
6 *Other Ground Units at Cranwell before 1939*

The Electrical and Wireless School which moved into vacant accommodation mainly in East Camp in September 1929 had a distinguished tradition within the short span of RAF history. It began life in 1915 as a School for Wireless Operators in the Town Hall at South Farnborough.¹ In 1918 it became No 1 (T) Wireless School, RAF at Flower Down near Winchester and in July 1919 its name was changed to Electrical and Wireless School. The aircraft apprentice scheme was introduced there in 1922 and it is no small distinction to be numbered as a Flower Down 'brat'. By 1926, when accommodation became available, there were rumours of moves to Cranwell but the accommodation at Flower Down was very good and it was not until 1929 that reluctance and inertia were overcome and the School moved northwards. By this time the World War I pattern of short courses had given way to longer and more complete courses to suit the requirements of a regular force. In February 1928 Group Captain A L Godman became Commandant of the School. It was under his aegis that the move to Cranwell was made. For Godman it was a homecoming since he had been the first Assistant Commandant of the RAF Cadet College in 1920-21. The tendency of ex-Cranwellians to be posted back for tours in different capacities is one that is constantly found in the records.

In 1931 Officers' Long Signals Courses were planned for 14 months' duration and after the reorganization of the electrical and signals trades in 1932, Boy Entrants were introduced in 1934. They were to be trained in the trade of Wireless Operator. In October 1935 the School was split into two wings. No 1 Wing was concerned with

training airmen as wireless operators. No 2 Wing comprised officers' courses, aircraft apprentice courses, boy entrants and refresher courses. By 1936 the School population was broken down as follows:

- 1103 airmen under training as W. Ops.
- 573 aircraft apprentices under training as W. Op. Mech.
- 575 boy entrants under training as W. Ops.
- 152 aircraft apprentices under training as Instrument Makers

The Chief Instructor at this time was Squadron Leader (later Air Vice-Marshal) J R Cassidy.

Passing out parades were held at the School in July and December and cadetships were awarded for the best performances. For example in July 1928, a General Duties cadetship was awarded to No 366190 LAA Shirley TUC who also won the Hyde-Thomson Memorial Prize.² In January 1936 the first entry of boy entrants passed out as Wireless Operators. The School was training Electricians, Clerks, Plotters and Telephonists at this time in addition to tradesmen in skills already mentioned above. The officer in charge of the RAF College Band, Flying Officer A E Sims made a signal contribution to the dignity of the Electrical and Wireless School when he dedicated a piece of original musical composition called 'Sparks' to Group Captain H Gordon-Dean, Officer Commanding the School on 11 April 1937.

The Signals Squadron of the School had its own aircraft which flew mainly from the North airfield. Before 1939 these were Wallace II, Valentia, Wapiti and Tiger Moth machines with the Magister just coming in.

By the outbreak of hostilities the range of technical training courses available at the Electrical and Wireless School was impressive. East Camp had something of the order of 2500 officers and men under training compared with West Camp's 150 or so. The courses provided included the following:

Officers (RAFVR) Signals	6 months
Aircraft Apprentices—W. Op Mech	2 years
Boy Entrants—W. Op	1 year
Airmen—W. Op Mech	32 weeks
Airmen—W. Mech	8 weeks
Air Gunners—W. Op	12 weeks