

## History of Air Scout

In the 1930's Scout Troops near to airfields and gliding clubs started to include air activities in their programmes and an 'Air Patrols' pamphlet was produced by HQ's. The Air Scout Branch came into being in January 1941, during the Second World War and provided for air-minded youngsters too young for the ATC where the minimum age was 16 at the time. The response was immediate and enthusiastic, with many demands for literature and advice as Troops and Patrols were formed in many parts of the country. Recruitment was little affected by uniform restrictions imposed by clothes rationing and it was possible to introduce a distinctive uniform in which, for the first time, a beret replaced the traditional Scout hat. Air Scouting reached its numerical peak in 1944. With the end of the War in the following year, numbers began to fall, but there was no lack of enthusiasm in those who stayed on. In October 1950, as a result of successful negotiations with the Air Ministry, a scheme was introduced for Air Scout Troop to be granted Air Ministry recognition provided certain conditions were met. Members of recognised Troops were permitted to wear a special badge and to have the advantage of certain much needed facilities including opportunities for flying experience in service aircraft for Air Scouts who had reached the required standard of training. To begin with, few Troops were strong enough to qualify for recognition but the scheme itself, gave the incentive, so that by 1955, nearly 40 Troops were given Air Ministry recognition. In that year, the Assistant Chief of Staff at the Air Ministry, Air Vice Marshal J.G.W. Weston, accepted appointment as Headquarters Commissioner for Air Scouts. Air Scouts by many of these local clubs.

Very quickly, he prepared and received Committee of the Council approval for a revised policy. 1955 was further notable because it also saw the introduction of Scout gliding courses. In 1959, the Association bought its first two-seater glider and, in the same year, Air Vice Marshal Weston was succeeded as Headquarters Commissioner for Air Scouts by Sir Bernard Chacksfield who held the appointment until 1972 when he was succeeded by Group Captain W.S.O. Randle. He, in turn, handed over to Group Captain G.N. Brierley. In the meantime, the position was renamed Headquarters Commissioner for Air Activities. For some years, up to 1978, the Association maintained an Air Activity Centre at Lasham, near Alton in Hampshire. However, the increase in demand for the facilities at this airfield for other flying purposes gradually diminished its suitability for Air Scouting and the Air Activity Centre closed. 1991 was the 50th Anniversary of Air Scouting. Today, Air Scouting depends very largely on the local availability of suitably qualified instructors and similarly, for practical experience, Troops rely on help from local flying and gliding clubs. On both counts, the Association is extremely grateful for the excellent co-operation and goodwill shown to Air Scouts by many of these local clubs.