

# **An RAF Photographer remembers 1959 to 1964**



**Brian Hillier  
26 July 2021**

# **My Teenage Interests**

Photography

Wireless Sets

Motor cycle

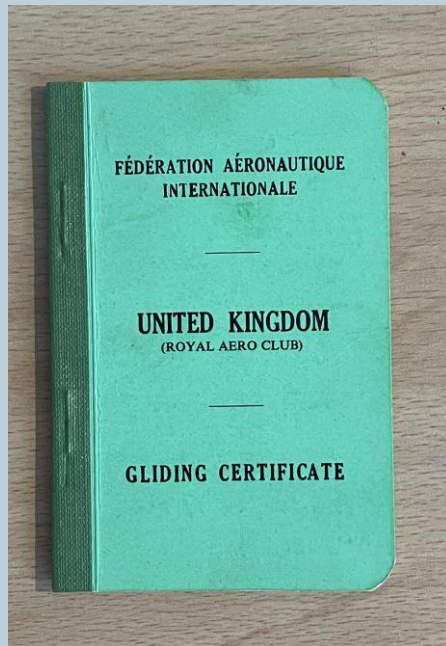
Cadet Force

Annual Army/RAF Military Camps

# At 16 - Gliding at RAF Halton, Wendover



# Gliding course at RAF Halton



FÉDÉRATION AÉRONAUTIQUE  
INTERNATIONALE

UNITED KINGDOM

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, RECOGNISED BY  
THE FÉDÉRATION AÉRONAUTIQUE INTER-  
NATIONALE AS THE SPORTING AUTHORITY  
IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, CERTIFY THAT

*Brian Michael Hillier*  
BORN ON *7th September 1939*  
AT *London*

HAVING FULFILLED ALL THE CONDITIONS  
STIPULATED BY THE FÉDÉRATION AÉRO  
NAUTIQUE INTERNATIONALE HAS BEEN  
GRANTED A

GLIDING CERTIFICATE

NO. *27332*  
THE ROYAL AERO CLUB

*Marjorie of Tara*  
PRESIDENT

119 PICCADILLY  
LONDON, W.1

GLIDING CERTIFICATES  
Issued by the British Gliding Association under  
delegation from The Royal Aero Club

THE HOLDER HAS QUALIFIED FOR THE  
FOLLOWING CERTIFICATES:

A. CERTIFICATE

DATE *18th April 1956*  
*Anthea Russell*  
SECRETARY  
BRITISH GLIDING ASSOCIATION.

B. CERTIFICATE

DATE *18th April 1956*  
*Anthea Russell*  
SECRETARY  
BRITISH GLIDING ASSOCIATION.

C. CERTIFICATE

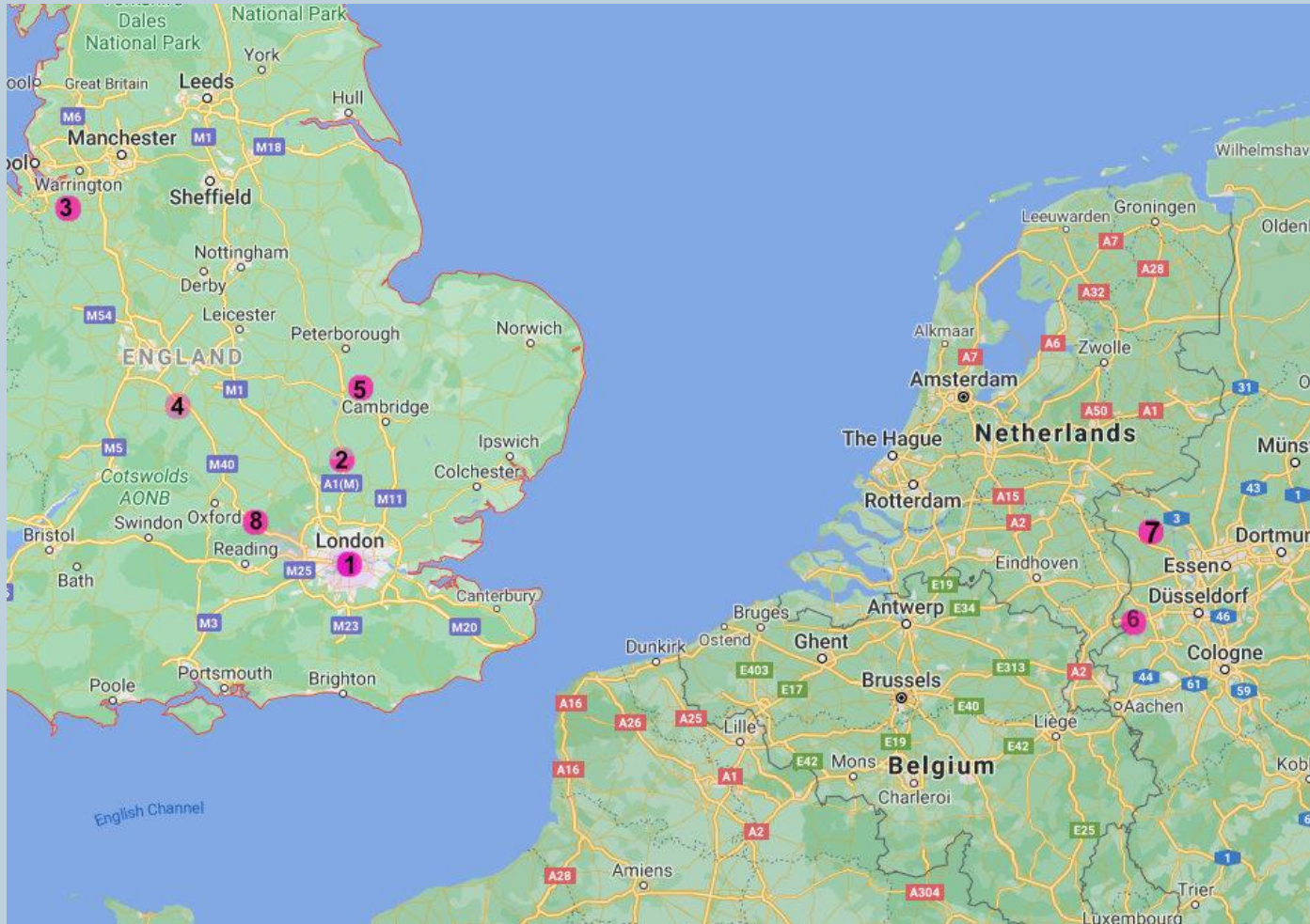
DATE \_\_\_\_\_

SECRETARY  
BRITISH GLIDING ASSOCIATION

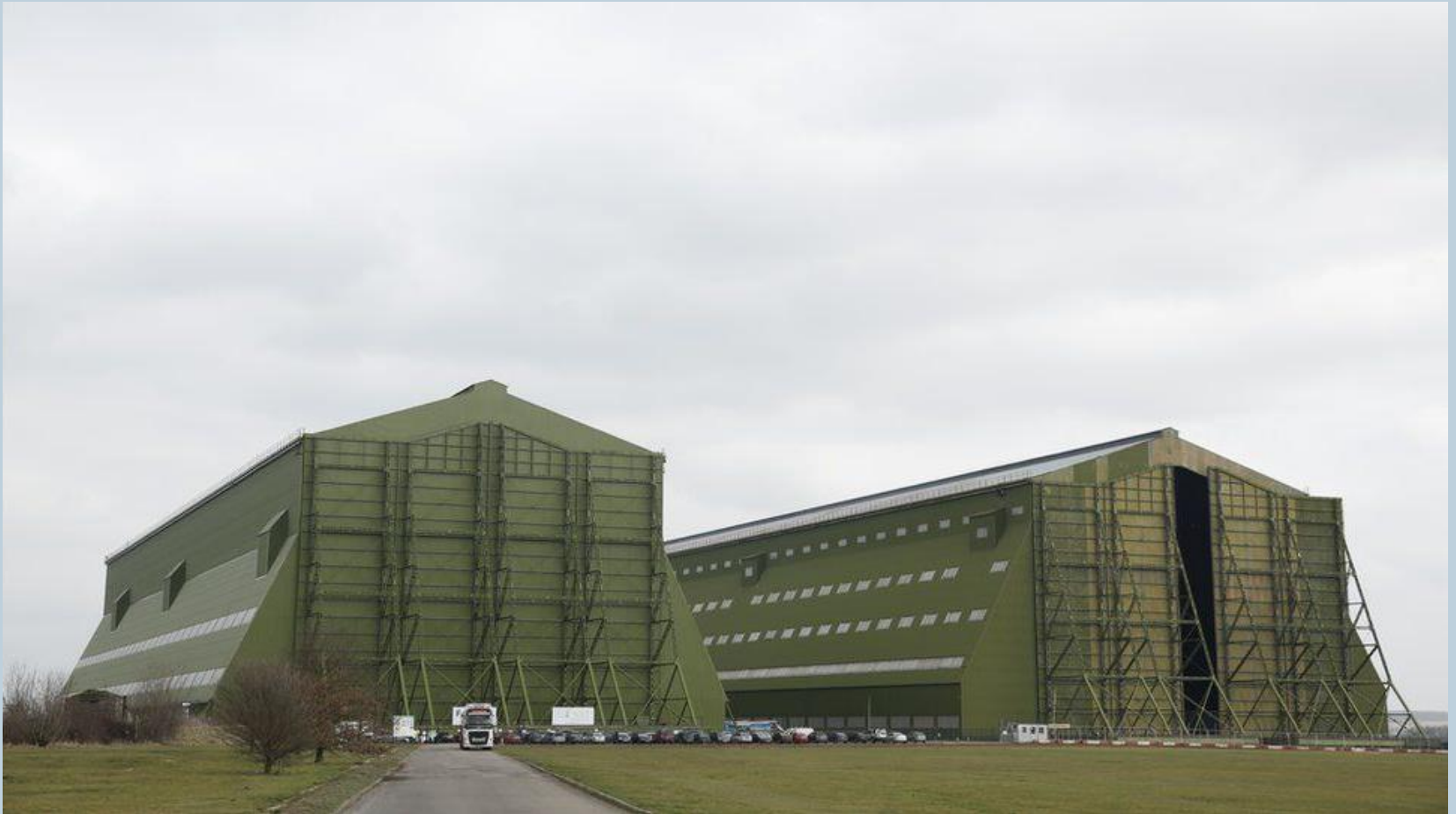
PHOTOGRAPH OF HOLDER

*B. M. Hillier*  
SIGNATURE OF HOLDER

# Where did the RAF take me.



# Cardington, Bedford





# Wilmslow – Basic training



# **Wilmslow – Basic training**

Discipline

Physical Fitness

Care and hygiene

Armed combat

# Wilmslow – Accommodation



# Wellesbourne Mountford

School of Photography  
near Stratford on Avon

- Theory
- Practical
- Camera usage



# Photographic Course – 16 D.E.



# Speed Graphic – 5 x 4 slides



# MPP – Studio camera - 5 x 4 film



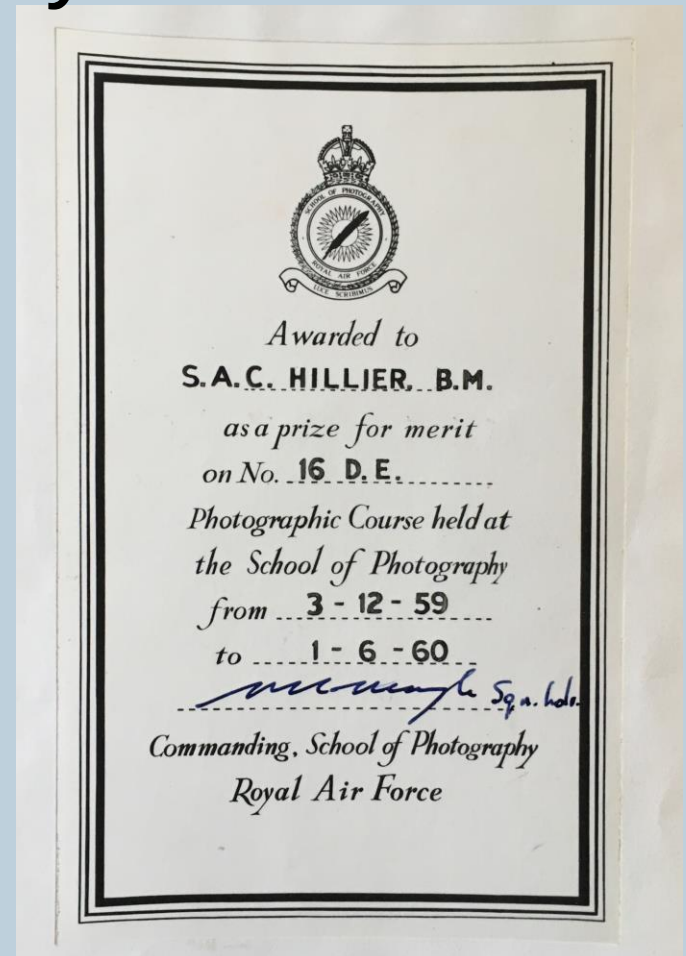
# Slides – have 2 exposures



# Course - 16 Direct Entry – 8 airmen

I passed  
- top of the class

Prize was  
- Ilford Manual of  
Photography



# RAF – Ground/Aerial Photography

Ground - Only events on Ground

Aerial Cameras were automatic

- No photographers flew to take aerial photos
- Ground crew fitted cameras in the Aircraft
- and loaded and unloaded cameras

Cassettes of film passed to

Photograph personnel

- Who developed and printed the films

# RAF Wyton – PR– My first posting



# RAF Wyton – PR squadrons

## Part of Bomber Command

### V-Force – Bombers or Photo Reconnaissance

- Valiant - *Vickers*
- Victor - *Handley Page*
- Vulcan - *Hawker Siddeley – Avro in Cheshire*

### Main Photo reconnaissance aircraft

- Canberra
- Hawker Hunters

# The Canberra

Range 2,000 nautical miles

Airbourne 5 hours

Usually at 50,000 feet  
could be 70,000 feet

No other plane could  
carry four different and  
imaging systems



# Hawker Hunter

Range

385 miles in combat

1,500 in ferry mode

Speed 727.6 mph

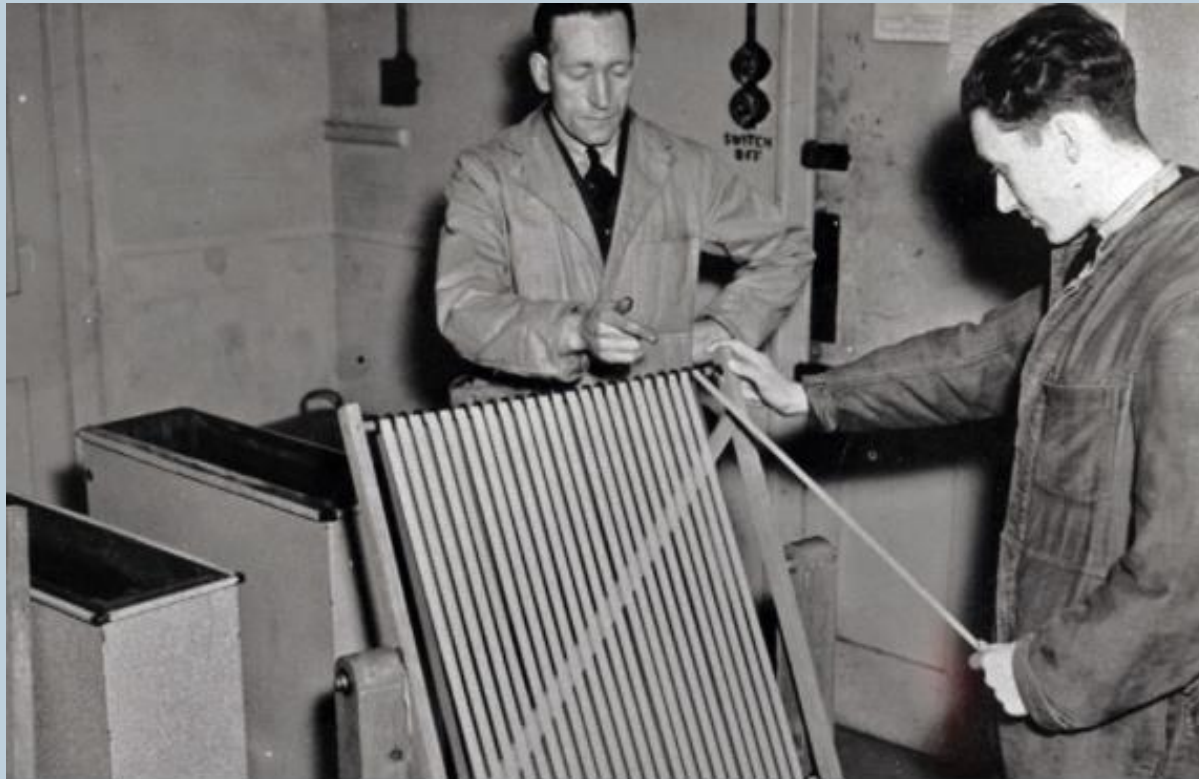
(1,171 km)



# G45 Gun camera - Open - Cassette



# G45 Gun camera – Film processing



In the dark, the film is wound onto a frame  
Then processed to give positive image

G45 – I owned one

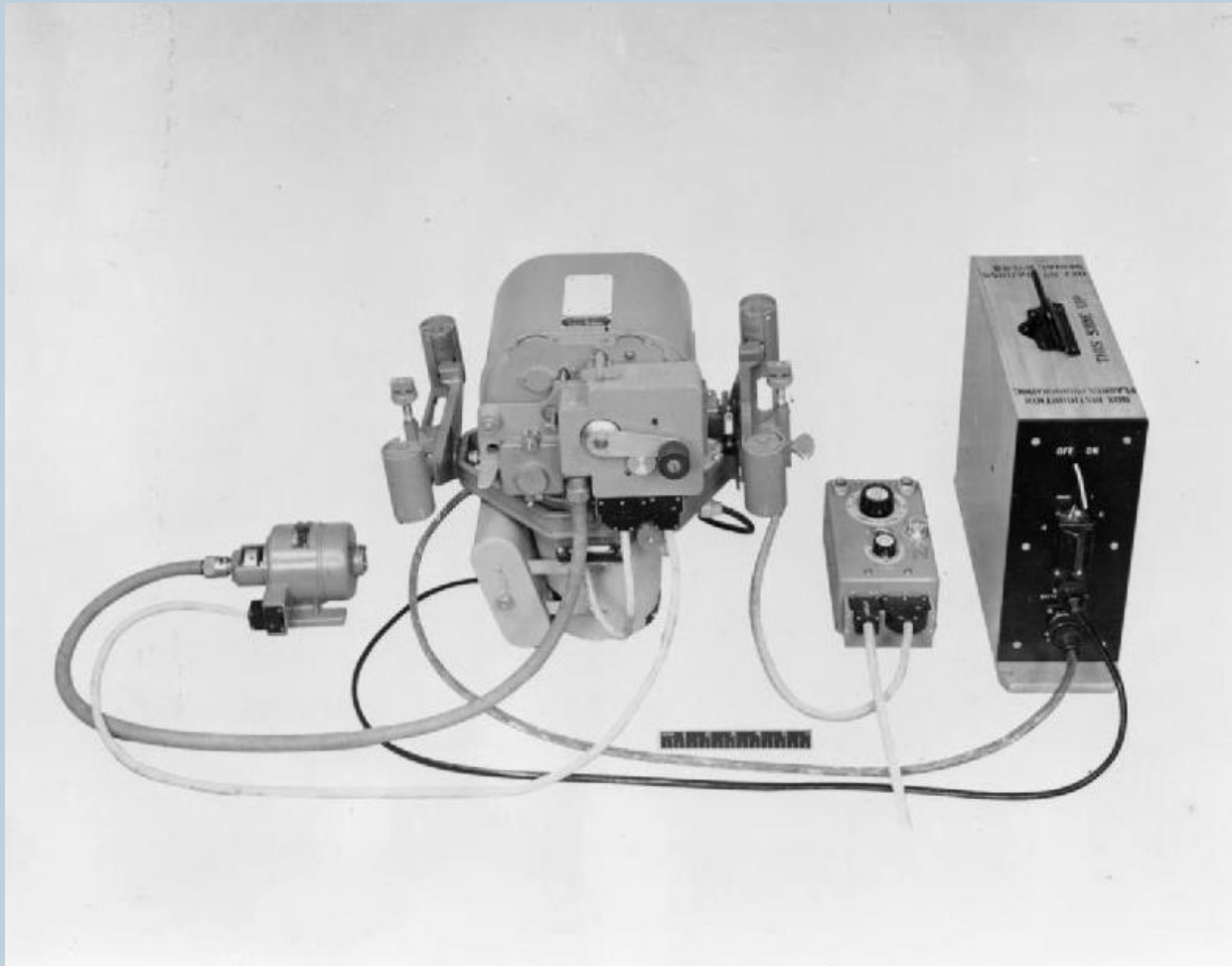


And, I made a 45 second film of the school's "Slingsby Grasshopper" flying on our playing fields.

# Ground crew load cameras into aircraft



# F24 – Camera components



# Aerial cameras and Aircraft

F24 – 5" x 5" – 250 exposures

- Focal length 8 or 36 inch

F56 – 8" x 7.5" - 500 Exposures

- Focal length 36 or 40 inch

F95 – Vinten – 70mm film

Aircraft - Max Height

- Canberra 70,000 ft
- Hunter 50,000 ft

Aircraft Rate of Climb - 3,800 ft per minute

# RAF Wyton - The Factory ?

Why did the RAF need a Factory?

How would they develop the films?

Who would interpret the results?

# Factory – Continuous Development

Continuous development



Assess films, perhaps print

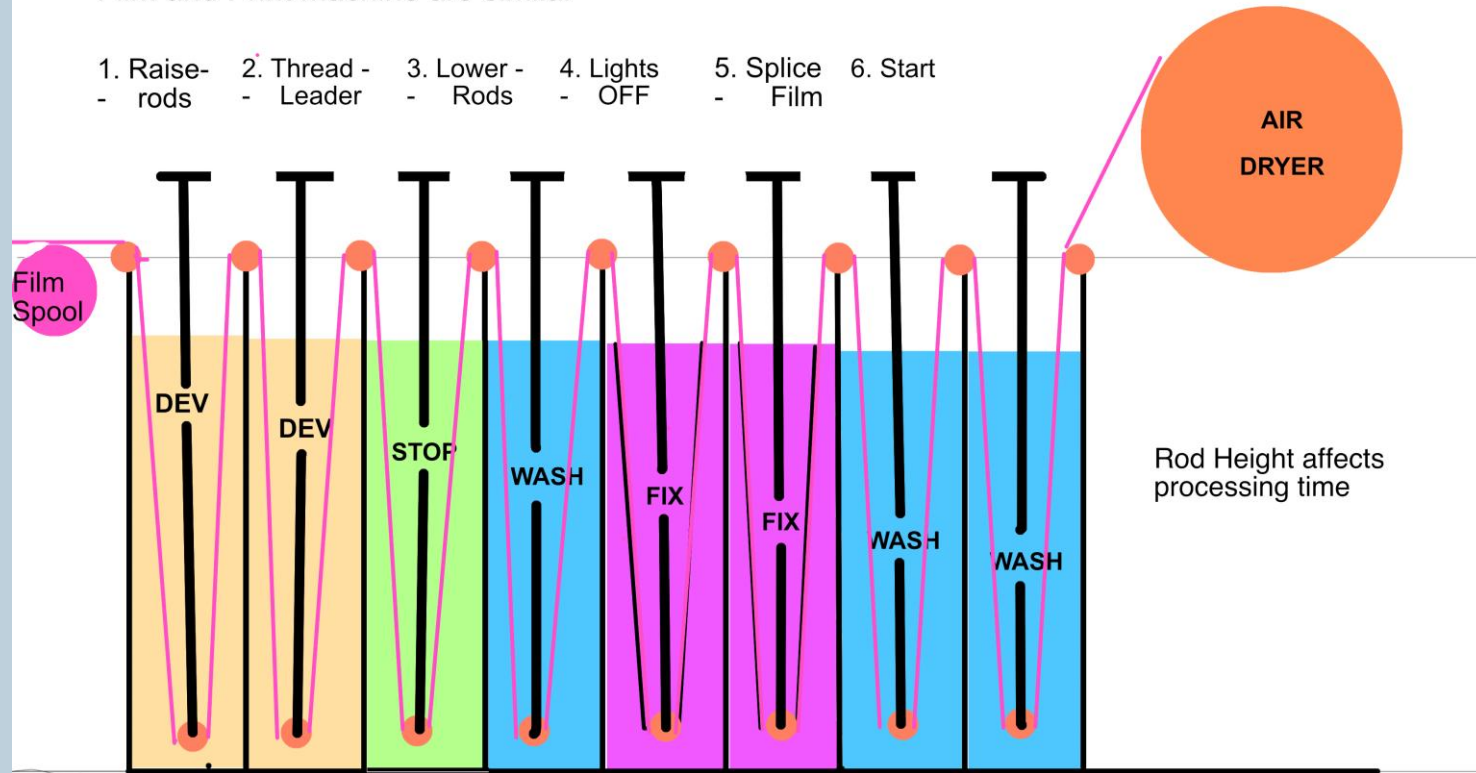


# Factory - Developing machine

## Continuous Developing machines

Film and Print machine are similar

1. Raise- rods
2. Thread - Leader
3. Lower - Rods
4. Lights - OFF
5. Splice - Film
6. Start



# Royal Aircraft Establishment

An RAF colleague and I went to Farnborough

- Test new processing equipment
- 'Airmanise' equipment,
- St Valentine's Day dance

Then returned to RAF Wyton

# The Factory – Photographic solutions

Large quantities were required

Maintain temperature

Maintain concentration

# Factory – Chemical Analysis required

In the Pump room and Laboratory were

- Two sets of Vats for Dev, Stop and Fix.

Every two days

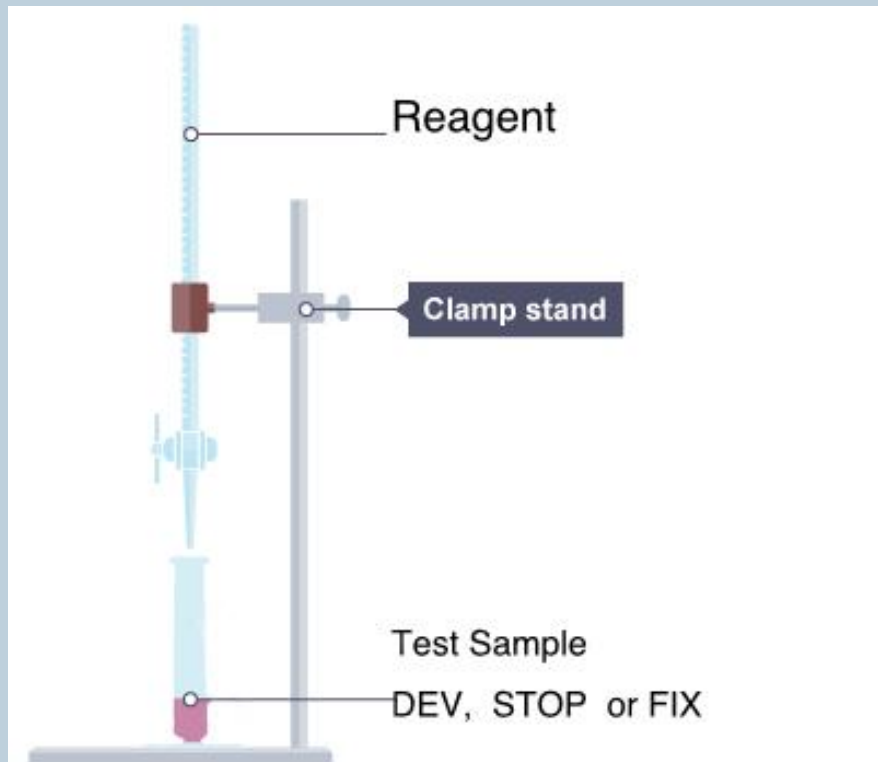
- Solutions analysed to calculate replenishment.

I transferred to the Laboratory

- Chemistry was one of my three "A" Levels

# Analysis - Titration method

Titration used to analysis strength of Dev, Stop or Fix



# RAF Wyton, Calculate replenishment

## Calculation example

10 ml of Developer is tested

= 9.5 ml Reagent - Dev is 5 % below correct strength

= 8.0 ml Reagent - Dev is 20 % below correct strength

If result is 5% - Add 5% of fresh developer concentrate

Repeat analysis for Stop Bath, and again for Fixer.

# RAF Wyton – Non-photo activities

Various guard duties: Cinema, Armoury, Airfield

## Saturday

- Morning - Horse riding,
- Evening - Local village Town Hall dances

## Day release Degree course in Cambridge

- Cycle between RAF Wyton and Cambridge,
- 15 miles each way, 1-1.5 hours
- Chemistry, but no time to do homework

# Time for a few aerial Photos

Now for a small diversion from my duties in the RAF

- An early photographer
- A battle field
- St Pauls

## WW1 – Aerial Photographer



## WW1 – Aerial Photograph of the Somme 1916



## St Pauls – Unmarked by bombing - 1946



## St Pauls – Unmarked by bombing - 1946



# RAF Brüggen – My next posting



# RAF – MFPU on Airfield next to apron



# RAF Brüggen - No 8 MFPU personnel



Brian not in  
photo

Other names

Brian Newton  
Dick Grieg  
Eddie Herring  
John Brogdale  
Pete Shirley  
Tony Whittiker  
Tug Wilson  
FS McCoy

# MFPU – Daily schedule

7:00 Get up

7:30 Breakfast

8:30 Report for duty

- Vehicle checks -

- Prepare photographic equipment

10:30 Tea/Coffee and Rolls – NAAFI / SallyAnn

- Photo Processing

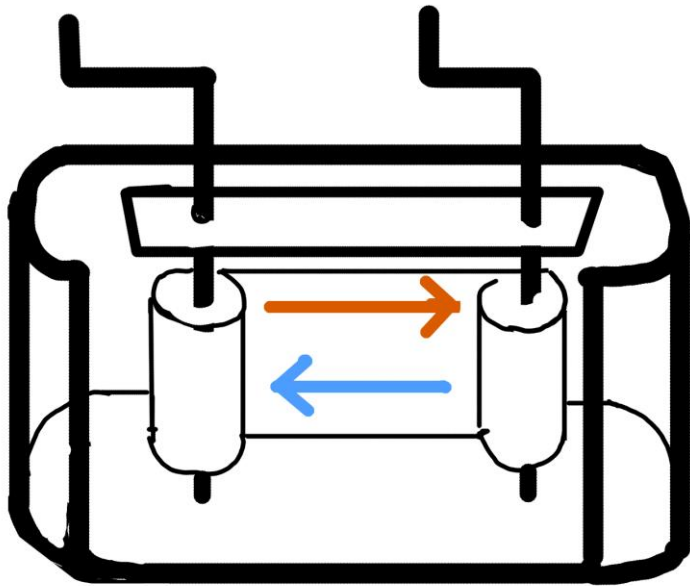
12:30 Lunch

- Photo processing

17:30 Evening Meal

18:00 Extra duties or free time

# MFPU – Hand film Developing



Separate tanks for

- Developer
- Stop Bath
- Fixer
- Washing

Clockwork timer

- Hand turn spooled film gently
- From end to end
- Avoid bubbles

# MFPU – Chrome Drum gloss finish



Wet prints were dried on a chrome plated drum.

This dried the photos with a glass like gloss finish.

Similar glass effect by drying the wet print on a window pane.

# RAF - Annual NATO Exercises

In the 1960 European forces were

British forces – North West Germany

French forces - Mid West Germany

American forces – Southern Germany

Russians – East Germany

# RAF Brüggen – Free Evgs & W/Es

Bought a Fiat 600D - Mine is on the left



# RAF Brüggen – Other activities

- Tankestelle – Saturday morning job
- RAF Outings to car races in Rheims, Nuremburg
- Paris to collect a Simca car
- Easy to travel - Belgium, Holland, Germany, Paris
- Taxi driver for Ostende and Hook of Holland
- Munich October Fest – Lowenbrau hall
- Oslo

# RAF – Das Feuerwehrauto

*The strange incident  
of the fire-engine  
in the evening.*

This little story will appeal to Ian Brown, who was an apprentice at/and worked in the London Fire Brigade.

# RAF - High Wycombe – Final posting

Just north of High Wycombe, in village of Naphill

Bomber Command - Headquarters

Photograph visitors for Identity

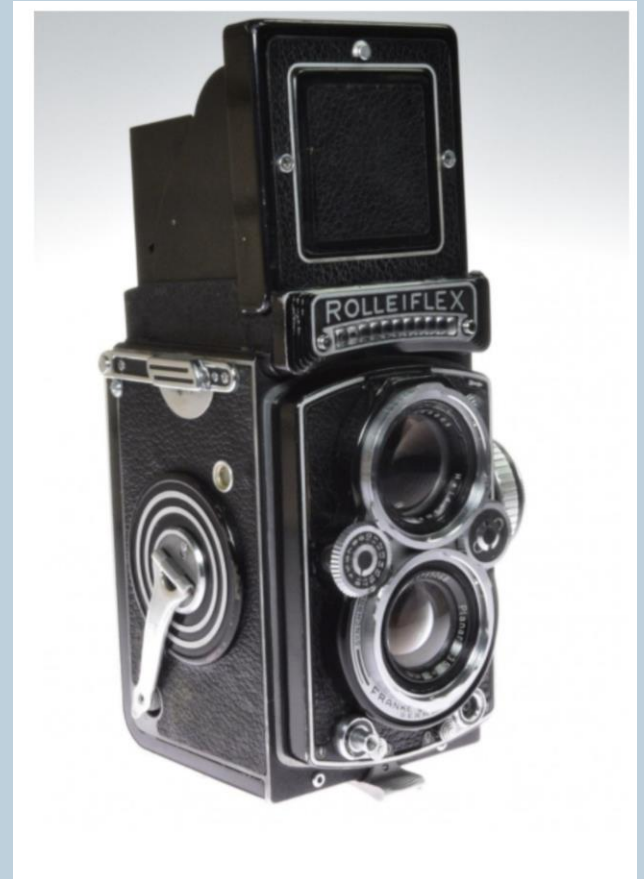
Panels of photos of foreign military staff attending a course or briefing.

Large Walk-in dark room

# RAF High Wycombe – Ground Photography

Rolleiflex – Twin-lens reflex

Camera of choice for many RAF  
Photographers



# RAF - It's a small world

- In the last year, at my local church, I met two men who served at RAF Wyton the same time as me.
- Danny Brookes – PR Pilot in Hunters (87 - *Just died*)
- Eric – Electrician who maintained electrical viewing equipment used for Photographic Intelligence
- Though we did not know each other at RAF Wyton

# RAF – Lots of friends, fun and travel



# RAF – After leaving the service

There were limited opportunities for photographers

- Police photographer
- Photo studios
- Weddings
- Kodak representative

# Brian Hillier - What happened next?

I became interested in computers, a new technology.

Joined Abbey National computer department

*My Auntie Nell was head of the Addressograph section, in charge of 40 staff, probably helped my application.*

I worked with computers for 45 years

- it was fascinating and still is.

*I hope I have presented some of the  
flavour of life of an RAF  
photographer 60 years ago.*

*And that you enjoyed it and found it  
interesting.*

*Thank you for watching*

*The End*