

## **College of Air Training - Hamble**

The College of Air Training (CAT) started in 1960 to train pilots for the National Airlines BOAC and BEA, which were later to become British Airways. CAT took over the airfield and premises of Air Service Training (AST), a private company, which came to Hamble in 1931 and trained civil and military pilots from all over the world. AST became known as Britain's Air University.

The airfield was formed from farm fields in 1926 when the original south airfield, located where Ensign Park and BP are situated today, could not accommodate the aircraft of that time and a larger airfield was required to serve the local aviation companies. During the Second World War the airfield and AST was one of the country's biggest Spitfire repair bases.

In September 1960 the first 21 cadets to start training at the new College of Air Training were greeted to Hamble by the new Principal, Air Vice Marshall Eddie Bates. The College was state-supported and sponsored by the Air Ministry & the national airlines. The College went on to train civil and military pilots from Britain and overseas. At its peak it had over 50 training aircraft.

In 1982 British Airways withdrew its funding and a private company, Specialist Flight Training, took over the College of Air Training which eventually closed in 1984. The 32 remaining aircraft, and other associated equipment were sold by auction in May 1984. Prior to this Southern Ideal Homes had purchased the land.

Ron Souch of the Antique Aircraft Company and Carill Aviation used the airfield while Southern Ideal Homes produced their development plans and worked towards gaining planning permission. The last aircraft to fly out of Hamble was flown by Ron Souch on 6th April 1986.

Most of the roads of the housing development eventually built on the airfield site have names that are linked with its previous aviation connections.

See 'Previous Meetings' for a report of a talk given to the Society about the College of Air Training in September 2011

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