

5 SQUADRON ROYAL FLYING CORPS

JULY 1913 – MARCH 1915

Group Captain George I. Carmichael, 1958
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The period July 1913 - August 1914 is written from notes made in 1919, aided by pilot's log book. The period August 1914 - March 1915 is extracted from a daily diary kept during that time and also aided by pilot's log book. Some corrections have been made with the assistance of AVM A.E. Borton, CB CMG DSO AFC, Major C.W. Wilson MC AFC and Major R.M. Vaughan MC.

5 SQUADRON, ROYAL FLYING CORPS, was formed from one Flight of 3 Squadron at Netheravon, July 1913. It moved to Farnborough with Major J.F.A. Higgins DSO, Royal Artillery, in command, Captain D.G. Conner, Royal Artillery, as Flight Commander and pilots Lts E.V. Anderson, Black Watch; R.O. Abercromby RFC; G.I. Carmichael, Royal Artillery; N.J. Gill, Royal Artillery; H.F. Glanville, West India Regiment; L.C. Hordern, West Africa Regt and Lancashire Fusiliers; F.G. Small, Connaught Rangers; R.M. Vaughan, Royal Enniskillen Fusiliers; and C.W. Wilson, Seaforths and RFC.

Aircraft consisted of: 4 Maurice Farman Longhorns (70hp Renault) and 3 Avros (50hp Gnome), to which was added a Caudron (60hp Anzani). Aircraft were known as 'machines' and airmen as 'mechanics'. Transport included 4 Leyland 30cwt lorries, 2 Crossley light tenders and some Douglas motor cycles.

Sheds and workshops were on Jersey Brow and the landing ground consisted of two straights at right angles, one running South up the hill to the buildings of Military Wing HQ, under Lt Col F.H. Sykes, 15th Hussars, on the Farnborough main road, and the other running West to Laffan's Plain.

Ground and air were both rather congested because, in addition to the Squadron activities, periodic sorties were made from the Royal Aircraft Experimental Factory Sheds, on the East side, by aircraft flown by Geoffrey de Havilland and H.R. Busteed, and at uncertain times a string of Cody Kites would suddenly rise swinging in the air.

In September 1913, 5 Squadron, with its Maurice Farmans, took part in the Autumn Manoeuvres (I cannot give a personal

account as I was at that time attached as an Assistant Instructor at the Central Flying School, Upavon). Capt E.W. Furze, Royal Artillery, Capt H.C. Jackson, Bedfordshire Regiment, and Lt Evans, Black Watch, were attached from the Army Staff College, Camberley, as observers.

Early in 1914, additional Officers arrived including Capt R. Grey, RHA, Lt H. le M. Brock, Royal Warwickshire Regiment, and Lt D.E. Stodart RFC from CFS Upavon; and also new aircraft including Sopwith 2-seater (80hp Gnome), Henri Farman (80hp Gnome) and one SE2 (Scout Experimental), christened 'the bullet' for its alleged speed of 100 mph.

In January 1914, B Flight was formed under Capt E.V. Anderson and, in March, C Flight under Capt G.I. Carmichael.

Flying centred on getting familiar with new aircraft, climbing as high as possible (Maurice Farman: 58 min to 6000ft and 1½ hrs to max height 7250ft), cross country flights to Salisbury Plain etc. and visits to private houses. Major Higgins set the pace, always appropriated the latest arrived aircraft and learned its tricks before passing on to someone else (there was no dual control); he never issued any orders other than administrative routine, but led his devoted flying pack by example and initiative.

Avros and HFs had disclosed most of their flaws in 3 Squadron and were popular and easy to fly, but the Sopwiths, though pleasant to fly, had too many teething troubles. The simplicity of all these aircraft and of the 80 Gnome rotary 7-cylinder engine enabled the Squadron personnel to carry out most repairs and some modifications, the complete overhaul of engines, and even to rebuild some of their own crashed aircraft.

5 Squadron's initial equipment comprised MF Se.7 'Longhorns' and Avro 502s. 224, one of the former, is shown at Farnborough. :FAAM JMB/GSL 09052

