

# FLIGHT LEUTENANT LAWRENCE CECIL CARR, RAF & RCAF

by Lorne Bohn

**B**Y 1917 THE CARNAGE of the Great War had taken its toll in not only man power but also war machinery. The situation was to be worsened by the collapse of the Russia front in 1918, discipline issues within the French Army and the fact that the involvement of the United States was not yet decisive.

As the war progressed, the technological advances in aircraft had expanded their capabilities beyond their roles of reconnaissance and artillery spotting and they proved themselves to be effective weapons of war. The air attacks on London by German airships and, later, by Gotha bombers had demonstrated that Great Britain could no longer depend on its isolation and sea power for defence. In one month alone, Bloody April of 1917, the RFC and the RNAS had lost 316 airmen in combat.

With these losses it soon became clear that a more effective air defence strategy was required. On 17 August 1917, the British War Cabinet recognized the need for a separate air branch of the military service and recommended that the Royal Naval Air Service amalgamate with the Royal Flying Corps, and so the Royal Air Force was formed. In a very short time, the RAF became the largest and most independent air force in the world with some 300,000 personnel. By the end of 1918 the RAF had 3300 aircraft. However, the speed and magnitude of this expansion came at a high cost.

In the beginning of the war, the RFC had, largely, been the preserve of a few officers who already held pilot's licences issued by the Federation Aeronautique Internationale via the Royal Aeronautical Society. As the war progressed and with heavy losses, both at the front and in pilot training, it became necessary to recruit pilots from wherever possible and many were recruited from the trenches. It was in these times that



*Lawrence Cecil Carr, RAeC Certificate 6685. :RAeC*

nineteen year old Lawrence Cecil Carr enlisted in the RFC.

No one who served in the RNAS, RFC and RAF can be considered typical, but the career of Lawrence Carr was certainly not an exception. L.C. Carr's qualifications and background made him an ideal candidate for pilot training.

He was born in Tottenham, London, England on 16 November 1899 to Presbyterian parents Ester (nee Goodall) and Philip William Carr, a solicitor and legal conveyer. Lawrence was well educated for the time. He had attended Downhill School, received his Senior Matriculation at Middlesex County School in 1917 and was fluent in French. After completing his formal education, he was briefly employed as a clerk for Harrison & Sons Publishing, St Martins Lane, London before he enlisted.

He was assigned the service number PI 3027 and began his training with 1 Officer's Technical Training Wing on 13 September 1917. On 14 December 1917, he was posted to 10 Officer Cadet Wing and by 22 February 1918 Carr was in 6 School of Aeronautics at 10 Elmdale Road in Bristol.

Then, after less than a month at Bristol, he was posted to 24 Training Squadron at Witney. 24 TS had moved onto the new aerodrome at Witney, from Netheravon, on 30 March 1918, transferring from the command of 4th Wing to that of 21st Wing.

He had his first flight on 14 May, 30 minutes in DH6 C2008 with a Lt Markham. After a further two instructional flights, Carr was given an air experience flight, to 10000 feet, in a Bristol F2B piloted by Lt A.H Berg.

His progress was rapid and he made his first solo flight on 19 May, after 2hr 55min instruction. Further solo flights included not only practice at turns and landings, but also short cross-



*A4500 was one of the RE8s flown by L.C. Carr during his training with 24 TS at Witney. It is shown here at Netheravon, the unit's previous base. This RE8 had been delivered during late October/ November 1917 but, by the time this photograph was taken, it had a new, enlarged fin and the deep engine cowling that was introduced during 1918. :CCI Archive*