

A HISTORICAL RECORD OF

No 733 (NEWCASTLE AIRPORT)
SQUADRON

AIR TRAINING CORPS



THE FIRST 60 YEARS (1941 TO 2001)

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INTRODUCTION



Old Crest



New Crest

Sixty years have passed since No 733 Squadron, Air Training Corps first received its Royal Charter. Its history is now quite long and certainly varied. It has been domiciled in three different locations of which has been incorporated in its title at the appropriate time and generations of cadets have passed through its ranks. It has been led over the years by a succession of officers and sustained by a band of civilian supporters, many of whom were themselves former cadets of the Squadron. There have been good periods and not so good periods, and periods of adversity have produced some exceptional individuals who have gone on to do great things, both for the Squadron and the Corps.

Many of these individuals are mentioned in this brief history and they are the ones who set the standards and created the Squadron's reputation and traditions that the Cadets of the present time still aspire to follow.

Many others have been associated with the Squadron over the past sixty years, but due to records being lost or incomplete, and memories fallible, some cannot be mentioned by name. This history is a tribute to all those people, officers, warrant officers, instructors, civilian helpers and cadets, both past and present, who have contributed so much to 733 Squadron, the Air Training Corps and the community.

CHAPTER 1 – IN THE BEGINNING

In the late 1930's the potential threat to Britain from a hostile regime in Germany caused great concern. Re-armament was in full swing, with new aircraft such as the Hurricane and Spitfire coming into service. Under the auspices of the Air League of the British Empire the Air Defence Cadet Corps (ADCC) was formed as a privately-funded voluntary organisation to encourage air-mindedness in young men. The first two squadrons of air cadets paraded at Watford in October 1938, and by the outbreak of war on 3rd September 1939 there were 172 squadrons, all financed and controlled by local civilian committees.

There was already a close liaison between the RAF and the ADCC, and on 5th February 1941 the *AIR TRAINING CORPS* was established by Royal Warrant from HM King George VI. The connection with the RAF became closer with the officers were commissioned in the RAF Volunteer reserve (Training Branch). Nevertheless, the individual squadrons retained close contacts with the local community through schools, colleges, and civilian committees. The original squadrons of the ADCC became founder squadrons in the new Air Training Corps (ATC).

As with the ADCC, there were two types of squadron; the 'open' squadron which was linked through a civilian committee and the 'closed' squadron which was linked to a particular school or college.



The early days of gliding in the Corps

CHAPTER 2 – No 733 (Newcastle Municipal College Of Commerce) Squadron

As soon as the ATC was formed full details were sent to all local authorities and schools. At that time the pupils of most secondary schools (grammar/high schools) left at the age of 16 years. Further education for the majority was through evening classes at technical or business colleges run by local authorities. The young men at Newcastle Municipal College of Commerce (which in later years became part of the Polytechnic, and eventually Northumbria University) were to form the ATC squadron. No 733 received its charter as a 'school' squadron at the end of March 1941, within weeks of the formation of the ATC. The first CO was Leslie Tait, then Assistant Director of Education and he was supported by three grammar school masters and one bank manager who were all commissioned within days for the duration of the war. They were a first class team, and through their efforts many young men received valuable pre-service training. Unlike today, the vast majority of cadets went on to serve in the armed forces, mainly the RAF. There is no doubt that the training was invaluable and much appreciated by the services. The joined with a head-start over the 'raw' recruits.

Conditions were much different in the war years. The country had come through the traumatic period following the evacuation from Dunkirk and the close-run victory of the Battle of Britain, but was still a long way from final victory. Enemy air raids were still frequent, especially in 1941, when there was significant damage to buildings with resultant civilian casualties. The Squadron occupied premises in Northumberland Road, which was near the New Bridge Street LNER Goods Station (now the site of the Warner Cinema Complex). This large railway goods station received a direct hit from a German bomber, and it burned for several days. All of the cadets worked full-time during the day as junior staff at banks, in commerce, local government and other professions. They attended evening classes two or three nights a week, attended Squadron lectures between leaving work at 5 p.m. and the commencement of evening classes at 7 p.m., and after that they would probably be helping out with emergency Air Raid Protection (ARP) services as runners or fire-watchers. Main parades were held at the weekend. Practically everything was in short supply and rationed and at night there was a complete blackout. Gas masks had to be carried at all times. Uniforms

were available at an early date, being the old button-up tunic style previously used by the RAF. There was also a very full sporting and social programme coupled with visits to RAF stations. The RAF provided a lot of obsolete equipment for training purposes, including a Rolls Royce 'Kestrel' aero engine. The pupils of the relatively modern Northumberland Road Boys School had been evacuated to safety, and the classrooms fitted out to train workers for the munitions factories. These facilities were ideal for the purposes of the ATC, with plenty of room, a large quadrangle for parades and drill, a large school hall, and a proper canteen. Perhaps one of the greatest benefits was an excellent and most co-operative school caretaker, Mr Turnbull. Nothing was too much trouble for him.

No 733 Sqn marching up Bigg Market, Newcastle on route from St Nicholas Cathedral, 1941. The formation is led by Fg Off Cecil Pattinson and in the first file Flt Sgt Len Lambert (see Chapter 3)



The training programme included basic radio and morse code. One of the officers, Plt Off Pattinson, was a radio 'ham', and the cadets reached high standards, so much so that a GPO detector van arrived one day to investigate the mysterious radio signals which were of course frowned upon in wartime. Plt Off Fletcher was a senior maths master and he took the teaching of air navigation very seriously. Plt Off Binks, a bank manager, had

been an officer in the relatively recent World War I, and was an expert on drill and military discipline. Plt Off Whitehead organised sport and PE. Most of the cadets were over 16 and a very high pass-rate was achieved with the cadet proficiency examinations.

The Airfield at Woolsington was taken over by the RAF for the duration of the war, but in those days there was no paved runway. However, at least one former cadet can remember having a flight in a Tiger Moth in 1942, which would be the Squadron's first air experience flight! Later that year the Squadron attended its first Annual Camp at RAF East Fortune (north of Berwick on Tweed) which at that time was a Beaufighter OTU. Unfortunately no flying was available for cadets, but it was a successful first taste of service life. Some cadets were able to spend a week at No 10 ITW, Scarborough, where newly joined aircrew commenced their training.

CHAPTER 3 – WAR SERVICE

The Prime aim of the ATC during the war was to prepare cadets for active service in the RAF. Some had already volunteered and been accepted for training as aircrew and advised to join the ATC whilst waiting for call-up (they were known as Deferred-Service Cadets). They formed the back-bone of the ATC at that time, although it quickly became apparent that not everyone would become a Spitfire pilot. A large number of cadets passed through 733 Squadron during the war, many becoming aircrew and more becoming technicians.

Only a few examples can be quoted here as the Squadron lost touch with the majority of those who served during the war. Inevitably some were killed in action or died on active service. For example, Hughie Lane and Tucker Robinson were two of the original cadets in 1941, very competent and excellent sportsmen, both promoted to Cadet Sergeant within a few months, and sadly both killed in separate flying accidents during pilot training.

Len Lambert, another founder member and the Squadron's first Cadet Flight Sergeant, was selected for training as a navigator and eventually, when over conversion from twins to four-engined bombers, met another ex-733 cadet, Maurice Trousdale, who had trained as a flight engineer. Both joined the seven-man crew of a Halifax bomber captained by Plt Off Cyril Barton.



Halifax – type flown by Plt Off Barton VC

After nearly twenty operational bombing missions deep into Germany, their aircraft was badly damaged by night fighters on the ill-fated raid on Nuremberg on 30/31st March 1944. With one engine destroyed, the radio and internal communications systems

out of action, and a fire in the forward crew compartment, the three forward crew bailed out and eventually became prisoners of war. However the pilot managed to regain control and with the help of the flight engineer steered the stricken aircraft back across the North Sea. Unfortunately they missed the landfall to take them back to their base in Yorkshire and eventually crashed on attempting to make a forced landing at Ryhope Colliery, Co. Durham after the fuel supply ran out. Sadly the pilot died in hospital shortly after the crash, but the flight engineer and two gunners survived, although the flight engineer was badly injured. Cyril Barton, the pilot, was posthumously awarded the VICTORIA CROSS, the highest award for gallantry, and Maurice Trousdale, the flight engineer, was awarded an immediate Distinguished Flying Medal. Maurice died a few years after the war, but his nephew, Malcolm Trousdale, joined 733 and became an outstanding cadet many years later. Len Lambert was active with 733 for many years after the war, first as a navigation instructor, then as Squadron Treasurer and a member of the Civilian Committee, and lastly as a squadron officer from 1965 to 1972.

Len Lambert's younger brother, Walter, was also a founder member of 733 but failed his medical for aircrew. However, he joined the RAF and became a sergeant compass technician. His friend, Bill Noble, also failed the aircrew medical, but went on to a self-inflicted fitness programme before applying to the Fleet Air Arm, who accepted him. He eventually qualified as a fighter pilot, but after demobilisation found life rather boring. He rejoined the Royal Navy after a couple of years and was headline news when he flew the 1,000th fighter sortie in the Korean War.

Another wartime cadet was Tom Winship who later qualified as a pilot in the RAF and became a flying instructor in the Middle East. After the war as a member of the RAFVR he flew Anson and Oxford aircraft at RAF Usworth giving cadets air experience flights, and some years later he rejoined 733 as a Civilian Instructor.

During the war the universities suffered a shortage of good undergraduate material due to most of the young men going into the fighting services. A scheme of scholarships for universities was introduced whereby suitable young men would be allocated a place at university for one year before being called up, with the university place being guaranteed for completion of studies after the war. At least one cadet of 733 was successful in getting a

scholarship to St Andrew's University. He was Bill Hall, who went on to qualify as a navigator in the RAF. After the war he completed his university course and became one of the most important characters in the history of 733 Squadron (see next chapter).

These are just a few examples. There must be many more wartime cadets still around with stories to tell.

CHAPTER 4 – PEACE AT LAST – A NEW ERA BEGINS

At the end of W.W.II the immediate purpose of the ATC had gone. The officers of 733, who had shouldered a considerable burden right through the war, were no doubt anxious to return to a more normal life-style. The wartime spirit had diminished and cadet numbers decreased. It became difficult to recruit cadets from the College of Commerce, as a large number of the students were young men who had returned from war and were resuming their studies. Recruitment was extended virtually to any boys studying at evening classes anywhere in the city, and eventually to pupils of any schools in the city. Leslie Tait, the original CO, became Director of Education at Peterborough. Sometime later, John Banks of Lloyds bank, was moved to the Blyth branch. Cecil Pattinson and Ron Whithead, two of the original officers, were able to support the squadron (Cecil Pattinson serving on the Civilian Committee until 1957). However there was no civilian committee in 1948, the Squadron technically still being a 'closed' unit with no direct contact with Northumberland Wing HQ. The Principle of the College of Commerce had the task of finding a new CO. This was not easy, as suitable former cadets from the war years had to make up for lost time in their chosen careers, and of course many had married and had additional family responsibilities.

However, by 1948 Bill Hall (see end of previous chapter) had completed his degree course at St Andrews and was still 'single'. He obtained an executive post with Bass Breweries and became the first former cadet to command 733 Squadron which he did with distinction for several years.

The squadron spirit had been boosted by the formation of the College of Commerce Old Cadets Association, known as COCOA. Apart from social activities, which included the continuance of the annual Christmas Concert and occasional dances, there was a ready source of Civilian Instructors, even though few could contemplate the commitment required as a Squadron Officer. The Squadron prospered with Flt Lt Bill Hall as CO, Fg Off Ron Coleby as Adjutant, and Len Lambert, Jack Browell, Geoff Nendig, Arthur Williamson and others assisting as

Civilian Instructors.

Fortunately at that time the RAF was well represented with active airfield in the area, allowing cadets to fly more frequently than they can today. The RAFVR Navigation School was based at RAF Usworth (now the site of the Nissan car plant). The school operated Avro Ansons at week-ends and cadets flew regularly with them. The ATC No 641 Volunteer Glider School (VGS) was also based at RAF Usworth and cadets from 733 took every advantage of this opportunity to gain Category 'B' gliding certificates. Many went on to Hailsland in Somerset to obtain their Category 'C'.



Avro Anson

The Flying Scholarship Scheme was introduced in the 1950's. The first Flying Scholarship in the Corps was awarded to a cadet of 733 Squadron, Cpl Charlie Lutman, who went on to serve in the RAF as a pilot and later in the RAuxAF and then the RAFVR as a part-time Air Experience pilot. As well as the latter, he became an airline pilot, flying Ambassador aircraft on the Newcastle/Heathrow route with BKS Airlines which eventually became part of North East Airlines then British Airways.

After the war 733 squadron took a very active part in Northumberland Wing and achieved considerable success in athletics, swimming and aircraft recognition competitions, and was regularly part of the Wing representation at Regional and Corps level.

CHAPTER 5 – ALL CHANGE

The end of 1955 saw the commencement of a major change in the administration of the Squadron. Flt Lt Bill Hall (who had served as a navigator during the War), moved to a Wing Staff post then to No 346 (Tynemouth) as their Commanding Officer. His replacement was an officer from London who was only in post for a short period. For a while the Squadron was staffed by officers delegated from Wing. Eventually command passed to Flt Lt Arthur Williamson, a former cadet who had rejoined the squadron as a Civilian Instructor after the war, then applied for a commission. His tenure of office over the next few years was probably the most difficult in the history of 733.

Despite the many problems, the Squadron continued to be active and there was an increasing co-operation with help from Northumberland Wing. Cadets from 733 attended Annual camps at a variety of operational RAF stations. Eight hour flights in the mighty Lincoln bomber were available, although cadets often spent the flight in the lonely and cold rear gun turret. Cadets could go to RAF Ouston almost any weekend and have two to three hour trips in Anson aircraft (one of which was regularly piloted by Charlie Lutman (see earlier). Squadron usually took their full complement of staff and cadets to camp, a practice which is no longer possible and is sadly missed. In hindsight this period was the golden age for flying in the Corps.

John Lamb, the Principle of the College of Commerce, retired around this time and with the appointment of a new Principle it became apparent that the ATC was no longer an integral part of the College. There were other factors. The school premises in Northumberland Road were no longer available, and the whole area was ear-marked for redevelopment for wider educational purposes, including the foundation of Newcastle Polytechnic.

The search began for suitable premises elsewhere. This was not an easy task. It was found impossible to obtain any premises other than schools in the city. The City Education Office was helpful, and Dave Mason, the City Youth Organiser, left no stone unturned. Apart from considering the actual accommodation on offer, the main stumbling block was to obtain

the willing co-operation of both the Head Teacher and (perhaps even more important) the School caretaker. Eventually it was decided that the Squadron would have to move to Chillingham Road School in Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne. In 1956 the Squadron was renamed No 733 (Heaton) Squadron.

CHAPTER 6 – No 733 (Heaton) Squadron

The facilities at Chillingham Road School were far from satisfactory, but it was the only one in the city where agreement was achieved between the Head Teacher and the caretaker, as, of course, the ATC required the use of the premises out of normal hours. In fact the premises could be made available only on Sunday mornings. As it was junior school, the desks and chairs were found to be too small for the lanky teenagers. There was no accommodation that could be devoted solely to the Squadron, so all equipment, etc had to be packed away after each parade. The only place where uniform and equipment could be stored was a wartime air-raid shelter in the school yard where the damp caused mildew and rust. This was one of the reasons why it was unfortunately necessary for the Squadron to part with its prized 'Kestrel' engine.

Up to this point 733 had been a 'school' squadron, but now as an 'open' squadron it required a Civilian Committee. The first meeting of the Civilian Committee was held at the Crown Hotel, Newcastle on 8th February 1957 with the famous Jim Denyer as Chairman.

Jim Denyer became a legend in his own right, but at that time he was relatively unknown. A former squadron leader Mosquito pilot during the war, he continued to fly Dakotas during the Berlin Airlift in 1948, and then became a flying instructor. After leaving the RAF in 1950, he became CFI at the Newcastle Municipal Flying School at Woolsington. Within two years he was offered and accepted the post of Commandant of the Airport. At that time it had not advanced far from the pre-war grass airfield with just a few wooden huts left over from the RAF's occupation during the war. Having already won the King's Cup Air Race in 1956, Jim had shown an interest in the ATC and Northumberland Wing were pleased to have him as Chairman of the newly formed Committee of 733 Squadron.

Other members of the first Committee included Dave Mason (the City Youth Organiser), Cecil Pattinson (one of the original Squadron Officers), Stan Jours (a pilot member of the Aero Club) and Len Lambert (one of the original cadets). Len took the job of

Squadron Treasurer and also wrote up the first Minutes pending the appointment of a Secretary. At that time the squadron had a strength of 27 cadets, one officer (Arthur Williamson), a warrant officer and four civilian instructors. One of the first points discussed was the possible effect of the move to Heaton (in then east of the City) upon the attendance of cadets who mainly lived in the west. Dr McClory (also of the Aero Club) joined the Committee after a short while, and, with Jim Denyer and two flying members of the Aero Club, there were good prospects of supplementary flying for cadets at Woosington.

The minutes of the Committee for the following five years make interesting reading:-

- A steady decline in numbers of cadets
- the many inconveniences and shortcomings of the accommodation
- the difficulties with the new Caretaker
- new names appearing
 - ✓ former cadet Stan Peat applying for and gaining a commission
 - ✓ Flt Lt (later Wg Cdr) John Knowles representing Wing HQ
 - ✓ Wg Cdr Ross – followed by Wg Cdr Smith
- the Easter weekend exercises
- cadets getting additional flying thanks to Jim Denyer
- still managing to get 18 cadets out of 19 total strength to sit proficiency exams, with 16 cadets passing
- flying at RAF Ouston
- Annual Camp at RAF Kinloss
- Jim Denyer in 1958 won the King's Cup Air Race for the second time
- more new names
 - ✓ Geoff Hudspith an ex-cadet joining as Squadron Warrant Officer after National Service – he was later (1959) commissioned
 - ✓ Brian Burns who was also later commissioned.

The recurring problem was accommodation. The search for premises was concentrated in the west end of the city where most of the cadets lived. There was news of a new type of specially designed ATC squadron building and the Chairman was soon sounding out the AOC-in-C on behalf of 733. However Wing HQ

were unable to recommend 733 for one of the new units due to the squadron being below the requisite strength. This prompted a confrontation that sadly resulted in the resignation of Flt Lt Arthur Williamson who had led 733 so well in very difficult circumstances. Some of the CIs also resigned. In October 1958 Flt Lt Frank Bell was then appointed CO, having previously commanded No 131 (Newcastle) Squadron. There was a chance of temporary accommodation at Sandyford Road Drill Hall and searches for a suitable site for one of the new ATC HQ buildings, but all came to nought. Flt Lt Bell resigned after a few months and once again Flt Lt Bill Hall moved back to become CO of 733 Squadron as well as simultaneously commanding No 346 (Tynemouth) Squadron. This led to a close association being set up between the two squadrons and NCOs from 733 regularly paraded with 346 Sqn.

By early 1959 the Squadron was parading at Longbenton on Wednesday evenings and there was a monthly Sunday parade at Woosington. The Squadron strength had increased to 22 cadets. The Annual Camp was at RAF Marham and there was a weekend visit to RAF Acklington.

RAF Ouston (now Albermarle Barracks) and RAF Acklington (now a prison) also provided facilities for the cadets such as flying and rifle ranges. When RAF Usworth closed, the Ansons and the Gliding School moved to RAF Ouston. At both Ouston and Acklington some lucky cadets obtained flights in exciting aircraft such as the Meteor jet trainer and Chipmunks in addition to the regular Anson flights.

Stan Peat, who had joined the Squadron in 1950 as a cadet, rejoined as an instructor following his National Service. He was commissioned in 1958. Geoff Hudspith, who had been a cadet since 1948 was appointed as Squadron Warrant Officer after RAF service as a Drill Instructor. He treated the cadets with the same harsh discipline as he had been trained to hand out to RAF National Service recruits. This appeared to do the cadets no harm at all. Geoff was subsequently commissioned into the RAFVR(T) as was Brian Burns who became an instructor at this time.

However, 733 Squadron was still based at the school in Heaton.

The long negotiations for a site in Denton broke down, and at the Civilian Committee Meeting held on 16th June 1959 the momentous decision was made to investigate the possibility of a site at Woolsington. In the Minutes of that meeting there was also the first mention of a Cpl Harry Lowe, who had just completed a weekend gliding course. He was destined to become a leading light in the history of both the Squadron and Northumberland Wing.

In the following month it was recorded that the Newcastle Airport Committee had approved a site for a new squadron HQ, and the negotiations for a lease had commenced. These were completed in January 1960 and the new HQ building was erected in the summer while the Squadron was at Annual Camp at RAF Finningley. The last Committee Meeting at Sandyford Road was held on 28th October 1960 when it was agreed that the name of the unit would be changed to No 733 (Newcastle Airport) Squadron. This was approved by the Airport Committee and plans were made for the official opening to take place early in 1961. This was to be the first squadron in Northumberland Wing to be issued with the new standard type of HQ known as a 'Spooner' building.

Jim Denyer and Bill Hall made a very persuasive team and they had radically changed the fortunes of 733 Squadron

CHAPTER 8 – LIVING AT THE AIRPORT



L to R Plt Off Hudspith, Lord Mayor Mrs Gladys Robson, Fg Off Peat, AVM HMaguire, Cadet Frasier

On 18th March 1961, almost exactly twenty years since it was originally formed, the Squadron officially marched into its new Headquarters during a ceremony performed by Air Vice Marshal Harold Maguire and the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Mrs Gladys Robson. The parade was supplemented by cadets from other local ATC squadrons together with the cadet bands of Tynemouth and Wallsend Squadrons. Amongst those present was the Squadron's first Commanding Officer, Leslie Tait, who traveled from Peterborough, also many former cadets from the College of Commerce Old cadets Association. It was happy and momentous reunion.

The new building had been erected on the foundations of one of the former RAF buildings. Mainly constructed from cedar wood, it provided three classrooms (with demountable partitions), a canteen, toilets, office facilities and a storeroom. Unfortunately the contractors had erected the building the wrong way round, with the front door at the back! This was rectified by some re-

arrangements of the internal walls prior to the opening. The site was neatly marked out, complete with the mandatory service flagpole and access was by tarmac road with ample areas available for drill practice.



With the Airport Commandant, Jim Denyer, as Squadron Chairman all of the airport facilities which became available. 733 Squadron was in a very enviable position and became known as “the lucky thirteenth” as a result of its change in fortune (thirteen being rather deviously devised by adding the numbers $7 + 3 + 3$). Led by Flt Lt Bill Hall who by now had acquired considerable experience within Northumberland Wing, 733 was poised to do great things in the future.

One of the cadets who played a role in the move was a young Cadet Sergeant, Harry Lowe, who has already been mentioned in this story. He later became Wing Commander E H Lowe OBE, Officer Commanding Northumberland Wing ATC. His experience with the Squadron’s move stood him in good stead years later when, in 1981, he was required to oversee the amalgamation of the Northumberland and the Durham Wings, and he became the first CO of the new combined Durham/Northumberland Wing ATC. . In doing so, he achieved the record of being the Wing Commander to have served longest in that rank in the history of the ATC, but that is another story.

Following the move, the Squadron quickly settled in to its new environment. Visits were arranged on a regular basis to various sections of the Airport, including the Control Tower, Fire and Security Sections. At that time the Airport was still

undeveloped and the Control Tower was just a wooden cabin on stilts.

One of the problems in the early days was the question of the No.5 bus service from Newcastle, especially in the evenings. Initially recruitment was slower than had been expected. Nevertheless, when the new OC Wing, Wg Cdr Lockwood, visited in June 1961 the strength was 30 cadets. The new training syllabus was introduced and more cadets obtained their gliding certificates. The Annual Camp at RAF Leuchars was a great success and in September the Squadron visited RAF Middleton St George for the annual Battle of Britain Air Display. The squadron strength had risen to 35 by November 1961 and the following March stood at 47. In the latter month Harry Lowe was promoted to Cadet Warrant Officer, the first cadet at 733 to hold that rank. Flt Lt Bill Hall left on being moved to Southampton by his employers. Stan Peat was promoted to Flight Lieutenant and given command of the Squadron. At about that time Dave Carr joined as a Civilian Instructor and later became Squadron Warrant Officer.



21st Anniversary Parade, Hexham, 3rd June 1962
Banner Bearer: CWO Lowe, 733 Sqn

The year 1962 saw the celebration of the 21st Anniversary of the formation of the Air Training Corps. It was another feather in the Squadron's cap that CWO Harry Lowe was selected to represent Northumberland Wing at the presentation of the first Corps Banner at St Clement Danes Church, London by HRH the Duke of Edinburgh. Later in the year he carried the Corps Banner

when it was paraded before a combined parade the three wings, Northumberland, Durham and Cumbria at Hexham Abbey. Later that year, in October, Harry Lowe was commissioned onto 733 Squadron.

In September 1963 Plt Off Lowe and AWO Carr were invited to form the team led by Flt Lt Terry Avery, Wing Staff Officer, to run the first Northumberland Wing NCO Course at RAF Ouston. These courses have carried on ever since, relocating to RAF Acklington when Ouston closed then subsequently to RAF Boulmer when Acklington closed. To date (2001) Harry has attended every course (– some day he hopes to gain a pass!)

Dave Carr was commissioned in 1964 and transferred to Wing Staff in 1966 to be followed by Fg Off Lowe in 1967. Fg Off Brian Burns also left the squadron to join Wing Staff as Wing PEdO. The Squadron was becoming the main supplier of staff officers which says a lot about the standards on 733 Squadron at that time.

One replacement officer was Len Lambert (see many of the previous chapters) who was re-commissioned in 1965 after an association with the Squadron which went back to its formation in 1941. Len had served as Squadron Treasurer and Navigation Instructor for many years since the war.

While all this was going on, there were major works services being carried out at the Airport with the lengthening and strengthening of the main runway and the erection of an entirely new terminal building and air traffic control centre. At one stage the Airport was closed for five months, air traffic being diverted to RAF Ouston. 733 provided the Guard of Honour for the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, when he officially opened the new terminal in 1967.

Around this time, 733 was asked to take control of No 1204 (Newburn) Squadron which was struggling to survive. It became a Detached Flight of 733. However reduced staffing made the task of running the Squadron and the Detached Flight untenable and it was handed over to No 131 (Newcastle) Squadron on 1st October 1967. The Detached Flight closed shortly afterwards.

Flt Lt Ted Dobinson then joined the Squadron as Adjutant on

transfer from No 404 (Morpeth) Squadron. Despite the disruptions caused by the massive re-development of the Airport, including the loss of the Squadron's football pitch and parade ground, the Squadron continued to thrive. Indeed it had become one of the leading squadrons in the Wing having won the coveted Lindisfarne in 1966 as the Best Squadron in the Wing. The presentation was made to Flt Lt Stan Peat at the 1966 Wing Review at RAF Ouston where the newly formed 733 Squadron Band made its first public appearance.

There were several outstanding cadets at that time one of whom was Malcolm Trousdale, nephew of the wartime ex-cadet Maurice Trousdale (mentioned in Chapter 3). Malcolm excelled at swimming and also won an exchange visit to the Swedish Air Cadets.

The popularity of Annual Camps was undiminished in the 1960's. Len Lambert proudly remembers taking a party of 733 cadets to RAF Bruggen in Germany. He also recalls organising for the whole squadron to fly from Woolsington to RAF Acklington in a DC3 Dakota whilst the rest of the Wing traveled by coach!

The move from Heaton to the Airport, although a gamble, had certainly paid off.

CHAPTER 9 - THE END OF AN ERA



Annual Camp, RAF Kinloss, 1963

Staff in front row: (4th from left) Mr P Zarraga (who later joined the RAF and flew Nimrods as a Sqn Ldr), Fg Off J Antolak, Plt Off E H Lowe, Flt Lt S Peat (CO), Fg Off B Burns, AWO D Carr, Mr K Fox

In this period Flt Lt Peat was awarded the Lord Lieutenants Certificate for meritorious service and for arranging for cadets from throughout the Wing to obtain experience flights to London, Heathrow with British Airways.

In the late sixties cadet Neil Robson followed in the footsteps of his older brother Flt Sgt Keith Robson in successfully completing a Flying Scholarship. Keith went on to fly with BKS Air Transport on Viscounts and Neil studied aeronautical engineering at Belfast University.

In 1970 the RAF hosted a 'Battle of Britain' Town Show in the Newcastle Exhibition Park. Squadrons throughout the Wing took part. One of the featured events was the Wing band which at that

time was led by Drum Major David Salkeld a Cadet Warrant Officer on 733 Squadron. The band performed three times per day throughout the Show and drew wondrous crowds of admirers. Another feature of the show was teams of cadets competitively assembling and dismantling two Kirby Cadet Mk 3 gliders. The 733 team did exceptionally well in this event beating a team made up of adult members of staff on the final day.

CWO David Salkeld was also captained of the Wing Soccer team when they won the Waddilove Trophy which they managed to achieve 4 times in succession. He went on to captain the very successful Corps team before joining the RAF passing out as the Best All-round Cadet of his intake at RAF Swinderby.

As can be seen, by 1970 the Squadron was in a very healthy state. It was able to form a detached flight at Middlegate Community Centre, West Denton under the command of Plt Off Brian Dale (an ex-cadet of No 347 (Barry) Squadron) who had recently been commissioned onto No 733 Squadron. He was the manager of the Shell re-fuelling section at the Airport. In 1972 one Cadet Greg Smith joined the detached flight and he was later to command No 733 Squadron. Later that year the Detached Flight gained Squadron status and became No 2510 (West Denton) Squadron under the command of Brian Dale who was promoted to Flight Lieutenant. He remained in command of 2510 until 1975 when he moved with his job to Heathrow Airport. Nevertheless, No 2510 Sqn maintained close links with 733 well into the 1980's.

During the 1970's and ex-cadet of the squadron, Cliff Nichol, was commissioned into the RAF following officer training at RAF Henlow during which he appeared in the BBC TV documentary series "*Fighter Pilot*". He went on to complete his flying training on Jet Provosts at RAF Linton on Ouse.

In 1977 Flt Lt Peat stood down as Squadron Commander. There followed a succession of commanders - Flt Lts George Donald, Doug Brain (ex 131 Sqn), Brian Adgar (ex 131 Sqn and later CO 2214 Sqn), Alwyn Boulby (ex 346 Sqn, 1000 Sqn and 1151 Sqn) and Bill Fairbairn (ex CO 861 Sqn). Other staff came and went during this period, however Alec McMath, who had joined the ATC as an instructor in 1969, remained throughout and still serves today. Jim Denyer continued at the helm as chairman.

In 1988 Flt Lt Greg Smith was given command and recalls being told by the then Wing Commander, Wg Cdr Lowe, to take care of 'his' Squadron for him in no uncertain terms. Once a 733 man, always a 733 man!

A short while later Fg Off Dave Wood moved from No 2510 Squadron to take up duties as Training Officer with 733. The rest of the staff consisted of Fg Off Chris Winks (ex 1313 Sqn), AWO Mike Stockman, Civilian Instructors Alec McMath, Wally Scott and Eddie Baker. A new instructor, Lee Round, joined the Squadron in the middle of a very boisterous Christmas party.

A retired officer, and a character, Gordon Blacker (ex-CO of 1114 Sqn), joined the Squadron as Treasurer. He and Jim Denyer ran the Squadron finances in a unique manner that basically meant the Squadron was sponsored by businesses associated with the Airport.

Cadet Hannon forming part of the Honour Guard at Ponteland



During the early 1980's links were forged with the community in Ponteland. The Squadron took over the marshalling duties for the Remembrance Parade held every November in Ponteland. A link was made with Ponteland Parish Council and a good working relationship developed.

Sgt Keanlyside was appointed as Lord Lieutenants Cadet for Northumberland despite stiff competition from other squadrons.

Sadly Wally Scott passed away shortly after his retirement from the Corps. The Squadron formed a guard of honour at his burial.

Unfortunately Wally's death was closely followed by that of Gordon Blacker. Wg Cdr (retd) John Knowles, who had previously commanded Northumberland Wing and was now Wing Chairman, took on the additional duty as 733 Squadron Treasurer and still remains a very active member of the Civilian Committee

Jim Denyer retired as Airport Manager and, sadly, after a lengthy illness he passed away. The Squadron was well represented at his burial service in Ponteland. This was a very sad period. The Squadron had not only lost three leading lights, but had also lost three good friends in a short period of time

CHAPTER 10 - PROGRESS



No 733 Sqn Continuity Drill Squad

Led by Cpl Bryn Ashton who, after service in the Army, was commissioned into the RAFVR(T).

During the 1980's cadet members remained fairly constant. No 733 Squadron was the one of the last squadrons within the Wing to accept female cadets following the appointment of Pamela Patterson as an instructor.

In 1989 the Squadron building was renovated to provide extra classroom space in anticipation of a new training syllabus. The Squadron equipped itself with video equipment and more overhead projectors to assist instruction the cost of this being provided by the ever faithful Civilian Committee.

The cadets continued to be heavily involved in all Wing, Region and Corps activities. A large number of cadets during this period obtained gliding certificates at RAF Catterick whilst powered flying was carried out at RAF Leeming in Bulldog aircraft.

One notable adventure occurred when the CO, AWO Stockman, CWO George and a party of cadets from 733 provided the 'enemy' for the TA's NCO training course at Otterburn. The cadets won the fight to the amazement of all concerned.



The successful 1985 and 1986 team led by CWO George seen on the left.

Since the early 1980's, mainly due to the skilled efforts of Eddie Baker, the Squadron has had a well deserved reputation for success in Aircraft Recognition competitions at all levels from success at the Wing Competition, success at the Regional Competition to success at Corps level.

In 1997 Newcastle Airport commenced a period of further development which meant that the Squadron building had to be demolished to make way for a new road. A deal was worked out whereby the Airport Authority helped fund a temporary building on an adjacent plot (all of 10 metres away!) for the Squadron with a view to a more permanent building coming available at a later date. Thus the Squadron moved into its present accommodation. It was a sad day when the bulldozer demolished the old Spooner building which had served the Squadron so well since 1961. However the squadron survived the move. At the end of 1998 Flt Lt Smith transferred to No 861 (Wideopen) Squadron. Flt Lt Chris Winks took over as Acting Squadron Commander to be replaced in October 2000 by Flt Lt Dave Hardy (ex-346 Sqn).

In November 1998 Wg Cdr Harry Lowe OBE retired from uniformed service after 21 years as Wing Commander (a Corps

record, having been appointed to the rank at age 36 years), 36 years commissioned service and 7 years as a cadet and re-joined his old Squadron, 733, as an Civilian Instructor.

733 Squadron is like that, it gets into your blood and a strong bond is formed. That has always been a major strength of the squadron and has assured its place as an exceptional unit.

Epilogue

This is the first edition of the History of No 733 (Newcastle Airport) Squadron ATC and, as such, is leaves many gaps. We would welcome contact at the Squadron from anyone who has reminiscences, anecdotes, photographs and/or facts that might be useful in developing a more comprehensive future edition.