

The rotary engine can be likened to a waggon wheel. the spokes being the nine cylenders and the hub the crank shaft into which petrol are and castoroil are rune- dasteroil fpr oiling the cylenders because it does not mix with thepetrol- to feed the cylenders. The two bladed propellor is attached to this wheel and the whole structure rotates. There was also a stationary engine in some machines such as the S.E.5 (Sopworth Experimental 5) - The wings were of some material stretched over a frame and these were kept in place by wires called landing and flying wires. On the dash board you had a speedometer-uktimeter-for height- and apetrol gauge. Nothing like the present day machine dash boards. To start the engine one switched on -ordinary house switch- and then the mechanic, after having turned the prop several times to suck in petrol to thr cylenders. The next command or order was contact and then the mechanic gave the propellor one mighty swing and hoped the damn thing would fire, start- Today of course they have self starters. Well you ran the engine for a while and then waved to the mechanic and he pulled the chocks away from the wheels and off you went down the run way. They wheels of the undercarriage were not detracted as today.

The training wings here were 28 - 74 and 84. The O.C. of 28 was Piere van Rynaveld later Sir Piere who after the war flew from England to S.A. taking about a month for the trip. He was of course supposed to be doing a survey of a possible Cape to Cairo airroute.

To diverse for a while and as a matter of interest while I think of it in mentioning van Ryneveld. While I was on leave in Serowe after the war a Major Holthouse and Colonel Courtreat arrived and spent a few days with us at Serowe. They doing a survey of sites for possible dromes on the route and had decided that there should be one at Palapye Road near Serowe. In the course of conversation one day Courtreat, knowing I had served with the airforce, asked If I wuld consider supervising the construction of two drome in the Protectorate and later take charge. I thought the matter over bu at the time thought there was no future for ait traffic. It must be remembered that at time all planes were Biplanes and were small and hot capable of carrying big loads. Today of course as we all know the aeroplanes carry all sorts of freight and padangers to which there is apparently now no limit. They also travel at such terrific speed. Well Cortreat eventually motored from the Cape to Cairo ad Holt-house became director of Civil aviation in this country- a Government job- and Van Rynaveld of course beame General and chief of staff. Well perhaps I missed a good job- bu I am quite satisfied with my life which I have enjoyed, every minnte of it.

Well to get on with my story as an airman. We had to be on the drome on call at certain hours but on account of the shortage of machines and instructors as I have already mentioned it was going to be some time before we became airmen. In those days, even with the delays it took less time to train a man than today when it takes a couple of years. We were supposed to do about four hours dual with an instructor and then five or six hours solo before being pushed onto a fighter machine as the S.E.5 or Sopworth Camel etc. for up to say eight to ten hours by which time you were considered ready for the firing line. You had of course gun through a course pf gunnery learning to use the Vickers and Lewis machine guns. While waiting our turn to fly there were many other duties, learn something of the rigging and construction of a machune, navigation, We spent quite a lot of time in the hangars watching mechanics repairing machines, rigging engines, guns and so on..

As a matter of interest I have just been checking my records and Log Book and find that I joined the R.F.C. on t e 7th.November 1917 and and was ent only posted to a training school, Castle Bromwich-on the 25th January 1918 which gives some idea-two and a half months- it took to train a man from the recruit stage to be fully trained. We should- having hsd training in two campaigns- have been posted straight to a training squadron for flying as were the many men who were allowed to transfer from a infantry Unit straight- to the Flying Corps and posted straight away to a flying School. It was not for us to tell them what to do. The Imperial Military