



Royal Air Force Henlow

The RAF Station at Henlow was established on 10th May 1918 at the end of World War One. Initially it was a depot for the repair and construction of aircraft and the training of the airmen who would be doing this work. In 1924, Henlow became the home of the School of Aeronautical Engineering. It is a little-known fact that the inventor of the jet engine, Sir Frank Whittle, was an Engineering student at the School.

In 1938, No.13 Maintenance Unit (MU) was established at Henlow, responsible for assembling, repairing and modifying front line aircraft throughout the coming war. The War years saw Henlow play a major role in the war effort and it became one of the largest maintenance units in the country. Amongst the aircraft handled here were Hurricanes, Spitfires, Hampdens, Whitleys, Lancasters and Mosquitos. Well over 1000 Hurricanes alone were assembled and modified. At the time the Station strength was around 9000.

After the War, the emphasis on aircraft production declined and a new role was found for Henlow. No.13 MU was disbanded in 1947 and in 1950, the Radio Engineering Unit (REU) was established with responsibility for the installation of ground radio and telecommunications equipment throughout the RAF. The REU also supplied, repaired and calibrated a vast range of radio and test equipment both at home and overseas.

In 1980, a detachment of the RAF Support Command Signals HQ was formed at Henlow. This grew steadily until, in 1982, it was split into two parts, one being RAF Signals Command Support Staffs (RAFSCSS) and the other became the RAF Signals Engineering Establishment (RAFSEE), who were tasked with the design, manufacture and worldwide installation of radio communications, ground radars and other airfield navigational aids, to meet the operational needs of the RAF. In 2000, RAFSEE became an agency of the Defence Communication Service Agency (DCSA). In 2006 the organisation was split to form several Integrated Project Teams (IPTs), one of which is Air Defence and Air Traffic Systems Delivery Team (ADATS DT) providing communication facilities for all three services.

For Further information or to offer memorabilia to the Museum, please contact:

The Curator

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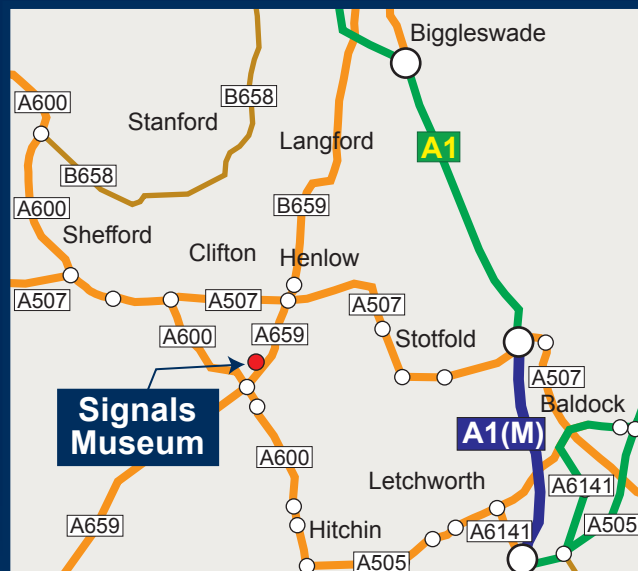


We are open the first Saturday of every month except January

10am - 4pm

No advanced booking necessary

Please take photo ID when booking in at the Guard Room



SIGNALS MUSEUM

RAF • HENLOW





Wireless Operator training at Cranwell 1930

This Museum attempts to tell the story of RAF signals from the beginnings through to the present day. A museum's displays will never be finished but it is hoped that visitors and signallers past, present and future will see something of the rich heritage upon which the Museum specialisation has been built. Whichever category our visitors fall into, we hope that they will find their visit both interesting and informative.

Introduction to the Signals Museum at RAF Henlow



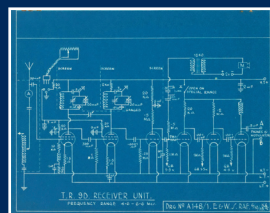
Teleprinter collection

Signals have been an essential part of warfare since prehistoric tribes first discovered that collective violence offered a viable and generally more exciting alternative to poverty and starvation. In the early days, communication was limited to voiced signals supplemented by hunting horns, beacons and drums. Later on the development of writing permitted the exchange of more complex information, but the role of signals remained essentially the same, i.e. the communication of intelligence about the enemy and the dissemination of orders to troops.

The advent of the telegraph in the 19th century represented the most significant advance in signalling for over 4,000 years, but its dependence on fixed infrastructure limited its utility to strategic communication. However, the development of wireless offered the possibility of mobile communications suitable for use on the battlefield. Powered flight became a practical reality at about the same time and the two technologies, signals and aviation, were soon brought together over the bloody battlefields of the Western Front, and the story of RAF Signals began.

RAF signals is a very wide subject that ranges from the early wireless flights of the First World War, through training, radar, communications intelligence and electronic warfare, navigation and approach aids, telecommunications, direction finding, test equipment, calibration and signals security, to communications by satellite and beyond.

Many of the initial exhibits in this Museum came from the now defunct museum attached to No. 1 Radio School at RAF Locking. Other items have been either donated or loaned by the RAF Museum Reserve Collection, other RAF units and enthusiastic individuals.



TR9D Receiver circuit diagram

The Museum's collection has a few items from the very early years of radio, including a Sterling spark transmitter as used by WWI reconnaissance aircraft. There are also some transmitters and receivers that were the standard fit in RAF aircraft during the 1920s and 1930s.

World War II equipment is fairly well represented, although it is becoming increasingly difficult to find some items and this inevitably means that there are many gaps in what is shown. There are examples of transmitters and receivers, both ground based and airborne. There are early airborne radar equipments, early air navigational aids and several examples of telegraphic equipment such as a morse undulator and some teleprinters.

Post war radar is well represented, with a number of consoles and models of radar installations. Also included in the collection is some early test equipment and items such as a selection of radio valves and cathode ray tubes.

T1154 & R1155 were the transmitter and receiver used in most heavy aircraft such as the Lancaster



The Ground Transmitter collection

A "Y" Service room is depicted as it would have been during WWII, when the "Y" Service stations provided Bletchley Park (Station X) and other military organisations with code from German radio signals that helped the Allied Forces find out what the Germans were doing.

As various RAF Signals Schools played an important role in the training of Apprentices, Boy Entrants and other signals personnel, an adjacent display depicts aspects of Apprentice and Boy Entrant training.

As for the exhibits generally, other important items are still needed, as there are many gaps in the collection. Do you have anything of interest that you could offer to the Museum?

A Museum of this size cannot give more than a flavour of this rich heritage. If we have given only passing mention to a particular activity or unit or have omitted it altogether, it is probable that considerations of space or, occasionally, security, are the reason for the omission rather than an attempt to marginalise any particular strand of the story.

Finally, Signals is a very technical and often complex subject, but we have tried to make our small museum interesting to both the specialist and non-specialist alike, so there is a necessary element of compromise between technical detail and accessibility. We hope you will agree that we have got the balance about right. If you notice that something has been missed or something is wrong, then please let us know so that we can take corrective action.



The "Y" Service display