

RAF COLLEGE CRANWELL

“Tour Guide Presentation”



Chapter 2 - The Leaders

Past Commandants & Assistant Commandants



The corridors leading away from the College rotunda contain portraits, photographs and paintings of Commandants, graduates and significant events such as HM The Queen's Review of the College.

To the West Wing are the photographs of former Commandants of the College (and some Cranwell graduates who received gallantry awards); to the East there are hand drawn portraits (cheaper than photographs in their day) of Assistant Commandants - the most recent Commandants and their Assistants appear furthest from the rotunda.

Sir Sefton Brancker



Sir Sefton Brancker - Sir Sefton can be considered as one of the founding fathers of the RAF. Though overshadowed by Lord Trenchard with whom he was to disagree on several occasions, it was he - when the RFC officers from the War Office were posted to France at the start of WWI - who remained in London and provided the vital admin and support to the RFC on the front.

He reorganised the home squadrons - a necessity, but also an unpopular move - and the training of pilots to ensure that the RFC in France had the aircraft and aircrew which they required. The three Air Boards in 1917 and 1918 on which Brancker sat were the forerunners of the Air Ministry which can arguably be seen to have brought about the formation of the RAF.

On 11 May 1922 he was made Director of Civil Aviation, and worked assiduously to stimulate UK interest in the private flying - both cheap and accessible - with both local authorities and flying clubs. He encouraged Manchester and other cities to construct municipal airports and airfields. He participated in several long-distance survey flights, notably with Alan Cobham. He was an ardent supporter of the development of British civilian air services connecting London to British colonies and dominions overseas.

He pioneered guidelines and a system of governance for flight safety, which became the bedrock of the Civilian Aviation Authority (CAA). He strived to maintain flight safety standards on the UK's airships, R100 and R101. He insisted that the government should not cut costs and tinker with their flagship design, but to no avail and it was a tragic irony that he should be killed, with Air Minister Lord Thomson, in the ensuing R101 disaster.

Founders' Gallery



For good or ill, air mastery is today the supreme expression of military power and fleets and armies, however vital and important, must accept a subordinate rank.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill