

Flying Training in the early 1950s



Tiger Moth T8189 B-L of 4 FTS, flying over the bush near RAF Thornhill, in what was then a beautiful and untroubled Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) during 1951. (Brian Sharman)

Pilot Training

The expansion of RAF fighter squadrons spurred by the Korean War in 1950 stimulated the urgent need for more aircrew, which in turn resulted in a corresponding enlargement in Flying Training Command, particularly during 1951-53. Prior to this the principal pilot-training units were the Flying Training Schools (FTS), most of which combined elementary and basic flying components, mainly using Tiger Moths, and Prentices/Harvards respectively. The Tiger Moth biplanes were replaced with Chipmunk monoplanes from 1950/51 and the Prentices were phased out of service from 1953.

To satisfy the need for more pilots five Basic Flying Training Schools (BFTS) were formed between December 1950 and February 1952, operated by civilian contractors and

equipped with Chipmunks, to supplement the twenty-five Reserve Flying Schools (RFS), most of which had formed in 1947-1949 and were also civilian-operated, flying Tiger Moths, then Chipmunks, with a few also flying Prentices and Harvards, while a minority operated Ansons or Oxfords for twin-engined training. The RFSs disbanded in 1953-1954 but their elementary training work continued with the University Air Squadrons (UAS).

After their elementary flying training most students went to a Flying Training School (FTS) where they progressed to 'wings' standard, i.e. the award of their flying brevet, attained on the Prentice and/or Harvard, eg 1 FTS Oakington, 2 FTS Clunton, and 3 FTS Feltwell. Provided they passed this course the majority were posted to an Advanced Flying School (AFS) most of which introduced the students to jets, being equipped with Meteors or



Tiger Moth N6848 R-13 of 18 RFS, Fair Oaks, 2 August 1951. (Raymond Rayner)



Chipmunk T.10 WD337 R-24 of 23 RFS, Usworth, in 1951. (Eric Taylor)