

Trenchard's Doctrine: Organisational Culture, the 'Air Force spirit' and the Foundation of the Royal Air Force in the Interwar Years

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ABSTRACT

While the Royal Air Force was born in war, it was created in peace. In his 1919 memorandum on the Permanent Organization of the Royal Air Force, Air Marshal Sir Hugh Trenchard outlined his vision for the development of the Service. In this strategy, Trenchard developed the idea of generating an 'Air Force spirit' that provided the basis of the RAF's development in the years after the First World War. The basis for this process was the creation of specific institutions and structures that helped generate a culture that allowed the RAF to establish itself as it dealt with challenges from its sister services. This article explores the character of that culture and ethos and in analysing the early years of the RAF through a cultural lens, suggests that Trenchard's so-called 'doctrine' was focussed more on organisational developments rather than air power thinking as has often been suggested.

In 1917, during the First World War and in direct response to the challenge of the aerial bombing of Great Britain, the British government decided to create an independent air service to manage the requirements of aerial warfare. With the formation of the Royal Air Force (RAF) on 1 April 1918, the Service's senior leaders had to deal with the challenge of developing a new culture for the organisation that was consistent with the aims of the Air Force and delivered a sense of identity to its personnel. However, as Marshal of the Royal Air Force (MRAF) Sir Dermot Boyle reflected in 1961, when the RAF was created it did not have traditions. Instead, the RAF borrowed customs from its sister services, the British Army and the Royal Navy, while at the same time developing its own.¹ The additional problem was that in its early

¹ Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Dermot Boyle, 'Foreword' to Squadron Leader P.G. Herring, *Customs and Traditions of the Royal Air Force* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1961), p. vii. Boyle, as the first graduate of the RAF (Cadet) College at Cranwell (hereafter Cranwell) to become Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) was a product of the period examined in this article.

years, the RAF had to manage the challenge of merging an officer class that came from the air arms of the other services, the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) and the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS). Boyle's recollection is significant as it is suggestive of an issue that has been largely ignored in the historiography of the RAF's early years. Namely, the development of the culture of the RAF. The historiography of the RAF in this period has tended to focus on issues of policy, doctrine, and technology; however, as the growing body of literature on military culture illustrates, culture shapes many of these themes.² As such, this article explores the character and development of the RAF's organisational culture, defined merely here as the values, belief and assumptions of an organisation, by examining the policies put in place by the Service's senior leadership to develop the Air Force's identity. In taking such an approach, this article furthers our understanding of the RAF because as Allan English reflected, little research has been undertaken on the culture of air forces.³ In taking a policy view, this article focuses on

² For key works on this period, see: H. Montgomery Hyde, *British Air Policy between the Wars, 1918-1939* (London: Heinemann, 1976); Barry Powers, *Strategy without Slide Rule: British Air Strategy, 1914-39* (London: Croom Helm, 1976); Maurice Dean, *The Royal Air Force and Two World Wars* (London: Cassell, 1979); Malcolm Smith, *British Air Strategy Between the Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984); Neville Jones, *The Beginnings of Strategic Air Power: A History of the British Bomber Force, 1923-1939* (London: Frank Cass, 1987); David Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force, 1919-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990); John James, *The Paladins: The Story of the RAF up to the Outbreak of World War Two*, Paperback Edition (London: Futura Publications, 1991); Scot Robertson, *The Development of RAF Strategic Bombing Doctrine, 1919-1939* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995); John Buckley, *The RAF and Trade Defence 1919-1945: Constant Endeavour* (Keele: Ryburn Publishing, 1995); Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality: The Evolution of British and American Ideas about Strategic Bombing, 1914-1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); David Ian Hall, *Strategy for Victory: The Development of British Tactical Air Power, 1919-1943* (Greenwood, CT: Praeger, 2007); Neville Parton, *The Evolution of Royal Air Force Doctrine, 1919-1939* (PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 2009); Peter Gray, *The Leadership, Direction and Legitimacy of the RAF Bomber Offensive from Inception to 1945* (London: Continuum, 2012).

³ Allan English, *Understanding Military Culture: A Canadian Perspective* (Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), p. 7. Exceptions include Paula Thornhill, "'Over Not Through": The Search for a Strong, Unified Culture for America's Airmen,' *RAND Occasional Paper* (2012); Robert Farley, *Grounded: The Case for Abolishing the United States Air Force* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2014); Jeffrey Smith, *Tomorrow's Air Force: Tracing the Past, Shaping the Future* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014); James Hasik, 'Mimetic and Normative Isomorphism in the

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the role of senior leaders, such as MRAF Lord Trenchard, and their impact on the RAF's organisational culture and the institutions and structures that were put in place to ensure the Service's independence. The creation of these institutions and structures was necessary because while the adoption of the imperial air policing mission helped give the RAF a role in a period of financial austerity, it was the foundation of the Service's culture that ensured survival. Additionally, while recognising that sub- and counter-cultures can and do emerge in organisations, the focus on organisational culture is necessary as it suggests why the RAF behaved in the manner that it did in the interwar years. Finally, while considering the importance of institutions such as Cranwell and the RAF Staff College at Andover (hereafter Andover), the structural focus of this article is the permanent officers of the General Duties (GD) Branch of the Service as the dominant 'tribe', or subculture, of the Air Force.⁴ This was because, unlike short-service officers, it was the permanent officers who rose to senior ranks and set the pace and tone of the RAF's emerging culture and ethos.

Defining RAF Culture

A key challenge in defining RAF culture, especially that at the organisational level, relates to that of what has been written on the subject. This is invariably brief and lacking definition, for example, while Martin Francis broadly talked about the 'distinct culture and ethos' of the RAF, beyond talking about the 'allure of the flyer', he did not define this.⁵ Indeed, much of what Francis described in *The Flyer* speaks to the existence of sub- and counter-cultures within the RAF that existed alongside the culture sought by the Service's senior leaders. Similarly, Markus Mäder, writing on modern RAF doctrine, provided an overview of what he described as the Service's culture regarding the Air Force being the 'junior service.' Mäder, however, did not define the concepts underpinning this culture beyond a doctrinal discussion of independent air power.⁶ Furthermore, while Elizabeth Kier admitted that to understand an organisation's culture, we need to read large numbers of sources, her views on the RAF are open to question.⁷ Kier neither adequately defined RAF culture nor, most importantly, noticed

Establishment and Maintenance of Independent Air Forces,' *Defence and Security Analysis*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (2016), pp. 253-63.

⁴ As well as the GD Branch, the interwar RAF consisted of several other smaller branches. Namely, the Stores, Account, Medical, Legal and Chaplains Branches.

⁵ Martin Francis, *The Flyer: British Culture and the Royal Air Force, 1939-1945*, Paperback Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 14.

⁶ Markus Mäder, *In Pursuit of Conceptual Excellence: The Evolution of British Military-Strategic Doctrine in the Post-Cold War Era, 1989-2002* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 105-12.

⁷ Elizabeth Kier, 'Culture and Military Doctrine: France between the Wars', *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (1995), p. 70.

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similarities between Britain's armed services. For example, on discussing leadership, Kier criticised the British Army for its focus on drill while writing that the RAF was more liberal and free-thinking due to its technological foundations.⁸ While technology was a key aspect of the RAF's cultural identity, Kier's argument ignored the shared leadership values between Britain's armed services, and the fact the RAF sought to recruit its officer class from the same sources as the British Army; Britain's public schools. There were also clear continuities between RAF thinking about leadership and that of its sister services, which influenced the Service's culture, ethos, and ethics. This highlights the challenge of suggesting that the birth of the RAF in 1918 was a break with the past - it was not, as Trenchard himself recognised.⁹

Culture has increasingly become a critical means through which to analyse military organisations. Broadly defined, culture is those values, beliefs, assumptions, and behaviours typical of a group.¹⁰ These ideational aspects of culture also find an outgrowth in key 'artefacts' – the visible elements of culture – in various 'histories,' 'stories,' 'rituals' and 'symbols.'¹¹ Importantly, culture is transmitted through key institutions and structures, such as Cranwell and the GD Branch, and is derived from two sources. First, culture is derived from what individuals bring to the military from broader society and second, it is a consequence of military experience and training. Social context shaped officers' views, for example, the preference for recruits from Britain's public schools for permanent commissions in the RAF was, in part, a consequence of the background of its senior officer class. Concerning military training, the importance here is that, for example, initial officer training at Cranwell was a point of cultural immersion and inculcated recruits with the organisation's culture and

⁸ Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 129-33.

⁹ The National Archives, Kew (hereinafter TNA), AIR 8/97, Verbatim Notes of Lecture delivered by the Chief of the Air Staff to Officers of the Royal Air Force at Uxbridge, 22 January 1926, p. 2.

¹⁰ For an introduction to organisational culture, see: Mary Ann Glynn, Simona Giorgi, and Christi Lockwood, 'Organization Culture,' in *Oxford Bibliographies in Management*, <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199846740/obo-9780199846740-0059.xml>. Accessed 31 July 2016. On military culture, see: Williamson Murray, 'Does Military Culture Matter?,' *Orbis*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (1999), pp. 27-42. Peter Wilson, 'Defining Military Culture,' *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 72, No. 1 (2008), pp. 11-41.

¹¹ Edgar Schien, *Organizational Culture and Leadership, Third Edition* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004), pp. 25-7.

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ethos.¹² Related to the concept of culture are ethos and ethics, and concerning the latter, it is simply worth noting that many cultural 'artefacts,' such as doctrine, have an ethical framework at their centre. Ethos, or the 'characteristic spirit' of a community, is important as it provides a distinctive professional identity.¹³ This idea of 'corporateness' (sic) lies at the heart of the development of military professionals.¹⁴ As such, developing an ethos is important as it delivers power and prestige to those who identify as members of key 'tribes.' Through the development of pilot ethos, permanent officers of the GD Branch were the RAF's military professionals, and as the key 'tribe' – or subculture – of the Service, they shaped its culture. However, due to problems of definition, the use of culture and ethos is not without its challenges.¹⁵ This is complicated further by using a modern conceptual language to explore the past. Officers, such as Trenchard, would not have used phrases such as culture or ethos and instead, terms such as 'tradition' or 'spirit' were more prevalent. However, here a conceptual bridge exists because in using these terms, Trenchard described processes that gave the RAF an identity, which lies at the heart of the concepts of culture and ethos.

RAF culture also related to Britain's strategic culture. Before the advent of air power, Britain's preferred 'way of war' shifted between continental commitments and naval approaches to conduct campaigns in the most efficient and pragmatic manner possible.¹⁶ The central idea of conducting campaigns efficiently found its way into air power theory with ideas surrounding strategic bombing and the need for control of the air linked to the most efficient manner of conducting operations. These emerging views of air power, however, were governed by a shared collective awareness between

¹² On this idea with regards to the Royal Navy, see: Alastair Finlan, *The Royal Navy in the Falklands Conflict and the Gulf War: Strategy and Culture* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), pp. 4-5.

¹³ RAF, *API – Ethos, Core Values and Standards*, Second Edition (Royal Air Force, 2008), p. 4.

¹⁴ Samuel Huntington, *Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 8-11.

¹⁵ English, *Understanding Military Culture*, p. 15; David French, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, and the British People c. 1870-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 6; Jeremy Black, *War and the Cultural Turn* (London: Polity Press, 2012), pp. 42-3.

¹⁶ David French, *The British Way in Warfare, 1688-2000* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), *passim*. For a discussion of the links between strategic culture and ways of war, see: Lawrence Sondhaus, *Strategic Culture and Ways of War* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).

Britain's armed services concerning the principles governing war.¹⁷ As Major-General Sir Frederick Sykes, CAS from 1918 to 1919 noted in 1918 'air forces are now essential components of all fighting efficiency' (emphasis added).¹⁸ Parallels also existed with naval thinking, for example, the idea of blockades as an efficient form of conducting war found its way into air power thinking.¹⁹ While his views shifted, in his 1925 work *Paris, or the Future of War*, Basil Liddell Hart suggested the use of air power to secure victory, and Air Vice-Marshal Robert Brooke-Popham, Commandant of Andover, recommended this book to Trenchard.²⁰ Liddell Hart's work reflected a broader belief that the efficient application of technology could reduce casualties. Indeed, the impact of the First World War led to a seductive reasoning concerning not only the development of air power specifically but also the use of machines more broadly as a replacement for soldiers on the battlefield. However, in the context of the emergence of total war, air power took this reasoning further in that the development of ideas such as the 'knockout blow' was linked to wars being conducted by whole nations and their populations. This then made the targeting of 'vital centres' of production legitimate with distinctions between belligerents and non-belligerents blurred.²¹ What is more, whether real or imagined or even technically possible, the development of thinking around strategic bombing reflected the influence of geography on Britain's strategic culture. The perception was that the country was no longer safe from attack as aircraft could range over Britain's traditional line of defence, the sea.²² While this threat led to a focus on bombing, and despite Trenchard's influence, it also meant that

¹⁷ Alaric Searle, 'Inter-service Debate and the Origins of Strategic Culture: The 'Principles of War' in the British Armed Forces, 1919–1939', *War in History*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (2014), pp. 4-32.

¹⁸ TNA, London, CAB 24/71/79, Memorandum by the Chief of the Air Staff on 'Air Power Requirements of the Empire', 9 December 1918, p. 1.

¹⁹ Air Commodore P.F.M Fellowes, 'Aerial Blockade', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institution (JRUSI)*, Vol. 82 (1937), pp. 530-5.

²⁰ Royal Air Force Museum (RAFM), Personal Papers of Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Trenchard, MFC76/1/140, Commandant, RAF Staff College to Captain T.B. Marson, 17 July 1925; B.H. Liddell Hart, *Paris, or the Future of War* (London: Kegan Paul, 1925). On Liddell Hart's legacy, see: Brian Holden Reid, 'The British Way in Warfare: Liddell Hart's Idea and Its Legacy', *The RUSI Journal*, Vol. 156, No. 6 (2011), pp. 70-6.

²¹ Thomas Hippler, *Governing from the Skies: A Global History of Aerial Bombing*, translated by David Fernbach (London: Verso, 2017), p. 83.

²² Richard Overy, 'Air Power and the Origins of Deterrence Theory before 1939', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (1992), pp. 77-80.

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the RAF invested in defensive counter-air capabilities throughout the interwar years.²³ Any focus on bombing must also reflect the influence of the RNAS on the development of RAF thinking in the interwar years. The RNAS played an important role in the First World War in developing thinking about the use of strategic air power. Nonetheless, despite the blurring of boundaries and questions concerning the status of international law, in 1939, RAF Bomber Command went to war recognising the need to minimise civilian casualties, though some officers recognised the challenge of avoiding such fatalities.²⁴ Furthermore, the idea of efficiency also filtered into the RAF's organisational structures, and the decision to have a GD Branch can be viewed as part of a desire to manage personnel efficiently while developing a feeling of membership through the shared ethos of being pilots. Finally, efficiency became a byword at Andover with the closing statement of the opening address in 1922 stating that:

[t]he setting up of the Staff College is a signpost, and on the signpost are the words to EFFICIENCY, ECONOMY, AND FORESIGHT. (emphasis in original)²⁵

Under the rubric of efficiency, RAF culture at the organisational level can be broadly defined using the following terms: an assumption of independence, the belief in 'Command of the Air' and the espoused value of the 'Air Force spirit'. These ideas were not monolithic, and the RAF reshaped its views through 'stories' like doctrine. Nevertheless, these markers derived from the RAF's understanding of its primary defence mission of '[N]ational and [I]mperial safety', as this justified its 'existence and claim on resources.'²⁶ In developing the Service's identity, Trenchard enabled the RAF's senior leadership to exert a degree of control on an institution that faced external threats in this period. RAF culture influenced the Service's defence mission by shaping perceptions and behaviours related to debates over the use of air power in the interwar years. This influence was enacted by officers who emerged from the RAF's career development processes and subsequently defended its independence and were well versed in critical air power thinking. Through its culture and ethos, the RAF projected a very particular image outside the Service that helped ensure independence through recruitment and the influencing of public discourse through various activities, such as the aerial pageants at Hendon and the nurturing of social and political networks.

²³ John Ferris, 'Fighter Defence before Fighter Command: The Rise of Strategic Air Defence in Great Britain, 1917-1934', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (1999), pp. 845-84.

²⁴ Gray, *Leadership*, pp. 136-40.

²⁵ TNA, AIR 5/881, Opening Address to the RAF Staff College, 4 April 1922, p. 4.

²⁶ Wilson, 'Defining Military Culture', p. 18; TNA, AIR 6/19, Memorandum of the Post-War Functions of the Air Ministry and the Royal Air Force, 13 November 1918, p. 1.

More specifically, it is here where the emergence of a distinct RAF culture engendered its greatest challenges and why understanding the ideas underpinning the Service as an organisation is important when discussing interwar policy debates. For example, the rise of independently controlled air power brought into the question the Royal Navy's strategic role as evidenced by the inter-service debates and disputes of the 1920s. This friction undoubtedly caused enmity at the senior level and during the deliberations of Lord Balfour's 'Sub-Committee on Relations between the Navy and Air Force' in 1923, Admiral Sir David Beatty, on various occasions raised the question of 'principles' over the separation of naval air assets from the Royal Navy.²⁷ For the RAF, such principles were not just operational but also cultural. To Trenchard, the air was one and indivisible, and this influenced the RAF's view of who should control air power and usefully represents the Service's belief in 'Command of the Air'. For the RAF, the doctrinal element of 'Command of the Air' was a conceptual state that allowed freedom of action for all services while recognising the challenge of maintaining absolute control of the air. Conversely, 'Command of the Air' for the other services was a physical state and related to their desire to recover what they perceived as their lost air arms. Indeed, the question of the ownership of air assets was contentious in this period. This was because, in his 1919 memorandum on the *Permanent Organization of the Royal Air Force*, Trenchard noted concerning those parts of the RAF to be trained to support the British Army and Royal Navy, that 'these two small portions' might become 'an arm of the older services.'²⁸ This was not what Trenchard meant, and this phrase laid the basis for ongoing disputes. In 1926, the Air Ministry reissued *Permanent Organization* as a new document with notes to 'bring it up to date', and in this paper, Trenchard's position was clarified.²⁹ The 1926 paper noted that:

The concluding phrase of this sentence was read by some as contemplating the recreation of a separate Royal Naval Air Service and Royal Flying Corps independent of, and additional to, the Royal Air Force. That this was in no sense intended was categorically explained by the

²⁷ TNA, AIR 8/66, Committee of Imperial Defence, Sub-Committee on Relations between the Navy and Air Force, 1923, *passim*; Geoffrey Till, 'The Strategic Interface: The Navy and the Air Force in the Defence of Britain,' *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1978), pp. 184-8. For more on the Royal Navy and air power in the interwar years, see: Geoffrey Till, *Air Power and the Royal Navy, 1914-1945: A Historical Survey* (London: Jane's Publishing Company, 1979), pp. 29-59.

²⁸ TNA, AIR 8/12, [Cmd. 467], *Permanent Organization of the Royal Air Force*, A Note by the Secretary of State for Air on a Scheme Outlined by the Chief of the Air Staff, 11 December 1919, p. 1.

²⁹ TNA, AIR 8/97, *The Organisation of the Royal Air Force, 1919-1926*, March 1926.

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then Secretary of State for Air [...] in the House of Commons within a few days of the issue of the original paper.³⁰

It was further noted that while units working with the Royal Navy and British Army were not available for other uses, they formed a definite part of the RAF.³¹

Setting the Vision: Trenchard and *Permanent Organization*

Senior leaders, such as Trenchard, need to have the necessary vision to set targets and goals for their organisations as well as generating change by creating urgency, guidance, vision, communication, empowerment, determination, and flexibility.³² A vital element in generating change is the development of the right culture to enable innovation. However, establishing the wrong culture can hold back innovation. As such, Trenchard's most significant contribution to the development of the RAF and its culture came in his 1919 memorandum *Permanent Organization*.³³ This strategy, presented to Parliament in December 1919 as a Command Paper with a covering note by the Secretary of State for War and Air, Winston Churchill, recognised the need for a practical framework for the development of the Service by creating urgency and communicating Trenchard's vision for the RAF. Indeed, while leaning towards hyperbole, in 1957, Viscount Templewood, who, as Sir Samuel Hoare, had been Secretary of State for Air several times between 1922 and 1929, described *Permanent Organization* as '[T]he Master Plan' for the RAF.³⁴ However, the degree of agency ascribed to Trenchard's role can be overplayed. *Permanent Organization* was the outcome of much work that went into the establishing the permanency of the RAF in 1919.³⁵ Some of this work, such as the establishment of various reconstruction committees that examined key organisational issues began before Trenchard returned as CAS.³⁶ However, *Permanent Organization* aptly likened the situation in 1919 to the 'Prophet Jonah's gourd' in that while the First World War had created the RAF, the exigencies of the post-war years meant it was reduced to a small cadre of personnel.³⁷

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 1.

³¹ *Ibid*.

³² John Kotter, *Leading Change* (Harvard, CT: Harvard Business School Press, 1996).

³³ TNA, AIR 8/12, *Permanent Organization*; Hyde, *British Air Policy*, pp. 63-8.

³⁴ Viscount Templewood, *Empire of the Air: The Advent of the Air Age* (London: Collins, 1957), p. 72.

³⁵ On the challenges of 1919 for the RAF, see: John Sweetman, 'Crucial Months for Survival: The Royal Air Force, 1918-19,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (1984), pp. 529-47.

³⁶ TNA, AIR 6/19, Air Council Precis on the Proposed Committees to deal with Questions of Royal Air Force Organisation, 19 December 1918.

³⁷ TNA, AIR 8/12, *Permanent Organization*, p. 2.

As such, the vision of a permanent RAF was to be achieved through the establishment of key institutions such as Cranwell, Andover, and the apprentice scheme at RAF Halton. These institutions became the ways in which to achieve Trenchard's strategic ends rather than wasting money on large numbers of aircraft that, in an era of rapid technological change, could become obsolete quickly. *Permanent Organization* identified the RAF's principal espoused value, the 'Air Force spirit', which was framed around the 'Extreme importance of training.'³⁸ The importance here is that rather than a focus on numbers and equipment, which Britain could not afford at this time, Trenchard emphasised the importance of the RAF's human element and their training as the key to developing the conceptual. In doing so, Trenchard provided a firm basis for the RAF so that when the situation presented itself, the Service had the organisational capacity to expand. To enable this, Trenchard recognised the need for a culture that would shape the RAF and make it fit for purpose.

The development of an appropriate culture was something that Trenchard recognised before *Permanent Organization* was presented to Parliament. In early 1919, when Churchill asked Trenchard to return as CAS to replace Sykes, the latter produced a memorandum outlining his views on the future development of the RAF. The first line of this memorandum stressed the importance of maintaining 'traditions' developed during the First World War and went on to suggest that their loss would be 'unpopular.'³⁹ This line of reasoning made its way into *Permanent Organization* with the maintenance of an 'Air Force spirit' linked to the experience of the First World War.⁴⁰ Similarly, in considering two possible developmental routes for the RAF, Trenchard's memorandum on the Air Estimates argued that '[T]o make a real Air Service' a key element was the engendering of an 'Air spirit, like the Naval spirit.'⁴¹ This would help 'create a force capable of influencing profoundly the strategy of the future.'⁴² Churchill presented this memorandum to the War Cabinet in October 1919, and it informed the production of *Permanent Organization*. That this line of reasoning appeared in a memorandum related to the Air Estimates is notable as while Trenchard understood the necessity for institutions, such as Cranwell, to transmit the RAF's culture, they could not exist without money from the Treasury. Trenchard had enunciated his

³⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 4-5.

³⁹ RAFM, Trenchard Papers, MFC76/1/164, Memorandum attached to a Letter from Major-General Sir Hugh Trenchard to the Secretary of State for War and Air, 5 February 1919.

⁴⁰ TNA, AIR 8/12, *Permanent Organization*, p. 4.

⁴¹ TNA, CAB 24/90/104, Memorandum on Air Force, Civil Aviation and Supply and Research Estimates for 1920-1921 and following years, October 1919, p. 1.

⁴² *Ibid*.

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concerns about the issue of money with which to create a 'ready-made' RAF in a note to Churchill in August 1919.⁴³ While it was essential to enunciate the value of institutions such as Cranwell, the financial context of the interwar years was significant. In short, while debate exists over the so-called Ten-Year Rule, the interwar years were a period of fiscal austerity, though the RAF often succeeded in making a case for expansion.⁴⁴ Moreover, understanding this economic context was essential for the RAF. For example, one argument used for the substitution of ground troops for air power in colonial operations was that military aviation was more financially efficient than using the other services.

Permanent Organization was not merely a written statement of intent as it remained the working framework for the RAF. As noted, in 1926, *Permanent Organization* was reissued to 'familiarise' officers with the development of the RAF over the ensuing years.⁴⁵ Importantly, the preamble to the reissued strategy was aimed at officers so that they 'may understand the main principles' that underpinned the development of the RAF, which included the idea of the 'Air Force spirit.'⁴⁶ The 1926 document was laid out with sections of *Permanent Organization* on one page with the facing page presenting the situation as it stood in 1926. On the value of the 'Air Force spirit,' it was concluded that a 'spirit of pride in [the RAF] and its efficiency permeates all ranks.'⁴⁷ Therefore, such an important document as *Permanent Organization* needs to be understood in context and a useful comparison can be found with the route taken by Trenchard's predecessor, Sykes. In his 1918 strategy on the 'Air Power Requirements of the Empire', Sykes focused on developing an argument for a large standing force around the British Empire. Given Sykes unrealistic vision for the post-First World War RAF, it is interesting to note that there were some similarities between his 1918 strategy and *Permanent Organization* as far as they both recognised the necessity of a permanent independent air force. This, therefore, begs the question of how Trenchard succeeded, where Sykes did not, beyond just their different

⁴³ RAFM, Trenchard Papers, MFC76/1/21, Chief of the Air Staff to the Secretary of State for War and Air, 27 August 1919, p. 4.

⁴⁴ On the Ten-Year Rule, see: John Ferris, 'Treasury Control, the Ten-Year Rule and British Service Policies, 1919-1924,' *Historical Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (1987), pp. 859–83; Christopher Bell, 'Winston Churchill and the Ten-Year Rule', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 74, No. 4 (2010), pp. 1097-1128.

⁴⁵ TNA, AIR 8/97, *The Organisation of the Royal Air Force, 1919-1926*.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

leadership styles.⁴⁸ The success was in the language deployed to support Trenchard's case. For example, while it is unclear who suggested the change, by 12 December 1919, a day after Churchill wrote his covering note, Trenchard's memorandum had changed its title to *Permanent Organization*.⁴⁹ Earlier drafts of Trenchard's memorandum had used the title 'The Formation of the Royal Air Force on a Peace Basis.'⁵⁰ This did not succinctly convey the vision and purpose of the strategy and its contents. Furthermore, while Sykes mentioned training, this was left to the final part of his strategy while Trenchard had it front and centre in *Permanent Organization*. There was also an issue of the length of the respective papers as Sykes' paper was much larger and in some respects more comprehensive than Trenchard's. However, Trenchard was able to frame his paper with the essential information in a concise manner that allowed him to ensure the RAF's continuing survival. Also, Trenchard talked in a language that his audience, Churchill, understood. For example, *Permanent Organization* argued that squadrons would provide a 'definite identity, which will be homes of the officers belonging to them.'⁵¹ Given Churchill's British Army background, it is reasonable to assume that he would have identified with Trenchard's line of reasoning on the idea of squadrons as 'homes' in much the same way regiments were family units in the Army. However, whether squadrons provided an identity for personnel similar to the regimental tradition prevalent in the British Army is open to question despite the reflection of the RAF's first official historian, Sir Walter Raleigh.⁵² Moreover, while the use of the term 'squadron' has both a British Army and Royal Navy frame of reference, the influence of French aviation developments before the First World War cannot be underestimated.⁵³ For example, in 1911, the then Captain Sykes visited France and reported on French developments.⁵⁴ Indeed, while the size of the French *escadrille* was

⁴⁸ On Trenchard's career, see: Andrew Boyle, *Trenchard: Man of Vision* (London: Collins, 1962). On Sykes, see: Eric Ash, *Sir Frederick Sykes and the Air Revolution, 1912-1918* (Abingdon: Frank Cass, 1999).

⁴⁹ TNA, AIR 1/17/15/1/84, S5 to C of 1, 12 December 1919.

⁵⁰ For various working drafts of *Permanent Organization*, see: TNA, AIR 1/17/15/1/84.

⁵¹ TNA, AIR 8/12, *Permanent Organization*, p. 3.

⁵² Walter Raleigh, *The War in the Air: Being the Story of the Part played in the Great War by the Royal Air Force – Volume I* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1922), p. 202. Hereafter, *OH Vol. I*.

⁵³ Peter Dye, 'France and the Development of British Military Aviation,' *Air Power Review*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2009), pp. 1-12.

⁵⁴ Major-General Sir Frederick Sykes, *From Many Angles: An Autobiography* (London: George Harrap and Company, 1942), p. 93. The development of aviation in other countries, including Germany, was also investigated in this period, see: Sykes, *From Many Angles*. p. 94.

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deemed too small for the British context, organisational developments in France were clearly important in supporting British thinking. One reason for the larger establishment in British squadrons was the lack of trained officers while another was the perception that it was the most efficient means of managing aviation assets.⁵⁵ Also, for the RAF, the emergence of the GD Branch acted against any 'regimental' ethos within squadrons, though many units did develop reputations. This was because identifying as a pilot became a more common identity in the RAF of this period. Moreover, while the RAF established seniority for squadrons and commanding them was a definite part of a GD Branch officer's career development, the Service recognised the challenge of this unit as the focal point for loyalty and *esprit de corps* amongst Air Force personnel.⁵⁶ Further evidence that Trenchard understood how to play to Churchill's own experience is evidenced in his February 1919 memorandum written before returning as CAS. In this memorandum, as well as noting the importance of tradition, Trenchard used terms such as 'First Air Lord' as the potential title for the professional head of the RAF instead of CAS.⁵⁷ Having served as First Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill would have readily identified with such language. Similarly, a focus on the importance of Cranwell would have gone down well with someone who had graduated from the Royal Military College at Sandhurst. In 1919, and throughout his time as CAS, Trenchard illustrated the ability to interface with both his organisation, and its broader political context to ensure RAF survival.⁵⁸

The 'Air Force spirit'

The essential element of RAF culture was the espoused value of the 'Air Force spirit'. Values are important as they necessitate an understanding of what they bring to the development of an organisation. Additionally, elements of both beliefs and assumptions can be found in values, and they need to be congruent with one another. For example, concerning military education, which was an outgrowth of the 'Air Force spirit', nurtured officers defended the assumption of independence as trusted agents of the

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 95; Raleigh, *OH Vol. 1*, p. 201-2; TNA, CAB 38/20/1, Report of the Technical Sub-Committee of the Standing Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence on Aerial Navigation, 27 February 1912.

⁵⁶ RAFM, AIR 69/61, *Esprit de Corps* in the RAF, Conference No. 5, 7th Course, RAF Staff College, July 1929; TNA, AIR 2/233, Letter to AOC operational commands, June 1929. There remained a call for a 'regimental' system for the RAF until the 1950s, see: Flight Lieutenant F.J. St G. Braithwaite, 'A Regimental System for the Royal Air Force', *The Royal Air Force Quarterly (RAFQ)*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (1937), pp. 368-74; J.R.A., 'A Regimental Group System for the Royal Air Force,' *The Hawk*, 13 (1951), pp. 47-53.

⁵⁷ RAFM, Trenchard Papers, MFC76/1/164, Memorandum attached to a Letter from Trenchard to Churchill, 5 February 1919, p. 2.

⁵⁸ Gray, *Leadership*, pp. 101-3.

Air Ministry, as they were well versed in the belief of 'Command of the Air'. The value of the 'Air Force spirit' related to the importance placed on it by Trenchard in *Permanent Organization* and the relevant section on the 'Extreme importance of training.' In this section, Trenchard stated:

We now come to that on which the whole future of the [RAF] depends, namely, the training of its officers and men.⁵⁹

Here Trenchard directly linked independence to the importance of education and training as pillars of the RAF's development and that of its personnel. Trenchard further noted that to create 'an Air Force worthy of the name, we must create an Air Force spirit'.⁶⁰ For permanent officers of the RAF, Cranwell and Andover were central to this process. Cranwell was the institution that laid the foundation for permanent entrants to the GD Branch. In 1922, the Secretary of State for Air, Captain Frederick Guest, described Cranwell as the 'home of our future chiefs of the Air Staff'.⁶¹ Similarly, Churchill noted in a debate on 15 December 1919 on the Air Estimates that Cranwell was 'the Air Force Sandhurst'.⁶² Churchill drew out the analogy that an independent service required a cadet college and recognised its significance, and this was reinforced when, in 1932, the Assistant Commandant at Cranwell, Group Captain Douglas Evill, enunciated at length on the advantages of Cranwell graduates compared to officers holding a Short-Service Commission.⁶³

The RAF spent a great deal of time considering modes of entry and education required for service in the RAF. This effort emphasised public school backgrounds for permanent officers and saw Cranwell as vital, though several permanent commissions were open to university candidates primarily with science and engineering backgrounds.⁶⁴ The Headmasters Conference, which coordinated the work of public

⁵⁹ TNA, AIR 8/12, *Permanent Organization*, p. 4.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Hansard, House of Commons Debate, 21 March 1922, Vol. 152, Col. 291.

⁶² Hansard, House of Commons Debate, 15 December 1919, Vol. 123, Col. 135.

⁶³ RAFM, Personal Papers of Air Chief Marshal Sir Douglas Evill, AC74/8/27, The Cranwell Entry by Group Captain D.C.S. Evill, DSC, AFC, 1932.

⁶⁴ See the files contained in TNA, AIR 2/100, Conference to Discuss the Regulations of the RAF Cadet College, file opened 18 June 1919; AIR 2/100, Appointment of Committee under Lord Hugh Cecil on the Preliminary Education of Candidates for Commissions, file opened 27 January 1919; AP904 – *Regulations under which Permanent Commissions in the Royal Air Force may be obtained by University Candidates* (London: Air Ministry, 1922), p. 4; Group Captain Philip Joubert de la Ferté, 'The Supply and Training

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schools was consulted on issues related to training at Cranwell.⁶⁵ As such, social views reflecting Britain's broader national character, which were fostered at public schools, filtered into the RAF's officer class, and ideas, such as honour, strength of character, sympathy, resolution, energy, and self-confidence formed an important aspect of the Service's ethics. These ideas were also linked to ideas of race within the British Empire with the regulations for entry to Cranwell noting that admission was open to those of 'pure European decent,' which included recruits from the white Dominions.⁶⁶ Ideas such as self-confidence also found their way into leadership doctrine as found in API300, the RAF's *War Manual*, and were also taught at Andover but importantly were values shared with the RAF's sister services.⁶⁷ For example, in 1922, Squadron Leader Charles Portal, who had attended Winchester College, wrote an essay at Andover that examined morale in the forces of Oliver Cromwell, Vice-Admiral Lord Nelson and Giuseppe Garibaldi.⁶⁸ Portal's essay stressed characteristics like 'desire', 'discipline', 'patriotism', 'ambition', 'confidence' and 'comradeship' as key to generating good morale. Portal further noted that '[P]ersonal courage in the leader ha[d] a triple value in securing high morale'.⁶⁹ This linked to views present in API300, which argued that success in war depended more on 'moral' than 'physical' aspects.⁷⁰ This related to the idea that the interrelationship of leadership and morale was key to generating fighting power. The line '[S]uccess in war depends more on moral than on physical qualities' in API300 is a direct quote from the 1909 edition of the British Army's *Field Service Regulations (FSR)*.⁷¹ The idea that 'success in war', the generation of fighting power, 'depends more on moral than on physical qualities' could also be found in naval thinking.

of Officers for the Royal Air Force in Time of War,' *JRUSI*, Vol. 69 (1924), p. 40. On issues of recruitment in the RAF, see: Tony Mansell, 'Flying Start: Educational and Social Factors in the Recruitment of Pilots of the Royal Air Force in the Interwar Years,' *History of Education*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1997), pp. 71-90.

⁶⁵ TNA, AIR 2/100, Secretary to the Headmasters' Conference, to the Secretary to the Air Ministry, 30 June 1919.

⁶⁶ API21 – *Conditions of Admissions to, and Residence at, The Royal Air Force College Cranwell*, 14th Edition (London: Air Ministry, 1937), pp. 3-4.

⁶⁷ API300 – *Royal Air Force War Manual: Part I – Operations* (London, Air Ministry, 1928), Chap. III, Para. 10.

⁶⁸ Squadron Leader C.F.A Portal, 'An Essay on Morale', in AP956 – *A Selection of Lectures and Essays from the Work of Officers attending the First Course at the Royal Air Force Staff College, 1922-1923* (London: Air Ministry, 1923), pp. 143-9.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 145.

⁷⁰ API300, First Edition, Chap. III, Para. 1.

⁷¹ *Field Service Regulations (FSR) Part I – Operations* (London: HMSO, 1909), p. 13.

For example, in 1913, an essay in *The Naval Review* noted that '[A]ll the elements of fighting power are functions of the human element (emphasis added).'⁷²

In 1931, Evill assessed the entry at Cranwell to consider the changing composition of entrants while also considering whether those emerging from 'better-known schools' were more suited to being officers.⁷³ The 'better-known schools' were, broadly defined, public schools and the important conclusion made by Evill was that the RAF required recruits from such sources. This was because despite challenges in subjects such as 'Mathematics and Mechanics,' such recruits had the right 'valuable qualities which the Service must still seek.'⁷⁴ Interestingly, Evill's report reflected on the success of those recruits who came to Cranwell from the apprentice scheme at Halton. While Halton itself is not considered in this article, it is worth noting that Evill considered that this 'tribe' had achieved a noticeable lead over recruits from public schools because they had been exposed to 'discipline,' and several 'Halton Brats' would go on to reach Air Rank.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the RAF showed an evidential preference for recruits to the GD Branch from public schools and established schemes to lease with these institutions.⁷⁶ This went as far as attempting to establish links with industry to help those on Short-Service Commissions find work after leaving the RAF.⁷⁷ This was because recruits from public schools maintained ideals that the RAF valued as an organisation. For example, Lord Hugh Cecil's 1919 committee on preliminary education of candidates for RAF commissions defined character as a 'high standard of courage, self-control, and honourable conduct, and seemly and considerable manners and deportment,' which were similar to ideas prevalent at public schools.⁷⁸ This

⁷² C.Q.I., 'Studies in the Theory of Naval Tactics – I', *The Naval Review (TNR)*, Vol. I, No. 1 (1913), p. 24.

⁷³ RAFM, Evill Papers, AC74/8/27, An Analysis of the Cranwell Entry, 16 November 1931, p. 1.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 4.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 3.

⁷⁶ TNA, AIR 2/286, Appendix "B": RAF Liaison Officers appointed to Public School, Director of Organisation and Staff Duties to Air Officers Commanding Inland Area, Coastal Area, Cranwell and Halton, 2 February 1926.

⁷⁷ TNA, AIR 2/3733, Copy of a Letter written by the Air Member for Personnel, 17 May 1926.

⁷⁸ TNA, AIR 2/100, Report of the Committee on the Preliminary Education of Candidates for the Royal Air Force Commissions, pp. 1-2. On public schools, see: Geoffrey Best, 'Militarism and the Victorian Public School' in B. Simon and I. Bradley (eds.), *The Victorian Public School: Studies in the Development of an Educational Institution*
www.bjmh.org.uk

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definition of character bears similarity to that found in various RAF publications including subsequently API300.⁷⁹ Indeed, while Cecil's committee utilised a rhetoric suggesting recruiting from a wide section of society, 'the image of the public school exercised a strong grip on its imagination.'⁸⁰ Interestingly, Cecil supported the recruitment of university candidates and rejected the Royal Navy's system as too specialist, though HMS *Britannia*, the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth, has been described as the Navy's public school.⁸¹ In one area, however, the RAF did reshape its views. This was the RAF's attitude to Cranwell as a fee-paying institution. While cadetships existed, in general, entrants to Cranwell paid to attend as cadets. Nevertheless, as early as 1924 the RAF favoured the abolition of fees.⁸² That it did not happen related to the challenge of how to recoup the investment made by the RAF in a cadet's training. However, by the time of the committee on conditions of employment for officers in the military in 1938, which was chaired by Sir Warren Fisher, the RAF concluded, primarily based on financial considerations, that it should not charge for entry to Cranwell, though this did not happen before the Second World War.⁸³ The RAF based this conclusion on the view that public school entrants to the Royal Navy did not pay and that both services provided a technical education designed to prepare candidates for military duty.⁸⁴ The RAF suggested that such a change would increase the standard of entrants, but importantly the Service maintained that permanent officers emerging from Cranwell remain a 'corps d'elite.'⁸⁵ Another driver in this change in attitude also probably related to the continuing problem of recruiting suitable candidates from public schools that also affected the Short-Service Commission scheme.⁸⁶

(Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1975); Gary McCulloch, *Philosophers and Kings: Education for Leadership in Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁷⁹ API300, First Edition, Chap. III, Para. 4

⁸⁰ Mansell, 'Flying Start,' p. 74.

⁸¹ TNA, AIR 2/100, Report of the Committee on the Preliminary Education of Candidates for the Royal Air Force Commissions, pp. 2-3; Anon, 'Dartmouth College: The Naval Public School', *TNR*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1921), pp. 66-70.

⁸² TNA, AIR 6/15, Minutes of the 121st Meeting of the Air Council, 16 April 1924, p. 3.

⁸³ TNA, AIR 2/3833, Air Member for Personnel to the Chief of the Air Staff, 25 May 1938.

⁸⁴ TNA, AIR 2/3833, Meeting of the Sub-Committee of Experts to Discuss the Question of Fees at Cadet College, 4 May 1938.

⁸⁵ TNA, AIR 2/3833, Air Ministry Paper on the Abolition of Fees at the RAF College, 16 May 1938, p. 2.

⁸⁶ Mansell, 'Flying Start,' p. 79.

The crucial other institution created by the RAF was Andover. This was a significant step because the idea of Andover as the ‘cradle [...] of [the RAF’s] brain’ was a furtherance of the value of the ‘Air Force spirit’ and the Staff College was seen as critical to the Service’s development.⁸⁷ During this period the Air Ministry continually reiterated the importance of officers with the post-nominals *psa* (Passed Staff College, Andover), which suggests that the idea of the ‘Air Force spirit’ was not just a tacit acknowledgement of the importance of education, but that it had enduring relevance for the RAF.⁸⁸ While Andover has been seen as a dogmatic institution that transferred accepted doctrine into students, this view is not sustainable when one examines the Staff College’s curriculum.⁸⁹ Air power only ever formed part of the curriculum with other subjects, such as leadership present. Moreover, recollections suggest that the RAF was more open to discussion than its sister services on important subjects and attendance at Andover was an important aspect of this process. For example, in a lecture in 1926, Trenchard noted that he wanted ‘free discussion’ in the RAF.⁹⁰ Liddell Hart’s recollection counters this view noting that Trenchard was concerned about RAF officers writing for public consumption.⁹¹ Liddell Hart specifically referenced the publication of C.G. Burge’s 1927 volume *Basic Principles of Air Warfare*, which had been published under the pseudonym ‘Squadron-Leader.’ Trenchard did not support Burge’s publication despite the latter being the former’s Personal Assistant.⁹² Nevertheless, Liddell Hart’s recollection should be considered in the context of the emergence of a critical mass of trusted officers emerging from Andover. Furthermore, by 1930, *The Royal Air Force Quarterly* (RAFQ), which Burge edited, had been established and was supported by the RAF.⁹³ Even before the opening of Andover, procedures were

⁸⁷ TNA, AIR 5/881, Opening Address, p. 1; On the development of the RAF Staff Colleges from their establishment to 1997, see: Ross Mahoney, “‘A Disseminating Station for Approved Doctrine’? The Development of the RAF Staff Colleges, 1922-1997’, *Journal of the Royal Air Force Historical Society*, Vol. 65 (2017), pp. 64-88.

⁸⁸ TNA, AIR 2/355, Director of Organisation and Staff Duties to Commandant, RAF Staff College, 4 June 1931.

⁸⁹ Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality*, p. 92; Vincent Orange, *Churchill and his Airmen: Relationships, Intrigue and Policy Making, 1914-1945* (London: Grub Street, 2013), p. 87.

⁹⁰ TNA, AIR 8/97, Verbatim Notes, 22 January 1926, p. 9.

⁹¹ The Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives (LHCMA), King’s College London, Personal Papers of Sir Basil Liddell Hart, 11/1927/1, Personal Diary, 9 February 1927.

⁹² Parton, *The Evolution of Royal Air Force Doctrine*, p. 146.

⁹³ On the development of the RAFQ, see: Parton, *The Evolution of Royal Air Force Doctrine*, pp. 152-5.

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outlined for officers who sought to write for service journals.⁹⁴ Importantly, however, many officers writing in service journals had the post-nominal *psa*, which was something that Burge lacked. Indeed, it was not until after the publication of *Basic Principles* that Burge attended the British Army Staff College at Camberley (hereafter Camberley), which meant he received the post-nominals *qs* rather than *psa*.⁹⁵ Returning to the subject of open discussion, in his autobiography, Air Chief Marshal Sir Philip Joubert de la Ferté argued that when compared with officers from its sister services, the RAF was more willing to argue and debate openly.⁹⁶ Joubert's recollection has merit given his experience as a student at Camberley, as Directing Staff at Andover and the Imperial Defence College (IDC), and as Commandant at Andover. Thus, while concerns about writing existed, Andover was vital because it allowed for the collegiate development of critical thinking about air power. This thinking was then transmitted through various means including service journals with articles typically written by those who emerged from Staff College. On the charge of indoctrination through Andover, a degree of standardisation was important to ensure that students emerged able to speak the same language to operate as effective staff officers and future senior commanders.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, as Joubert recalled, students at Andover 'were allowed great latitude in their views.'⁹⁸ Moreover, the aims of Andover moved from a narrow focus on developing staff officers towards an education that grounded nurtured officers in the challenges and ambiguities that would be confronted at the senior level.⁹⁹ Furthermore, Brooke-Popham, based on his own experience in the British Army and at Camberley, admitted that anti-intellectualism pervaded the British military and that a critical element of Andover's curriculum and ethos was to challenge this attitude. As the first Commandant of Andover, Brooke-Popham argued that graduates should be able to 'think and act quickly' and 'to change attitude of mind', thus, encapsulating the 'Air Force spirit.'¹⁰⁰ Indeed, to paraphrase Sir Michael Howard's hackneyed quote concerning the appropriateness of doctrine to future conflicts, the importance of

⁹⁴ Air Ministry Weekly Order (AMWO) No. 354 - Publication of Articles by Officers of the Royal Air Force, 22 April 1920.

⁹⁵ Parton, *The Evolution of Royal Air Force Doctrine*, p. 149.

⁹⁶ Air Chief Marshal Sir Phillip Joubert de la Ferté, *The Fated Sky: An Autobiography* (London: Hutchinson, 1952), pp. 88-9.

⁹⁷ Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality*, pp. 92-3.

⁹⁸ Joubert, *The Fated Sky*, p. 88.

⁹⁹ LHCMA, Personal Papers of Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, I/5/3, Address at the Opening of the RAF Staff College, 4 April 1922, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 1.

Andover was not that it got everything correct but that it gave officers who attended Staff College the ability to 'get it right' when it mattered.¹⁰¹

Command of the Air and Independence

As a belief 'Command of the Air' can be found in Andover's opening address, where parallels were drawn with the naval concept of 'Command of the Sea'.¹⁰² Given the broader educational and leadership implications of this speech, this concept was significant for a nurtured officer's development as they engaged with views that influenced it. 'Command of the Air' pre-dated the First World War and at a conceptual level, this belief filtered through from the RFC *Training Manual* into API300. Furthermore, the Director of Military Training and later Director-General of Military Aeronautics at the War Office, Brigadier-General David Henderson used the phrase at the General Staff Conference of 1913 when comparing it to 'Command of the Seas'.¹⁰³ Similarly, Captain Brooke-Popham used the phrase in a 1912 article in *The Army Review*.¹⁰⁴ While Henderson noted differences between 'Command of the Air' and 'Command of the Sea,' especially the impermanence of the former, it is hard to put aside similarities given the language used. In 1936, Wing Commander John Slessor, in *Air Power and Armies*, reflected on the problem of 'commanding' the air or sea and preferred the terms control of the sea communication and air superiority.¹⁰⁵ A doctrinal term, 'Command of the Air' incorporated concepts, such as control of the air, air superiority and neutralisation, which became increasingly prevalent.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, while 'Command of the Air' presented an overarching cultural concept, at the doctrinal level it is clear that it was anything but monolithic, and it diffused into joint doctrines, such as the *Manual of Combined Operations*.¹⁰⁷ Doctrinally, 'Command of the Air' was inherently offensive, as API300 stated that the 'maxim that offence is

¹⁰¹ Michael Howard, 'Military Sciences in the Age of Peace', *JRUSI*, 119:1 (1974), pp. 3-11.

¹⁰² TNA, AIR 5/881, Opening Address, p. 2.

¹⁰³ Joint Services Command and Staff College Archive, Subject No. 1 - 'Employment of Aircraft', Discussion on Thursday 16 January, *Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Royal Military College*, 13 to 16 January 1913, p. 54

¹⁰⁴ H.R.M. Brooke-Popham, 'Military Aviation', *The Army Review* (1912), p. 96.

¹⁰⁵ Wing Commander John Slessor, *Air Power and Armies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 5.

¹⁰⁶ On the use of neutralisation in RAF doctrine, see: API300, Second Edition (London: Air Ministry, 1940), Chap. VII, Paras. 15-24.

¹⁰⁷ Ross Mahoney, "'The support afforded by the air force was faultless": The Royal Air Force and the Raid on Dieppe, 19 August 1942', *Canadian Military History*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (2012), pp. 17-9.

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the best defence applies even more truly in air warfare than to any other operation of war.¹⁰⁸ The question of how 'Command of the Air' was to be achieved incorporated elements of both technological and cultural assumptions, as bombers were seen as the key method of employment, while centres of morale, like industry, were targeting choices due to the belief in their fragility. This morale-based view of the offensive had its antecedents in nineteenth-century military thinking, and it paralleled the idea of spirit prevalent in leadership philosophy of the period.¹⁰⁹ Importantly, air power doctrine in this period was more akin to 'principles of belief,' albeit one that slowly evolved.¹¹⁰ Doctrine manuals and various Air Publications also acted as cultural 'artefacts', as they contained the knowledge that underpinned RAF culture and was a key form of transmitting this information.¹¹¹ Indeed, it can also be suggested that the evidence interpreted to develop RAF thinking did, at times, exhibit an inherent cultural bias towards arguments that helped ensure independence.¹¹² Nonetheless, while the RAF held a strategic view encapsulated by the need for air superiority as the most efficient manner of conducting operations, the ways, means and ends of this doctrinal language as well as its physical application, continued to evolve up to and through the Second World War.¹¹³ The RAF was also quick to begin a codification process if only to stake a claim on the subject of air power employment and ensure its assumption of independence. By comparison, the British Army only published what can be broadly considered its first capstone doctrine, *FSR*, in 1909, while a provisional *Naval War Manual* for the Royal Navy first appeared in 1921.¹¹⁴ Some historians' narrow focus on strategic bombing ignores this broader scope of RAF thinking. Notably, API 300 spent more time discussing operations other than strategic bombing than on it. Rather than acting as a prescriptive manual, API 300 was a statement of intent. Finally, belief in

¹⁰⁸ API 300, First Edition, Chap. VII, Para. 5.

¹⁰⁹ Tami Davis Biddle, 'Air Power Theory: An Analytical Narrative from the First World War to the Present' in J. Boone Bartholomees Jr (ed.), *US Army War College Guide to National Security Policy and Strategy: Volume I – Theory of War and Strategy*, Fourth Edition (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2010), p. 280.

¹¹⁰ Gray, *Leadership*, p. 19.

¹¹¹ Parton, *The Evolution of Royal Air Force Doctrine*, p. 6.

¹¹² For example, on early post-First World War assessment of British bombing, see: George Williams, *Biplanes and Bombsights: British Bombing in World War I* (Maxwell, AL: Air University Press, 1999), pp. 238-68.

¹¹³ James Pugh, *The Royal Flying Corps, the Western Front and the Control of the Air, 1914-1918* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), p. 5.

¹¹⁴ 'The Influence of History on Sea Power: The Royal Navy and Lessons of 1914-1918' in Arthur Marder, *From the Dardanelles to Oran: Studies of the Royal Navy in War and Peace*, Introduction by Barry Gough (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2015 [1974]), p. 36; TNA, ADM 186/66, *Naval War Manual* (1925); *FSR Part I* (1909).

‘Command of the Air’ found an outgrowth in RAF ethos and its organisational structure through the focus on pilots and flying as an essential element of a GD Branch officer’s career.

Accepting that doctrine is a crucial source of culture brings into focus the issue of ethics and while much has been written about the moral issues surrounding the RAF’s strategic bombing campaign of the Second World War, emerging officers were, for example, willing to question the contents of API300.¹¹⁵ In 1937, Wing Commander Leslie Hollinghurst, then on the Directing Staff at Andover was informed that his next posting would be to revise the first edition of API300.¹¹⁶ Amongst the various questions included in a draft letter that Group Captain G.C. Pirie had appended to his letter to Hollinghurst was one about:

[w]hether [the RAF] should admit that direct air attack on the civil population may well be the policy of a determined and desperate enemy in another war and whether [the RAF] should accordingly train our forces to meet and counter such attacks and be prepared ourselves to adopt this policy if need be.¹¹⁷

The RAF had always been cautious in the language that it had used concerning targeting. For example, in an address to the IDC in 1928 on the Service’s war aims, Trenchard made clear that there was a ‘misapprehension’ about the RAF undertaking ‘indiscriminate bombing on the civil population as such.’¹¹⁸ Instead of talking about civilian populations, Trenchard referred to ‘vital centres’ and those that were considered ‘essential’ to the ‘enemy’s resistance.’¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, in his response to Pirie, Hollinghurst made evident that ‘You know as well as I do that it will come to that – intentionally or incidentally.’ As a student and member of the Directing Staff at Andover, Hollinghurst had been exposed to the RAF’s broader thinking on air power and argued that if the revised *War Manual* were to be sincere, then it should admit this

¹¹⁵ For example, see: Stephen Garrett, *Ethics and Airpower in World War II: British Bombing of German Cities* (New York, NY: St Martin’s Press, 1993).

¹¹⁶ RAFM, Personal Papers of Air Chief Marshal Leslie Hollinghurst, AC73/23/100, Group Captain G.C. Pirie to Wing Commander Leslie Hollinghurst, 22 March 1937.

¹¹⁷ RAFM, Hollinghurst Papers, AC73/23/100, Appended Draft Letter, Group Captain G.C. Pirie to Wing Commander Leslie Hollinghurst, 22 March 1937.

¹¹⁸ Air Staff, *Air Staff Memorandum No. 43, The War Aim of the Royal Air Force* (London: Air Ministry, 1928), p. 5.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 6.

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'contingency.'¹²⁰ While Pirie's response does not exist in Hollinghurst's papers, in the end, the latter did not revise the *War Manual*: that job went to Squadron Leader Ronald Ivelaw-Chapman.¹²¹ Given that Hollinghurst was open about his ethics on this particular subject, it is also worth reflecting that the draft letter that Pirie had appended to his initial note to Hollinghurst was to be sent out to anyone interested in revising API 300 from the rank of Air Marshal down to Squadron Leader. As such, this example suggests that the RAF engendered an openness and willingness to discuss challenging ethical issues while encouraging critical engagement with doctrine and military thinking. However, such discussions were limited to those who would shape the Service's culture in the future; permanent officers of the GD Branch. Hollinghurst's openness did not affect his career as he eventually retired at the rank of Air Chief Marshal.

The assumption of independence owes its existence to the findings of General Jan Smuts' second report by the Committee on Air Organisation and Home Defence against Air Raids in 1917, though several attempts had been made during the First World War to manage Britain's air power requirements. The Smuts Report noted that an '[A]ir service [...] can be used as an independent means of war operations' and was the starting point for the legal process that led to the formation of the RAF in 1918.¹²² This independent view of air power's strategic efficacy remained constant throughout the period. It was a critical reason for the battles between the RAF and Royal Navy over the apportionment of resources that characterised inter-service relations in the 1920s. Independence remained an assumption because the perceived efficiency of an independent air force had not been proven. Thus, this assumption also formed part of an on-going pursuit to ensure independence. Therefore, by generating a suitable culture and nurturing officers well versed in aspects of their profession, the RAF ensured independence as these officers both 'sold' and educated the other services about the role of air power in war. For the RAF and its officer class, there was a clear link between technology and its culture that saw the emergence of a more efficient means of conducting military operations. This was reflected more broadly in the appearance of what David Edgerton described as 'liberal militarism' in Britain's body politic.¹²³ In 1938, an Air Staff paper on 'The Role of the Air Force in National Defence' argued that due to air power, the traditional methods of defence, centred on the Royal

¹²⁰ RAFM, Hollinghurst Papers, AC73/23/100, Wing Commander Leslie Hollinghurst to Group Captain G.C. Pirie, 12 April 1937.

¹²¹ John Ivelaw-Chapman, *High Endeavour: The Life of Air Chief Marshal Sir Ronald Ivelaw-Chapman* (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 1993), p. 84.

¹²² TNA, AIR 8/2, Second Report of the Committee of the Committee on Air Organisation and Home Defence against Air Raids, 17 August 1917, p. 3.

¹²³ David Edgerton, *England and the Aeroplane: An Essay on a Militant and Technological Nation* (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 41-3.

Navy, were at a disadvantage and that the best source of deterrence now lay with an independent air force.¹²⁴ However, the RAF did not discount the fact that it would operate in a joint environment. For example, as an army co-operation specialist, Wing Commander Trafford Leigh-Mallory bridged the intellectual gap between the assumption of independence and a realisation that future conflict required co-operation between the services. In 1931, Leigh-Mallory stressed the need for air superiority as the most efficient means of supporting the British Army through offensive-counter air operations, thus further illustrating the links between cultural concepts, doctrinal statements and the progressive thinking the RAF engendered.¹²⁵

The development of assumptions and beliefs was imperative for RAF culture because officers engaged with these concepts during their career development. Career development in the RAF was underpinned by various characteristics, such as the Service's attitude towards war, military education, and its perception of itself as a profession. The RAF perceived itself as a profession that encouraged meritocracy and the provision of educational opportunities. For example, while the RAF established the Short-Service Commission scheme to manage operational requirements this did not mean such officers could not join the permanent force. After both left the RAF in 1919, MRAF Lord Douglas and Slessor re-joined as Short-Service officers and subsequently received permanent commissions in 1920, which suggests a move towards a meritocratic approach to keeping capable personnel.¹²⁶ However, these characteristics often reinforced a self-perception that the RAF desired as it sought to set itself apart from its forebears. For example, the RAF initially had an Air Secretary to help manage officers' careers. However, the RAF disestablished this position in the 1920s, and it did not re-emerge until 1957. A 1956 report by the Director of Personnel, Air Commodore R.W.L. Glenn, admitted that the lack of this post meant that RAF 'career planning [was] generally on an "ad hoc" basis'.¹²⁷ Given the potential criticism of favouritism associated with the posts of the Military and Naval Secretaries, it is probable that given the background of senior officers in the RAF, the Service chose to remove the Air Secretary post and leave career management in the hands of the Air

¹²⁴ TNA, AIR 8/243, Role of the Royal Air Force in National Defence, 5 July 1938.

¹²⁵ Wing Commander T.L. Leigh-Mallory, 'The Maintenance of Air Superiority in a Land Campaign', *RAFQ*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1931), pp. 245-52.

¹²⁶ AMWO No. 1003 - Grant of Permanent Commission to Officers holding Short-Service Commissions, 25 November 1920.

¹²⁷ AIR 2/13309, *Report on the Proposed Introduction of an Air Secretary's Department into the Permanent Organisation of the Air Ministry* by Air Commodore R.W.L. Glenn, 16 February 1956, p. 20.

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Member for Personnel (AMP). Nevertheless, by 1944, it was recognised that the AMP's department was too overloaded with work to manage careers effectively.¹²⁸

The assumptions and beliefs of the RAF found outlets in both formal and informal statements on air power that officers read, studied, or even produced. Many officers, such as Slessor, became Trenchard's 'English merchants' and were the ones responsible for translating the latter's views into coherent 'artefacts' that underpinned RAF culture.¹²⁹ These 'artefacts' ranged from formal doctrine such as API300 through to externally focused and informal 'stories', such as the official history of the RAF in the First World War and articles in the *Journal of the Royal United Services Institution* and *RAFQ*. Externally focused 'stories' included statements written by serving officers but published for general consumption. Trusted civilians also wrote many 'stories', and while numerous titles were published on air power, perhaps the most significant was J.M. Spaight's *Air Power and War Rights*, which gained acceptance due to his position in the Air Ministry and his experience as a jurist.¹³⁰ Moreover, as evidenced by the example of C.F. Gamble Snowden, Trenchard was not beyond helping where possible those writing works supportive of the RAF.¹³¹ Several key future senior RAF officers including Slessor and the future Air Vice-Marshal Edgar Kingston-McCloughry produced notable volumes.¹³² The importance of these 'histories' and 'stories' is that several appeared on reading lists at key points in an officer's development. They also reinforced and furthered RAF cultural practices to both a receptive internal audience and external onlookers as the Service sought to inform on-going debates on air power

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 1-3.

¹²⁹ Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Slessor, *The Central Blue: Recollections and Reflections* (London: Cassell, 1956), p. 47.

¹³⁰ J.M. Spaight, *Air Power and War Rights* (London: Longmans, 1924). This received new editions in 1933 and 1947. Spaight also wrote regularly for the *RAFQ*, see: J.M. Spaight, CB, CBE, LLD, 'The Chaotic State of the International Law Governing Bombardment', *RAFQ*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1938), pp. 24-32. On Spaight's influence, see: Gray, *Leadership*, pp. 54-7. For a modern review of *Air Power and War Rights*, see: Group Captain Neville Parton, 'Historic Book Review – Air Power and War Rights by J.M. Spaight', *Air Power Review*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2008), pp. 106-10.

¹³¹ RAFM, Trenchard Papers, MFC76/1/188, Chief of the Air Staff to C.F. Snowden Gamble, 13 December 1928; MFC76/1/188, Commandant, RAF Staff College to the Chief of the Air Staff, December 1928. Gamble's book, *The Air Weapon*, would be published in 1931 by Oxford University Press.

¹³² Slessor, *Air Power and Armies*; Air Vice-Marshal E.L. Gossage, *National Defence – The Royal Air Force* (London: William Hodge and Company, 1937); E.J. Kingston-McCloughry, *Winged Warfare: Air Problems of Peace and War* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937).

and promote air-mindedness. This was especially the case with officers who were involved in 'selling' air power to the RAF's sister services. For example, Leigh-Mallory wrote several key articles while serving as the Commandant of the School of Army Co-Operation and as a member of the Directing Staff at Camberley between 1927 and 1931.¹³³ While potentially a form of indoctrination there was a great deal of variety in the material produced by nurtured officers and the identification and promotion of such individuals allowed senior leaders to promote cultural change as junior personnel encountered processes such as military education.¹³⁴

The assumption of independence also found an outgrowth in RAF material culture, which highlighted the Service's need to define its activities in the eyes of politicians. Even before the establishment of the RAF, the Air Ministry made moves to have King George V formally recognise the Service as 'Royal' by an Order under the Sign Manual.¹³⁵ *The London Gazette* proclaimed this warrant on 15 March 1918. This was an

¹³³ Wing Commander T.L. Leigh-Mallory, 'Co-Operation of Aircraft with Cavalry,' *The Cavalry Journal*, 17 (1927), pp. 277-83; *Idem*, 'Co-operation between the Army and Royal Air Force during 1929', *RAFQ*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1930), pp. 37-44; *Idem*, 'Air Co-Operation with Mechanized Forces', *JRUSI*, Vol. 75 (1930), pp. 565-77. *Idem*, 'The Maintenance of Air Superiority in a Land Campaign.'

¹³⁴ For a selection of articles written by nurtured RAF officers who reached Air Rank by the Second World War, see: Group Captain Christopher Courtney, 'The Strategic Mobility of Air Forces (lecture)', *JRUSI*, Vol. 75 (1930), pp. 287-301; Wing Commander W. Sholto Douglas, 'The Heavy Fighting Aeroplane: A Reply', *RAFQ*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (1931), pp. 597-600; Wing Commander A.G.R. Garrod 'Air Strategy', *RAFQ*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1930), pp. 28-36; Wing Commander E.L. Gossage, 'Air Co-operation with the Army (lecture)', *JRUSI*, Vol. 72 (1927), pp. 561-78; Joubert, 'The Supply and Training of Officers for the Royal Air Force in Time of War,' pp. 37-51; Air Marshal Sir Arthur Longmore, 'Training for Higher Command', *JRUSI*, Vol. 84 (1939), pp. 463-78; Air Vice-Marshal L.A. Pattinson, 'The Training of an Air Force Pilot (lecture)', *JRUSI*, Vol. 83 (1938), pp. 11-21; Wing Commander R.H. Peck, 'Aircraft in Small Wars (lecture)', *JRUSI*, Vol. 73 (1928), pp. 535-50; Air Commodore C.F.A. Portal, 'Air Force Co-operation in Policing the Empire', *JRUSI*, Vol. 82 (1937), pp. 343-58; Squadron Leader B.E. Sutton, 'Some aspects of the work of the Royal Air Force with the BEF in 1918', *JRUSI*, Vol. 67 (1922), pp. 336-48; Squadron Leader A.A. Walser, 'The Influence of Aircraft on Problems of Imperial Defence', *The Army Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1922), pp. 38-49; Group Captain A.C. Wright, 'The Royal Air Force in the Far East (lecture)', *JRUSI*, Vol. 80 (1935) pp. 529-39.

¹³⁵ TNA, AIR 2/73, Secretary, Air Ministry to the Under-Secretary of State, Home Office, 24 January 1918.

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important move because the Air Force (Constitution) Act of 1917 had only enacted the creation of an 'Air Force.' The recognition of the RAF as 'Royal' was significant as awards and titles represent an act of legitimisation by governments concerning the use of force, as 'they support the conversion of physical-military power into social-symbolic power' and in return, they convert 'social power and interests into military power'.¹³⁶ From an organisational perspective, through its relationship with pilot ethos, RAF cultural 'artefacts', such as ranks and medals, encapsulated the Service's culture and saw its activities legitimised by the state. Ranks and medals linked to RAF culture as the titles chosen for such 'artefacts' stressed the importance of independence by being distinct from those used by the British Army and Royal Navy. While the RAF assumed the importance of its independence, these 'artefacts' also replicated its views as the Service sought to pursue freedom from the other services during this period. In 1917, to provide a degree of distinctiveness to the RAF, a series of Gaelic titles were suggested but rejected.¹³⁷ However, in 1919, the Air Council recognised that the adoption of distinct ranks was necessary for 'preserving a separate identity' for the RAF.¹³⁸ This distinct identity underpinned independence and provided the RAF with an image set apart from its sister services. It also highlighted the relationship between the parochial issue of inter-service tribalism and ownership amongst the RAF and the other services over the assumption of independence. The British Army and Royal Navy at that time sought the return of what they perceived to be their air arms. Regarding cultural 'artefacts', this issue was usefully summarised by the Admiralty's displeasure over the rank of Air Commodore in 1919. The Royal Navy believed that the RAF was impinging on naval tradition where the title Commodore was an appointment rather than a rank. The Admiralty suggested the rank of 'Air Brigadier' and believed that, as the senior service, their traditions were more significant than either the British Army's or the newly formed RAF's.¹³⁹ Similarly, during discussions over the status of military decorations in general in 1926, the principle of the area of actions and demarcations as applied to the award of medals was raised by AMP, Air Vice-Marshal Sir Philip Game. Game stressed that air power had changed the terms that should be applied concerning

¹³⁶ Dalia Gavriely-Nuri, 'It is not the heroes who need this, but the nation': The Latent Power of Military Decorations in Israel, 1948–2005', *Journal of Power*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (2009), p. 403.

¹³⁷ TNA, AIR 2/105, Proposed Ranks and Titles for RAF Officers, date opened 22 October 1917.

¹³⁸ TNA, AIR 1/9/15/1/33, Secretary to the Air Council to the Under-Secretary of State for Air reference 'New Titles for Officer Ranks of the RAF' as discussed at the 81st Meeting of the Air Council, 18 March 1919.

¹³⁹ TNA, AIR 1/9/15/1/33, Admiralty to Secretary, Air Ministry, 13 June 1919.

direct contact with the enemy.¹⁴⁰ Additionally, the RAF used the phrase 'flying' in some of its medals, as it represented its primary function; for example, the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Ethos, Pilots, and the General Duties Branch

For the RAF in this period, ethos was framed around being a pilot and flying, which was reinforced by the Service's organisational structure. Indeed, many officers recalled that their principal reason for joining was simply to fly. This was, in part, because of links between aviation, modernity and heroic identity that were prevalent during the interwar years, though the origins of these links could be traced to the literature of the Victorian era.¹⁴¹ The RAF readily played on the links between aviation and modernity. A 1925 recruiting booklet on *The Royal Air Force as a Career* suggested that while it was once common for sons to follow in their father's professional footsteps, developments in 'aviation' meant that '[W]ith all these new vistas [...] a boy may be excused for not wishing to follow in his father's footsteps.'¹⁴² However, while Christopher Coker argued that the RAF was professional when compared to the *Luftwaffe*, and Francis highlighted the importance of flying, neither recognised its formal legitimacy through the GD Branch and the importance of pilots as the military professionals and preferred future senior leaders of the RAF.¹⁴³ Indeed, while evoking an air of modernity, the aforementioned recruiting booklet made sure to describe the RAF as a profession, and one with an attendant 'element of risk.'¹⁴⁴

Despite any potential links to modernity, the critical challenge faced by the RAF in 1919 was the lack of any strong tradition and that it had to merge personnel from the RFC and RNAS into a single entity.¹⁴⁵ By codifying flying as a critical element of RAF ethos, the Service furthered its aim of ensuring independence and the ownership of air power related resources. Institutions, such as Cranwell and Andover, 'stories' and

¹⁴⁰ TNA, AIR 2/294, Air Member for Personnel to Keeper of the Privy Purse, 6 February 1926.

¹⁴¹ Michael Paris, 'The Rise of the Airmen: The Origins of Air Force Elitism, c. 1890-1918,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (1993), pp. 123-41; Francis, *The Flyer*, p. 13, p. 14, p. 153 & p. 163.

¹⁴² API 100 – *The Royal Air Force as a Career* (London: HMSO, 1925), p. 3.

¹⁴³ Christopher Coker, *The Warrior Ethos: Military Culture and the War on Terror* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 107; Francis, *The Flyer*, p. 32.

¹⁴⁴ API 100, p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ On the merging of the RFC and RNAS, see: Air Force Memorandum No. 1 – *Transfer of Royal Naval Air Service and Royal Flying Corps to the Royal Air Force*, 1 March 1918.

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'artefacts', such as doctrine, reinforced this emerging ethos by transmitting fundamental cultural values and behaviours to GD Branch officers through their career development. Furthermore, in Britain being a military pilot was a profession unique to the RAF, though it could be split between permanent and short-service officers, Sergeant pilots and officers seconded from the Royal Navy and British Army. However, importantly, it was in the RAF that these different subcultures served as pilots, at least until 1937 when the decision was taken to transfer the Fleet Air Arm to the Royal Navy, which took effect in 1939. As well as ensuring independence, the advantage of having a single service focussed on the delivery of air power was that it allowed for the development of a culture and ethos commiserate with the RAF's defence mission. However, this could and did generate friction with other services and had implications for the RAF itself in the long-term. As Air Marshal Sir John Curtiss remarked in his foreword to C.G. Jefford's *Observers and Navigators*, 'It's a pilots air force', and 'pilots have always been more equal than others'.¹⁴⁶ Curtiss had served as a navigator in Bomber Command during the Second World War and as the air commander during the Falklands War. A preference for pilots in executive roles can be traced to the First World War. As Jefford argued, the attempts to appoint observer officers to command roles 'amounted to heresy' as it 'challenge[d] the RFC's doctrinaire belief in the absolute supremacy of the pilot.'¹⁴⁷

In 1919, Cecil's report on the preliminary education of candidates for RAF commissions reinforced the process of codifying pilot ethos when it stated, 'every officer in the air force should have learned to fly'.¹⁴⁸ The purpose of this view was to provide 'homogeneity' to the RAF.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, in making the argument for training in *Permanent Organization*, Trenchard reflected that 'it is not sufficient to make the Air Force officer a chauffeur and nothing more.'¹⁵⁰ Thus, pilots had to have a purpose and lead the organisation. On 31 July 1919, Air Ministry Weekly Order (AMWO) No. 866, which dealt with the award of Permanent Commissions, stated that, with certain exceptions, all officers so awarded were required to 'qualify as pilots within 12 months from 1st August 1919'.¹⁵¹ Additionally, AMWO No. 866 recorded that, except for 'Quartermaster service,' commissioned service in the RAF would only be open to

¹⁴⁶ Air Marshal Sir John Curtiss, 'Foreword to the First Edition' in Wing Commander (ret'd) C.G. Jefford, *Observers and Navigators: And Other Non-Pilot Aircrew in the RFC, RNAS and RFC*, Updated and Expanded Edition (London: Grub Street, 2014), p. vii.

¹⁴⁷ Jefford, *Observers and Navigators*, p. 58.

¹⁴⁸ TNA, AIR 2/100, Report of the Committee on the Preliminary Education, p. 1.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ TNA, AIR 8/12, *Permanent Organization*, p. 5.

¹⁵¹ AMWO No. 866 – Award of Permanent Commissions in the RAF, 31 July 1919, p. 2.

'flying officers'.¹⁵² Further codified in 1929, API334 stated flying requirements for officers up to the rank of Wing Commander:

2. An officer [...] employed on ground duties in a flying unit or at a ground training school will fly at least four hours per month.
3. An officer [...] employed on staff duties at a station where there is a flying unit will fly at least four hours per month.
4. An officer [...] employed at the Air Ministry or at a station where there is no flying unit will fly at least six hours per annum.¹⁵³

API334 was derived from the *Kings Regulations and Air Council Instructions* for 1928 and that the RAF felt the need to issue a specific Air Publication on flying requirements illustrates the importance placed on this activity by the Service for its officer class. Even before the end of the First World War, AMWO No. 1042 of 19 September 1918 stated that officers 'commanding flying units should look on flying as a very definite part of their routine duties'.¹⁵⁴ AMWOs were a significant avenue for the dissemination of information in the RAF as they were in effect the Service's notice board and were to be acted on by unit commanders. As such, they were a key tool in the transmission of cultural ideas. Concerning promotion, Annual Confidential Reports regularly recorded the numbers of hours flown by officers.¹⁵⁵ As well as through important sources such as AMWOs, the ethos of flying was diffused through other publications, such as the *RAFQ*. In 1932, an article appeared in the *RAFQ* on the subject of 'Compulsory Piloting' under the pseudonym "Seagull."¹⁵⁶ The significance of this pseudonym derives from the analogy that to get a seagull to fly, you must throw stones at it thus suggesting an epithet for officers less than willing to undertake flying duties. Therefore, flying formed the core professional competency for GD Branch officers and was a definite part of their identity.

The GD Branch encapsulated vital aspects of RAF culture and ethos as the members of this organisational structure formed the Service's executive branch. The GD Branch provided the RAF with a structure consistent with its mission and values and was central to defining institutional authority. It has been argued that the decision to form the GD Branch derived from Trenchard's regimental experience and that the RAF was

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ TNA, AIR 10/1730, API334 – *Extract from the King's Regulations and Air Council Instructions 1928: Regulations Relating to Flying*, 1st Edition, March 1929, p. 259.

¹⁵⁴ AMWO No. 1042 – *Flying by Senior Officers*, 19 September 1918.

¹⁵⁵ TNA, AIR 2/506, Copy of Form 367, Annual Confidential Report (Officers) for 193.

¹⁵⁶ "Seagull", 'Compulsory Piloting', *RAFQ*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1932), pp. 201-5.

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a 'single regiment'.¹⁵⁷ While the GD Branch might be thought of as a 'regiment', there is little archival evidence to support this assumption beyond Trenchard's insinuation in *Permanent Organization* and the fact that his earlier service might have influenced the organisational structure of the RAF. While Trenchard was certainly influential, such assumptions ignore the effect that the branch system of the Royal Navy had on organisational choices.¹⁵⁸ In its early years, the senior leaders of the Air Ministry had both British Army or Royal Navy backgrounds and their influence on critical decisions cannot be dismissed. During his first period as CAS in 1918, Trenchard was aware that the merger of the RFC and RNAS could create friction within the new RAF. In a letter to Major-General John Salmond on 13 February 1918, Trenchard remarked that 'I fear the Navy will think they have joined the RFC, and every department put together under two heads, either a Naval man under an Army man or vice versa, will cause trouble at first.'¹⁵⁹ Attempts were made to abrogate against this fear, and many of the reconstruction committees formed in 1919 included both former RFC and RNAS officers. For example, the committee of Brigadier-General Thomas Webb-Bowen that examined modes of entry and training to the RAF included Colonel Arthur Longmore and Lieutenant-Colonel Geoffrey Bromet who were both former RNAS.¹⁶⁰ This committee looked at issues concerning training and considered the RAF's branch structure. It suggested four branches within a 'General List.' These included those flying with the Royal Navy, flying with the British Army, independent air work and engineering. All members of these branches were to fly and then further specialise in other areas, such as navigation.¹⁶¹ The committee concluded that '[I]n drawing up these proposals the Naval system has been kept in view, as it is considered that the Air Force more nearly approaches that service than any other.'¹⁶² Importantly, the committee met before Trenchard returned as CAS, thus suggesting that discussions over the RAF

¹⁵⁷ John James, 'Alternative Models for the Royal Air Force', *RUSI: Journal of the Royal United Service Institute for Defence Studies*, Vol. 119, No. 4 (1974), p. 69.

¹⁵⁸ On issues related to the Royal Navy's branch system before the First World War, see: Robert Davison, *The Challenges of Command: The Royal Navy's Executive Branch Officers, 1880-1919* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

¹⁵⁹ RAFM, Trenchard Papers, MFC76/1/92, Trenchard to Major-General John Salmond, 13 February 1918.

¹⁶⁰ TNA, AIR 2/121, Report of the Reconstruction Committee assembled at the Air Ministry to consider Questions concerning the Modes of Entry and Training of Regular Officers for the Royal Air Force, 1919.

¹⁶¹ TNA, AIR 8/35, Report of the Reconstruction Committee appointed to consider Questions concerning the Modes of Entry and Training of Regular Officers for the Royal Air Force, 1919, p. 3.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, p. 5.

future simply did not come from one source.¹⁶³ Furthermore, given Trenchard's experience of the regimental system, it can be argued that he sought a more flexible system. If there was a British Army influence, it came from the specialist corps of the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers, whose branch system promoted merit and allowed for horizontal and vertical promotions and appointments in the same manner as the GD Branch.¹⁶⁴ The GD Branch continued to evolve, and the pervasive distinction concerning flying branches suggested by Webb-Bowen's committee filtered away. However, it established the precedent that officers trained as pilots before specialisation.

The GD Branch encapsulated the belief in 'Command of Air' and the assumption of independence. Officers of the GD Branch held a shared identity that helped ensure independence through the promotion of RAF culture. However, by expecting GD Branch officers to be pilots before any technical specialisation took place, the RAF subsumed technical knowledge to heroic leadership. RAF officers shared a common interest in flying that reinforced and engendered feelings of membership and pilots were the prevalent form of senior leaders in the RAF. For example, while logistics, managed by the Stores, later Equipment, Branch, was a vital element in enabling air power, officers who staffed this branch struggled until the outbreak of the Second World War to reach Air Rank. This had its antecedents in the First World War where the creation of the role of Equipment Officers in the RFC to manage technical and supply issues allowed Squadron Commanders to 'concentrate on operational matters.'¹⁶⁵ This raises an interesting issue related to organisational culture and the perception of command and leadership ability as equipment officers did not command squadrons. Equipment Officers were managers while pilots who became squadron commanders were leaders. However, as noted with observers, this process reflected an ingrained belief that only pilots were fit for executive roles. Similarly, Stores Branch officers could not apply to attend Andover until 1928.¹⁶⁶ Until this time, regulations for entrance to Andover explicitly noted that candidates had to be 'qualified as a pilots', thus reinforcing this aspect of RAF culture.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, Trenchard's *Permanent*

¹⁶³ TNA, AIR 2/121, Director of Personnel to the Chief of the Air Staff, 24 February 1919.

¹⁶⁴ French, *Military Identities*, p. 28.

¹⁶⁵ Peter Dye, *The Bridge to Airpower: Logistics Support for Royal Flying Corps Operations on the Western Front, 1914-18* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2015), p. 42.

¹⁶⁶ AMWO No. 22 – Regulations for Entry of Students to the RAF Staff College, 12 January 1928.

¹⁶⁷ AMWO No. 536 – Regulations for Entry of Students to the RAF Staff College, 7 October 1926.

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Organization strategy did suggest that appropriate technical specialisation would not bar officers from senior positions, illustrating his altruistic, and possibly egalitarian, hopes for the RAF. This, however, was focused on permanent officers of the GD Branch who specialised after training as pilots. Within this 'tribe,' while Staff College attendance was viewed as important for promotion to Air Rank, specialisation did not retard advancement to higher rank.¹⁶⁸ For example, *The Air Force List* for September 1939, which included details of officers gazetted up to 15 August, shows that 25 percent of Group Captains in the GD Branch held some form of specialisation. Conversely, 27 percent had attended either Andover or the Staff Colleges of the RAF's sister services. Seven percent held both a specialisation and had attended Staff College.¹⁶⁹ Nevertheless, as an 'artefact' the nominalisation that identified an officer's specialisation was no longer recorded on *The Air Force List* once they had reached Air Rank while post-nominals related to Staff College attendance remained.

By the 1930s, however, the increasing pace of technological change led to the formation of the Technical Branch in 1940 to manage maintenance in the RAF. The creation of this branch, despite offering more opportunities within the RAF, did not support Trenchard's egalitarian hopes for the Service.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, in 1926 it was argued that the formation of more branches 'would be fatal in the long run.'¹⁷¹ However, the ethos of all GD Branch officers being pilots was no longer tenable by the outbreak of the Second World War. In the long-run, despite the emergence of more non-pilot officers within the RAF, the key problem was the promotion of non-GD Branch officers to Air Rank and the idea of a 'common list' for promotion to senior rank was often discussed.¹⁷² This aimed to provide equal opportunities to all capable officers and mirrors similar debates within the Royal Navy at the turn of the twentieth century as that service dealt with the challenge of technological change. The Second World War also saw the formation of further branches, such as Administrative and Special Duties Branch that worked against Trenchard's ideals. Increasingly, pilots, and by default senior officers, were not to be burdened with responsibilities beyond their

¹⁶⁸ TNA, AIR 8/12, *Permanent Organization*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁹ Figures derived from *The Air Force List* for September 1939 (London: HMSO, 1939), col. 403-5.

¹⁷⁰ Flight Lieutenant E., 'An Engineering Branch for the Royal Air Force?' *RAFQ*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (1935), pp. 371-74; Wing Commander M.E. Pulvermacher, 'The Development of the RAF Technical Branch', *JRUSI*, Vol. 103 (1958), p. 404.

¹⁷¹ TNA, AIR 8/97, *The Organisation of the Royal Air Force, 1919-1926*, p. 5.

¹⁷² Pulvermacher, 'The Development of the RAF Technical Branch,' p. 410. Also, see: Wing Commander K.R.C. Slater, 'Is the Branch System Producing the Leaders We Need in the Royal Air Force?' *RAFQ and Commonwealth Air Forces Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1951), pp. 138-140.

specialisation of flying and the management and conduct of air warfare. From a leadership perspective, a preference for so-called 'heroic' traits reinforced the organisational choices generated by the membership of the GD Branch. Technical leadership, which focused on developing specific skills for particular roles, was secondary to officers' primary concerns. For example, the rapid expansion of the RAF in the 1930s forced the Service to consider the question of administration more closely, and, as a 1939 report on this subject stated, 'the inexperience of junior officers [made] it difficult to delegate responsibility to any great extent'.¹⁷³ The formation of the Administrative and Special Duties Branch separated administrative functions from the GD Branch. This was because administration did not fit the RAF paradigm that to 'become fully efficient in operational and flying matters an officer cannot afford to divert any part of his time or energies to other subjects.'¹⁷⁴ Given the importance of staff duties as a job assignment, this interesting quote illustrates the tensions between a GD Branch officer's operational responsibility concerning the management and conduct of air warfare and the need to understand administration. Furthermore, through senior staff positions, GD Branch officers still typically led those involved in administration. Nevertheless, despite these challenges to the Service's ethos, during this period, through the GD Branch, the RAF continued to show an evidential preference for pilots. Through institutions such as Cranwell and Andover, the RAF nurtured selected GD Branch officers as future leaders, as they exhibited the traits that the Service valued, which linked to the generation of a distinct culture and ethos that help ensure the survival of the Air Force.

Conclusion

In 1928, Trenchard wrote to the Secretary of State for Air, Sir Samuel Hoare, about the ideal term of service for a CAS. In this note, Trenchard reflected that he assumed that 'the Air Force is now secure on a sound foundation.'¹⁷⁵ That Trenchard was able to feel this way was because, by the late 1920s, the RAF had survived the worst of the inter-service debates that had afflicted the Service in its early years. An essential element to this survival was not only the role of Trenchard but the establishment of a culture that ensured the RAF's foundation. In exploring the ideational and materialist character and development of the RAF's organisational culture from a policy perspective, this article has argued that *Permanent Organization* provided the vision and urgency to create the institutions that developed a culture conducive to ensure

¹⁷³ RAFM, X004-0415, *Report of the Committee on Royal Air Force Administration*, 1939, p. 6.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ TNA, AIR 8/97, Chief of the Air Staff to Secretary of State for Air, 13 November 1928, p. 2.

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continuing independence. It has also shown that Trenchard was a key driver in the development of those policies that sought to develop the RAF's culture even though, as he admitted, he may not have physically written the strategies that encapsulated key themes himself and that some of the work had begun before his return as CAS for a second time.¹⁷⁶ Also, as evidenced in areas such as leadership and the recruitment of permanent officers of the GD Branch, there were other drivers in the development of the Service's culture. Principally, the RAF looked to its sister services and its brief history in the First World War as sources of its culture. The emergence of the RAF was not a revolution but an evolution and one that sought to learn lessons and apply them to the development of the Service's culture. However, this emerging culture and ethos were neither monolithic nor perfect. The adoption of an ethos centred on flying increasingly became untenable as the RAF expanded as the Second World War loomed on the horizon. Finally, while this article has provided a starting point from whence to explore RAF culture much more work is required to understand the influence of other tribes, or subcultures, on the overall culture of the Service, such as the apprentice scheme at Halton and the establishment of the Auxiliary Air Force in 1924.

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¹⁷⁶ TNA, AIR 8/97, Verbatim Notes, 22 January 1926, p. 3.