

Central and East Yorkshire Wing Air Training Corps



Pocket Guide to understanding how the Air Cadets works

Issued by the Wing Media and Communications Officer and intended for use by members of
Civilian Committees as a guide
Re-issue 2006

Introduction

Over recent times many people who have joined Civilian Committees have found it hard to understand the systems, procedures and indeed the language of the Air Cadets. Those of us who have been involved for many years perhaps forget that a new-comer may have difficulties and that these difficulties cause confusion and may even cause them to leave or certainly not be as effective or supportive as they could be.

It is with this in mind that I have produced this little booklet for circulation within Civilian Committees to members who feel the need to understand how this large organisation works, who does what and what indeed some of them are talking about.

Details of the main players in the Wing are available in the Wing Directory held by the Squadron CO. An abridged version is held by the Squadron Chairperson. Where a committee member is unsure on any matter the first point of contact should be their own Squadron Chair-person and/or the Squadron Commanding Officer. The Chair-person then has recourse to the Wing Chairman/Wing Treasurer as required for any help or assistance.

“Politics” plays a part in Air Cadet life whether we like it or not, and to differing extents. Sometimes a committee, Chairman or even the odd individual member will feel the need to disagree with how the Squadron is being run, to criticise individual members of staff or to get too deeply involved, maybe in their own child’s membership. Sometimes Commanding Officers and/or their staff do not always see eye to eye with the committee. None of this benefits the Squadron or the cadets.

The aim of the exercise should be for the Squadron Staff and Civilian Committee members – each in their own roles– to work collectively to the benefit of the Squadron. Everyone needs to understand and respect the other’s position and responsibilities. It is fundamental in this that all should understand that the “running” of the Squadron is the sole responsibility of the Commanding Officer. His/her staff and the Civilian Committee are there to support him/her in that role. The job is time consuming and difficult enough so the less hassle the better.

Our Motto “Altogether better”

Our Wing Motto means what it says; if we all work together we make for a better Wing and a better organisation. We then generate more cadets, more staff, more opportunities and more fun for cadets and adults alike.

Civilian Committee

The main role of the civilian committee is to raise funds to support the Squadron and look after the welfare of cadets. Whilst the RAF provide funds for buildings, maintenance, utilities and a limited amount for travel costs, the other costs rest with the Squadron. The requirement for funds will depend upon the liabilities of the Squadron. For example a Squadron with a Band or with a mini bus will generally require more funds than a Squadron without them.

Civilian Committees usually consist of parents or local people. The officials of the Committee are the Chairperson (responsible to HQAC for the safe keeping and correct handling of all funds) a Treasurer and a Secretary. Committee meetings are generally held once every one or two months and the Squadron Commanding Officer and Chaplain attend as ex-officio members (i.e. no voting rights.) It is important that proper minutes are recorded and that all funds are accounted for. This is a requirement of the Charities Commission. It is also an opportunity to discuss matters with the CO about the Squadron and the welfare of the cadets. Some Squadrons discuss budgets with the CO and balance his/her and Corps requirements with a fund raising plan. These days regular fund raising is becoming essential as we see financial constraints increasing on public funds. Civilian Committees can look to support from local businesses and local charities as well as the National Lottery. Also there are monies which can be claimed from the tax man against subscriptions.

The Air Cadet Organisation

The Air Training Corps and the Combined Cadet Force (RAF) are jointly controlled from the Royal Air Force College at Cranwell in Lincolnshire. They are collectively called the Air Cadet Organisation or "ACO". I am afraid you will have to get used to initials being used – it's an Air Force thing. The organisation is based at Headquarters Air Cadets (HQAC) or H-quack as you may hear it called. Here a full time Royal Air Force Air Commodore (Commandant Air Cadets) is the top man. He is responsible to those above him in the Royal Air Force for the running of the whole show. A staff of Royal Air Force Reserve Officers and civil Servants aid him in this task. The Combined Cadet Force (CCF) is generally school based units and that is about all you need to know about them. I will concentrate purely on the Air Training Corps. (ATC)

Headquarters and Regions

The country, including Northern Ireland is split up into Regions each controlled by a Royal Air Force Reserve Officer of Group Captain rank. Each region has a Headquarters (Regional HQ or RHQ) with a small staff. We are controlled by the Northern Region with Headquarters at Royal Air Force Linton on Ouse. The Region is split into Wings – ours being the Central and East Yorkshire Wing– with Headquarters separate to Regional Headquarters at RAF Linton on Ouse. So far all the main people involved at HQAC and RHQ (you should by now be getting used to and starting to understand these initials!) are Civil Servants and paid for their duties. It is at Wing level where this changes.

Wing Structure

Wings are commanded by a Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (Training) Branch Officer of Wing Commander rank. In other words he or she generally follows their own occupation and these ATC duties are part time. The Wing Commander is supported by a uniformed Wing Staff team generally two Squadron Leaders and two or three Flight Lieutenants, again all volunteers called Wing Staff Officers. (WSOs for short) On the Civilian volunteer side the team will include a Wing Chairman, Wing Treasurer and Wing Chaplain. At the Wing Headquarters, a very small staff comprising the Wing Administration Officer (Wing Ad O) who is a Royal Air Force Reserve Officer holding Squadron Leader rank, an Administrative Officer and a typist (All Civil Servants) keep the Wing running on a day to day basis. All correspondence comes out of this office and one of their biggest frustrations is not getting information back on time, so please, if you receive requests for information from Wing HQ action it within the time scale because one missing reply can hold up the consolidated Wing response up the line.

The Wing Staff Officers have several duties to perform. Each will be responsible for one or more of the following – Wing Physical Education Officer (Wing P Ed O), Wing Adventure Training Officer (WATO), Wing Training Officer (WTO), Wing Staff Development Officer (WSDO), Wing Duke of Edinburgh Awards Officer (Wing D of E Officer) as well as each having a "clutch" of Squadrons to support and guide. Wing Staff Officers visit Squadrons regularly on both formal inspections and presentations and informally to help and advise.

Each year a formal inspection of each Squadron is carried out. This is known as the AFI (Annual Formal Inspection) and is a thorough review of the Squadron and its activities over the previous year. The Wing Commander leads the inspection team which includes the WSO, W Ad O (You must have got it by now) and the Wing Chairman or Treasurer. Civilian Committee members are invited to attend this inspection and you should take the opportunity to go and meet the team. The Squadron Treasurer will be asked to produce the Squadron accounts for inspection and therefore they need to be completed in time for the inspection.

Most of the events a cadet attends are arranged and organised through the Wing Staff Officers and the Wing Administration Officer. These include flying, gliding, sport, annual camps, overseas camps, courses, Duke of Edinburgh Award as well as all training and examinations. A large workload for all. There are also staff meetings, promotion boards, Regional meetings, special events etc to attend. It helps if committee members deal with the Wing Chairman through their own Chairman for any assistance.

The Squadron

The Squadron is the main unit of the Air Training Corps. There is one, sometimes two, in almost every town and City. There are twenty two Squadrons in this Wing which includes Stockton and Middlesbrough in the North, to Hull, Bridlington and Scarborough in the East to York and Harrogate in the West. It is the Squadron that you are supporting and your input is vital to its success. It is important to always remember that the Commanding Officer is responsible for running the Squadron and you are there to support him/her. The Squadron will comprise of members in the following categories:

Officers – are members of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (Training) Branch, known as RAFVR(T) and often referred to as “VRT Officers.” In order to qualify they are interviewed at Wing and Regional level and if considered suitable and subsequent to security clearance they receive the Queens Commission. Initially holding the rank of Pilot Officer (Plt Off), after two years they are automatically promoted to Flying Officer (Fg Off). Appointment to Flight Lieutenant (Flt Lt) is generally only given to the Squadron Commander (CO). (There could be the odd long serving Flight Lieutenant around who is not a CO.)

Adult Warrant Officers and Senior NCOs – are mature adults who attend a Wing selection Board and are appointed, after security clearance as Adult Sergeants or Flight sergeants in the ATC. Eventually they can become Warrant Officers after several years' service, some go on to take a Commission. Senior NCOs are generally responsible for drill, discipline and security. There may be more than one Adult NCO on a Squadron.

Civilian Instructors – known as CIs, they are appointed on recommendation of the Commanding Officer' after security checks, to help instruct on the Squadron. It may be that they have specific knowledge such as Adventure Training, shooting or band, or it may be they have general knowledge or skills and can teach aviation subjects. Some Squadrons have many CIs some only the odd one. Squadron Commanders are always on the lookout for good instructors so if you think you can help or know someone who can, speak to them.

Squadron Chaplain – each Squadron should have a chaplain, usually from the local church but appointed by the Wing Chaplain. He/she is responsible for the pastoral care of Cadets and staff, non denominationally.

Cadets - as well as the staff of course, there are the cadets. To be viable a Squadron should have at least 30 cadets. An important aspect of Squadron life is to continue the task of recruiting. It must be on-going as a Squadron can suddenly lose sufficient cadets to cause problems. Cadets can join at age 13 years and if suitable become Instructor cadets at 18. A cadet who has been appointed Cadet Warrant Officer can however stay until they are 22. Cadets can be promoted to the ranks of Corporal, Sergeant and Flight Sergeant by the Commanding Officer, who, although solely responsible for these promotions must do so in accordance with numbers laid down by HQAC. However, the rank of Cadet Warrant Officer requires a Wing Interview and the appointment to be ratified by HQAC. (There can be more than one CWO on a Squadron—some Squadrons may not have one at all.) Cadets also study for academic qualifications by way of examination to First Class, Leading Cadet, Senior and Staff Cadet. The latter is two part, the second part being an oral interview with a Wing Staff Officer. Squadrons generally meet on two evenings a week. All uniform clothing (except shoes) is issued to a Cadet on loan and supplied to the Squadron by the RAF. Other activities organised by either the Squadron or by Wing can take place at weekends. Where an activity involves adventurous training, suitably qualified staff always accompany the Cadets. Opportunities now exist for older cadets to train to obtain supervisory ratings for adventure training.

Understanding Forms

As you will probably expect by now there are plenty of forms in the Royal Air Force and yes, they all have letters and numbers, so I will attempt to explain some of those used by the ATC in case you come across them.

A.P Air Publications. This is an RAF term for RAF publications. The one you may hear of is AP 1919 which is in effect the RAF rule book for the running of the Air Cadet Organisation.

A.C.P Air Cadet Publications. Specific to the Air Cadets. For example ACP 20A is the Corps Training Manual whereas ACP 20B is the Administrative Instructions. Further ACPs cover subjects such as shooting, Duke of Edinburgh Award, security etc and all the training books which cadets study from.

F1250 (known as the Twelve fifty) is the RAF Identity Card issued to all Officers and AWOs.

F3822 (known as the Thirty eight twenty two) is the cadet's record of service (the blue book).

F1771 (known as the Seventeen seventy one) is the form for adults to claim authorised travel expenses.

Other Wing Staff Members

As well as the posts outlined there are other people in the system. The Wing Commander has a deputy as does the Wing Chairman and the Wing has a uniformed Health and Safety Advisor, a female cadet advisor, a Corporate Communications Officer and a Wing Warrant Officer. We also have a Wing President, a Wing Chaplain and a Wing Historian. All their details can be found in the Wing Directory. All in all there is a large team of very experienced people to call on if in doubt.

Finally

This is a big organisation with a large floating population of cadets, staff and civilian committee members. Everyone has a part to play and the way it works is time proved, even though you may not always understand the reasons why certain actions or procedures apply. It's important for everybody that the rules are obeyed. They are often not open to discussion – remember this is a military based organisation at the end of the day and we are bound by their regulations.

Media and Communication

Communication is a vital component in ensuring the efficiency of this Wing. People must talk – people must also listen. The future for the Air Cadets is very good and we can all play our part in that future. As the head of media and communication in the Wing I will try to raise the profile of communication between all parties in Squadron life and to the general public. If you need to talk to me or feel you can help in any way – call me.

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