



NEWS

208 SQUADRON ATC CELEBRATES 70 YEARS

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By Ene Kitching - 208 Sqn

208 (North Leeds) Squadron Air Training Corps celebrated its 70th Anniversary on Friday, 4 February 2011, at its headquarters on Oakwood Lane, Leeds. Commanding Officer Flt Lt Chris Sheard welcomed guests, including Michael Fox, the Deputy Lord Lieutenant, Brenda Lancaster, Lord Mayor Elect, Councillor Matthew Loble, Councillor Valerie Kendal plus current and ex cadets, many of whom arrived clutching photograph albums and memorabilia recalling their time in the ATC. Guests also included many adult volunteers who are a vital part of the continuing success of the Air Training Corps.



The evening marked the beginning of a year of celebrations for 208 Squadron and the other 917 squadrons in the UK. On the 5 February 1941, the Air Training Corps was granted a Royal Warrant by King George VI to prepare young men for the RAF.

Today the Air Training Corps is one of the largest voluntary youth organisations, with over 40,000 cadets and adult volunteers. It not only prepares young people aged 13-19, both male and female, for a career in the RAF, but it also offers them the opportunities and experiences they won't find elsewhere – flying, gliding, shooting, adventurous training and community activities. Cadets take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme and are able to study for the BTEC Award and participate in events which develop the valuable life skills of leadership and good citizenship.



During the evening guests enjoyed presentations showing 208 Squadron's history and its close and continuing links with Oakwood and Roundhay – in 1941, the Squadron was affiliated with the Blackburn Aircraft factory located on the site currently occupied by Tesco and Homebase. The three presenters each have a long history with 208 Squadron. Civilian Instructor Dale Kitching's grandfather, Bill Hartwell, had been the Squadron's first Officer Commanding and his parents had met when his father had been a cadet. W/O Andy Campbell has been with 208 for 32 years. Fg Off Sara Gibson's father, Paul Gibson, had been associated with 208 for over 49 years, and Sara for 21 years, making a total of 70 years between them.



The Air Training Corps has come a long way since those dark days of World War II and even though a great part of the evening was dedicated to looking back, the ATC has a bright future. Kingsley Simpson from Moortown has been a cadet for over seven years and that evening, at the age of 20, he attended his final parade. However, Kingsley is not finished with 208 Squadron. "I want to snap back straight into it as a volunteer to inspire others and to give something back. If you enjoy a good time, the ATC is fantastic," he commented.

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On May 17th at the Inter Squadron athletics, Woodburn Stadium, Sheffield 208 Squadron were overall winners of the day, coming first place in junior and senior girls, attaining for the squadron 6 Gold medals, 9 silver and 1 Bronze. [more->](#)