

1454 Story

Full title: 1454 (Harrow) Squadron Air Training Corps

The Air Training Corps (ATC), of which HRH the Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, is Commodore-in-Chief, was established by Royal Warrant on 5 February 1941 and continued via subsequent Warrants.

The objects of the Air Training Corps are as follows:

- To promote and encourage among young people a practical interest in aviation and the Royal Air Force.
- To provide training which will be useful both in Service and in civilian life.
- To foster the spirit of adventure and to develop the qualities of leadership and good citizenship.

The ATC has its origins in the Air Defence Cadet Corps, which was formed under the auspices of the Air League of the British Empire and the earliest squadrons paraded in October 1938. The administration of each squadron was in the hands of a committee of local citizens, thus establishing the two streams of support military and civilian which still form the basis of the organisation today. In 1941, in order to provide the means of giving part-time air training to young men destined for the Royal Air Force, the Air Defence Cadet Corps changed its name to the Air Training Corps, which subsequently achieved a wartime peak of over 210,000 cadets. At a conservative estimate, some 170,000 trained ex-cadets (of which 436 were from 1454) had entered the Services by the end of the World War II.

At the end of the war, greater emphasis was given to general youth and citizenship training. The distinguishing characteristics of the Corps remain in its special relationship with the Royal Air Force and its involvement with all air related activities.

The Corps comprises squadrons organised into 40 Wings, generally by county. These in turn are formed into 6 regions covering the whole of the United Kingdom.

1454 (Harrow) Squadron is in Middlesex Wing. The number and name of the squadron is derived from the order in which squadrons were formed and the name of the locality it represents. Thus we are the 1454th squadron to be formed and we represent Harrow.

Our Royal Warrant is dated 5 February 1941 and we are the oldest ATC squadron to operate continuously since formation without a break in the London Borough of Harrow, although there are two other squadrons in the borough, one a lot younger and the other had a short non- operational period.

We accept young men and women aged 13 to 20 years old, and our Squadron strength is 72 enrolled cadets from both sexes with a waiting list of a similar number.

The squadron is led by Flight Lieutenant Neil Chamberlain RAFVR(T) who holds the Queen's Commission, supported by Flight Sergeant (ATC) Tom Levett who is due to be promoted in the autumn this year. In turn the Civilian Instructors Misses Eccles and Porter and Messrs Daswani and Bhoday (both qualified commercial pilots) take care of the day to

day instruction. The Civilian Committee play their part too with Mrs Kerai and Mr Thomas assisting each parade night. All the squadron staff and committee are CRB cleared. This is a pre-requisite for all volunteers and cadets over the age of 18 years.

When cadets reach the upper age limit (20), many apply to serve in the armed forces with a significant number of them entering other branches of public service eg fire, police etc. The majority though have already enrolled at universities for further education.

We have a long and valued history of sporting and civic successes with many cadets, both male and female, representing the Corps at the highest level in many sporting events, having earned their places by commitment and skill.

Personal and civic responsibilities play an important role in the squadron and since 1993 we have been honoured to represent the London Borough of Harrow at our twin town's Armistice Parade in Douai, France and parade with the French Army to remember their Fallen as well as our own. This year we are again honoured to be invited to parade at The Menin Gate, Ypres at 11 o'clock, 11 November. A magical and emotional time for all of us.

In 1997 our HQ building suffered an arson attack when all our adventure training equipment was either totally lost or so badly damaged it was uneconomic to repair. Due to the long and tireless efforts of the cadets, staff and committee, all the equipment has now been replaced along with some extras.

Harrow Young Musicians performed a special Concert for our benefit.

In 1997 we were granted the privilege of flying the Borough Coat of Arms on our replacement squadron Standard. This was dedicated in September 1998 and on the same occasion the squadron was re-dedicated.

The timing was especially apt as the squadron, supported by the two other borough squadrons, The Royal British Legion and other ex-service and cadet organisations joined us in our celebrations, the Sea Cadets and the Church Lads Brigade bands led our parade through Harrow town centre to mark the 80th Anniversary of the founding of Royal Air Force and the Anniversary of the Battle of Britain in 1940.

In October 2001 we were presented with a Certificate of Appreciation by the Borough in Council which recognised our continuous commitment to the Borough and in particular the youth.

The squadron is affiliated with The Royal British Legion (Harrow) Branch. Through various contacts from our staff we have many introductions to diplomatic and senior military personnel, to name a few:

- Air Attachés of Australia and the United States of America
- US Marine Attachés,
- Commanding Officer No1 Fighter Wing USAF
- Head of the Australian Defence Staff,
- Belgian Military Attaché

and many others, all of whom have visited the squadron and spoken about their service experiences and careers

Nearer home our visitors include:

- Deputy Lord Lieutenant of London,
- Alderman of the City of London,,
- two Sheriffs of the City of London,
- Field Marshal,
- Deputy Lieutenant of Harrow
- MOD section heads
- Various specialist RAF and Army officers
- Regiment of Ghurkas officers
- successive Harrow Mayors.

These visitors and others illustrate to the cadets the deep and genuine interest and appreciation taken by serving officers both military and civic dignitaries at the highest level.

We also provide the Guard of Honour for various Mayoral functions eg Civic Service, St Mary's, Harrow on the Hill plus others as requested by Mayoral Services.

Our Committee play important roles in the organisation of Harrow's Remembrance Day Parade as part of the Deputy Lieutenant's Committee.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is a vital part in the development of young people and we are committed to incorporate its in-depth programme as a major component in our full schedule.

- At all levels:
 - Voluntary works
 - Expedition training
 - Physical ability
 - Skill.
 - Residential (Gold only)

The training we offer covers all aspects of this prestigious Award, from Bronze through to Gold. Those cadets attaining Gold then train others at lower skill levels. This does not preclude other cadets training, under supervision, beginners to the scheme as part of their own Award. The ultimate prize being presented with the Gold Award by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh at St James's Palace.

So far 4 cadets have achieved their Gold

Currently 8 cadets are working towards their Gold and should complete in 2014

15 cadets are working towards Silver

30 + cadets working towards Bronze

'Syllabus' training is the main part of our indoor training programme. This covers all aspects of air related subjects:

- such as airframes and their construction,
- piston and jet engine propulsion,
- air navigation,
- map reading,
- drill,
- expedition training,
- basic survival skills,
- aircraft recognition,
- aircraft handling,

- radio / radar,
- principles of flight,
- airmanship and others.
- All the examinations qualify for a BTEC in 'Aviation Studies' and a certificate is awarded upon successful completion.

Cadets are able to gain:

- flying and gliding experiences,
- compete in inter-squadron, Wing and Service target shooting
- competitions (0.177 air-rifle, 0.22 L81 & L98)
- undertake annual UK and overseas camps,
- caving,
- climbing,
- abseiling,
- mountain walking and many others.
- Understanding community and civic responsibilities

UK camps include:

- Browdown, Gosport. Adventure Training
 - Sailing
 - Orienteering
 - Flying
 - Drill instruction
 - Many sports
- St Martins Plain, Folkestone. 'Spitfire March'.
 - 25 miles, preparation for the 'Vierdaagse'
- RAF Cranwell. Adventure Training
- RAF Wittering. Adventure Training
- RAF Leuchars, Adventure Training.
 - Maritime patrol flying
- Chickerell. Adventure Training
- RAF Cosford. Adventure Training
- RAF Shawbury. Adventure Training.
- Helicopters
- Orienteering
- Drill instruction
- Many sports

- Otterburn. Adventure Training
- Cwt-y-Gochlen. Climbing, abseiling, caving
- Fremington. Royal Marines UK training site. Walking, orienteering, in-shore kayaking, life-saving

Overseas visits include:

- 12 day visit to HQ Fighter Command, US Air Force, Langley, Virginia, USA inc:
 - US Marines Amphibious base and ships,

- US Marines Air Base, Long Beach
- Aircraft carrier 'USS George Washington',
- US Army assault courses, Ft Eustis
- NASA Research
- Paul Garber Facility, Smithsonian Institute

17 day visit to US Marines, Quantico, Virginia

- § Laying Wreath at Unknown Soldier, Arlington National Cemetery
- § All US Marine training facilities inc:
- § Various assault and training courses
- § Basic Marine Combat Qualification (designed for 18+ year old Marines!). All cadets passed with certificates.
- § US Navy Docks, Washington
- § Mount Suribachi Memorial
- § Gettysburg,
- § Manassas and other Civil War sites
- § UAV factory (security controlled)
- § Presidential helicopter site
- § Passing Out Inspection by General DuLay, CO USMC Quantico.

'Operation Trolls Travels', Norway. 10 day cross country skiing expedition to Hardangarvidda, to learn:

- § FIRST Learn to ski, and SECOND ski with loaded rucksack
- § Cold weather survival (below freezing all the time. At night it reached -27° C plus wind chill)
- § GPS instruction
- § Map reading (without landmarks) and Compass instruction
- § Sleeping under canvas
- § Digging and sleeping in snow hole
- § Outdoor cooking
- § Slalom and downhill skiing basic instruction

36 hour visit to Royal Dutch Air Force Soesterberg, Netherlands.

'Vierdaagse'. Each year since 1998 4 day 100 mile march around town of Nijmegen, Netherlands.

Ypres. Five visits (so far) to parade at The Menin Gate

Passchendaele. Three visits so far to Parade at their Memorial. Permanent unwritten invitation.

Battlefield tours:

- § Ypres Salient
- § Somme
- § Normandy
- § Douai. Alternate years. Parade with French Military at Douai's Armistice Parade.
- § French Air Force, Base Arianne 'Commandant Mouchotte', Cambrai.
- § 'La Coupole'. German V2 assembly and launch site.
- § 'Vimy Ridge', Pas de Calais. Canadian WW1 battle site.
- § Royal Australian Air Force. Planned but cancelled due to cost.
- § US Air Force Academy, Colorado. Planned but cancelled due to cost.
- § Royal Canadian Army, Yukon. Planned but cancelled due to cost.
- § Cross country skiing, Bavaria. Planned but temporarily on hold.

Leisure pursuits:

- § discos
- § quizzes,
- § night navigation exercises
- § swimming
- § visits to air displays etc.
- § Formal annual Squadron Dinner
- § Dress code
- § Mess Etiquette
- § Toasts

Presentation Night. Where all cadets are presented with their cups, trophies, certificates won throughout the year. New cadets enrolled.

Our minibus transports the cadets and staff when required.

We are fortunate in having been granted three separate Grants for widely diversified items as a new fire resistant storage hut, adventure training and skills enhancing equipment such as tents and all the other basic camping items as well as VHF and UHF radios, computers and a video camera to name a few.

As with all organisations, we rely heavily on weekly subscriptions, despite being the fortunate recipients of the above Grants.

Subscriptions are £12.00 per month, and these are treated as charitable donations under the 'Gift Aid' scheme.

The basic uniform comprises items below. Basic Uniform Comprises:

Trousers or skirt

- § 'Wedgwood' shirt (light blue)
- § Working shirt (dark blue)
- § wool pullover
- § brassard and badges
- § black tie
- § beret and badge
- § waterproof jacket

All 'blue' uniform is supplied on loan and replaced as required free of charge. Due to personal requirements, shoes, underwear or socks are not issued, although shoes of a specific pattern are a required part of the uniform. These are obtained via the squadron staff from the Royal Air Force at RAF Northolt. Cadets nominated for parades must wear this style of shoe.

Other items of clothing which cadets sometimes need are 'combats'. These are the camouflaged jacket and trousers which regular soldiers wear. We normally obtain these as Government surplus.

Parade Times

Parade evenings commence at 1900 and finish at 2200.

Parade evenings are Tuesdays and Fridays year round except for Public Holidays, Christmas and New Year and other specific occasions as notified. Mostly these are subject to calendar requirements.

Racial and religious tolerance.

All cadets are equal.

We will not, and do not, tolerate in any way, shape or form religious, sexist or racial intolerance or abuse.

Discipline is strictly adhered to

The order of seniority in the cadets is from high to low:-

Merit only:

Cadet Warrant Officer

Flight Sergeant

Sergeant

Corporal

Academic achievement:

Staff Cadet

Senior Cadet

Leading Cadet

Orders / instructions given from a more senior cadet must always be obeyed.

Names / title

It is normal for cadets to address each other by their surnames, except if one has a NCO rank ie Corporal or higher, then they are addressed as 'Corporal.....' etc.

We believe that the young people of Harrow deserve the best extra-curricular training, and instruction that is available to fit them for enjoyable, productive and personal careers in later life.

Our programme and diversity of training, guidance, events and camps both UK and overseas provides the young people of Harrow with experiences that no other Harrow based organisation can offer from a single source.

We hope that this brief introduction to the squadron has given you a taste of the many ways in which we provide that extra 'something' in your life.