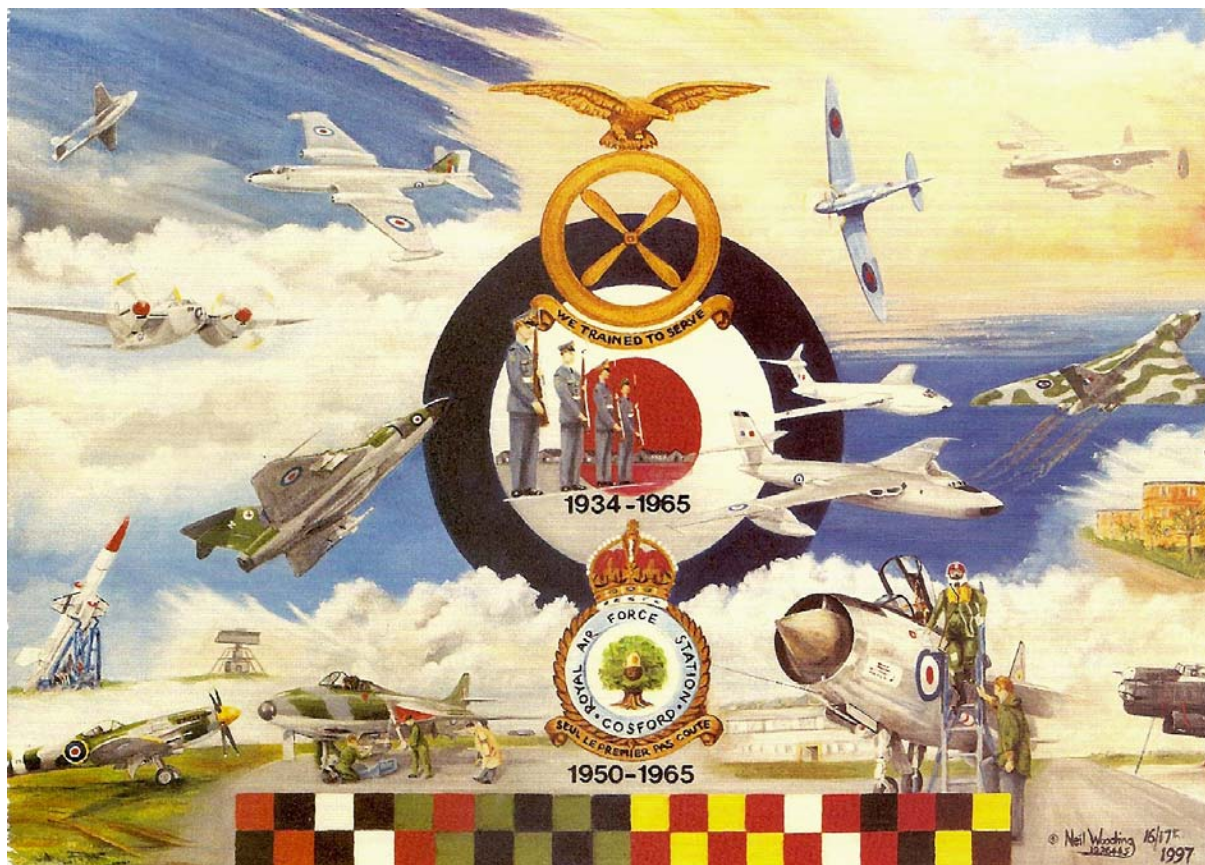


## The History of the Boy Entrants



Boy Entrant training in the Royal Air Force started in 1934 when some 90 boys aged between 15 & 16 years of age began training as Wireless Operators, Aerial Photographers & Armourers. Compared with the better known Aircraft Apprentice scheme, Boy Entrant training was introduced in order to give boys from more disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity of a Royal Air Force career. The last pre-war course graduated in June 1940.

Training recommenced with the 1<sup>st</sup> (post war) Entry in May 1947. Telegraphists trained at RAF Compton Bassett, Armourers at RAF Kirkham & Instrument & Electrical fitters at RAF Locking (later transferring to RAF Yatesbury). The Boy Entrant scheme continued until July 1965 when the 51<sup>st</sup> Entry (final entry) graduated from RAF stations Cosford, St Athans & Hereford. Over the years, the subjects covered increased to accommodate virtually every specialisation within the RAF and many thousands of boys were trained in this way. The excellence of the training together with a strict disciplined approach combined to produce a high level of “Esprit de Corps” and ex-Boys quickly became known as the “Backbone of the Air Force!”

The only distinction from the regular service uniform that was worn, was the use of coloured on chequered hat-bands around SD cap to indicate which subject the boy was studying, plus of course, the now famous four bladed propeller 'wheel' worn on the left sleeve! These chequered hat-bands were very distinctive with a wide variety of colour combinations: brown/white – Telegraphists, red/black – Radio & Radar, red/yellow (blood & custard) – Airframes. Other trades had green/blue, yellow/orange, green/yellow, red/yellow etc etc.

The Cosford scheme for the early 1960's is shown below. An overall picture can be seen at: [http://www.40thcosford.org.uk/gallery/memorabilia/hatband\\_disks\\_nov05.jpg](http://www.40thcosford.org.uk/gallery/memorabilia/hatband_disks_nov05.jpg)

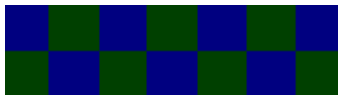
Ex-Boys were still serving in the RAF in 1997 & were well represented in the highest ranks. Outside, in commerce & industry ex-Boy Entrants are also found in the higher echelons of management. Hence the motto of the RAFBEA: "We trained to serve"



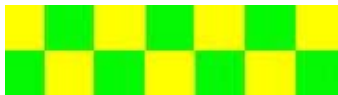
RAF Cosford Initial Training Sqn (ITS)



RAF Cosford 1 Wing  
1 Sqn Photo & Telegs  
2 Sqn Air Radar



RAF Cosford 2 Wing (Old Colours)  
3 Sqn Ground Wireless  
4 Sqn Air Wireless & Nursing Attendants



RAF Cosford 2 Wing (New Colours) \*\*\*

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I think the 2 Wing change over took place mid way between the 37th's Supporting Entry role and becoming Senior Entry, which would be approx mid September to mid October 1960.