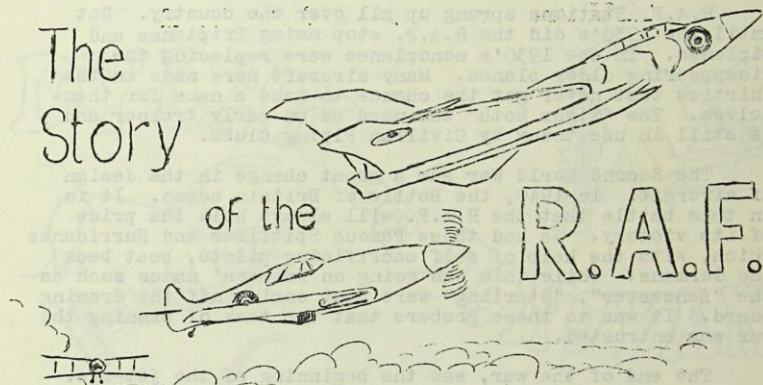


The Story



Five decades ago a man named Lord Shackleton formed the Royal Air Force. It was on April 1st, 1918, when the Royal Flying Corp and the Royal Naval Air Service amalgamated to become what is known as the R.A.F.

Lord Shackleton had an extremely difficult task in forming this new Air Force. A system of designating ranks had to be organised. R.A.F. stations to be built, etc.

The motto chosen:-

"Per Ardua Ad Astra"

Translated for those sensible people who do not study Latin:-

"Through many difficulties to the stars"

The R.A.F. is divided into five main sections or Commands - Fighter, Bomber, Flying Training, Transport and Coastal Command, each dealing with a particular type of aircraft.

From the beginning and throughout the 1920's, the R.A.F. employed some very flimsy aircraft such as the Se. 5a. (Fighter Command) and the D.H. 9a. (Bomber Command). We in Britain owe much to such aircraft for our victory in the First World War.

R.A.F. Stations sprung up all over the country. Not until the 1930's did the R.A.F. stop using Triplanes and Biplanes. In the 1930's monoplanes were replacing the disappearing older planes. Many aircraft were made in the thirties that never got the chance to make a name for themselves. The "Tiger Moth" was used as an early trainer and is still in use today by Civilian Flying Clubs.

The Second World War saw a great change in the design of aircraft. In 1940, the Battle of Britain began. It is in this battle that the R.A.F. will always hold the pride of its victory. We had those famous Spitfires and Hurricanes which, with the help of self sacrificing pilots, beat back the Germans. While this was going on Bombers' names such as the "Lancaster", "Sterling" were just coming off the drawing board. It was to these Bombers that the task of winning the war was entrusted.

The end of the war, saw the beginning of the jet-age. Propeller planes were going out and jets coming in. In the fifties, when speed and altitude records were continually being broken, the R.A.F. fleet was almost completely composed of jets. Such aircraft were the Hawker Hunter and Hunting Provost T.4. (Fighter and Trainer Command respectively). Also in the fifties the R.A.F. for the first time broke the Sound Barrier in a Hawker Hunter.

The R.A.F. has never been more powerful than it is now. It has some of the World's finest aircraft. The B.A.C. Lightning, The Avro Vulcan, The Polland Gnat, The Vickers V.C.10, are all British, they are just four of our fine aircraft.

In the seventies, the R.A.F. will depend on aircraft like these if war should ever threaten us.

One thing that will never change in the R.A.F. is its policy. It is to strike rather than defend. Many men in the R.A.F. have become immortal, because of their daring exploits. Such a man is Group Captain Douglas Bahder, the legless pilot.

There are twenty-eight different types of aircraft in today's R.A.F. Many will come and go, but the R.A.F. will never basically change. It will always stay as our third youngest Force.

A. Reszka