



Bedford Air Cadets Celebrate 70 Years

3rd June 2009

Birthday Parade

As the storm clouds of the Second World War gathered, a small group met at the Bedford Arms public house on Bromham Road, Bedford to discuss the formation of a local Air Defence Cadet Corps Squadron. A committee was formed and on 2nd June 1939, 70 years ago, 134 (Bedford) Air Defence Cadet Corps Squadron was officially formed. On 5th February 1941 the unit became an Air Training Corps Squadron.

To celebrate its 70th birthday the cadets, staff and civilian committee of 134 (Bedford) Squadron Air Training Corps held a formal parade at its Headquarters Building on the former RAF Cardington Site, Shortstown, Bedford.

Reviewing the parade was Wing Commander Dan Archer RAF from the Defence Security and Intelligence Centre, Chicksands. During the inspection Wing Commander Archer presented each and every cadet on parade with a 'birthday present'. For the male cadets a set of limited edition silver cufflinks bearing the squadron crest and for the female cadets a silver limited edition make up mirror again displaying the squadron crest.

The parade held in front of four former Commanding Officers and parents/guardians, also provided the ideal opportunity for the Squadron to be presented with a new banner. The old banner had been in service since 1980 and had given sterling service to the unit over 29 years.

Wing Commander Archer formally handed over the new banner to cadet Sergeant Ryan Sharples, 15 yrs, who had the honour of being the first bearer of the new banner.

Following the parade, the cadets massed for a series of photographs to mark the occasion and then enjoyed a slice of 70th anniversary birthday cake that was officially cut by Wing Commander Archer and Flight Lieutenant Mark Robinson the current Commanding Officer of 134 (Bedford) Squadron.

Squadron Leader Alan Wiggins a former Commanding Officer of the Squadron (1981 – 1996) said after the parade, "As one of a group of previous Commanding Officers, I was pleased and delighted to be asked to return to Bedford Squadron on the occasion of its 70th Anniversary. The standards displayed by the cadets in the formal parade and the pride in their unit as the cadets showed the guests and parents/guardians around, demonstrated that the spirit of 134 past has passed on to a new generation - My congratulations to all members of the Squadron!"

The Squadron moved to RAF Cardington in 1953 having previously been based at a number of locations in Bedford that included a hut in Castle Lane owned by the Electricity Board, Bedford, a few doors down from where

the BBC Light Entertainment Department was broadcasting live concerts with Glen Miller and his big band. The squadron has remained on the Cardington site ever since despite the Station closing in 2000 and is proud that it retains a light blue footprint at this historical location.

The unit's longest service Commanding Officer, Flight Lieutenant Ron Turvey RAF VR(T) took command in 1956 and steered the Squadron through the rest of the 50's, the swinging 60's and 1970's before retiring in 1981.

In 1999 the Squadron was awarded the Freedom of the Borough of Bedford and is allowed to march through the town with bayonets fixed and banners flying.

Drill has always been close to the Squadrons heart, having won the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Wing Drill trophy 8 times – more occasions than any of the other 30 Squadron in the Wing.

Cadets join and retire, many going on to do great things. Few would realise the opportunities that they may end up undertaking during their career, like the cadet that flew to Iraq in the 1950's or to the lucky few who have flown in fast jets with the Royal Navy or Royal Air Force. One cadet - Phil Tolman went on to spend 3 years flying with the Red Arrows.

The Squadron has had a long, illustrious and busy history. A few thousand young people have been through its doors. Most will have achieved personal successes and improvements with thanks to the Corps, the hardwork of the Staff and Civillian Committee.

The squadron continues to look forward, and in the words of its motto will “Fly through Hardships”



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