

April-18



Dear Club Member,

April marks the 100th anniversary of the forming of the RAF. The British Royal Airforce was formed towards the end of World War I and is the oldest independent airforce in the world. It wasn't the first airborne combat force, but was the first to be independent of either Army or Navy control. At the end of World War I the newly formed force was made up of 20,000 aircraft, and 300,000 personal.

Your fibre this month is based on the RAF uniform, with a historic nod to it's early formation. The RAF was formed from the combination of the air branches of the Royal Navy, and the Army. So the colour these month nods towards the uniform of those branches of the British Armed Forces. The uniform itself has remained unchanged since the 1920's. The initial uniform colour as a shade of pale blue. Popular rumour has it that this colour was chosen because there was a surplus of cloth following the disbandment of the Imperial Russian Cavalry, who wore the same colour, after the Russian Revolution. The colour was unpopular, it was impractical, and thought by the servicemen to be unstylish. By September 1919 the colour was switched to the now familiar blue-grey shade. At the start of World War II the colour of the uniform provided a slight incentive for many young men, who felt that the RAF uniform was preferable to that of the Army.

Women were involved in the RAF from the very beginning In 1918 they acted as mechanics, freeing up men for combat roles. This continued during World War II, but the members of the Women's RAF didn't fly planes, they just performed ground support roles. There were female pilots. bu they were members of the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) Service. Unmarried women had to perform national service in the same way as the men, either ending up in one of the female branches of the Armed Forces, or in the Land Army, or in the ATA. The force was made up of women, or of pilots who didn't meet the physical standards to fly in the RAF. The ATA played a crucial role in keeping the RAF flying during World War II, they were responsible for ferrying planes around the country from factories to airfields. In 1943 women received equal pay for their work as the men employed in the ATA, a first for the British Government. At the end of the war the ATA was disbanded, with very little recognition for the work carried out by the force. In 2008 they were finally recognised with an award.

Happy Spinning,
Katie

Further Reading-

Picture Gallery showing 100 years of RAF history-

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/gallery/2018/apr/01/100-years-of-the-raf-in-pictures>

Firsthand account of a volunteer who joined the RAF to avoid conscription in the Army-

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/08/a2307908.shtml>

History of the ATA-

<https://www.britishairways.com/en-gb/information/about-ba/history-and-heritage/explore-our-past/the-air-transport-auxiliary>

First hand account by a female ATA pilot-

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/tv/entries/cbb743cb-36a2-3011-8a33-34299cafc194>

<https://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/world-war-two/world-war-two-in-western-europe/battle-of-britain/spitfire-girls/>