

# BELOW SQUADRON STATUS

Auster A.O.P.6 of  
No. 1960 Flight.



*An Outline History of R.A.F. and F.A.A. "Flights"—Part 2\**

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AS the 1400 series came to a close, in 1942, the 1500 series and 1600 series began. It must be realized, however, that the numbers were not always used in sequence. Reservation of blocks for specific types of units resulted in new units having several possible numbers. Another factor was that, in accordance with the policy of avoiding duplication of unit numbers, no flights were given numbers corresponding with those of Conversion Units, i.e., 1331/1336, 1380/1385, 1584, 1651/1675 and 1699. Moreover, even where numbers were allocated in sequence, the delay between conception and realization often resulted in some numbers being taken up apparently out of turn.

The 1500 series started as a continuation of the 1400 series, 1508 being an acclimatization flight, aircraft being coded "UQ." Then came a large block reserved for beam approach training flights and, later, radio-aids training flights. These were all equipped with Oxfords, carrying yellow-triangle identification markings. The majority of these units were attached to a larger training unit, such as a (pilot) advanced flying unit, and in some cases originated as part of one. Latterly, some of these units had their Oxfords supplemented by Ansons. Amongst the longest-lived of wartime units, the last of these flights did not close down until 1947. Such B.A.T. and R.A.T. Flights as survived in the post-war period adopted the code markings of the particular Command in which they served. These flights included 1509 B.A.T. Flight at Dyce (1942); 1510 B.A.T. Flight at Leuchars (1941) and Bircham Newton (1947—code "RF"); 1511 B.A.T. Flight (1946—code "FKA"); 1513 R.A.T. Flight with 1381 T.C.U. at Bramcote (1945/6—code "LL"); 1514 B.A.T. Flight at Coningsby (1943); 1516 R.A.T. Flight at Snaith (1946—code "QW"); 1517 B.A.T. Flight at Chipping Norton with 6(P)A.F.U. (1943); 1518 B.A.T. Flight with 8 S.F.T.S. at Edzell (1944); 1521 R.A.T. Flight (1946—code "J6"); 1523 B.A.T. Flight at Great Rissington; 1525 B.A.T. Flight at Docking (1944/5); 1527 B.A.T. Flight at Prestwick (1945), later an R.A.T. Flight (code "PY"); 1528 R.A.T. Flight at Wittering (code "YM"); 1529 R.A.T. Flight at St. Mawgan (1944/5—code "GL"); 1531 B.A.T. Flight with 12(P)A.F.U. at Cranage (1944); 1532 B.A.T. Flight with 15(P)A.F.U. at Babdon Farm (1943); 1537 B.A.T. Flight at Little Rissington (1946—code "FKD"); 1542 B.A.T. Flight with 14(P)A.F.U. at Dallachy; 1546 B.A.T. Flight with 20(P)A.F.U. at Kidlington, Weston-on-the-Green and Snitterfield (1943/4); 1547 B.A.T. Flight with No. 1 Beam Approach School at Watchfield (1945/6—code "FKF"); 1552 B.A.B.S. Flight or R.A.T. Flight at Membury and Wratting Common (1945/6—codes "ER," "PN" and "SS"); aircraft SS-J to SS-M detached to Merryfield; 1555 R.A.T. Flight (code "DR"); 1556 R.A.T. Flight (1946—code "VT"); and 1557 R.A.T. Flight (1946—code "AB").

## Sequence Resumed

The normal sequence was then resumed with a block (Nos. 1561 to 1566) allocated to a further series of Met. Flights. Nos. 1561 and 1562 were based in the United Kingdom, being coded "VM" and "B9" respectively, whilst the remaining four served in the Far East, 1565 Met. Flight having Hurricanes and the other three Gladiators. Nos. 1563 and 1564 Flights were attached to 212 Group in North Africa in 1942/43, 1563 Flight eventually receiving Spitfires (Mk 5B and 8). No. 1565 Met. Flight formed part of 259 Wing in the Levant, whilst 1566 Flight came under H.Q. British Forces, Aden, and was stationed at Hiswa. The remaining flights in the 1500 series were formed in the Middle East and Far East, the majority of them in India. Three ground gunnery flights in India were numbered 1571/1573, of which 1572 Flight at St. Thomas Mount (Madras) eventually became No. 21 Armament Practice Camp. Nos. 1575 and 1576 were both Special Duties Flights. No. 1575 S.D. Flight formed in the summer of 1943 from a detachment of 138 Sqn. at Blida under the command of F/L. J. Austin, D.F.C. and Bar. Its purpose was to open up resistance in Corsica, equipment being mainly Halifax B.2 Series 1 and B.5 Series 1, but Venturas were also flown. A rapid increase in this unit's work soon resulted in its redesignation as 624 Sqn. In India, its opposite number, 1576 S.D. Flight, was formed around the same period with four

or five Hudsons at Chaklala. Commanded by F/L. J. King, it divided its time between dropping agents deep in Burma and helping to train supply-droppers at Chaklala. It was eventually redesignated 357 Sqn.

No. 1577 Airborne Experimental Flight served at Mauripur, Dhamial, and Chaklala and in Southern India. Two calibration flights were numbered 1580 and 1583. No. 1580 formed at Yelahanka, moving to Cholavaram on September 1, whilst the latter was based successively at Akyab, Sambre (from August 1945), and Trichinopoly. Yet another S.D. Flight, No. 1586, was manned exclusively by Polish personnel. Operating with 334 Wing, it flew from Derna, and afterwards Brindisi, flying Liberators, and later Halifax C.8's, coded "GR." At one period it absorbed 301 (Polish) Sqn, and when that unit eventually returned to full strength in England, 1586 operated as a detached flight of it, remaining in Italy. No. 1587 A.O.P. Refresher Flight was attached to the Army at Deolali, whilst 1588 Heavy Freight Flight flew Stirling C.5 transports (carrying Transport Command code "ORT") from Santa Cruz (Bombay) and in Malaya.

## Special-duty Units

Simultaneously, the 1600 series was in use, largely for specific-duty blocks. In November 1942, a re-organization of anti-aircraft training units resulted in the disbandment of the various flights of No. 1 Anti-Aircraft Co-operation Unit and their replacement by independent flights. These flights of No. 1 A.A.C.U. had been formed early in the war and were designated "A" Flight, "B" Flight, etc., extending to "X" Flight. Basic equipment was the Hawker Henley T.T.3, but other types in use included the Defiant, Queen Bee, Battle, Magister, Tiger Moth, Lysander and Blenheim. The new flights were numbered from around 1600 onwards, and were designated target-towing flights. Typical of them were 1611 and 1612 T.T. Flights. These started life as "K" and "M" Flights respectively of No. 1 A.A.C.U., the former originating at Weston Zoyland early in the war. It soon moved to Bircham Newton, where it was joined by the newly formed "M" Flight. In December 1941 both flights moved to Langham. Markings were various, but for a lengthy period the Henleys and Defiants, in common with aircraft of the other flights of No. 1 A.A.C.U., carried markings denoting their unit identity, "K" Flight aircraft being coded "K1," and those of "M" Flight "M1."

Soon the flights moved back to Bircham Newton, and Oxfords and Hurricanes were added to their equipment. A few months later, a further re-organization took place; the T.T. Flights were disbanded and their places taken by A.A.C. squadrons. Under this change, 1611 and 1612 T.T. Flight were amalgamated to become 695 (A.A.C.) Sqn. Owing to the extremely short period of their existence, details of the numbers of these flights are obscure, but the following flights of No. 1 A.A.C.U. probably became 1600 series T.T. flights:—"A" Flight (Weston Zoyland and Cleave), "B" Flight (Carew Cheriton and Bodorgan) became 1606 T.T. Flight, "E" Flight (West Freugh), "F" Flight (Squires Gate and Cark), "H" Flight (Ipswich and Martlesham Heath), "J" Flight (Twinwood Farm), "L" Flight (Aberporth), "N" Flight (West Hartlepool), "R" Flight (Cark; used code "T7" on its Martinets after becoming a T.T. Flight), "T" Flight (Towyn and Weybourne), "X" Flight (Weybourne and Watchet), and other flights stationed at Greatham, Manorbier, Merston and Turnhouse.

No. 1641 Flight existed in the United Kingdom at the end of the war, aircraft being coded "MW" and No. 1677 T.T. Flight, based at Netheravon, flew Martinets and used code "HM." No. 1678 Heavy Conversion Flight was formed at Foulsham in September 1943, using Lancaster 2s coded "SW," and was attached to 514 Sqn. On November 23, 1943, it moved to Waterbeach, where it became "A" Flight of 514 Sqn. in the following April. No. 1680 Flight was formed at Colerne for transport duties, using Harrows coded "BJ." It was later redesignated 271 Sqn., and the number re-allocated to 1680 Comm. Flight.

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