



RAF (AHB)

A BE2c of No 30 Squadron RFC loaded with food for besieged British and Indian forces at Kut al Amara, 1916. This squadron was formed from the original Indian Army aviation detachments in Egypt and Mesopotamia

The origins of Military Aviation in India and the Creation of the Indian Air Force, 1910 - 1932

Part One: The Origins of Military Aviation in India, 1901-1918

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Introduction

During 2007 a number of events have taken place both in India and overseas to mark the Platinum Jubilee Year of the Indian Air Force. These will culminate on Indian Air Force Day, 8 October 2007 – the 75th anniversary of the day on which ‘the Indian Air Force came into being as a separate service under an act of the legislative assembly.’¹

While an authoritative study of the history of the Indian (later, Royal Indian) Air Force from its foundation in 1932 until the declaration of the Republic of India in 1950 has recently been published, the military and political factors that led to the creation of an air service in India separate from both the Indian Army and the Royal Air Force remain relatively unexplored.² This article will aim to provide an overview of this hitherto neglected aspect of Indian military and aviation history.

The first part will examine the earliest attempts to establish an Indian Army air arm financed by the Government of India. Although reference will be made to the participation of Indian Army aviation detachments in operations over Egypt and Mesopotamia, it is not intended to provide a detailed account of their operations, but rather to place them in the context of the development of an ‘Indian Flying Corps’. The article will also attempt to establish why attempts to create such an air arm came ultimately to naught and why air operations in support of Indian troops at home and overseas were instead vested in the Royal Flying Corps and later the Royal Air Force. The second part will go on to examine the postwar pattern of RAF operations in India, the part played by Indian nationals to the RFC and RAF during the First World War, and the

events that led to the establishment of an independent Indian Air Force.

Aviation and the Indian Army prior to the First World War

The first military aviators to fly in India employed balloons. In 1901 Captain A H B Hume, Royal Engineers, and six non-commissioned officers and sappers from the 4th Balloon Section RE arrived in India in order to establish an experimental balloon section at Rawalpindi as part of the Bengal Sappers and Miners. The first commander of this experimental section was Captain W A Stokes RE and during its’ brief history the section would have a further four commanders, all drawn from the Royal Engineers.³ In his account of ‘The History of Early British Aeronautics’ one of these officers, Brigadier P W L Broke-Smith, noted that ‘considerable proficiency was reached in the handling of balloons’; the section ‘developed a good technique, and successfully practiced direction of artillery fire at Hutti artillery practice camp.’⁴ However, the performance of the section was hampered both by the effects of the Indian climate on the balloons (which deteriorated rapidly unless treated regularly with glycerine) and by shortages of transport, facilities and equipment. In 1909, the balloon section was relocated to Roorkee and in 1911 it disbanded.

Broke-Smith attributed the limited opportunities available for the balloon section to deploy with other arms ‘partly to the disabilities of the section and partly to the general lack of interest in balloons, which was finally accentuated by the prospects of the supersession of balloons by aeroplanes’. While early aeronautical development in India lagged some way behind that in the

UK, by 1909 sufficient interest had been engendered in aviation to enable the co-founder of the Aerial League of the British Empire, Colonel Harry Stanley Massy to establish an Indian branch of this society; its first president being the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, Sir O'Moore Creagh.⁵ Other officers in India at this time had begun to look to the aeroplane as an instrument of war. As early as January 1910, Captain Walter Mervyn St. George Kirke RA noted in the Journal of the United Services Institute of India that 'From a military point of view, such high speed machines would be valuable for offensive and defensive purposes, particularly against other flying machines, but [also] to fulfil their main role with a field army in reconnaissance.'⁶

In January 1911, the British aviation journal *Flight* reported that 'From a correspondent in India we learn that during the last three months the active interest taken in aviation out there has gone forward remarkably.'⁷ By the end of 1910 at least one aeroplane ordered by the chief engineer to the Maharaja of Patiala – the first of the Indian princes to demonstrate an active interest in aviation – had arrived in India.⁸ In addition, during the winter of 1910-11 no fewer than three separate aviation parties arrived in India in order to carry out demonstration flights. The most significant of these parties in terms of the development of Indian military aviation would appear to have been the group from the British and Colonial Aeroplane Company Ltd that arrived at Calcutta by sea in December 1910 in order to demonstrate the company's Bristol 'Boxkite' biplanes, an unlicensed and improved copy of the Henri Farman biplane.⁹ Their disembarkation was

overseen by the Deputy Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster-General of the Presidency Brigade, Captain William Sefton Brancker. A gunner by training, Brancker had experienced first-hand the use and limitations of captive balloons for artillery observation and as a student in the Indian Staff College he had caused 'some surprise and not a little derision by advocating observation aircraft for howitzer fire.'¹⁰ Brancker jumped at the diversion provided by the British and Colonial Aeroplane Company party and 'attached himself firmly to the exhibition', being 'permitted to fly, unofficially, in the character of observer.'¹¹ He later recalled that the party's arrival 'was treated with profound suspicion by those local authorities with whom they came into touch; but I've always enjoyed being one of the fools who step in where angels fear to tread, and so took them under my wing with a will, which certainly deflected a good deal of energy from my more legitimate duties.'¹²

In January 1911 one of the party's Boxkites took part in cavalry manoeuvres in the Deccan, flown by British and Colonial Aeroplane Company test pilot Henri Jullerot and with Brancker accompanying him. Their role in the exercise was described by Sir Walter Raleigh in the first volume of the official history *The War in the Air*:

The first flight was made by M Jullerot and Captain Brancker, the day before the manoeuvres began, in the presence of twelve generals, one of whom was Sir Douglas Haig, at that time Chief of Staff in India, and a numerous company of staff officers. Next morning the aeroplane was attached to the northern force at Aurangabad, whose task was to drive back the rearguard of a southern force retreating

towards Jalna. Captain Brancker and M Jullerot made a flight of about twenty-seven miles at a height of 1,100 feet, and the hostile force was accurately located. A full report was in the hands of the commander of the northern force in less than an hour and a half from the time of his demand for information.

*Subsequent flights were less successful; indeed, the next morning the aeroplane crashed from a height of a hundred feet; the two aviators escaped with a few scratches, but the machine was reduced to matchwood.'*¹³

Brancker later attributed this crash, which took place on attempting to take off, to a combination of the impromptu airstrip's altitude (between 2,000 and 3,000 ft above sea level), the lack of wind, and contaminated fuel.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the Boxkite's all-to-brief contribution to the exercise would appear to have made a favourable impression on many of the senior officers who witnessed it. The latter included the Commander-in-Chief, Sir O'Moore Creagh; Brancker later recalled that Creagh was convinced of aviation's 'vast possibilities and its future importance to the Indian Empire, but money for the Army was terribly short and, and he was unable to start an aeronautical organization at once as he ardently desired.'¹⁵ Creagh's frustrations were also reflected in a letter sent by Sir Douglas Haig, then Chief of the General Staff in India, to his successor as Director of Staff Duties at the War Office, Brigadier-General Launcelot Kiggell in May 1911. On the day before the start of the manoeuvres, Haig had handed Brancker 'a sealed envelope containing the orders for the following day...the first occasion on which a British General issued official orders for an aeroplane to fly and bring back information about

troops opposed to his.'¹⁶ Writing to Kiggell, Haig noted:

*We are considering here how best to start a school of instruction and a corps for air work. I should be greatly obliged if you could let me have any suggestions on the subject.... The [Bristol] Company had an agent here last winter showing off one or two of their machines.... Money at present is very tight here and so we shall find it difficult to make a beginning even in a small way.'*¹⁷



Captain Seaton Dunham Massy, Indian Army, 1911. Massy was a key figure in early efforts by the Indian Army to establish its own an air arm (RAF Museum)

In the same month a nephew of Colonel Massy, Captain Seaton Dunham Massy of the 29th Punjabis, became the first serving officer of the Indian Army to complete *ab initio* flying training and qualify as a pilot with the Royal Aero Club (RAeC).¹⁸ Captain Massy learnt to fly at the Bristol School of Aviation at Larkhill on Salisbury Plain and on 9 May 1911 he qualified for RAeC Aviators Certificate No 84.¹⁹ Massy went on to

spend at least part of that year attached to the Air Battalion, Royal Engineers. This unit had formed on 1 April 1911 at Larkhill with 'the specific duty of training officers and men in the handling of all forms of aircraft and providing a small body of expert airmen from which air units for war could be formed'; for in the words of the Commandant of the Air Battalion, Major Sir Alexander Bannerman, Bart, RE, 'the mere taking of an Aero Club's aviator's certificate does not make a man a military flier.'²⁰

By the end of the year, at least four other Indian Army officers – Captains Duncan Le Geyt Pitcher and Cuthbert Gurney Hoare of the 39th Central India Horse, Lieutenant Latham Valentine Stewart Blacker of the Queen's Own Corps of Guides and Lieutenant Cyril Louis Norton Newall of the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Gurkha Rifles – had also gained their Aviators Certificates at Larkhill. In September 1911 the Commandant of the Air Battalion was requested to 'arrange...for some officers of the Indian Army who have obtained pilots certificates to receive some further training in aeroplane work with the Air Battalion'. The many other demands then placed on the Battalion would appear to have prevented any further Indian officers from training with this unit. In his response on 18 September 1911, Bannerman stated:

In view of the fact that all aerial work will have to be suspended until about November 15th, owing to musketry and Furlough; that all the Air Battalion establishment are in the melting pot; that we want all our pilots not on leave to try new machines which we hope to have bought; that we have to train a reserve of our own officers to replace the casualties now, unhappily, becoming of regular

occurrence, I do not see what we can do for the Indian Army this winter.²¹

Advocates of military aviation in the Indian Army continued to press their case during the following year. In an article published in the Journal of the United Services Institute of India in October of that year, Captain Massy emphasised 'the necessity of India having its Flying Corps and having it without delay...our requirements in aircraft will be large.'²² Although a small number of Indian Army officers continued to receive flying training to Royal Aero Club Certificate standard in UK civil schools between 1912 and 1914, given the limited flying training resources available to the British Army it was clear that there would be little or no capacity to spare for the training of Indian officers for the foreseeable future.²³

As a first step towards creating an Indian Flying Corps it would therefore be necessary to establish facilities in India capable of generating trained personnel for the new air arm. Massy spent the summer of 1912 'at Army Headquarters in India working out the details of a scheme for introducing a School of Aeronautics in India'.²⁴ In a letter to the War Office dated 19 July 1912 the Assistant Military Secretary at the India Office outlined the scope of the planned school. It was proposed that 'ten aeroplanes in active commission, and five complete but not erected spares' should be acquired, together with all of the tools and spares required to maintain them; and also to construct an erecting shop, a repair shop and a store at the chosen site for the school. In response to a request to help establish the initial and ongoing monthly costs of such a school, the War Office forwarded an estimate in October 1912 that placed the

cost of maintaining a school on the scale envisaged (not including the purchase of the aircraft themselves) at over £9,000.²⁵



Lieutenant Hugh Lambert Reilly, Indian Army. Reilly was awarded Royal Aero Club Certificate No 252 after qualifying at the Deperdussin School, Hendon, on 24 July 1912 (RAF Museum)

In response to a question from the Rt Hon Sir John Rees MP, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, confirmed in the House of Commons on 30 April 1913 that 'The Government of India intend to have their own school of military aviation...The scheme will be under an officer trained in the home air battalion here, and the future staff of instructors will be similarly trained at the cost of the Indian revenue.'²⁶ In a separate announcement, the Government of India named Massy as the commandant of the new school and Hoare, Newall and Lieutenant Hugh Lambert Reilly of the 82nd Punjabis as the first instructors.²⁷ A report in *Flight* on 10 May 1913 noted that 'These officers are certificated pilots,

but they are coming to England in order to undergo a long period of training at the Central Flying School before taking up their new duties'.²⁸

Captain Massy was appointed formally to command the Indian Central Flying School on 1 December 1913.²⁹ The site chosen for the school was at Sitapur in Uttar Pradesh. The school was inspected by the new Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, General Sir Beauchamp Duff, on 27 March 1914, after which he was flown in one of the school's Maurice Farman biplanes piloted by Massy.³⁰ However, despite its name, the Central Flying School was not charged initially with a training role. Replying to a further question from Sir John Rees on 7 April 1914, Montagu's successor as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for India, Charles Roberts, stated that 'There are three aeroplanes, and five others have been ordered. The immediate object is to gain experience in aviation under Indian conditions, with a view to the eventual expansion of the school as a training establishment.'³¹

The Indian military also considered the viability of using airships to secure India's borders. In July 1914 the Director of the Air Department in the Admiralty, Captain Murray F Sueter, replied to a request from Colonel Wyndham Knight of the General Staff 'for information as regards the employment of airships on the Indian Frontier.' The 'technical remarks' forwarded with Sueter's letter, outlining suitable designs for such an airship and the supporting infrastructure that it would require, cautioned that 'It should be clearly understood that no satisfactory results are likely to be obtained without the expenditure of a large sum of money. Airships cannot be run on the cheap.'

Although Sueter undertook to provide 'full details of the ship, sheds, and all accessory requirements for work of a somewhat similar character', with the outbreak of war this proposal would seem to have fallen by the wayside.³²

Indian Army air operations during the First World War

With the outbreak of war in August 1914 the Royal Flying Corps deployed into the field *en masse* in support of the British Expeditionary Force. At least five Indian Army aviators – Captains Massy, Hoare, Reilly, and Pitcher and Lieutenant Newall – were at Farnborough at the outbreak of war, and all were caught up in this hurried mobilisation.³³ Reilly and Pitcher were attached to No 4 Squadron, all but one flight of which left Dover en route to Amiens, in conjunction with Nos 2 and 3 Squadrons, on the morning of 13 August 1914. On 21 August 1914 Pitcher would appear to have become the first Indian Army officer to take part in an operational flight, serving as the observer aboard an aircraft piloted by Lieutenant W G S Mitchell during a reconnaissance sortie over Mons, Soignes, Roelux, and La Louviere.³⁴ Of the remaining three Indian Army officers, in October 1914 Captain Massy 'was appointed to command No 1 Reserve Aeroplane Squadron at home, the other two being made Flight Commanders in two other squadrons.'³⁵

Although Indian Army officers flew initially on attachment to the RFC, by the end of 1914 personnel and equipment from the Indian Central Flying School had been formed into an aviation detachment paid for by the Indian exchequer and used to support Indian Army operations in the field. These air operations did not take place

in India itself. The requirement to form an air detachment for expeditionary operations some distance beyond India's own borders reflected a marked shift in the policy that governed the deployment of the Indian Army. In his 1919 London Gazette despatch examining 'the part taken by India, including the Indian States, in the prosecution of the war', the then Commander-in-Chief in India, General Sir Charles Monro, stated that in August 1914 the Army in India numbered some '77,000 British and 159,000 Indian ranks, exclusive of 38,000 Volunteers and 35,000 Indian reservists.' However despite its size, 'this force was in no sense a potential reserve to the armed forces of the British Empire.' While acknowledging 'there have been many precedents for the employment of small contingents from India in support of Imperial interests in other parts of the world', Sir Charles emphasised that it had 'never been the policy to maintain troops in India in excess of those actually required for the protection of her own interests';

As the Government of India are aware, the primary functions of the pre-war Army in India were two-fold, namely, the maintenance of order within and on the borders of British India, and, secondly, the provision of a field army capable, should the necessity arise, of undertaking a campaign beyond the border for purposes of defence against external aggression. The Army in India was in no sense maintained for meeting external obligations of an Imperial character.³⁶

During the summer of 1914 the prospect of Britain becoming embroiled in a major worldwide conflict led the Government of India to reappraise this stance. While it remained the case that 'no appreciable contingent could be

furnished for employment overseas without involving considerable risk', it was nevertheless 'recognised that in the event of an emergency threatening the integrity of the Empire, the Government of India might be called upon to accept this risk with the objective of adding to our strength at the decisive point'.³⁷ Immediately prior to the outbreak of war, the Government of India therefore undertook for the first time to create and fund expeditionary forces for service beyond the Indian subcontinent.

One consequence of this change in policy was the deployment of Indian troops to Egypt. The entry of Turkey into the war in November 1914 in support of the Central Powers heightened concerns with regard to safeguarding the Suez Canal against attacks from the Ottoman Empire. In response to the Turkish threat, an Indian Army contingent under the command of Major General Sir Alexander Wilson was despatched to defend this vital line of communication.³⁸ In addition, an RFC detachment drawn from 'a small group of officers belonging to the newly formed Indian Central Flying School... was formed for co-operation in the defence of the Canal.'³⁹

This detachment sailed from the UK aboard the SS 'Beethoven' on 4 November 1914. Captain Massy was appointed to command the detachment, and he was accompanied by Captain Reilly (now returned from No 4 Squadron) and by Second Lieutenant Samuel P Cockerell, a RFC Special Reserve officer. On arriving in Egypt, the detachment established itself at Camp Moascar, Ismailia and here it was reinforced by officers from units in Egypt and the UK. Further reinforcements also arrived on 21 December 1914 from the Indian Central

Flying School at Sitapur, including one officer (Lieutenant S C Parr), three civilian mechanics, and three airframes – a Royal Aircraft Factory BE2a and two Maurice Farman 'Longhorns' (1913 Type), all without engines.



A sketch plan of the Egypt detachment's airfield at 'North Moascar' [sic]. This was prepared by one of the detachment's observers, Captain A J Ross RE, in January 1915 (TNA AIR 1/1168 204/5/2589)

On 27 November 1914 the detachment flew the first of its first reconnaissance sortie. It continued to patrol the area to the east of the canal defence zone for most of the following year, working in conjunction with French Navy seaplanes operating from seaplane carriers.

Although the Sinai front remained quiet for much of this period, in January and February 1915 the detachment played an important role in locating and harassing Turkish forces attempting to cross the Suez Canal. In his despatch describing the defence of the Canal, Wilson expressed his 'high appreciation of the valuable work done by the pilots and observers of the French hydro-aeroplane squadron and the detachment Royal Flying Corps in the numerous reconnaissances carried out by them previous to and during the advance of the enemy. They were constantly under shrapnel and rifle fire and carried out their difficult and dangerous duties with courage, resourcefulness and success.'⁴⁰

Mesopotamia

Egypt was not the only place in which Indian troops were deployed to counter any Turkish attack. In response to the threat posed by either Turkish forces or a German-inspired jihad to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company installations at Abadan, on the mouth of the Shatt al Arab waterway 'it was decided, after consultation between the British Government and the Government in [sic] India, to send a force from India to the head of the Persian Gulf.'⁴¹ The leading elements of Indian Expeditionary Force 'D' sailed from India in mid-October 1914 and after seizing Fao went on to occupy Basra on 22 November 1914 and Kurna on 9 December 1914.

It was soon clear that any future Indian Army operations in Mesopotamia would be dependent upon accurate and timely reconnaissance. The despatch of aircraft for this purpose had been requested by the commander of the first full Indian division in Mesopotamia, Major General Sir Arthur Barrett, as early as January

1915. When the objectives of the Indian Army's campaign in Mesopotamia grew more ambitious the establishment of an aviation detachment became a reality. On 26 March 1915 Captain Philip W L Broke-Smith RE – a former commander of the Indian Army's first experimental balloon section – was appointed Deputy Assistant Director of Aviation, Indian Army, with the acting rank of Major.⁴² On 1 April 1915 the Government of India decided that Indian Expeditionary Force 'D' should be reorganised as an Army Corps under the command of General Sir John Nixon, and Broke-Smith accompanied Nixon and his staff when they landed at Basra on 9 April 1915.

Broke-Smith's initial tasks were 'to make arrangements for the establishment of a base aerodrome and depot at Basra and to acquire a knowledge of the climatic and geographical conditions. Also to determine the work which would be required of the aeroplanes, and effecting the necessary organisation and establishment of the flying service with the Indian Expeditionary Force "D".'⁴³ Broke-Smith returned to Bombay (where a depot had been established to support the aeroplane detachment) on 17 April 1915 in order to begin preparations for the despatch of the flight. He re-embarked for Basra on 30 April, accompanied by Captain Reilly – who had been transferred from Egypt to command the new flight with the temporary rank of Major – and by the flight's engineering officer, Second Lieutenant W R Willis, formerly an engineer in the Public Works Department. They were later joined in Mesopotamia by Lieutenant Parr and four mechanics from the Egyptian detachment, and two of the Maurice Farmans that had arrived in Egypt from India in December 1914 were also sent

to Mesopotamia. The aircraft park was established in Basra in April 1915, and after a false start at Mekina Malsus (which had to be abandoned due to flooding) a site for the aerodrome was selected at Tanouma, opposite Basra.⁴⁴



The Mesopotamian detachment's initial area of operations in 1915; the dotted line denotes the then border between Mesopotamia and Persia

It was clear from the outset that India lacked the personnel and aircraft to maintain both the Egyptian and Mesopotamian detachments. During early 1915 the RFC's attention was focused primarily upon the demands of the Western Front and India was therefore obliged to call on the rest of the Empire for support. On 8 February 1915 the Australian Government 'received from the Government of India a message asking whether Australia could provide for service in Mesopotamia any trained airmen, flying machines and motor-transport. Two days later the Australian Government replied that the Commonwealth could furnish some airman and [the] necessary mechanics and transport, but no aeroplanes.'⁴⁵

A single flying officer from New Zealand was also posted to join the detachment. In addition, 'Both Australia and New Zealand offered to bear all expenses connected with their part of the detachment. The establishment for a Flight and for an Aircraft Park was completed by volunteers from Territorial battalions in India.'⁴⁶

When the 'Mesopotamian Half-Flight' arrived in theatre on 26 May 1915, the Australian contingent found at Basra 'Two Indian Army airmen (Captains P W L Broke-Smith and H L Reilly) and a few mechanics.' One member of the Mesopotamian Half Flight, Captain T W White, recalled that:

These two officers, with about four British and five Indian mechanics, formed the Indian Flying Corps, which was supplemented by an Indian Army reserve lieutenant as engineer officer, and six British motor-transport drivers. They possessed two motor-lorries and a few spare aeroplane parts. With the assistance of Indian pioneers a road of date-palm logs had been made from the Shatt-el-Arab (the canal on which Basra is situated) across a swamp to an Arab cemetery, where tents had been pitched and a small aerodrome was in the making.⁴⁷

On the following day, the detachment made its 'first flight over Mesopotamia when Reilly and Broke-Smith carried out an air test in one of the detachment's Maurice Farmans.⁴⁸ Although handicapped by inadequate aircraft and chronic shortages of essential spares and equipment, the detachment in Mesopotamia went on to play an important role in the ensuing campaign, culminating with the capture of Nasiriya on 24-25 July 1915. In his despatch describing this operation, General Sir

John Nixon paid tribute to 'the excellence of the work performed by officers and men of the Royal Flying Corps, whose valuable reconnaissances materially assisted in clearing up the situation before the battle of the 24th July.'⁴⁹

The Royal Flying Corps takes over

Although the despatches submitted by Sir Alexander Wilson and Sir John Nixon identify the aviation detachments belonging to the Indian Expeditionary Forces in Egypt and Mesopotamia as belonging to the Royal Flying Corps, this would not appear to have been the case. Both detachments were established and funded (in large part) by the Government of India and the majority of their personnel would come from the Indian, Australian and New Zealand Armies rather than from the RFC.

Despite its' success, the need to strengthen the Mesopotamian detachment was soon evident and on 12 June 1915 General Sir John Nixon forwarded a request for 'adequate aircraft reinforcements' to the Government of India. By the end of June, the War Office had agreed to bolster the air strength in Mesopotamia by sending to that theatre 'two flights of the Royal Flying Corps from Egypt.'⁵⁰ Nixon's appeal also coincided with a growing desire on the part of the Government of India to acquire aircraft in the defence of India itself. Of particular concern was the security of the North-West Frontier, the mountainous region straddling the border between India (following partition, Pakistan) and Afghanistan that had long formed 'a prickly and untrimmed hedge between Rawalpindi and Kabul.'⁵¹

Following his appointment in April 1915 as the Inspector of Mechanical

Transport, Indian Works Office, Lord Montagu of Beaulieu prepared a memorandum for the Indian General Staff in which he advocated that 'a chain of aeroplane stations should be established from Chakdara to Tank. Each station would have three aeroplanes and a small defence force to guard them.'⁵² Given that the Government of India was at that time incapable of reinforcing the existing Indian Army aviation detachments in the field, it is clear that the resources to implement such a scheme could not be found from within India itself. The Government of India therefore had little choice but to approach the War Office (via the India Office) in London for assistance.

The case for employing aircraft over the Frontier was first advanced by the Government of India to the India Office in the summer of 1915, and was summarised in a telegram sent by the Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India on 20 August 1915. The Viceroy opened by pointing to the fact that by deploying Indian troops overseas 'we have reduced the garrison of India and especially that of the NW Frontier to [the] bare minimum necessary to provide for the security of the frontier. While [the] Amir of Afghanistan has preserved [the] correct attitude, that of the tribesmen ever since the participation of Turkey in the war has given increased anxiety.' The Government of India regarded any additional measures that might increase the efficiency of the forces already deployed on the frontier 'as of the highest importance, and amongst such measures we regard the introduction of aircraft as one of the most valuable.' He went on:

In frontier warfare reconnaissance has always been one of the greatest

difficulties, and our ability to meet large and sudden concentrations is largely dependent on information. We are satisfied that [the] increasing reliability of aeroplanes at present confers on us [the] power of reconnaissance far in excess of past experience. Thus from our point of view [the] necessity is an urgent one.'⁵³

The India Office duly forwarded this telegram to the War Office, with a covering letter emphasising that 'Mr Secretary Chamberlain [the Secretary of State for India] would strongly recommend that the views of the Government of India be accepted and their application for the despatch of a suitable detachment of the Royal Flying Corps to India be complied with as soon as the opportunity offers.'⁵⁴

Although the attention of the War Office was at this time focused firmly on the air fighting over the Western Front, it nevertheless acquiesced with the Government of India's urgent requests to reinforce the Indian Army air unit in Mesopotamia and assist in the creation of a squadron for operations in India itself. This agreement was not without conditions, for in return the War Office wished to ensure that all of these units (and their personnel) came under its control. In a telegram to the India Office dated 22 August 1915, the Viceroy referred to a letter from the Directorate of Military Aeronautics dated 21 July 1915 in which the latter required that air units operating over 'Mesopotamia and [the] North West Frontier shall form an integral branch of the Royal Flying Corps.' Noting that the Government of India 'are prepared to assist [the] War Office in every way and cordially accept [this] principle', the Viceroy went on to emphasise that 'The early establishment of an efficient and adequate flying service

in Mesopotamia and on the North West Frontier is so essential for us that we press for all promptitude in the matter'⁵⁵

Measures to bring both the Egyptian and Mesopotamian detachments into the RFC predated the Viceroy's telegram. On 31 July 1915, Major S MacSwiney of the Directorate of Military Aeronautics wrote to Massy in Egypt 'to inform you that the detachment of the Royal Flying Corps under your command became No 30 Squadron on 24th March, 1915.'⁵⁶ All of those officers belonging to the Mesopotamian flight that were not already on the establishment of the Royal Flying Corps (including those of the Australian and New Zealand Armies) were gazetted formally into the RFC with effect from 5 August 1915.⁵⁷ It had also been decided that No 30 Squadron should be concentrated in Mesopotamia, and in August the Mesopotamian flight was informed that 'the provision of flying units in Mesopotamia would be taken over by the War Office and that the flight would now become part of No 30 Squadron'.⁵⁸

However, the integration of the Egyptian and Mesopotamian detachments as No 30 Squadron did not take place in practice until November 1915. On 7 November, the Mesopotamian detachment, now reinforced by the arrival of personnel and aircraft from the UK, and joined by a Royal Navy Air Service flight from east Africa, 'was reorganised into No 30 Squadron, consisting of a Headquarters 'A' Flight and 'B' Flight and No 4 Aircraft Park.'⁵⁹ Subsequently, the No 30 Squadron party in Egypt was relieved by 'A' Flight of No 14 Squadron on 26 November and on 9 December those members of No 30 Squadron that were had not been transferred to No 14 Squadron left for Basra. During this period, Major Reilly

assumed command of No 30 Squadron in Mesopotamia, pending the arrival of Major Massy from Egypt; after which Reilly was to travel to India to command the new unit being established for operations over the North West Frontier. However, on 20 November 1915 Reilly was shot down by machine gun fire during a reconnaissance sortie behind the Turkish lines and subsequently captured. Following Reilly's capture, Major R Gordon RNAS (Major, Royal Marines Light Infantry) acted as the commanding officer of No 30 Squadron prior to Massy's arrival at Kut al Amara on 28 November 1915.⁶⁰

Although No 30 Squadron would continue to operate over Mesopotamia for the remainder of the war, it would do so as part of the RFC and later the RAF, rather than the Indian Army. While the Government of India may have accepted that its flying units in the field should come under the mantle of the RFC, it nevertheless sought to maintain some control over Indian Army officers volunteering to serve as a pilot or observer. It therefore suggested that every Indian Army officer sent to the UK for flying training should either return to India on completion of his training, or be replaced by a suitably experienced officer from the UK. To facilitate this exchange, it once again argued for 'the establishment of an aviation school in India' at which Indian Army officers could be trained.⁶¹ The War Office rejected this proposal, informing the Under Secretary of State for India on 2 October 1915 that:

It will not be possible for the War Office to supply instructors or aeroplanes to establish a Flying School in India, as every available instructor is already fully occupied in the training establishments in

the United Kingdom. Moreover, in view of the very serious difficulty that exists in obtaining a supply of spare parts adequate to replace the constant breakages that occur in a training establishment, it would be impossible to maintain the equipment of a Flying School situated at so great a distance from the source of supply.

The [Army] Council are, therefore, of the opinion that the question of the formation of an elementary flying school in India should be dropped.

Should there be any officers on the Indian establishment who are desirous of, and recommended for, employment in the Royal Flying Corps, they could be sent to the United Kingdom for training.

As soon as the total number of trained pilots of the Indian Army exceeds the number required for service in India, with Force D, and with the Indian troops on service elsewhere, it would be necessary to ascertain in each case whether, having regard to the exigencies of the Service, it would be possible to provide a relief. Until then, however, the Council lay stress on the principle that every officer who graduates as a pilot must be entirely at their disposal, irrespective of the establishment from which they are drawn.⁶²

The refusal of the RFC to acquiesce with Government of India's wish to establish a flying school for the Indian Army – in effect, to resurrect the now defunct Indian Central Flying School – can therefore be seen to have marked the de facto demise of the Indian Army's attempt to form its own air arm.

The RFC and RAF in India, 1915-1918

It therefore fell to the RFC to form the first air units intended to conduct military air operations in Indian skies.

In a letter to the Military Secretary at the India Office, General Sir Edmund Barrow, on 17 August 1915, General Sir Percy Lake (then the Indian Army's Chief of the General Staff) expressed his concern that the War Office had not yet grasped 'the peculiar conditions and difficulties to be overcome' when operating aircraft over Mesopotamia and the North West Frontier. He therefore sought to provide some brief notes that were intended 'to be passed, demi officially, by you to the DDMA [the Deputy Director of Military Aeronautics]' and which summarised some of the factors that the War Office should consider. With regard to the North West Frontier, Lake stressed that the 'frontier conditions are as yet unknown to us and will require careful study'. He further urged that 'Politically it will be most important that the first flights undertaken over tribal territory should be successful, and we take this to be an additional reason for the provision of none but the very latest and best obtainable machines, piloted by exceptional men, from the outset.'⁶³

In order to determine whether the proposal to use aircraft over the frontier was a viable one, the War Office turned to one of the Indian Army aviators in the UK – the former Captain Pitcher, now serving as the Assistant Commandant of the Central Flying School with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. On 28 August 1915 Pitcher completed a brief report detailing 'Flying conditions on the North West Frontier of India and suitable types of machines for the same', and this report was forwarded to the India Office on at the beginning of the following month.⁶⁴ In it, Pitcher outlined many of the difficulties inherent to operations over the Frontier. These included the need to be able to climb to altitudes of

between 8,000 and 15,000 feet above sea level; the winds and extremes of temperature typically encountered in the Frontier region; the paucity of suitable landing grounds; and the difficulties in supporting aircraft when deployed into the hills. Aircraft suitable for Frontier operations would need to be capable of a speed of at least 80 miles per hour and should be able to fly 'from Dargai to Chitral', a round-trip of approximately 200 miles, which (together with the time taken to climb and descend) would require the aircraft to be in the air for up to 4½ hours. For offensive purposes, 'HE bombs for use against sangars and villages and some form of incendiary bomb for the purpose of firing crops' would be used. Given the absence of hostile aircraft or anti-aircraft guns, defensive armament was unnecessary; but rifle fire from the ground would pose a threat and aircraft would therefore need to be armoured to some degree.

The limited performance of the aircraft then available led Pitcher to recommend that 'Dead weight will have to be kept to a minimum. With an inherently stable machines [sic] there is no real need for an Observer.' Pilots would need to be provided with a revolver or carbine, iron rations and water in order to give them 'a chance of finding his way back on foot in the case of a forced landing.' Pitcher also added a grim warning with regard to the possible fate of downed aviators; 'Capture by the enemy would probably entail mutilation.'

Pitcher's report concluded that both the Royal Aircraft Factory BE 2c and the Royal Aircraft Factory RE 7 aircraft would, after modification, be suitable for operations over the Frontier. The BE2c was duly selected, and in November 1915 a flight of No

31 Squadron departed from the UK en route to India. The flight arrived in the following month, and in February 1916 No 31 Squadron was brought up to full strength with the arrival in India of a second flight detached from No 22 Squadron in the United Kingdom. No 31 Squadron thus became the first RFC squadron to serve in India, a fact celebrated both by the squadron's motto – *In Caelum Indicum Primus*, 'First into the Indian Skies' – and by the mullet in the centre of the squadron's badge,



A Royal Aircraft Factory BE2c (AHB) which represents the Star of India.

After a brief period at Pir Piai, No 31 Squadron relocated to Risaplur and here it took over the remaining stores and equipment of the former Indian Central Flying School. Squadron operations commenced in earnest during the latter part of 1916 when it flew its first reconnaissance, artillery observation and ground attack sorties against armed tribesmen on the Mohmand border in support of the Indian Army. During 1917 and 1918 routine training and survey tasks were interspersed with a number of calls on the squadron to participate in operations against tribes on the North West Frontier. Such was the success of these operations that in September

1917 a nucleus from No 31 Squadron was used to form a second squadron – No 114 Squadron – at Lahore. In June 1918 a signal from the Commander in Chief India summarised the strength and disposition of the RAF in India as follows; No 31 Squadron (HQ and three flights) at Risalpur, allotted to Corps troops, 4th Army Corps; and No 114 Squadron (HQ and two flights) at Lahore, where it acted as a central reserve available for use either on the North West Frontier or for internal security duties as required. The Aircraft Park was also located at Lahore, while a half-flight of No 114 Squadron was at Aden.⁶⁵

Thus, it can be seen that despite the delayed start made by the Indian Army in field of aviation, a number of both junior and senior officers were nevertheless quick to grasp the potential advantages offered by aircraft in operations along India's borders. The need to offset the large numbers of Indian personnel sent overseas during the First World War further sharpened interest in the employment of aircraft amongst India's military and political leaders. Prewar efforts to establish some form of military air arm within India centred upon the creation of an Indian Central Flying School, and if the war had not intervened in these efforts the Indian Army may have been able to develop this school as the centre of a viable independent aviation infrastructure. However, the Army's aspirations always appear to have been somewhat at odds with the meagre resources available to it. Following the outbreak of war, the establishment of aviation detachments in support of Indian Army expeditionary forces in Egypt and Mesopotamia led not only to the dissolution of the Indian Central

Flying School, but also obliged the Government of India to look to London for the personnel and material required to support India's aviation units – and accept the loss of autonomy associated with such assistance.

Although limited in scale, the RFC's early air operations in India had demonstrated to both the Government of India and the India Office the potential importance of aircraft to the maintenance of Indian security. According to a letter from the Secretary of the India Office's Military Department to the Air Ministry dated 11 July 1918, the Secretary of State for India (the Rt Hon Edwin Montagu MP⁶⁶) was

*much impressed with the importance of having more aeroplanes in India. Recent frontier warfare has shown their extreme value, and it is not too much to say that an efficient and sufficient force of aeroplanes can bring about a decision in our favour on the frontier more quickly than anything else, and incidentally save many lives, considerable bloodshed, and much money.*⁶⁷

While questions would continue to be raised as to the utility of air power in India, the position of the RAF as the provider of air power in Indian skies had been established by 1918 and the Government of India did not attempt to resurrect its pre-war proposals to formation an 'Indian Flying Corps'. Those Indian Army officers that had served in the RFC and RAF during the First World War and wished to continue their military careers would appear either to have continued to serve in the RAF, or to have returned to the Indian Army. For example, of the five Indian Army Officers at Farnborough in August 1914, one (Massy) returned to the Indian

Army during the course of the war, while a second (Hoare) returned to the Indian Army shortly after the war. The remaining three (Newall, Pitcher and Reilly) went on to establish notable careers in the interwar RAF.⁶⁸

Notes

1 Squadron Leader Rana T S Chhina, *The Eagle Strikes: The Royal Indian Air Force 1932-1950* (Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research, United Service Institution of India / Ambli Knowledge Resources Pvt Ltd, 2006). The first Indian Air Force unit was formed at Karachi on 1 April 1933, and in a footnote on page 10 of *The Eagle Strikes* Squadron Leader Chhina notes that: 'Till 1981 the Indian Air Force commemorated its raising on this date. However, this was officially changed to 8 October with effect from 1982, on the grounds that this was the date that the service officially came into being with the promulgation of the gazette notification to that effect, and the commissioning of the first six officers into the IAF. A few old timers subsequently dryly remarked that birth was marked from date of delivery, rather than conception!'

2 Chhina, *The Eagle Strikes*. The Indian Air Force became the Royal Indian Air Force on 12 March 1945. However, with the declaration of India as a republic on 26 January 1950 'In keeping with Government policy, the Indian Air Force shed the prefix 'Royal'. It would henceforth be known simply as the Indian Air Force' (*The Eagle Strikes*, page 280).

3 Captain G C B Loch RE, Lieutenant P W L Broke-Smith RE, Captain T H L Spaight RE and Lieutenant C E Colbeck RE. Brigadier P W L Broke-Smith CIE, DSO, OBE. *The History of British Military Aeronautics*, *Royal Engineers Journal*, 1952 (reprinted by The Library Association, 1968), page 19.

4 *Ibid*, page 20.

5 Flight, 9 January 1910, page 26; Michael Paris, 'Air Power and Imperial Defence 1880-1919', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Volume 24, 1989, page 217. References in the latter to 'Captain S D Massey' and 'Colonel Massey' would appear to relate to Captain (later Major) Seaton Dunham Massey and Colonel Harry Stanley Massey respectively. Colonel Massey was elected a vice-president of the Aerial League at the League's first annual general meeting at the Carlton Club in June 1909 (Flight, 12 June 1909, page 348). According to an obituary notice published in Flight on 21 October 1920, Colonel Massey's extensive service experience in India included command of the 19th Bengal Lancers and a post on the Indian General Staff (page 1111).

6 Quoted in Major Peter J Lambert USAF, 'The Forgotten Airwar: Airpower in the Mesopotamian Campaign' (unpublished Masters Degree thesis presented to the Faculty of the US Army Command

and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2003; downloaded from the Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library, US Army Command and Staff College, <http://cgsc.cdmhost.com/cgi-bin/showfile.exe?CISOROOT=/p4013coll2&CISOPTR=77&filename=78.pdf> on 29 July 2007), page 34.

7 Flight, 21 January 1911, page 56. According to this source, 'Capt Dawes, who was the first officer in the regular army to obtain a British pilot certificate, was the first flying man to go out to India from Great Britain, but he is entirely confining himself to the military side of aviation' (page 57). The officer in question would appear to have been Captain G W P Dawes of the Royal Berkshire Regiment, who was awarded Royal Aero Club Certificate No 17 at Wolverhampton on 26 July 1910 whilst flying a Humber monoplane. A brief article in the 29 April 1911 issue of Flight described an accident suffered by a 'Lieut Dawes' when demonstrating his Humber monoplane 'at the Bombay Oval' on 26 March 1911. During the demonstration his aircraft flew into telegraph wires alongside the Bombay-Baroda railway line and force-landed on the track, after which it was struck by a goods train; although the monoplane was seriously damaged, Dawes 'jumped clear before the collision took place, and so escaped serious injury' (page 376). Despite the disparity in rank, this would appear to be a reference to the same officer. However, this is the only possible reference to Captain Dawes' activities in India located by the author whilst researching this article. 8 'Sikhs in Indian Air Force', downloaded from <http://www.sikh-history.com/sikhhist/personalities/military/sikhimaf.htm> on 27 March 2007. This article notes that 'The Maharaja sent his Chief Engineer to Europe for an on-the-spot [sic] study and then ordered three aeroplanes including a Blériot monoplane and Farman biplanes, these aeroplanes arriving in the Punjab in December 1910.' According to a notice in Flight on 22 October 1910, the Maharaja was elected a member of the Royal Aero Club of the United Kingdom on 18 October (page 864). A photograph in the 17 December 1910 issue of Flight is captioned as showing a Lane-Farman 'taken out to India by Mr C W Bowles for His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala' (page 1037). Subsequently, a Flight report on 21 January 1911 stated that the Maharaja 'has purchased a Voisin biplane as well as a Blériot monoplane, with which it is expected that Mr Boyes [sic] will shortly be making trials' (page 57). A report of 'The first small flight of an aeroplane in the Punjab' on 12 February 1911 appeared in Flight on 18 March 1911; according to this report, 'The machine belongs to His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala, and was piloted by Mr C W Bowles.... At the end of the first trial the machine ran into a cannon and smashed one of the runners. It is the Farman type built by Lane of Brooklands' (page 229).

9 The British and Colonial Aeroplane Company Ltd was formed in 1910 and manufactured aircraft under the 'Bristol' name until 1920, when it went

into voluntary liquidation and its assets were transferred to The Bristol Aeroplane Company Ltd. The other British group to arrive in India during the winter of 1910-1911 belonged to the aviation arm of the Humber Motor Company. According to a report in the 26 November 1910 issue of Flight, Humber had concluded a contract 'with the committee of the United Provinces Exhibition, India, under which two of the Company's aviators have this month proceeded to that country with aeroplanes' (page 973). The aviators in question were Mr E Keith Davies and French pilot H Pecquet, flying a Humber Monoplane and Humber-Sommer Biplane respectively. In his Annals of British and Commonwealth Air Transport (Putnam, 1962), John Stroud records that on 18 February 1911 a Humber aeroplane made the world's first Government air mail flight, carrying approximately 6,500 letters and post cards between the United Provinces Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition at Allahabad and Naini Junction, a distance of five miles (page 479). A report of this flight can also be found in the 18 March 1911 issue of Flight (page 223-24). Additionally, the Belgian aviators Baron de Caters and Jules Tyck brought their Farman biplane and Blériot monoplane to India in late 1910. In an article published in Flight on 4 November 1912, the organiser of their activities in India, Ernest Esdaile described the participation of the Belgian aviators in an event at the Tollygunj Golf Club, Calcutta on 28 December 1910. Claude Graham-White and Harry Harper confirm in their work The Aeroplane: Past, Present and Future (T Werner Laurie, 1911), that Tyck 'gave [a] demonstration before [a] large crowd of people' at Calcutta on this date (page 99). Graham-White and Harper also state that on 1 February 1911 Baron de Caters 'gave a demonstration at Bangalore, India, before 25,000 people' (page 60). According to Esdaile, 'The conditions at both Tollygunj and Bangalore Maidan were very favourable, and the authorities, both military and civil, did all in their power to aid the venture. Sir Moore O'Creagh, the Commander-in-Chief, took a very lively and personal interest in the matter, as did Lord Hardinge [the Viceroy] and his staff' (page 1019).

10 Norman Macmillan, Sir Sefton Brancker (William Heinemann, 1935), page 6-7. Although completed and edited by Macmillan, the early part of this work (covering the period between 1877 and 1918) was drafted by Brancker himself prior to his death aboard HM Airship R101 at Allone, near Beauvais, on 5 October 1930.

11 Sir 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 University Press, 1922), page 421.

12 Macmillan, Brancker, page 14.

13 Raleigh, The War in the Air, Volume I pages 421-22. An account of these flights (including extracts from Jullerot's own diary) can also be found in Somnath Sapru, 'An Early Military Reconnaissance in India', Cross and Cockade, Volume 16, No 2, 1985,

page 86.

14 Macmillan, Brancker, page 18. It is evident from this account that Brancker had considerable regard for Jullerot's ability as a pilot; according to Brancker, 'Jullerot's skilful handling when we side-slipped saved us from a much worse smash.' Brancker's reaction to the accident would also appear to have impressed Jullerot. In a footnote to Brancker's account, Macmillan quotes Jullerot as having written that 'We were both flung out, none the worse for it. My companion had scratched his face, but his eyeglass was intact. He is most plucky, for he is arranging to come up with me again, directly the second machine is erected' (footnote, page 19; italics as in original). A second Boxkite was erected on the polo ground at Midnapore, near Calcutta, during February 1911, and an officer from the General Staff was sent to observe and report on the activities of the British and Colonial Aeroplane Company party. However, 'The weather had become very hot and bumpy; the country was difficult and very jungly, we had a certain amount of engine trouble; and the climate combined with the crash had affected Jullerot's health. We accomplished several successful trial flights near the temporary aerodrome on the polo ground, but never worked properly with the troops again, and eventually Jullerot had to go sick and further operations were abandoned. Thus ended the first effort at military aviation in India (page 19)'. 15 Macmillan, Brancker, page 19.

16 Ibid, page 17.

17 Quoted in Paris, 'Air Power and Imperial Defence', page 218.

18 A file relating to this officer is held by The National Archives as WO 374/46677. One of the enclosures is the Royal Military College's 'First Appointees' form, 'to be filled up by successful Candidates for appointment to Commissions in the Army'. On this form Massy requests that his first posting be to 'The Princess of Wales Own Yorkshire Regiment 2nd Batt' and states that his 'Uncle, Lieut Gen Dunham Massy CB, served in this regiment in the Crimea.' The entry for Lieutenant General William Godfrey Dunham Massy in The Dictionary of National Biography, Supplement, January 1901 - December 1911, Volume II Faed-Muybridge (Smith, Elder & Co, 1912; reprinted by Oxford University Press, 1927) indicates that he was the 'eldest of four sons of Major Henry William Massy (1816-1895) of Grantstown and Clonmaine, co Tipperary' (page 585); while that for Colonel Harry Stanley Massy in Who Was Who, Volume II, 1916-1928 (Adam & Charles Black, third edition, 1962) states that this officer was the third son of 'Major H W Massy of Grantstown Hall, Tipperary' (page 712). It is therefore clear that General Massy and Colonel Massy were brothers, and that the latter was therefore the uncle of Captain Massy.

19 An index card relating to the Royal Aero Club Certificate awarded to Captain Massy is held by the Department of Research and Information Services Royal Air Force Museum. According to a

report in Flight of 13 May 1912, on the morning of 9 May 1912 'Capt Massy...got into the machine [a Bristol Biplane] to make his test flights. In landing, during one of these, the machine came down a little heavily, resulting in damage to the propeller and the skid. This was soon put right and Capt Massy the successfully completed the tests, thus making a second brevet won that morning' (page 424).

20 Broke-Smith, 'The History of British Military Aeronautics' page 46; AIR 1/1608/204/85/33. Whilst serving with the Air Battalion, Massy participated in the somewhat less than successful attempt on the part of the Battalion's No 2 Aeroplane Company to deploy from Larkhill to airfields at Hardwick (near Cambridge) and Thetford. In his account of the 'Cambridge Odyssey', Broke-Smith notes that only two of the aeroplanes despatched by the Air Battalion arrived at Hardwick without damage (page 52). Raleigh records that although Captain Massy was one of the five Air Battalion aviators that succeeded in reaching the staging airfield at Oxford, he did not make it any further; for on attempting to take off for to Thetford he 'had engine trouble fifty yards from the start, and completely wrecked his machine without hurting himself at all' (page 193-94).

21 AIR 1/1608/204/85/33.

22 Quoted in Lambert, 'The Forgotten Airwar', page 35.

23 A list of 'Aviators Certificates Granted by the Royal Aero Club of the United Kingdom' contained in the 1916 edition of Jane's All the World's Aircraft (Sampson, Low, Marston and Co) indicates that in addition to those named in the text, the following Indian Army officers were also awarded Certificates prior to the First World War: Major R L Benwell (regiment not indicated, Certificate No 165, Brooklands, 6 December 1911); Captain H C Fielding (38th Dogras, Certificate 212, Brooklands, 30 April 1912); Lieutenant A C H A Eales (regiment not indicated, Certificate No 569, Hendon, 21 July 1913); Captain G Henderson (regiment not indicated, Certificate No 644, Brooklands, 7 July 1913); Captain G C B Buckland (8th Gurkha Rifles, Certificate No 657, Salisbury Plain, 22 October 1913); Captain M G Lee (40th Pathans, Certificate No 700, Brooklands, 8 December 1913); Captain E A H Fell (12th Bengal Cavalry, Certificate No 758, Salisbury Plain, 27 March 1914); and Lieutenant T R Wells (33rd Punjabis, Certificate No 851, Brooklands, 21 July 1914). This list is not necessarily exhaustive.

24 Letter from General Officer Commanding, Canal Defences, Ismalia, to the AA and Quartermaster General, The Force in Egypt, 26 April 1915; on WO 374/46677.

25 AIR 1/120 15/40/73. The estimated costings included £952 for 'Tools and equipment for Erecting and Repair Shops'; £7,655 for 'Aeroplane stores, spares and equipment'; and £600 for 'Bench testing plant'.

26 Flight, 10 May 1913, page 522.

27 Reilly was awarded Royal Aero Club Certificate No 252 at Hendon on 24 July 1912. Jane's All the

Worlds Aircraft, 1916, page 30.
 28 Page 522. In a letter to the AA and Quartermaster General, The Force in Egypt dated 26 April 1915 (on WO 374/46677) the General Officer Commanding, Canal Defences (Major General Sir Alexander Wilson) confirms that in 1913 Massy, Hoare and Newall, 'were sent to England...to go through a course at the Central Flying School'. In Sefton Brancker, Brancker notes that his fellow students on the first Short Course conducted at Upavon by the Central Flying School during July and August 1913 included 'four from the Indian Army' (page 37); this would appear to be a reference to Massy, Hoare, Newall and Reilly.
 29 The London Gazette, Number 28839, Friday, 12 June 1914, page 4620. Captain Hoare, Lieutenant Reilly and Lieutenant Newall were appointed officially to the Indian Central Flying School as instructors on 14 April 1914, 28 December 1913 and 17 November 1913 respectively.
 30 Flight, 4 April 1914, page 374. This report states that the inspection took place 'on Friday of last week'.
 31 Hansard, 7 April 1914, Column 1783 (TNA ZHC 2/569); Flight, 11 April 1914, page 388. One of the school's aircraft was presented by the Maharaja of Rewa and procured by Massy from the UK (Flight, 13 September 1913, page 1015).
 32 AIR 1/2529.
 33 Raleigh The War in the Air, Volume I, page 410.
 34 Typescript No 4 (Army Co-operation) Squadron, RAF, undated; Air Historical Branch collection.
 35 On WO 374/46677.
 36 The London Gazette, No 31476, 28 July 1919, page 9537.
 37 The London Gazette, No 31476, 28 July 1919, page 9537-38.
 38 According to a footnote on Chapter 1, page 2 of AH 21/6/87 The Campaign in Mesopotamia 1914 to 1918: Narrative compiled from Official [sic] documents by the Air Historical Branch (TNA AIR 1/674 21/6/87), 'The Overseas Expeditions from India at the outset were known as Expeditions "A", "B" and "C", "A" being an Expedition to France and "B" to Egypt and a defensive Expedition to East Africa and "C" an offensive Expedition to East Africa. The expedition to Mesopotamia which was sent later was known as Force "D". In a despatch describing 'Military Affairs in the Egyptian Command since the Turks attacked the Suez Canal in February 1915' published in The London Gazette, Number 29632, 21 June 1916, General Sir John Maxwell states that 'The duty of guarding the Suez Canal was allotted to the Indian Expeditionary Force "E" under the command of Major-General Sir A Wilson, KCB' (page 6174). It would therefore appear that the Indian Army deployment to Egypt was designated initially Expedition "B" and later redesignated Expeditionary Force "E".
 39 Air Publication AP 125 A Short History of the Royal Air Force
 40 The London Gazette, Number 29632, 21 June 1916, page 6168.

41 H A Jones, The War in the Air: Being the Story of the part played in the Great War by the Royal Air Force, Volume V (Oxford University Press, 1935) page 251.
 42 The London Gazette, No 29304, 21 September 1915, page 9337.
 43 The Campaign in Mesopotamia, Chapter 3, page 3.
 44 This account is based upon Jones, The War in the Air, Volume V, Chapter V; The Campaign in Mesopotamia, Chapter 3; and No 30 Squadron: Royal Flying Corps Detachment Egypt (unpublished manuscript, Air Historical Branch collection). For a detailed account of the actions of No 30 Squadron in Egypt and Mesopotamia, see also Flat Out: The story of 30 Squadron Royal Air Force by John F Hamlin (Air-Britain, 2002). The promotions of Broke-Smith and Reilly to the temporary rank of Major were announced in The London Gazette, No 29172, 26 May 1915, page 5078. A 'List of Officers serving with the Egypt Detachment: No 30 Squadron' as at 31 October 1915 in No 30 Squadron: Royal Flying Corps Detachment Egypt indicates that Lieutenant Parr had returned to the Egypt by this date.
 45 F M Cutlack, The Australian Flying Corps in the Western and Eastern Theatres of War 1914-1918 (Angus & Robertson, 1923) pages 1-2.
 46 Jones, The War in the Air, Volume V, page 253.
 47 Cutlack, The Australian Flying Corps, page 3. Although Broke-Smith is described by Cutlack as an Indian Army officer, he was actually a British Army RE officer serving with the Indian Army.
 48 The Campaign in Mesopotamia, Chapter 3, page 4.
 49 Jones, The War in the Air, Volume V, page 256ff.
 50 Jones, The War in the Air, Volume V, page 257.
 51 Sir Olaf Caroe, quoted in Michael Barthorp, Afghan Wars and the North-West Frontier 1839-1947 (Cassell, 2002) page 14.
 52 Paris, 'Air Power and Imperial Defence', page 219. Lord Montagu's proposals were described by General Sir Percy Lake in a letter to the Military Secretary at the India Office, General Sir Edmund Barrow, dated 17 August 1915 (on AIR 1/31 15/1/165): Our own proposals in the initial scheme (which was not submitted to the Secretary of State for India) contemplated the establishment of a squadron headquarters near Peshawar, with two flights broken up into groups of three machines (2 active, 1 reserve) at various points from the Malakand through Peshawar down to Bannu, and perhaps Dera Ismail Khan - Quetta later. These were to be supported by a park somewhere centrally situated - a point like Rawalpindi, whence railway communication leads to aero-locations on the frontier. Behind this park we contemplated forming a depot at Sitapur (the former school, prior to the War) whence there are workshops and an aerodrome, and it was intended to have the instructional flight here also.
 53 AIR 1/31 15/1/165 Aeroplane for use on North West Frontier of India (Includg; [sic] Report by Lt Col Pitcher IA).
 54 AIR 1/31 15/1/165.
 55 AIR 1/31 15/1/165.

56 A transcript of this letter forms part of 30 Squadron: Royal Flying Corps Detachment Egypt. The origins of No 30 Squadron are reflected in the palm tree at the centre of the squadron badge.
 57 The London Gazette, No 29253, 5 August 1915, page 7723-24.
 58 No 30 Squadron: Royal Flying Corps Detachment Egypt.
 59 The Campaign in Mesopotamia 1914 to 1918, Chapter 3, page 24.
 60 No 30 Squadron: Royal Flying Corps Detachment Egypt; letter from the War Office to the Under Secretary of State for India, 2 October 1915, on AIR 1/31 15/1/165.
 61 AIR 1/31 15/1/165.
 62 AIR 1/31 15/1/165.
 63 AIR 1/31 15/1/165.
 64 A copy of Lieutenant Colonel Pitcher's report is contained on AIR 1/31 15/1/165.
 65 AIR 2/68, File A.1179 Organisation of the RAF in India 1918-1919. Special Aeroplanes for India, suggestion by Mr Montague [sic], opened 22 June 1918.
 66 Rt Hon Edwin Samuel Montagu MP was the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for India between 1910 and 1914 and later succeeded Sir Austen Chamberlain as Secretary of State for India in June 1917, serving in this position until 1922. He should not be confused with John Walter Edward Douglas-Scott-Montagu, second Baron Montagu of Beaulieu, who as Inspector of Mechanical Transport in the Indian Works Office proposed the deployment of aircraft at airfields along the North West Frontier (see fn 52).
 67 AIR 2/68, File A.1179.
 68 Papers on WO 374/46677 show that Major Seaton Dunham Massy applied to rejoin his parent unit, the 29th Punjabis, whilst serving on attachment to No 3 Reserve Squadron (RS), Shoreham (then part of the Training Brigade RFC) in February 1917. His request was approved and Massy was struck off the strength of the Brigade on 17 March 1917, being ordered to embark at Marseilles for India in the following month. Despite this, Massy would not appear to have reached India immediately; for correspondence on his personal file indicates that he served as the commandant of the Released Indian Prisoners of War Camp at Suez with the temporary rank of Lieutenant Colonel until rejoining his unit in February 1919. The entry for Cuthbert Gurney Hoare in the 1968 edition of Who's Who indicates that he although he continued to serve in the RFC and RAF for the remainder of the war, he too elected to return to the Indian Army postwar, retiring in 1923 with the rank of Brigadier General. He died in 1969. The remaining three former Indian Army officers pursued careers in the peacetime RAF. Entries in interwar editions of The Air Force List show that Air Commodore Duncan le Geyt Pitcher CMG CBE DSO and Group Captain Hugh Lambert Reilly DSO retired from the RAF on 12 April 1929 and 5 August 1934 respectively; although Reilly continued subsequently to be employed by the

Air Ministry as a civilian member of the Deputy Directorate of Intelligence, Department of the Chief of the Air Staff. However, the most significant postwar career was that of Cyril Newall. After holding a series of senior appointments at home and overseas, Air Chief Marshal (later, Marshal of the Royal Air Force) Sir Cyril Newall served as Chief of the Air Staff between September 1937 and October 1940. Following a period as Governor General of New Zealand, Newall returned the UK in 1946 and in the same year he was raised to the peerage. MRAF The Lord Newall died on 30 November 1963. For details of Lord Newall's career, see Air Commodore Henry Probert RAF (Retd), High Commanders of the Royal Air Force (HMSO, 1991) pages 15-18 and 106-107.

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