

*No. 1 Radio School*

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*50th  
Anniversary*

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**1943 - 1993**

**NUMBER ONE RADIO SCHOOL has a proud history which has its origin in the days even before the Royal Air Force itself was formed.** My own modest contribution to this story was as an Aircraft Apprentice on the 50th Entry at Cranwell from 1945 to 1948. I have many happy memories of that time and I know that I owe much to the School and its dedicated staff of the day. I believe that the effectiveness of the all-round training given by the School throughout the whole of the time that it has existed, can be directly measured by the successes achieved, both within and outside the service, by so many of its former trainees.

I applaud the initiative of the School in publishing this booklet, which tells an important but little known story in the parallel development of the Royal Air Force and the complex world of electronics.

I send my best wishes to the School on its fiftieth birthday.

*Keith Williamson*

*Marshal of the Royal Air Force*

*Sir Keith Williamson*

*GCB AFC*

It is hard to believe that as recently as 1895 Marconi made the first radio transmission across one mile of English countryside. Now, less than one hundred years later, communications systems are an integral part of all our lives, with the technology which allows us to receive data from satellites thousands of miles out in space available in our own homes through the television set.



**Group Captain  
C.M. Davison  
BSc MIEE MIMgt  
RAF**

By the end of the First World War, radio had already established itself as a vital adjunct to the conduct of military operations, but it was at sea and in the air that the greatest potential was seen. For the Royal Navy the ability to communicate with distant ships using High Frequency signals was the first step in 'shrinking' the globe, which the advent of long distance air travel would bring to fruition. For the newly formed Royal Air Force too, HF radio opened up contacts with the far flung outposts of the Empire in a way never before possible, and shorter range communications with, and between, aircraft held obvious benefits, for the efficient conduct of day-to-day air operations as well as for the prosecution of war.

After the First World War radio systems continued to develop, but HF morse was still considered the state of the art. However, the invention of radar in 1936 by Robert Watson-Watt opened up a completely new discipline in the world of signals, which provided the impetus for the exploitation of the frequency spectrum beyond the few kilocycles of the early experimenters to the gigahertz of the modern, high definition radar. As with many other areas of advanced technology, the defence imperative was the spur to rapid progress. The constant striving for advantage, the cycle of measure and counter-measure, during World War

Two produced remarkable developments in electronics and laid the foundations for the communications and radar technologies we know today.

New technologies require new skills, and the Royal Air Force training system has made a major contribution to the corporate knowledge and expertise of this country in the disciplines which are now seen as vital to our economic future. This year is the 50th Anniversary of No. 1 Radio School, but important though that landmark is it celebrates just one evolution in the unbroken history of a training organisation which pre-dates the formation of the Royal Air Force. The training the School and its predecessors have provided over nearly eighty years to countless thousands of men and women has exactly paralleled all those exciting and important developments in communications and radar. The story of the School also embraces the history of Apprentice training in the Royal Air Force, a personal legacy of Lord Trenchard which sadly comes to an end in 1993.

This booklet, although celebrating the Golden Anniversary of No. 1 Radio School, would not be complete without mention of the period 1915-1943 and the early days of Royal Air Force Station Locking. What follows is less of a definitive history, more a collection of memories and anecdotes. Whether you trained at the School, served on the staff or just have an interest in a relatively unsung part of the history of the Royal Air Force in its 75th Anniversary year, I hope you enjoy this souvenir.

*Group Captain C M Davison  
Commandant No. 1 Radio School*

*One busy afternoon whilst diligently discharging my duties as a Flight Commander I was woken to be told I had been volunteered to write the No. 1 Radio School 50th Anniversary Booklet. My delight had no bounds, and I raced off to the Station Museum with the speed of a striking sloth to begin my research.*

*The main purpose of this Booklet is to outline the history of No. 1 Radio School from its formation to the present day. However, claiming this booklet as a definitive history of the School would be presumptuous as a number of major historical events occurred during this period, only a selection of which are covered here.*

*It would also be inexcusable if there was no mention of the history of RAF Locking; it has hosted No. 1 Radio School for over forty-two years. Although it has no runways and lacks the noise and glamour of a military airfield, RAF Locking has made a vital contribution to training in the Royal Air Force since 1939.*

*Every effort has been made to avoid a long winded, chronological account of the historical facts, but also to ensure the accuracy of the information included. Thank you for purchasing this booklet; the proceeds will be donated to RAF charities.*

*Flying Officer G. Gidda RAF,*

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## THE ORIGINS OF THE SCHOOL

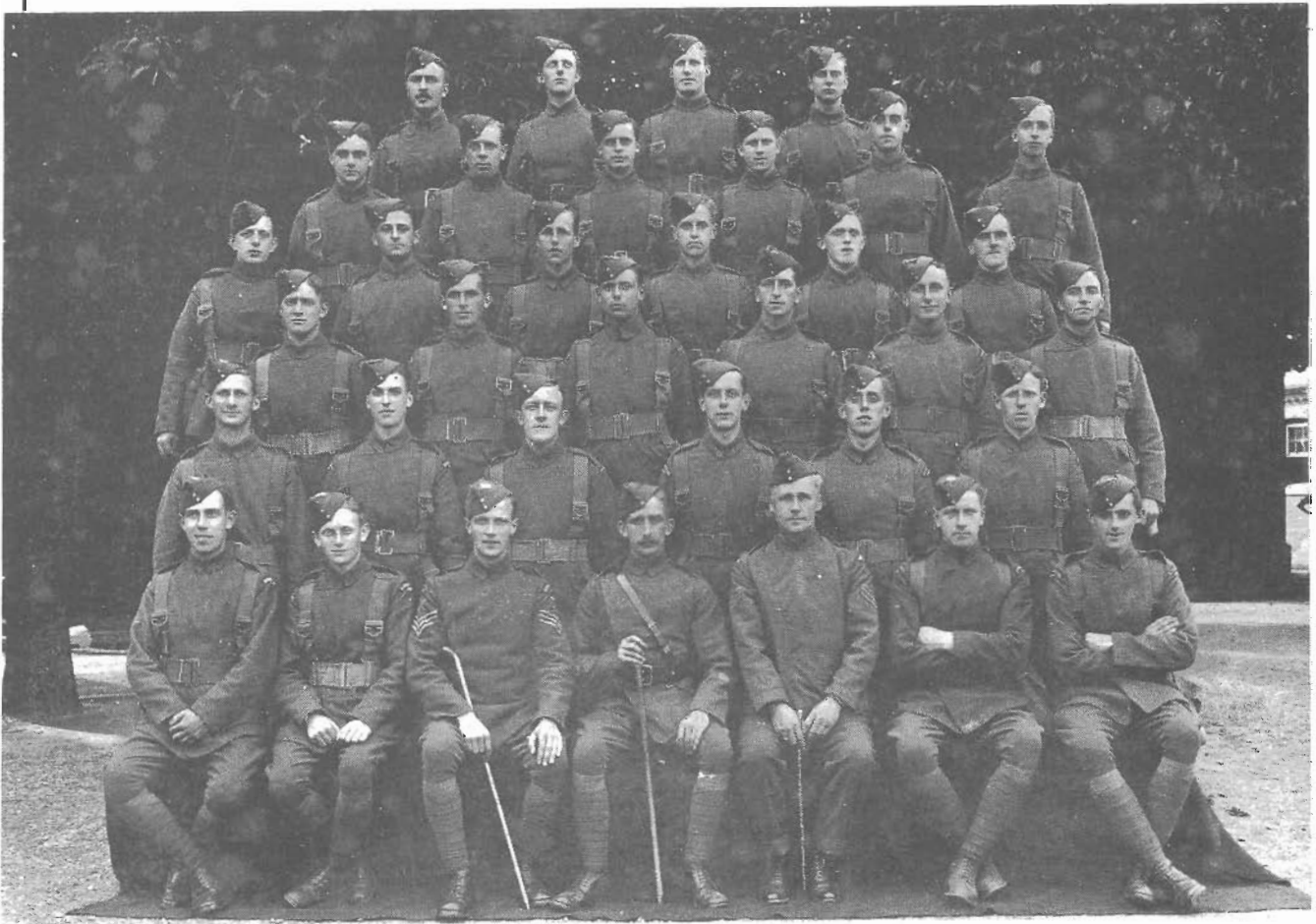
**W**hen the Royal Flying Corps was formed by Royal Warrant on 13th April 1912, officers were drawn from both the Army and the Royal Navy. In the early stages of the First World War the need was identified to train men of the Royal Flying Corps as wireless operators and mechanics, and by January 1915 instruction in the field was being undertaken by No. 9 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps at St Omer in France. In April of that year the squadron disbanded in France and, under its commander, Captain H.C.T. Dowding (later Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding), was re-formed at Brooklands to continue its wireless training task. Before the end of the year the squadron moved to the Town Hall, South Farnborough where it became the School for Wireless Operators. In December 1916 the school moved to

Blenheim Barracks, South Farnborough where it was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel J.B. Bowen, OBE (later Air Commodore Bowen).

Wireless was first used on counter Battery work in 1915. Most pilots would not use telephony because of the distorted speech so R/T seems to have been shelved. The Stirling Spark Gap Transmitter, developed by the Royal Navy, was the main aircraft transmitter in use at this time. Reception generally relied on a portable 30 foot mast for the aerial. This was the 'state of the art' when the Royal Air Force was created on 1st April 1918.

In November 1918, the Wireless Operators' School was transferred to the Royal Air Force, and in early 1919 it moved to

**The School for  
Wireless Operators,  
Royal Flying Corps.  
Aldershot, June 1917**



Flowerdown, near Winchester, and was re-titled No. 1 (T) Wireless School. At Flowerdown operators were taught Morse Code with a requirement to send and receive up to 25 words per minute. Semaphore was also taught; it was ideal for close proximity line of sight communication where the use of Morse would have been overkill. The wireless school curriculum also included the principles of the thermionic valve, tuneable wavemeter and continuous wave transmissions.

In July 1919, the badge was again changed to the Electrical and Wireless School. The short, intensive training courses necessary during the war were replaced by more comprehensive courses lasting 22 weeks. Shortly after the War the Aircraft Apprentice Training Scheme was introduced by Lord Trenchard, and in January 1922 apprenticeships began at the Electrical and Wireless School, the majority of the apprentices being trained as Wireless Operators/Mechanics with the remainder

as Electricians and Instrument Makers.

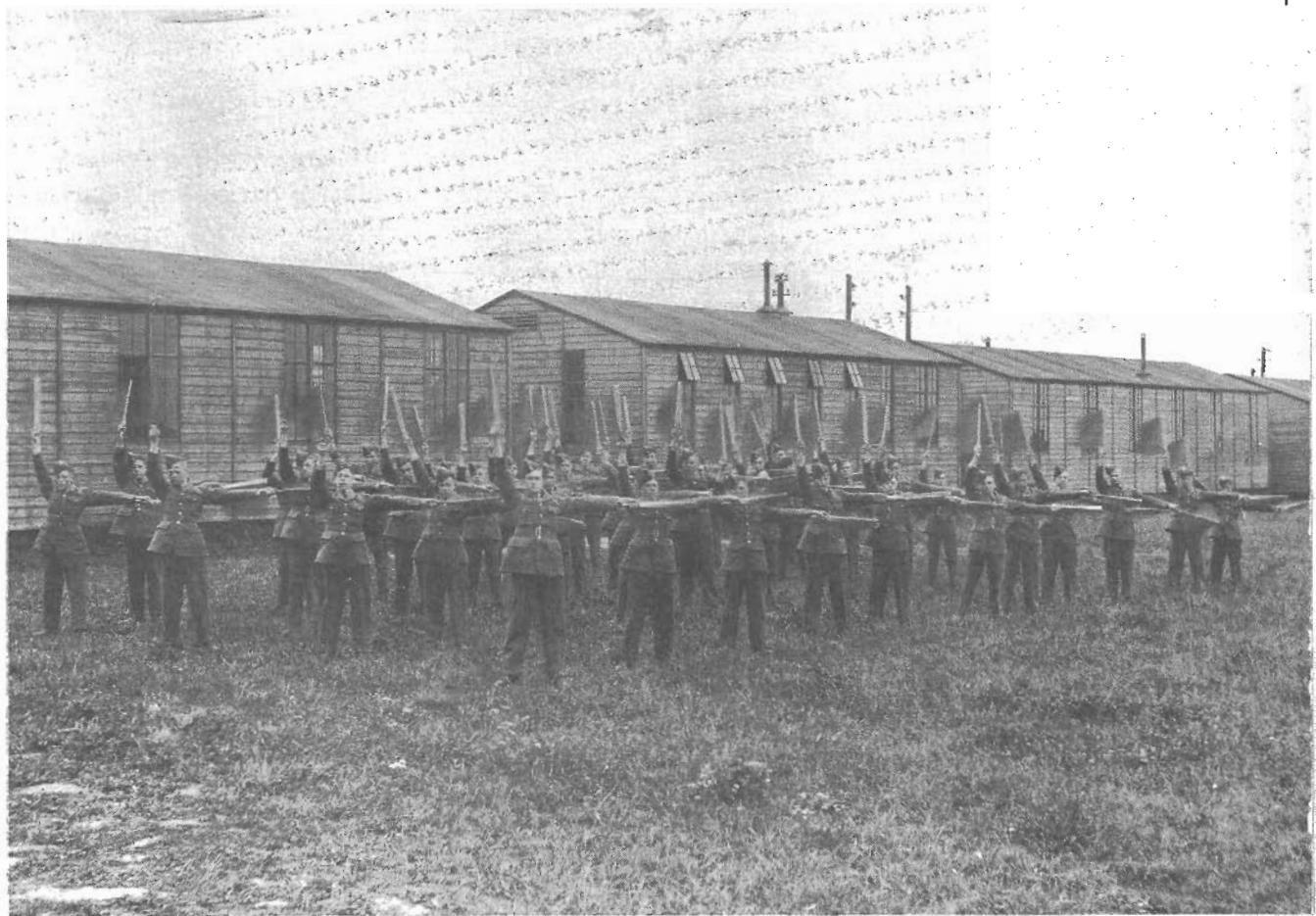
In September 1929, the Electrical and Wireless School re-opened for business at Cranwell, having been transferred from Flowerdown during August. Happily, Flowerdown is still a military establishment, having been handed on to the Royal Navy in 1930 as HMS Flowerdown and then the Army in the early 1960s. . . don't they get all our Stations in the end? Flowerdown is now known as Winchester Flowerdown Military and is the Light Division Depot for the Army. It is still a training school for the Light Infantry, Royal Military Police, Royal Greenjackets and the Army Logistics Corps. Some £25 million has been spent on it recently, so its future would seem as-



**Air Chief Marshal  
Sir Hugh Dowding**



**Semaphore class  
under instruction**



	RAF ca 1924 - ca 1941	Civil ca 1935 - ca 1945	RAF ca 1941 - April 1943	RAF April 1943 - 1956	Civil 1951 - 1956	RAF/Civil 1956 - Date
A	AC	Amsterdam	Apple	Able-Afirm	Alfa	Alfa
B	Beer	Baltimore	Beer	Baker	Bravo	Bravo
C	Charlie	Casablanca	Charlie	Charlie	Coca	Charlie
D	Don	Danemark	Dog	Dog	Delta	Delta
E	Edward	Edison	Edward	Easy	Echo	Echo
F	Freddie	Florida	Freddy	Fox	Foxtrot	Foxtrot
G	George	Gallipoli	George	George	Golf	Golf
H	Harry	Havana	Harry	How	Hotel	Hotel
I	Ink	Italia	Ink	Item/Interrogatory	India	India
J	Johnnie	Jerusalem	Jug/Johnny	Jig/Johnny	Juliett	Juliett
K	King	Kilogramme	King	King	Kilo	Kilo
L	London	Liverpool	Love	Love	Lima	Lima
M	Monkey	Madagascar	Mother	Mike	Metro	Mike
N	Nuts	New York	Nuts	Nab/Negat	Nectar	November
O	Orange	Oslo	Orange	Oboe	Oscar	Oscar
P	Pip	Paris	Peter	Peter/Prep	Papa	Papa
Q	Queen	Quebec	Queen	Queen	Quebec	Quebec
R	Robert	Roma	Roger/Robert	Roger	Romeo	Romeo
S	Sugar	Santiago	Sugar	Sugar	Sierra	Sierra
T	Toc	Tripoli	Tommy	Tare	Tango	Tango
U	Uncle	Upsala	Uncle	Uncle	Union	Uniform
V	Vic	Valencia	Vic	Victor	Victor	Victor
W	William	Washington	William	William	Whiskey	Whiskey
X	X-ray	Xanthippe	X-ray	X-ray	Extra	X-ray
Y	Yorker	Yokohama	Yoke/Yorker	Yoke	Yankee	Yankee
Z	Zebra	Zurich	Zebra	Zebra	Zulu	Zulu

Source AP 1081	Source AP 1529	Source	Source AP 1970	Source ICAO, 1/11/51	Source ICAO, 1/3/56
AP 1713		Tee Emm 1944	AP 2528Y AP 3032	R Aero Club Gazette	R Aero Club Gazette

Most apprentices seem to have experienced some shock, or even dismay, in their first impressions of Cranwell. However, few admitted to home sickness and even fewer would contemplate the loss of face if they tried to buyout at that stage. The apprentices had to attend church parades which were held most Sundays. When the popular hymn 'The Church's One Foundation' was being sung, the old Service parody was usually substituted.

Here it is, suitably edited :

*We are the Royal Air Force  
No Blessed Good are We,  
The only time we fly-y  
Is to Breakfast, Dinner and Tea.  
And when we draw  
Deferred Pay,*

*We shout with all our might,*

*Per Ardua, Ad Astra,  
Hard luck George, I'm alright.*

**The Phonetic Alphabet A Chronology**

ured. Remarkably, also, the Flowerdown Apprentices Association is still going strong and has an annual reunion. None of its members is under 80 years of age!





























**The Semaphore Code**

During the 1930s there were several re-organisations of the School and of the trades it trained. Officers' Signals

Courses were provided and the numbers of trainees and apprentices increased as a result of the Royal Air Force Expansion Scheme of 1934. In November 1938 the School again changed its title, becoming No. 1 Electrical and Wireless School on the creation of a second school at Yatesbury which undertook the training of our wireless operators.

George, of course, was King George V, and the meaning of that last line is that having drawn all their 'credits' they were going home on leave and could forget all about the Service for a while . . . Are things really any different today?

With the outbreak of the 1939 war, other schools came into being as the training load increased. Together with No. 1 at Cranwell and No. 2 at Yatesbury, they were re-named, Signals Schools. No. 3 was formed at Compton Bassett in 1940 and No. 4 at Madley in 1941. Radar schools were also set up and, to confuse the issue, they were called Radio Schools. This was resolved at the end of 1942 when the separate nomenclature of Signals and Radio Schools was abolished, and they were all renamed Radio Schools, renumbering where necessary. Altogether fifteen such schools were in use during the War, some heavily involved in

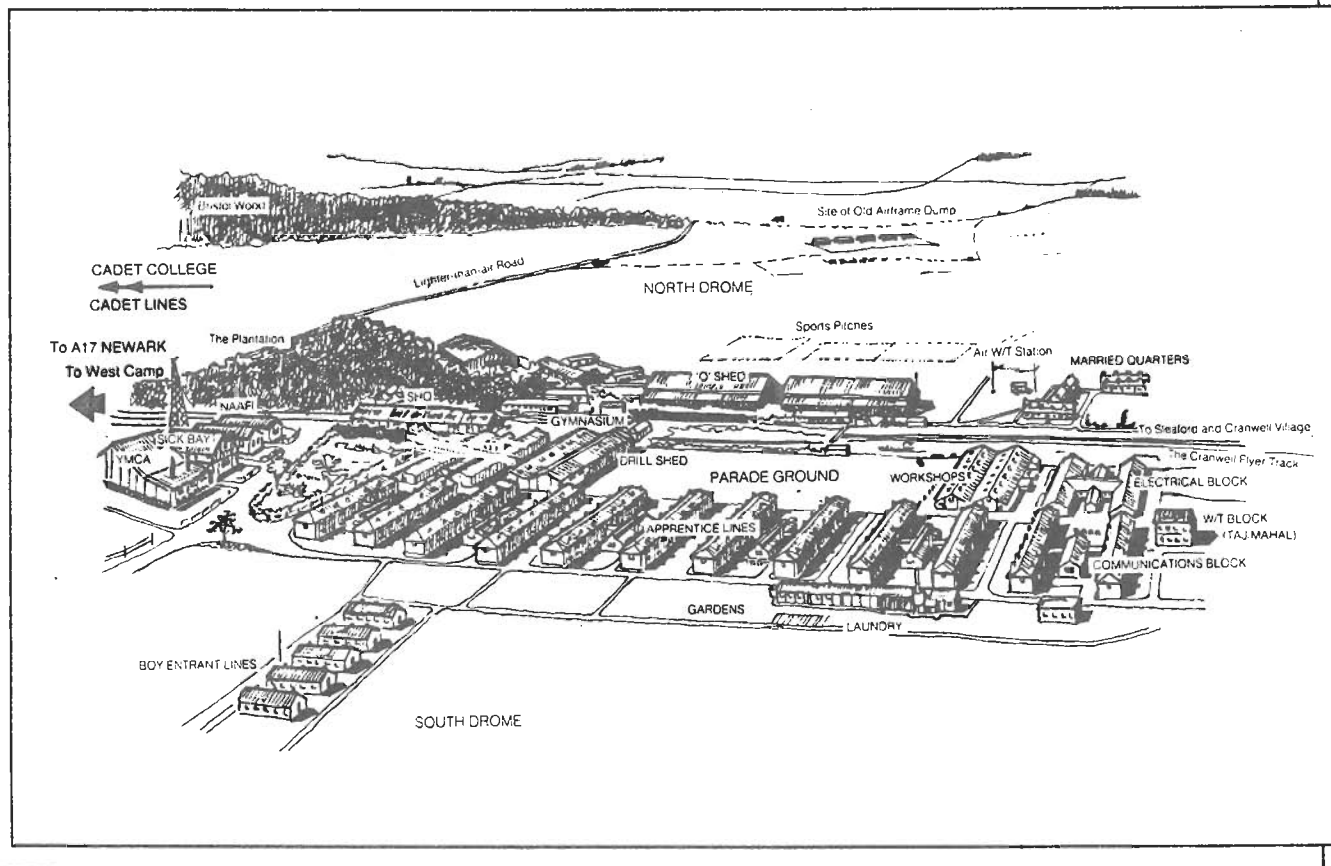
 A 1 <sup>st</sup> CIRCLE	 H 2 <sup>nd</sup> CIRCLE	 P	 ERASE
 B	 I	 Q	 NUMERICAL SIGN
 C	 K	 O	 JALPHABETICAL SIGN
 D	 L	 S 3 <sup>rd</sup> CIRCLE	 V 5 <sup>th</sup> CIRCLE
 E	 M	 T 4 <sup>th</sup> CIRCLE	 W 6 <sup>th</sup> CIRCLE
 F	 N 2 <sup>nd</sup> CIRCLE	 U	 X 5 <sup>th</sup> CIRCLE
 G 1 <sup>st</sup> CIRCLE	 O 3 <sup>rd</sup> CIRCLE	 Y	 Z 7 <sup>th</sup> CIRCLE

training large numbers of aircrew over a long period, others for relatively small numbers and perhaps for short periods only. The full list of the Schools and locations during the second half of the war is shown in the panel on the right. No. 1 Radio School as we know it therefore came into being in January 1943. It is interesting to note that a No. 1 Radio School had been formed at Cranwell on 10th March 1941 to teach radar; it became No. 8 Radio School in January 1943 and was disbanded on 26th June 1946.

Advances in radio engineering in the 1930s, together with the rapid development of military electronics during the Second World War, greatly increased the demand for tradesmen trained to operate and maintain ever more complex communication and radar equipments. This demand was met by the Schools, and between February 1940 and September 1945 some 68,000 trainees passed out of No. 1 Radio School alone. The other schools have long since disappeared, although Yatesbury and Compton Bassett survived until the early 60s and the end of National Service.

- No. 1 Radio School Cranwell (WOp/ AC Apprentices)
- No. 2 Radio School Yatesbury (WOp/ WOp Air Gunner)
- No. 3 Radio School Compton Bassett (WOp)
- No. 4 Radio School Madley (WOp/ Air Signaller)
- No. 5 Radio School Oxford (College of Cypher)
- No. 6 Radio School Bolton (WOp)
- No. 7 Radio School South Kensington (Radar training)
- No. 8 Radio School Cranwell (Radar training)
- No. 9 Radio School Yatesbury (Radar training)
- No. 10 Radio School Carew Cheriton
- No. 11 Radio School Hooton Park
- No. 12 Radio School St Athan (WOp)
- No. 13 Radio School Blackpool (Recruit trg + Morse code)
- No. 14 Radio School St Athan (WOp)
- No. 15 Radio School Cosford (Boy entrant training)

The Electrical & Wireless School East Camp in 1936





## REMINISCENCES OF A CRANWELL APPRENTICE

*Air Marshal Sir Eric Dunn KCB CB BEM MRAeS RAF*

**A**s 579751 Aircraft Apprentice E C Dunn of the 7M3 (48th) Entry, I arrived at No. 1 Radio School in March 1944. The School was then based at RAF Cranwell and had just been reborn to reflect the growing importance of radar, which, together with the traditional specialisations of electrical and wireless, made up the task of the new Radio School. These facts were, however, completely lost on the 70 teenagers comprising the latest entry of apprentices as we assembled on the parade ground. Of much more significance to us in those early months of our life in the RAF was the massive expanse of that parade ground, the stark gauntness of the lines of red brick barrack blocks, the interminable cold and the wait for the next meal that hardly satisfied our growing appetites. Indeed it is the memory of the apparent mundane rather than the esoteric of radio training that lingers with me today.

One of my earliest recollections is of acting as escort to two senior apprentices accused of stealing a Blenheim aircraft. I remember little of their evidence; I was much more concerned with not dropping my rifle and bayonet, but apparently the rigours of apprentice training had got too much for them and sunny Spain seemed a better bet. Unfortunately for them they could not get the second engine started and they were speedily removed to airman training.

In fact, discipline in the Apprentice Wing was strict but not overbearing. Great reliance was placed on the hierarchical structure within the apprentice system with the sergeant apprentice, corporal and leading apprentices keeping firm but fair control over the junior entries. It is clear to me now

that this internal control system gave excellent early training in self confidence, man management and military discipline which stood all apprentices in good stead when they eventually passed out into the Air Force.

My memories of our routine within No. 1 Radio School are as sparse as the barrack rooms themselves. Each housed 30 apprentices with 30 Macdonald beds, 30 steel wall lockers, two trestle tables and acres of linoleum. The notorious Macdonald bed, with its solid metal frame supporting a thin three piece horse hair mattress was never as uncomfortable as its description, and reputation, implied. The linoleum was a different matter. This had to be kept with a mirror-like finish. Experience over many years of 'Bull' nights devised the optimum method of achieving this with minimum sweat and time. A 30 man snake with pads of old blankets under each foot moved in unison from side to side chanting negro spirituals, (with RAF words), first with polish on the pads and then with clean polishing pads. 30 minutes later the job was complete, but from thence on to inspection time the next morning everyone walked with pads under their feet.

Reveille by the apprentice bugler was followed in quick succession by bed stripping, mattress stacking, blanket folding, floor polishing, ablution cleaning, breakfast (best forgotten) and then working parade. This latter was a serious and polished exercise with the Wing pipe band and plenty of swank to show the airmen just how it should be done. We marched down as a Wing to the Radio Block, colloquially known as the Taj Mahal, which was the

centre of technical training activity, surrounded by workshops, labs and hundreds of wooden huts acting as classrooms. Mid-morning NAAFI break produced the best meal of the day, as long as you made the front of the queue for the buttered scones, otherwise you had to keep going on Bakewell tarts.

Actual technical training remains something of a blur; of metal filing that seemed to go on for months with little relevance to superhet receivers, of morse practice and hours of board chalk and writing up notebooks. We did not appreciate then just how good the No 1 Radio School instruction actually was with its mix of long serving civilian instructors, experienced NCO fitters and young, and not so young, graduate educators who, when we reached the radar phase, just about kept ahead of the trainees in their knowledge of the new techniques, many of which had only been invented a few months before! Realisation of the excellence of this training came later under pressure of maintaining the front line or grappling with new techniques and equipment.

Of the many activities at Cranwell during those early years of No 1 Radio School, the excellence of sport stands out in my memory. The Apprentice Wing took over many of the traditional RAF College fixtures, particularly those against the 'local' Public Schools: Oundle, Uppingham, Stamford and Trent. Consequently, cricket and rugby were played hard and to a high standard. We trained regularly as the facilities were good and time in the evenings and weekends needed to be filled. Sunday morning did, however, mean Church Parade. Unfortunately 'Parade' stands out in my memory rather than 'church'. After the



**Apprentices going through their paces.**

inevitable inspection we marched as a Wing behind the Pipe Band the two miles to Church which invariably proved a more inspiring occasion than the sermon.

Looking back over these 50 years there is little doubt in my mind that the technical training given by No 1 Radio School in its early years, although archaic and long winded by modern standards, was excellent in its depth and thoroughness. Arguably of more importance was the way the School, and the Apprentice Wing in particular, moulded the immature apprentice into a resourceful, confident military technical airman. Proof of this in RAF history is difficult to find. Suffice to say that in all our encounters, from the Battle of Britain to the Gulf War, the high standard of maintenance of our avionics, our ground radar and our communications played a significant part in our victories. It is to No 1 Radio School, and the other Technical Training establishments that we owe a debt of gratitude for ensuring that the RAF's technical tradesmen were able to meet these challenges. A minor example of the excellence of No 1 Radio School's training in its early years is that three apprentices from that era served together in London in the early 1980s as Air Marshals; one as Chief Engineer, one as Controller Aircraft and one as Chief of the Air Staff - 'Thorough' indeed.

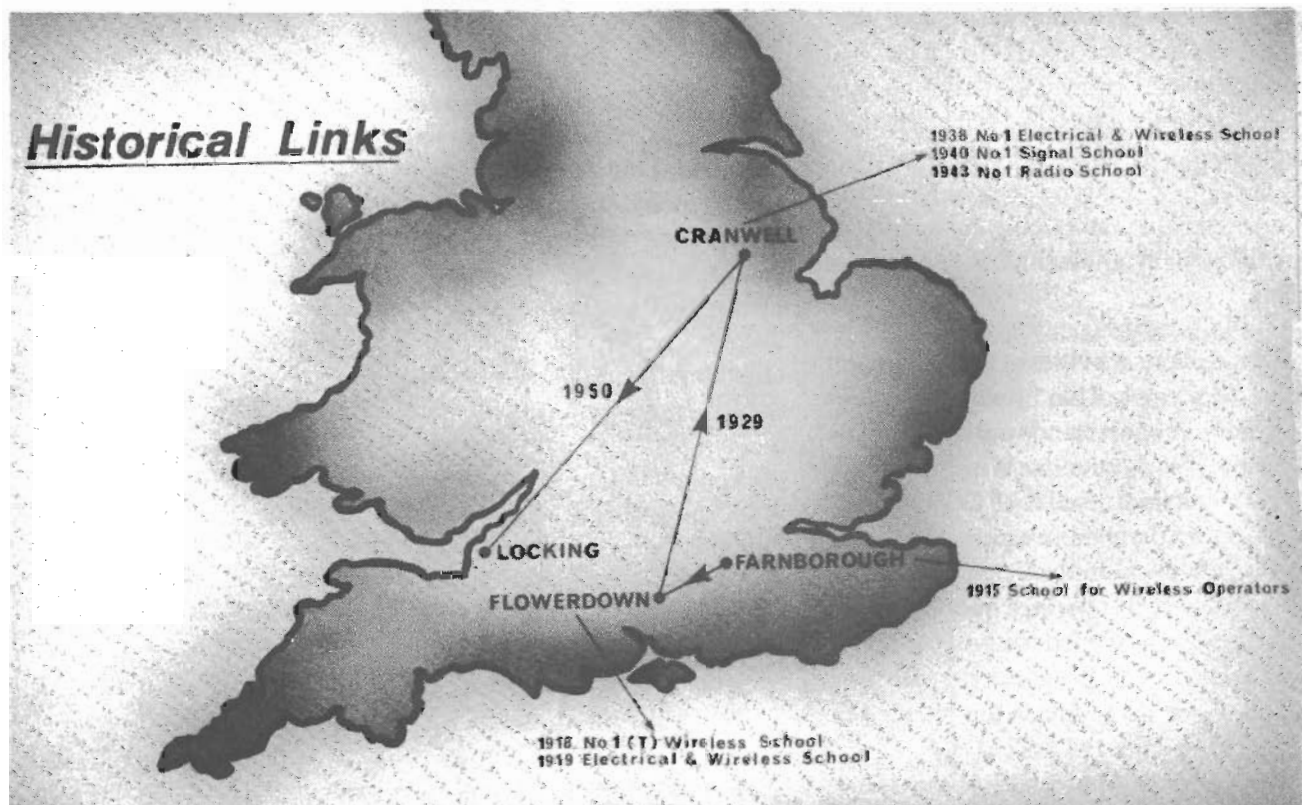
## POST WAR YEARS

**A**fter the Second World War No. 1 Radio School continued to provide training in the radio and radar trades for apprentices, National Servicemen and regular airmen. In October 1950 the majority of the School moved to RAF Locking; the element remaining at Cranwell was retitled No. 6 Radio School and was concerned only with apprentice training. On 1st December 1952, however, the Cranwell element disbanded and its apprentices re-joined No. 1 Radio School at Locking. The first Aircraft Apprentices to pass out from Locking were No. 64 Entry on 18th December 1952.

The training of foreign servicemen at the School began with Dominion Airmen in early 1938 and, since then, several thousand officers and men from forty-six different Foreign and Commonwealth Forces

have successfully passed out from Cranwell and Locking.

One of the major changes to training at the School began with the introduction of transistorised equipments into the RAF in the mid-60s. One of the School's most experienced radar instructors is Mr John Caiger, who served a number of tours at Locking as a chief technician and is now a civilian Instructional Officer. He recalls that whilst working with the Radio Installation Team at RAF Henlow in 1965, he had to attend an AR1 Radar manufacturer's course on the Isle of Wight. The AR1 was one of the first radars to have more transistors than valves, and the course was extended by one week so that Servicemen could learn transistor theory.



*Air Marshal Sir John Whitworth Jones inspecting the first  
Aircraft Apprentices to pass out from RAF Locking*



**The Programme  
for the Passing-  
Out Parade of  
the 64th Entry of  
Aircraft  
Apprentices**

No. 1 RADIO SCHOOL.  
ROYAL AIR FORCE



**Passing-Out Parade**  
OF THE 64th ENTRY OF  
**Aircraft Apprentices**

REVIEWING OFFICER :

Air Marshal Sir John Whitworth Jones  
K.C.B., C.B.E.

Air Member for Supply and Organisation, Air Ministry

LOCKING

18th DECEMBER, 1952

Programme

Spectators are requested to be seated on the main Parade Ground by 14.00 hours.

Item.	Time.	Remarks.
1.	14.00	Parade, less No. 64 Entry, advances on markers.
2.	14.05	No. 64 Entry advances on markers.
3.	14.15	The Reviewing Officer and Reception Party arrive at the Parade Ground for the General Salute, Inspection and March Past of No. 64 Entry.
4.	14.45	The Parade marches off. Aircraft Apprentices of No. 64 Entry proceed to Instructional Workshops.
5.	14.50	The Reviewing Officer leaves the Parade Ground to inspect No. 64 Entry in Instructional Workshops.
6.	15.15	Staff, visitors, and all entries of Aircraft Apprentices other than No. 64 Entry proceed to the Assembly Hall in No. 2 Shed.
7.	15.30	The Reviewing Officer proceeds to the Assembly Hall in No. 2 Shed to receive a report on No. 64 Entry by the Officer Commanding No. 1 Radio School, to present prizes and to address the Apprentices.
8.	16.05	Tea will be served for guests of No. 64 Entry of Aircraft Apprentices in the Apprentices Institute.
9.	16.05	Tea will be provided for the Reviewing Officer, Reception Party and invited guests in the Officers' Mess.
10.	16.05—18.00	School open for inspection by visitors.

The Occasion

Today's Parade and Inspection marks the successful completion of their training by fifty-eight aircraft apprentices of No. 64 Entry who joined the Wing in January, 1950.

This is the first Aircraft Apprentice Passing-Out Parade to be held at R.A.F. Locking; the Apprentice Wing which has been at Cranwell since 1929 having re-formed at Locking on 1st December, 1952.

Included in this Passing-Out Entry are eighteen apprentices of the Royal Pakistan Air Force. These are the first Pakistan Aircraft Apprentices to have completed radio training with the Royal Air Force.

Today, No. 64 Entry parade with the Apprentice Wing for the last time before passing into the Royal Air Force as qualified tradesmen in the trades of Air Radio Fitter or Ground Radar Fitter. They will shortly be posted to Service units to commence their duties.

On this parade, of which a more detailed form is given overleaf, the aircraft apprentices of No. 64 Entry make up two flights.

After the final General Salute, the aircraft apprentices of the 64th Entry will march off parade in slow time in their last ceremonial act as aircraft apprentices.

As they leave the Parade, the remainder of the Apprentice Wing will present arms as a tribute to the passing-out entry. The new senior apprentices take command and the parade will march past the reviewing officer and disperse.

The Officers and N.C.Os. of the Wing do not take part in the Parade.

Parade State

Commanding the Apprentice Wing	Sergeant Aircraft Apprentice	BIDDESCOMBE, P. G.
No. 1 Flight Commander	Passing Out Entry.	Sergeant Aircraft Apprentice
		ELLIS, J.
No. 2 Flight Commander	Sergeant Aircraft Apprentice	NORTHMORE, G. E.
		BRYAN, J. H.
Parade Warrant Officer	—	Sergeant Aircraft Apprentice
Commanding Junior Entries	—	WORTHY, P. J. G.
		"A" Squadron
Commanding	—	Sergeant Aircraft Apprentice
Flight Commanders	—	GODFREY, W. R.
		McINTOSH, W. R.
"B" Squadron	—	TURNBULL, P. F.
		SMITH, G.
Commanding	—	Sergeant Aircraft Apprentice
Flight Commanders	—	TUMBER, T. S. G.
		CARTER, R. A.
"C" Squadron	—	BAKER, W. J.
		KIME, A. B.
Commanding	—	Corporal Aircraft Apprentice
Flight Commanders	—	SISSONS, T. B.
		SMITH, L. B. W.
"D" Squadron	—	RENNISON, J. H.
		DANIELS, B. A.
Commanding	—	Sergeant Aircraft Apprentice
Flight Commanders	—	MORRISON, G. M.
		Corporal Aircraft Apprentices
Commanding Officer's Orderlies	—	JONES, B. P.
		McVIE, J.
No. 5 Royal Air Force Regional Band	Director:	MILLERSHIP, R. I.
		McVIE, J.
By permission of the Air Council	—	SCOTT, N. S.
		WATRINS, K. R.
No. 1 Radio School Apprentices Band	—	F Sgt. McCUTCHEON.
Officiating Chaplain, Prize-giving	—	The Rev. D. C. MAULLE.
		JOHNSTONE



Sequence of the Parade

1. **March On, Junior Entries.**  
At 1400 hours the three Squadrons, less the Passing Out Entry, march on parade and form up in line of Squadrons in close column of flights.  
BAND—"Highland Laddie."
2. **March On, Passing Out Entry.**  
At 1405 hours the Passing Out Entry march on parade and form up in line, in front of the Squadrons.  
BAND—"Earl of Mansfield."
3. **Arrival of the Reviewing Officer.**  
At 1415 hours the Reviewing Officer arrives at the Saluting Base accompanied by:—  
AIR MARSHAL SIR VICTOR E. GROOM, K.B.E., C.B., D.F.C.  
(Air Officer Commanding in Chief Technical Training Command)  
AIR COMMODORE B. D. NICHOLAS, C.B.E.  
(Air Officer Commanding No. 27 Group)  
GROUP CAPTAIN A. T. MONKS  
(Officer Commanding No. 1 Radio School)  
WING COMMANDER I. E. HILL  
(Officer Commanding No. 1 Apprentice Wing).  
Spectators stand whilst the Reviewing Officer is escorted to the Saluting Base.  
Fanfare—Haydn Wood.
4. **General Salute.**  
The Parade receives the Reviewing Officer with a General Salute.  
Spectators stand.  
BAND—"General Salute."

5. **Inspection.**  
The Reviewing Officer inspects the Passing Out Entry.  
BAND—"Pageantry."  
The Reviewing Officer returns to the Saluting Base.
6. **March Past.** The Passing Out Entry forms up on the right flank in readiness to March Past.  
BAND—"Standard of St. George."  
"R.A.F. March."  
The Passing Out Entry re-forms on the Reviewing Base.
7. **Advance in Review Order.**  
The Apprentice Wing advances in review order, halts and presents arms in General Salute.  
BAND—"The Royal Air Force Advance."  
"General Salute."  
Spectators stand.
8. **The Passing Out Entry Marches Off.**  
No. 64 Entry marches off parade in slow time.  
BAND—"Auld Lang Syne."
9. **The Apprentice Wing Marches Past.**  
Under the command of the new senior aircraft apprentices, the Apprentice Wing forms close column by Squadrons on the right flank to march past and subsequently marches off to dismiss on Squadron Parade Grounds.  
BAND—"Highland Laddie."  
"Piper's Cave."  
"Scotland The Brave."  
"High Road to Gairloch."

Prize-Giving

Address by the Officer Commanding No. 1 Radio School.  
Presentation of Prizes and Awards by  
AIR MARSHAL SIR JOHN WHITWORTH JONES  
K.C.B., C.B.E.  
Address by the Reviewing Officer.  
Prayers.  
GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.

A Cadetship has been awarded in the General Duties Branch to:—  
S/A/A BIDDESCOMBE, P. G.

THE PRIZES

Apprentices' Endowment Trustee Prize—S/A/A BIDDESCOMBE, P.G.  
Technical Subjects:—  
Air Radio Fitters ..... S/A/A ELLIS, J.  
Ground Radar Fitters ..... L/A/A BUTTERWORTH, N. W.  
Highest Educational Marks ..... S/A/A ELLIS, J.  
General Service Subjects ..... C/A/A CHERRETT, J. F.  
Highest Aggregate Marks ..... S/A/A ELLIS, J.

WING TROPHY  
Victor Ludorum Trophy ..... C/A/A HOBSON, F.

A brief history of Aircraft Apprentice Signals Training

In 1922 the first Aircraft Apprentices to be selected for Signals duties entered the Royal Air Force and commenced training at the Electrical and Wireless School. The School was then located at Flowerdown, near Winchester, and was established to train all tradesmen required for the maintenance and operation of Signals equipments. The Aircraft Apprentices were trained as Wireless Operator Mechanics, Electricians and Instrument Makers.

In August, 1920, the Electrical and Wireless School moved to Cranwell, and in the pre-war expansion of the Royal Air Force became No. 1 Radio School, concentrating solely on training of Signals personnel. In 1950, No. 6 Radio School was formed at Cranwell with responsibility for radio training of Aircraft Apprentices only. On the 1st December, 1952, No. 6 Radio School was disbanded at Cranwell and reformed at Locking as No. 1 Apprentice Wing, No. 1 Radio School.

Early entries of Aircraft Apprentices were trained to operate and maintain all Signals and Electrical Equipment used by the Royal Air Force, both in the air and on the ground. The increasing complexity and wide range of Signals equipments, gradually made it necessary to train the Signals Aircraft Apprentice in Signals maintenance duties only, the electrical and operating commitments being assigned to other suitably trained airmen. It later became necessary to train Aircraft Apprentices specifically for Ground or Air Signals maintenance duties. Of the Aircraft Apprentices passing out to-day, approximately half have been trained as Ground Radar Fitters and half as Air Radio Fitters.

On leaving us today for their new Units, the 64th Entry will be joining a select band of highly qualified radio technicians. Since the first Aircraft Apprentice passed out at Flowerdown in 1925, 4,600 have successfully completed Signals training and of these over 1,000 have been selected for and granted commissions, several now holding air rank.

WING COLOURS

The following Apprentices of 64th Entry have been awarded Wing Colours in the sports shown:—

BASKET BALL	HOCKEY	RUGBY
S/A Bidlescombe	C/A Butt	C/A Hobson
A/A Harvey	C/A Gukhar	
	A/A Nayo	

## APPRENTICE LIFE AT LOCKING

**N**o. 6 Radio School, which was originally at Bolton, was re-established briefly at RAF Cranwell in 1950. Trevor Ward was posted to the school as an instructor in 1952 and he was one of the last to move when apprentice training rejoined No. 1 Radio School at Locking. He has been associated with No. 1 Radio School for over 40 years and is currently a Senior Burnham Lecturer at the School. His memories of the apprentice days at Locking are vivid.

In the early 50s all apprentices were under training for three years. There were three intakes a year, each being approx 100 strong. At this time all Engineering Apprentices, on completion of their training at Locking or Halton, went for a few months to RAF St Athan. After some practical on the job training they were posted to their parent operational unit where they arrived virtually at an Operational Performance Standard.

**Air Force personnel waiting for a train at Weston-s-Mare Station**

Apprentices were restricted to the camp during their first three months of training, after which they were allowed

out at weekends, and then in uniform. Apprentices in the senior entry gained the privilege of being allowed off the camp in civilian clothes, but these were restricted to a blazer, flannels, white shirt and Apprentice Wing tie.

When the school leaving age was raised from 15 to 16 in the mid 60s the 2 year Craft Apprentice scheme was introduced. The 3 year apprentice became a Technician Apprentice, graduating as a corporal and also gaining an Ordinary National Certificate.

A passing out ceremony was invariably preceded by some notable event. Each entry would try and achieve a unique feat the day or night before pass out. Two events are worthy of mention :

*The removal of the dummy pilot from the seat of the MK 21 Spitfire, which stood on the pedestal currently occupied by the Gnat, and its replacement by an apprentice who saluted all personnel as they passed on their way into camp.*

*The Lancaster aircraft, which was housed in one of the Bellman Hangars (together with a Meteor, Vampire and Var-sity), was manhandled out of the hangar, the idea being to get it up to the Main Guardroom. Unfortunately, it had been raining the night before and one wheel got bogged down in some soggy ground on the way up to the parade square. This event was outstanding since it took nearly a week to get a tractor with the correct towing attachment to return the Lancaster to the hangar!*





All escapades were carried out with care to ensure minimum damage occurred. If there was a need to recompense departments through MPBW, now PSA, there was a contingency fund held by Apprentice Wing which had been built up over the years by the passing out entry.

The air radio fitters gained hands-on experience on the training aircraft in the Bellman Hangars, but in the late 50s these were transferred to a hangar at the far end of Weston Airfield; it was thought more realistic if the training could be carried out in an airfield environment. There was also a need to update the types of aircraft used for training, and to meet this need a Victor bomber was flown in to Weston Airfield. The date of the event was widely publicised and most of the population of Weston watched the landing, which was accomplished with only a little runway to spare.

In the early 50s, during term time, apprentices received only a proportion of their pay on pay day. The remaining pay was saved up and then given to them in total on the last day of term. The indoor parade area in 3(T) Block was used as the pay centre. After receiving their pay and enforced savings,

the apprentices were 'embussed' onto Bristol Tramway buses (now Badgerline) and, with two SNCOs as escorts, they were taken to Locking Road Railway Station (now Tesco's Superstore) where they were 'entrained' on a special train to Bristol Temple Meads. They were now no longer the responsibility of the School.

Saturday morning working occurred three times a month, as did Sunday Church Parades, and there was a monthly CO's parade. The whole camp, including the padres, took part in the CO's parades and invariably the Parade Square was filled to capacity. Due to the number of squadrons being inspected the parades could be quite an ordeal, particularly in extreme weather conditions.

Other than a bicycle, for the senior entry only, apprentices were not allowed any other form of transport on the camp. However, enterprising apprentices used to hire garages in the surrounding area where they stored their motorcycles, cars and other than regulation civilian clothes. The riding of motorcycles during term time was vigorously opposed.

**Winter on the Parade Square**



An inspection of the Apprentice Pipe Band (with Hamish McCrackers in attendance!)



The Apprentice Pipe Band was very popular with the local people, particularly when accompanied by the Apprentice Wing Mascot, a Shetland Pony called Hamish McCrackers. Hamish was occasionally demoted from sergeant to corporal for "conduct prejudicial" on a major parade.

The present No 1 Radio School Training Wing Adjutant, Warrant Officer DJ Reid, was an apprentice at the School from 1957-60. His memories as a Locking apprentice are very similar to those of Sir Eric Dunn.

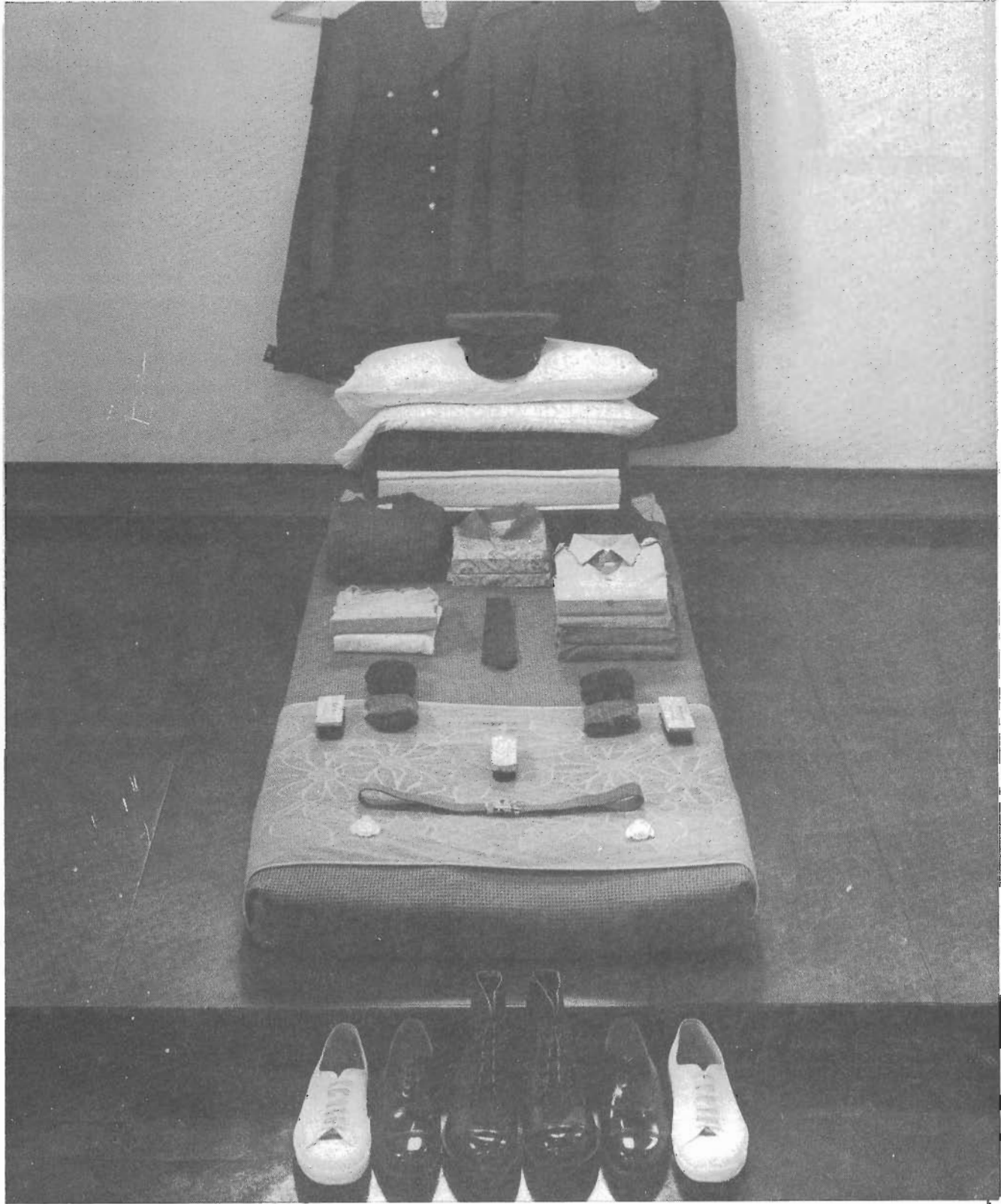
Apprentices marching to work



"In my apprentice days RAF Locking consisted of a large hutted camp. My first impressions were of a dank and dismal place, permanently wet and windy. We were accommodated in wooden billets sleeping some twenty-two men, each with his own area of brown polished lino. Every morning started with laying out a blanket pack and leaving the billet ready for inspection with the brown lino floor polished to such a degree that everything reflected in it. We were not allowed to walk on the floor in those days and had to shuffle around with small pieces of blanket under the feet.

The whole of Apprentice Wing, numbering close on one thousand, would parade on the road around the apprentice accommodation by the sports field (now occupied by the Flowerdown club, WRAF block, TMT school and the open ground by the sports pavilion). After being inspected, the Wing would then march off to work led by the Pipe Band. Every Saturday morning there was a full parade, just like the Queen's birthday parade, on the Parade Square (hallowed ground and not a car park) with the Apprentice Wing and the Wings of regular and National Service trainees accompanied by the Regional Band and the Apprentice Pipe Band. With the exception of the last Sunday in the month, Sunday mornings saw a full blown church parade marching to the church in the 3(T) theatre."

*"... every morning started with laying out a blanket pack and leaving the billet ready for inspection with the brown lino floor polished to such a degree that everything reflected in it ..."*



## THE 1960s TO THE PRESENT DAY

In the 1950s and early 60s the trainee population of No. 1 Radio School was around 4000, accommodated in the literally hundreds of wartime wooden huts which made up most of RAF Locking. Apprentice Wing was located beside where the Airmens Mess now is, and the Direct Entry and National Servicemen were on the other side of camp. The whole of 8 Area to the north, including what is now the Donkey Compound, was also covered in huts used mainly as classrooms. The boom years ended with the demise of National Service training in 1960, and from then on the numbers in the School have declined steadily.

The trades trained at the School since the War were many and varied (a full list is included at the end of this booklet) but were essentially a mixture of air and ground mechanics, fitters and apprentices. However, the 1964 Trade Structure resulted in a major rationalization of the plethora of individual trades, and in consequence the aircraft and ground electronics trades were separated. Aircraft Direct Entry and Apprentice training transferred to No. 2 School of Technical Training at Cosford in 1965, leaving the ground electronics specialization at Locking.

*Trade Group 3 trainees under instruction in one of the School's laboratories.*



Apprentice training at No. 1 Radio School sadly ended with the graduation of No. 122 Entry on 3rd March 1976, 54 years after the first apprentice entry to the Electrical and Wireless School at Flowerdown; thereafter, trainees entered the Service direct from civilian life as either mechanics or technicians. In 1978 a completely new trade group was created in recognition of the increasing need for specialist ground electronics maintainers. The new Trade Group 3 was sub-divided into the three specializations of Airfields, Air Defence and Telecommunications to encompass the main areas of employment on airfield ground radio flights, on heavy radars and in the Defence Communications Network and the Tactical Communications Wing.

Although the emphasis in No. 1 Radio School has always been on technical training that is no longer entirely true today, for in 1989 the training of Trade Group 11 communications operating trades was transferred to Locking from Cosford. These trades are the direct descendants of the Wireless Operators who had trained at various of the wartime Radio Schools. At the end of the Second World War, operator training had been concentrated at No. 3 Radio School Compton Bassett and expanded to include the trades of Teleprinter Operator, Telephonist and Telegraphist. On the closure of Compton Bassett in 1964 training was transferred to Cosford, and in 1981 the trades were rationalized into those we see today. With the move to Locking the wheel had in a sense come full circle, and the operators resumed their rightful place in the sole surviving Radio School.

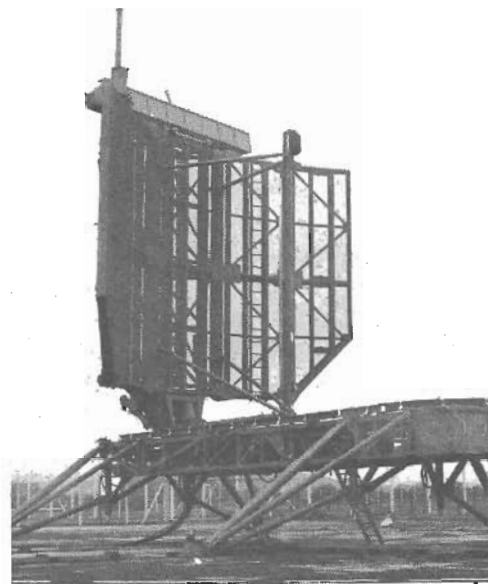
No. 1 Radio School is a much smaller establishment today than it was in the 1950s, but the technology is undeniably far more

complex; computers, integrated circuits and satellite communications would have seemed like science fiction to the apprentices of forty years ago. Although basic training of electronics and communications tradesmen and women remains a major task, the emphasis in the School has shifted towards the training of airmen and officers in a wide range of specialist pre-employment courses covering virtually all the ground electronics equipments and systems in use in the RAF, as well as computing and software engineering. Also embedded in the School is Trade Management Training, an intense blend of theory and practice which prepares newly promoted NCOs and SNCOs for their enhanced roles as technical supervisors.

The end of the Cold war has resulted in significant reductions in RAF manpower and the closure of many stations. This has had a major impact on the training task; in 1990 there were about a thousand trainees in the School, but at the time of writing there are less than four hundred. The future remains uncertain, with further contraction, and contractorization of some maintenance activities, likely to affect the size of Trade Group 3. The technology and the nature of the operational task also continue to change, with equipment becoming more reliable, more sophisticated yet less easy to repair using the traditional multi-meter and soldering iron. The RAF concluded that it was over-training its electronics tradesmen on entry to the Service, and that many first line tasks could be carried out by a mechanic. Accordingly, on 1st April 1993 Trade Group 3 was rationalized into a single ground electronics trade, and all new recruits will enter as mechanics, with the possibility of further training to technician standard after they have proved themselves in service. The training courses at No. 1 Radio School have been significantly re-designed to take account of these changes, and the first course of new-style, multi-skilled mechanics begins at Locking in June 1993.

The fifty year existence of No. 1 Radio School has seen enormous technical and cultural changes. The apprentice scheme offered training second to none and produced high calibre SNCOs as the backbone of the engineering trades. Ex-apprentices also made up the majority of the two thousand graduates of No. 1 Radio School who went on to gain a commission, and nineteen of these achieved Air Rank, producing one Chief of the Air Staff and one Chief Engineer. Many Radio School graduates went on, after completing their time in the Service, to form a highly trained nucleus of expertise in the British electronics industry and have therefore made a significant contribution to the wealth of the nation.

It is easy to view the past through rose coloured spectacles and compare it unfavourably with the present; a booklet such as this positively encourages nostalgia! However, we must retain a sense of perspective and be prepared to move with the times. The training offered by No. 1 Radio School still lives up to the motto 'Thorough', and we look forward with confidence to the next fifty years.



**The T94 Radar System is used in the School to train RAF technicians for their detachment to the Falkland Islands.**

**Modern day Wireless Operators learning to work with morse code (16 words-per-minute).**



## No. 1 RADIO SCHOOL BADGE

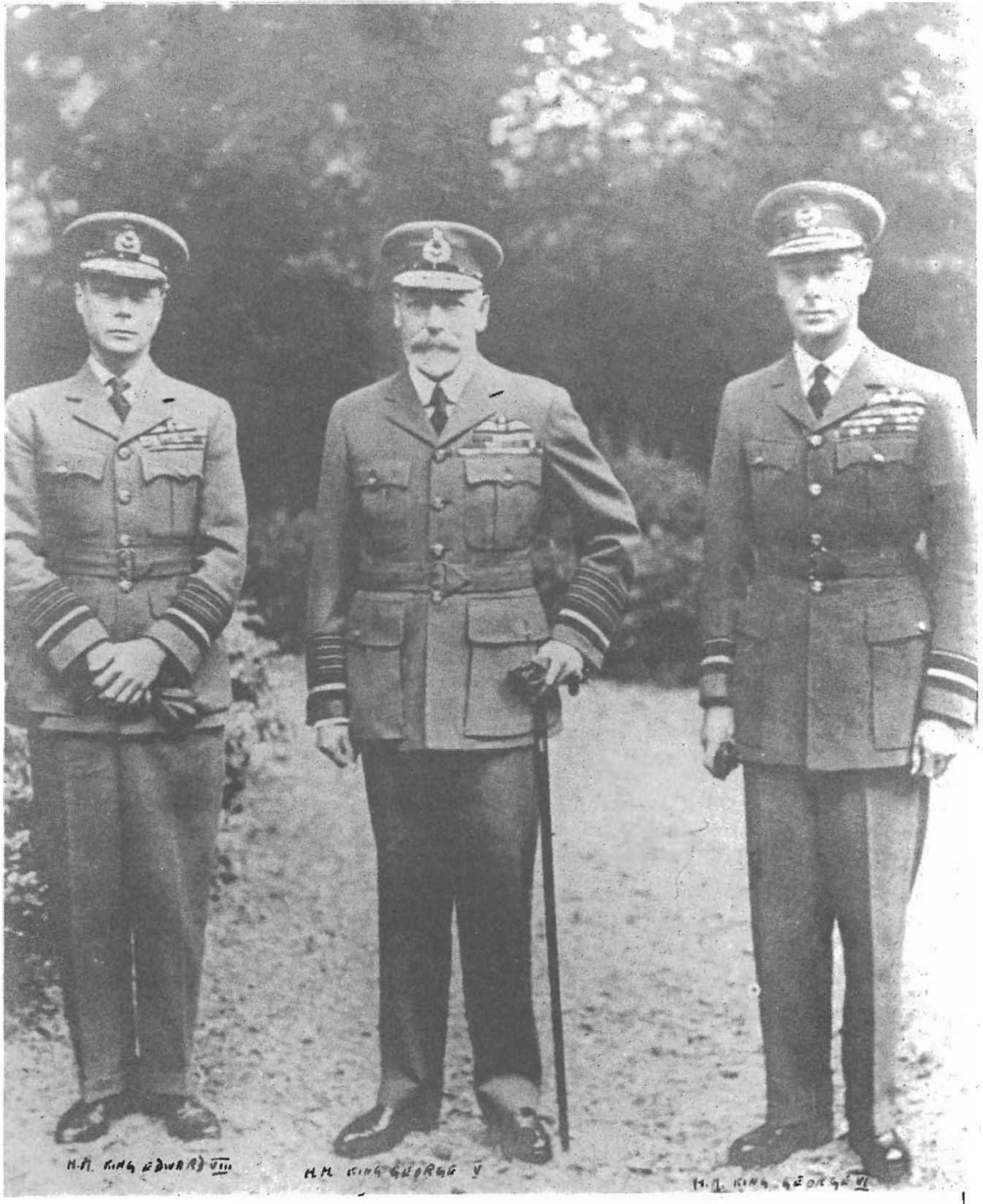
**T**he first School badge to receive Royal Assent was awarded to the Electrical & Wireless School in October 1937. In July 1942, His Majesty King George VI approved a badge for No. 1 Signals School and, following the change in title, His Majesty subsequently approved the badge of No. 1 Radio School in May 1944. Each of these badges has a common central design described as:

*"In front of an open book a hand grasping three flashes of lightning"*

The reasons for this design are that "the book is indicative of learning, the hand holding the three flashes of lightning of the matters taught".



*King George V, flanked by the two Princes  
(later both to become Kings) Edward and George*



## CONNECTIONS WITH THE SOVEREIGN

**N**o. 1 Radio School has been honoured by many visits from members of the Royal Family and has had the privilege to be represented at numerous Royal occasions. This connection with the Sovereign led to the School submitting a request to Her Majesty the Queen for the award of a Queen's Colour on the occasion of the School's 40th anniversary. The submission failed, but the record of Royal events is nevertheless impressive:

Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Gloucester visited RAF Cranwell on 6th May 1943 where she inspected WAAF TPO trainees and the WAAF Hairdressing Salon in No. 1 Radio School.

His Majesty King George VI approved the badge of No. 1 Radio School in May 1944.

His Majesty King George VI visited RAF Cranwell on 13th June 1945 on the occasion of the College Jubilee celebrations. His Majesty's tour included No. 1 Radio School. Apprentices formed a Royal Guard of Honour and lined the route along which His Majesty drove.

On 1st December 1945 ACW Haseldine of No 1 Radio School was chosen by the YWCA to represent RAF Cranwell at a Pag-

eant and Presentation Ceremony at which she presented a purse to Her Royal Highness the Princess Elizabeth.

Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands paid a brief visit to the Apprentices' Wing of No. 1 Radio School on 25th September 1947.

Their Majesties the King and Queen, accompanied by Her Royal Highness the Princess Margaret, visited RAF Cranwell on 6th July 1948 for the ceremony of the Presentation of a Colour to the RAF College by His Majesty. Sixty Aircraft Apprentices commanded by four Sergeant Apprentices were chosen to form part of the Guard of Honour of a hundred, and two hundred and forty Apprentices commanded by Officers and SNCOs of the Apprentice Wing were chosen to line the route on this historic occasion.

On 13th November 1948 a special School Colour Hoisting Parade was held to mark the occasion of the birth of an infant Prince to Her Royal Highness the Princess Elizabeth.

On 15th August 1950 a ceremonial Parade was held to mark the occasion of the birth of a daughter to Her Royal Highness the Princess Elizabeth.

**The Passing-Out  
Parade of the  
72nd Entry of  
Aircraft  
Apprentices.  
26th July 1955**



A King's Birthday Parade was held on the Parade Ground at RAF Locking on 7th June 1951. A Royal Standard was obtained for this parade and flown at RAF Locking for the first time.

Her Royal Highness the Princess Margaret visited RAF Locking on 23rd May 1953 for the first stage of her tour of Somerset Youth Organisations. Aircraft Apprentices from No. 1 Radio School formed a Guard of Honour and very high praise was given by those in command on the Apprentice's smartness, excellent bearing and general turn-out.

Her Royal Highness the Princess Margaret reviewed and inspected the 72nd entry of Aircraft Apprentices on the occasion of their Passing-Out Parade on 26th July 1955.

Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Gloucester on 24th March 1959 reviewed the Passing-Out Parade of the 83rd entry of Aircraft Apprentices.

The Chief of the Defence Staff, Admiral of the Fleet Earl Mountbatten of Burma, KG PC GCB GCSI GCIE GCVO DSO, arranged a tour of Latin America from 24th February to 22nd March 1963. He agreed that two Aircraft Apprentices should accompany him on his tour and the Apprentice chosen from No. 1 Radio School was No 287147 Corporal Aircraft Apprentice Pyle G S.

Numerous Aircraft Apprentices from RAF Locking have taken part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and, in 1965, fourteen received personal invitation cards to attend Gold Award Certificate Presentation Ceremonies at Buckingham Palace. Each of these ceremonies, on 11th



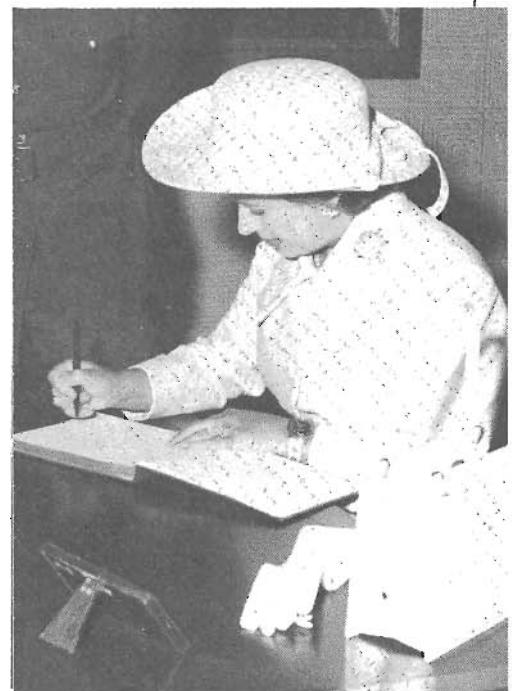
May, 8th July and 23rd November, was presided over by His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh.

Sixty-eight Apprentices lined part of the route for the wedding of Her Royal Highness the Princess Anne to Captain Mark Phillips on 14th November 1973.

Her Royal Highness the Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowdon, visited the No. 1 Radio School on 25th June 1974 where she saw many aspects of the School's training and recreational activities. The bells of Locking Village Church concluded the day by peeling out "Westminster" in honour of her Royal Highness's visit.

Air Marshal Her Royal Highness the Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester, GCBCI GCVO GBE, visited No. 1 Radio School on 23rd

**Photographs taken during the visit of Her Royal Highness Princess Margaret to No. 1 Radio School. 25th June 1974**



*Margaret*





**ABOVE:**  
Princess Alice,  
Duchess of  
Gloucester visiting  
No. 1 Radio School.  
23rd May 1979

**RIGHT:**  
Her Majesty  
Queen Elizabeth II  
visiting  
No. 1 Radio School.  
30th October 1986



*Elizabeth R*

May 1979. The Duchess was pleased to meet a substantial cross section of Service personnel from RAF Locking and showed a keen interest in the School's training facilities. She also met many of the civilian and service personnel engaged in Welfare and recreational activities.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II visited No. 1 Radio School on 30th October 1986 where she viewed the training facilities offered by the School. The visit was a major event in the School's modern day history.

Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales paid a low-key visit to RAF Locking on 15th March 1991 where she

met the wives of servicemen involved in the Gulf conflict, and also spoke with the Gulf Support Group.

Mr Archie Latto, lecturer at the School since 1966, recalls the Queen's visit with some amusing memories. The Station had prepared itself for every eventuality, including the weather. Meticulous planning had gone into the preparation for an outdoor or indoor parade. As fate would have it our British weather did not let us down, and the heavens opened up. Plan 'B' sprung into action for the wet weather parade in 3(T) Block. However, someone noticed the large umbrella sat just inside the entrance to the block and asked if it was for the short walk from Her Majesty's car to the building. No! Came the reply, it is here to keep Her Majesty dry within the building because the roof leaks like a sieve.

It was minutes before Her Majesty was due to arrive at 3(T) Block that the Station mascot, Sparky the donkey, decided to answer the call of nature within the building. His little contribution to the day was removed at the double.

*Pictures taken during the visit of the  
Princess of Wales to RAF Locking in 1991*

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*Diana*

*Royal Air Force Locking has been a training school since it opened in 1939. Although the Station has remained open continuously since then, activities were considerably reduced for two years in the late 1940s until the second great phase in the Station's history began with the arrival of No. 1 Radio School.*

## RAF LOCKING 1939-1945

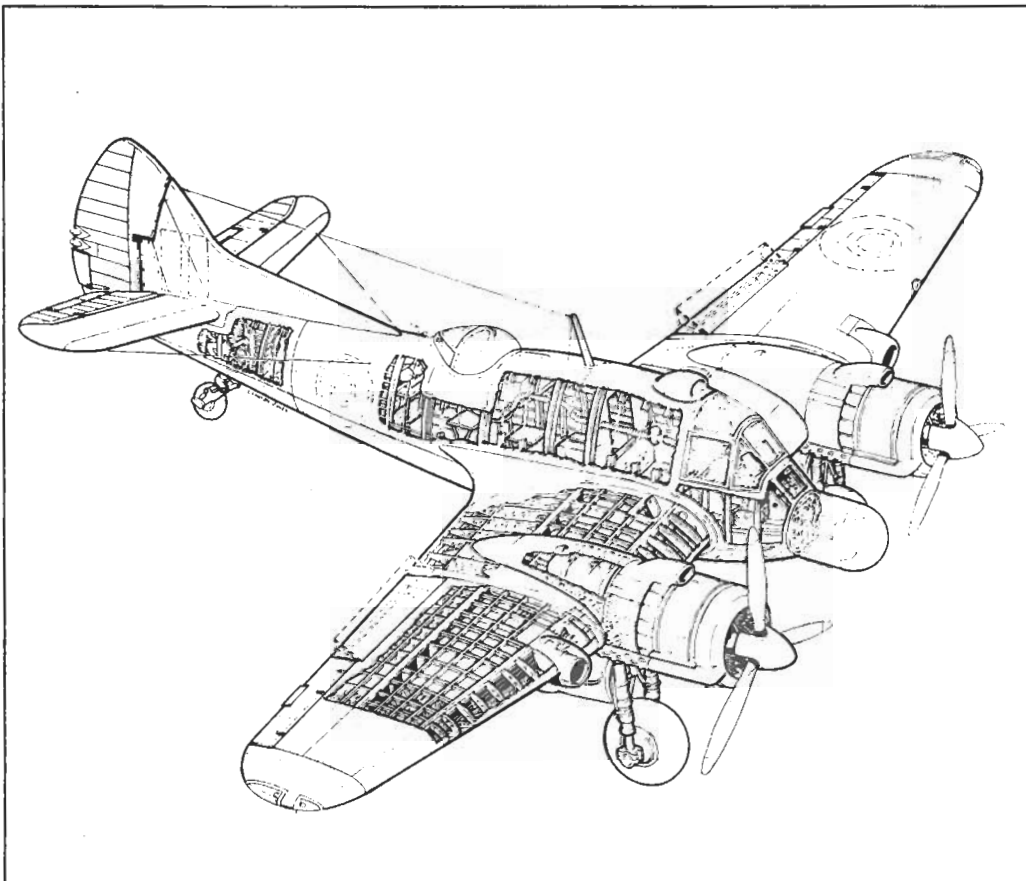
**O**n 2nd January 1939 a small party of seven officers formally opened 5 School of Technical Training at Locking, under the temporary command of Wing Commander Glaisher DFC. From March until April the Station's strength grew to over 1700 Servicemen and 11 civilian education officers. The Station formed itself into three wings; No. 1 Wing trained Fabric Workers and Parachute Packers and Nos. 2 and 3 Wing trained Flight Mechanics and Flight Riggers respectively.

During the war years the Station saw intense enemy aircraft activity with some fourteen bombs landing near the camp, including incendiaries on Hutton Hill. By March 1943 the Station seemed to have settled down sufficiently for the following statement to be made, "No. 5 S of TT is devoted to the training of Flight Mechanics Airframe and Engines, Fitters Marine and Carpenters Boat Builder. Four workshops covering an area of 50,400 square feet. Four Bellman hangars each covering 6648 square feet. Total output since formation of unit: 30,682."

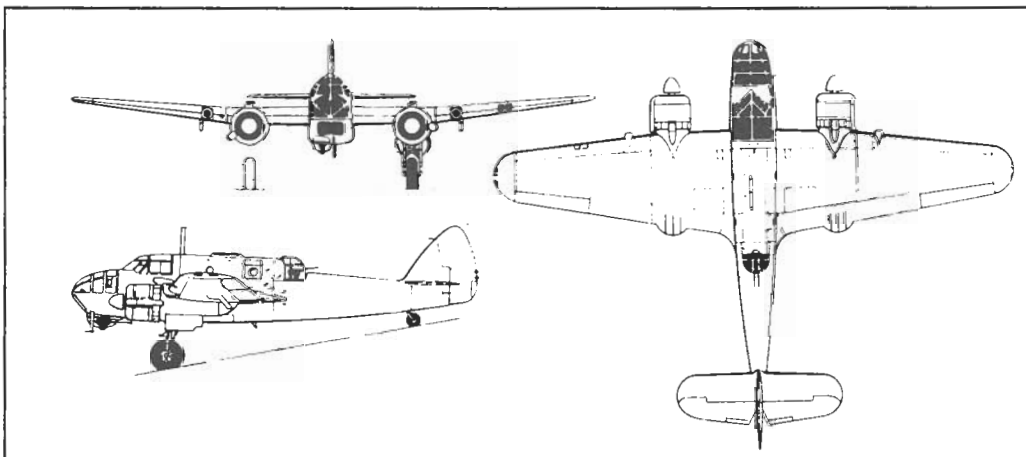
Wartime Locking was a huge establishment. There were several thousand airmen and sailors under training and when a Station parade was called nearly six thousand personnel would be assembled on the

Square. It is interesting to note that in September 1943 Saturday afternoon games was changed to PT spread throughout the week to reduce wear and tear on the Station's sports grounds.

It is also worth mentioning that the Bristol Beaufighter aircraft was assembled at a Shadow Factory, which was situated directly opposite RAF Locking at the old Bristol Aerojets site. It was called a Shadow Factory because it was a shadow of the main factory at Bristol. You may have wondered why the A371 Locking Road is wider between the Station and Weston airfield than any other part of the road. The reason is the Beaufighter was towed down the road to the airfield before taking off to its final destination. Altogether 5564 Beaufighters were built in Great Britain, the majority of these being built in the Shadow Factories at Locking and Winterstoke. This aircraft was the first to use a radar to track an enemy, and in November 1940, Squadron Leader J Cunningham and Sergeant J Phillipson of 604 Squadron, were the first to shoot down an enemy aircraft on the basis of radar information. The Bristol Beaufort, a torpedo bomber which saw service in Coastal Command, was also assembled at these Shadow factories, and the last aircraft type to be built there was the Hawker Tempest Mk II.



LEFT:  
Bristol Beaufighter  
Mk X



LEFT:  
Bristol Beaufort I



LEFT:  
Hawker Tempest  
MkII

## POST WORLD WAR II

No. 5 School of Technical Training was finally closed on 15th May 1950 and ten days later RAF Locking was transferred to No. 27 Group of Training Command and became the home of No. 1 Radio School. On 29th December 1973, the Station became di-

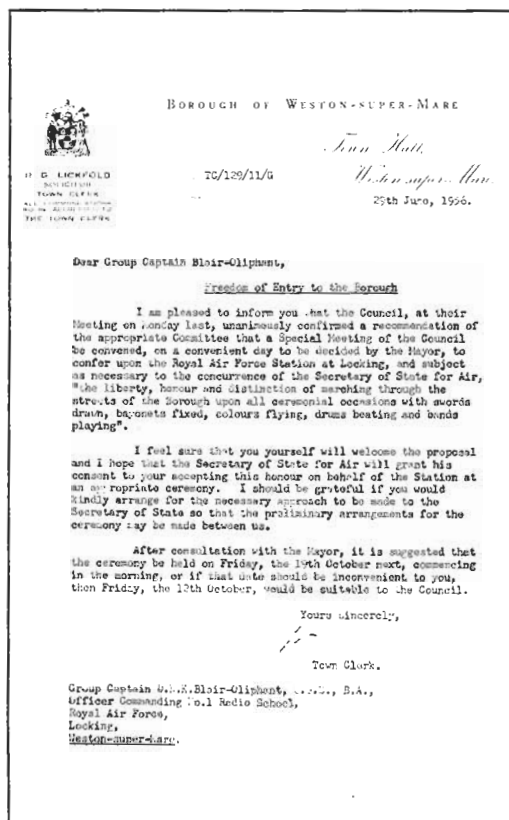
rectly administered by Headquarters Training Command, and subsequently the Station came under the control of RAF Support Command on 13th June 1977, when Training and Support Commands merged.

## THE FREEDOM OF WESTON-SUPER-MARE

As a reflection of great credit on the Station and the high esteem in which the Borough holds Locking, confirmation of the offer for freedom of entry to the Borough was received on 29th June 1956. The actual ceremony took place on 12th October 1956. The parade comprised mainly the trainees of No. 1 Radio School.

Over one year earlier an article had appeared in the 'Mercury' newspaper which suggested that RAF Locking be added to the roll of Honorary Freemen of the Borough. The article suggested that this was the highest honour that a town could confer and, in due course, would strengthen the bond between the Town and the School.

**The original offer to RAF Locking of the Freedom of Entry to the Borough.**  
29th June 1956



Part of the Freedom of Entry gives RAF Locking "the liberty, honour and distinction of marching through the streets of the Borough upon all ceremonial occasions with swords drawn, bayonets fixed, colours flying, drums beating and bands playing."

Warrant Officer Reid recalls that the early Freedom of Weston parades would form up outside the railway station. They would then march down Station Road past the Town Hall, left down Regent Street at the Odeon, right into the High Street (in the days before it was a precinct), up Lower Church Road past Grove Park, coming out on the sea front by the Marine Lake. Then it was along the sea front with the salute being taken at the Winter Gardens before returning to the railway station via Oxford Street. The whole thing was quite an endurance test as they had the Lee Enfield .303 rifle with an 18 inch bayonet (First World War vintage).



**LEFT ;**  
*Photographs from  
the first Freedom  
Ceremony.  
12th October 1956*



**BELOW :**  
*Personnel from the  
present Station  
marching past the  
Town Hall on a  
recent Freedom  
Parade.*



## THE STATION MASCOT

**T**he present Station Mascot, Sergeant Sparky McDougall, was presented to Locking by the Town Mayor of Weston-super-Mare on 23rd May 1980. On the date of the presentation he was a two year old aircraftman, last three 281, and graduated from training as an Agricultural Assistant, under training as a school mascot. He later re-mustered to his new trade.

Later on Sparky McDougall was promoted in the field to Corporal and after twelve years distinguished service, to acting Sergeant unpaid at the Station Annual Reception in August 1992. However, his years of service have not been without incident. He went AWOL in 1980 and

after being interviewed by the Station Police (Note : only they can speak the language) he admitted to the offence on the grounds of wanting to chat-up the young lady a few fields away. Sparky also got into bother when he was bitten and beaten up by two civilians who were sharing his accommodation. He was quoted "The two civvies were assing around", which resulted in them being banned from the Sta-

tion bounds and the local police were informed of their unruly behaviour. Perhaps Sparky is still in with a chance of the Medal of Undetected Crime, also known as the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal (only just over two years to wait).



**ABOVE:**  
The Station Mascot,  
Sgt Sparky  
McDougall.

**RIGHT:**  
One of Sparky's  
predecessors,  
Heather, on parade  
in the 1960s.



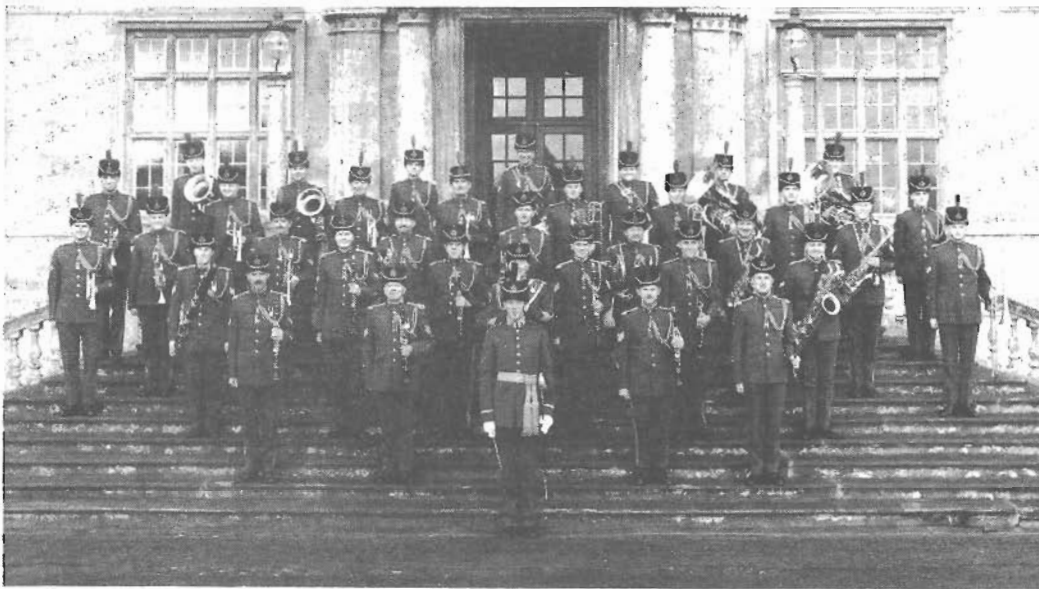
Sparky's predecessors were Hamish McCrackers and Heather, both of whom were Shetland Ponies. Hamish appeared at many of the apprentice passing out parades; he was constantly being demoted for actions unbecoming of an airman on parade, and then later promoted. Heather, who was bought by the apprentices in 1964, appeared at many parades and finally retired to a farm in Devon in 1973.

## THE WESTERN BAND

**I**t would be inexcusable if there was no mention of the highly trained and skilled personnel of the Western Band of the Royal Air Force, who have brought so much pride to themselves and their home Station, RAF Locking. The Band has been based at Locking since 1948, one of four United Kingdom

based RAF Bands established to perform at ceremonial and public occasions throughout the country and internationally.

The Band fulfil many regular engagements which include State Ceremonial Visits and events at Buckingham Palace. They



*The Band outside Longleat House, Somerset. 19th November 1990*

are better known, in the local area, for their performances at Pass-outs and Freedom of Weston Parades. However, the winter months limit the Band to promoting the Royal Air Force at local schools.

In 1987, 1988, 1990, 1991 and 1992 at the Royal Air Force Music competitions the Western Band won the coveted Sir Felix Cassel Cup for the Best Performance of a Set Work. They also hold the Boosey and Hawkes Trophy, which is awarded to the best concert programme, which they have won every year since 1987.

Each year the band travels, on average, between 20,000 and 30,000 miles to places all over the British Isles. A few hardship tours to St Lucia in the Caribbean Windward Islands, Berlin and Gibraltar have also, reluctantly, been taken on by the Band.

The Band has a secondary role, that of medics and stretcher bearers. This was put to the test in January to March 1991 when they were sent to the Gulf to join No. 1 Air Evacuation Squadron. Not only did they move every British casualty, they moved other allied casualties as well as many wounded Iraqi prisoners of war.



*As Guard of Honour at HQ Strike Command, High Wycombe., 1990.*



## NAMING OF BARRACK BLOCKS

It may be of some interest to people to learn how the twenty-one Barrack Blocks on this Station came to get their names. In January 1968 the OC Admin Wing, Wing Commander E H O'Toole, decided that the naming of the barrack blocks would be more aesthetically pleasing. More important than this, the commemoration of our Service's heroes would have a beneficial effect on morale.

The intention was to name the twenty one newly built airmens' and apprentices' barrack blocks after Victoria Cross holders of the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Air Force. The final list of names for the blocks was drawn up in May 1968 and was as follows:

### AIRMEN'S BLOCKS

1. Nicholson
2. Cruikshank
3. Lord
4. Robinson
5. Mottershead
6. Manser
7. Ball
8. Cheshire
9. Mannock

### APPRENTICE BLOCKS

10. Garland
11. Cruikshank
12. Hawker
13. Scarf
14. Hannah
15. Gray
16. McCudden
17. Gibson
18. Bishop
19. Aaron
20. Jackson
21. Thompson

The four training blocks were also to have been given names, but of famous people associated with the development of electronics:

- 1(T) Block - *Marconi Block*  
(Inventor of radio telegraphy)
- 2(T) Block - *Watson-Watt Block*  
(Development of radar)
- 3(T) Block - *Faraday Block*  
(Many principles of electricity and magnetism)
- 4(T) Block - *Maxwell Block*  
(Electro-magnetic theory)
- 5(T) Block - *Babbage Block*  
(Inventor of the computer)

Although there are pictures of these scientists and engineers in each Block, the idea never caught on, and today they are still known by their original titles as 'T' Blocks.

## THE STATION CREST

The RAF Locking Station Crest is described as "In front of a lighthouse a seagull alighting upon a key fesswise wards downwards and to the sinister". The motto 'Docemus' may be translated "We teach" and the authority for the crest came from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in April 1977.

The seagull and lighthouse are taken

from the Crest in the Armorial Ensigns of the Borough of Weston-super-Mare and mark the close relationship between the Station and the Borough. The key represents the key of knowledge and alludes to the Station's primary task, that of a technical training school preparing ground tradesmen for service in the Royal Air Force.

*The RAF Locking Crest,  
authorised by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 1977.*

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College of Arms  
April 1977

*Walter J. Verco*  
Norroy and Ulster King of Arms and  
Inspector of Royal Air Force Badges

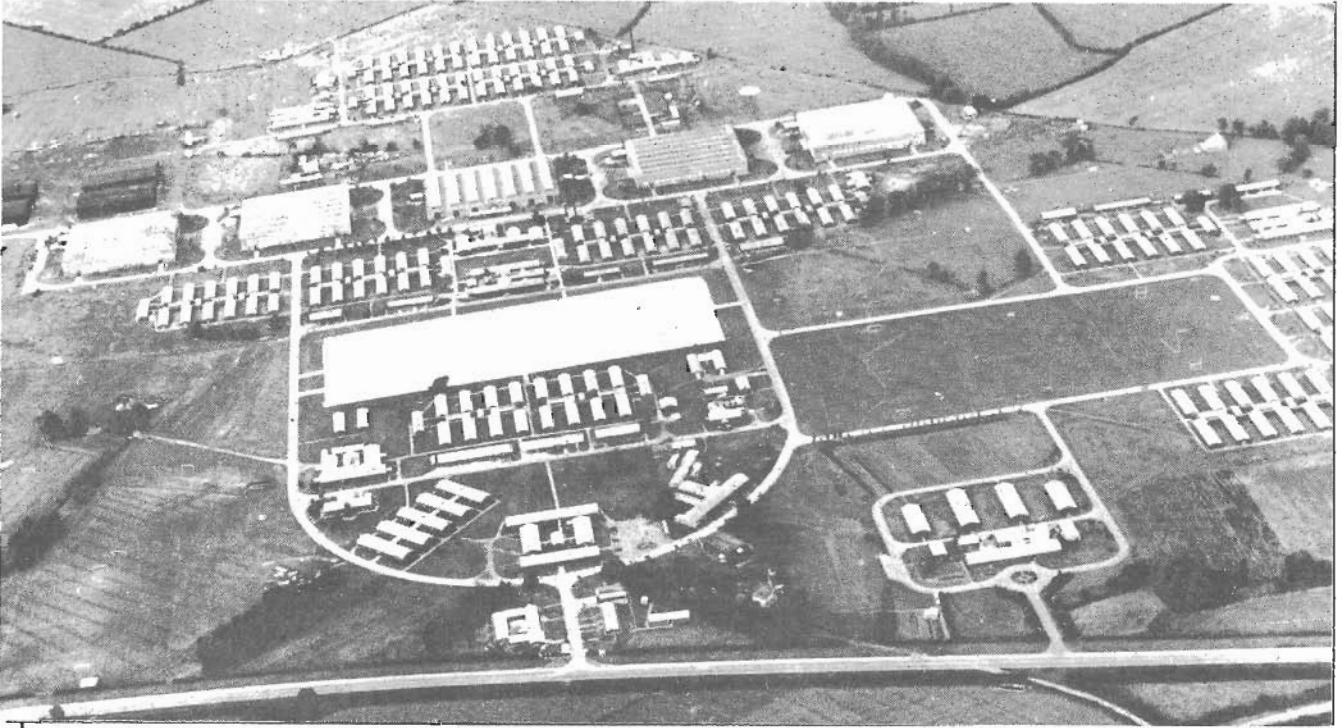
'Docemus' : We teach

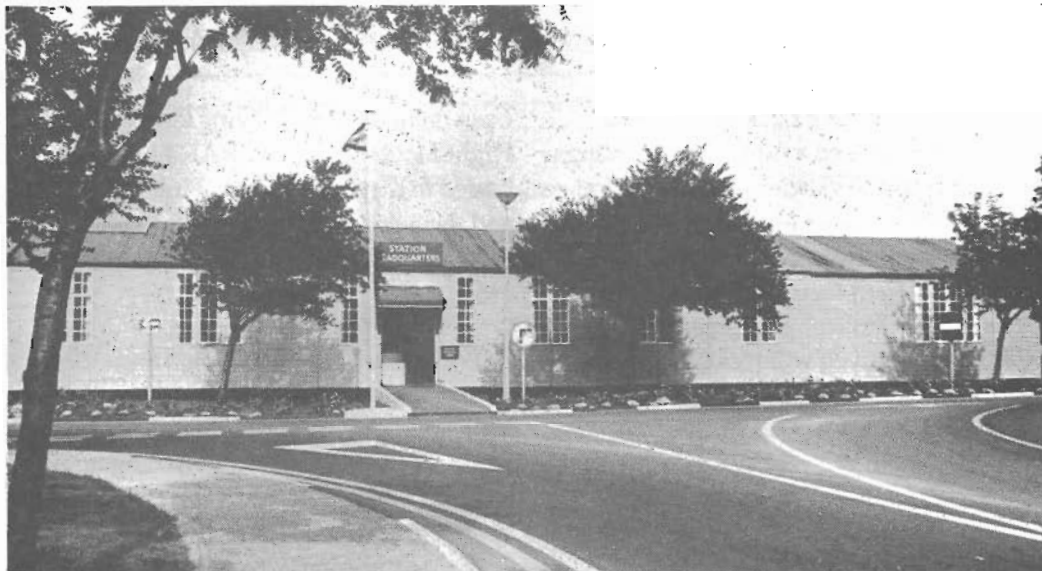
**ABOVE:**  
A view of the Station  
23rd September,  
1948.

## THE STATION BUILDINGS

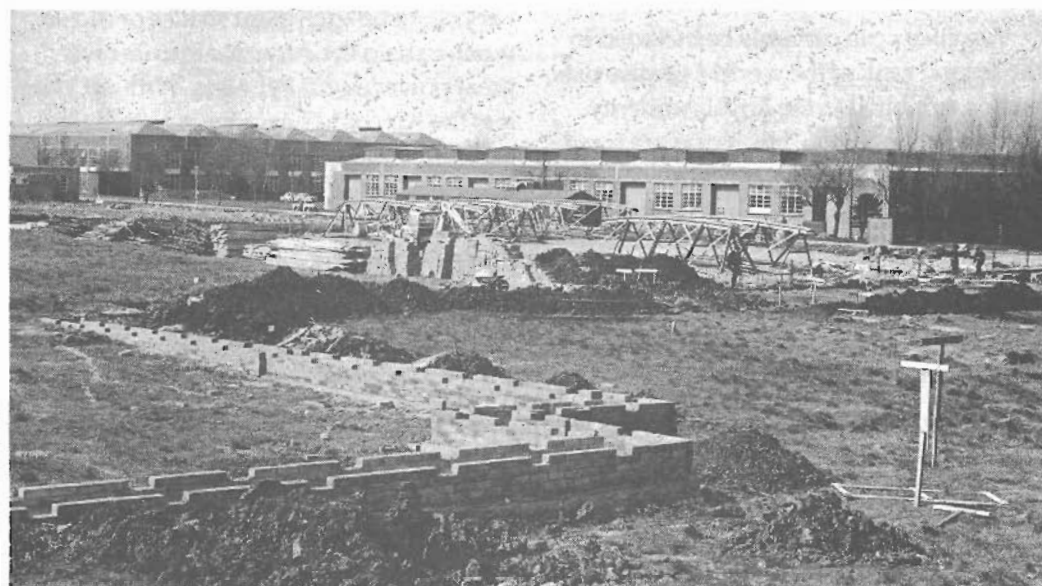
**BELOW:**  
The same scene  
today - note the  
spread of Worle and  
the M5.

*Royal Air Force Locking . . . Views from above*

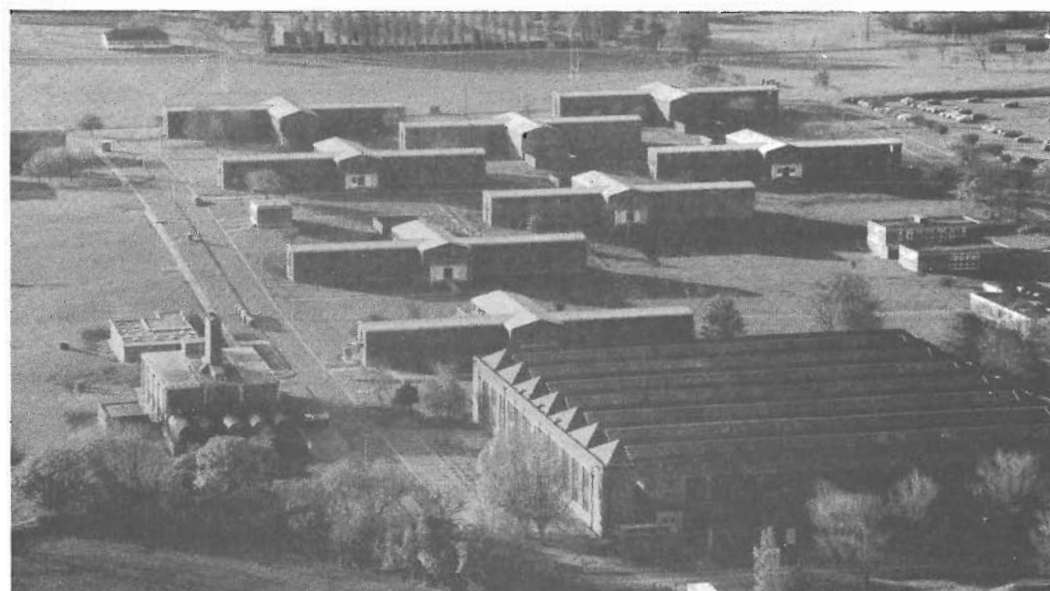




**The Station Headquarters, pre-1966.**



**5(T) Block being built, 1967. The Station Gym is in the background.**



**A view of the Station today. One of the original Training Blocks is in the foreground.**

## THE VERPILLEUX PAINTINGS

**A**ll visitors to the RAF Locking Officers' Mess will have seen a number of paintings which depict the various tasks that wireless men had to undertake during World War One. The majority of Locking personnel know nothing of their significance, but every ex-apprentice who remembers the YMCA at Cranwell will recall the huge paintings that were hung on the walls.

### *Antoine Emile Verpilleux,* MBE

Verpilleux can certainly be included in the second rank of the world's great artists, having exhibited in the Royal Academy and the French Salon. His works are hung in many public galleries including the British Museum, Paris, New York, Ottawa, Rome, Moscow, Liverpool, Manchester and museums in Sweden and Japan. A

Captain in the Royal Flying Corps and a Flight Lieutenant in the RAF, he was mentioned in dispatches in the First World War and awarded an MBE. His death is recorded in 'Who's Who' on 10th September 1964.

The set comprises nine paintings. A portfolio of copies was made in 1920, for which Viscount Lord Trenchard wrote a Foreword. The Foreword is also exhibited in the Officers' Mess, and from it and other correspondence we read that in Lord Trenchard's opinion... "no part of the Service made such giant strides or did so much to help the Air come into its own great power as did Wireless. Without Wireless the Air could never have played the part that it did...". Verpilleux's original pictures were presented to the Officers' Mess, Electrical and Wireless School, Flowerdown in 1919 and stayed with the School down the years.

*Viscount Lord  
Trenchard's  
Foreword to a  
Portfolio of Copies  
made in 1920.*

**I** HAVE been asked to write a brief foreword to accompany these reproductions of nine pictures painted by Flight Lieutenant E. Verpilleux, MBE, and presented by the artist to the Officers' Mess of the Electrical and Wireless School, Royal Air Force, at Flowerdown, in July last year, to serve as a permanent and visible record of the war work of the Wireless Section of the Royal Air Force.

It is a pleasure to me do so, since I have had reason to be very sensible of the vital part which "W/T" played and will always play in air warfare, and I think that these reproductions will serve to make the distinguished record of the Wireless Section in the late war known to an even wider circle than hitherto, whilst they should at the same time help to engender in future generations of wireless personnel that esprit de corps and realisation of the high traditions bequeathed them by their predecessors, which is the life blood of the service.

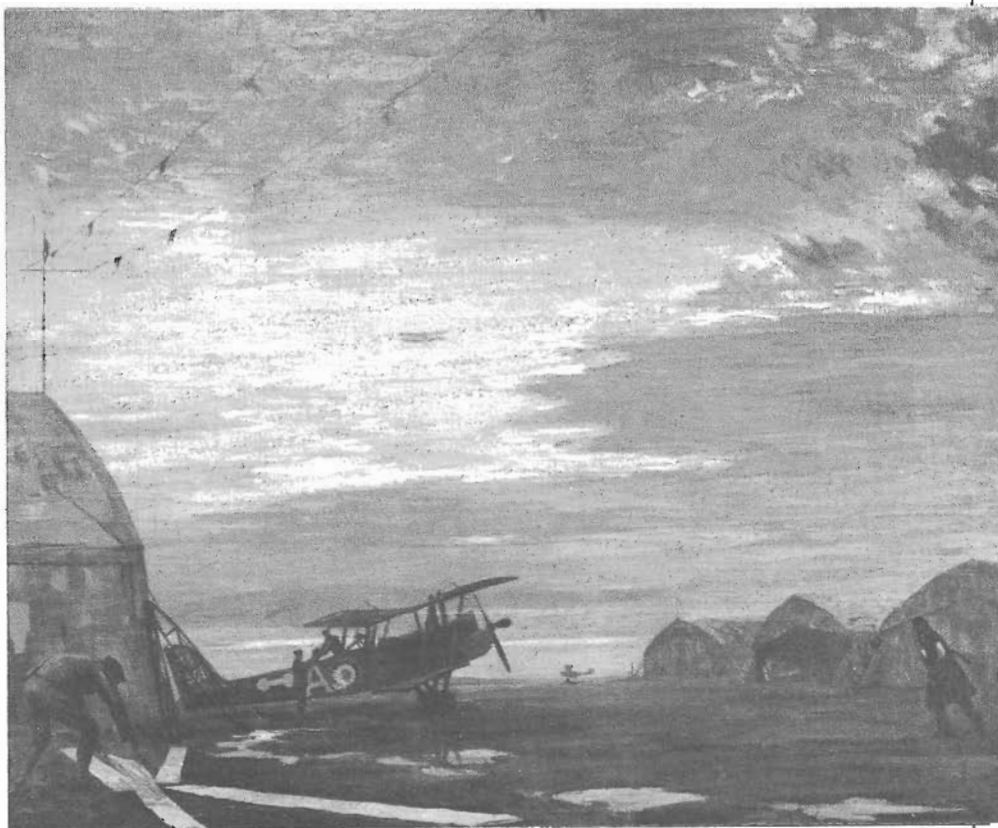
The Wireless Section owes a debt of thanks to Flight Lieutenant Verpilleux, through whose skill and enthusiasm it has been fund possible to give effect to the desire generally expressed to preserve in pictorial form some record of this most important branch of the war activities of the Royal Air Force. Without intimate first hand knowledge of the subject these pictures could not have been painted, and the originators of the scheme have been singularly fortunate in securing the services of one who is both a wireless officer and an artist, and who has in consequence been able to perform his task with insight and sympathy.

*H Trenchard*  
C. A. S.

## The Paintings

### 'Morning'

Dawn sees the departure of the first patrol. A tired wireless mechanic puts out the 'K' in answer to the calling-up signal of the departing machine. The atmosphere of first light is sensitively created.



### 'Noon'

This outstanding painting conveys the tense atmosphere at that particular time. It shows the battery commander's post during a shoot. The central figure of the operator has that unmistakable wireless look and appears to be oblivious to everything except the instrument and its signals. The dug-out is apparently an old cellar. The wireless operator in this picture is C.W. Moss who enlisted on 10th July 1918 and was posted to Flowerdown as a wireless learner. He subsequently became a wireless operator at Cranwell on 25th July 1921. He was a Flight Cadet from 15th September 1921 to 18th December 1923 and on being commissioned was posted to No. 4 Squadron at Farnborough. He was killed in an aeroplane accident on 9th April 1924.





### 'Evening'

*This is a picture of a 'strafed' battery position showing the remains of a wireless dug-out with what is left of a mast standing precariously. The sense of desolation and the threat of death is evident in a shell-torn landscape.*



### 'Enemy Aerodrome Active'

*A watching F.E. hovers above an enemy aerodrome where landing lights and other signs of activity appear. This observer mission, by signalling back by CW to his own aerodrome, will instigate an attack. Although the scene is at night the artist has shown an immense amount of detail.*

### 'Station Erection'

The battery commander and the squadron wireless operator, after having settled the best position for a station, are discussing the problem of dealing with artillery co-operation. A view of ruined Ypres and a camouflaged gun are also in the picture.

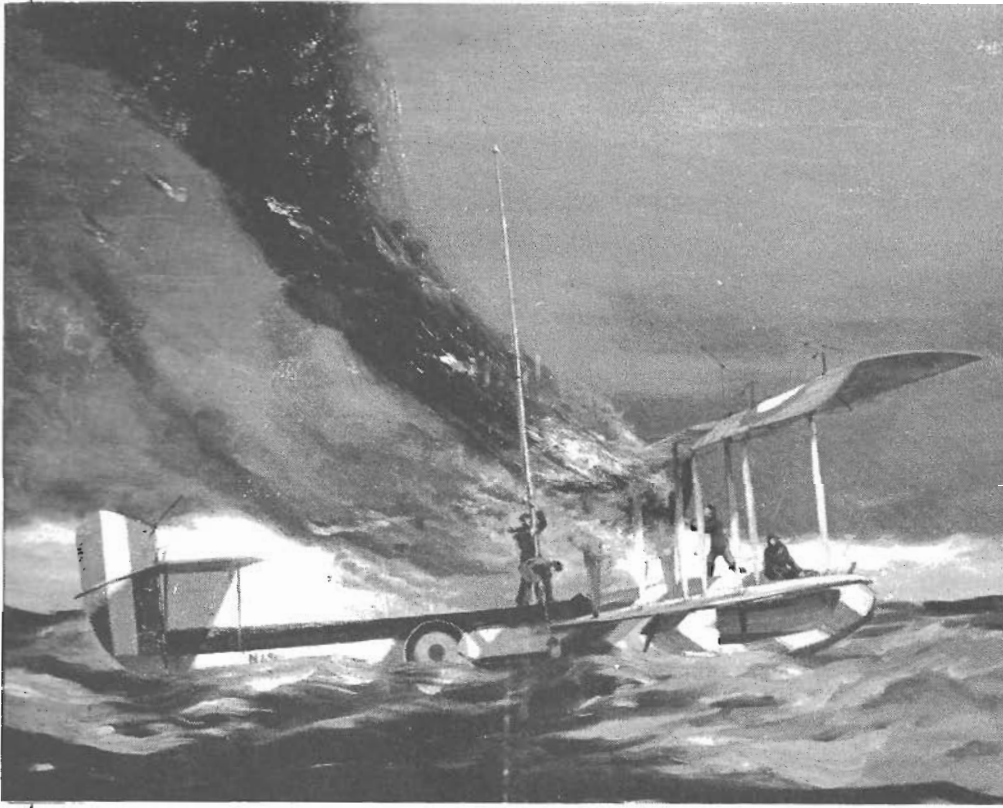


### 'The Visiting Corporal'

A solitary figure in the Flying Corps tunic carrying curious looking equipment tramps around the batteries at all times of the day or night, investigating trouble, helping with instrument servicing and replenishing supplies.

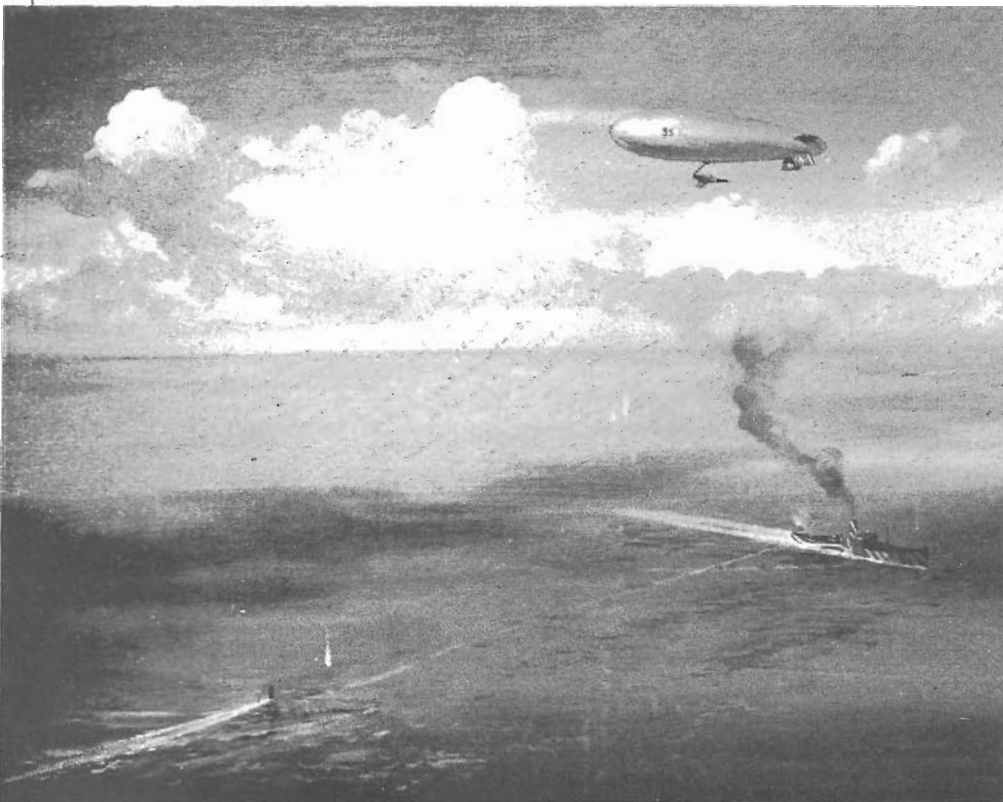






### *'The SOS'*

*This depicts an actual incident and shows a blazing seaplane in which all the occupants would have died but for the action of a wireless operator who erected a telescopic mast to send out a wireless SOS for help.*



### *'The Blymph'*

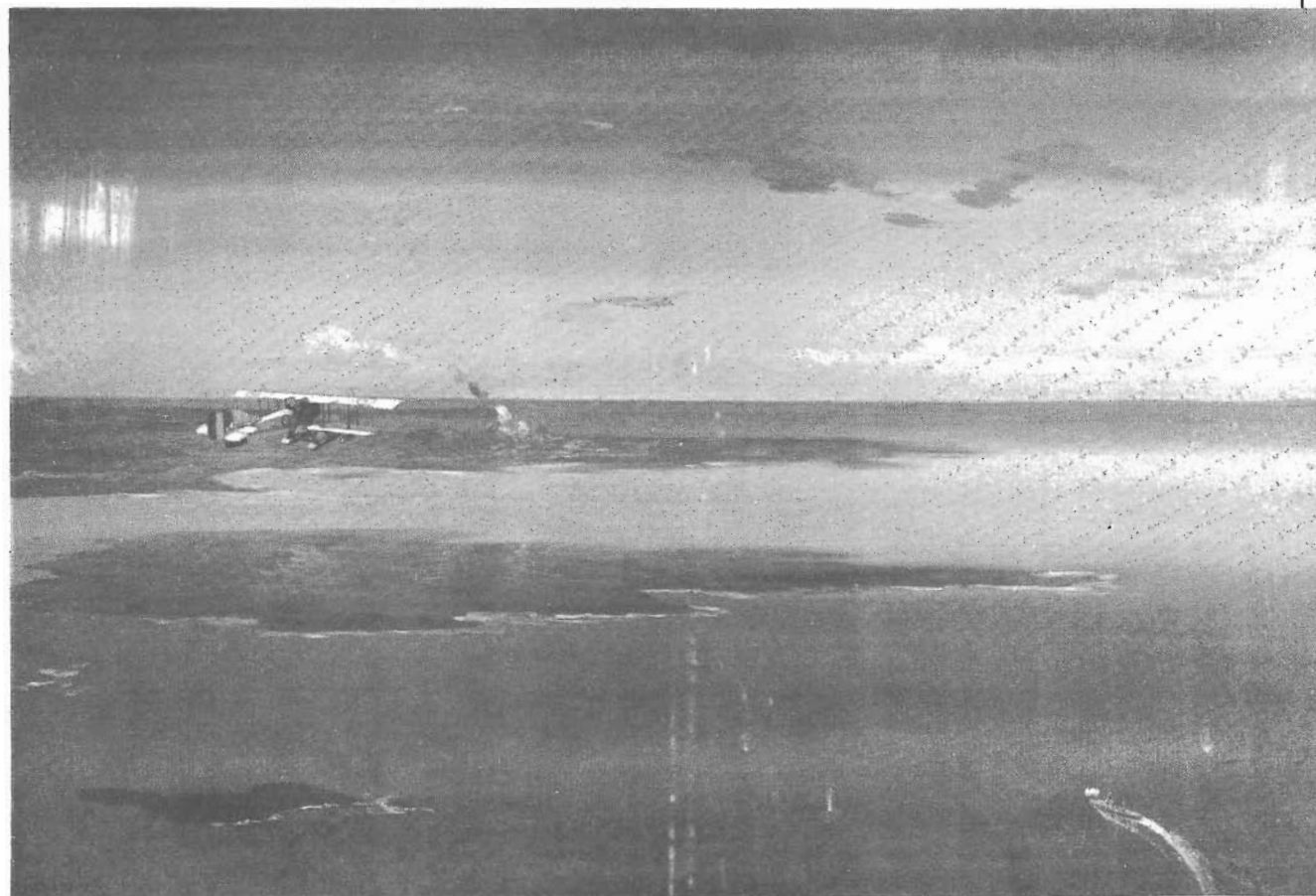
*A steamer is being attacked by a submarine and would obviously be in serious trouble were it not for the Blymph which has called up two destroyers (seen hurrying to the rescue) on its wireless.*

*Note : Blymph = Balloon, Lymp, Hydrogen.*



**'Registering for the  
Monitor'**

*The seaplane poised in its blue  
emerald setting is flying to relieve  
the machine in the far distance  
which is sitting over the Turkish  
Fort registering for the  
bombarding monitor.*



# COMMANDANTS 1916 - 1993

## *Electrical & Wireless School and No.1 Radio School*

A photograph of all  
Commandants of  
the School is shown  
on the opposite  
page

Wing Commander J.B. Bowen, OBE	1916-21
Group Captain A.D. Warrington-Morris, CMG OBE	1921-25
Group Captain R.P. Ross, DSO AFC ADC	1925-28
Group Captain A.L. Godman, CMG DSO	1928-31
Group Captain R.H. Verney, OBE	1931-34
Group Captain H. Gordon-Dean, AFC	1934-37
Group Captain J.H. Simpson	1937-40
Group Captain L.T.N Gould, MC	1940-42
Group Captain C.. Ellen, DFC	1942-43
Group Captain G.P. Chamberlain, OBE	Jan-Jun 1943
Group Captain S.L. Quine, MC	1943-44
Group Captain G. Thripp	1944-45
Group Captain N.F. Simpson, OBE	1945-46
Group Captain A.T. Monks	1946-48
Group Captain H.A. Evans-Evans	1948-52
Group Captain A.T. Monks	1952-53
Group Captain B. Robinson, CBE	1953-55
Group Captain D.N. Kington-Blair-Oliphant, OBE	1955-58
Group Captain A.P. Chamberlain	1958-59
Air Commodore H.G. Leonard-Williams, CBE	1959-61
Air Commodore W.D. Disbrey, CBE AFC	1961-64
Air Commodore C.R.C. Howlett	1964-65
Group Captain A.F. Ward, OBE	1965-66
Air Commodore C.S. Betts, CBE	1966-67
Group Captain N.W. Maskell	1967-69
Group Captain F.C. Padfield	1969-71
Group Captain W. Ormrod	1971-74
Group Captain F.M. Holroyd	1974-76
Group Captain J.M. Walker	1976-77
Group Captain P.J. Hector	1977-80
Group Captain D.G. Harrington	1980-82
Group Captain K.G. Lewis	1982-84
Group Captain M.R.M Heyes	1984-87
Group Captain R.C.R Johnston, MBE	1987-89
Group Captain R.J. Holt	1989-91
Group Captain C.M. Davison	1991-



# EX-APPRENTICES OF AIR RANK

## *Electrical & Wireless School and No.1 Radio School*

Rank	Name	School	Entry
Mshl RAF	Sir Keith Williamson GCB AFC	Cranwell	50th
Air Chf Mshl	Sir John Rogers KCB CBE	Cranwell	49th
Air Mshl	Sir Eric Dunn KBE CB BEM	Cranwell	48th
AVM	H.B. Wrigley CB CBE	Cranwell	12th
AVM	S.W.B. Menaull CB CBE DFC AFC	Cranwell	25th
AVM	L. Moulton CB DFC	Cranwell	25th
Air Cdre	W.C. Cooper	F/Down	5th
Air Cdre	A.D.Messenger CBE	Cranwell	14th
Air Cdre	J. Goodman CBE	Cranwell	25th
Air Cdre	J.A. Holmes DFC	Cranwell	29th
Air Cdre	K. Hellowell	Cranwell	31st
Air Cdre	A.J.B. Clements	Cranwell	32nd
Air Cdre	R.L. Top AFC	Cranwell	35th
Air Cdre	J. Mathews	Cranwell	38th
Air Cdre	G.C.D. Goodman CBE	Cranwell	44th
Air Cdre	J.D. Jones DFC	Cranwell	44th
Air Cdre	W.J.J. Northmore CBE	Cranwell	52nd
Air Cdre	R.E. Gladding CBE	Cranwell	53rd
Air Cdre	M.J.S. Palmer	Locking	91st

# CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF HISTORICAL LANDMARKS

## *No.1 Radio School*

- 1915 School for training wireless operators formed at Farnborough, Hants by the Royal Flying Corps.
- 1918 School transferred to the Royal Air Force as No. 1 (T) Wireless School and moved to Flowerdown, Winchester, Hants.
- 1919 School renamed Electrical and Wireless School.
- 1922 First entry of Aircraft Apprentices attested at Flowerdown for training as Wireless Operator Mechanics.
- 1929 School transferred to RAF Cranwell.
- 1940 Renamed No. 1 Signals School.
- 1943 Renamed No. 1 Radio School on 1st January.
- 1950 No. 1 Radio School moves to RAF Locking, except Aircraft Apprentices who remain at Cranwell as No. 6 Radio School.
- 1952 Aircraft Apprentice training rejoins No. 1 Radio School, RAF Locking.
- 1964 Last entry of Aircraft Apprentices. First entries of Technician and Craft Apprentices commenced training.
- 1965 Air Electronics trade training moved to RAF Cosford. No. 1 Radio School became responsible for ground electronics trade training.
- 1966 Last entry of Aircraft Apprentices completed training at Locking.
- 1970 First entry of Mechanic Apprentices commenced training.
- 1976 End of all Ground Electronic Apprentice training. No. 1 Radio School assumed responsibility for training the Electronic Technicians Synthetic Trainer.
- 1978 Reorganisation of the ground electronics trade group resulting in three sub-specialisations (Airfields, Air Defence and Telecommunications).
- 1985 YTS training commenced. Synthetic Trainer training moved to No. 2 School of Technical Training RAF Cosford.
- 1987 Introduction of Trade Management Training for TG3 personnel.
- 1988/ Trade Group 11 training transferred progressively to No. 1 Radio School
- 1989 from No. 2 School of Technical Training.
- 1993 Amalgamation of the three specializations of Airfields, Air Defence and Telecommunications into a single, multi-skilled Ground Electronics trade, with a new single gate mechanic entry.

# LIST OF COURSES/TRADES TAUGHT AT No. 1 RADIO SCHOOL

1943 - 1993

1943	Type X Course
1943	Teleprinter Operators - American
1943-44	Instructors Course
1943-44	Advanced Signals (Long and Short Course)
1943-44	Wireless Operators (Air) - Maintenance Course
1943 & 45	Liberator Wireless Equipment Course
1943-45	Wireless Operator Mechanics
1943-45	Navigators W/T (Short Course)
1943-46	Wireless Operators (Air Gunners) - Allied Airmen
1943-46	Navigators W/T (Long Course)
1943-50	Radio Telephony Operators
1943-50	Teleprinter Operators - WRAF/RAF
1943-65	Aircraft Apprentices
1944	Signals (War - Long and Short Course)
1944	Radio Mechanics (Grd)
1944-45	Navigator W/T Refresher Course
1944-45	Wireless Mechanics Advanced Course
1944-47	Officers Signal (War) Course
1944-50	Wireless Operator Mechanics
1945	Specialist Signals (War) Course
1945	Radio Bursars
1945	French Wireless Mechanics (Refresher)
1945	Meteorologists - Teleprinter Training
1945	Wireless Operator (Air) - Initial Training Wing (Refresher Course)
1945	W.O.M. (Air) from Wireless Operator (Air) - Preparatory course
1945	Wireless Operator Mechanics (Conversion Course)
1945-46	Telegraphist II from Wireless Operator (Grd)
1945-46	Pre-commissioning Signals Course
1946	General Duties Officers Signals (War) Course
1946-47	Wireless Mechanic - Belgian
1947	Wireless Mechanic Advanced - Allied

1947	Signals Officer Radar Familiarisation Course
1947-48	Polish Radio Fitters
1949 & 52	Ground Wireless Mechanics
1950-51	Wireless Fitter (Long Course)
1950-55	Ground Wireless Mechanics (Inter Command)
1952-66	Aircraft Apprentices (Grd / Air) - Radar / Radio Fitters
1953-55	Ground Wireless Fitter (Adv trg Part II Spec)
1964-76	Craft and Technician Apprentices
1967	Non-RAF Officers - Ground Radar
1968	Malaysian Electronic Fitters (Grd)
1969-72	Electronic Fitter (Ground Radar) - Non-MoD personnel
1969-78	Electronic Fitter (Grd Radar / Comms)
1970-72	Mechanic Apprentices
1972-77	Electronics Fitter (Ground Radar) - overseas airmen
1974	Electronic Mechanic (Ground Comms) - overseas airmen
1974-78	Overseas Mechanics (Ground Radar)
1974-78	Electronic Mechanic (Ground and Airfield Radar) - overseas airmen
1974-79	Overseas Officers (Ground Radar)
1976-85	Electronic Technician Synthetic Trainer
1978	Electronic Technician Telecommunication / Airfield / Air Defence - direct entry (DE)
1978-93	Electronic Mechanic Telecommunication / Airfield / Air Defence - direct entry
1979	Electronic Technician Telecommunication / Airfield / Air Defence - further training (FT)
1983	Electronic Technician Telecommunication / Airfield / Air Defence - overseas airmen
1987	Trade Management Training - Trade Group 3
1988-92	Telecommunication Operator Conversion (from Telephonist) - TCOB
1988	Telecommunications Operator (Basic) - TCO



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5. Air Historical Branch - archival reference material.
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7. Weston-super-Mare Museum - archival reference material.
8. Weston-super-Mare Library - archival newspaper reports.

## SPECIAL THANKS TO :

**Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Keith Williamson GCB AFC - Cranwell Apprentice.**

**Air Marshal Sir Eric Dunn KBE CB BEM CEng MRAS RAF (Ret'd) Cranwell Apprentice.**

**Squadron Leader I.A. Macpherson - OC Communications Operations Squadron.**

**WO D.J. Reid - Locking Apprentice (present School Training Wing Adjutant).**

**Mr Trevor Ward - Senior Burnham Lecturer.**

**Mr Archie Latto - Burnham Lecturer.**

**Mr John Caiger - Instructional Officer.**

**Mr Walter Strachan CBE FRAeS - Ex-Managing Director of the Locking Shadow Factory.**

**Mr Arthur Howell - RAF Locking photographer.**

*This booklet has been produced to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of No. 1 Radio School.*

*The origins of the School date back to 1916 and the First World War. The historical landmarks covered within include the First and Second World Wars, reminiscences and anecdotes of past and present lecturers and students and the School's links with the Monarchy. There is also a mention of the history of RAF Locking and its close links with the Borough of Weston-super-Mare, including the bombings of the local area during the Second World War, the Shadow Factories at Locking and Winterstoke and the Granting of the Freedom of Entry to the Borough.*

*Your purchase of this booklet will be of direct benefit to many RAF supported charities.*

*Squadron Leader I.A. Macpherson RAF  
(50th Anniversary Co-ordinator)*