RAF COLLEGE CRANWELL
Commandants

1920-2020

(Notes compiled by Phil Bonner ex-20 GE)

COMMANDANTS

AIR COMMODORE	C.A.H.LONGCROFT, C.M.G. D.S.O. A.F.C.	5-2-20
AIR COMMODORE	A.E.BORTON, C.B. C.M.G. D.S.O. A.F.C.	15-8-23
AIR COMMODORE	F.C.HALAHAN, C.M.G. C.B.E. D.S.O. M.V.O.	1-11-26
AIR COMMODORE	A.M.LONGMORE, C.B. D.S.O.	10-12-29
AIR COMMODORE	W.G.S.MITCHELL, C.B.E. D.S.O. M.C. A.F.C.	30-1-33
AIR COMMODORE	H.M.CAVE-BROWN-CAVE, D.S.O. D.F.C.	3-12-34
AIR VICE-MARSHAL	J.E.A.BALDWIN, D.S.O. O.B.E.	21-12-36
	1939—1945	
AIR COMMODORE	R.L.R.ATCHERLEY, C.B.E. A.F.C.	1-10-46
AIR COMMODORE	G.R.BEAMISH, C.B. C.B.E.	1-1-49
AIR COMMODORE	L.F.SINCLAIR, O.C. C.B. C.B.E. D.S.O.	31-7-50
AIR COMMODORE	H.EELES, C.B.E.	25-8-52
AIR COMMODORE	T.A.B.PARSELLE, C.B.E.	10-4-56
AIR COMMODORE	D.F.SPOTSWOOD, C.B.E. D.S.O. D.F.C. A.D.C.	26-8-58
AIR COMMODORE	E.D.McK.NELSON, C.B.	17-4-61
AIR COMMODORE	M.D.LYNE, A.F.C.	21-8-63
AIR COMMODORE	I.D.N.LAWSON, C.B.E. D.F.C.	28-12-64
	MERGER WITH TECHNICAL COLLEGE HENLOW, 1965	
AIR VICE-MARSHAL	I.D.N.LAWSON, C.B. C.B.E. D.F.C.	1-4-65
AIR VICE-MARSHAL	T.N.STACK, C.B. C.V.O. C.B.E. A.F.C.	1-2-67
AIR VICE-MARSHAL	F.D.HUGHES, C.B.E. D.S.O. D.F.C. A.F.C. M.A.	9-3-70
AIR VICE-MARSHAL	R.D.AUSTEN-SMITH, D.F.C.	23-9-72
AIR VICE-MARSHAL	W.E.COLAHAN, C.B.E. D.F.C.	19-7-75
AIR VICE-MARSHAL	D.HARCOURT-SMITH, D.F.C.	28-1-78
AIR VICE-MARSHAL	B.BROWNLOW, O.B.E. A.F.C.	9-1-80
AIR VICE-MARSHAL	R.C.F.PEIRSE, C.B.	30-1-82
AIR VICE-MARSHAL	E.H.MACEY, O.B.E.	19-1-85
AIR VICE-MARSHAL	R.H.WOOD, O.B.E.	17-7-87
AIR VICE-MARSHAL	R.M.AUSTIN, A.F.C.	8-12-89
AIR VICE-MARSHAL	D.COUSINS, C.B. A.F.C. B.A.	21-2-92
AIR VICE-MARSHAL	A.J.STABLES, C.B.E.	7-10-94
AIR VICE-MARSHAL	J H THOMPSON	22-1-97
AIR VICE-MARSHAL	T W RIMMER O.B.E. M.A. F.R.Ae.S.	29-7-98
AIR VICE-MARSHAL	H G MACKAY C.B. O.B.E. A.F.C. B.Sc. F.R.Ae.S.	21-7-00

ASSISTANT COMMANDANTS

WING COMMANDER	A.L.CODMAN, C.M.G. D.S.O.	5-2-20
WING COMMANDER	A.E.BARNETT, C.M.G. M.C.	11-1-21
WING COMMANDER	L.N.S.RUSS, V.C. O.B.E. M.C. A.F.C.	26-1-23
WING COMMANDER	E.M.MURRAY, D.S.O. M.C.	18-12-24
WING COMMANDER	D.C.S.EVILL, D.S.O. A.F.C.	7-1-28
GROUP CAPTAIN	P.RABBITTS, M.C. A.F.C.	22-12-31
WING COMMANDER	J.E.HERRING, D.S.O. M.C.	4-12-35
WING COMMANDER	C.N.LOWE, A.F.C. D.F.C.	6-9-37
GROUP CAPTAIN	E.J.KINGSTON-McCLOUGHRY, D.S.O. D.F.C.	11-5-38
	R.HALLEY, D.F.C. A.F.C.	19-12-38
	1939—1945	
GROUP CAPTAIN	A.R.A.PEEL, D.S.O. D.F.C.	
GROUP CAPTAIN	J.C.W.OLIVER, C.B. D.S.O. D.F.C.	1-3-47
GROUP CAPTAIN	W.E.KYLE, C.B.E. D.S.O. D.F.C. A.D.C.	20-2-48
GROUP CAPTAIN	E.D.McK.NELSON, C.B.	1-2-51
GROUP CAPTAIN	D.H.LEE, D.F.C.	23-6-52
GROUP CAPTAIN	H.N.G.WHEELER, C.B.E. D.S.O. D.F.C. A.F.C. A.D.C.	24-9-54
GROUP CAPTAIN	L.M.HODGES, C.B.E. D.S.O. D.F.C.	10-6-57
GROUP CAPTAIN	T.P.SEYMOUR, C.B.E.	4-1-59
GROUP CAPTAIN	A.C.DEERE, D.S.O. O.B.E. D.F.C. A.D.C.	14-11-60
GROUP CAPTAIN	G.C.LAMB, A.F.C.	3-2-63
	MERGER WITH TECHNICAL COLLEGE, HENLOW, 1965	6-4-64
AIR COMMODORE	N.CAMERON, D.S.O. D.F.C.	
AIR COMMODORE	R.G.WAKEFORD, M.V.O. O.B.E. A.F.C.	22-2-65
AIR COMMODORE	J.E.BAZALGETTE, D.F.C.	20-9-66
AIR COMMODORE	A.MAISNER, C.B.E. A.F.C.	23-12-68
AIR COMMODORE	B.BROWNLOW, O.B.E. A.F.C.	22-5-71
AIR COMMODORE	M.M.J.ROBINSON.	28-7-73
AIR COMMODORE	H.S.CARVER, M.V.O.	31-8-74
AIR COMMODORE	E.G.P.JEFFERY.	9-5-77
AIR COMMODORE	M.R.WILLIAMS, M.A.	29-9-79
AIR COMMODORE	A.MUSKER.	9-5-81
AIR COMMODORE	T.W.G.CARLTON.	5-5-84
AIR COMMODORE	M.J.MILLIGAN, C.B.E.	10-12-85
AIR COMMODORE	B.N.J.SPEED, O.B.E.	26-2-88
AIR COMMODORE	R.B.DUCKETT, C.V.O. A.F.C.	3-8-90
AIR COMMODORE	B.C.LAITE.	5-5-92
GROUP CAPTAIN	R.D.IVESON, A.F.C.	27-9-93
	DEPARTMENT OF INITIAL OFFICER TRAINING	4-7-95
GROUP CAPTAIN	T J BENEY FIMgt	7-5-96
GROUP CAPTAIN	R H MIDDLETON	14-8-98
GROUP CAPTAIN	G A BOWERMAN O.B.E.	26-9-00

Charles Alexander Holcombe Longcroft

Longcroft attended RMA Sandhurst and was commissioned into the Welsh Regiment in 1903. He gained Royal Aero Club certificate No 192 in March 1912, volunteered for the Air Battalion before joining the Royal Flying Corps on its formation.

During WW1, he served on the Western Front with 1, 2 and 4 Squadrons. He then transferred to the RAF and relinquished his commission in the Welsh Regiment on appointment of a permanent commission in the RAF in 1919.

On 1st November 1919, he was appointed Commandant of the RAF College in the rank of Air Commodore. On 5th February 1920, he was appointed Air Officer Commanding Cranwell when first cadets arrived.

He retired at his own request on 2 November 1929 in the rank of Air Vice Marshal.

Born 13 May 1883. Died 20 February 1958.

Amyas Eden Burton

Commissioned into the Black Watch militia in January 1904 (equivalent of the reserves). He transferred to the Regular Army in 1906. Learnt to fly in 1911/12 gaining Royal Aero Club certificate No 170 on 19 January 1912. Secondment to the Military Wing of the RFC in June 1914 he served on the Western Front with 5 Squadron.

Credited with coming up with the slang word “Archie” for German anti-aircraft artillery. Apparently as he dodged the exploding artillery shells he shouted the words “Archibald, certainly not”, the words from a popular music hall song of the time.

Was a flight commander with 8 Squadron and was severely wounded during aerial combat over the Western Front, with a bullet wound to the head and neck. Recommended for a Victoria Cross he was subsequently awarded the DSO. Evacuated to the UK, it was several months before he returned to duties.

(Note: his brother Arthur Burton served in the Army transferred to the RFC as an observer in January 1915 but was seriously wounded in an accident in March 1915. Subsequently transferred to the Royal Navy and then the London Regiment with whom he won the VC).

Amyas finished the war serving in Palestine. Remaining in the RAF after the war he succeeded Longcroft as Commandant on the 15th August 1923.

Subsequently he followed Longcroft on 1st November 1926 as Director of Personnel Services. Born 20 September 1886. Promoted to AVM on 1 July 1929. Retired 23 August 1933. Died 15 August 1969. [Citation for DSO is worth a mention]

Frederick Crosby Halahan

Halahan entered BRNC Dartmouth in 1894, specialised as a gunnery officer and then was involved with an Anti-Aircraft unit at the start of WW1. He later worked in the Air Department of the Admiralty.

He learnt to fly in early 1915, gaining Royal Aero Club certificate No 1169 on 14th February.

He is then believed to have served in several staff appointments.

He became RAF College Commandant on 1st November 1926 in rank the of Air Commodore, but was promoted to Air Vice Marshal whilst in post on 1st July 1928.

He retired around 1930, but subsequently served in the rank of Group Captain in the RAF's personnel department during WW2.

Born 27 May 1880. Died 17 October 1965.

Arthur Murray Longmore

Born in New South Wales, Longmore was educated in England and entered the Royal Navy College Britannia, Dartmouth in May 1900, being commissioned in 1904.

In 1911, the Royal Aero Club offered the Royal Navy the opportunity to train 4 pilots and Longmore was one of the successful applicants, earning Royal Aero Club certificate No 72 on 25 April 1911. In November or December 1911, he became the first pilot to land an aircraft on water; using floatation airbags attached to a Shorts biplane.

He was part of the Naval Wing of the RFC and posted to the Central Flying School. The Commandant of CFS was Captain Godfrey Paine (later Commandant of RNAS Cranwell Daedalus). At that time Paine was not yet a pilot so one of the first things Longmore had to do was teach Paine how to fly! Paine qualified as a pilot on 15th May 1912, with certificate No 217. One of Longmore's pupils on the first CFS course was Trenchard.

Longmore saw service with 1 and 3 Squadrons of the RNAS before returning to sea duties on HMS Tiger in 1916, when he saw active service at the Battle of Jutland. He subsequently had a series of staff appointments within the RNAS.

Awarded a permanent commission in the RAF in 1919, he became Commandant on 16th December 1929 and promoted to Air Vice Marshal on 1st January 1930.

By the outbreak of WW2, he was an Air Chief Marshal in charge of Training Command, but in April 1940 he was appointed AOC Middle East Command. This appointment was to prove controversial and he was replaced by Churchill in May 1941. Longmore had made constant demands for reinforcements which had not gone down very well with Churchill, who viewed him as a pessimist who was complaining of lack of resources. However, in his defence, Longmore had sent units from the Middle East to support the fight against the Italians and Germans in Greece, a decision which had met with approval from Churchill. It was when these units were not replaced that he started to put in his requests for reinforcements.

His last appointment was as Inspector General of the RAF. In March 1942, he stood as the Conservative candidate in the Grantham by-election, Lady Thatcher's constituency in later years. He lost to the Independent Candidate by 367 votes.

Born 8 October 1885. Retired March 1942. Died 10 December 1970. We believe he may have been Reviewing Officer at his son's graduation.

William Gore Sutherland Mitchell

Commissioned into the Devonshire Regiment in 1906 as an infantry officer, Mitchell attended CFS in 1913 and was awarded his Royal Aero Club certificate No 483 in May of that year, before becoming a pilot in the RFC. During WW1 he commanded 10 Squadron.

Awarded a permanent commission in the RAF in 1919, he served in India and also commanded No 1 FTS.

In 1929, he was Director of Training before being appointed as Commandant of the RAF College on 30 January 1933 and promoted to Air Vice Marshal on 1 July 1933. He was the AOC when College Hall was opened in October 1934 - just before he handed over command.

Subsequently, he achieved the rank of Air Chief Marshal on appointment as AOC-in-C Middle East Command and then appointed Inspector-General of the RAF, on both occasions being succeeded by ACM Longmore.

On retiring from the RAF in 1941 he became the first RAF officer to hold the post of ‘Black Rod’ in the House of Lords.

Born 8 March 1888. Died of a heart attack 15 August 1944.

Henry Meyrick Cave-Browne-Cave

C-B-C was one of two brothers who joined the Royal Navy as engineering officers. Henry joined in 1903, being commissioned in 1907. He trained as a pilot in March 1915, gaining Royal Aero Club certificate No 1129. He flew seaplanes in the RNAS, earning the DSO and DFC.

Awarded a permanent commission in the RAF, he commanded the Far East Flight in 1927. Consisting of 4 Short Southampton flying boats, the Flight went through Egypt, India, Japan, and Australia and arrived in Singapore on 10 December 1928.

Prior to his appointment as Commandant of the RAF College, he was Director of Technical Development and is credited with authorising the financial investment into the development of the Supermarine Spitfire.

He was appointed Commandant on 3 December 1934 and was promoted to Air Vice Marshal on 1 July 1935.

In January 1939, he was seriously injured in a flying accident that ended his career in the RAF.

Born 1887. Retired 18 September 1940. Died 5 August 1965.

[His brother, Thomas Cave-Browne-Cave, also transferred to the RAF. He left the RAF when the Air Ministry discontinued the operation of airships following the R101 crash. He went on to become a Professor of Engineering at Southampton University].

John Eustice Arthur Baldwin

Baldwin attended the Royal Military Academy before being commissioned into the 8th (Kings Royal Irish) Hussars in 1911. In November 1914, he gained his wings and was awarded Royal Aero Club certificate No 971. As a pilot in the RFC, he saw service on the Western Front and, by October 1916, he was commanding 55 Squadron.

He transferred across to the RAF and served with 41 Wing, which conducted strategic bombing against Germany in WW1. He was granted a permanent commission in the RAF at the end of war and resigned his commission in the Army. He attended the 1st course on the RAF Staff College and subsequently became Commandant of the Central Flying School.

Promoted to Air Vice Marshal on 1 January 1936, he became Commandant of the RAF College on 21 December 1936.

This should have been his last tour as he officially retired on 15 August 1939, but was recalled to serve two weeks later. He was appointed AOC 3 Group and was briefly acting C-in-C Bomber Command in early 1942.

Subsequently, he was posted to India and then was appointed AOC Third Tactical Air Force in South East Asia. He reverted to the retired list again in December 1944.

Born 13 April 1892. Died 28 July 1975.

Douglas Harries

PHOTO AWAITED

Attended Britannia Royal Naval College and by 1915 he specialised as an airship pilot, commanding Polegate Airship Station.

On 1 April 1918 he joined the Airship Branch of the RAF and the following year he was awarded a permanent commission. It was not until 1924 that he concentrated on fixed wing flying, attending 4 FTS, by which time he was a Squadron Leader.

By 1939 he was an Air Commodore and was appointed as Commandant of Cranwell on 15 August 1939.

He was subsequently appointed AOC 23 Group on 28 January 1942, in the rank of Acting Air Vice Marshal.

Born 31 March 1893. Retired 19 August 1946. Died 6 December 1972.

Walter Edward George Bryant

Was initially commissioned into the Royal Fusiliers before transferring to the Royal Flying Corps. In July 1916 he was seriously wounded in the chest while flying with 60 Squadron on the Western Front. Evacuated back to the UK, it was not until 10 October 1916 that he was declared fit for permanent employment in the RFC and he returned to France in the November for service with 45 Squadron.

Granted a permanent commission in the RAF in August 1919, he subsequently found himself as the Air Attaché in Tokyo and was interned on 7 December 1941 (the date of Pearl Harbour). He was subsequently released in exchange for Japanese diplomats and served in India.

Appointed AOC of RAF Cranwell in July 1944, he was taken ill whilst Commandant and died in Rauceby Hospital on 22 August 1945. Born 21 June 1883.

Richard Llewellyn Roger Atcherley

Atcherley was educated at Oundle School and entered the RAF College in 1922. He was on A Squadron and finished as a Flight Cadet Sergeant. He graduated in 1924 and was awarded the RM Groves Prize.

[His twin brother David Francis William Atcherley also applied to enter Cranwell, but was rejected on medical grounds. Instead, he entered the RMA Sandhurst and was commissioned into the East Lancashire Regiment. Subsequently, David transferred to the RAF in October 1929].

On graduating from Cranwell, Richard had a distinguished career as a fighter pilot, flying instructor and test pilot. He was a member of the RAF's Schneider Trophy team in 1929.

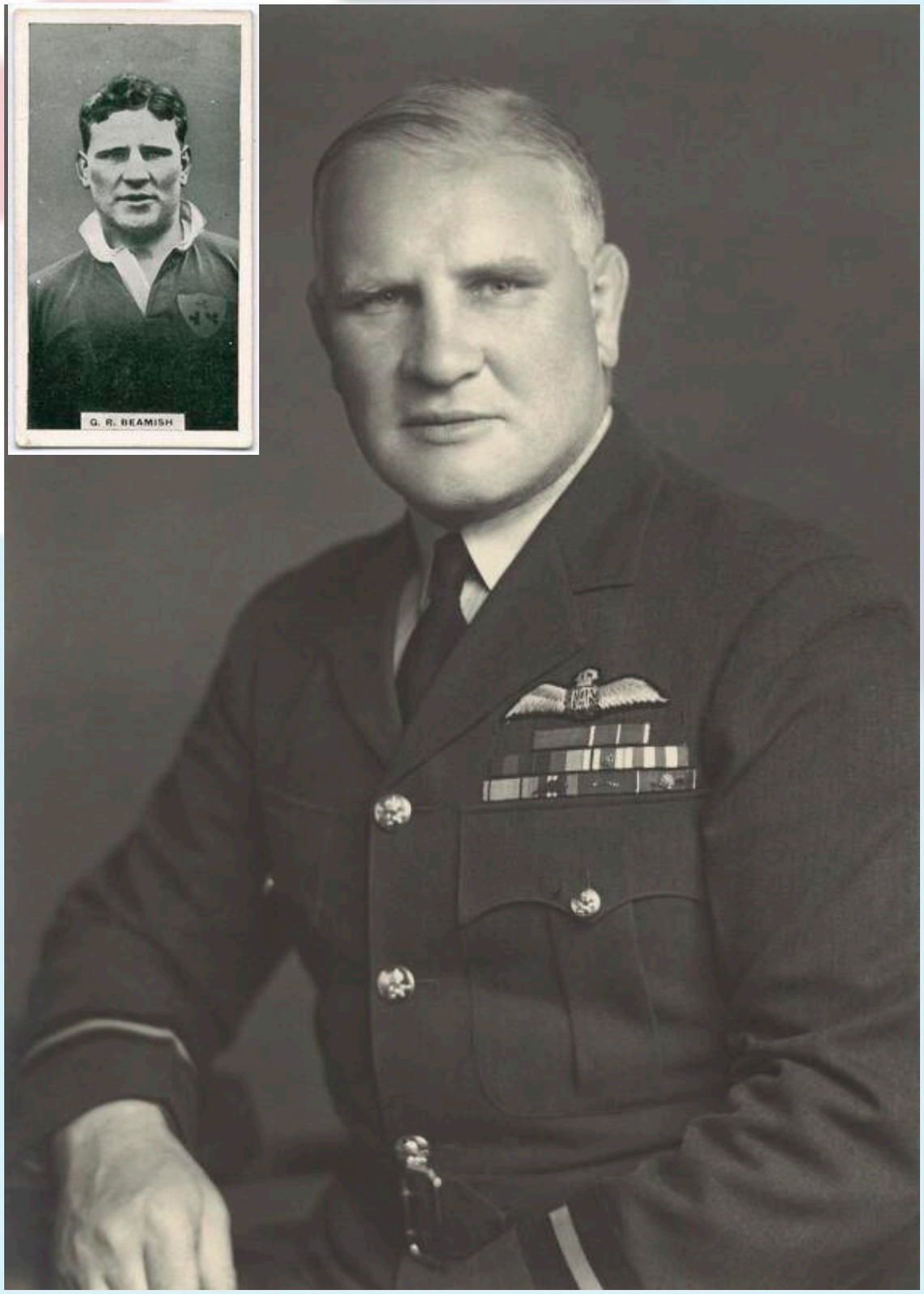
In May 1940, he was Officer Commanding Air Element of the British Expeditionary Force in Norway, before assuming command of RAF Drem the following month. At Drem, he helped to develop the night landing system which subsequently became known as the Drem system.

He was appointed Commandant of the RAF College in September 1945 in the rank of Air Commodore, the first Cranwellian to hold the post.

He subsequently became Chief of the Air Staff for the Royal Pakistani Air Force in 1949 and then Air Officer Commanding No. 12 Group in 1951. He went on to be Head of the RAF Staff in Washington D. C. in 1953 and Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief at Flying Training Command in 1955, before retiring in 1959.

Born 12 January 1904. Died 18 April 1970.

George Robert Beamish



Air Commodore George Robert Beamish (later Air Marshal Sir George Beamish) was Commandant from 1st January 1949 until 31st July 1950.

He had entered the College as a Flight Cadet in 1923 and was commissioned in 1924. He flew with 100 Squadron and 45 Squadron and during the Second world War, he served overseas in the Middle East, Crete and North Africa.

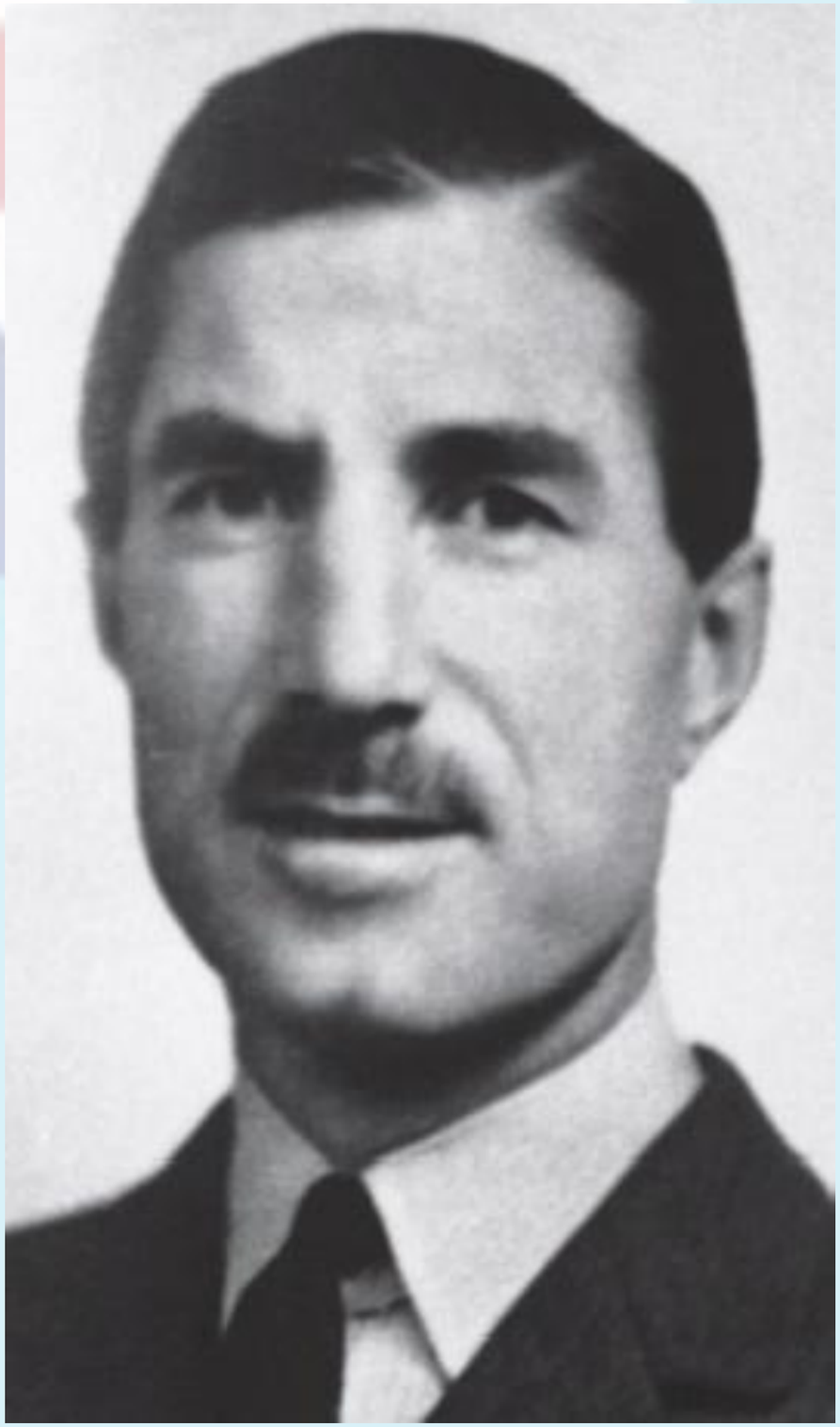
He played rugby for Ireland and the British Lions.

George was one of four brothers who served in the RAF. Cecil Beamish was a dentist who rose to the rank of Air Vice Marshal. Victor Beamish was also a Cranwell Flight Cadet between September 1921 and August 1923; a rugby triallist for Ireland, he was killed in action on 28th March 1942 in the rank of Group Captain (DSO*, DFC & AFC, Battle of Britain). Third brother, Charles, also played for Ireland and the British Lions and retired as a Group Captain.

George Beamish's last appointments were as Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief at Transport Command in 1954 and Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief at Technical Training Command in 1955. In 1955, Beamish was appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath.

Born 29 April 1905. Retired in 1958. Died 13 November 1967

Laurence Frank Sinclair



Air Commodore Laurence Frank Sinclair (later Air Vice Marshal Sir Laurence Sinclair) was a Cranwell Flight Cadet in 1926 and commissioned in 1928.

Whilst serving in India in 1938, a stomach illness led to the discovery that he had been born with only one kidney and he was confined to ground appointments. However, at the outbreak of war he was returned to flying duties and commanded 110 Squadron.

Whilst based at RAF Wattisham in September 1940, he rushed to the aid of a Blenheim aircraft which had crashed on take-off and burst into flames. For his bravery, he was awarded the George Cross.

Citation for George Cross: *During a night in September, 1940, an aircraft burst into flames whilst taking off. Wing Commander Sinclair immediately went to the scene to render assistance, but two 250 1b. bombs exploded before he reached it. Undeterred, and knowing that two more bombs were in the aircraft, he pressed on and dashing into the fire he succeeded in dragging the air gunner to a safe distance. In this act this officer displayed the most complete disregard for his own safety. Unfortunately the rescued air gunner has since died of his injuries."* (London Gazette 21 January 1941)

He was appointed Assistant Commandant in 1949 and became Commandant on 31st July 1950. Believed to be the first Commandant who had served as Assistant Commandant.

Born 13 June 1908. Retired 1960. Died 14 May 2002.

Henry Eeles

Air Commodore Henry Eeles was a Cranwell Flight Cadet on 'A' Squadron, having entered the College in January 1929 and was an Under Officer Cadet when he graduated in December 1930.

He flew with 41 Squadron and was the Officer Commanding 263 Squadron, flying Hurricanes and Whirlwinds during the Battle of Britain. Though entitled to wear the Battle of Britain clasp, it is believed that he opted not to wear it, as he did not serve in the south of England during the Battle.

He was Commandant from 25th August 1952 until April 1956 (Possibly the longest serving Commandant).

He retired from the RAF in the rank of Air Commodore.

Born 12 May 1910. Retired from the RAF 29 January 1959. Died in 1992.

Thomas Alfred Boyd Parselle

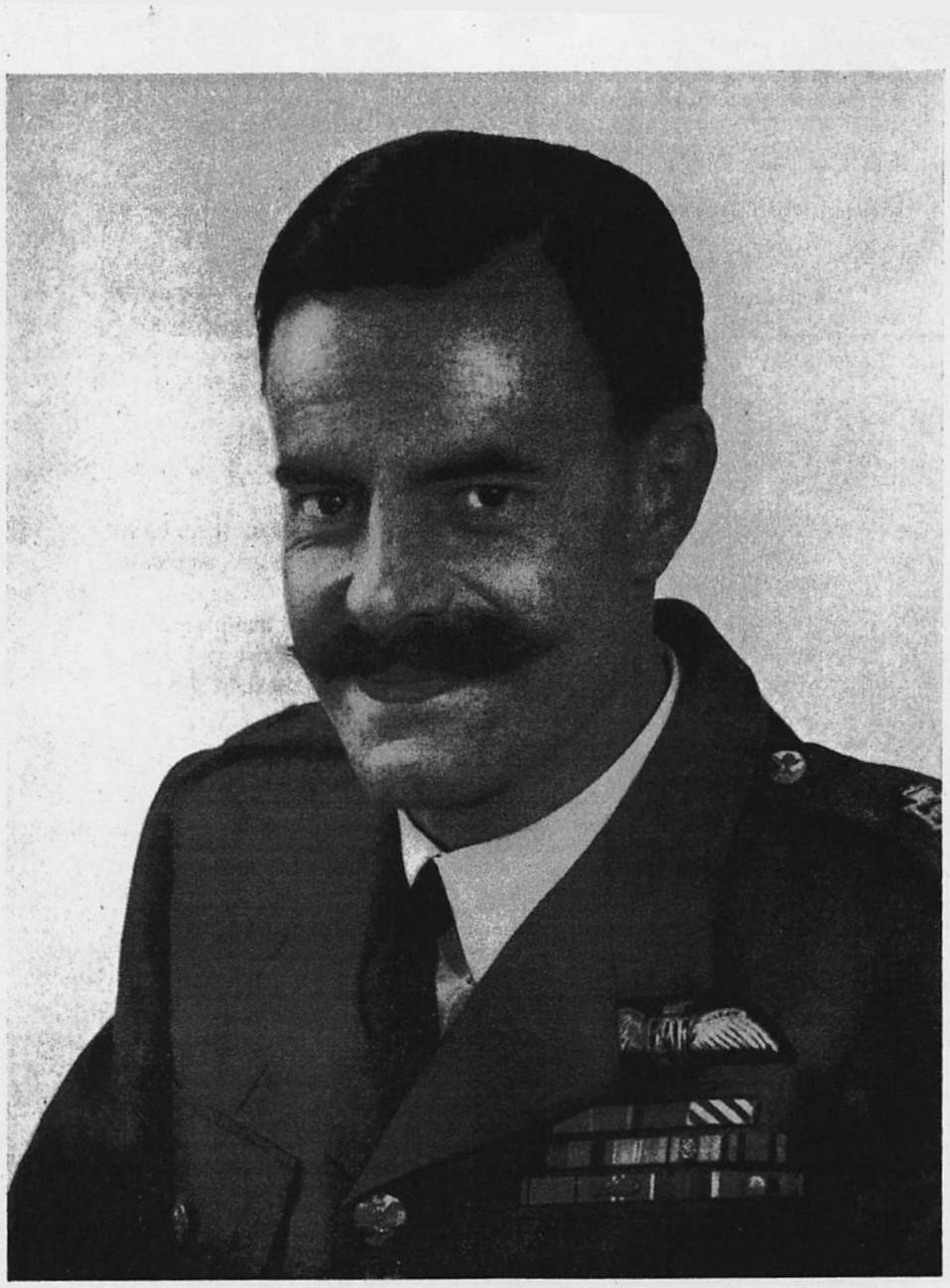
Air Commodore Thomas Alfred Boyd Parselle (later Air Vice Marshal) was from Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). He entered the RAF College in 1930 as a member of C Squadron and was a Flight Sergeant Cadet when he graduated.

He commanded 207 Squadron during World War Two. On the night of 25/26 May 1943, he was captain of Lancaster W5001 (EM-J) on a raid to Dusseldorf when the aircraft was attacked and destroyed by an enemy fighter. He was blown out of the cockpit and was one of only two survivors from the crew. He was taken prisoner of war and was interned in Stalag Luft III.

He was Commandant from 16th April 1956 and was subsequently Task Force Commander for Operation Grapple, the British nuclear weapon test at Christmas Island.

Born 15 July 1911. Retired 6 June 1964. Died 28 August 1979

Denis Frank Spotswood



Air Commodore D. F. Spotswood, C.B.E., D.S.O., D.F.C., A.D.C.
Commandant Royal Air Force College

Air Commodore Denis Frank Spotswood (later Marshal of the RAF Sir Denis Spotswood). He originally intended to be a journalist, but joined the RAF in 1932 and served in Coastal Command.

He remained in the RAF after the war and became Commandant in August 1958. He was the first post-war Commandant who was not an Old Cranwellian and was Commandant when Her Majesty the Queen visited the College in 1960.

He was appointed Chief of the Air Staff in April 1971 and was the Reviewing Officer in August 1971 when he awarded Prince Charles his wings at the College.

He was promoted to Marshal of the Royal Air Force on 31 March 1974, the same day that he retired from the RAF.

Born 26 September 1916. Died in 2001.

Eric Douglas McKinley Nelson

Air Commodore Eric Douglas McKinley Nelson entered the College as a Flight Cadet on C Squadron in 1931 and was an Under Officer Cadet when he graduated two years later.

After commissioning and winning his wings, he flew with 12 Sqn. In 1934, he became the ADC to AOC-in-C Coastal Command.

During the war, he commanded 103 Squadron and in June 1952 was appointed Assistant Commandant at the College.

He was appointed Commandant in April 1961, having previously commanded the RAF Staff College at Andover.

Air Commodore Nelson retired from the RAF when he relinquished command of the College in August 1963.

Born 2 January 1912. Died in December 1996

Michael Dylan Lyne

Air Commodore Michael Dylan Lyne (later Air Vice Marshal) was a Cranwell Flight Cadet on B Squadron on probably the last entry to graduate before the outbreak of World War Two, passing out on 20th July 1939.

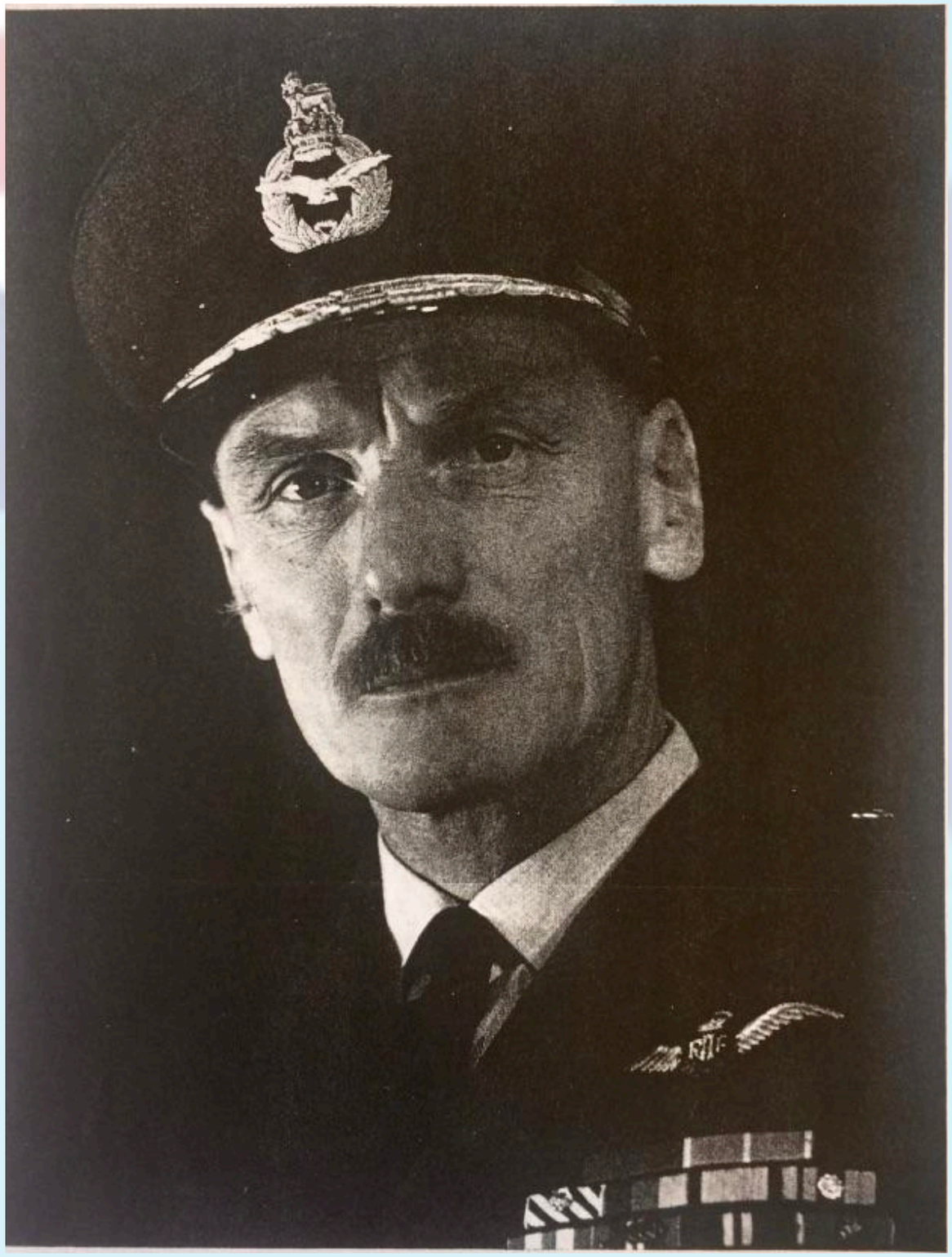
Posted to 19 Squadron, he was shot in the knee over Dunkirk and, so bad was the injury, that he was off flying for 12 months. On returning to operational duties, he volunteered to fly with the Merchant Ship Fighter Unit. Flying Hurricanes which were catapulted from ships to protect the convoys if necessary, the pilot would have to parachute into the sea as there was no means to land back on the ship. Fortunately, he did not have to be launched whilst serving with the unit.

He was awarded the first of his three Air Force Crosses (AFC) for the command of a gunnery school towards the end of the War. As Commanding Officer of 54 Squadron in the early 1950s, he established the first jet aircraft display team and was awarded a bar to his AFC. It was during the 1950s that he served as a Squadron Commander at the College. As a Wing Commander, he was the Chief Flying Instructor at the RAF Flying College at Manby where he was awarded a second bar to the AFC for his Aries IV flight over the North Pole.

He was Air Attaché in Moscow at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis, prior to taking up the post of Commandant of the RAF College on 21st August 1963. At the time, he was the youngest Commandant of the College.

Born 23 March 1919. Died 31 December 1997

Ian Douglas Napier Lawson



Air Commodore Ian Douglas Napier Lawson (later Air Vice Marshal) was working for De Havilland before the war, but had joined the RAF Volunteer Reserve as a Sergeant Pilot in 1938.

On declaration of war, he was still undergoing training and was sent to Cranwell to complete his pilot's course. He was commissioned on the award of his wings and was posted onto Wellington bombers.

Most of his operational flying was in the Middle East, flying against targets in North Africa, Greece, Crete, Sicily and Yugoslavia. He was awarded the DFC and bar and mentioned in despatches on three occasions. After the war he was awarded a permanent commission.

He was appointed as Commandant in December 1964.

Born 11 November 1917. He retired on 8 September 1969. Died 22 January 1998

Thomas Neville Stack

Air Vice Marshal T. N. Stack, C.V.O., C.B.E., A.F.C.

Air Vice-Marshal Thomas Neville Stack (later Air Chief Marshal) was the son of the aviation pioneer Thomas Neville Stack and, though named after his father, he was known as Neville.

Like Air Vice Marshal Lyne, he was a Flight Cadet who graduated from the College just before the outbreak of war. He was an Under Officer Cadet and awarded the Sword of Honour.

During the war, he served mainly in Coastal Command.

He was appointed Commandant of the College in the rank of Air Vice Marshal on 1st February 1967.

Subsequently, he was AOC-in-C Training Command and AOC-in-C Strike Command.

Born 19 October 1919. Retired 1978. Died 26 January 1994.

Frederick Desmond Hughes

Air Vice-Marshal Frederick Desmond Hughes was a member of Cambridge University Air Squadron who was called up at the outbreak of war.

After completing his pilot training at Cranwell, he became a successful night fighter pilot, pioneering night flying techniques in defiant aircraft, and was awarded the DSO and DFC and two bars. By the end of the war, he was credited with destroying 18 enemy aircraft.

Awarded a permanent commission after the war he became Commandant of the College on 9th March 1970. As a graduate of Cambridge University and a former member of the University Air Squadron, his appointment was most appropriate, as he oversaw the transition from the Flight Cadet entries to the Graduate Entry scheme and the responsibility for the University Air Squadrons.

Born 6 June 1919. He retired in 1974. Died 11 January 1992.

Roy David Austen-Smith

Air Vice-Marshal R. D. Austen-Smith, DFC, RAF

Air Vice-Marshal Roy David Austen-Smith (later Air Marshal Sir Roy Austen-Smith) was appointed Commandant of the College in September 1972.

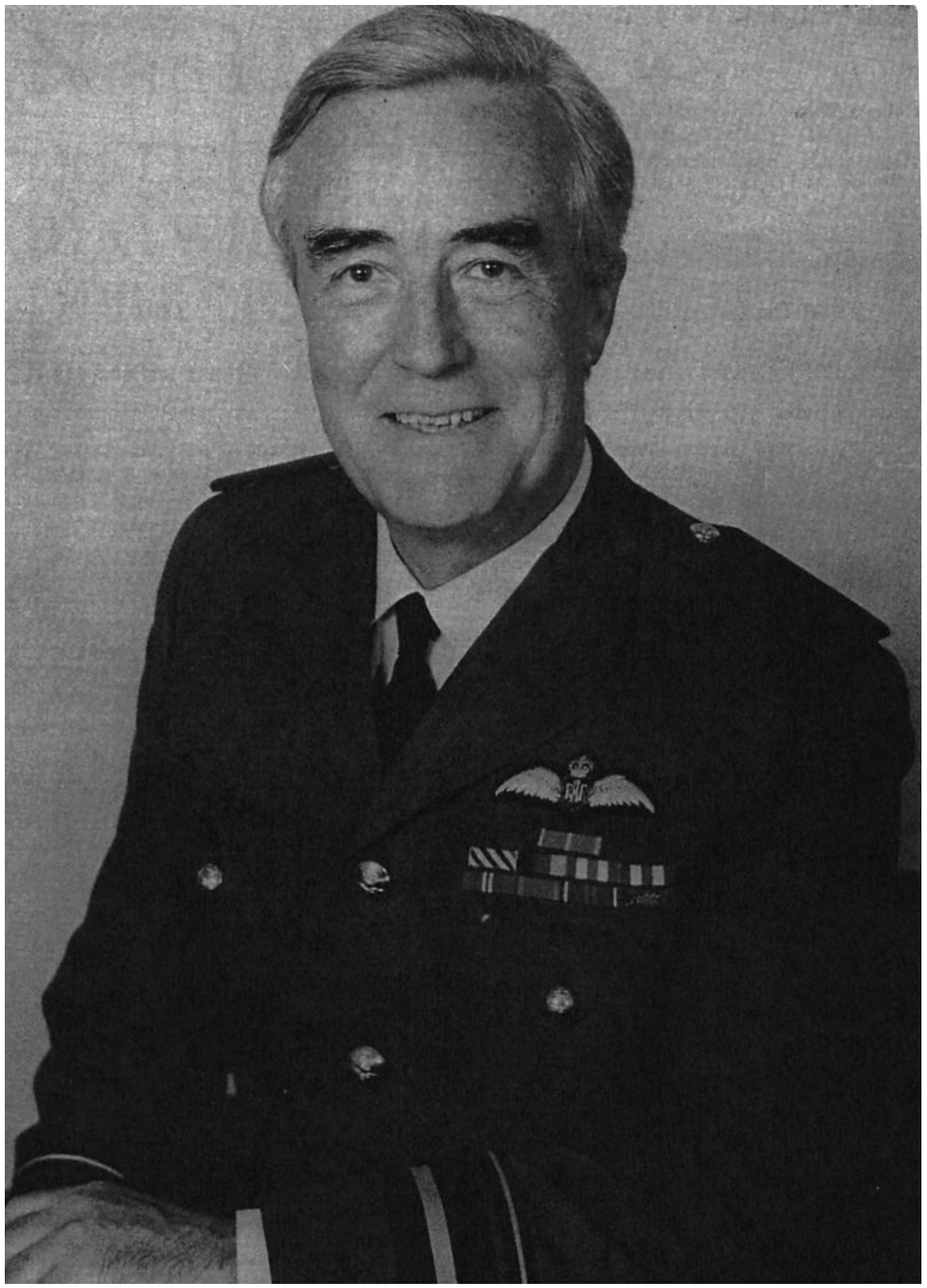
He joined the RAF as a pilot in 1943 and granted a war commission as a pilot officer.

At the end of the war, he was awarded a permanent commission. He flew the De Havilland Hornet with 33 Squadron in the Malayan Emergency and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in March 1953. He commanded 57 Squadron flying the Victor in the early 1960s and subsequently commanded RAF Wattisham.

Following his command of the College, he was posted to the Headquarters of the Near East Air Force before being appointed as Commander of British Forces Cyprus. His final posting was as the British Defence Attaché in Washington.

Born 28 June 1924. He retired in November 1981 in the rank of Air Marshal.

William Edward Colahan



Air Vice-Marshal William Edward Colahan was born in South Africa and served with the South African Air Force during the Second World War, during which time he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Flying with RAF units in Italy, he applied for a transfer to the RAF and was accepted in 1947. In 1968, he commanded RAF Valley and, in 1971, he was Air Commander of Malta in the rank of Air Commodore.

In July 1975, he took up the post of Commandant of the College and oversaw the arrival of the Headquarters of the Central Flying School.

On completion of his tour, he retired from the RAF at his own request on 31 March 1978.

Born 2 August 1923. Died 20 February 1991.

David Harcourt-Smith

Air Vice-Marshal D Harcourt-Smith DFC Air Officer Commanding and Commandant

Air Chief Marshal Sir David Harcourt-Smith entered the College as a Flight Cadet on 4 January 1950.

He subsequently served in Aden during the Suez War and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions during that campaign. His book Wings Over Suez, is the definitive account of air operations during the Suez war.

He commanded 6 Squadron when the squadron was the first unit to convert to the F-4 Phantom and subsequently commanded RAF Bruggen in Germany.

Appointed Commandant in January 1978, he went on to become Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of RAF Support Command. His last tour was Controller Aircraft, during which he was a member of the Air Force Board

He retired from the RAF in 1989 in the rank of Air Chief Marshal. Born 13 October 1941.

John Brownlow

Air Vice Marshal John 'Bernie' Brownlow entered the RAF in 1947 and trained as a navigator at No 1 ANS Topcliffe.

In 1949, he joined 12 Sqn at RAF Binbrook, flying Lincolns, and during his tour became a qualified bombing instructor. He was posted to the first Canberra squadron, No 101, in 1951, thence to 1 Group in 1952 and thence trained as a pilot in 1953.

A graduate of the Empire Test Pilots' School in 1958, much of his service career was spent in research and development appointments, and as a test pilot at Farnborough and Boscombe Down. He became Commandant of A&AEE Boscombe Down in March 1977.

He was appointed Assistant Cmdt of the RAF College in July 1973 and, following his tours in MOD(PE) and A&AEE, became Commandant in January 1980.

Born in xxxx. Retired in yyyy

Richard Charles Fairfax Pierse

Air Vice Marshal Richard Charles Fairfax Pierse (later Sir Richard Pierse) entered the College as a Flight Cadet in September 1949 on 'B' Squadron and graduated in early 1952.

He subsequently attended the Central Flying School and, on becoming a Qualified Flying Instructor, he served as a flying instructor at the College in the late 1950s.

He commanded 51 Squadron and was Station Commander at RAF Waddington in the early 1970s. He also served as Deputy Captain of the Queen's Flight.

He became Commandant in January 1982.

On relinquishing command of the College in January 1985, he was appointed as Defence Services Secretary, a senior appointment in the Royal Household.

Born 16 March 1931. He retired from the RAF in 1988. Died 8 February 2014. His father was Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Edmund Charles Pierse.

Eric Macey

Air Vice Marshal Eric Macey joined the RAF in 1954 and, after qualifying as a pilot, flew Hunter fighters with 263 and 1 Sqns.

He then joined the rapidly-expanding V-Force, initially flying Valiants of 214 Sqn on in-flight refuelling trials and completed the first non-stop flight to Singapore.

He moved across to the Vulcan Force and enjoyed a long association with 101 Squadron, serving as a Training Officer and subsequently Squadron Commander. He was Chief Instructor on the Vulcan Operational Conversion Unit at Scampton and commanded RAF Waddington when it was a Vulcan base.

He took command of the College in January 1985.

R H Wood

Air Vice-Marshal R H Wood took command of the College in July 1987.

Roger Mark Austin

Air Marshal Sir Roger Mark Austin joined the RAF on a short service commission. On completion of his pilot training, he was 'creamed off' to become a Qualified Flying Instructor.

His first operational tour was flying Hunters with 20 Squadron. He subsequently commanded 54 Squadron, also flying the Hunter before commanding the 4 Squadron (UK Echelon) as it converted to the Harrier. Austin later commanded 233 Operational Conversion Unit and was Station Commander of Chivenor.

He took command of the College in December 1989 and handed over to Air Vice Marshal David Cousins in February of 1992. Shortly after handing over command, he was promoted to Air Marshal and was knighted in June 1992.

His last tour of duty was Controller Aircraft, during which he was a member of the Air Force Board

On retiring from the RAF on 22 May 1997, he was for a period the National President of the Royal British Legion.

Born 9 March 1940.

David Cousins

Air Chief Marshal Sir David Cousins entered the RAF in 1961 as a Flight Cadet at the College.

On qualifying as a pilot, he subsequently went on to fly the Lightning fighter aircraft before converting to the Buccaneer. He commanded RAF Laarbruch in Germany in the mid-1980s.

He took command of the College in February 1992.

On relinquishing command in October 1994, he became the Air Officer Commanding 38 Group. His final appointment was Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief Personnel and Training Command.

He retired from the RAF in 1998, becoming Comptroller of the RAFBF.

J E Stables

Air Vice-Marshal J E Stables took command of the College in October 1994.

He had enjoyed a long association with 18 (B) Squadron flying helicopters, having been both a Flight Commander and Squadron Commander at both Odiham and Gutersloh.

He served as Air Care PSO to CDS.

MORE TO COME

John Francis Hugh Thompson

Air Vice-Marshal John Hugh Thompson was educated in New Zealand and joined the RAF in 1970.

He flew the Harrier and was Station Commander of RAF Wittering in the late 1980s. Subsequently, he was the Senior Air Staff Officer at Rheindahlen in Germany. In 1996, he was made an assistant to the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, tasked with implementing the Dayton Agreement which ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovinia.

He was commandant of the College between January 1997 and July 1998.

As an Air Marshal, he served in Saudi Arabia on the Al Yamamma programme, a lucrative and high profile sales deal signed off by UK's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Subsequently, he was Defence Attaché in Washington DC before retiring in 2002.

Born 18 September 1947.

T W Rimmer

Air Vice-Marshal T W Rimmer was born in Perth Scotland and studied Modern Languages and Economics at Edinburgh and Montpellier Universities. He was a member of Edinburgh University Air Squadron as a member of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve and was commissioned in 1971.

He graduated from the RAF College Cranwell as a member of No 5 Graduate Entry and on completion of his pilot training attended the Central Flying School.

After a tour as a flying instructor at Linton-on-Ouse, he converted onto the Jaguar. After two tours flying the Jaguar, he attended the French Air Force Staff College before being appointed as the Chief Instructor at the Tri-National Tornado Training Establishment at Royal Air Force Cottesmore. He subsequently returned to Cottesmore as Station Commander.

He was appointed Commandant of the College in July 1998, the first Cranwellian from the Graduate Entry era to be so appointed.

Whilst an Air Vice-Marshal, he later became CBFCyprus.

Born 16 December 1948. Retired in 2004.

Gavin Mackay

Born and brought up in the north of Scotland, **Air Vice-Marshal Gavin Mackay CB OBE AFC BSc FRAeS** enjoyed a brief flirtation with the Royal Navy at BRNC Dartmouth before studying Civil Engineering at Glasgow University. He was commissioned into the Royal Air Force during his final year, and passed out from Cranwell on the first of the Graduate Entries in 1971. Creamed off from advanced flying training on the Gnat, he instructed on the Jet Provost (1972-74) before converting to the Hunter (1975) and subsequently the Harrier (1976), serving in the fighter ground attack and reconnaissance roles (ashore and afloat) in Germany, Belize, the Falklands and the UK. Returning from the Falklands after the war (1982), and having been awarded the AFC, he attended Royal Naval Staff College before joining the Central Tactics and Trials Organization as the Harrier specialist, flying trials on IR countermeasures and ultra low level weapons delivery profiles. He subsequently commanded the Central Flying School's Examining Wing (1984-87), qualifying as a helicopter pilot, and fast-jet and multi-engine QFI. As "Chief Trapper", he led testing and advisory teams world-wide: flying, instructing and examining on numerous types of aircraft; from Jaguars and Buccaneers to micro-lights and MiGs. He was awarded the OBE following this tour.

From 1987 to 1990, he served in the Ministry of Defence (MOD) in Concepts Studies and Operational Requirements, before commanding RAF Gutersloh and the RAF Germany Harrier Force from 1991 to 1993, during which time he also became limited combat ready on the Puma helicopter. Following a further short tour in the MOD as Deputy Director Air Offensive, he attended the Royal College of Defence Studies in 1994. He then moved back to Germany in a NATO appointment as ACOS Operations, HQ Allied Air Forces Central Europe, before returning to the Central Flying School as Commandant in late 1996, renewing his qualifications on all training aircraft, and accompanying CFS teams and the Red Arrows on tours abroad. From early 1999, he led the Joint Force 2000 Implementation Team, bringing together the RN and RAF Harrier Forces, and then commanded the Joint Force as part of the newly re-formed 3 Group. **He was Air Officer Commanding and Commandant of the Royal Air Force College Cranwell for 2 years from July 2000,** and was appointed CB in 2002.

Having retired from the RAF in 2002, he took up another globe-trotting appointment as Military Deputy (aka Senior Military Adviser) in the MOD's Defence Export Services Organisation (DESO) in September 2002, leading a team of Navy, Army and Air Force officers and men providing operational and technical advice world-wide on British military equipment and services, in support of British Industry. From 2009 to 2012, he returned to his roots in the RAF, serving as a full time reservist flying instructor on 16(R) Squadron at Cranwell.

Now fully retired, Gavin Mackay continues his links with the RAF as President of the CFS Association, and as Honorary Air Commodore of No 2503 (County of Lincoln) Squadron, Royal Auxiliary Air Force Regiment. He lives in Wellingore, Lincolnshire, together with his wife, Elizabeth, who is attempting (with very limited success) to teach him bridge.

Al Smith

Air Vice-Marshal Al Smith was educated at Shene Grammar School and read Mechanical Engineering at Kingston Polytechnic.

He joined the Royal Air Force as an engineering officer and his first tour was on first line support of Phantom aircraft at RAF Coningsby. Subsequent tours were spent at RAF Gutersloh and RAF Bruggen in Germany. His next tour was as the senior engineering officer for the Hawk aircraft at Valley before serving in Saudi Arabia with the MOD Team tasked with the introduction of the Tornado, Hawk and Jetstream under project Al Yamama. In 1989 he was promoted to Wing Commander and attended the RAF Staff College at Bracknell. He subsequently commanded 431 Maintenance Unit at RAF Bruggen. Promoted to Group Captain in 1994 he was appointed Station Commander of RAF Cosford in 1997. As an Air Commodore he was Director of Support Management responsible for Jaguar, Harrier, Canberra, Hercules and Jaguar aircraft.

Air Vice Marshal Smith was Commandant of the College from 27th June to 6th December 2002. He is believed to have been the only engineering officer to have commanded the College.

Michael Carl Barter

Air Commodore Mike Barter was commissioned in 1975 and was awarded his pilot wings in 1976.

His first tour was flying the Wessex helicopter with No 18 Squadron at RAF Gutersloh in Germany, followed by a tour with No 28 Squadron at RAF Sek Kong in Hong Kong. He trained as a Qualified Helicopter Instructor and again flew the Wessex with No 72 Squadron in Northern Ireland. In early 1983 he spent a short period flying the Puma with No 33 Squadron at RAF Odiham before commencing an exchange tour with the USAF at Kirkland Air Force Base in New Mexico as an instructor pilot at the Special Forces Training Wing, flying the HH-53.

Promoted to Wing Commander in 1993 he commanded No 7 Squadron at RAF Odiham. He subsequently returned to Odiham as Station Commander in 1999.

Promoted to Air Commodore in 2002, he was appointed Commandant of the College in December of that year. (Note the rank of the Commandant is now Air Commodore)

Robert Cunningham

Air Commodore Robert Cunningham joined the Royal Air Force in 1975 as a University Cadet and read Natural Sciences (Physics) at Lincoln College Oxford.

After Initial Officer Training at the RAF College, he trained as a Navigator at No 6 Flying Training School at RAF Finningley, before converting onto the Phantom F-4 in the Air Defence role. He later converted to the Tornado F-3 and joined the re-formed No 23 Squadron as a Flight Commander at RAF Leeming.

In 1992, he attended the Royal Australian Air Force Command and Staff College in Canberra and on return to the United Kingdom served in the Ministry of Defence.

He commanded Operations Wing at RAF Akrotiri from 1997 to 1995 and was then appointed as Group Captain Air Defence at Headquarters No 11/18 Group. Subsequently, he became Group Captain Defensive Operations at Headquarters No 1 Group in 2000.

He commanded RAF Cranwell and No 3 Flying Training School from 2002 to 2003. In mid-2005, he led Project TRENCHARD, the development of expeditionary air force structures.

He was appointed Commandant RAF College Cranwell and Director of Recruitment (RAF) in November 2005.

Born xxxx. Retired in yyyy

A D Stevenson

Air Commodore A D Stevenson undertook pilot training in the USA, flying the T-37 and T-38 aircraft before completing his training back in the UK on the Hawk.

He was posted on to the Harrier Force and spent all his operational flying on that type.

He ejected from a Harrier GR.5 in 1989 and was involved in a second ejection in 1991 flying a two-seat Harrier T.4. Following the second event, he was awarded a Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct when he rescued the rear seat passenger after she landed in the burning wreckage.

He commanded No 3 (F) Squadron and was also Station Commander at RAF Wittering.

On promotion to Air Commodore he was appointed Air Commodore Force Development Headquarters at No 1 Group.

He was Commandant of the RAF College from 2008 to 2010.

P N Oborn

Air Commodore P N Oborn was born in Auckland New Zealand and joined the RAF in 1980.

After initial officer training and pilot training, he was posted on to the Hercules Force at RAF Lyneham. It was on the Hercules, that Air Commodore Oborn flew all his operational flying, including missions in both Gulf Wars.

He was posted to the Canadian Joint Command and Staff Course in 1994 and on his return to the UK in 1995 he was posted to Strike Command.

Promoted to Wing Commander, he returned to Lyneham to command 24 Squadron. A further tour at Strike Command followed before he took up the post of Station Commander at RAF Lyneham.

On promotion to Air Commodore, he was appointed the UK Air Component Commander at Al Udeid and, on return from the desert, he was appointed Air Officer Air Transport and Air-to-Air Refuelling at HQ 2 Group.

He became Commandant of the RAF College on 3 June 2010.

D Stubbs

Air Commodore D Stubbs was posted onto helicopters on completion of his initial pilot training and subsequently commanded 28 Squadron.

He was the Station Commander of RAF Aldergrove from 2006 to 2008.

He took command of the RAF College in March 2012.

Christopher J Luck

Chris Luck joined the RAF as a direct entrant in 1984 as a pilot. His first operational tour was with 33 Squadron at RAF Odiham, which included deployments to Northern Ireland, Belize and to Iraq on OP GRANBY. He was then posted to 230 Squadron at RAF Aldergrove from 1992 to 1996, returning briefly to RAF Shawbury in 1992 to train as a Qualified Helicopter Instructor. His tour included an United Nations' deployment to Bosnia, as well as an extended stint with the Northern Ireland Special Operations Support Flight. He left 230 Squadron to return to RAF Odiham as the Puma Operational Conversion Unit Flight Commander, 27(R) Squadron. A posting to RAF Strike Command followed as the Rotary desk officer, which then migrated to the newly formed Joint Helicopter Command (JHC) at HQ Land, Wilton.

On finishing at JHC, Chris Luck was posted to the Kuwait Air Force as an Advisor and helicopter instructor at Ali Al Salem Air Base, flying Pumas and Gazelles. In April 2003, he was posted to the United States Air Force's Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama, gaining a Masters degree in Military Operational Art. On completion of the course, he remained on the directing staff, completing the tour as the Deputy Director of Strategy and War. This was immediately followed by a return to study as the first non-US student at the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, gaining a Masters degree in Strategic Air power.

Chris Luck took command of 33 Squadron at RAF Benson in 2007. This tour was set against the backdrop of OP TELIC and was completed in June 2009. Promoted to Group Captain in June 2009, he was posted to the Permanent Joint Headquarters as Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff in the J5 Plans branch, with specific responsibility for the Broader Middle East region and global Counter Terrorism.

This was followed by a tour as Station Commander RAF Shawbury from 2011 to 2013, time as a Strategy student at the Royal College of Defence Studies from September 2013 to November 2013 before taking up the post of Commandant of the RAF College and Director Recruiting and Initial Training from December 2013 to August 2016. Promoted to Air Vice-Marshal in January 2017, Chris Luck is currently serving as Commandant of the Joint Services Command and Staff College at the Defence Academy.

He retired from the RAF in September 2019.

Peter James Murray Squires

From 1975 to 1986, Peter Squires was educated at Warwick School, an all-boys public school in Warwick, Warwickshire. Having received a bursary, he studied aeronautics and astronautics at the University of Southampton. He joined the RAF as a pilot in 1989.

From April 2009 to April 2011, Squires commanded No. 100 Squadron RAF, a Hawk squadron based at RAF Leeming. He was Commanding Officer of the 906 Expeditionary Air Wing during Operation Unified Protector, the NATO-enforced no-fly zone over Libya in 2011. He was promoted to group captain on 1 January 2012.

He commanded the Royal Air Force College from August 2016 to October 2019.

Suraya A Marshall

Air Commodore Suraya Marshall grew up in York, graduating from the University of Nottingham with a Law degree and becoming a member of East Midlands University Air Squadron before joining the Royal Air Force as a Navigator in 1994. During 3 tours flying on the Tornado F3, she participated in numerous operational deployments in Iraq, conducted Quick Reaction Alert in defence of the UK and the Falkland Islands, qualified as a Weapons Instructor and deployed on many overseas, multi-national training exercises.

Command appointments include Fast Jet Weapons System Officer Training, Officer Commanding No. 92(R) Squadron in the Air Warfare Centre responsible for operational Tactics & Training, Officer Commanding No. 55(R) Squadron delivering Rear Crew Flying Training and Deputy Commander of the Royal Air Force's Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance Force. She assumed command of Royal Air Force College Cranwell in December 2019.