

RAF COLLEGE CRANWELL

College Journal Extracts



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Photo by]

[Mr. Williams, Carnarvon.

**WING-COMMANDER L. W. B. REES, V.C.,
O.B.E., M.C., A.F.C.
OFFICER COMMANDING FLYING WING.**

On 1st July 1916 at Double Crassieus, France, Major Rees, whilst on flying duties, sighted what he thought was a bombing party of our machines returning home, but were in fact enemy aircraft. Major Rees was attacked by one of them, but after a short encounter it disappeared, damaged. The others then attacked him at long range, but he dispersed them, seriously damaging two of the machines. He chased two others but was wounded in the thigh, temporarily losing control of his aircraft. He righted it and closed with the enemy, using up all his ammunition, firing at very close range. He then returned home, landing his aircraft safely.

Medical examination showed that Rees had been fortunate in not having a leg artery severed, and he spent several weeks in hospital, and ended up with a slight but permanent limp. On 5th August 1916, came the news of his Victoria Cross award, which he received from King George V on 14th December 1916. When fit again for duty, he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel on 1st May 1917 and travelled to the USA as part of Harold Balfour's Mission entourage. On his return, he was given command of No 1 School of Aerial Fighting, Turnberry, Ayrshire. He remained at Turnberry for the rest of the war, and was awarded the Air Force Cross on 2nd November 1918, and decorated with an OBE.

In 1919, he was granted a permanent commission as a Wing Commander. On 15th January 1920 he was given the Freedom of Caernarfon, and presented with an ornate Sword of Honour. In 1923-1924, he became Assistant Commandant to the newly created RAF College, Cranwell; and in 1925 he commenced a two years' stint in the Directorate of Training, at the Air Ministry, and appointed ADC to King George V. In April 1926, he was posted to the Middle East as Group Captain, in command. He later commanded the RAF Depot at Uxbridge.

April 1921 - Lead Article (1)

REPORT OF THE INSPECTION OF THE R.A.F (CADET) COLLEGE, DECEMBER 20th, 1920.

THE first Inspection of the College was held on Monday, December 20th, 1920, by the then Secretary of State for War (the Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill, M.P.) and the Chief of the Air Staff (Air-Marshal Sir Hugh Trenchard, K.C.B., D.S.O.).

A good number of relatives of the Cadets had spent the week-end at Cranwell, having been put up by the A.O.C. and the wives of several married officers, and were present at the inspection.

The inspecting officers were received on the parade ground by the Commandant (Air-Commodore C. A. H. Longcroft, C.M.G., D.S.O., A.F.C.). The whole of the personnel of the station was drawn up in a square for inspection, and afterwards marched past in column of route. The order of the march past was:—Cadet Wing, Ground School, Flying School, No. 2 School of Technical Training (Boys). The handling of arms and march discipline displayed by the Cadets reflected great credit both upon themselves and their instructors, and one could scarcely realize that the

body marching past and that untrained multi-attired body of some six months ago were one and the same.

Following the march past, an inspection was made of Cadets at work in the workshops and at the rigging of wireless masts. The visitors then proceeded to the flight sheds, and witnessed a display of solo flying by the Senior Term Cadets. A physical training display was afterwards given by the 1st Term Cadets under the College P.T. Instructors.

After luncheon the Cadets and Instructors paraded in the Gymnasium, where the Commandant read his report of the year's work, and a speech was given by the Secretary of State for Air.

In his report the Commandant dealt briefly with the organization of the College, the objects of instruction, subjects of instruction, the difficulties encountered, the health and conduct of the Cadets, and sports and games.

The College, he said, opened on February 5th, 1920, with an entry of 52 Cadets, comprising 17 ex-Naval Sub-Lieutenants and Midshipmen, 32 Civil Service Commission entrants, and 3 nomination Cadets. The ex-Naval entry were admitted for one year's course of instruction instead of the normal course of two years, in order to form a senior term. From amongst these Cadets the Cadet Under-Officers and non-commissioned officers had been selected, and on their shoulders to a great extent had rested the task of setting the tone of the College from the commencement. That duty they had admirably fulfilled. They had now completed their year's course. They had made the best of their time at the College, and although their instruction had been necessarily somewhat hurried, they had attained a high standard of efficiency for so short a course.

Thirty-three Cadets joined the College in August, of whom 32 were Civil Service Commission entrants and one a nomination, making the total number of Cadets for the year up to 85. Of this number 7 were non-effective:—

1 returned to the Navy through inability for flying;

3 dropped a term through protracted illness;

3 discharged on medical grounds owing to defective eyesight and hearing,

thus leaving an effective strength at the end of the year's course of 78 Cadets.

In dealing with the organization of the College, the Commandant said that the College was organized into two Schools—the Flying School and the Ground School. The former he would deal with under the heading of flying; the latter consisted of two parts—the Cadets and the Instructors.

The Cadets were formed into two Squadrons, which, as they reached their full number of 200, would expand into four. Each Squadron was commanded by a Squadron Leader assisted by two Flight Lieutenants. Cadet Under-Officers and Cadet non-commissioned officers in each Squadron were responsible for the discipline of the Cadets. Each Squadron was a complete unit both for work and games. New entry Cadets were posted equally to the Squadrons, so that each Squadron consisted of a proportion of old and new Cadets.

For work Squadrons were organized into sets, which varied slightly according to the particular work which was being done.

In dealing with the objects of instruction, he need scarcely mention that the object of the College was to train officers for the Royal Air Force, but it might not be out of place to emphasize the fact that although an officer who could not fly was useless to the Air Force, yet the mere ability to fly by no means qualified an individual to become an officer in the Royal Air Force. In fact, it was scarcely too much to say that flying in the Royal Air Force was then, and would more and more assume, the same relative importance to other branches of technical knowledge as riding did in the Cavalry and marching in the Infantry.

The course included such varied subjects as—

Air Pilotage and Practical Flying.

Map Reading.

Reconnaissance and Observers' Training.

Meteorology.

Engines and Magnetos.

Rigging.

Theory of Flight.

Carpentry.

Wireless.

Armament—Small Arms, Machine Guns, Bombs and Bombing.

History of the Royal Air Force.

Law and Administration.

Organization of the Army.

Organization of the Navy.

Mathematics.

Applied Mechanics.

Science.

English History and Geography.

English Literature.

Drill.

Physical Training.

The flying training of the Cadets had been carried out within the Flying School, which comprised Headquarters and three Flights, which would ultimately be increased to six Flights as the number of Cadets reached the proposed establishment.

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The total number of hours flown during the period under report was 1,020, of which 245 were solo flying by the Senior Term.

All the Senior Cadets, with the exception of one (who was prevented by an accident), had now completed their flying tests.

The weather conditions during the spring and summer had been excellent, but through the past term the prevalence of fog had considerably interfered with flying instruction. Flying had been entirely prevented for three weeks in October owing to the necessity of carrying out technical alterations to machines.

The standard of the ex-Naval Cadets who had been instructed in flying appeared to be above the average of the pupils trained during the war, but it must be remembered that the instructors had been of exceptional ability, and that each pupil had from three to five times as much dual control as was given during the war. The result was that pupils had been better grounded in the elements of flying, and better watched over for the faults which inevitably developed when solo flying began.

The whole of the Senior Term Cadets were now able to loop, spin, half-roll, and were capable of making a good forced landing in any but very small fields. They had also shown themselves capable of finding their way across country under good weather conditions.

The only accident approaching a serious nature occurred through engine failure. The machine was badly wrecked and the pilot slightly concussed. With this exception, the only damage done to machines during the year had been—

One machine wrecked getting off, owing to a failing engine.

One broken under-carriage due to a bad landing.
Neither caused any injury to the Pilot.

There had been many difficulties to overcome in organizing the instruction at the College, the chief of which had been—

The number and wide diversity of subjects which had to be dealt with.
These had already been enumerated.

They had no past traditions as a College, no precedents, and no previous experience to go on.

The difficulty of fitting flying training into an already crowded syllabus. This difficulty, he hoped, had been partially overcome by prolonging the summer term at the expense of the winter term, thus taking every advantage of flying weather.

The general health of the Cadets had been excellent, local injuries having been responsible for 50% of the total days' illness. These injuries were chiefly due to football and athletics, all of which were normal to the life of a healthy Cadet.

The conduct of the Cadets throughout the year had been exemplary. Their general bearing and efficiency had been good. The duties of Under-Officers and

non-commissioned officers had been performed in a loyal and spirited manner. The support which they had given to their immediate superior officers had been of the greatest assistance in laying the foundation of good discipline. Traditions were rapidly creeping in and being upheld, and competitive spirit was gaining strength daily.

The facilities for games and sports were probably better at the College than at any similar institution. Cricket, football (especially Rugby), running, hockey, and boxing had all flourished, and if they had not shone as brightly in outside matches as they might have wished, it must be borne in mind that their numbers were small and their selection limited.

The beagles had provided sport for many, and had been instrumental in introducing some of them to fox-hunting, for which unusual facilities existed.

In concluding, he thought they might look back on the past year with some satisfaction. They had tried, he hoped not without success, to set themselves a high standard, but they must remember that the standard could never be too high, and that constant endeavour was necessary if they were to go on improving, and if they were to become, as they meant to become, a Cadet College worthy of the finest Service in the Empire.

The Secretary of State for Air, in addressing the Cadets, said that it did not seem so long ago in his mind that he stood formed up in the Sandhurst Gymnasium being inspected as they were being inspected to-day, and he could assure them that he had been most interested and pleased with all he had seen of Cranwell that morning.

Air-Commodore Longcroft, he said, had accepted a very difficult task—the complications of the Air Force, the many sciences which united the Air Service, the varied arts and crafts, and the varied forms in which they had to be acquired, required a greater ability and a greater knowledge than did anything connected with the training of officers of the Navy, Army, or even the Artillery.

The time was not long, and he could well believe their days were so packed with the work they had to do, all they had to learn, and with the necessary proportion of games and sports, that he was sure they were glad to get to bed at night, and that they slept soundly until the next morning.

They were, in the main (except, perhaps, some few of them who had served in the Navy afloat), young men who had not had the opportunity of participating in the Great War, in which the name of the Royal Air Force was made, and it was their duty to preserve it for the Empire and for their country. Although the Great War was over, the country was by no means at rest. Airmen had been forced to fly against enemies even during the present year in four different countries—Persia, Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Somaliland—and although one felt that a general

settlement of the world was taking place, yet it was most likely that in a year or two some of them there to-day would have the opportunity of entering into exploits, as did all those masters of the air in the Air Force in the Great War which had just come to an end.

The first object of the Cadets of Cranwell College should be to go out into the Royal Air Force and into the world, intermingling with the officers of the Navy and the Army, knowing that the responsibility rested upon them to give a good name to the College and to sustain its reputation—a reputation which they had helped to make, and one which made everyone proud to belong to it, and made people want their sons to be sent to receive its special vocational education. They should remember that they were going out into a Service which had a future before it. Science was expanding, and one could not compare the machines of to-day with the machines of ten years ago. It seemed absurd to remember that from ten to twelve years ago people used to lie on the ground to see if the wheels of an aeroplane lifted from the ground for four to five yards—in those days a great feat. Much had been done up to the present time, but much remained to be done, as greater things lay before them in the future. They must press forward towards such problems as vertical flight, the substitution of some other form of propulsion for the air screw or propeller, some form of non-inflammable fuel from which engines would develop the utmost possible power. In every way one felt that the future seethed with interest, and that there was no limit to the determination and ambition of man in his conquests over this new element—the air.

He was very much impressed, he said, by what he had seen of the solo-flying that morning, and by the enormous advance which had been made when, after only 50 hours' instruction, such excellent landings could be made and evolutions performed which, a few years ago, were considered to be dare-devil flights of the pioneers of aviation.

He offered them his congratulations on their bearing and deportment, and trusted that in their work in the Royal Air Force they would bear themselves so that naval and military officers would feel that they had their equals in the Royal Air Force in those qualities which went to make a good officer and gentleman.

The Secretary of State then presented the cups given by Air-Marshal Sir Hugh Trenchard and by Prince Chimay.

On the evening of December 20th a ball was held in the Cadets' Mess. The music for dancing, which was carried on from 9 p.m. until 2.30 a.m., was provided by the Cadet College Band, under the direction of Bandmaster A. E. Halford.