

C.F.S.



Birthplace of Air Power

John W. R. Taylor



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Introduction

AFTER the names and decorations of certain Royal Air Force officers printed in the official *Air Force List* appear the initials “*c.f.s.*”, indicating that they have completed a flying instructor’s course at the Central Flying School and in time have achieved an above-average standard of flying instruction. When the letters are followed by an asterisk, the officer concerned holds a current “A.1” instructor’s category. There is no greater recognition of a pilot’s flying ability.

Throughout its 75-year history, the site and even the precise purpose of the Central Flying School have changed several times; but its tradition of unrivalled training has never been disputed. Pilots of 60 overseas air forces have been proud to qualify as instructors on its courses, and many nations have based their own training methods on those taught at the C.F.S.

Such a reputation was not acquired easily and, in recording something of the history and achievements of the School, this book is intended also as a tribute to the men whose vision and devotion to its ideals have built up the tradition. Some are mentioned by name; a far greater number are remembered through the photographs of C.F.S. Courses which today fill a library of albums in the Headquarters of the School at the R.A.F. Station at Scampton. A lone Lancaster bomber, standing by the main gate, reminds visitors that it was from this airfield that Wing Commander Guy Gibson, V.C., led the “Dam-busters” of No. 617 Squadron on one of the most famous attacks in history. Today, from Scampton, the R.A.F.’s “Red Arrows” aerobatic display team sets out on goodwill missions to nations as far away as Indonesia and the U.S.A.

Without these generations of pilots, and the Flying School at which they perfected their skill, Britain’s victories in the air in two World Wars would have been less assured. After an earlier

war, the Duke of Wellington declared that “the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton”. Just as surely, the air battles over the Western Front in 1914–18, over Southern England in 1940 and over Hitler’s Europe, over Africa, the Far East and the South Atlantic in later years, were won on the training fields of the Central Flying School, for this has been since 1912 the birthplace of Britain’s air power.

J.W.R.T

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