

# RAF COLLEGE CRANWELL

## “Training Statistics”



1939 - 1947

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# **“Lies, Damn Lies and Statistics”**

**When you are fortunate to discover a plethora of training records, particularly ones that have been locked away for many years, the temptation is to analyse them and collate statistics that give an insight into changing trends. So it is with individual flight cadet records, graduation programmes and disposal rolls, stored in the College archive, that record the passage of some 28,000 cadets who have undergone training at the RAF College.**

**In four separate albums, we offer some insight into the training trends of the world’s oldest independent air academy, from its inception in 1920 to the present date. We do not claim that the statistics are wholly accurate, but merely give some indication of training trends through the decades. Some individual records are missing from the archive - perhaps withdrawn for briefings, mislaid or even destroyed over time - but we have collated sufficient information to enable comparisons to be made as life at the College evolved over its 100 year history.**

**In this album, you will see an analysis of the 1920s and 1930s, and the RAF and FCO cadets who graduated from Initial Officer and Pilot Training; those who “withdrew”; those who were killed in flying accidents.**

**In the war years, covered by a second album, the College was closed for Officer Training, but many airman aircrew undertook their flying training with the SFTS at Cranwell. Officer and Pilot training at the College resumed in the 1940s, to which Navigator, Equipment and Secretarial Training was added in the 1950s, and then Engineering and Regiment Training in the 1960s. The recruitment of cadets straight from school ceased with 101 Entry, which graduated in March 1973.**

**During the 1970s, university graduates received Initial Officer and Specialist Training - Pilot, Engineering, Supply and Secretarial - under the Graduate Entrant (GE) scheme; Navigators completed Initial Officer Training at Cranwell before moving to RAF Finningley (now Robin Hood Airport) for their Navigation Training.**

**In the 1980s, the GE system ‘morphed’ into the IOT system, with the closure of RAF Henlow and the amalgamation of Officer Training schemes under an initiative known as the Single Gate Initial Officer Training scheme. This scheme and its replacement of July 2016 (IOTC) catered for Initial Officer Training of all branches prior to specialist training conducted at a variety of training bases elsewhere.**

**So, this album is offered with some circumspection. It is an insight and not a definitive record. Read on.**

# Notes Found on RAFC at War (1)

## BRIEF NOTES ON ROYAL AIR FORCE CRANWELL OCTOBER 1939 TO MAY 1940

All Instructional Staff and Flight Cadets were recalled from leave to the College on 30 August 1939 in view of the grave international situation. Immediately after the declaration of war against Germany, the Royal Air Force College ceased to function as such and was formed as the Royal Air Force College Flying Training School. There was no change of staff or students, but the normal Flight Cadet syllabus was dropped and all emphasis was on Flying Training. The FTS had an Intermediate Training Squadron and an Advanced Training Squadron.

The last PROPER Flight Cadet Entry to pass out was the September 1937 Entry which passed out on 28 July 1939. The following entries were at various stages of instruction (normally the Flight Cadet Courses lasted 2 years) at the outbreak of war:

January 1938 Entry.

April 1938 Entry.

September 1938 Entry.

January 1939 Entry.

April 1939 Entry.

The Entry due in in September 1939 was already recruited and in the pipeline; this was sent initially to No 9 Elementary Flying Training School at Royal Air Force Ansty. Later they came back to Cranwell in April 1940 to join the FTS and was called the April 1940 Entry.

All the Flight Cadets in these 6 entries were listed as Aircraftmen 2 (AC2) on 7 September 1939, then on 8 September 1939 as Leading Aircraftmen (LAC).

The Senior Flight Cadet Course, ie January 1938 Entry, were posted at the outbreak of war to Specialist Courses or to Operational Training Units. The rest of the 5 Flight Courses formed the nucleus of the first 5 Courses of FTS at Cranwell.

These 6 Flight Cadet Courses did NOT complete the proper Flight Cadet Training Course.

These first 5 FTS Courses were a mixture of ex-Flight Cadets, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve Pilots and ex-University Air Squadron Pilots.

The last ex-Flight Cadets (ie April 1940 Entry) were trained on No 9 Course FTS and were joined by 16 Australians. They passed out late August-early September 1940.

The May 1940 Course, ie No 10 Course FTS, were recruited from the Initial Training Squadrons and Elementary Flying Training Schools.

At some time early in this period (I cannot trace the actual date) the title of Royal Air Force College Flying Training School changed to Royal Air Force Service Flying Training School (RAFSFTS).

The length of the Course in Intermediate Training Squadron was 6 months, and concentrated on Flying Training with some ground school studies (navigation etc).

The Advanced Training School length of Course is not known, but they made detachments to West Freugh and Warmwell for gunnery and bombing practice. During May 1940 the Advanced Training School was dropped and the Intermediate Training School doubled in size to accelerate the flow of replacement pilots to the squadrons.

The average Course was about 39 students and the pilot wastage was approximately 25%.

The aircraft flown were:

Hawker Audax.

Hawker Hind.

Hawker Hart.

Hawker Fury.

Hawker Hector.

Miles Master.

Airspeed Oxford.

and the single-engined aircraft were given up cMay 1940 in favour of the twin-engined Oxfords.

Accommodation was in the College Hall Building. The 'old' single rooms of the Flight Cadets were now double rooms. The larger rooms like the games rooms, lecture rooms etc were used as dormitories - there was gross overcrowding in all rooms. With the overcrowding, life in the Mess was a lot more informal and less rigid.

Cooks and dining hall staff were mainly all Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF's). There was almost continuous flying, therefore meals were at all times. Strict food rationing was in force in the UK and meals were difficult to produce, eg early diners got meat, later ones got gravy!! Local farmers were asked to supply extra produce, meat and vegetables, for the 'War Effort'.

In the time span of October 1939 to May 1940 there was a particularly hard winter. From 1 to 25 February 1940, instructors and pupils were give leave because of the thick snow and the ice-bound state of the airfield.

\* \* \* \*

The above facts were gleaned from various notebooks, journals and papers deposited in the Royal Air Force College archives - there is no ONE definitive source. Indeed, as the College was officially closed and SFTS records were taken with them when they left in 1944, it is very difficult to piece together accurate details of College life 1939-1944.

# Notes Found on RAFC at War (2)

## CRANWELL

### COMMAND

21 Group Training Command 1939-40  
21 Group Flying Training Command 1940-45

### SATELLITE AIRFIELDS

Barkston Heath	1941-43
Fulbeck	1941-42
Caistor	1943-44
Wellingore	1943-45
Coleby Grange	1944-45

During the Second World War, Cranwell was one of the largest training centres in the RAF and housed up to 5000 personnel. Courses were conducted for both air crew and ground staff and large numbers of flying instructors, pilots and airborne wireless operators, as well as many crews for Coastal Command squadrons were trained here.

In September 1939 the RAF College and No 1 Electrical & Wireless School were the principal occupants of the Station. At the outbreak of war the College's Flying Wing was mobilised as a Service Flying Training School and was equipped with Audaxes, Hinds and Oxfords, plus a smaller number of Harts and Furies. As such it was split into Intermediate and Advanced Training Squadrons, and in the first six months of war part of the course was carried out by detachments at such stations as West Freugh and Warmwell where bombing and gunnery training was undertaken. During May 1940 Master Aircraft were introduced and in that fateful summer the school took on a further changeable appearance when it was rapidly reorganised, firstly to drop Advanced Training and double the Intermediate output in order to accelerate the flow of replacement pilots to the squadrons, and shortly afterwards to give up its single engined aircraft and concentrate on twin engined training with Oxfords. The Luftwaffe were not slow to realise the importance of the Station and several raids were made on Cranwell during June and September that year.

No 2 Flying Instructors' School was formed in September 1940 alongside the College SFTS for the purpose of training selected pilots as instructors which were urgently needed as the Air Force rapidly expanded. The new unit was equipped with Oxford and Tutor aircraft and after a few weeks was renamed No 2 Central Flying School. It quickly became an important unit in its own right, and moved out in June 1941 to a new airfield at Church Lawford.

The College SFTS meanwhile was growing both in size and importance, and by the Spring of 1941 was operating a fleet of over 150 Oxfords. To relieve the consequent congestion and facilitate night flying, Relief Landing Grounds were therefore brought into use at Fulbeck and Barkston Heath. In January 1942 the function of the unit was again changed to provide half single and half twin-engined training, and a number of Oxfords were replaced again by Master aircraft.

Pilots of many nationalities were a notable feature at Cranwell and in May 1942, for example, countries represented included Belgium, France and Turkey. British Army officers transferred to the RAF were also given training here. During 1943 Refresher Courses were introduced for pilots who had been on non-flying duties and during the latter half of the war a regular flow of Turkish aircrews passed through the School, and carried out an abridged operational training course on special flights of Spitfire and Blenheim aircraft. By 1943 the original Relief Landing Grounds at Fulbeck and Barkston Heath had been earmarked for development by Bomber Command and the satellite airfields at Caistor and Wellingore were taken over in their place. Coleby Grange airfield was also adopted as a relief landing ground in the autumn of 1944 when it had ceased to function as an operational night fighter station.

The SFTS was moved out of the College buildings in January 1944 and a few weeks later was redesignated 17 SFTS. Following the Invasion in June it was required to deal with increasing numbers of aircrew released from POW captivity and the training given to these pilots, as well as to aircrews from a number of countries overseas, including Iraq and Persia, formed the main duty of the unit in the last months of war. During this period the complement of Oxfords and Masters was augmented by Harvards, Blenheims and Spitfires and immediately before VE day the unit moved to Grantham (Spitalgate). Its place was taken by 19 FTS which commenced to form with Harvard aircraft on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1945.

The departure of No 2 CFS in June 1941 had meanwhile left room for the arrival of No 3 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit which was reformed at Cranwell in August as a lodger unit. Wellingtons and Whitleys formed the principal equipment of the unit, which also used a number of Ansons, and its function was to train crews for Operational Squadrons in Coastal Command.

In addition to conversion training on to large aircraft, the bombing and gunnery practice, the 3 OTU syllabus included long cross country and overseas training flights from Cranwell; one regular exercise route extended out to Rockall and required some 980 miles of flying.

It was a Whitley of 3 OTU which, during night flying on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1942, crashed into the roof at the west end of the College, killing its crew of three and causing extensive damage to the building. A year later the last Whitleys were withdrawn from service, and the unit received additional Wellingtons, some of which were equipped with Leigh Light equipment. No 3 OTU remained at Cranwell until June 1943 when it moved to Haverfordwest.

Returning to September 1939, Cranwell was also the home of No 1 Electrical and Wireless School, which was responsible for the training of airborne Wireless and Radar Operators and ground electrical and wireless tradesmen. The Schools' flying activities were carried out by the Signals Squadron, which in 1939 was mainly equipped with Wallace aircraft and was located on the North aerodrome. Other type

used included Magisters and DH 86s as well as one or two ancient Valentias, which continued in use as flying classrooms until the last was retired in February 1942.

The flying element of 1 E&WS became part of No 1 Signals School during a reorganisation in August 1940, and shortly afterwards its fleet of Wallaces was replaced by more modern Proctors. These bore the brunt of airborne W/OP training and were assisted by a smaller number of DH 86 and DH 89 aircraft. The unit was again redesignated in January 1943 becoming No 1 Radio School, but its functions and equipment remained the same and it continued its training programme until it was disbanded in May 1944.

Before the war Cranwell had become one of the first airfields to be equipped with a concrete runway, which was provided for the experimental long distance flights made by Wellesley aircraft in 1938. This facility subsequently proved valuable for trials of aircraft requiring a long take-off run, such as the massive Hamilcar glider which carried out some of its early flying from here. On 15<sup>th</sup> May 1941 an event of the utmost importance took place. On that day the Gloster E28/39 prototype was wheeled out of a guarded hangar and after running up its experimental jet engine took off from the runway for its flight. Though few were there to witness it at the time because of the need for top security, this was to be a historic moment not only for Cranwell but for the whole of British aviation. Trials with this aircraft continued at Cranwell and elsewhere and within two years a number of F9/40 development aircraft were ready for trials. One of these was also sent to Cranwell and on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1943 made its first flight here. Fourteen months later Meteors were joining the squadrons as the first jet aircraft to enter service in any of the allied Air Forces.

# Notes Found on RAFC at War (3)

## CRANWELL

### PRINCIPAL UNITS

From	Date	Unit	Aircraft	Mark	Code	Date	To
-	-	RAF College Service Flying Training School				20.3.44	Redesig
			Audax	(9.39-40)			
			Hind	(9.39-40)			
			Oxford	(9.39-3.44)			
			Hart	(9.39-40)			
			Fury	(9.39-40)			
			Master	(5.40-9.40) (1.42-3.44)			
			Spitfire	(43-3.44)			
			Blenheim I	(43-3.44)			
					det West Freugh	23.9-22.10.39	
					det West Freugh	6-21.12.39	
					det West Freugh	10.1-6.2.40	
					det Warmwell	21.2-6.4.40	
					det Warmwell	26.4-9.5.40	
					det Dumfries	25.8.43-9.43	
					det Dumfries	23.11.43-12.43	
				4			
RAFC SFTS	20.3.44	17 Service Flying Training School				1.5.45	Spitalgate
			Oxford	(3.44-5.45)			
			Master	(3.44-5.45)			
			Spitfire	(3.44-5.45)			
			Blenheim I	(3.44-5.45)			
			Harvard	(9.44-5.45)			
			Blenheim V	(3.45-5.45)			
-	-	1 Electrical and Wireless School				1.8.40	Redesig
			Wallace	(9.39-40)			
			Magister	(9.39-40)			
			Mentor	(9.39-40)			
			DH.86	(9.39-40)			
			Envoy	(9.39-40)			
			Valentia	(9.39-40)			
			Harvard	(9.39-40)			

## CRAIL

From	Date	Unit	Aircraft	Mark	Code	Date	To
1 E&WS	1.8.40	1 Signals School				1.1.43	Redesig
			Wallace	(8.40-40)			
			Proctor	(11.40-1.43)			
			DH. 86	(8.40-42)			
			Dominie	(40-1.43)			
			Valentia	(8.40-2.42)			
1 SS	1.1.43	1 Radio School				31.5.44	Disbanded
			Proctor	(1.43-5.44)			
			Dominie	(1.43-5.44)			
Formed	10.9.40	2 Flying Instructors School				14.11.40	Redesig
			Oxford	(9.40-11.40)			
			Tutor	(9.40-11.40)			
2 FIS	14.11.40	2 Central Flying School				15.6.41	Ch Lawfd
			Oxford	(11.40-6.41)			
			Tutor	(11.40-6.41)			
Reformed	6.8.41	3 Operational Training Unit				20-23.6.43	Havfdwest
			Wellington	(8.41-6.43)			
			Whitley	(8.41-4.43)			
				6			

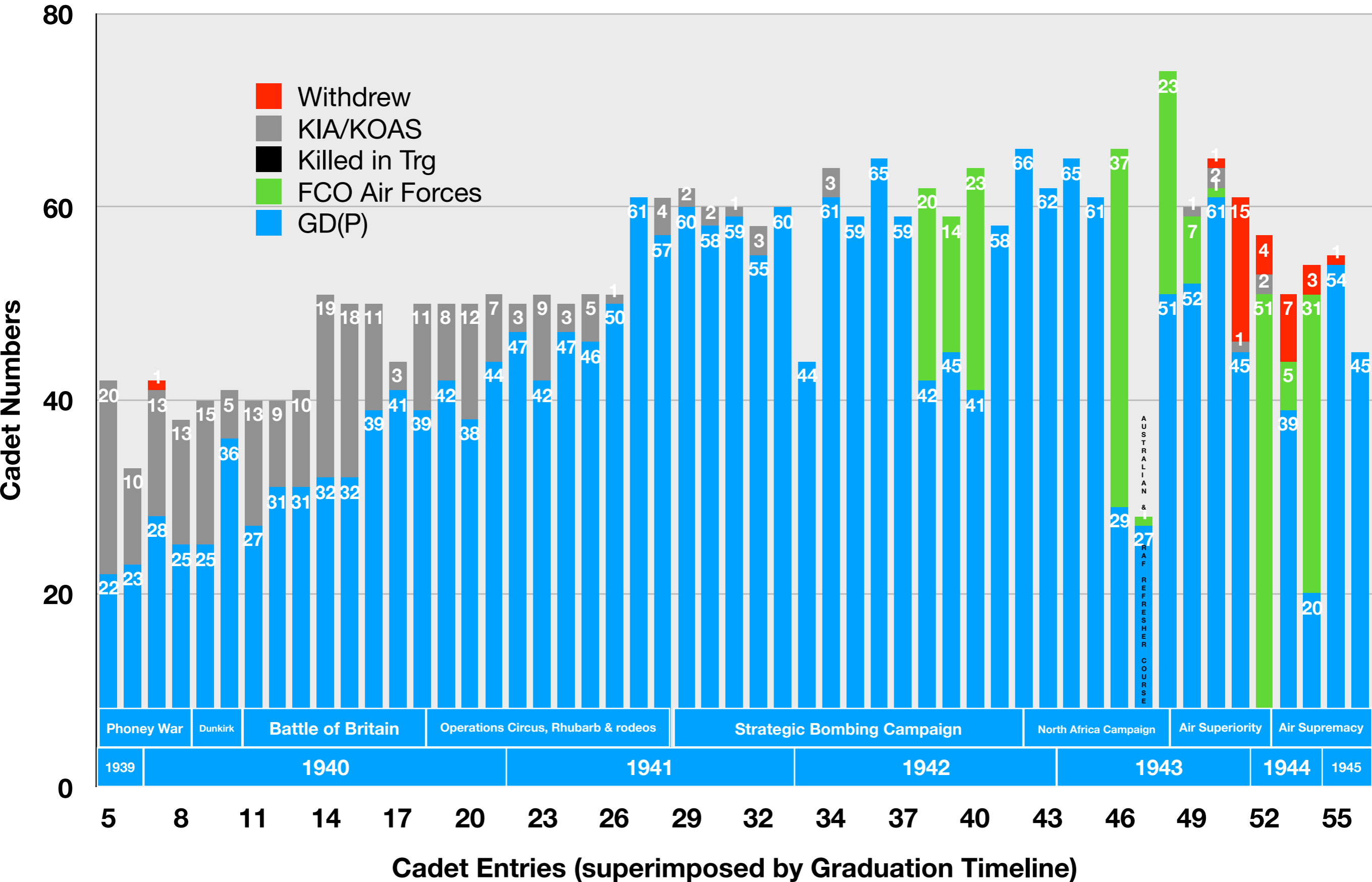
From	Date	Unit	Aircraft	Mark	Code	Date	To
			Anson	(8.41-4.43)			
			Lysander	(8.41-43)			
			Martinet	(43)			
					det Templeton	30.11.42-22.6.43	
Reformed	1.5.45	19 Flying Training School				-	-
			Harvard	(5.45)			
			Anson	(5.45)			
			Tiger Moth	(5.45)			

## OTHER UNITS

-	-	21 Group Communication Flight				44	Spitalgate
Shawbury	25.10.41	11 SFTS					
			Oxford	II		11.41	Shawbury
Snailwell	8.43	2 Heavy Glider Maintenance Unit				44	

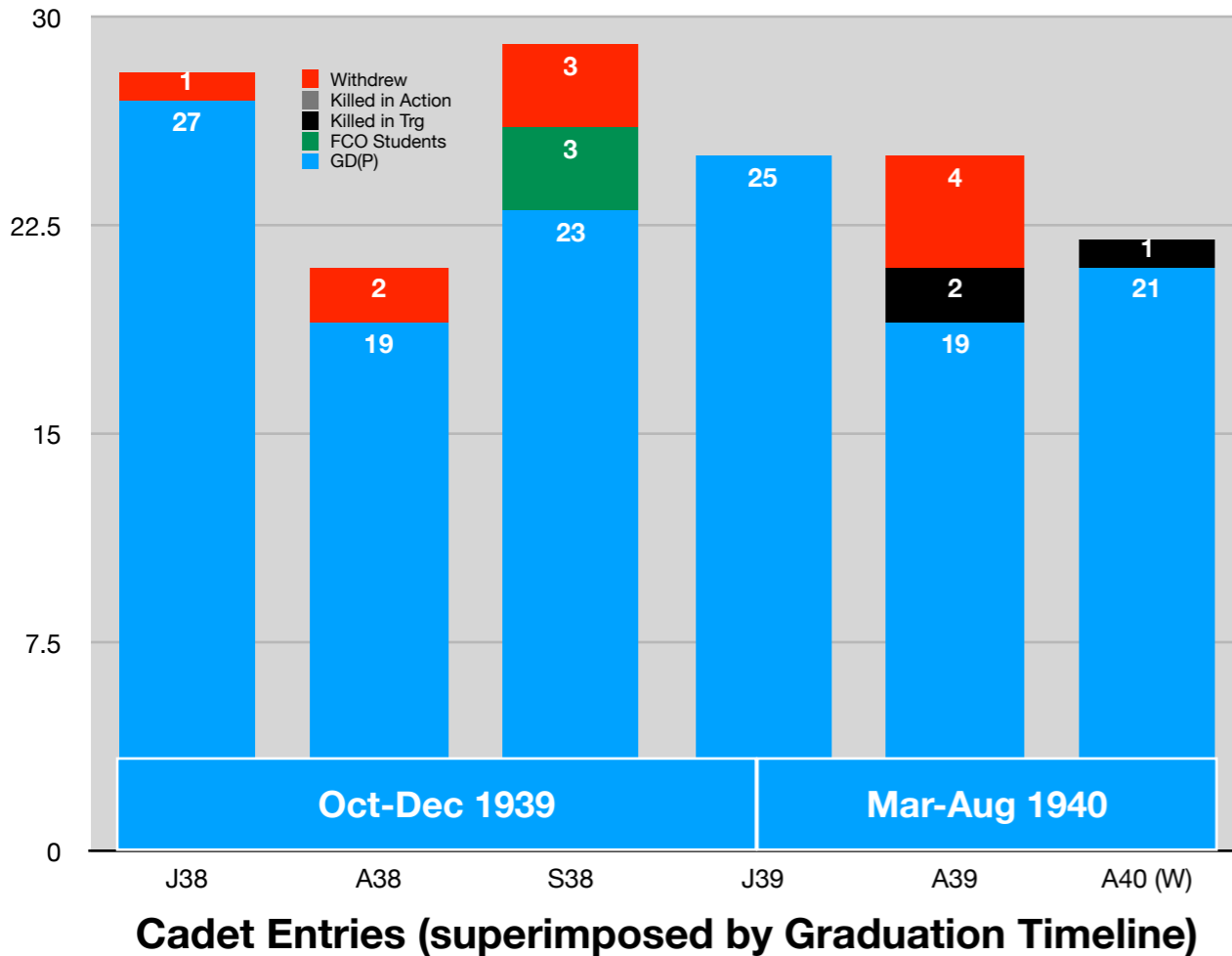
# War Year Training Statistics

SFTS Trainees 1939 - 1945



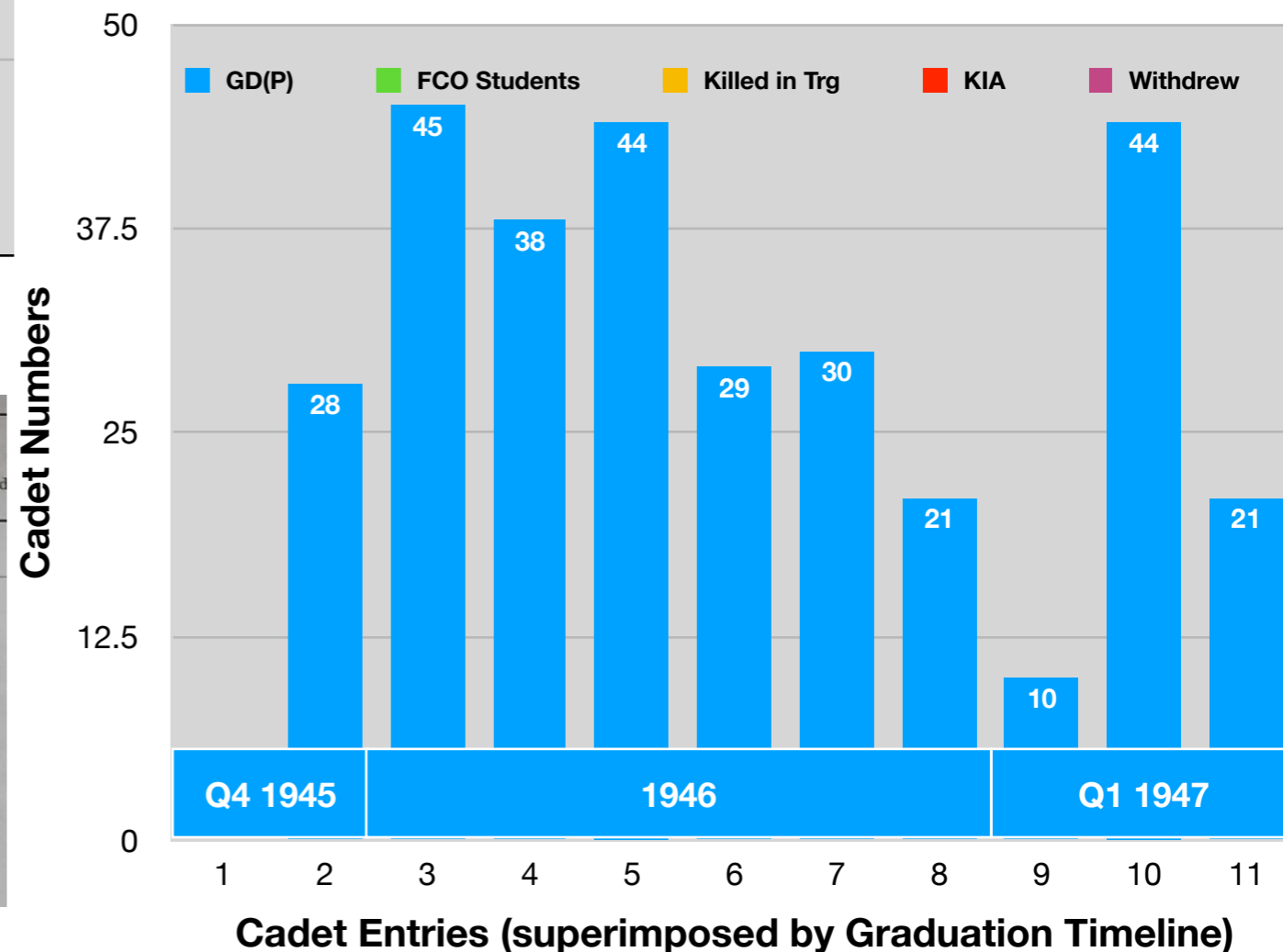
# Immediate Pre & Post War Year Training Statistics

## Cadet Graduations in the Early 1940s (Merged with Early SFTS Courses (1-4))



OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK			
of (Unit or Formation) NO. 17 S.F.T.S., SPITALGATE.		No. of pages used <i>14</i>	
Date	Time	Summary of Events	SECRET.
MAY	45		
1		No. 17 S.F.T.S. left Cranwell and moved to Spitalgate, Grantham.	
5		Half Day unfit flying.	
6		Half Day unfit flying.	
8		Victory in Europe Day. . . . Parade of whole Station at 09.00 hours and a broadcast given by Station Commander. . . . Remainder of day observed as a holiday and extended to 14.00 hours on 9th May, 1945. . . . . No. 17 Refresher Course terminated. . . . . No. 19 Refresher Course commenced.	
14		Canadian personnel on Unit left for repatriation. Half Day unfit flying.	

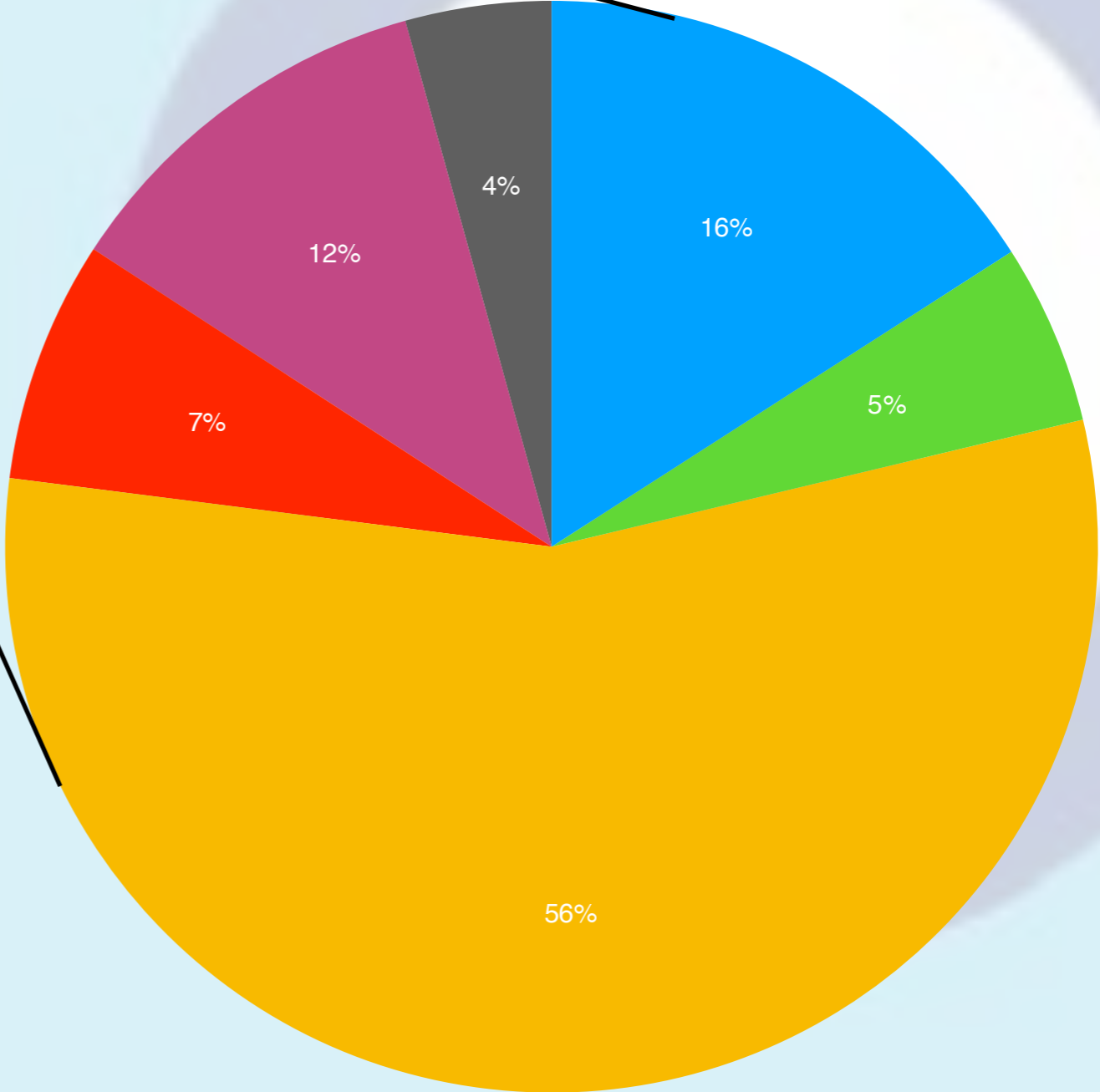
## 19 FTS Trainees 1945-47



OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK			
of (Unit or Formation) Station Headquarters, CRANWELL.		No. of pages used	
Place.	Date.	Time.	Summary of Events.
CRANWELL.	1.9.39.		Lieutenant T.A. Tindle assumes the duties of Station Defence Officer. Education Officers - members of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve - recalled for duty. Aerodrome Council School closed owing to evacuation.
	2.9.39.		Lighting restrictions introduced, and guards posted at entrances to the Station.
	3.9.39.		Receipt of message stating that War has been declared on Germany by the Allied Powers. Group Captain Strugnell, MC., posted to Command (A/Cadre Post). Royal Air Force College becomes a Flying Training School, and is self-controlled.

# An Overview

Training Scheme	Total Numbers
Flight Cadets	4,346
GE System	1,459
IOT	15,223
IOTC (Verified)	1,957
<b>Total Officer Cadet Records Held</b>	<b>22,985</b>
SFTS War Years	3,142
SERE Recorded	428
Projected IOTC/SERE (yet to be analysed)	1,479
<b>Total Number Recorded</b>	<b>28,034</b>



- Flight Cadet Sub-Total
- GE Sub-Total
- IOT Sub-Total
- IOTC Sub-Total
- SFTS Sub-Total
- IOTC