L., Spatcher J. L., Cooper A. C., Farwell J., Forse B. E., Goldring R. A., Jennings J. K., Jones M. L., McIntyre D., Moore M. A., Morgan A. G., Poyser G. F., Whittam J. R., Heyward B. B., Hutchinson J. D., Phillips C. J., Pugh J. D., Richardson C. G., Snare R. T. F., Tomlin B. F., Wallingford J., Walpole N. J., Waters J. C., Salter A.

The following also took part in the parade:

Squadron Leader D. G. Roberts, W.O. R. A. Masters, B.E.M., Flt Sgts Lune R. J. and Holt J.

[Return to Contents List](#)

June 1955 - Cranwell in the Early 20s (1)

Cranwell in the Early 'Twenties

By D.M.

TWENTY hours' solo in an elementary trainer and about half that number of hours' dual instruction with a few passenger flights was the total flying cadets did at first during the two-year course at Cranwell! 'Wings' were not awarded until some weeks after passing out from Cranwell and when further training in operational squadrons had been completed.

In retrospect that seems a strange start for those who were about to make the R.A.F. their career; but it is easy to look back and be wise after events. Lessons were very soon learned from early experience and the R.A.F. owes much to the wisdom of the early College authorities who gave it such a splendid start. It would be invidious to mention names other than perhaps the first Commandant—Air Commodore C. A. H. Longcroft (later Air Vice-Marshal Sir Charles)—who will always be remembered with affection by cadets who served at Cranwell under him.

The R.A.F. Cadet College, as it was then called, opened in February, 1920, and I arrived in August of that year and so was in the Second Entry to Cranwell. I found that there were two terms senior to mine, since a number of ex-Naval cadets had been transferred from Dartmouth to undergo one year's training as flight cadets before being commissioned in the R.A.F. Thus there was the 'Naval Term' in addition to the normal first term. As the full course was of two years' duration and there were only two entries a year, we first reached the full strength of four terms in August, 1921. The Cadet Wing was organized in two squadrons only, 'A' and 'B,' and the Flying Wing comprised 'A,' 'B' and 'C' Flights. During the first year at Cranwell a flight cadet was treated once a week, weather permitting, to a brief passenger flight during which he was required to sketch some local village from the air! Flying instruction started at the beginning of the second year and it was only then that the non-starters in flying were weeded out. Such a policy was therefore destined for early revision.

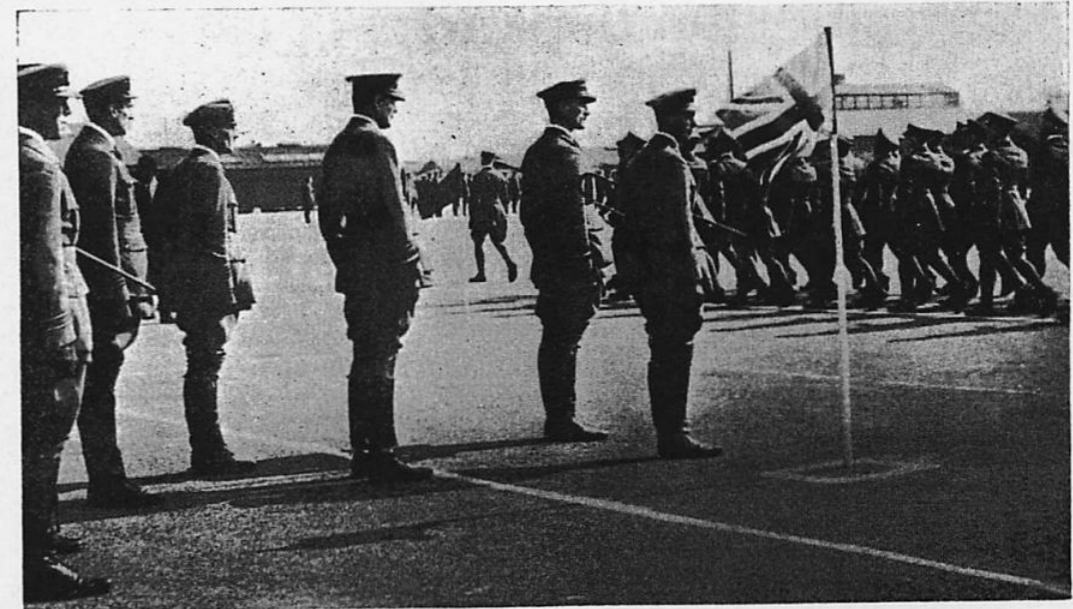
Flying for cadets took place only on the southern aerodrome, and my most lasting impressions of the flying flights were the noise and smell! The only aircraft flown by cadets was the Avro with the Gnome Monosoupape rotary engine. This engine had no throttle but was handled by a mixture control, which had only one

set position for running, and the switch. A special switch was fitted on top of the control column so that taxi-ing speed could be checked by switching off the engine. When taxi-ing, this produced a very loud staccato buzzing noise. The Gnome engine had to be run on pure castor oil, which gave off pungent blue smoke with a sickly smell. This was, I am sure, responsible for some of the early cases of air sickness. Compared with nowadays, a strange feature of flying instruction was that the pupil was enjoined on no account to look at his instruments and that all flying must be done by 'feel.' The reason behind this was that instruments were primitive and could not be relied upon. The one exception to the rule was that an occasional eye must be kept on the oil pressure gauge. Parachutes for pilots or passengers were, of course, unheard of.

The pupil was always taught to judge his approach to the aerodrome without the use of the



Air Commodore C. A. H. Longcroft, first Commandant, remembered with affection by cadets who served under him



H.R.H. Prince Albert, later King George VI, takes the salute at the march past on the College parade ground, 23rd March, 1920. On the Prince's left is the first Commandant; to the rear is Lord Trenchard, then Chief of the Air Staff

engine and any contravention of this, or 'rumbling,' as it was called, was very much frowned on. Again there were good reasons for this. Engines were by no means reliable and forced landings were frequent. A feature of our training was thus practice in executing forced landings.

During my last term, a forced landing competition was organized. A 50-yard diameter circle was marked out on the aerodrome and the winner would be the cadet who finished his landing run nearest to the centre of the circle after throttling back at 2,000 ft. Only the first competitor took part in the trial and he finished in the middle of the circle. But unfortunately he landed off a half turn of a spin and the aircraft was completely wrecked!

Two names in my Flying Log Book are of particular interest to me. In my first year I find that the Chief Flying Instructor, Squadron Leader Portal (now Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Portal) was pilot while I was sketching the village of Rauceby. On another occasion, Flying Officer Harold Balfour (afterwards Under-Secretary of State for Air, and now Lord Balfour of Inchrye) force-landed in a hurry on the northern aerodrome with his engine on fire just as we were setting course for Leadenham!

I suppose life for the first flight cadets was a good deal more spartan than nowadays. We lived five to a wooden hut partitioned into two rooms,

one the sitting-room and the other a dormitory, with far from modern conveniences located at one end. Heating was supposed to be furnished by a central stove in each room. As the fuel ration was never sufficient, the huts in winter were bitterly cold. First drill parade was at 0655 hours and this was the time frequently chosen for the electric power system to fail, so that dressing often had to be completed in the dark. As the water system was also usually cold at that hour, the flight cadet did not feel in his most cheerful mood on those dark winter mornings.

First parade finished at 0730 hours, and after breakfast fall in for colour hoisting parade sounded at 0810 hours. This parade was quite impressive and consisted of three wings—the Cadet Wing, the Flying Wing and the Boy Entrants' Wing. I suppose about 1,500 in all were on parade. The Cadet Wing formed the centre of a hollow square and was flanked by the other two wings. When the colour was raised on the flag-staff some 150 yards away, the executive word of command was 'Royal Salute, Cadet Wing present arms.' The band, under its first conductor, Warrant Officer Halford, then struck up the National Anthem. I can clearly recall A. C. Bangay (the present Bandmaster) looking resplendent with the big drum resting against his leopard skin apron. An amusing incident occurred one day when the flagstaff was being repainted. As the

June 1955 - Cranwell in the Early 20s (2)

flanks turned outwards to face the flagstaff, the figure of a painter in a bowler hat was observed perched at the top of the flagstaff in a wooden cradle. To the amusement of all he politely raised his hat immediately the National Anthem was struck up.

Uniform for all parades was tunic with breeches and puttees. We had a standard baratheia uniform for best occasions and, during the week, wore a tailor-made thick serge uniform of the same design. With the latter we were allowed to wear grey flannel trousers off parade. As all uniforms had to be tailored individually, we did not appear in uniform until about six weeks after arrival at Cranwell. Before our uniforms were ready, bowler hats and stiff white collars were the order of the day for Church or formal parades.

The first cadets were a little bewildered by the number of different uniforms worn by the officers in those days. The R.A.F. had been formed for less than two years and many officers still retained the first R.A.F. khaki uniform, and others the very pale blue fashion with gold rank stripes that shortly followed it. For flying, some even wore the old R.F.C. khaki uniform, and I can remember one of the early instructors flying in tartan trousers. But on Church parades all turned out in 'best blue,' which was much like the present pattern except for breeches and puttees for the junior officers; squadron leaders and above wore black field boots with breeches. White shirts with stiff white linen collars instead of blue were also standard dress. There must have been some doubt on the correct method of wearing neck decorations at that time, but this was solved by the

Commandant and the Assistant Commandant wearing a stiff evening dress collar with black bow tie, underneath which hung the Order of St. Michael and St. George.

Church parades were held at first in the gymnasium and the altar and chancel were contained behind a roll-top desk type of blind which was raised on Sundays only. I think it would be about in the middle of 1921 that the present Church hangar was consecrated and this was filled to capacity each Sunday by officers, cadets, airmen and boy entrants.

The original cadets' Mess, which was situated roughly opposite to the present main gates of the College, has now disappeared. This wooden building was infested with rats which made good practice with a .22 rifle in the dining-room after dinner. I understand that the rats migrated to another building on the station when the cadets went on leave. One Duty Officer was reported to have been given a bad fright when he saw many hundreds of eyes glinting in the moonlight as the entire colony scurried across the parade ground behind the Mess.

As a means of stimulating interest in the internal combustion engine, each cadet was issued with a P. & M. motor cycle which he was required to maintain in running order. Petrol and oil were a free issue and permission could be obtained to take the cycles away on leave. This perhaps was not quite such a happy arrangement as it might sound at first, since most of the cycles were in a sad state of disrepair. During my entire time at Cranwell I remember I never succeeded in getting any gear except top to function! One bright



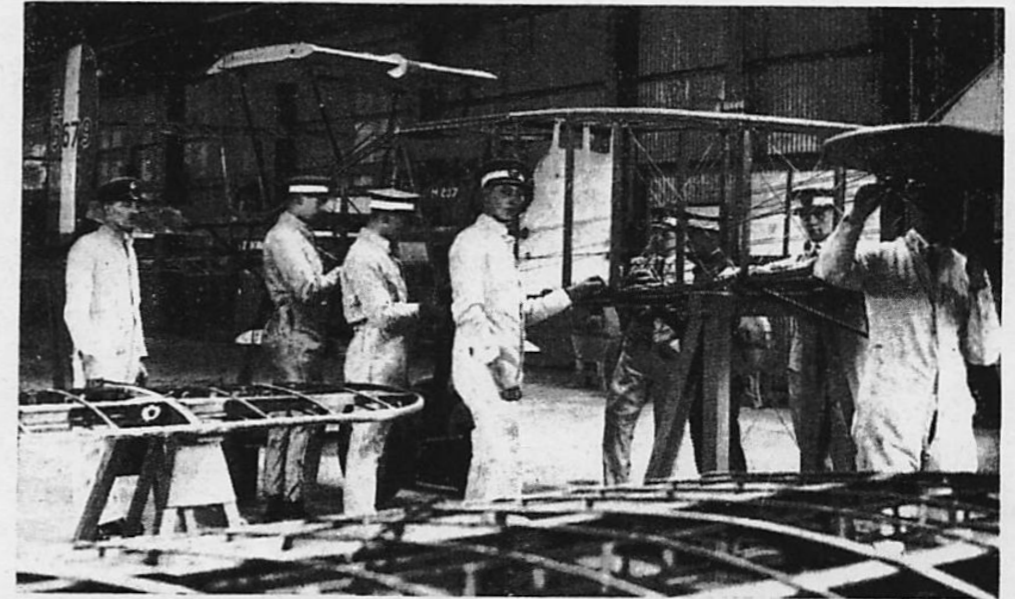
Result of a cross-wind landing

of the marks available for completing the course too quickly. Few had efficient silencers and I believe the College authorities were inundated with complaints from irate neighbours for the disturbance of their Sunday afternoon's rest. Strange to

autumn Sunday afternoon a 'reliability run' was organized round the local countryside, passing through the villages of Leadenham, Caythorpe and Fulbeck. Many failed to complete the course and those who did lost most

say, there was only one accident and in that, unfortunately, a cadet broke his leg which set him back one term.

I do not think any article on early days at Cranwell would be complete without some tribute to the first domestic staff of the College who so quickly and so obviously became devoted to all that Cranwell stood for. A few of the original members are still serving and I know it is true to say that when revisiting Cranwell nothing gives the early ex-cadet greater pleasure than to meet these older members of the staff once again. They alone have served the College from its start. Long may they continue to do so.



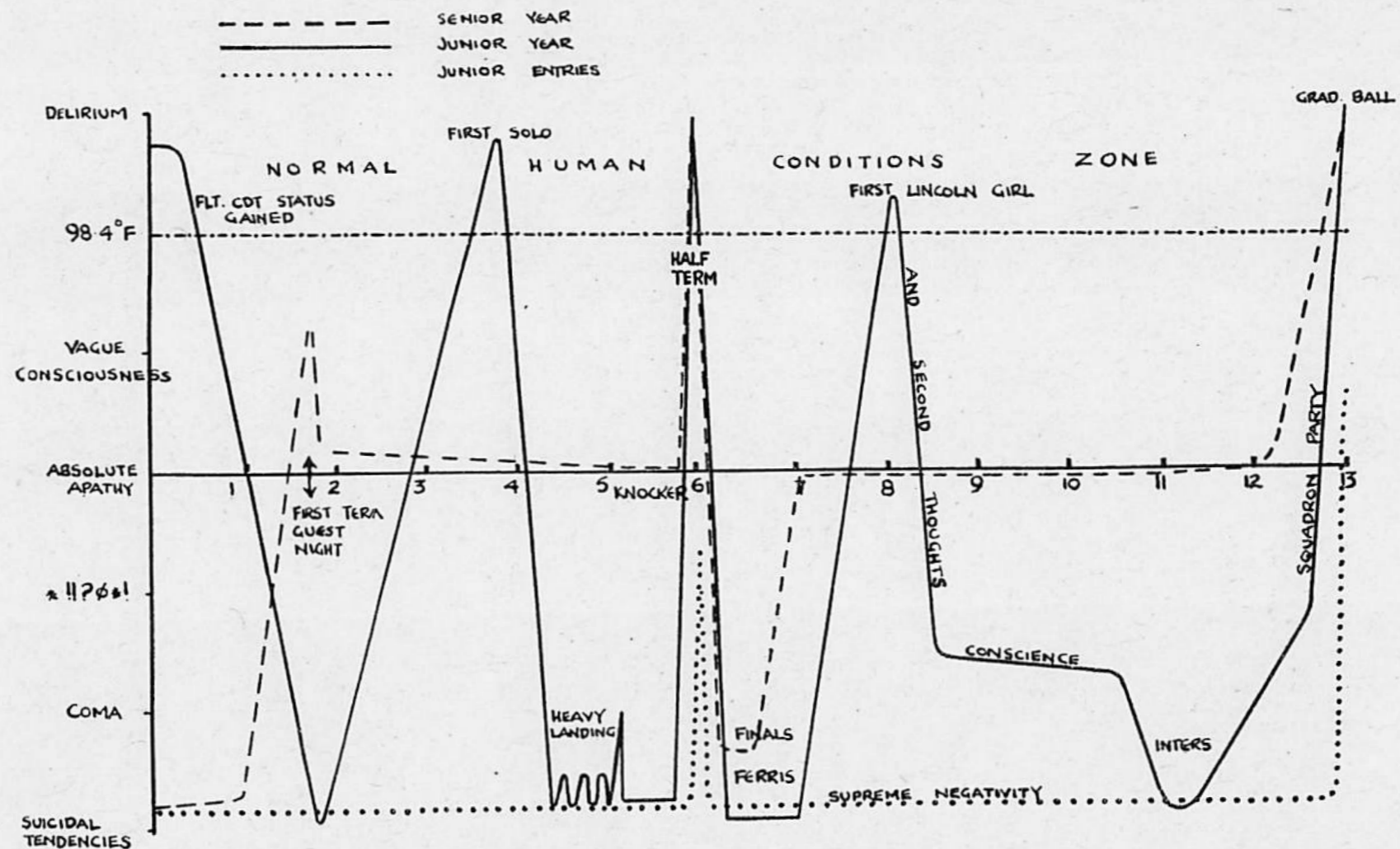
Rigging instruction was a regular part of the cadets' syllabus in those early days

June 1955 - Life at Cranwell (1)

The Results of an Assessment made by a Board of Unknown Gentlemen on the Life and Natural Habits of the Flight Cadet

These facts have been energetically obtained by a team of research workers who submitted to great danger and hazard in order to obtain accuracy of results. For example, during research work on material for Fig. 3, one member of the team fainted on drill, three got their fingers burnt and a fifth his face slapped.

**Fig. 1: GENERAL ASSESSMENT - I
MORALE IN STAGES v. TERM IN WEEKS**

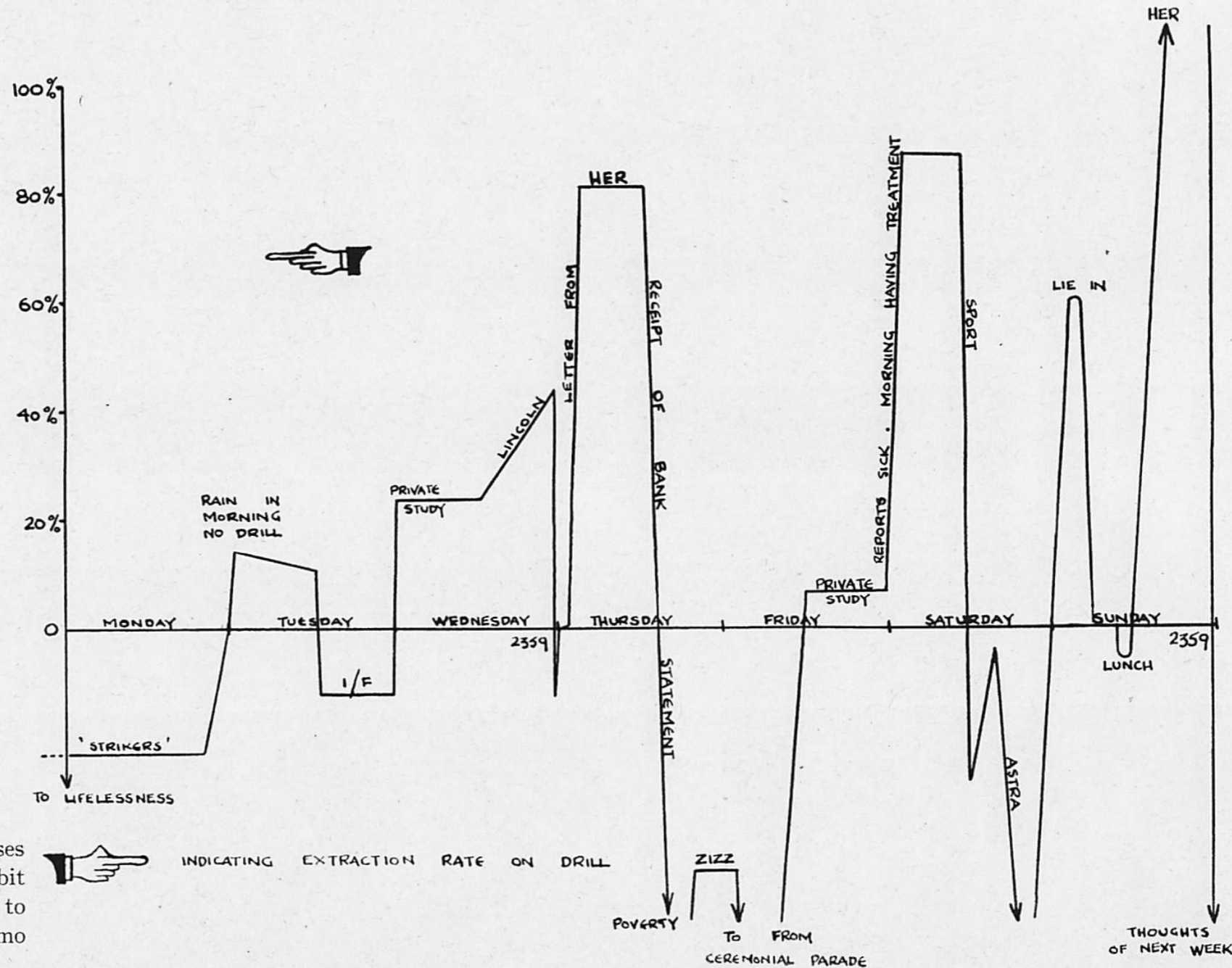


Note: Senior Year graphs are often influenced by a series of purge disturbances from external factors. These reflect considerably on the Junior Year curve.

June 1955 - Life at Cranwell (2)

Fig. 2: GENERAL ASSESSMENT - II

% INCREASE IN BLOOD PRESSURE v. WEEKLY EVENTS (per unit Flt Cdt)

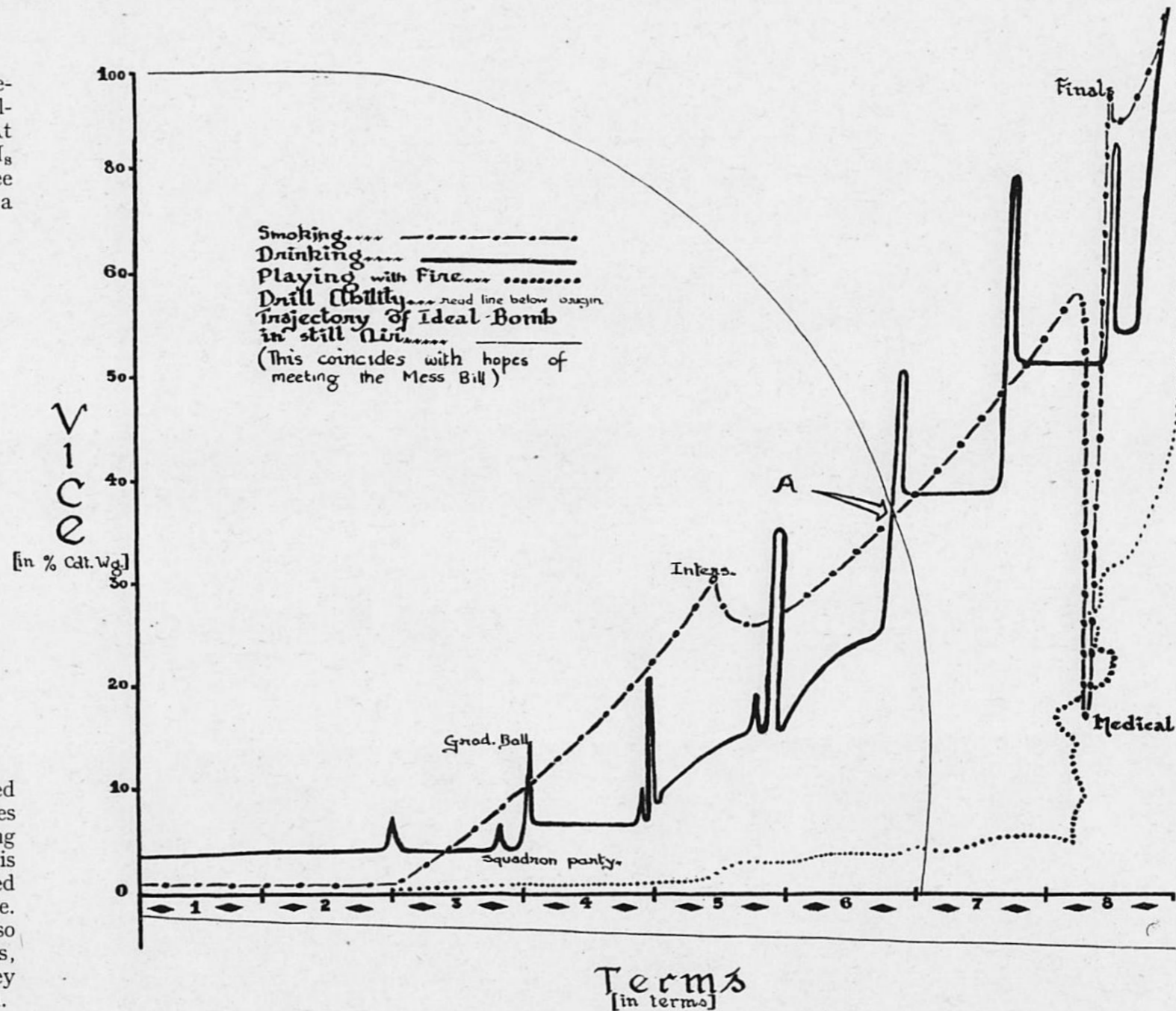


Note: Above 85% cases were found to exhibit signs of life similar to those found in Homo Sapiens.

June 1955 - Life at Cranwell (3)

Fig. 3 : ACTIVE INTERESTS v. COURSE (Plotted as Vice v. Terms)

Note: Point A represents the optimum alcohol-smoke ratio. At this point the I_s reaches its T-T: three sharp hiccups and a puff of smoke result.



Thanks are extended to the external sources who offered interesting information on this subject; it is regretted that it is unprintable. The Board are also indebted to Mavis, Francesca and Shirley for valuable research.

June 1955 - Life at Cranwell (4)

Page 166

Fig. 4: DISTANCE/WEAR RATIO (per unit Flt Cdt)

Note: (i) The Ferris Line is obtained by integrating the other curves. The area below this line is directly proportional to energy used and is known as the Bull Area.

(ii) The rapid increase in Senior Entry shoe wear is due to the frantic race to get to coffee break and the ensuing scramble to reach the front of the queue.

(iii) Conversion factor example:

For non-average four-legged Flt Cdt.

$$= \frac{dt}{dw} \cdot \text{Boot} \cdot 4x$$

where

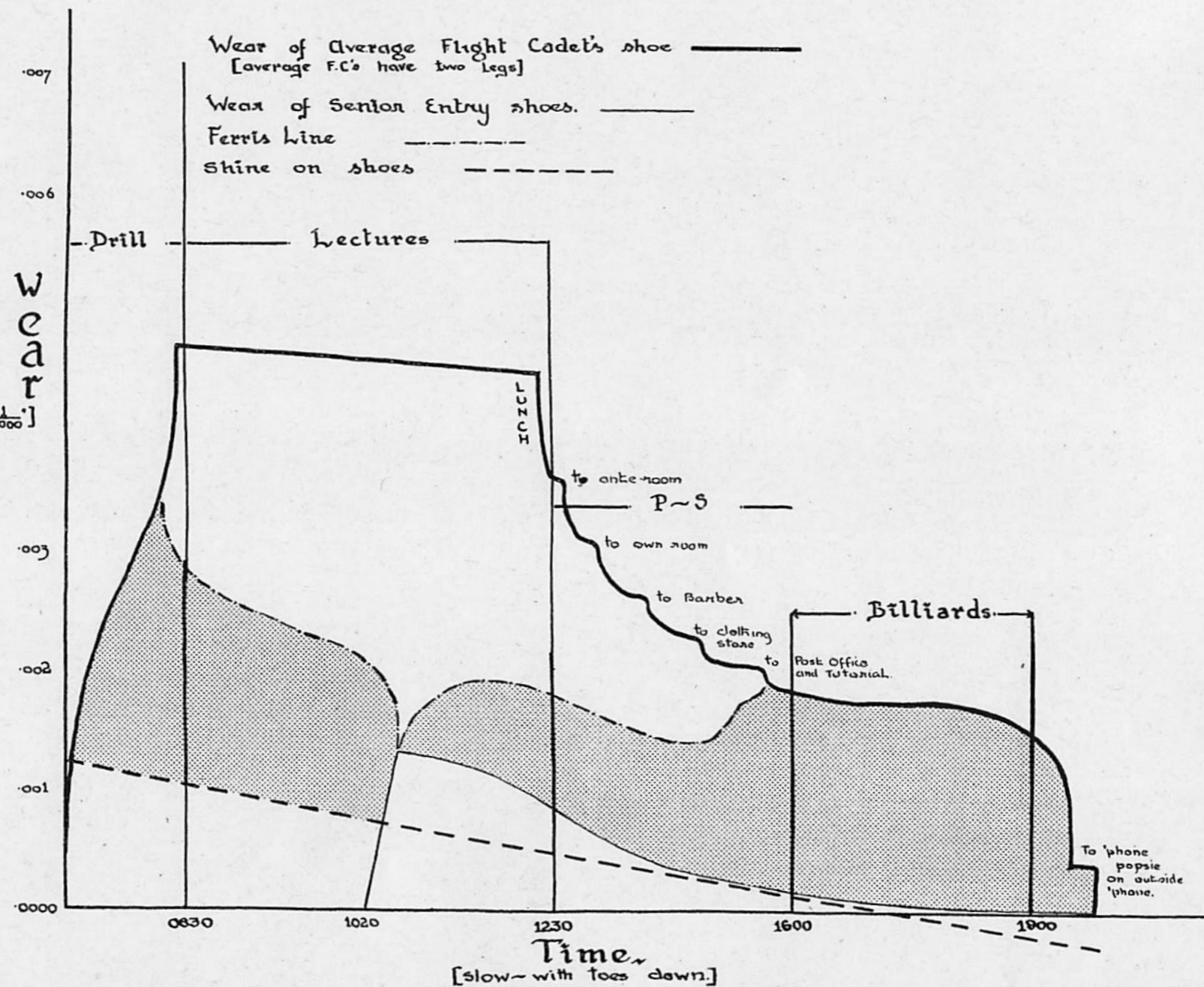
$$dt = dt$$

$$dw = dw$$

$$=$$

$$4 = \text{legs}$$

$$x = \text{footsize in ins. Hg.}$$



The final results of the Board's findings will probably be made public at a later date. This depends entirely upon action taken by Mavis, Francesca and Shirley.

November 1955 - Cranwell in the Early 30s (1)

Cranwell in the Early 'Thirties

By A.R.D.M.

IT was the road that established the dividing line between the present and the future; between the old Cadets' Mess and the 'Huts,' and the still unfinished brick and stone College. The long, straight road that lay like a grey ribbon through the Camp, almost from Byards Leap to the village itself from which the camp takes its name. The road was there from the beginning; from 1917. It will always be there.

In the early 'thirties, however, it symbolized to those of us living in the old Cadets' Mess the threshold of a promise—a promise rich with hints of luxuries to come; of rooms to ourselves; of spacious ante-rooms and a dining hall for five hundred; of central heating! We were to move into the new College building at the beginning of our third term. We were to live 'across the road'! Our first year as flight cadets was spent in anticipation—and speculation of what was to come.

We arrived at Sleaford station early one afternoon in September, 1932, new, inexperienced, and dressed in a wide variety of styles, ranging from dark suits to plus-fours. Only the bowler hat, which had been so clearly stipulated in our joining instruction, was common to all of us. I had never before seen plus-fours and a bowler hat together: I've never seen it since!

From Sleaford to Cranwell we travelled in R.A.F. transport, clutching our suitcases and bowlers and speculating among ourselves as to the identity of an erect and authoritative figure in R.A.F. uniform who had us very quickly under control. This was Joe Beresford, the Cadet Wing Sergeant Major. Some of us were as yet uncertain of R.A.F. rank emblems, so we called him 'Sir' to be on the safe side.

There were about thirty of us from the train. A few had already arrived earlier in the day, bringing our total to forty or so. We were split among the three squadrons which comprised the Cadet Wing—'A,' 'B' and 'C' Squadrons. I went to 'B' Squadron.

The Cadets' Mess, and the 'Huts' where we slept and studied and relaxed in the evenings, were wooden, verandahed buildings. The Mess contained a junior and senior ante-room, a dining-room and a large but antiquated kitchen. The Mess had remained unchanged since it had been put up in 1917. To the new arrival it breathed an atmosphere of unquestionable tradition. Photographs of young men in R.F.C. uniforms, and

paintings of Sopwith Pups and D.H.9a's hung on the walls. The heavy leather furniture was scarred and patched and stitched. The whole place was somewhat spartan, but scrupulously clean.

The Huts were connected with the Cadets' Mess by means of covered walkways. The Huts themselves were interconnected by verandahs running the full length of each row. I remember most clearly the pounding roar of a downpour of rain on the tin roofs. I recall also the solemn precepts given me on my first evening by the Third Term Cadet in charge of my hut, and the strange, exciting smell of my new uniform, mess kit and half-wellington boots.

On weekdays we wore officer-type barathean tunics, grey flannel trousers and black boots. Our shirts were white flannel with long-pointed soft collars through which we wore a tie-pin. Our officer pattern caps had white cap-bands.

On ceremonial occasions we exchanged our soft collars for stiff ones with rounded edges and put on breeches and puttees. Uncomfortable though these were, and laborious though it was to wind your puttees so that they both ended exactly in line with the side seam of your breeches, there was something undeniably satisfying in the sense of smartness they imparted. The only occasion on which I've been caught preening myself was when my squadron under officer surprised me with my mirror tilted so that I could gauge the effect of my well-flared breeches and neatly rolled puttees!

For the first two terms we lived in the Huts and the old Cadets' Mess. We graduated on the parade ground through a First Term Squad, under a ginger-haired Sergeant Major from Edinburgh. We then joined the ranks of our squadrons where we met the full force of the personality of Joe Beresford. Joe was neither a tyrant nor a bully; he was a first-class drill instructor whose word was law and whose tireless ambition was to improve, and still further improve our standard of drill and ceremonial. We were roared at, not because we were necessarily bad but simply because we fell short of the unattainable standard of his own perfection. Joe made us sweat and toil but when, a year after I arrived, he came to say goodbye to us on retirement from the Service, he came as a friend. We passed him a little later as we marched in a squad to our lecture, and we gave him an eyes right which nearly dislocated

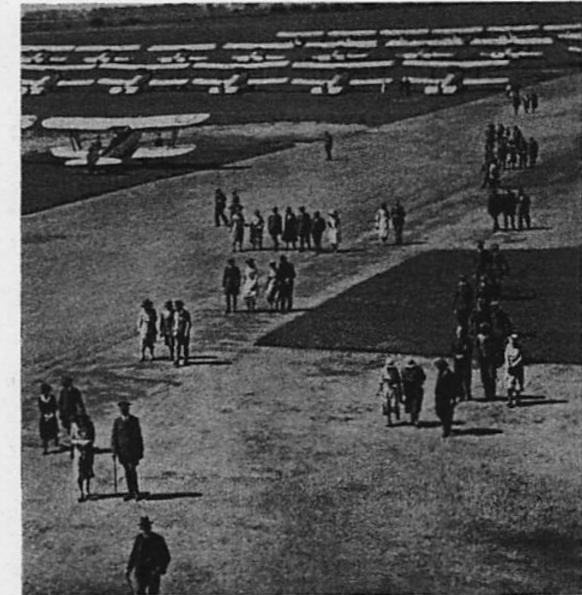
our necks. He had his small daughter by the hand and he took off his bowler hat and stood there bareheaded and said 'Thank you, Gentlemen, thank you,' as we marched past.

Most lectures took place in what was known as 'The Triple Block,' so called, as far as I remember, because there were three subjects studied there, Electricity and Magnetism, Statics and Dynamics, and Maths. These were taught respectively by three civilian professors affectionately known to us as 'Coulomb,' 'Struts' and Peter Pitches. Rupert de la Bere, or 'Bass,' also held sway near the Triple Block. Bass was virtually the Director of Studies; he was the professor of the humanistic subjects.

We started our flying training in the first fortnight after our arrival, and I freely confess that much of what 'Bass,' 'Coulomb,' 'Struts' and Peter Pitches taught me during those early days passed in one ear and out the other. Our pre-occupation was flying; our first solo was an occasion of intense private and personal triumph. You could see the aeroplanes coming in to land by looking out of the lecture-room windows. You felt an almost animal envy of the chap who was up there, and the significance of Ohm's law seemed purely academic.

We flew from the South Airfield. The aircraft and Flight offices were housed in five black corrugated iron hangars. They stood there gaunt and by no means weather-proof, with only a narrow strip of rough tarmac between them and the grass airfield. There was no Flying Control as such. The Watch Office contained the Duty Pilot with one telephone, a pair of binoculars, a Verrey pistol, with a selection of coloured signal cartridges, and an Aldis lamp. The Chief Flying Instructor, then a squadron leader, occupied a small 'bungalow' building between the Watch Office and the Eastern edge of the tarmac. Neither the Duty Pilot nor the C.F.I. could see very much of what was going on, owing to the convex topography of the airfield.

Flying training took place approximately once a day for each flight cadet. The first two terms were spent on the elementary type of aircraft and the third and fourth terms on Service types. When we first arrived, and during our first term, we were given our elementary instruction on Avro 504Ns. This remarkable aeroplane was very like its famous predecessor the 504K, but it was fitted with a radial engine—a Lynx—and a slightly more modern undercarriage. It was fully aerobatic, had a maximum level speed of between 90 and 100 m.p.h. and was virtually un-taxiable in a strong cross-wind. The senior terms were, at



A review of aircraft in July, 1931. Older readers will recognize some of the types of aircraft that are mentioned in the article

this time, flying Atlases and Siskins.

We made our first solos on the Avros, and my log book records about 30 hours' total flying during our first term. We flew through a hard winter when the flat Lincolnshire countryside was covered with snow, and the icy slipstream whipped our faces and tore through our flying overalls, chilling us to the bone. I remember losing all feeling in the fingers of my throttle hand and being so cold that my arms and legs seemed no longer to belong to me. When we landed my instructor, a flight sergeant, made me run twice round the hangar block to restore my circulation.

The instructor occupied the front cockpit, the pupil the rear. I never realised how much encouragement I had drawn from the sight of that helmeted head with its blue scarf until the day of my first solo when suddenly it was no longer there. I had made three passable landings with my instructor at the far end of the airfield, after which he turned to me, grinned, hopped out and said, 'Off you go!'

Breathing rather heavily, I took off, completed the circuit, sidled away from an Atlas that had turned in under me, and settled down to my first glide in. Somewhere out of the corner of my eye I sensed a small solitary figure sitting on his parachute underneath the windsock, and then it was time to level off. I bounced once and involuntarily said 'Sorry, Flight,' and then I was down. My instructor climbed in, put his thumb up and

November 1955 - Cranwell in the Early 30s (2)

shouted 'Not bad!' We taxied back to the hangar and I entered 'First Solo' in my log book in red ink.

Just before the end of our first term two of the instructors brought in the first of the new elementary trainers, the Avro Tutor. We knew they were expected, and as soon as they were sighted over the western boundary we rushed out to watch them land. There were two of them, flying in tight formation and diving as they approached. They pulled up vertically over the hangar, broke away and landed. We swarmed round them. Compared with our ancient 504Ns, the Tutors were a big step forward in aircraft design. They were, of course, still biplanes and they were powered by the Lynx. But they were small and compact. A Townsend ring round the engine was moulded neatly into the fuselage. They had brakes, and the cockpits, though still open, gave reasonable protection against the elements. They looked right, and were credited with a top speed of 120 m.p.h.

We continued our elementary flying training on the 504Ns until the end of our first term. When we started our second term they had all been replaced by the Tutors. We found the new aircraft very easy to fly, delightful for aerobatics and altogether up to our expectations.

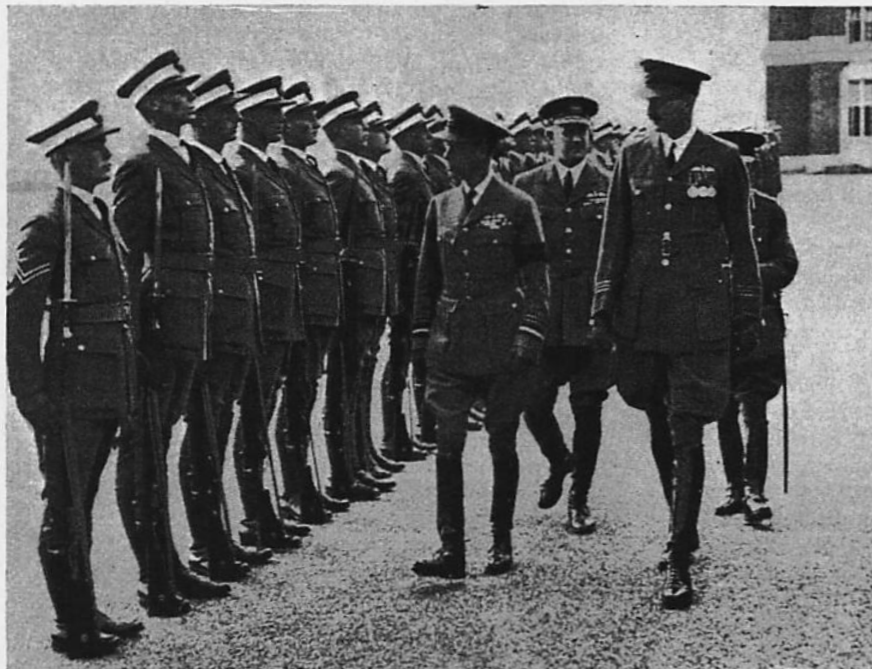
We were still in the old Cadets' Mess and the Huts, but the College was almost ready for occupation, and several of the senior term cadets

had been shown over it. Smoke could be seen coming from the kitchen chimneys at the back, and the grass that had been sown in a great circle in front of the College had been mown for the first time.

And so, our spartan existence continued throughout our second term. We were no longer Bog Rats; we had acquired some small status as Second Termers and we were gaining experience as pilots. We flew solo cross-countries to Hucknall, Duxford, Upper Heyford and Catterick. We got lost, and forced landed in small fields from which we were retrieved by our instructors. We came back from Grantham late on Saturday nights and stole into the kitchen premises of the Cadets' Mess and helped ourselves to Sunday morning's breakfast rolls. We would hide under the tables in the dining-room while Thistle, the old pensioner, who was on duty at night, sheezed round in pursuit, switching on and off the lights in the hopes of catching us red-handed. I cannot remember that he ever did.

Our second term drew to its close. We had finished our elementary flying training. Next term we were to graduate to Service types and I was to join 'E' Flight, the Siskin Flight, for training in single-seater fighters. Next term we were to move into the College; we were actually going to live 'across the road.'

I find it very difficult to recall to mind my first impressions of our third term, and life in the new



The Duke of Windsor, when Prince of Wales, inspecting a Guard of Honour after his arrival at the College on the occasion of the opening of the new College building in 1934. To the right of the Prince is Sqn Ldr C. E. V. Porter, commanding the Guard of Honour; to the rear is the Commandant, Air Vice-Marshal W. G. S. Mitchell

The Duke of Windsor, when Prince of Wales, declaring open the Royal Air Force College building on 11th October, 1934. On his left are Lord Londonderry, Lord Yarborough and Lord Trenchard. On his right is Air Chief Marshal Sir Edward Ellington



College. The change-over was not one of degree but one of kind, and I think that was because we had rooms to ourselves and therefore privacy. I believe that privacy and the opportunity for solitude and for unshared reflection, which it offers, is one of the most important ingredients in the growing-up process of a young man. In the Huts one was seldom alone; more often indeed the room was full and, as a junior member, one was lucky to have a chair to sit on. In consequence one tended to tag along, conforming with the general social theme which the senior members dictated, putting aside, for fear of having them laughed at or ridiculed or gently but firmly squashed, many of the thoughts and ambitions which are the private companions of all young people.

At first, when we moved over into the new College, we were almost afraid of the privacy of a room to ourselves. We circulated in small groups from one room to another. We clustered together in the broad passageways and, for the first few days, we dropped our voices to a whisper on coming into the ante-rooms. A loud laugh seemed almost as disrespectful as bad language in church. I think we were all somewhat overawed to begin with: it took us several weeks to settle down and to get the measure of our new surroundings. But by the end of our third term we felt at home again: we had perhaps lost something or left something undefinable behind in the Huts, but we had gained

enormously in a new sense of dignity and importance. It was almost the transition from a school to a university, and the growth of an intellectual quality in our lives and outlooks began to make itself felt.

In our own rooms we began to read and write and discuss things with a few close friends. Against the constant background of our flying, there developed and germinated many of the ideas that went to form the various extra-mural activities of the College Society of today.

Our transition from the elementary aircraft to Service types was of a different order; it was material and professional, and was summed up in the words of my new flight commander when we joined 'E' Flight. He said, 'You are now going to learn to fly aeroplanes which were built to fight in the air as weapons of war.'

By 1933 the Siskin was no longer in squadron service with the R.A.F., and had been replaced by the Bulldog. But in 'E' Flight at Cranwell it represented the fighter and it mattered little to us that it was obsolete. Our flying assumed a new importance; it was as though we were almost operational pilots. The Siskin was a squat, business-like little single-seater biplane with a very short lower plane. It stood very much nose up on a tall undercarriage which made it tricky to land, as the tail had to be brought down and the aircraft brought right through the stalling altitude if a three-pointer was to be made. It also tended

June 1956 - Three Ages of Cranwell

Three Ages of Cranwell

IT was spring, and the Lincolnshire countryside was beginning to grow green again, when a young lad journeyed to Cranwell Lodge farm where Mr Usher Banks lived. With a carpet bag filled with his possessions slung over one shoulder he made his way slowly towards Cranwell village. The first part of his journey was by carrier's cart, a four-wheeler with seats along the sides and back, covered over by a large tarpaulin sheet. It could hold about twenty people and their luggage and was pulled by a horse which on this occasion was encouraged to forsake its lazy walk for a quick trot.

When the cart arrived at Cranwell the passengers dismounted and proceeded further on foot for the road ended there. The young lad saw a few cottages, two or three farmsteads, and a pond near the small church. Realizing that he was a little lost, the carrier came over to him and said:

'Yours Cran'el Lodge? There—in the middle of yon wood. You'll see it better when you turn that bend. Good luck to you, boy—you'll find him a good boss.'

He reached the top of the hill and turned the bend, and there before him lay Cranwell, acres and acres of fine farmland encompassed by stone walls that ran like ribbons across the countryside to make a beautiful green and brown jigsaw puzzle, broken here and there by the darker green of clumps of trees. There was no road, only a cart track. He set off stumbling a little over the rough surface. At the edge of a wood he came to three stone cottages occupied by some farmhands.

On the left a little further up the track stood Cranwell Lodge, and under the tree at the entrance to the farmyard was a group of farmhands singing:

'The sun went down behind yon hill,
across yon dreary moor.

When weary and lame a lad there came,
up to a farmhouse door.

Can you tell me if any there be
that will give to me employ.

For to plough and to sow, to reap and to mow
And to be a farmer's boy.'

As he drew nearer the song grew clearer, and he wondered if they knew of his coming. When he reached the group the bearded foreman left his kitchen to welcome him and to invite him in to eat. Afterwards he was introduced to the group who had been singing, and taken on a tour of the farm buildings. The grey sombre stone of the

high walls guarding the fields made a deep impression on him, and that night he dreamed of them.

The next morning he rose early to go to work in the paddock. To his dismay what he thought to be a small enclosure was a field of 100 acres! He was happy with his work, learned much about farming, and time flew by. But after a while he found that the stone walls oppressed him. He longed for an uninterrupted view. So he left and enlisted in the Royal Lincolnshire Regiment and the walls became a memory.



But his peace did not last for long for war was declared in 1914 and he went abroad with his regiment to see service in France, where he won the Military Medal, and in Gallipoli. While in France and on one of his leaves from the front line trenches he visited one of the headquarters of the Royal Flying Corps. There he was introduced to aeroplanes and learnt to identify enemy and Allied aircraft. Later he went for his first flight in one of the R.E.8's. During another of his leaves he returned home to England and to Lincolnshire. While he was resting from the rigours of trench warfare he met an officer from the Royal Naval Air Service at Cranwell who invited him to visit the station. Mr Banks' farm had become H.M.S. Daedalus.

He caught the 'Liberty Boat' from Slea River Station, and as that 'puffing billy' of a train gathered speed, he thought how much more comfortable travel was by train than by carrier's cart, even though they dismounted several times to allow the train with its heavy load of carriages to puff up the many steep inclines. Eventually he arrived at Cranwell to be met by the officer.

He was shown round the station and marvelled at the transformation. Dominating the scene, high on stilts stood a big water tank near the old farmyard. Hundreds of long low huts spread out in all directions, and in the distance he could see the huge hangars housing the airships. He was shown round the Lighter-than-Air Sheds standing near Bristol Wood and inside he saw the silver

cigar of a large airship, and several smaller ones, used to patrol the North Sea.

Emerging from the hangar, he looked eastwards towards Cranwell village and saw green grass stretching away into the distance. Gone were the acres of arable land and with them the walls which had so dominated his existence. As he walked back towards the station with the conducting officer many thoughts passed through his mind, in particular he thought about walls and trenches and the war in France.

Thanking the officer for the interesting visit he returned thoughtfully to Sleaford, pulled by the puffing billy. When his leave expired he went back to those trenches stretching like furrows from the North Sea to Switzerland.



The declaration of peace in 1918 brought home our soldiers and, after a period in Ireland, he left the Army after seven years of adventurous service, returned to his native Lincolnshire, and entered Air Ministry employment at the new Royal Air Force Cadet College at Cranwell.

Cranwell had changed yet again. The Lodge was occupied by the Commandant, the stone cottages by the Air Ministry Directorate General of Works, and the farmyard by the mechanical transport section. The Lighter-than-Air sheds had disappeared, leaving behind the concrete stumps of their foundations. The long low huts were now occupied by young cadets, the future leaders of the Royal Air Force. Amidst all this change, the tree in the farmyard beneath which the farmhands had sung on his first visit still stood a little older, and a little more gnarled.

The next few years were chequered with incident as the young Royal Air Force College grew up. Many pioneer flights such as those to Karachi and Capetown started from the airfields of Cranwell. Aircraft improved in design and performance—the days of the Avros and Bristols were soon over. He watched this progress with deep interest, and followed the careers of the Cranwellians, who, passing through the College entered commissioned service and ultimately achieved high rank. When Cranwell was visited by royalty on many occasions he had the privilege of meeting them.



Mr Albert Clay, M.M.

He is still at Cranwell. The agricultural scene of many years ago has been displaced by the fine new buildings which house the cadet wing. The cart track has been made into a metalled road; the steep gradients of the railway line have been levelled; both improvements perhaps using the grey stones from those sombre walls. And now, as the Vampires scream in take-off from the concreted south airfield, and as a former cadet takes up his appointment as Chief of Air Staff, we leave him, sitting in his little office, thinking back on a life full of service, and of Cranwell in three ages.



July 1957 - Cranwell in Retrospect (1)

Cranwell in Retrospect—A Woman's View

WHEN I was asked to write this article for *The Journal* I at first felt very flattered, but, on thinking it over, I had qualms. *The R.A.F. College Journal* caters entirely for male readers; it was like being asked to write for *Men Only*. The cosy note suitable for women's magazines would be as out of place as frilly curtains in an Officers' Mess. But even at Cranwell, men need women somewhere in their lives, so perhaps *The Journal* may occasionally voice a feminine point of view.

Looking back on our arrival at Cranwell, I remember that I felt apprehensive: it did not sound as though it were at all my cup of tea. All the men who had been there said it was wonderful. The reverent affection a man feels for his old school is puzzling and rather funny to a woman, who usually feels nothing but revulsion for hers. I listened to my husband and other old boys reminiscing about Rugger, and old So-and-So's high jinks at guest nights, and wondered how I could fit into such a hearty, masculine world. It seemed that my function there—apart from watching Rugger in a north-easter and cricket in a south-wester—would be to maintain a high standard of Gracious Living at the Lodge, and to behave at all times with dignity and decorum.

I was soon put to the test. Within 24 hours of our arrival at the Lodge we had a venerable bishop to stay, plus his even more venerable wife. They did not long survive their visit, and once or twice I wondered whether I should—for the wife was somewhat eccentric, as well as old and frail. The Bishop was to preach at the first Church Parade of the term—my first ceremonial occasion. My husband announced that we must all be ready on the doorstep at 23½ minutes past ten. Our three children were in a state of wild excitement at the space and splendour of their new surroundings, and it was with difficulty that I got them all lined up and presentable by zero hour. Mrs Bishop tottered downstairs in a vintage hat and a summer dress.

'It may be cold in church,' I warned her.

'I shall be all right,' she replied. 'I have put on my woollen petticoat,' and she lifted up her skirt and revealed a formidable garment of brown stockinet. The display was interrupted by a 'Time to go!' from the A.D.C., and he and my husband, medals clinking and buttons winking, ushered us into the official hearse and off we swept to the church. I was somewhat shaken to find that we had to march right up the church,

past the assembled, staring congregation, and climb some slippery steps to our seats of honour in the choir. Somehow we manoeuvred Mrs B. to her place, and all went well until the collection came round. In the rush of departure I had forgotten to make sure that I had some change. A hasty fumble in my bag produced a few coppers for the children and a shilling for myself. Then I saw that Mrs Bishop was also fumbling, but her fumbling only produced an assortment of pills. She looked imploringly at me while the flight cadet waited with the bag. As I handed her my shilling the choir, the organ, and Bill Bangay's Band ended the hymn with a resounding 'Alleluia.' In the hush that followed the shilling dropped from the old lady's fingers with a clang and rolled away, while the entire congregation stared with interest at their new Commandant and his family. Mrs Bishop grovelled on all fours among the hassocks. I leant across her, snatched the bag, and passed it on to the sniggering children before their pennies also dropped.

We had so many episcopal visits during our time at Cranwell that I eventually became quite nonchalant about them, and learnt to cope with any emergency—such as a bishop discovering a rent in his breeches just as he was setting out for a College Guest Night, and having to be stitched up *in situ*—or the awkward moment that occurred when we were entertaining a round and jolly one, who enjoyed the good things of life. He was sitting opposite to me after lunch, telling funny stories to two politely attentive flight cadets, when I suddenly noticed that the zip-fastener of his trousers had proved unequal to the strain and was slowly opening. It was a situation not foreseen by my book of etiquette. . . .

To return to our early days at Cranwell—the Lodge soon became home—a very lovely one—and we settled down to living there in the style of pre-war country gentry. I became used to being treated like the Queen, and secretly rather enjoyed it, though I was always unnerved at being saluted by passing flight cadets. I never knew how to respond. A cheery wave? A dignified bow? Usually I compromised with a sickly grin.

I soon discovered that games were by no means the be-all and end-all of life at Cranwell. There were literary and dramatic activities, concerts, lectures, country sports—something for every taste. Between us my husband and I have a pretty wide range of interests, so we were perpetually out of breath from trying to pursue as many of them as



possible and keep up with our duty assignments. I acquired some new interests, too, becoming a Rugger fan, and, even more surprising, a teacher. I found myself instructing some of the flight cadets in French. Whether they learnt anything is doubtful, but I did—and not only French.

Entertaining and being entertained took up a great deal of our time. As well as bishops, we fed and sheltered authors, politicians, film producers, scientists, and, of course, officers from our own three Services and from overseas. We count ourselves lucky to have met so many famous and interesting men—but celebrities are not always better company than other people. Some of our pleasantest evenings were those when we entertained members of the College staff. Often their highly individual personalities would generate heated arguments, yet one felt that, in spite of differences, they were all working together for the good of the College.

On Sunday evenings we used to invite some of the senior flight cadets to supper. I often wondered how they felt as they stood on the doorstep, and what they said to each other when they walked away down the drive, or departed explosively by car. Did they look on my husband and me as pompous ogres, or as slightly absurd old fogies, to be humoured with polite small talk? Whatever their thoughts, they were usually excellent company. It was amusing to try to draw them out and discover their opinions on various College matters; sometimes they were remarkably frank, and we would have a very instructive evening.

It was part of our job to maintain good relations with the local people. They were so hospitable and friendly that this was not difficult. Thanks to their kindness my husband was able to

enjoy plenty of shooting, and I became happily involved in horsey activities. These sometimes upset our domestic harmony, as when the Commandant once sank into bed in the small hours after the Old Cranwellians' Dinner, to be awakened ten minutes later by the clatter of hoofs under the window, followed by triumphant neighing as the pony—an incorrigible escapist—danced a jig on the freshly rolled tennis lawn.

A glance through our Cranwell scrapbook gives an idea of our gay and busy life. Here I am, smiling determinedly, as I give away the prizes at the Inter-Squadron Athletics—here is the Commandant on a Welsh mountain—here we both are, very relaxed, dancing a reel—visiting Sandhurst—watching a flying display with a

French general—the Commandant receiving the Duke of Edinburgh. Finally here is the Lodge party setting forth for a summer Passing-Out Parade, the men bowed before the gale, the women wrapped in furs and clutching their hats.

I love dramatic occasions, ceremonies, and excuses for buying a new hat, so I adored Passing-Out Parades, in spite of the nervous strain beforehand. The atmosphere during the last weeks of the term was as frenzied as that in a newspaper office when it goes to press. The Commandant became more and more immersed in reports and speeches, and we hardly had time to discuss domestic arrangements. When we did exchange a few words between parties, they would be something like this:

I: What V.I.Ps will be coming this time?

Commandant: I haven't heard yet.

I: But it's next week! Well, whom shall we ask to dinner to meet them?

Commandant: Oh, the usuals—the Assistant Commandant, the D. of S., perhaps one of the Squadron Commanders. The C.-in-C. isn't bringing his wife, so we must find an odd woman.

I: H'm—what about Mrs A?

Commandant: Too odd.

I: Mrs B?

Commandant: She talks of nothing but horses.

I: Mrs C, then?

Commandant: She doesn't talk at all—but still, she does look nice. Now, what are you giving us to eat?

I: Well, I thought of duck, but we can't get three in the oven, so it'll have to be steak again—and smoked salmon to start with—if we can raise enough fish knives—but the big question is, what am I going to wear? Not the old black *again*

July 1957 - Cranwell in Retrospect (2)

—and what are we to do about the children? They break up on the same day.

Commandant: Oh Lord! Well, come on, we shall be late!

That cry was ever ringing in our ears, so off we would rush, with nothing decided. Yet somehow, thanks to the Lodge staff, things would be under control when the Great Day dawned. The Parade never failed to impress me. My husband would be critical, and say afterwards that it was a good or a bad parade, but to me it always looked good—unless somebody actually fell down or dropped his rifle, which never happened. I always had a lump in my throat when the newly commissioned officers marched off into the College to the strains of Auld Lang Syne, but it hardly had time to form before a new senior under officer strode out to take over the Parade, and we would begin wondering what next term's Senior Entry would be like.

After the Parade came the social part of the day—enjoyable, but a strain, remembering who was who and keeping the visitors purring. At lunch in the Dining Hall, I used to look round at the gleaming silver, the flowers, the waiters deftly serving delicious food—and think what a high standard of Gracious Living I had to compete with here. Husbands or sons might well be hard to please at home after living in such

style. I wasn't sure whether to consider the Mess Secretary my friend or not.

The Ball in the evening was no strain at all, except on the feet—for the distinguished guests had gone, and we could relax and enjoy ourselves *en famille*. The next day would seem very quiet, no cadets scurrying between College and classrooms, the sky empty and silent except for the larks. One felt flat and a little melancholy—another term and another Parade were over, another batch of cadets had moved on, just as one had got to know them.

At last the time came for us, too, to move on. As we drove away down the Ancaster Straight, I looked back at the College tower shrinking on the horizon, and remembered my misgivings on first seeing it. How absurd they now seemed! I had wondered how I could fit into such a male world: I was now so deeply dug into it that to leave was a painful wrench. We had had a wonderful time in every way—met interesting people, made many friends, learnt a great deal, and I had had, above all, the great satisfaction of taking part, in a small way, in my husband's job—the best job he ever had. So, if other wives feel, when their husbands are posted to Cranwell, that it's a Man's Place—let them take heart. There's plenty for them there, too.

J.E.



I OFTEN WONDERED HOW THEY FELT — !

[Return to Contents List](#)

December 1958 - Cadet Wit (1)

Passing-Out Parade of No. 174 Entry

*Speeches by Marshal Rodion Malinovsky and
by the Commandant*

ON the 18th December the Academy welcomed Marshal Rodion Malinovsky as the Reviewing Officer for the graduation parade of No. 174 Entry. The weather was fine, inside, and punctually at 1108 the cadet wing marched on under the command of Senior Commissar Comrade Cadet Z. Z. Kruschev through snow that was only chin high.

A formation of 16 aircraft of Advanced Flying Wing flew past, some with and some without smoke trails—one more proof of the freedom allowed in our people's democracy—as the Reviewing Officer's head, which could just be seen above the snowline, approached the dais.

After the Advance in Review Order, Marshal Malinovsky dug out the Parade Commander and presented him with the Three-Stage Rocket of Honour, the Sputnik Medal for Lunar Studies, and the R. M. Laika Memorial Prize. Watching the presentations carefully was N. S. Kruschev, the father of the prizewinner. The Reviewing Officer went on to make the following speech:

The Reviewing Officer's Address

'It is indeed a great honour for me to be here today and as you know it is customary for the reviewing officer to offer you some few words of advice. Be always on your guard against those detestable bourgeois traits of initiative, resourcefulness and leadership, for these are the arch-enemies of the all-important virtues of comradeship and uniformity. For you know, this is how we of the Free World have so great an advantage. We at the Warsaw Pact H.Q. are proud of the contribution the military forces have made to peace and security, and we are pleased that we have added to the strength, the confidence and the hopes of our peoples. But military requirements are but one contributing factor. We know full well that the great weapon—the great Deterrent—is the strength that springs from the *unity* of our countries.



'This, you see, is where we are so different from those wicked N.A.T.O. countries; take this opportunity of reaffirming your "desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments," your determination "to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization" of your peoples "founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law," and your resolution to contribute your "efforts for collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security".'

On the eve of the Passing-Out Parade the Commandant addressed the members of the Senior Entry in a short, touching ceremony.

The Commandant's Address

Igloo 439
Komsomolets Island
Latitude 82°N.

[Return to Contents List](#)

December 1958 - Cadet Wit (2)

ORDER of MERIT



D. G. LUCASTA

Struck down before his goal at the very height of the battle this valiant fighter did not spare himself but took up Chess.

O. U. BAGEROV

Taciturn, unsmiling, Muscle-man First Class of the Soviet Union; his prowess in all realms of sport needs no comment from us.



R. VOLGA-DON

One of our less inhibited comrades who hails from the outer provinces. His greatest ambition at the moment is to travel; he should go far.

C. U. LAITA

Missile marksman Laita, who in private life is no mean organist, introduced the mortar into the Wild-fowling Section and bagged 7½ geese, 3 wolves and 2 gamewardens.



IVAN ORFULITCH

This photograph belies the towering build of this slim Norseman from the Pripet marshes. All life's difficulties he takes in his long, loping stride.

Z. Z. KRUSCHEV

Like his father he has gone Secretarial and there is that certain something about his looks that makes one think he is set for success.



THE LEGEND OF BYARD'S LEAP

LEGENDS of witchcraft may seem singularly out of place in this journal but as the scene of this story is only half a mile from the College, it will doubtless be of more interest than most. It is the story of how the spot at the junction of the Ancaster and Grantham roads, known as Byard's Leap, received its name.

The story begins in Ancaster at some indeterminate time in the past and concerns the village beauty, an extremely attractive girl named Peggy. She was never short of attention from admirers, but the young man with whom she fell in love, a fellow called Jim, though attracted by her beauty, left the village to join the army. Soon after this there was a new arrival in the village, another young man. Neither Peggy nor the other villagers knew where he came from, and several people found him rather strange, but Peggy was attracted very strongly to him and discovered that he seemed to be a perfect-mannered and fascinating companion. It was not long, however, before she began to realise that there was something mysterious about the influence which he had over her and she found herself unable to break away from it. This did not worry her, however, as she loved to be in his company and agreed to everything he asked, especially when he promised her everlasting youth and beauty and power over the people and things of the village. In return, she agreed to sell her soul to him. To seal the promise, he asked her

to sign her name in her blood on the contract he would give her. Then he would have to leave her for a time, but he would return in a few years, on a certain day, to take her away to be with him forever. Peggy was disappointed at the parting, but consoled herself with the thought that she could spend the time practising her new powers, and she eagerly signed the contract as her lover had asked. As she did it, however, the realisation of what she had done, and the fact that her lover was the devil, suddenly dawned upon her. There was no turning back, though, as he quickly snatched the paper and disappeared from view. She was doomed — and alone.

In the next few days, the villagers saw an amazing change in Peggy. Despite her lover's promise, her beauty completely faded away, leaving her ugly and wizened and, though she was still young, she was nicknamed "Old Meg." She began to take a fiendish delight in causing as much trouble and misfortune as possible to the villagers. Finally, feared and shunned by everyone, she went to live by herself in a little hut near the present road junction, taking with her, in the best witchlike traditions, an old black cat and a big black pot.

Jim, returning to the village from the army several years later, refused to believe that the tales he heard about his old friend could be true. Taking pity on her, he went to visit the hut, but his attempts to renew their

friendship were in vain as she would not speak to him. This, and the atmosphere of terror in the village, and especially the fear of his new sweetheart, Sue, caused him some anxiety. Then one morning he woke up to find the village in an uproar. During the night all the cattle and crops had died, and a farmworker, going home late the night before, had seen Meg brewing a mixture in her pot which had given off a foul smelling smoke covering the fields, and apparently causing the damage.

This incident convinced Jim that Meg was a witch, and that the villagers were right after all. Furiously he went to her hut and demanded an explanation, but she merely boasted unashamedly of her deeds. Returning to the village, he openly vowed to kill her, and rid the neighbourhood of its troubles. His mother and Sue both tried to dissuade him fearing that Meg, with the devil's help, would kill him. Jim stayed firm, however, and that evening went to church and received the blessing of the priest for his fight against the evil spirits.

Next morning, Jim began to make preparations for his fight, and set about choosing a horse. He decided to let providence guide his choice, and accordingly asked all the villagers to bring their best horses down to the pond. He himself brought his old, blind warhorse, Byard, though he did not contemplate using him. He asked that all the horses should be allowed to drink from the pool, then he would throw a stone into the middle of the pond, and would use the horse which first raised its head — as this would presumably be the most spirited animal. To everyone's amazement, this horse turned out to be Byard, none of the other horses taking any notice of the splash. Moreover, Byard seemed to have thrown off his old age and was prancing eagerly about. Jim was no less surprised than the other onlookers, but decided to use the old horse, so mounting Byard and taking up his sword, he started slowly down the road from the village towards Meg's hut.

In the hut, Meg was in a furious temper, for this was the day on which her lover was supposed to come to fetch her, but as he had not fulfilled all of his other promises, she did not know whether he would come, and she was cursing herself for being so stupid as to

believe in him. At this point Jim appeared in front of the hut and shouted at her to come out, but she did not immediately obey him, as it was a few minutes before midday at which time the devil would come for her. If she could delay the battle for these few minutes, she might gain his assistance, but whatever happened, she was determined to kill Jim, as she regarded him as the indirect cause of her downfall.

Outside the hut, Jim waited, and suddenly she rushed out of the hut at him and leapt on the horse's back, digging her fingernails in his flanks, and this caused the horse to leap in agony, and four leaps carried him the fantastic distance of three hundred feet. These leaps, however, failed to unseat Jim or dislodge the witch, but Jim managed to turn and drive his sword into Meg's heart.

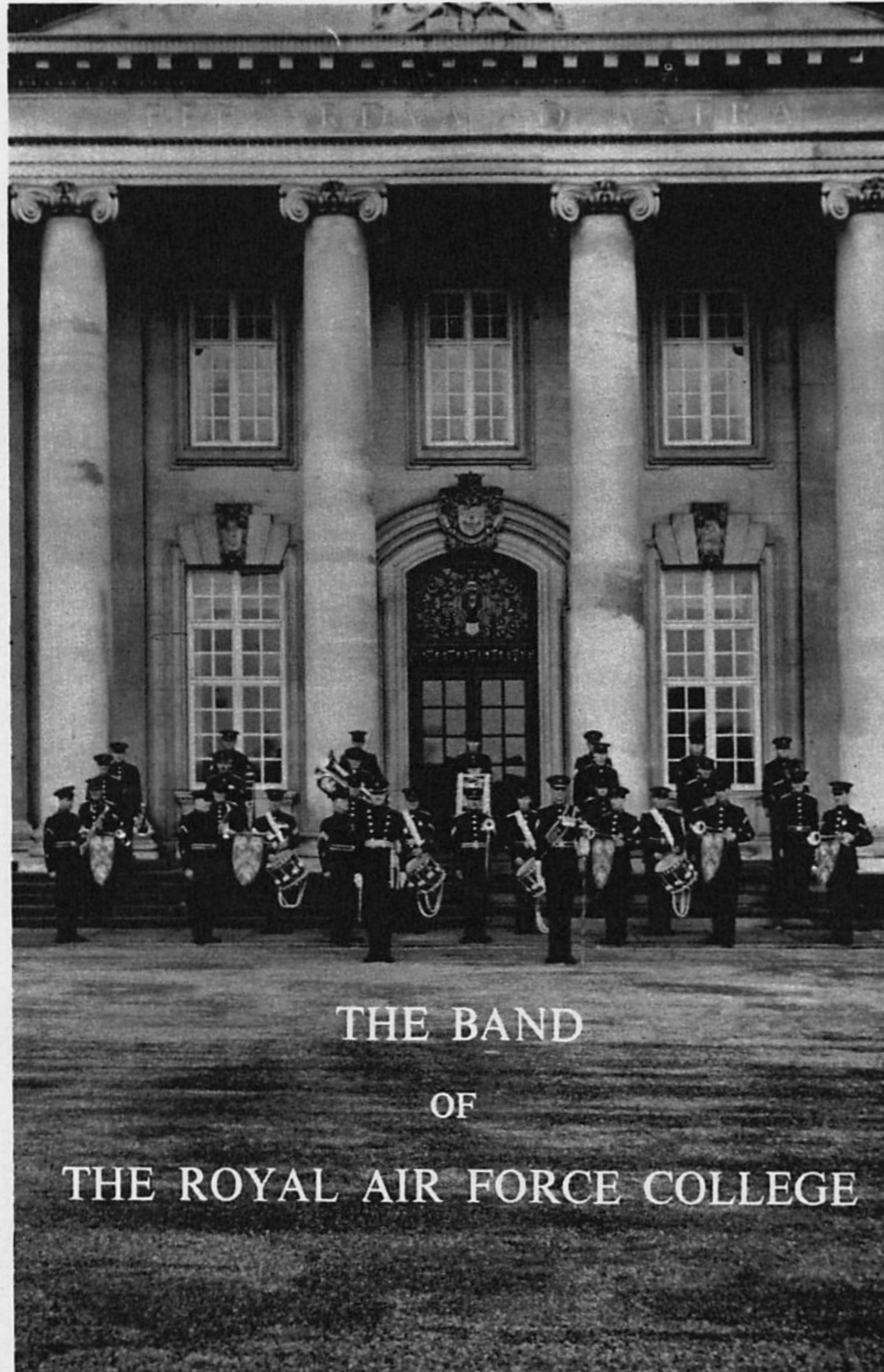
Suddenly there was a great crash of thunder and an explosion which blew Jim to the ground. When he regained his senses, he found himself entangled with the dead bodies of Byard and the witch, and it was some time before he could free himself and stagger back along the road to Ancaster, where he met the anxious crowd of villagers, who had not dared come any closer, but who were now overjoyed to hear that his mission had been successful.

That is really the end of the story. When Jim recovered, he and the men of the village went back to the hut. Meg's body had disappeared — her lover had presumably claimed her at last, and all that was left were the dead Byard and the enormous hoof marks made by his great leap. Of course, the horse was buried with great honour.

While living in the hut, Meg had had two small children, though it was not certain who the father was, and these were taken from the hut and were looked after, but they soon showed signs of following in their mother's footsteps and so they were smothered before they could cause any more trouble. Jim and Susan duly married and continued to live in the village.

This, then, is the story of Byard's Leap, a story which contains all the standard ingredients of the usual witch story, even down to the black cat. Is it based on fact, or is it just a legend? Well, a set of hoof-prints can still be seen at Byard's Leap by anyone who cares to go and look for them.

Spring 1964 - The College Band (1a)



N. S. B. Reynolds

Many will know already that, next to the Central Band, the Band of the Royal Air Force College is the most senior in years of our service bands.

According to information which appears in our oldest files, it was shortly after the formation of the Central Band in April 1920 that a group of musicians were certified "free from infection" and fit to travel to the Cadet College to assist in the formation of a College Band. Warrant Officer A. E. Halford of the 1st Battalion King's Regiment became the first bandmaster, and, much to the concern of his Colonel, it appears he sought to coax several regimental musicians to come with him. Apart from this the band has remained mainly thoroughbred. There have been only four Directors of Music since those early days, and even now we are proud still to have some musicians who came to Cranwell during the 30's.

The first loyalty of the band has always been to the College itself, and since the College was established the band has been present on all occasions where music has been necessary: each parade, Sunday Church Service and Guest Night, and numerous other less formal occasions when they have simply entertained by concert-giving.

The band was also popular outside the College. After its first public appearance in 1921, it made a first broadcast from Cardiff in 1923. This was followed by further broadcasts from the North and West Region stations, and it was not long before the band was known to a wide audience.

Old programme and account books show that the band appeared at numerous county shows and seaside resorts. One of our more interesting printed programmes was produced by the City of Plymouth where the band presented daily concerts on the Hoe in the week before the last war commenced in 1939. The band was present at the Jubilee Celebrations of King George V, and was selected to attend with the Royal Guard of Honour at Buckingham Palace at the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. At the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 the College Band appeared in the procession.

As the musical commitment at the College and at our neighbouring units has steadily increased, the public has seen less of the band. We miss especially the summer visits we used to make to the Scarborough bandstand, but apart from numerous engagements within the Royal Air Force at that time of year, there seems generally to be more interest in 'Mersey Beat' than in 'Military Beat' at seaside resorts.

In spite of this, our musicians continue to lead a full life, and a great deal of rehearsal time is spent in preparing music for our regular College engagements. The Sunday Church Service is probably the most familiar of these, and we like to think that the music of the band does something to excite the piety and devotion of our worship there.

During the past year the band has been privileged to provide music in Lincoln and Peterborough Cathedrals, in St. Mark's Church, Lincoln and in St. Denys' Church, Sleaford. At Southwell Minster the W.V.S. held their 25th Anniversary Service and as a birthday present we were able to present the score of a specially composed fanfare which the College Trumpeters had performed in the Minster.

A look at the events over the last twelve months reveals that the band has prepared 45 different programmes for numerous indoor and outdoor occasions, including 34 Guest Nights. Our listeners like to hear modern music sometimes, but keeping abreast of the music publishers is a costly business, and we have a valuable library of music from the past which it is necessary to make full use of.

At Guest Nights, choosing music to aid digestion is sometimes a problem. However, we have left behind us the time when no dinner programme was complete without "Daisy," "My Bonnie," and "Lily of Laguna," although Freddie Eastwood continues to blow the "Post Horn Gallop" with considerable verve.

Our own music library includes an interesting and meticulously kept programme book for the period 1934 — 1939 in Wing Commander Sims' own hand. The Wing Commander was Director of Music at the College from 1932 to 1946 and on a programme dated 26th July 1937 he recorded the fact that two items were not played, firstly owing to there being "too much of a rough house," and secondly "A game of leap-frog was in progress." During a third item a Xylophone appears to have been smashed in what he describes as "A Grand Rag"! Clearly the musicians have not always enjoyed the Palm Court placidity which has accompanied Guest Nights of more recent years.

Spring 1964 - The College Band (1b)

The mention of Palm Court is a reminder that a feature of recent months has been the formation of a small orchestra. The twelve musicians concerned first appeared at a dinner night in the Junior Cadet Mess in February. In March the orchestra was augmented with musicians from the surrounding district to provide music for the College Operatic Production.

During May the band has an opportunity to present its second concert of light music in the Whittle Hall. We believe there is still a real place for Military Bands in the field of concert-giving, and always consider this to be an important part of our work. Our Cranwell audiences are encouraging, and we like them to know how welcome their programme suggestions are.

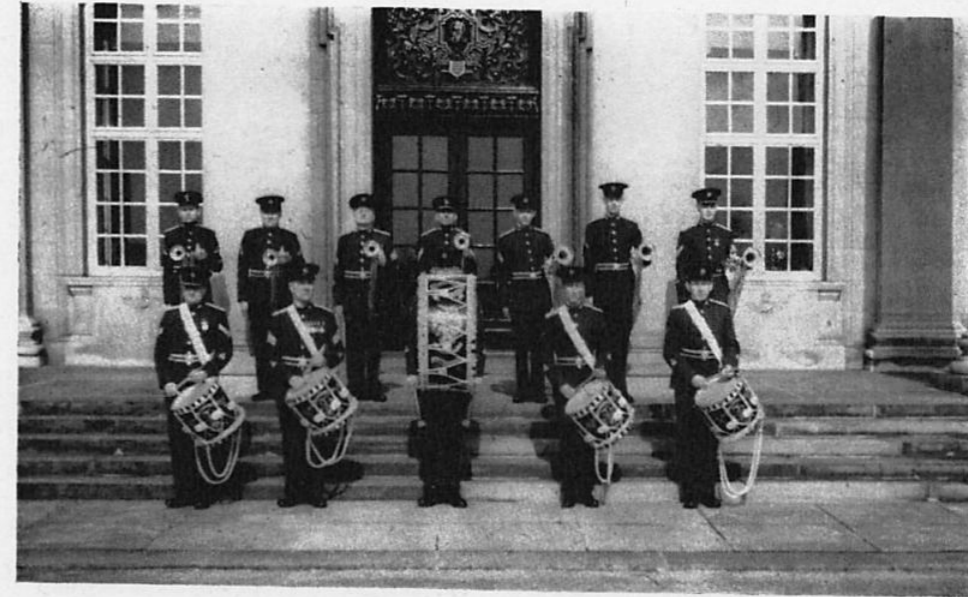
Over twelve months the band has been paraded on no fewer than 96 occasions. This, together with the 45 indoor programmes mentioned earlier, tells something of our year's work, bearing in mind that one hour's music may take many hours to prepare in rehearsal. The analysis will also give some idea why it is necessary to have professional musicians in the Royal Air Force, and why our own musicians look upon themselves as an important feature of our College — a thread which has been sewn through the last forty-four years at Cranwell.



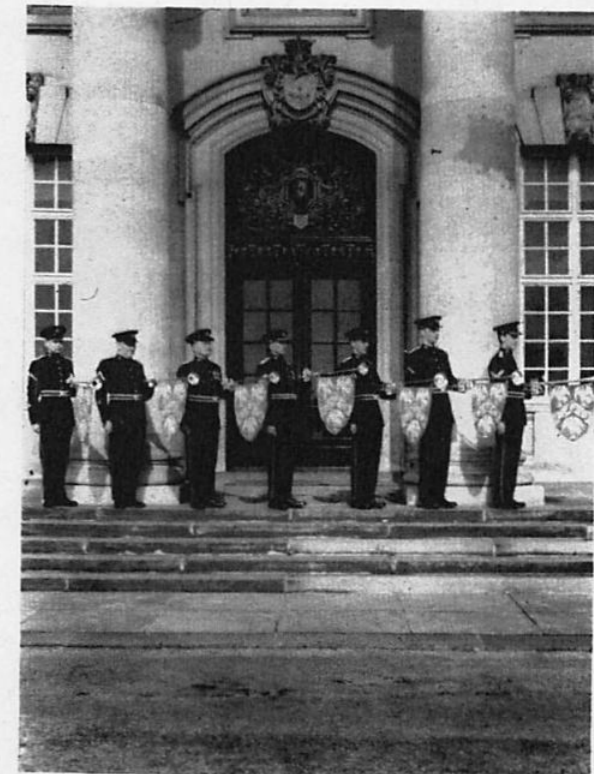
[“MUSIC OF THE R.A.F.” is the name given to a recent record release — H.M.V. CLP 1705 (or stereo C.S.D. 1526) by the Central Band of the Royal Air Force, Conductor Wing Commander J. L. Wallace.

One side of the disc is devoted to the music of a Graduation Parade at Cranwell College and includes ‘The Lincolnshire Poacher.’ There is also a brilliant performance of Koenig’s ‘Post Horn Gallop.’

The recording is excellent, particularly in the stereo version.]



The Trumpeters and Drums



The Trumpeters

*Photographs by
N. S. B. Reynolds*

[Return to Contents List](#)

December 1970 - The College Band (2)

THE BAND OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE COLLEGE

1920 — 1970

Many will know already that, next to the Central Band, the Band of the Royal Air Force College is the most senior in years of our Service bands.

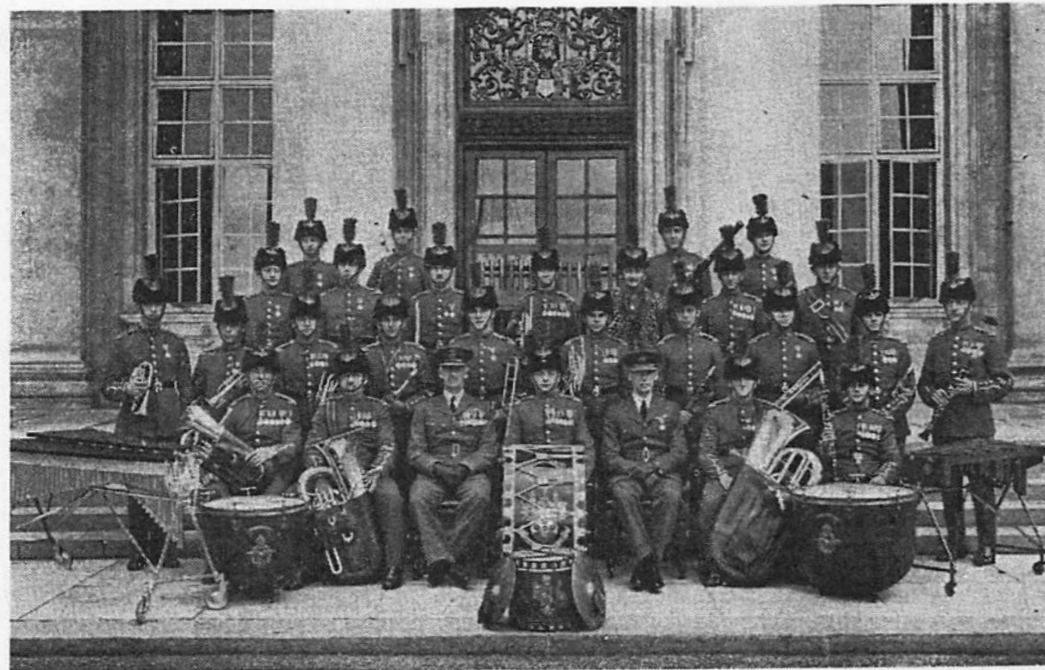
According to information which appears in our oldest files, it was shortly after the formation of the Central Band in April 1920 that a group of musicians were certified 'free from infection' and fit to travel to the Cadet College to assist in the formation of the College Band.

Warrant Officer A. E. Halford of the 1st Battalion King's Regiment became the first bandmaster, and, much to the concern of his Colonel, it appears he sought to coax several regimental musicians to come with him. Apart from this the band has remained mainly thoroughbred.

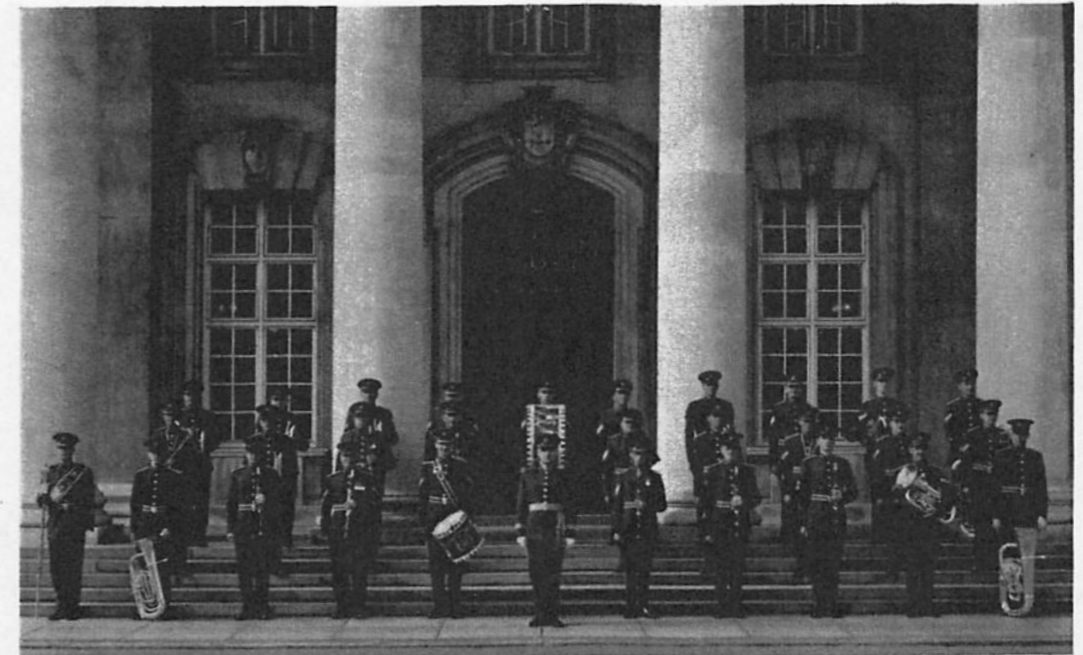
The first loyalty of the band has always been to the College itself, and since the College was established the band has been present on all occasions where music has been necessary: each parade, Sunday Church Service and Guest Night, and numerous other less formal occasions when they have simply entertained by concert-giving.

The Band was also popular outside the College. After its first public appearance in 1921, it made a first broadcast from Cardiff in 1923. This was followed by further broadcasts from the North and West Region Stations, and it was not long before the band was known to a wide audience.

Old programmes and account books show that the band appeared at numerous county shows and seaside resorts. One of our more



The Band of the Royal Air Force College 1937



*The Band of the Royal Air Force College 1970
(Director of Music, Flight Lieutenant D. S. Stephens)*

interesting printed programmes was produced by the City of Plymouth where the band presented daily concerts on the Hoe in the week before the last war commenced in 1939. The band was present at the Jubilee Celebrations of King George V, and was selected to attend with the Royal Guard of Honour at Buckingham Palace at the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. At the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 the College Band appeared in the procession.

One of the now retired members of the band Sergeant E. 'General' Grant, who resides in Cranwell Village joined the College Band as a boy musician at the age of 17. He finally retired after serving at the College for 38 years without a break. He can recall the times when Aircraftsman Ross (Lawrence of Arabia) would call in the band billets for a tête-a-tête.

At Guest Nights, choosing music to aid digestion is sometimes a problem. However, we have left behind us the time when no dinner programme was complete without 'Daisy,' 'My Bonnie,' and 'Lily of Laguna.' Our own music library includes an interesting and meticulously kept programme book for the period 1934-1939 in Wing Commander Sims' own hand. The Wing Commander was Director of Music at the College from 1932 to 1946 and on a programme dated 26th July 1937 he recorded the fact that two items were not played, firstly owing to there being 'too much of a rough house,' and secondly 'A game of leap-frog was in progress.' During a third item a Xylophone appears to have been smashed in what he describes as 'A Grand Rag'! Clearly the musicians have not always enjoyed the Palm Court placidity which has accompanied Guest Nights of more recent years.

[Return to Contents List](#)

May 2012 - College Band (3)

A Year In The Life Of The Band Of The RAF College

Corporal D Jones, Band of the RAF College

During a 12 month period the Band of the RAF College covers many thousands of miles up and down the country performing various engagements, ranging from full band concerts to small ensemble work and parades. The wide variety of work covers occasions from the most solemn to the most joyous. A large number of the concerts have raised considerable funds for charities including the RAF Benevolent Fund (RAFBF), Help for Heroes and the RAF Association (RAFA).

The Band of the RAF College also has its own big band 'Swing Wing' who travel the country performing more lively engagements, in venues that do not have the capacity for the full military band. When not performing, the band spends its time rehearsing for upcoming events. As members of the band are still required to fulfil military commitments, including out of area detachments time is also spent undergoing standard military training to cover guard commitments and war roles.

The usual start to the year is with school liaison concerts, not only in the local Lincolnshire area but also as far afield as Scotland. Whilst entertaining the children these concerts provide them with an insight into what the Royal Air Force has to offer and gives them the opportunity to speak to an RAF careers advisor. During January or February the band also covers a month of guard commitment.

Concerts are a major part of the band's schedule and are a highlight for all band members. In recent years the band has taken part in a cathedral tour, performing in the cathedrals of many cities including Coventry, Lincoln, Southwell and Litchfield. These buildings are of phenomenal stature and offer incredible acoustics making them an absolute honour to perform in. Band concerts contain a rich and varied programme of music and are always extremely well attended and enjoyed by all.

At RAF Cranwell, Whittle Hall is a recurring venue with Summer, Autumn and Christmas concerts, all open to the local community. These offer a good opportunity for the families of band members to come and see their loved ones perform, making the evening valuable for families and band members alike.

Massed band concerts, involving all 3 of the bands of the Royal Air Force, are annual events used to raise funds for the RAF charitable trust. These events are popular with band members as they allow musicians to perform together in some of the best concert halls in the country, including, amongst others, the Symphony Hall in Birmingham and the Sage in Gateshead.

May 2011 was an exciting time for the Band of the RAF College as it was their turn to record a long awaited compact disc. 'American Legends' was recorded to celebrate the rich and varied music of the United States, ranging from the film scores of John Williams to the rousing marches of Phillip Sousa. The CD was recorded in RAF Cranwell's own St Michael's Church.

In July 2011 the band performed in front of the RAF College at 'Anthems in the Park'. This proved to be an experience not to be forgotten by the many thousands of people who turned out to see the legendary Brian May and West end vocalist Kerry Ellis who performed several numbers with the band.

The day included a combination of concert band and rock music topped off with an impressive fireworks display above the College.

Overseas trips are a part of band life, visiting countries such as Cyprus, Germany and Gibraltar with new and exciting places coming in each year. These tours consist of concerts and parades, be them military or civilian. In 2010, the Edinburgh Military Tattoo was taken to Sydney Football Stadium in Australia for 4 nights. Here the band performed to 27,000 people each night alongside other military and pipe bands from around the world. A truly awe inspiring event for all those lucky enough to be involved.

During a typical year the band supports many parade occasions including sunset ceremonies, freedom parades, homecomings, remembrance parades, closure ceremonies, graduation parades at RAF Cranwell and passing out parades at RAF Halton and RAF Honington. With the recent reorganisation of the RAF as a whole, the band has been involved in several ceremonial retirements and closures. Two of note have been the retirement of the Harrier force at RAF Wittering and the closure of RAF Kinloss, which was attended by HRH the Duke of Edinburgh. These are difficult times; as a chapter ends it is always an honour for the band to be involved in such momentous occasions where the proud and rich history of a station can be remembered and celebrated.

September to November, with its Battle of Britain celebrations and various remembrance services, is a part of the year that never fails to be a hectic time for all military bands. These occasions are of high importance and are meaningful to all who attend, including the band personnel who find it an honour and privilege to be involved.

Sunderland is thought to be the second largest remembrance parade that takes place in Great Britain and in 2011 the band performed alongside the Band and Bugles of the Royal Air Force, Bear Park and Esh Colliery Band and the pipes and drums of Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Service. More than 200 serving members of the Armed Forces and 100 members of the emergency services took part in the parade which ended with a march past by veterans and serving troops.

Towards the end of the year the band undergoes military Common Core Skills (CCS) and guard training ready for the allocated commitments at the beginning of the following year along with the Whittle Hall Christmas concerts. With December being the festive season the opportunity is taken to have a little fun and merriment. With 'willing' volunteers the band gathers players and singers performing Christmas Carols around RAF Cranwell. This is always enjoyed by those taking part and, whilst travelling around the camp, a collection is made with proceeds going to charity.



Fit Lt Little.



Musician from the Band of the RAF College.

Legendary rock star Brian May performs with the Band of the RAF College at 'Anthems in the Park'.

[Return to Contents List](#)

August 2016 - College Band (4)

BAND OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE COLLEGE

The Year that was 2015

Over the last year, the Band of the Royal Air Force College has undertaken a full and varied schedule of engagements, including a number of important ceremonial occasions.

In April, the woodwind Quintet of the Band of the Royal Air Force College flew to Goch, Germany where they provided musical support for a guest night organised by Royal Air Force personnel of the Combined Air operations Centre based at the NATO Air defence site, Uedem.

In May, with the nation celebrating the 70th anniversary of VE Day, the Band was performing at the annual Whittle Hall Spring concerts. To commemorate VE Day, much of the concert featured music honouring those who lived and fought bravely during the Second World War.

We also travelled to IMJIN Barracks near Gloucester, home to the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, to perform

at a Party in the Park in aid of The RAF Benevolent Fund.

In June the Band visited Durham Cathedral and later in the year Liverpool Cathedral to perform concerts in aid of the Royal Air Force Association. The concerts told the story of the Battle of Britain through music, paying tribute to the 75th Anniversary. The programme mapped the build up to the Battle of Britain and its aftermath culminating with VE Day.

In August we travelled to Edinburgh alongside the Central Band of the RAF to perform at the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, titled East Meets West. The RAF headlined the show and again honoured the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain with a display accompanied by the Queen's Colour Squadron. The finale also showcased the Bands, performing not only to nearly 9,000 people every performance, but also to worldwide coverage on the BBC.



In October the Band supported the unveiling of the International Bomber Command Centre at Lincoln. This was a prestigious event for the Band as we provided music for the opening ceremony, which was covered on national television, of a monument inspired by a Lancaster wing to commemorate the thousands of crewmen who served in Bomber Command during World War Two. The event was attended by hundreds of veterans and included flyovers from a Blenheim bomber, two Tornados, three Hawks and the last flying Vulcan.

The concert band has also played a major role in this year's Charitable Trust Enterprise 'RAF in Concert Tour', highlighting the 75th anniversary of the battle of Britain. They have performed at prestigious venues throughout the United Kingdom, including The Sage in Gateshead, The Bridgewater Hall in Manchester and The Royal Concert Hall in Nottingham. The concerts also featured the Band's 'RAF Swing Wing', the Big Band, who have also undertaken a large number of successful engagements during the year.

To end the year the Band performed its own rendition of the popular fairy tale Cinderella. Music was provided by the RAF Swing Wing and members of the Band featured as characters from the tale. The audience left with a huge smile on their faces and are looking forward to what the Band has in store for next year.



[Return to Contents List](#)

Spring 1964 - The College Library (1)

The College Library

At first sight there may seem little need for an article describing the work of the College Library. As one of the most imposing rooms in the College building, it invariably appears on the itinerary of visitors to Cranwell, while the great majority of officers and cadets use it regularly during their time here. However, the library staff have good evidence that many readers know much less about it than might be expected. Recently, for instance, we heard a distinguished visitor being told that "most of the books here are technical," and people who ask how many books there are in stock receive a bewildering variety of answers. It may therefore be worth while to describe briefly how the library has developed over the years, how it functions at the present time, and what further changes are planned for the future.

There was of course a requirement for books as soon as Cranwell began to operate as a cadet College in 1920, but for the first ten years of its existence the library appears to have been scanty and insecurely based. It was possible to list the entire book-stock on a couple of pages of the College Journal, and the officer in charge had to appeal for donations more than once. However, the designers of the permanent building which was opened in 1932 must have been library-conscious, for the main part of the room now in use dates from that time. Substantial space for storage, in the approaches to the clock-tower, was also allocated, and until very recently there has been no space problem.

Up to 1939 the management of the library was entrusted to members of the academic staff, and the first professional librarian was not appointed until several years after the re-opening of the College in 1946. Throughout much of the post-War period invaluable continuity was provided by the senior Clerical Officer, Mr. H. Gill, whom many ex-cadets will remember as a trusted adviser and expert on essay subjects. Mr. Gill died, literally at his post in the library, in 1961. By that time, after several unsuccessful experiments, a workable, though still not ideal system of cataloguing and classification had been introduced, and the library had expanded to occupy all the space available in the immediate vicinity.

The present stock of the library, if one includes all the textbooks which have had to be deposited away from the main building, and the assortment of still unclassified books and pamphlets in the stock-room, may be estimated at between 55 and 60,000 volumes. The number of separate titles must be just over half that figure, and of course a good percentage of these are always on loan to borrowers. Even so, an enquiry for a book on a particular subject can more often than not be satisfied immediately from what is available on the shelves. Among the more frequently used sections, Military History is naturally very prominent, with particular emphasis on the two World Wars. The Scientific and Technical section certainly does not dominate the library, although it too has been growing rapidly; in some ways this is the most difficult part of our collection to administer, because technical books are so often quite unintelligible to a layman, and because they go out of date so very quickly. English Literature has always been well represented in the library, while the present academic syllabus ensures that

Economics, Geography, and Modern Languages receive careful attention. It is the librarian's job to remember subjects on the fringe of the syllabus, and to try to arrange a fair division of resources between the different teaching departments.

The average annual grant for expenditure on new books, agreed with the Air Ministry after prolonged negotiations, is now in the region of £2,000. This sum, which is invariably spent up to the last penny, enabled us to add 2434 volumes to our stock during the twelve months ending March, 1964. In order to qualify for the 20% discount allowed on government purchases, the great majority of these books are ordered through the Stationery Office in London. Orders can be placed with local book-sellers only in cases of extreme emergency; and it must be said that the machinery of the Stationery Office can usually be made to produce results just as quickly as any other source of supply available to us.

Requests for new books to be obtained in a great hurry are certainly the least popular with the library staff; in contrast, requests for very obscure or out of print books can often be met without undue difficulty. This would not be so but for the generous co-operation and help of other libraries, especially Lincoln City Library and Kesteven County Library. The nationwide inter-library loans scheme, which Kesteven operates on our behalf, can be relied on to track down almost any title of which particulars are known. In this way, we have recently borrowed books from places as widely scattered as Exeter, Belfast and Clackmannan. In addition, there are a number of "special," or non-public, libraries to which we can apply for direct loans. However, it must be emphasised that we can borrow books from outside sources only when there is an important reason for doing so; the preparation of an ordinary essay or talk would not normally justify the paper-work involved, and requests from cadets have to be approved by an officer.

One of the most neglected sources of information in the Library is the magazine article. Nearly a quarter of our annual grant is now spent on some hundred-and-twenty weekly, monthly, quarterly and yearly publications, and a number of others are donated to us. A high proportion of them are set aside for permanent retention, or at least for as long as they remain relevant. It is of course quite impossible to have all these magazines on display — in the case of Flight and Aeroplane they go back as far as 1910 — but we can usually turn them out very quickly on request. Unfortunately, it appears that library-users can go through the whole of their time at Cranwell without ever hearing of such invaluable labour-savers as Keesing's Archives, Brassey's Annual, or the Royal Air Force Quarterly. We are always looking for new ways of drawing attention to our magazine resources, and some kind of indexing service for important articles has high priority among our ambitions for the future.

Plans for future improvements in the library service are dependent, as always, on money and staff, and, in our case, on space also. The building of a new room on the flat roof behind the main fireplace has recently been approved, and this should enable us to absorb whatever is required from Henlow's stock, and to bring in the present "fiction" library so that it can fulfil its proper function. Some of the books from Henlow will be housed in the Institute of Technology, but the two libraries will be run in close conjunction, probably by a joint staff. If more staff are available, there will be plenty of work for them in the present building alone, for we are aware of many deficiencies, especially in the cataloguing system. Nevertheless, we believe that up to now the library has always made a worthy contribution towards the well being of the College, and we are confident that we shall be equal to any demand that may be made on us in the future.

August 2016 - College Library (2)

THE COLLEGE LIBRARY

A Tale of Two Portraits

The RAF College Cranwell has two libraries, one of which is situated in the College Hall Officers' Mess. The building was designed by Sir James Grey West to replace original College buildings and has been used by RAF officer cadets since the autumn of 1933.

The library as one expects has books, but it also houses (along with other sections of the College) items which reflect the heritage of the Royal Air Force. There are however, two items which at first seem curiously out of place in a British military establishment.

These are a pair of portraits by the German artist Adolf Schorling. The paintings are of World War 1 fighter aces Baron Manfred Von Richthofen or 'The Red Baron' (1892-1918), and Von Richthofen's idol and mentor, Captain Oswald Boelcke (1891-1916). Von Richthofen is infamous for having 80 air combat victories and Boelcke taught air combat and formalised air combat tactics with his rules known as the 'Dicta Boelcke'.

The portraits were given to the RAF College after a visit by the German State Secretary of Air General Erhard Milch, the Chief of the Air Staff, General-Lieutenant Hans-Jurgen Stumpff, and the Chief of the Technical Division of the German Air Ministry, General-Major Ernst Udet, who was himself, the second highest scoring fighter ace after Von Richthofen.

The German delegation visited Great Britain during 1937 and toured various air fields and factories and also visited RAF Cranwell. In May 1938, the portraits were unveiled by the German Air Attaché, General-Lieutenant Wenniger on behalf of General Milch "*with his sincere thanks for the interesting and pleasant time he spent at Cranwell*".

The gifts were given to foster relations between the two Air Forces and were given in the hopes that neither side would have to fight each other again. Unfortunately, this hope failed some 16 months after the unveiling.

The RAF reciprocated by sending the German Air Force portraits of two British fighter aces, Edward 'Mick' Mannock, VC, DSO**, MC* and Albert Ball,

VC, DSO**, MC, Legion d'Honneur (France) and the Order of St George (Russia).

The original Schorling portraits are believed to have been destroyed during the war and there is very little information about them. The only online information found is in the July 1939 issue of 'Der Adler' (a journal of the Luftwaffe) which uses the portraits to illustrate articles about the German Air Force in World War 1.

As well as appearing as portraits, Von Richthofen and Boelcke also feature in old College Journals. The articles range from coverage of Von Richthofen's funeral, a long article on the life of Oswald Boelcke and a series of letters disputing the claims of who actually shot down Von Richthofen.

Since their unveiling, the portraits have been part of the fabric of the College Library and although for many they represent the enemy, they are still hanging today, overlooking both College staff and cadets. They are a paradox, yet are also part of the furniture of the Library.



[Return to Contents List](#)

1982 - Cranwell History by AVM Lyne (1)

A Review By Air Vice-Marshal M D Lyne (Retd) Of "The History Of Royal Air Force Cranwell".

(Published by HMSO, November 1982 Price £9.95)

Who was the Cranwell corporal who became a Nobel prizewinner?

When did the Cranwell officer strength include 55 Turkish officers, against only 107 Royal Air Force officers?

What were Prince Albert's reactions to life at Cranwell?

Under what circumstances did a Cranwell aircraft ditch in the Atlantic?

What is "The Argentine Air Force Senior Prize"?

How many coal gas spherical balloons were on strength at Cranwell in 1916/17?

Group Captain Haslam's "The History of Royal Air Force Cranwell" answers these questions as well as many others over an equally broad field. He lists the 23 Commandants who presided over 55 peacetime years. (Is there an error over Air Vice-Marshal Jack Baldwin? Surely his distinctive personality set the tone at my passing out parade in July 1939?) This list shows that every pre-war Commandant was a member of the Distinguished Service Order, although none of these wore it only 4th in their decorations as did Air Vice-Marshal L F Sinclair (1950-52). The notes and appendices alone occupy 49 pages, and would by themselves be worth a place on the shelves of any reader interested in Cranwell. With the addition of 129 pages of closely packed information in the body of the book, "The History of Royal Air Force Cranwell" indeed constitutes a formidable work of reference. The disciplines that go with having HMSO as publisher could be expected to enforce reticence in tricky areas, and Group Captain Haslam has touched only lightly on some of these. But he has set out pointers for others to follow in a less formal setting. He must have notebooks full of fascinating material bearing on what would nowadays be called "the rich sub-culture of College life". Perhaps he can be persuaded to ally himself

with a less formal publisher to bring these events to us in due course.

Inevitably the story of the Royal Air Force Cadet College occupies centre stage, but in this year in which, for the first time, a "double Cranwellian" has become Chief of the Air Staff it is good to note that the East Camp has not been ignored. We are reminded that in the early days, the Boys' Wing grew out of the amalgamation of trainees of the Royal Naval Air Service with boys of the Royal Flying Corps. Prince Albert (later King George VI) found everything "...in rather a muddle ..." - a cry which was to be repeated in the wake of later reorganizations, when the wafer-thin line between reorganization and disorganization was crossed all too frequently. Nonetheless the unit settled down to provide the high grade aero engine fitters and other skilled tradesmen who constituted the technical backbone of the Royal Air Force. After this wing had moved off to Halton, another unit vital to the effectiveness of our Service in World War II settled in East Camp. This was the Electrical and Wireless School. Not only did these schools provide highly-trained manpower for the hangar floor, but many officers of the wartime air force were also graduates. I am reminded that not all their early careers were a clear pointer to later success. In one case the muddle to which Prince Albert had referred had become too much for the men. A disturbance broke out. Three corporals were identified as ringleaders and the Service police plunged into the angry crowd and arrested them. In later years all 3 men reached the rank of Wing Commander.

But the stiff discipline of those days did not encourage transgression. One of Group Captain Haslam's witnesses gives us a chilling glimpse of the ceremonial thought necessary to mark an airman's dismissal from the Service. The difficulty most of us will have in understanding such Khomeini-like

procedures points up the effort needed to bridge the cultural gap between ourselves and the pioneers of our Service. Look at Plate 14 in the book, "After Church Parade on a wet Sunday morning", and then turn to Plate 31 "HRH The Prince of Wales after his Graduation". An unfair comparison, perhaps? After all the first group is some way past breakfast and some way short of its lunchtime sherry; the second would seem to be post-prandial. Possibly, though, there is a human link between ourselves and the pioneers which we ought to acknowledge in spite of barriers of style. We look at the stiffly uniformed (yes - even the bishop) dramatis personae who occupy the rather scruffy saluting base. We look again at the relaxed and individualistic personalities at the splendid main entrance of the College. We remember that it was Trenchard, a member of the inscrutable generation, who fought so long and hard first to found a vigorous community with a distinctive character, and then to fund a building worthy of the world's first air force college. In a parallel volume "The Commandants of the Royal Air Force College Cranwell 1920-1950" Group Captain Haslam gives brief biographies of the first 9 Commandants. We see the ex-soldiers with their neat moustaches. We see the ex-sailors, Halahan, Longmore and Cave-Brown-Cave, just as positively sailors in their bluff clean-shaven countenances. Were they as conventional as they look? Trenchard was not for a start. Although he moved easily enough in establishment circles, his proposals for providing officers for the Royal Air Force were, by the standards of the day, radical. One of his declared reasons for planting the College so far from the sister institutions of Dartmouth and Sandhurst was to spare his cadets from wounding social comparisons. He meant the officer ranks of our Service to be open to talented men regardless of social origins.

The men whom Trenchard sent to lead Cranwell may have looked conventional, but their careers were full of acts of enterprise. They all learned to fly between the years 1911 and 1915 - akin to being astronauts today. Some of them made early record-breaking flights. One, whilst serving in the Royal Air Force, ran an aircraft factory on the side. They had a difficult row to hoe (as shows in Andrew

Boyle's "Trenchard", which ought to be read in parallel with Group Captain Haslam's book) and their conventionality on the surface must have acted as a form of armour against the suspicion that they were engaged in weakening social conventions about who possessed "officer-like qualities". "The History of Royal Air Force Cranwell", Longmore's autobiography and also Haslam's "The Commandants of the Royal Air Force College 1920-1950" all dwell on the appeal of foxhunting. Nowadays this may seem a strange irrelevance in the growth of an air service which had all too little time in which to prepare itself to take on a highly technical adversary. The Royal Air Force had to live and indeed expand in a world in which those who counted regarded correct dress and behaviour in the hunting field as a mark of one who could be trusted: "one of us".

I remember Lincolnshire in the hey-day of the pre-World War II expansion in pilot training. The skies buzzed with the hideous noise of the Harvard aircraft's overspeeded propeller tips. The pubs and dancehalls were full of socially heterogeneous RAF officers and cadets. At ever decreasing intervals out-of-control aircraft would "crump" into somebody's fields (as it happens very few were from Cranwell, but who could tell). Air Vice-Marshal Jack Baldwin, the former Hussar, would be out hunting several days each week. His reassuring charm must have done much to keep influential people from impeding the work of flying training schools. As usual the British had started desperately late to prepare for the inevitable war. Those days in the saddle - improbable as it may seem - had their place in supporting the preparations.

It is natural that "The History of Royal Air Force Cranwell" should give space to the Commandants, particularly to Longcroft who started the College and to Atcherley who restarted it in 1946. Those who did not know the old College may be surprised to see the names of batmen and stewards. In fact this is no less than justice. They were effectively part of the instructional staff, if unacknowledged. Shrewd judges of men and with a clear idea of the proper etiquette between an officer and his servant, their contribution to training was intelligent and profound. Small wonder that few of their sons were available to step into their fathers' shoes. The sons were at

1982 - Cranwell History by AVM Lyne (2)

university.

The latter part of Group Captain Haslam's book must have made painful writing for one who had been Assistant Director of Studies at Cranwell. Occasionally Group Captain Haslam lets this slip out, and who could blame him? The academic side had always been squeezed between the upper millstone of the cadet's enthusiasm for flying or his other professional and vocational studies and the lower millstone of Service discipline and sport. But the great national expansion in higher and further education created expectations which the Royal Air Force felt bound to take into account. Group Captain Haslam carefully charts the attempts that were made to set up an appropriate syllabus. The old staff college tag "order, counter-order, disorder" may seem to apply, but perhaps it could not have been otherwise. So many things have happened

since the task was to make naval and military officers feel "... that they had their equals in the RAF in the qualities which went to make a good officer and gentleman". In the wake of the Falklands operation, when all 3 Services and the Merchant Navy have demonstrated the highest human and professional qualities the battle for acceptance is well over (if indeed it was not over by the end of World War II). A new setting creates new imperatives. Possibly Group Captain Haslam's most useful service has been to provide so copiously in "The History of Royal Air Force Cranwell" the data for informed debate on the future recruitment and training of the Royal Air Force.

Copies of the "History of RAF Cranwell" can be purchased from the College Secretariat, HQ RAF College, Cranwell.

[Return to Contents List](#)

March 2007 - Battle of Britain Sunday 2006

BATTLE OF BRITAIN COLOUR SUNDAY SERMON 2006

by The Right Reverend Tom Burns, Roman Catholic Bishop for the Forces

When a new Pope is elected, it is customary to give him a new car. So, last year Pope Benedict sold his old green Volkswagen. The event got into the news, because when the new buyer checked the documents, he noticed who the previous owner was. The story made it onto the programme: *Have I Got News for You*, and it was reported how the new owner sold the car on, at a higher price. The car was then sold a third time at an even higher price. So, as the presenter said: *On the third day it rose again!*

Now, it is interesting that this story makes you smile or laugh. For you have obviously understood the reference to rising on the third day, even though – statistically – people today are supposed to be a more ungodly and unchurched lot than they were in Britain of 1940. Yet, despite all the secularisation of our society, there is still a religious memory. There are moments when people are struck by something deeply religious: e.g. the picture of the New York Fire Department Chaplain, Father Mychael Judge, being carried dead from the rubble of the twin towers. This is something that resonates deep within each one of us.

Each year here at RAF Cranwell, the same deeply religious experience strikes all of us. By this annual service, we confront those who would find it convenient to forget what happened so long ago. We rightly recognize, spiritually and religiously, those of Bomber and Coastal command, who had to wait 66 years, until now in 2006, for political and official recognition for what they did, so generously and so selflessly. Many will continue to debate whether it was right to depend on the RAF for victory in the Battle of Britain, or whether the nation should have turned to the Royal Navy to prevent an invasion. The facts are: the RAF did it; the Navy did not. But, by our presence here, we keep alive the determination that nothing so evil as war should ever happen again. The people we remember are our very own. We feel proud to honour them in this chapel and at this service. They deserve the efforts of the living to give thanks for the efforts of the dead – and the few who are still alive. But more than that, we the living must shout from the rooftops the words of Pope John Paul II: *War is never a solution* – then or now.

Do we believe what people tell us about the awfulness of war? Are we inclined to dismiss tales of war in the air as tall stories of daring-do:

Oh, that could never have happened. It's been dramatised. It's all an exaggeration. It can't have been like that at all. As time passes, have people become incredulous about the awfulness of war, the lives lost (on land, sea, and in the air), about the inhumanities done by one human being to another? Have we forgotten? Is it all too far away, in distance and in time? Will we ever learn? Iraq, Zimbabwe,

Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Palestine, Afghanistan. The yoke still remains to be eased; the burden still remains to be lightened. When will we ever learn? When will God's Kingdom come?

God's Kingdom will be ushered in when attitudes change. For:

The world says: *Put up your fists.*

But the Gospel says: *Love one another.*

The world says: *Bloody his nose.*

The Gospel says: *Wash his feet.*

The world says: *Worship other gods: like money, status, power, promotion.*

The Gospel says: *Come to me all you who labour and are overburdened.*

The world says: *They don't deserve what they've got.*

The Gospel says: *You're right, but neither do you.*

The world says: *Take your revenge.*

The Gospel says: *Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

The world says: *Don't let him get away with it.*

The Gospel says: *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.*

The world says: *Be ambitious.*

The Gospel says: *Blessed is he who laid down his life for his friends.*

This is a high calling. There is no calling higher than the moment when the Lord laid down his life for sinful mankind. And in human terms, there is no calling higher than the moment when soldiers, sailors and airmen have laid down their lives in defence of the livelihoods and values of a nation threatened by a hostile foe. Yet, today, it can often seem that the reverse is true: that too many now lay down, not their lives for their friends, but their friends for their lives: trampling on others to get ahead, get promoted, get something first. No, *Blessed indeed is he who lays down his life for his friends.*

What we are doing here today in this chapel recalls a remark made by that great England and Yorkshire cricketer, Freddie Trueman, many years ago. He would be as much surprised as you probably are that his words might be applied to this occasion too. He was fielding in the slips with that other great cricketer, David Shepherd, the former Anglican Bishop of Liverpool. Bishop David dropped a relatively easy catch. Immediately, Freddie Trueman turned to him and said: *Eee, lad, can't tha not do what tha does on Sundays: like, put tha hands together!* We today



The Right Reverend Tom Burns
SM

put our hands together in prayer as we retain the memory of events and people that occurred 66 years ago – events remembered by many a plaque and inscription on the walls of this College. If only they could speak and teach us today. The generosity and sacrifice of so many fliers, aircrew, and groundcrew in the Battle of Britain and in the years that followed were enormous and selfless. They merit our prayers and our promise never to forget them. They ask us to keep their memory alive, to continue to carry their burden of freedom in our own age. In pursuit of that freedom, airmen continue their initial flying training in this establishment, and go on to meet huge challenges in defence of goodness, right, and family values. In the history of the Royal Flying Corps and then the Royal Air Force, thousands have never returned home. Go to RAF Kinloss today, and you feel the grief of service personnel and families, as they try to come to grips with the loss of 12 members of 120 Squadron in Afghanistan. The generosity and sacrifice of so many, over the years, have been enormous and selfless, including their bereaved families and loved ones. Yet, they might still be asking us today: *When will we ever learn?*

For Christ, the sacrifice of his own life has been seen by some as a great mistake. Out of love for mankind, Christ suffered mortally. Was that a great mistake? If there was any mistake, it was entirely ours that weak mankind needed him to do that for us. Similarly, out of love for dear ones at home, our Armed Forces have suffered mortally. Was that a great mistake? If there was any mistake, it was entirely on the part of governments that failed to find any other way but war to resolve problems. War is as much a contradiction as the cross is. But both show complete selflessness and self-sacrifice on the part of those who suffer in a good cause. They rise to the occasion, with a spirit and a strength that they never knew they had before. For *when we are down to nothing, God is up to something.*

But, paradise is not to be found in this world. Nation will go on warring against nation. From A to Z, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, oppression and terror

continue unabated, as though no-one will ever learn. Iran has begun to flex its nuclear muscles against Israel, which it threatens with annihilation. Until there is peace between Jew and Arab in Palestine, we will never have peace anywhere in the Middle East. And in its thirst for resources to feed its growing economy, China widens its influence worldwide, particularly by alliances with oil and gas-rich countries, and by injections of capital into many vulnerable parts of Africa. The world becomes more and more unstable, because Jesus Christ is not recognized in the world. He is no longer wanted. He is not seen as satisfying mankind's needs. We want everyone else to change, but not ourselves. If we find it so difficult to change ourselves, imagine how difficult it is to change others. Conversion, for that is precisely what we are talking about, is not a single, dramatic event. There might not be a blinding light, as happened to St Paul on the road to Damascus – or as one child wrote: *on the road to Domestos!* Conversion requires a leap of faith, a leap into the unknown.

How do we do that? Well, King George VI gave one answer, in the very first royal broadcast on Christmas Day in 1940, as Britain battled against invasion. He quoted a little-known poet called Minnie Louise Haskins, who said:

*Put your hand into the hand of God,
and go out into the unknown.
That shall be for you better than a known
way.*

Go out into the unknown. Oh, how we fear uncertainty. Oh, how we are reluctant to LET GO! LET GOD! to let go of what we've always known, to move on from familiar ways. The hardest ministry of all is to let God do in us what we dare not even think of. It would change the world.

Some advice from Oscar Wilde would also change the world, when he said: *"Always forgive your enemies. Nothing annoys them so much!"*

Delivered in St Michael's and All Angels Church on Sunday 17 September 2006.

IN MEMORIAM

We record with regret the passing of the following Cranwell Graduates whose deaths were notified to us during the last year:

AVM	M J C W	Dicken	73 GE	23 Dec 05	Flt Lt	S	Johnson	98 IOTC	2 Sep 06*
Air Cdre	V B	Howells	76 GE	5 Sep 06	Flt Lt	L A	Mitchelmore	192 IOTC	2 Sep 06*
Air Cdre	A M	Ruston	Jan 38 Entry		Flt Lt	S	Mulvihill	194 IOTC	6 May 06*
Gp Capt	J L	Crosbie	Jan 33 Entry	10 Apr 06	Flt Lt	G R	Nicholas	184 IOTC	2 Sep 06*
Gp Capt	F	Drew	Sep 27 Entry	10 Oct 06	Flt Lt	N C R	Rees	81 IOTC	6 Jan 06
Gp Capt	A M	Mumford	68 GE	11 Feb 06	Flt Lt	A J	Squires	115 IOTC	2 Sep 06*
Wg Cdr	J W	Arney	Sep 33 Entry	19 Nov 06	Flt Lt	S	Swarbrick	191 IOTC	2 Sep 06*
Wg Cdr	F D	Belfield	43 IOTC	22 Jun 06	Fg Off	K	Gregory	147 IOTC	3 Jan 06
Wg Cdr	A W	Cochrane	72 IOTC	27 Feb 06	Mr	R	Thomas	72 GE	
Wg Cdr	J	Coxen	67 IOTC	6 May 06*					
Wg Cdr	R F	Martin	Sep 37 Entry	1 Sep 06					
Sqn Ldr	P A	Lean	43 IOTC	10 Mar 06					

(* Whilst on operational service).

[Return to Contents List](#)

March 2011 - RAFC 60 Years Ago (1)

RAF College Cranwell Life Sixty Years Ago

Fred Hoskins RAF (Retd)

Back in the late 1940s and '50s, young men aspiring to become officers and pilots in the Royal Air Force by way of cadetships at the Royal Air Force College arrived, often in a state of nervous excitement, at Sleaford railway station where NCOs of the RAF Regiment shepherded them to buses to take them on for the last part of the journey. In April 1949 I was one of a group of 41 young men of 54 Entry on those buses. We were all aged between 17 and 19 and more than half, including three from Ceylon, were straight from school, but the rest of us were already in uniform.

Some were airmen conscripted for National Service, several were Cadet Pilots and Cadet Navigators from the flying training schools and I was a former Aircraft Apprentice. One new cadet was in khaki, a Sergeant in the Royal Army Education Corps with the complication of getting discharged from National Service in the army and into the RAF.

As to education, we were more or less evenly divided between public schools and grammar schools. To qualify for entrance, those who had not earned exemption in other ways, such as by passing the Higher School Certificate examinations, were obliged to pass the rigorous examinations set by the Civil Service Commission in mathematics, English, a general paper and the choice of two other subjects. The course at RAFC Cranwell lasted two years and eight months and was divided into eight terms, with a new entry arriving each term. The first two terms were spent as mere 'cadets' in the Junior Entries and then the successful ones moved up to become Flight Cadets. On graduating, Flight Cadets were appointed to permanent, as opposed to short service, commissions.

In those far off days the building now known as 'College Hall' was simply called 'the College', but new arrivals began by spending two terms in Block 77, opposite the entrance to Station Sick Quarters (by accident or design I know not!). New cadets were divided between the three squadrons and allocated to the four barrack rooms where the second term cadets occupied the beds on one side of the room and the new arrivals the other.

Lee Enfield Mk4 Rifle



Cadets wore the uniform of ordinary airmen, complete with eagle shoulder badges, but were distinguished by white bands round their field-service caps (sidecaps) and their ceremonial peaked caps. Additionally, they wore lanyards on the right shoulders of their working dress denoting their squadron (red for 'A', yellow for 'B' and blue for 'C'). This working dress was usually known as "battledress", with a short blouse/jacket without brass buttons while the best uniform had brass buttons and belt buckle. On becoming Flight Cadets the eagle badges were removed, white slides with a stripe in the squadron colour were worn on the shoulder straps of working dress, white georgette patches were sewn on the collars of best uniforms and Warrant Officer pattern cap badges replaced the airman type. Both uniforms were of thick rough serge but, to get back to pre-war standards, at the end of 1949 officer pattern uniforms were issued in addition to the others.

Another essential item was a battledress uniform in khaki denim, complete with webbing anklets, to be worn when undergoing Ground Combat Training (GCT), namely basic infantry training. Each cadet was also issued with a Lee Enfield Mk4 rifle and bayonet and a steel helmet, for which he was responsible for the whole of his time at the College. To cope with the cold Cranwell winters a sleeveless leather jerkin could be worn over the denims and greatcoats were also standard issue. Raincoats were not issued and instead cadets were equipped with a so-called cape. This was a rectangle of rubberised material with an added triangle and a collar of the same material. It could be used as a groundsheet or as a poncho/cape draped round the shoulders. The strange shape meant that it was short at the back and long in the front, directing water onto the right knee.

In the barrack rooms of Block 77 cadets were initiated into the display of kit in the wall lockers and the method of lining up beds and boxes on the polished brown linoleum floor. Each cadet was given a room task to do each morning, such as sweeping or polishing the floors, lining up the beds and boxes, cleaning the wash basins and taps, or tidying the surrounds of the block. These tasks often occupied an evening as well, in preparation for a formal inspection of room and kit. In fact there were frequent inspections by the NCOs and by the officer in charge of the junior entries and the barrack rooms

Sleaford Railway Station 1949



had to be made ready to inspection standard every morning, with the kit in individual lockers set out according to a strict pattern and the blankets and sheets folded into a square block wrapped in one of the blankets and looking rather like a 'liquorice allsort'.

Throughout the first two terms cadets were drilled and exercised every weekday but there was an even greater emphasis on drill and physical training (PT) during the first weeks. When the necessary standard of drill had been reached the cadets joined the Flight Cadets for the routine drill sessions in front of the College from 0725 to 0800 every weekday morning except for one day for each squadron's turn at PT from 0700 to 0735 and when, every other Friday, morning drill was replaced by a full ceremonial parade for the entire Cadet Wing, including those undergoing training for the Equipment and Secretarial branches at Digby.

The College did not then offer training for other than those two branches in addition to General Duties/Pilot. The routine came easily to me after more than three years as an aircraft apprentice in a barrack block in East Camp and others with previous service had experienced something similar. It was new to most of the boys from school even though many had been in cadet corps and came hardest to the three from Ceylon, who seemed to find the rigours of discipline hard to understand. As an example, on an inspection, when one of them was told by the Sergeant that his rifle was dirty he replied in his innocence "Of course it is, I haven't cleaned it yet!"

During the very first term boxing loomed large in the physical training sessions. We boxed during PT and trained in preparation for First

The AV Roe Anson



Term Boxing, a tournament in which cadets in their first term were paired off to fight in the ring. I use the word 'fight' advisedly because skill was not important. What was required was to slug it out. The object appears to have been to see if cadets were made of the "right stuff", with plenty of moral fibre. The event took place after a guest night in the College and was attended by the Commandant and officers in mess kit, by all Flight Cadets and by all junior cadets not boxing, namely those in their second term.

During the training in the gym the officers commanding the College squadrons would look in to see how things were progressing and in particular I remember Squadron Leader Dyer, commanding C Squadron. He was a stocky man, full of pugnacious energy and in the gym he intervened, dancing about in front of cadets and shouting "Hit me! Go on, Hit me!" I don't think anyone managed to hit him and quite probably didn't think they ought to try very hard. On the night, everyone duly slugged it out over two rounds and the one who lost the most blood was the man of the tournament! Several years later an enlightened point of view was brought to bear and boxing was seen as potentially detrimental to the fitness of men planning to fly.

Altogether, the two junior entries living in Block 77 comprised 80 cadets and had their own mess in a wooden building quite near and completely separate from Flight Cadets and airmen and airwomen. The diet was, by modern standards, simple and the only choice was to take it or leave it. Probably because of the relatively small numbers to be catered for, the food was of a reasonable quality and was better cooked and presented than I had known as an apprentice. Instead of the scrape of a white substance laughingly called 'butter' on the corner of a slice of bread I had known before in the Cadets' mess, there was a plate with a slab of real butter on each table. We who had lived with food rationing, which was still in force, knew that this had to be shared equally, but it had to be explained to the cadets from Ceylon that as the rest of us expected to get a share they could not take as much as they liked. For the 80 cadets there was also a NAAFI canteen, selling the usual soft drinks, cakes, snacks toiletries and cleaning materials – but no alcohol.

Training in the first two terms was not entirely physical in content. Instruction began in a variety of subjects in both the Aeronautical Science and Engineering (ASE) and the Humanistics departments of the College. In the ASE Department Flight Cadets were, during the course of the eight academic terms, taught aerodynamics, thermodynamics, meteorology, weapons theory, radio and navigation. In the first two terms cadets were also given instruction in mathematics including logarithms, calculus and the use of the slide rule. The navigation syllabus covered the theory of compasses and other navigation instruments, the use of radio aids, the calculation of drift and wind velocity, flight planning and an introduction to astro-navigation, but in the first two terms the instruction was largely in the uses of maps, compass and watch for basic pilot navigation.

These skills were applied in Anson aircraft and for these flights the cadets were kitted out in heavy canvas Sidcot flying suits of wartime vintage with fur collars, sheepskin-lined boots, thick woollen sweaters, leather flying helmets

March 2011 - RAFC 60 Years Ago (2)

and goggles, silk inner gloves and leather gauntlets. With green canvas bags of maps, log pads and Dalton computers they boarded the Ansons to fly cross-country routes, keeping a log of their positions and times, using the drift sight, working out wind velocities and, in many cases, being airsick because of the uncomfortable surroundings; the heavy and hot suits and the bumpy motion of the slow aircraft flying at around 2,000 feet. The gauntlet gloves came in handy as sick bags! It was not the best introduction to a flying career!

Additionally, during the first two terms cadets received instruction in the Cadets' Instructional Workshops where they were taught such things as the workings of hydraulic systems, how to strip down internal combustion engines and how to carry out simple repairs to airframes. These included how to patch a hole in a fabric covering and how to patch a hole in a wooden skin as on a Mosquito aircraft. For cadets to learn to start and test engines there were two Miles Martinet aircraft from which the outer wing sections had been removed.

'Humanistics' included English, military and economic history and geography, current affairs and War Studies. The latter covered the organisation and history of the Royal Air Force and there were also instructors from the Royal Navy, the Army and the United States Air Force to give instruction relevant to their services.

I recall that the first lecture on the Royal Navy began with the instructor unrolling a map of the world and proclaiming "The world is divided into six Royal Naval stations!" The campaigns and battles of the Second World War were studied, of course. Apart from the subjects directly relevant to professional studies, there were topics intended to broaden the mind and a memorable excursion in Junior Entries was to a coal mine in Nottinghamshire. Hours spent underground viewing at first hand the appalling working conditions of the miners working in confined spaces with picks and shovels resulted in a healthy respect and sympathy for those toilers. The English course was broad and included the study of literature and poetry as well as the use of the language. Flight Cadets were also required to write a thesis during the final year, but three of my entry were excused the thesis and given tuition in Russian instead.



Sidcot flying suit

The Aeronautical Science and Engineering Department had most of its lecture rooms and laboratories in a building to the east of the College, near the present St Michael's church, while the Humanistics lecture rooms were on 'A' Site, about five hundred yards to the west of the college. The navigation room was in the college building and, for the two junior entries, some lectures were given near their barrack block. The drill square for the junior entries was near their barracks, but routine morning drill took place at the front of the College. The gymnasium and swimming pool were near the south airfield, as were the workshops and, of course, the hangars and crewrooms for flying training. Thus, the main locations were at the corners of an approximate rectangle with short sides of about half a mile and long sides of almost a mile. Hence, a good deal of time and physical effort was spent in moving between classes, drill and PT. Marching quickly between locations in all weathers helped to improve or maintain fitness and also created an appetite.

On completing Junior Entries the cadets became Flight Cadets but, as there were not enough rooms for all in the College, they moved for one term to Daedalus House, a large house to the rear of the Station Sick Quarters. Here, as in the main College building, they enjoyed the privilege of a bedroom each, equipped also for study, but even in Daedalus there were not enough rooms and so there was a hut in the grounds for the overflow. My room was in the hut and was comfortable and cosy, because it had an open fire for heating – this was Jan 1950. As in the rooms in the College itself, furniture was a bed, wardrobe, desk, chair, bookcase and small piece of carpet on a brown polished linoleum floor. It was absolute bliss in contrast to living in a barrack room.



The Miles Martinet

As Flight Cadets we also enjoyed the services of civilian batmen to clean the room and perform some valeting services – which did not extend to cleaning webbing belts, boots and rifles. In the early post-war years some of the batmen and waiters had been College servants since the '20s and could tell of 'their' cadets from those early days who had achieved fame.

Cadets were not permitted to wear civilian clothes but Flight Cadets were not only permitted, but were required to have them. When in civilian clothes were expected always to wear a hat out of doors, but no particular style was imposed on us and so a variety of head coverings appeared, according to the whim of the owner. My choice happened to be a brown hat made by Stetson and with a slightly broad brim – rather similar to the hat I have now, in fact.

Cadets who had already been serving in the RAF were paid at their previous rates, while entrants from civil life were paid four shillings a day. The start of flying training brought an extra three shillings a day (this total of seven shillings a day equates roughly to £9 in terms of purchasing power in 2010). Of course, uniform, food and accommodation were free. On being raised to the status of Flight Cadets, to acquaint us with running our finances sensibly our pay was paid into the College Bank and we were given cheque books to enable us to draw cash and pay our mess bills. It was expected that each Flight Cadet would pay his batman ten shillings per month as a supplement to wages.

A few people owned radios, there was a television set in the College and there was a public telephone near the Hall Porter's Lodge (now known as "reception") but, of course, there were none of the electronic entertainment and communication devices that are now considered to be indispensable. Perhaps a dozen cadets owned cars, all pre-war, most of them nearly as old as their owners and a further dozen or so owned motorcycles, but the great majority relied on public transport, bicycles or their feet. As an aside, on being commissioned as a Pilot Officer, with flying pay the annual salary was £401, roughly equivalent in 2010 to £10,000 in terms of purchasing power. This, taken with the absence of cars, televisions and other gear may now suggest that we were, by modern standards, underprivileged. But expectations vary with the times, and if we thought of it at all, which we probably didn't, we would have considered ourselves quite well off by the standards of the late '40s and early '50s.

Being in Daedalus House meant more walking or rather, marching, as meals were taken in the College with all the more senior Flight Cadets. 'Marching' because it was simply not permissible to walk! All cadets were expected to move briskly and if two or more were moving from place to place together then they must march in step and without talking. It was not unknown for an officer on a bicycle to glide up soundlessly behind a small party heading back to the College after flying and then make his presence felt. Discipline was strict and sanctions, usually 'restrictions' or extra drill, were arbitrarily and swiftly imposed.

In the dining hall were three long tables, one for each squadron and with a break in the middle, leaving a path from the central entrance door to the servery door. At the head of the table sat the senior entry and at the bottom the next senior entry. Immediately below the senior entry sat the most junior entry of Flight Cadets, presumably so that the seniors could keep a close watch over them. The food was reasonable in quantity and quality although there were some items frequently recurring on the menu which were not greatly appreciated, such as Brown Windsor soup and what the irreverent termed 'mutton rings', namely sliced rolled breast of lamb. Again, there was no choice other than take it or leave it.

Soft drinks and essential toiletries and similar items could be obtained in the Fancy Goods Store (the FGS) in what is now an ante room opposite the present bar, which was then used for instruction in

navigation. It was in the FGS that the one and only television in the College, monochrome and very small screen, was situated.

On Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays Flight Cadets could wear civilian clothes after duty and the evening meal was an informal supper. On the other four nights of the week they had to dress in their best 'airman pattern' uniform and sit together for a formal dinner which was attended also by some of the officers, who wore dinner jackets. Those dinners always took the same form: soup, a main course, dessert and then a savoury, usually a small piece of cheese on toast. There was only water to drink and the same applied to the Guest Nights which replaced one of these ordinary dinners on alternate Thursdays. Then, officers wore mess dress and Flight Cadets wore their very best, officer pattern, uniforms with white shirts, wing collars and bow ties. At Guest Nights the College band played in the gallery above one end of the dining hall, the commandant was at the head of the top table and there would be some important guests from outside the College and even from outside the RAF, such as industrialists, explorers, scientists and diplomats. It could be a little unnerving for a junior Flight Cadet to find himself sitting next to and conversing with one of these senior and important people, who included eminent men such as Sir Frederick Handley-Page (aircraft manufacturer), Professor R V Jones (scientist) and Sir Reader Bullard (diplomat).

Shortly after being elevated to Flight Cadet status, groups of four would be invited to supper with the Commandant on a Sunday evening. The Commandant at that time was Air Commodore George Beamish, a bachelor noted for his sporting prowess, particularly as having played rugby for the RAF and for Ireland and thus likely to ask embarrassing questions as to how well one had done in various College sporting activities! There were many tales told of those supper evenings. No wine was offered, but there was a drink which appeared to be watery beer with oatmeal floating in it. After supper the form was to walk to the station cinema where we would sit in state in the central box at the back. Of course, the cinema staff knew that the Air Commodore would be coming, so waited until he was seated before starting the film. He would then turn to his four cadet guests with a smile and say "Just in time, gentlemen. Just in time!" It did occur to us that the Commandant intended this as a modest little jest.

Another feature of one's first term as a Flight Cadet was "First Term Guest Night", that is to say, the first time new Flight Cadets attended a guest night in the College and so had to undergo an initiation process. After the dinner, the new Flight Cadets were required to entertain the rest of the Flight Cadets by doing some sort of turn or trick to be judged by the audience giving the thumbs up or down sign as in the Roman arena. In fact, an ante-room was turned into something approaching an arena, with armchairs and sofas stacked up on tables so that Flight Cadets in the highest seats were very near the ceiling. Into the limited space remaining in front of the baying mob, those being initiated would sing or dance or do whatever they had thought would win a thumbs up. One of our entry placed a dustbin lid on the floor, put a lighted thunderflash on it, a steel helmet over the thunderflash and stood on the helmet, thus blowing himself up. That act was a great success.

Those whose acts produced "thumbs down" had to pay a forfeit which might require doing a handstand while having water or some other fluid poured down, or up, the trouser legs. Another forfeit was to have to crawl across the foyer (now known as the Rotunda) under the carpet. It did not happen to our entry, but it had been known for new boys to be made to ride, naked, on bicycles around the Orange with fire hoses being played on them.

For those in, as it were, the back seats, Guest Nights could be quite jolly events, with often a little banter from the sprinkling of flying instructors who sat with the cadets and entertaining music from the

[Return to Contents List](#)

March 2011 - RAFC 60 Years Ago (3)

band – South Rampart Street Parade and St Louis Blues as well the more orthodox pieces. After dinner the Flight Cadets moved to the lecture hall (now the Longcroft Room) to listen to lectures from the principal guest. Guest Nights were followed by a College ceremonial parade the next morning – not a very good idea bearing in mind that the same very best uniform had to be worn and everyone had been late to bed. However, that was how it was and first parade for inspection by the Under Officer and the squadron drill instructor was early enough to allow for a further inspection by the Squadron Commander before finally marching onto the parade ground and, in due course, another inspection by the Commandant! I don't suppose anything has changed in that regard.

For the College parade the Cadet Wing included the E & S flight cadets of 'D' Squadron, who were brought from Digby by bus. With perhaps 400 on parade, the frontage was somewhat cramped and the dressing had to be "At half arm", with the left hand on the hip and the elbow touching the right arm of the next man. On at least one occasion this closeness resulted in the left arm of a greatcoat becoming impaled on the bayonet of the next cadet.

After the preliminary dressings the King's Colour was marched on, the ensign and his escorts emerging from the main door of the College and descending through the band positioned on the steps and taking post in the centre of the parade. The form of the parade was probably much the same as today and during the inspection the College band played suitable music – which sometimes was very contemporary, including music from the films, such as 'The Harry Lime Theme' from 'The Third Man'. The four squadrons marched past by squadrons in line, changing from close to open order and back again while on the move, first in slow time and then in quick time. After that the cadet wing went back to its original formation in front of the College and the parade commander, one of the Under Officers, asked permission to march off. This was not always forthcoming and on many occasions the Senior RAF Regiment Officer was heard to utter to the College Warrant Officer the ominous words "March them round again, Mr Millis!"

Mention of the Under Officer prompts a description of how the College was run. Under the Commandant was an Assistant Commandant and there was a College Adjutant. A squadron leader commanded each of the three squadrons and was assisted by a flight lieutenant or flying officer, known as a 'Cadet Wing Officer', who was also a flying instructor. Under him was a flight sergeant of the RAF Regiment, who supervised drill each day and then there were the Flight Cadet NCOs of the senior entry who acted more or less as school prefects.

At the head was an Under Officer (UO) distinguished by a thin stripe of braid on his cuff, the stripe rising to a point. Under him were two Flight Cadet Sergeants who wore ordinary sergeant stripes on their arms. Up to 1951 each squadron also had four Flight Cadet Corporals, but these were dispensed with and all the senior entry were designated 'Senior Flight Cadets'. Cadets in the junior entries addressed all flight cadets as 'sir' and all flight cadets addressed the senior entry in the same way. The senior entry, by the way, had the privilege of their own ante-room. The drill instructors addressed flight cadets as 'sir' or added 'Mr' to the front of the name eg a flight sergeant might well say (or shout) "Mr Smith, sir! Pick your feet up!" The College Warrant Officer addressed flight cadets as 'sir' but was called 'sir' in return.

'Class distinction' was noticeable in that when the roll was called on morning drill parade, the names of Flight Cadets were all prefixed with Mr and then, on reaching the two junior entries, the word 'Mr' suddenly disappeared.

There were set ways of doing things and cadets had to learn very quickly. One of the first things was that only members of the senior entry were permitted to cross the front hall, or foyer, in the College.

All other flight cadets and cadets could only cross from one wing to the other by going round the back of the lecture hall, which was immediately behind the front hall and in front of the dining hall, just as now. As there were then no carpets other than that in the foyer and ante-rooms, and junior cadets wore boots with studded soles, (unlike flight Cadets, who were allowed to wear shoes except for drill) there was much skidding round the corners by those in a hurry, which was nearly everyone nearly all the time. In this passage way were situated all the photographs of previous College entries, prize-winners and sports teams. Here also were the notice boards for the display of orders, sports fixtures and teams and notices of events such as concerts or vacation activities. The College had a thriving 'College Society' with sections for activities such as music, dramatics, aeromodelling, debating and many others. The aim was to provide voluntary activities, in addition to syllabus items, to help broaden the minds of the flight cadets. In the vacations, about ten weeks each year, there were visits to service establishments, including those of the other services, opportunities for gliding, parachuting, winter sports, sailing, climbing and shooting – to mention just a few. Some of these activities were compulsory and it was expected that Flight Cadets would take part in others voluntarily.

The College syllabus included about 250 hours of flying instruction culminating in the presentation of wings on graduation. (Interestingly, it has been calculated that more time was spent on drill than in the air). Flying and academics alternated day by day so when there was flying in the morning there were lectures in the afternoon and vice versa. But as I have mentioned, on four weekdays there was drill to start the day, immediately after breakfast, and on the fifth weekday there was PT before breakfast - almost always a thoroughly miserable experience! For early morning PT the squadron paraded in PT shorts, vests, socks and boots at 7.00 am, carrying gym shoes and wearing a sweater in the winter. The squadron ran to the gym, almost half a mile, changed boots for gym shoes and then experienced 30 minutes of boring and strenuous exercise carried out in silence – but for the orders of the PT instructors. There were no games to enliven the session, just straight PT exercises, with some work on the vaulting horse or box and some agonising exercise such as hanging backwards from the wall bars and slowly raising the legs to the horizontal. Towards the end the PTI would have given the order to run in a circle and then "On the back of the man in front – go!" Obviously, it was as well to be quick and jump before being jumped on. Finally, "Feet on the green line – go!" and then "Double away to the changing room – go!" Very often this was followed by "Not quick enough! Back into the gym and feet on the green line – go!" Sometimes there was a long enough pause before that order for a few of the quickest to have taken off their gym shoes and be half way into their boots so then they would be last back to the green line and liable for some further punishment such as press-ups. Then came a run back to the College, abutions and breakfast before either flying or lectures.

The start of flying was what everyone was looking forward to and it came with the promotion to Flight Cadet status at the beginning of the third term. There were two Flying Wings, basic and advanced, each made up of two Squadrons divided into two Flights. Flight Cadets were allocated to instructors and shown over the aeroplanes they were to fly, namely the Percival Prentice for the basic phase and the North American Harvard IIB for the advanced. In the Prentice the instructor and pupil sat side by side and there was a third seat behind. The Prentice was somewhat slow and underpowered, with a Gypsy Major 32 engine. The North American Harvard had a Pratt and Whitney Wasp radial engine, with much more power and both types had the advantage of variable pitch propellers and flaps. The instructors were almost entirely of World War II vintage, many wearing the ribbon of the DFC, and with a sprinkling of DSOs as well. The Korean War was in full swing, the RAF was expanding and some

of the instructors had rejoined after several years in civilian life. Not many of them ever spoke about their experiences, but sometimes it was possible, on a day when the weather rendered flying impossible, to lure one of them into telling, for example, how he had flown a Lancaster in the raid to sink the Tirpitz.

Not all cadets found that flying was easy, although some were "naturals". Flying, it was found, demanded a high degree of application and concentration. At first came lessons in flying straight and level, climbing and descending and then turning, before learning to take off and land. On average it took about seven or eight hours of dual instruction before flying solo. Possibly solo could have been achieved in less time, but the requirements of the RAF were demanding. Before solo, pupils were shown stalling and spinning and after solo and consolidating their practice in circuits and landings there was more stalling and spinning and also aerobatics, practice forced landings and precautionary landings. After that instruction progressed to flying on instruments, night flying, formation flying and navigating by day and night.

The same syllabus was covered during the advanced stage, but with a more complicated aircraft with a retractable undercarriage and more demanding characteristics; the Harvard was capable of some vicious reactions to mishandling. During the advanced phase cadets also learned the basics of air to air firing, using camera guns and steep glide bombing (what most people would call "dive bombing") with 25 pound bombs on Bassingham Fen.

Even with all these various studies and activities occupying the cadets, their moral welfare was not overlooked. They received talks from the chaplains of the various denominations and, of course, there was compulsory church parade every Sunday. This took the form of a full College parade but without arms, save for the colour party. On arrival at the church, then a converted hangar, the colour party waited outside and when all were seated within marched in and handed the colour to the chaplain to place on the altar. At the end of the service the colour was handed back and the parade marched back to the College and the cadets were dismissed to a free afternoon. Wednesday and Saturday afternoons were free of lectures but devoted to compulsory sport.

A wide variety of sports were played at Cranwell, cricket, rugby, hockey, football, swimming, water polo, squash, tennis, rowing, shooting, gliding, riding and boxing. As to the latter, this was 'proper' competitive boxing as opposed to the "first term boxing" where the intention appeared to have been merely to see whether the cadets had a suitable level of courage and the 'winner' of the evening was the cadet who had shown the most pluck, which seemed to be judged by the quantity of blood lost. The subject was not mentioned specifically but all cadets knew the expression 'LMF' (lacking moral fibre), something that had come out of the war when aircrew who had finally cracked were declared LMF, stripped of their aircrew badges and allocated menial and degrading tasks – pour encourager les autres. At Cranwell it was apparent that there were direct efforts to ensuring that cadets had 'the right stuff'. Hence, the Warrant Officer PTI had the windows of the swimming pool fixed open permanently throughout the Lincolnshire winters when the wind came directly from the steppes. Hence, cadets were caused to perform backward somersaults from the top diving board and on an occasion when visiting foreign officers arrived at the swimming pool it was arranged that there was no cadet to be seen; those who were not in the pool hidden under a rubber dinghy were hidden in the rafters and when a whistle was blown, they would drop into the water and those under the dinghy would appear, all with a loud shout. Parachuting was not compulsory but it was an activity available during vacations and for those cadets who took part the fear of being labelled LMF for not jumping was greater than the fear of the actual jumping.

Another facet of the Cranwell training was the constant pressure to do well and to do better than somebody else. Every single term, (no less than eight times for each cadet during his time at Cranwell) there was an inter-squadron competition for the Ferris Cup for drill, judged by officers and sergeant majors from Sandhurst; a PT competition for the Knocker Cup; and inter-squadron sports competitions for the Chimay Cup. The squadron achieving the best results over all became 'The King's Squadron' for the following term and had the honour of providing the ensign and escort for the King's Colour of the Royal Air Force College and of sitting at the centre table in the dining hall, with the Colour held in the claws of a large bronze eagle above and behind the Under Officer.



The Harvard

[Return to Contents List](#)

March 2011 - RAFC 60 Years Ago (4)

All these competitions demanded a great deal of effort and application. Throughout the course cadets were urged to try harder, move faster, be smarter and, above all, to be 'up to standard'. This was a common expression and thus the hapless Flight Cadet whose boots were not as clean as they might be (even though highly polished to the untutored eye) would find himself on restrictions because they were not 'up to standard'. The requirement always to march and not merely walk has been mentioned as has been the distances that had to be marched between venues. The working day effectively continued until after dinner each evening and all these things combined to impose pressures over a long period of time. The marvel is that so few yielded to these pressures and asked to be withdrawn; albeit some were withdrawn from training without having to ask. My Entry began with 41 cadets, one left after a couple of weeks, others left at various stages of the course and not of their own volition; two were transferred to the E&S wing, two came down to us from the preceding entry and we graduated 31 strong. Of these, three were killed within a year; flying accidents led to the death of seven in all and the invaliding out of an eighth who also did not live a full span.

Having said all this, it has to be recognised that there was a lighter side to life. The great choice of sports and the availability of all manner of pursuits to be followed during term and during the vacations has already been mentioned. There was also a lot of fun and camaraderie and, training together for almost three years forged bonds, such that most of us who have survived are still in touch with each other today: sixty years later. There was tremendous spirit among the cadets, all

of whom had come through a rigorous selection process, who knew that they were privileged to be trained at Cranwell and were proud to be members of what was acknowledged to be an elite group among the mass of officers who were trained under different schemes. It was indeed a great privilege to be a 'Cranwell Cadet', and to be known as such was to be a marked man in the Royal Air Force, a man of whom much was expected - but it has to be said that to be a Cranwell Cadet was not necessarily to meet with universal acclaim from the less privileged, not least because, subject to passing Promotion Examination "B", Cranwell graduates received accelerated promotion so as to reach Flight Lieutenant rank after only 30 months from the appointment to a commission, as opposed to six years.

The culmination of everything was Graduation, a time of excitement not least because of the announcement of postings to the various Advanced Flying Schools. After the final guest night the senior entry put on a 'Review' to entertain the rest of the College and the staff. Naturally, this consisted largely of sketches in which fun was poked at the system, the staff - and also at ourselves. Later came the Graduation Parade, under the eyes of the senior entry's families and reviewed by a senior service officer, a senior politician or even a member of the royal family. Wings were presented and in the evening there was the Graduation Ball with the erstwhile senior entry now clad in their brand new uniforms with wings and the very thin light blue band on the cuff denoting the rank of Pilot Officer. That was the first rung on the career ladder; what had passed during the previous eight terms was merely a reaching out for that first rung.



The Queens' Colour now sits in College Hall

[Return to Contents List](#)