RAF COLLEGE CRANWELL
“Tour Guide Presentation”

Chapter 5 - The Library

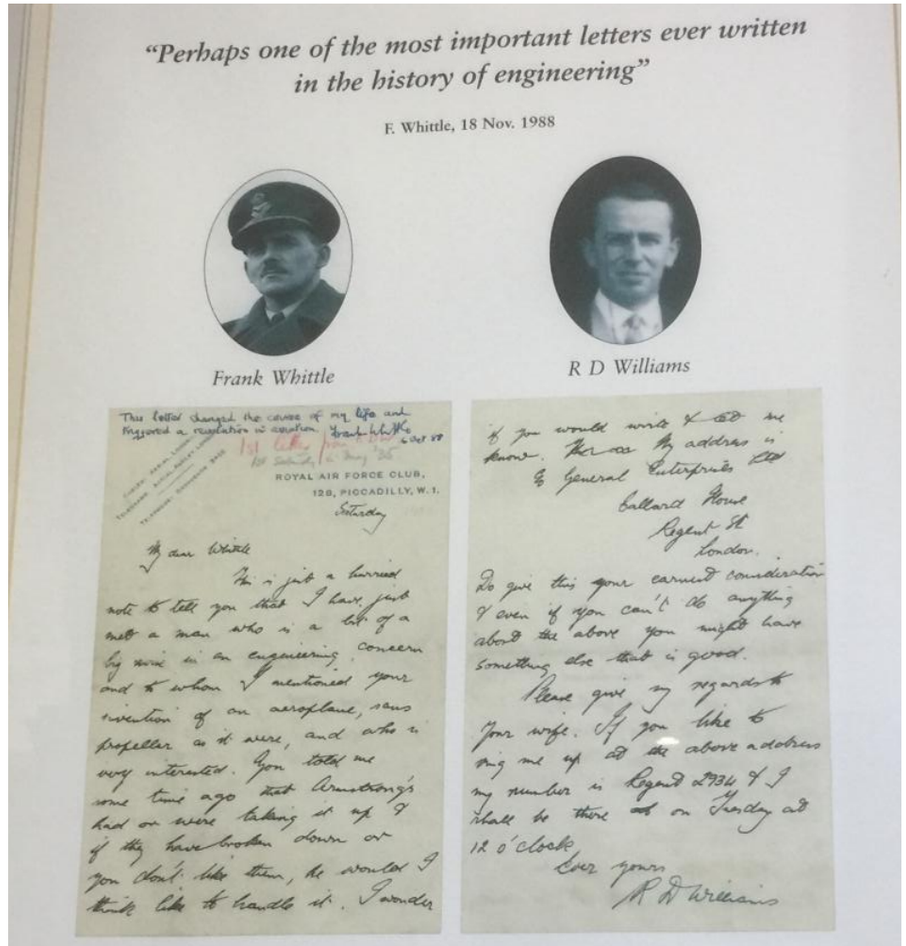
Mahogany Bombers - Sir Frank Whittle's

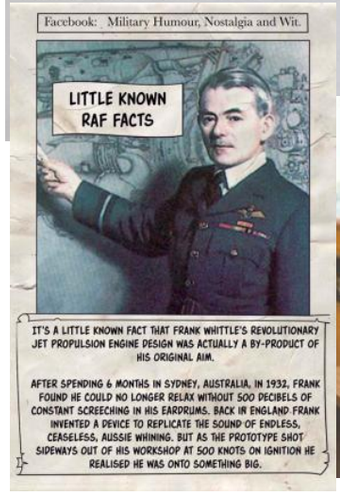
Sir Frank Whittle is the RAF College's most distinguished academic cadet. His desk can be seen at the entrance to the College library where you will also find many items of interest relating to Sir Frank's achievements as the inventor of the jet engine.

Whilst a teenager at Cranwell, he published his first printed theory of jet propulsion in the Cranwell Journal of Autumn 1928. Our chief educational block to the west of the College is named Whittle Hall in his memory and a replica of the prototype jet engine stands in the entrance to this building. An extract from his paper is exhibited outside the Commandant's Meeting Room at the back of the College Hall library.

To the right of this slide is a letter exhibited in the RAF Club. It shows that Whittle, despite the knock-backs from officialdom in Whitehall, received support from RD Williams and ultimately Power Jets Ltd, to pursue his theories and to develop the turbo-jet engine for the Gloster E28/39, which flew at Cranwell for the first time on 15 May 1941. As Whittle's hand-written note acknowledges, the letter from RD Williams was to change the course of Whittle's life.

And Sir Frank Whittle very recently featured on social media, Facebook, with a light hearted explanation of why he was motivated to invent the jet engine.





Mahogany Bombers - MRAF Sir Arthur Harris's

Sir Arthur 'Bomber' Harris was a much loved C-in-C by his bomber crews, despite losing half of them during WW II. He was given the loosest of briefs to destroy Nazi Germany with strategic air power and, with the support of the USAF, he remained wedded to the belief that Germany could be destroyed from the air.

However, his philosophy of 'area bombing' did not meet with universal approval and, despite attritional successes throughout WW II, he lost the full support of Churchill who saw the war being won on two land fronts - the Western Front launched on 'D-day' and the Eastern Front being waged by Stalin's Soviet forces. Historian Max Hastings gives a very good account of the tensions within the RAF and between British and American forces as the strategic air power gave way to tactical air power in support of an integrated campaign on the Western Front.

Notwithstanding, the contribution made by Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris during our darkest years cannot go understated and he remains one of our greatest air commanders ever.

In an interview with the then Gp Capt Tony Mason - later AVM Professor Mason - Sir Arthur was to reiterate his determination, from the 'shower of directives', to take the war to the enemy and defeat him on his home ground.

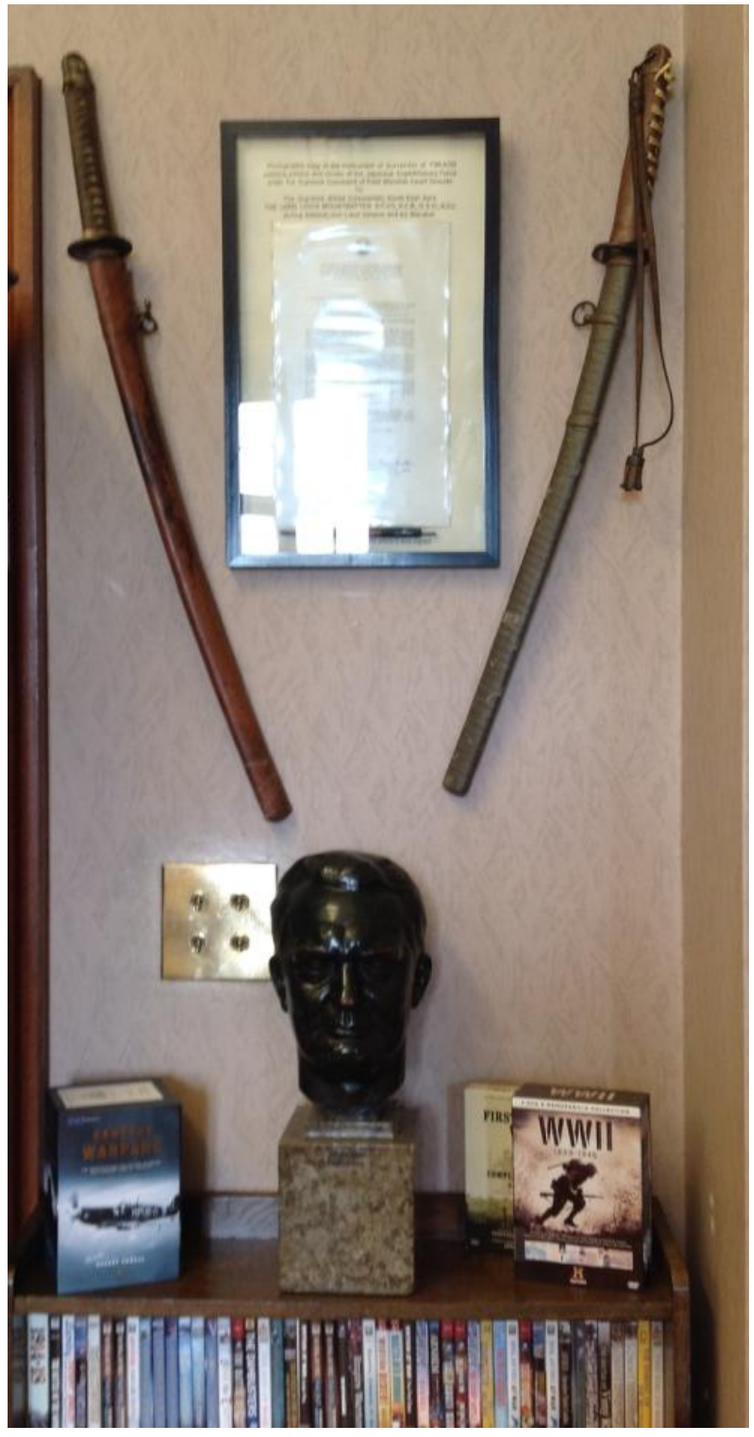
Enemy Trophies

With his eye on the RAF College as a potential HQ, Goering sanctioned the presentation of two charcoal and chalk drawings of Richthofen and, his mentor, Boelcke; the College responded with two of its own WW1 fighter aces, Captain Albert Ball VC and Major Mick Mannock VC.

Offered as a gift to encourage mutual respect to “avert war”, the two drawings were presented during a visit by General Milch in 1938 and have remained here ever since. It is thought that these drawings are copies of originals retained by Germany, but lost when Soviet forces closed in on Berlin to force the German surrender.

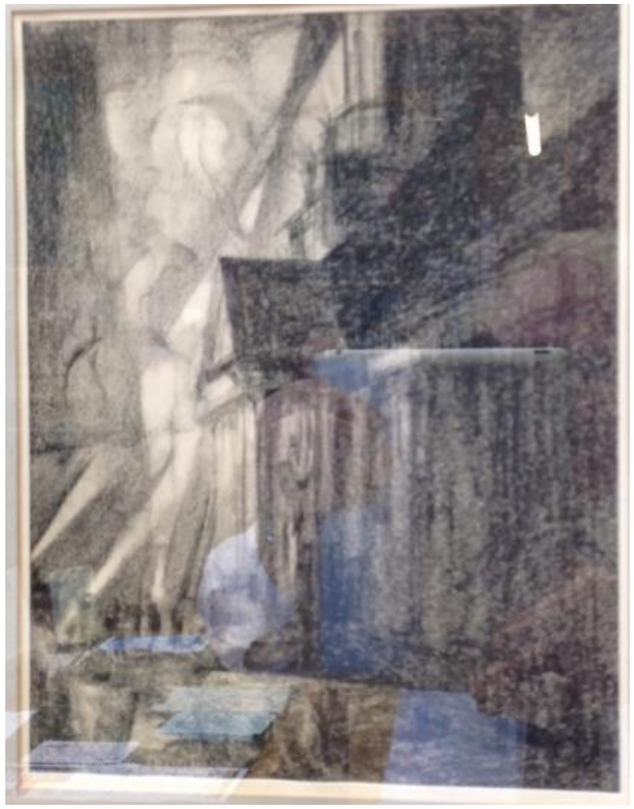
A bust of Goering was presented at the same time and, surviving a temporary deployment to a skip, is located in the library, below the Japanese Document of Surrender.

To the right of these drawings, flanked by two Samurai swords, is a copy of the Japanese Document of Surrender accepted on the Allies’ behalf by Earl Mountbatten. It is displayed with one of the fountain pens actually used to sign the Surrender Treaty

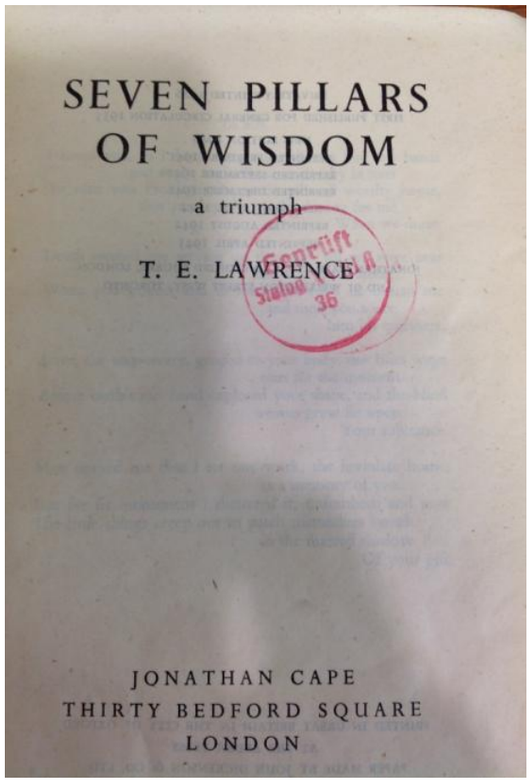


‘Wizard Prang’

The Whitley Bomber which crashed at Cranwell on 18 March 1942 caused the only damage to College Hall throughout the war period. The three crew members of the aircraft were sadly killed in the accident, but the personnel who would have been sleeping in the building later that night were spared injury as they were at the cinema at the time of the crash. The pictures show the incident itself and the various stages of repair to the College buildings. The brass engine plate recovered from the wreckage of the aircraft is also displayed.



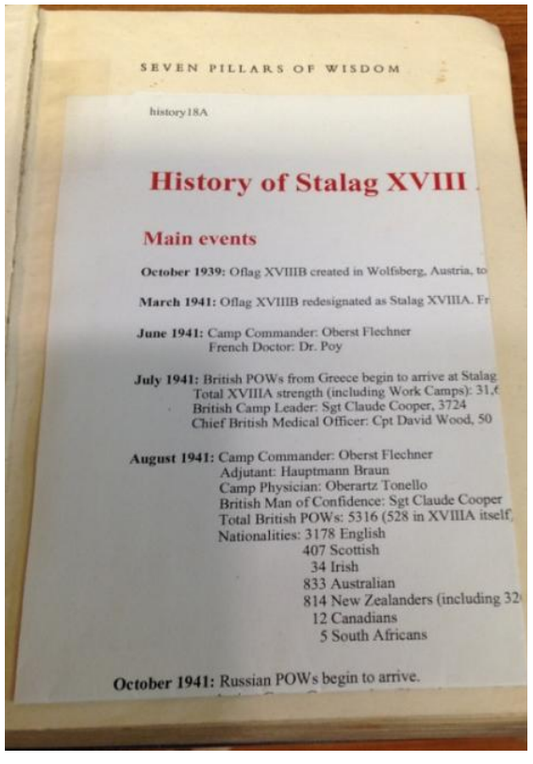
TE Lawrence (aka AC Shaw)


SEVEN PILLARS
OF WISDOM

a triumph

T. E. LAWRENCE

JONATHAN CAPE
THIRTY BEDFORD SQUARE
LONDON


SEVEN PILLARS OF WISDOM

history18A

History of Stalag XVIII

Main events

October 1939: Oflag XVIIIB created in Wolfsberg, Austria, to

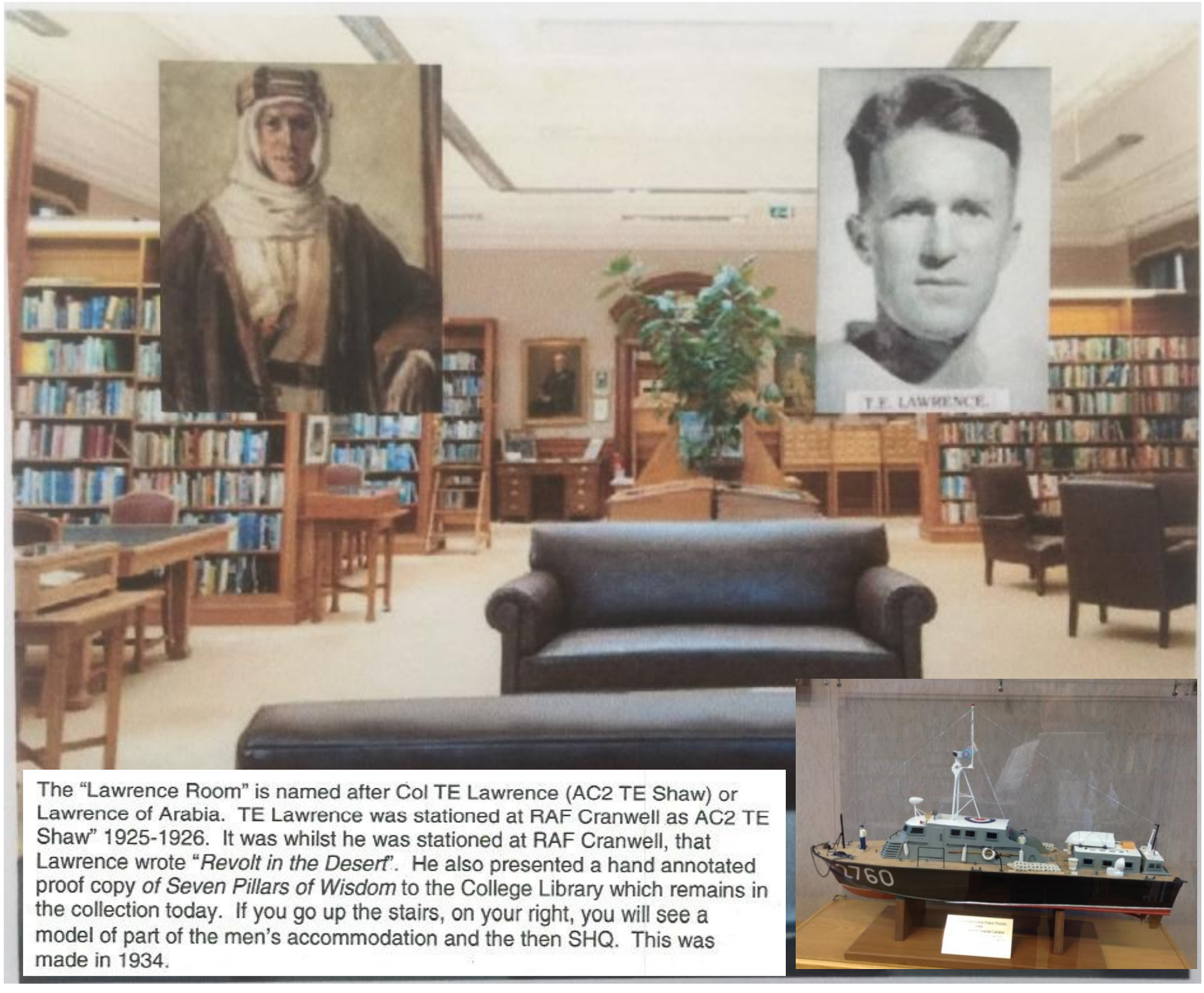
March 1941: Oflag XVIIIB redesignated as Stalag XVIIIA. Fr

June 1941: Camp Commander: Oberst Flechner
French Doctor: Dr. Poy

July 1941: British POWs from Greece begin to arrive at Stalag
Total XVIIIA strength (including Work Camps): 31,
British Camp Leader: Sgt Claude Cooper, 3724
Chief British Medical Officer: Cpt David Wood, 50

August 1941: Camp Commander: Oberst Flechner
Adjutant: Hauptmann Braun
Camp Physician: Oberartz Tonello
British Man of Confidence: Sgt Claude Cooper
Total British POWs: 5316 (528 in XVIIIA itself
Nationalities: 3178 English
407 Scottish
34 Irish
833 Australian
814 New Zealanders (including 32
12 Canadians
5 South Africans

October 1941: Russian POWs begin to arrive.



The "Lawrence Room" is named after Col TE Lawrence (AC2 TE Shaw) or Lawrence of Arabia. TE Lawrence was stationed at RAF Cranwell as AC2 TE Shaw" 1925-1926. It was whilst he was stationed at RAF Cranwell, that Lawrence wrote "*Revolt in the Desert*". He also presented a hand annotated proof copy *of Seven Pillars of Wisdom* to the College Library which remains in the collection today. If you go up the stairs, on your right, you will see a model of part of the men's accommodation and the then SHQ. This was made in 1934.

The Dowding Letter

The College library displays a copy of the original letter sent by ACM Sir Hugh Dowding to the PUS for Air, expressing his concern about the continued use of his fighter force in a beleaguered France and seeking its retention for the Battle of Britain which he foresaw.

In the film *Battle of Britain*, the opening sequence shows the PUS interviewing Dowding on receipt of this historic and 'game changing' letter. You may recall the script as the PUS challenged Dowding, "You realise, Dowding, the Prime Minister will have to see this." To which Dowding, played by Laurence Olivier, responded without flinching, "That's why I wrote it."

HEADQUARTERS, FIGHTER COMMAND,
ROYAL AIR FORCE,
BENTLEY PRIORY,
STANMORE,
MIDDLESEX.

Reference :— FC/S.19048.

16th Sep, 1940.

Sir,

I have the honour to refer to the very serious calls which have recently been made upon the home defence fighter units in an attempt to stem the German invasion on the Continent.

2. I hope and believe that our Armies may yet be victorious in France and Belgium, but we have to face the possibility that they may be defeated.

3. In this case I presume that there is no-one who will deny that England should fight on, even though the remainder of the Continent of Europe is dominated by the Germans.

4. For this purpose it is necessary to retain some minimum fighter strength in this country and I must request that the Air Council will inform me what they consider this minimum strength to be, in order that I may make my dispositions accordingly.

5. I would remind the Air Council that the last estimate which they made as to the force necessary to defend this country was 52 Squadrons, and my strength has now been reduced to the equivalent of 36 Squadrons.

6. Once a decision has been reached as to the limit on which the Air Council and the Cabinet are prepared to stake the existence of the country, it should be made clear to the Allied Commanders on the Continent that not a single aeroplane from Fighter Command beyond the limit will be sent across the Channel, no matter how desperate the situation may become.

7. It will, of course, be remembered that the estimate of 52 Squadrons was based on the assumption that the attack would come from the eastwards except in so far as the defences might be outflanked in flight. We have now to face the possibility that attacks may come from Spain or even from the North coast of France. The result is that our line is very much extended at the same time as our resources are reduced.

8. I must point out that within the last few days the equivalent of 10 Squadrons have been sent to France, that the Hurricane Squadrons remaining in this country are seriously depleted, and that the more squadrons which are sent to France the higher will be the wastage and the more insistent the demands for reinforcements.

/I....

The Under Secretary of State,
Air Ministry,
LONDON, W.C.2.

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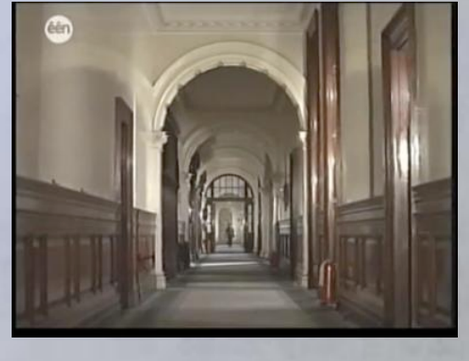
9. I must therefore request that as a matter of paramount urgency the Air Ministry will consider and decide what level of strength if to be left to the Fighter Command for the defence of this country, and will assure me that when this level has been reached, not one fighter will be sent across the Channel however urgent and insistent the appeals for help may be.

10. I believe that, if an adequate fighter force is kept in this country, if the fleet remains in being, and if Home Forces are suitably organised to resist invasion, we should be able to carry on the war single handed for some time, if not indefinitely. But, if the Home Defence Force is drained away in desperate attempts to remedy the situation in France, defeat in France will involve the final, complete and irremediable defeat of this country.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient Servant,

H.R.H.J. Dowding

Air Chief Marshal,
Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief,
Fighter Command, Royal Air Force.