



Ode to Commemorate the Diamond Jubilee
of the
Royal Air Force Aircraft Apprentice Training Scheme
founded by
Marshal of the Royal Air Force
Viscount Hugh Trenchard
G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., D.S.O., D.C.L., LL.D.

*Halton, your Sons who have returned this Day
To mark the passage from yesteryear
Of sixty years on from Trenchard's dream
When he formed plans for the Apprentice Scheme.*

*'Boom', convinced the beaten foe would come again,
Planned an élite from which to obtain—
Rapid expansion in time of need.
In the grim, hungry 'twenties, parents paid heed.*

*And so came Cranwell, Flowerdown, Halton—
Ruislip, and others, as time passed on.
Staffs trained boys in mind, body, spirit—
And 'excellence in all things' and few did quit.*

*Trenchard's Brats joined their Schools from far and wide,
Jocks and Taffs with Geordies close behind,
Kentish boys, boys of Kent and from Emerald Isles—
Paddies with Kivis and Canucks in close files.*

*Brothers followed brothers, the gallant Grays and Meadows
The Munday twins, Vincos, Nelsons and others.
And sons from fathers, the Hendleys, Wests and Fosters,
With nephews from uncles, 'though not shown on rosters.*

*When in 'thirty nine the foe did come again,
Your Sons at Halton experienced some change,
From training syllabus and routine round
They carried arms - with pen - to guard your fair ground.*

*Throughout the world their elder brothers were found,
On all war fronts of air and sea and ground.
The devotion of their Kin to maintain aircraft in the air
Was 'the envy of our Allies and for our foes despair'.*

*Halton, your Sons showed their stamp in dark days of 'forty,
In Blenheim and Battle, Wimpey and Whitley.
The battle for Britain they fought o'er foe's ground,
By day and by night and round after round.
Your ground and aircrews, weary—yet proud—
That Boom knew his Brats had won their first round.*

*Three decades later 'twas said of this year,
And others which followed 'til victory was there,
'Without Halton 'twould have been a poor War for us'
Let those who come after, safeguard this trust.*

*Halton, your Sons of third generation are joining you today,
Their future in your care gleams bright as yesterday.
Time has moved on with concepts and ideas
And 'slings and arrows' will test the fibre of their years,
But if they hold the line as their brothers before—
'Son of Halton' each will proudly claim for evermore.*

*Halton, in peaceful years the splendour of your scene—
Ne'er waned and glory of your Bands held high esteem,
But fickle conduct of your Welsh goats—
Oft made Drum Majors put language in quotes.*

*Before the days of Lewis I, II, III, and IV
Your massed Bands attended in 'twenty four—
Royal Tournament with muster of many scores.
At end of day 'Olympia thundered its applause'.*

*Victory Parade of 'forty five and Lord Mayors' Shows.
At the Cenotaph for sounding of Last Post blows.
In 'fifty two with the Queen for her Colour—
And for Freedom of Aylesbury four years later.*

*Halton, your Sons showed prowess on track and ground
And reached Olympic heights and captaincy for Triple Crown.
Your gymnasts thrilled crowds unto the Albert Hall,
From the ring—a lad with I.S.B. crown 'gainst all.*

*Halton, the days of leaking roofs are long since dead,
Two trestles, three planks and bag of straw for bed.
Riches counted in a "buckshee" slice of bread.
Yet from those Spartan days an élite of men was led.*

*Halton, when your Sons to civil life returned
And uniform for other clothing was exchanged,
Your 'stamp' remained and Cobham's words of 'twenty seven
That, 'civil firms will seek them out'—were proven.*

*And so it came about—test pilots, schoolmasters.
Linguists, illustrators, lecturers and designers.
White hunters, padres, a surgeon and physician—
A Black and White Minstrel and M. Ps. (Rhodesian).*

*Airline captains, a missionary, a Chief Constable
Chartered engineers, authors and a British Consul.
Consultants, executives, editors, inventors—
Hoteliers, examiners and aircrew various.*

*And 'men of fine tradition' was proved prophetic,
Through Commandants and Staffs, thorough and dynamic.
They forged your Sons to shape and tempered with care—
In School and workshop, playing fields, gym and Square.
When these same Sons lift heads with pride and say—
'I was there,' they remember those of dedication rare.*