

WEST ESSEX AVIATION

AIRFIELDS & LANDING GROUNDS

ABRIDGE [Loughton Air Park]

One of the lesser-known civil airfields in the West Essex area, Abridge was short lived and known by a number of titles. The site, part of the modern Piggotts Farm, was situated about half a mile north of Abridge village and west of the B172 Abridge to Theydon Bois road and the present farm buildings. The land that was once a grass airfield is now 80 agricultural acres bisected by a motorway.

A small private landing ground with restricted access, the field offered a maximum landing run of 2,400ft in a NE/SW direction. Eventually there was a 70ft steel hanger with a 41 ft wide doorway on the eastern boundary, this being supplemented by three smaller metal lock up hangers each with 13ft 6inch wide doorways immediately to its north side. The only other building noted as related to the flying field was the club house on the south side of the field. Local press reports in 1932 stated that by then only the hanger and a single example of lock ups was then extant. Press reports also gave a slight variation on the dimensions of the landing ground, stating that it was set in 100 acres and gave a maximum run of 1,000yds [3,000ft].

Although this aerodrome was reported to have opened early in 1932 for the Essex Flying Club, an application to the Air Ministry for a licence was dated as late in the year as November 12. Operating with an Avro 504K G-ABWK, the Essex Flying Club gave way to another when the Abridge site received its licence as a private aerodrome on November 29, 1932 under the name of Loughton Air Park, Abridge. The new operator was Commercial Airways (Essex) Ltd., a company registered in March 1933. They assisted in the forming of the East Anglian Aero Club. Adverts for the new venue for flying training started to appear from March 1933.

COMMERCIAL AIRWAYS	
(Essex) LTD.	
FOR BUSINESS AND PLEASURE	
AIR TAXIS. FLYING TUITION.	
Cheapest Rates. Express Aircraft.	'Phone : THEYDON BOIS 224.
LOUGHTON AERODROME, ABRIDGE, ES'X	

30/- SOLO	NORFOLK & NORWICH	THREE MACHINES
HOUSEHOLD, NORWICH		37/6 DUAL

Wilfred J Lewington, the Managing Director of Commercial Airlines, applied for the operating licence and was given as the person entering into the lease of Piggotts Farm with the owners B Padfield of Chigwell and Whitbread Co. Ltd. He gave his address as Gilbert Street, Waltham Cross, and called the flying site Loughton Aerodrome, Abridge. Other characters in the operation were Flt. Lt. W R Bannister RAFO, the Chief Flying Instructor [CFI] and Mr. P H Wellum, the Display Secretary. The club President was Sir Claude Champion de Crespigny, Bt, and the chairman was Vernon Blanchard.

In the 1932 licence application the activities of Commercial Airways [Essex] were given as regular air services to Leicester, Nottingham, Leeds, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Birmingham and Liverpool, air taxi, charter, flying tuition, joyriding, stunt exhibitions, parachuting and wing walking. The company had a severely restricted fleet at that time, just one Bristol Fighter, so it seems that the claim may have been somewhat exaggerated. The initial operating licence restricted use to the Avro 504K, Bristol Fighter and DH Moth.

The flying club had a number of aircraft. Two Bristol Fighters, G-ABZG and G-ACFK, the latter of which were not certificated, and two DH Moths. One of the Moth aircraft was a DH60G c/n 1022 G-AADP which served the East Anglian Aero Club from 1933 until it was written off on September 9, 1934 supposedly after an accident at Abridge in the June. Other sources suggest that the final accident occurred on the September date. The Moth collided with the Flying ClubHouse, causing the pilot Neville Browning slight injuries. The other Moth in use at Abridge was G-ABEO. An Airspeed Courier was ordered and a request for the type to be added to the licence, effective from December 1933,

made. Although there is a suggestion that this type may have operated briefly from Abridge in 1934, one was not delivered to the company.

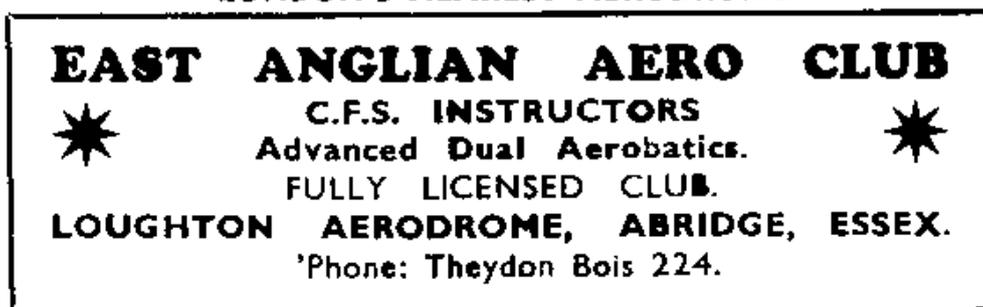
Mr. John Lockwood MP officially opened the airfield on June 17, 1933. The ceremony took place in between spells of pouring rain before a crowd of 400-500 spectators. Contemporary local press reports of the opening day stated that several Moth aircraft, a Bristol, a Spider high wing monoplane, and a Hillman Airways Dragon aircraft were present. John Lipton, at 11 years the youngest pilot then in the UK, gave a flying display. As well as the main figures associated with the club, Mr. D Kinnear, the CFI of the Broxbourne based London General Omnibus Company [LGOC] Flying Club, was present at the opening.

Bannister, the Club CFI, had previously held the same post with the Herts & Essex FC at Broxbourne. On a wider level he was better known for his involvement in the 1933 King's Cup Air Race. On July 8 Bannister flew Norman Killian's Pobjoy Comper Swift G-ABJR in a field of 42 entrants without success. Bannister died in an air crash whilst the DH89 Dragon Rapide he was flying for Hillman Airway's during October 1934 crashed into the Channel off Folkestone.

There were a number of other aircraft users at Abridge including Plane Advertising which operated three Avro 553's [G-ACAW, G-ACAX and G-ACRP], S T Lowe's Comper Swift G-ABWE, Ilford Aviation's Swallow G-ACYY, Miss E R Gerren's Redwing G-ADBO and a prototype of the Supermarine Seamew. The latter arrived from Felixstowe on the back of a lorry.



LONDON'S NEAREST AERODROME



The East Anglian Aero Club was not a success. Although improvements had been forced upon them to renew the licence once already an Air Ministry inspection on April 29, 1936 revealed a neglected landing ground which was considered to be unsafe to undertake training on. The licence was surrendered on June 16, 1936 and the company went into liquidation.

The demise of the licensed operator was not to lead to the immediate demise of the airfield and the other operations continued. In spite of impending troubles afflicting the operators of Loughton Air Park, an air show was arranged for the afternoon of Sunday June 28, 1936. Tom Campbell Black arranged a British Empire Air Display for which adults were charged admission of 1/- and children 6d. Probably reflecting the class of persons with access to such transportation, the car park was also charged at 1/-. The air display included aircraft such as the Drone and a Flying Flea. Flights were offered at 3/6d for adults and 2/6d for children.

The London Transport (Central Omnibuses) Sports Association Flying Club took a lease on the buildings and about one third of the site previously rented to the East Anglian Aero Club. After the demise of Commercial Airways the Loughton Air Park training operations were taken over by Atlas Air Services Ltd., operating from Croydon. The company took over the remaining two thirds of the airfield, but also gained access to the other third. They set to and undertook improvements to the flying surface and following an inspection on August 26, Lt. Col. Amos H Ronan, a director of Atlas, was granted a licence for one year from September 5, 1936. The new Atlas operations were first advertised as about to commence in "The Aeroplane" on September 9, 1936. The September 23 edition confirmed that operations from the airfield, now called Abridge, had started.

On November 20 in the same year Atlas formed the Abridge Flying Club Ltd., and officially changed the name of the airfield from Loughton Air Park to Abridge. It was registered as a public company on November 26. The flying club had a nominal capital of £1,000 in 4,000 ordinary shares of 5/- each. The directors of the new operation were Lt. Col. Amos H Ronan, John Flynn and Joseph W Anderson (all of the Atlas operation). Richard V D Beaumont was the Club Secretary. The CFI was Eric H Alliott, who had previously held an instructional post with the Brooklands Flying Club. Flynn also appears to have been a flying instructor, it being noted in "The Aeroplane" that he was "stuck at Croydon" (and unable to get to Abridge) until December 19. The ground subject instructor was D J Adie.

In late September 1936 it was stated that a Klemm belonging to Ilford Aviation, G-ACYY, a Moth and a Topsy were in service at Abridge. There were a number of possible Moth aircraft this one may have been, but the Topsy can only have been Topsy T2 G-AENF (ex-Belgian OO-ASA) the first of its type registered in the UK on October 29, 1936 and eventually burned in 1948. It was expected that Major A Q Cooper's Cierva C-30A Autogiro, G-ADBJ, would be "on site shortly".

The British Klemm L25C 1A Swallow, G-ACYY, was registered to Ilford Aviation Co, Ltd., at Abridge in July 1936. Although ownership was transferred to Coventry (Civil) Aviation Ltd., at Whitley late in 1938 the aircraft was shown to be with the Civil Air Guard in Chigwell during 1939 until ending its days at Maylands in 1940. Another Abridge resident aircraft was a Spartan 3 seat G-ABYG owned by Miss Joan L A Hughes and N M Browning. Miss Hughes was from Woodford and had been taught to fly shortly after her 17th birthday on May 1, 1935. The Spartan was present from May 1935 until September 1937. Miss Hughes was an instructor with the Civil Air Guard - also with the Romford club at Chigwell. She later joined the ATA during the war years and was awarded the MBE.

Plans to operate scheduled air services from Abridge came to nothing.

The second resident flying club also found itself in difficulties in 1936 and ceased trading. From a lack of contemporary reports in the aeronautical press it may have been that the malaise affecting the East Anglian Flying Club failed to go away. The aerodrome licence lapsed on August 7, 1937 and was suspended when Lt. Col. Ronan failed to appear at an inspection on August 17. No further commercial flying was allowed. Yapton Aero Club of Ford made a request to use the site on August 28 1937 as their own base was adversely affected by military expansion. The application to use ground trainers, Drones, Kronfield 2-seaters and Moths was turned down on the grounds of potential interference with the setting up of No.21 ERFTS at nearby Stapleford. On April 21, 1938 Romford Flying Club made a similar application and on November 26, 1938 Neville Browning applied for permission for Civil Air Guard training to be carried out there. Both were turned down, presumably for the same reason.

At what stage unlicensed private flying from the airfield also ceased is unknown. It can be assumed that a final cut off date associated with the start of the war in September 1939 will have been the last possible.

In 1936 a report on aviation in Essex [Air planning in the county of Essex, Norman & Dawbarn April 1936] stated that Abridge was... 100 feet above mean sea, level, 3 miles south of Epping Forest, is a private aerodrome controlled by D. J. Lewington,. Esq., of Branscombe, Gilbert Street, Waltham Cross, Herts. It is at present disused. The surface is grass covered with dimensions North/South 660 yards, North-east/South-west 800 yards, East/West 650 yards, and South-east/North-west 600 yards. Facilities for aircraft included three small temporary hangars, petrol, oil, water and minor repairs. Transport facilities include omnibus service to Epping past the Aerodrome and a service from London to Abridge one mile distant. Theydon Bois Railway Station is two miles and Chigwell Lane 1miles from the Aerodrome. A belt of trees 25 feet high along the south.-west boundary forms the only serious obstruction. We have noted that serious gradients occur near the boundaries of the landing area and that extension would not be possible.

Long since returned to agricultural use, the old landing ground was dissected by the building of the M11 London-Cambridge motorway in 1974.

BARKING

The failure of the Aeronautical Society to attract its members to its Dagenham landing ground in any numbers eventually led to it being abandoned. The majority of members thought it rough and unsuitable for their flimsy craft and only seven are known to have used it for their early aeronautical experiments. Many would be manufacturers were also members of the Royal Aero Club and tended to prefer a site offered by them at Eastchurch on the Isle of Sheppey, Kent.

One of the few users of Dagenham, Frederick Handley Page, set up his aircraft building factory at Creekmouth, Barking in 1909, the buildings already on site being supplemented by those acquired from the closure of the Dagenham flying site in January 1910.

Handley Page Limited, the first private limited company formed in Britain for the specific purpose of aeronautical engineering, was set up on June 17, 1909. Its first task was the building of a large shed to undertake its manufacturing task. Almost all of the early activity of this great aircraft manufacturer at Barking related to parts manufacture for other designers and experimenters. Regardless of this activity for others, Handley Page was able to construct his first machine, the Type B, early in 1910. The Type B, or HP2, a bi-plane was not an HP design, merely a modification of a type designed by another aeronautical engineer and constructed at Barking. It suffered an accident and never flew whilst at Barking. The first Handley Page design to fly, the Type A or HPI "Blue bird", a monoplane, first flew powered by a 20hp engine on May 26, 1910 and crashed. It was not then further proceeded with in this form.

Two machines under construction, and part of the works, suffered damage in gales during 1910. One of this pair of aircraft, a reconstruction variously identified as the HP2B and HP3, had been undertaking the preliminaries to flight trials prior to the damage. In the event it never flew from Barking, it was transported to Liverpool and flew there.



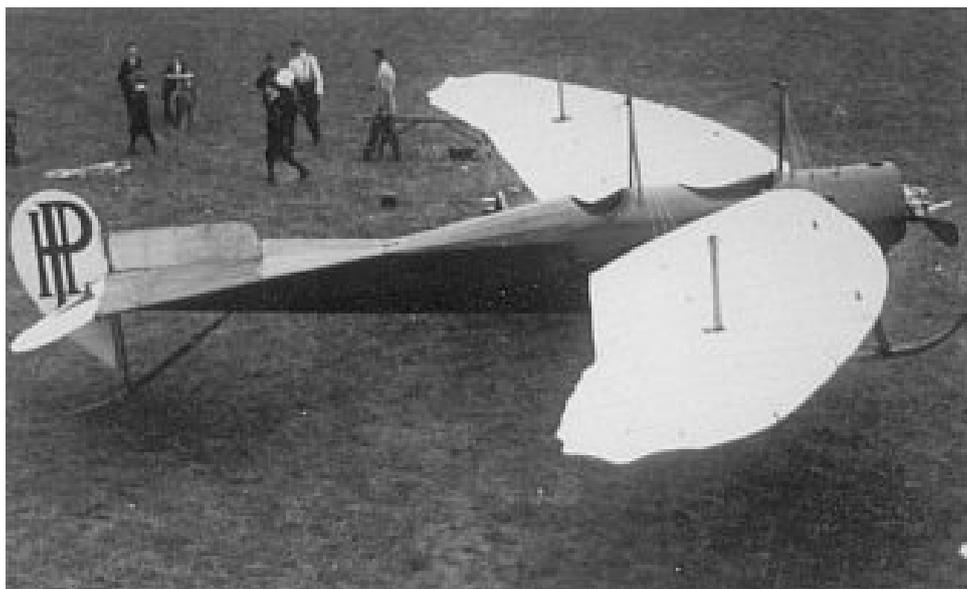
Other unsuccessful machines constructed at Barking included the Baden-Powell Scout, the Mackenzie-Hughes Triplane and a further Handley- Page design the Type D or HP4. A Monoplane nicknamed "Antiseptic" and "Yellow Peril" from its colour scheme, it was designed with a 35hp Green engine for

the April 1911 Olympia Aero Show. Work began on it at Barking in October 1910 and it appeared as intended, but still unflown, at the show. It first flew from a 500 yard by 1,000 yard sports ground at Fairlop on July 15, 1911 but crashed on its return. This machine was rebuilt quite easily, re-emerging as with a 50hp Isaacson engine and flying on several occasions from Fairlop.

The Handley Page Type E, or HPS, was another monoplane design also confusingly known as "Yellow Peril". Powered by a 50hp Gnome, the first two seat design by the company, it was the final Handley Page design to fly from West Essex. Built at Barking it made its first flight at Fairlop sports ground on April 26, 1911.

The Handley Page Type F, also side-by-side two seat, was to be the last aircraft built at the Barking works. Powered by a 70hp engine the machine was transported, unflown, to Larkhill to participate in the Military Trials of August 1912.

By then it was quite clear that the flying area at Barking was somewhat worse than that previously offered at Dagenham, a situation which had led to the Barking built Type D, and others, being transported to the sports ground situated at Fairlop.



Handley Page Limited, a company name that remained at the forefront of British aviation for 61 years, removed their building activities to larger premises situated at Cricklewood. Some sources give the date of this removal as December 1911, others as 1912. The former date would not fit in with the construction of the type F at Barking.

The Barking creek site is not known to have had any further aviation connections.

BROXBOURNE

One of the less well known civil airfields in the West Essex area, a matter exacerbated by the airfield name. Although taking the name of the town situated to its west - Broxbourne, Hertfordshire - its site actually lies half in that county and half in Essex. It was actually closest to the Essex village of Nazeing.

Supposedly at the instigation of F E Darlow, the site was developed from agricultural land into a small airfield late in 1930, he had been closely involved with the formation of a gliding club at Fairlop. Darlow approached two well known motor cycle speedway riders 'Buster' and Roger Frogley and suggested the formation of an aero club on their fathers land at Nazeing; Alexander Frogley had died some time earlier and the land was left with Mrs Tatsford Frogley.

Roger Frogley, who with 'Buster' had raced at the first British speedway race held at High Beech, Epping Forest, in February 1928, continued to race until 1934. Able, it was said, to command a massive £100 for each meeting he graced, for the first few years finance for aeronautical aspirations was not a problem.

The aerodrome was licensed from November 13, 1930 as the home of the Herts & Essex Flying Club, so named because of the county boundary running across the aerodrome. The site was on 55 acres of land leased for 21 years. Darlow remained the club Secretary until the war when he joined the Fleet Air Arm.

The first club aircraft Roger Frogley's own DH6OX Moth G-EBVK. In the spring of 1931 a clubhouse and hangar had been erected, with-instruction being undertaken under the leadership of the CFI Flight Lt. W R Bannister. Bannister did not stay long, in 1933 he was CFI with the East Anglian Aero Club operation from Loughton Air Park, and later still he died when the Hillman Airways Dragon Rapide he was piloting crashed into the English Channel during October 1934.

Broxbourne was officially opened on the afternoon Sunday June 14, 1931 by comedian Will Hay with Jim and Amy Mollison (Johnson), famous pilots of the day. Seeking good publicity for their operation, the Frogley's saw that the Mollison's were enlisted as joint Presidents of the H&E.

Initially the Frogley's continued to spend a majority of their time with speedway racing, but eventually each was spending more and more time with the H&E. Roger took his 'B' licence and became the club CFI after retiring from the track (and thereby presumably displacing Bannister to Loughton). 'Buster' Frogley, one time first ever Captain of Wembley Lions speedway team also succumbed to aviation and took on the role of Managing Director.

As they were already public figures and able to command the attention of a large section of the media, the brother's attempts at securing good publicity

for their fledgling flying operation paid off handsomely. The club soon gained a good name for itself at both home and abroad, this in turn leading to the growth in the number of students attending courses from outside the immediate area. This pleasing situation reached such proportions that the clubhouse was extended progressively to include more and more accommodation and facilities.

The Herts & Essex continued to expand and in March 1934 it was being reported that they had trained a total of 96 pilots, 175 of the 362 members being flyers. In 1933 the Club's five Moth's (3 Cirrus and 2 Gipsy) had accrued 2,500 hours flight time. By 1936 there had been a big expansion in hanger and workshop accommodation to cater for a growing fleet of aircraft. By 1937 the fleet had grown to five Moths, one Miles Hawk, one B.A. Swallow and one Stinson Junior.

Herts & Essex was not the only flying club to occupy Broxbourne pre-war. Among others, the London General Omnibus Company Flying Club (LGOC) chose to base their aircraft there. Formed in 1931 the club was open to anyone who worked on the London Buses at a fee of 6d (2½p) weekly. A large membership was touted for by dragging a Robinson Redwing around each of the forty-eight bus garages on the back of a lorry, over 1,000 applied and the £25 brought in weekly to club funds made the project viable. A new Robinson Redwing G-ABMV, was purchased for £400 in July 1931 and set the club on its way. The CFI in 1932 was D. Kinnear.

The economics of this system were undoubtedly similar to that touted elsewhere by Miss Page of the Redwing Aircraft Co in late 1931. Attempts to gain the creation of a London police flying club at 6d a week failed.

The LGOC Redwing was sold late in 1932 and replaced by a Gipsy Moth, this being replaced in turn by another of the same type and this later joined by a Moth Major. Club facilities were rented at £125 annually. As was always intended by the scheme, the busmen were provided with a subsidised method of learning to fly. It was reckoned that members could gain a pilots licence at a cost of as little as £5 as compared with a more usual rate of £25. By 1937 the LGOC fleet consisted of two Moth Majors, one Gipsy Moth and one Avro Avian (Genet). In later years the LGOC changed its name, thereby reflecting the progression towards the modern London Transport.

A brief fellow occupier of the airfield was a company called Deekay Aircraft Ltd who between 1936 and 1939 undertook experiments with the manufacture of a plastic aircraft wing and then an aircraft, the Deekay Knight, before leaving the site for Glasgow.

The 1936 report on aviation in Essex [Air planning in the county of Essex, Norman & Dawbarn April 1936] made mention of Broxbourne.

In 1938 two events important to the development of the Herts & Essex took place. A unit of the Civil Air Guard (CAG) was set up at Broxbourne, the eventual membership rising to 202, and a contract to operate an RAF

Reserve Flying School was gained at Waltham Aerodrome, Grimsby. The Waltham offshoot, Grimsby Aviation Ltd., operated club flying and support of another CAG with three BA Swallows and three Avro Avian's.

At Broxbourne the aircraft in use in September 1939 numbered 24. All flying ceased upon the outbreak of war, many of the club aircraft being impressed, others - twelve in all - were deemed unsuitable and were left to rot.

The airfield became a repair and maintenance base for light aircraft, a role it kept throughout the war years. Some further expansion of buildings took place. Types often seen in this period included a number of Percival types and Canadian built Harvard trainers (in for modification). In addition a number of other types including the Battle, Spitfire, Hurricane, Oxford, Anson and Wellington.

The Frogley's returned after the war and set up a new flying operation based upon an Auster Autocrat, G-AGXI, from May 1946. They continued to operate successfully (as Herts & Essex Aero Club (1946) Ltd) in spite of a catastrophic hanger fire in late June 1947 which destroyed three Proctor's and eight Tiger Moth's as well as a pair of hangers and a set of lock up's. They were operating at full strength again by January 1948, with a fleet of five Tiger Moth's, four Magister's, three Auster's and a Hornet Moth.



In 1953 when they sold the site and moved to Stapleford Tawney (which see) the Broxbourne site was used for gravel workings and was then passed to other uses including engineering. Part of the site now includes the works of Nazeing Glass.

CHIGWELL

At least three sites were, correctly and incorrectly, to be known as CHIGWELL at various times. These were:-

CHIGWELL 1

The oldest site to hold the name of Chigwell (Airport) was a field at Fairlop which lies well outside either the present, or any past, local authority area known as Chigwell. It is adjacent to the Hainault Industrial Estate, Romford, in the modern local authority area of Barking and Dagenham.

Although an incorrect title, it was used on a number of occasions as a point of reference, particularly in the 1930s and therefore pre-dating any of the other aeronautical references to Chigwell.

The location was, and still is, the field situated immediately to the north of Hainault Lodge at the Hog Hill end of Forest Road. Close to Hainault Forest and bordered on its northern side by industrial site buildings adjacent to Fowler Road, it now clearly features a pronounced hump of uncertain vintage which precludes being able to see one from one end of the field to the other. Even when in irregular use before the war the field was not particularly suitable for extensive aircraft use, as the pilot of the Bristol 130, the prototype Bombay military transport, was to find when he severely damaged the aircraft at this location in 1939.

The mid-1930s plans to set up an airport at 'Chigwell' do not relate to this site either, but they clearly demonstrate how this location gained the title of Chigwell by default. Fairlop, the true location for this projected airport is even further distant from the area of its namesake and appears under that heading.

RAF CHIGWELL

The Royal Air Force station Chigwell, the only aeronautical location to hold the name correctly, was set up as the recruiting station for No.909 Balloon Unit and opened on May 16, 1938. With a new war clearly looming, a new formation was set up to operate a variant on the Great War defensive balloon and the observation kite balloon of the Western Front. Largely concentrated on a site to the east of the River Roding it lay in between the area of its title and Buckhurst Hill. The site was mainly concentrated in an area to the north of Roding Lane but there were a number of minor satellite works, including some which encroached upon the site of the former civil airfield of New Barns Farm to the south and across Roding Lane to the east.



On August 4, 1938 No.4 Balloon Centre was established there, with No.30 Barrage Balloon Group, the local operational army being based there in 1940. The site is best remembered as the home of the Central Test Board assessing airmen for ground trades.



Although it was a defensive operation with a largely passive role in the war, it was to find itself in receipt of the attention of enemy bombs.

After the war the HQ of 253 Signals Unit was formed from April 1, 1952, this being followed on August 15, 1952 by a ground radar calibration unit. In 1956 an Aerial Erectors School Unit operated until August. Its status of RAF station ceased on December 1, 1958 but the Ground Radio Servicing Unit remained until October 16, 1961.

The structures marking the station bear little resemblance to those other local airfields blessed with runways accommodating normal aircraft rather than derigibles. Mainly sited to the north and west of Roding Lane and west of the present M11 motorway much of the original structure was bulldozed in building the motorway and increasingly encroached upon by a projected motorway service area, presently the base for motorway police, and a large sports complex.



Not all of the former site has been lost and it is thanks in part to the creation of a nature reserve in the area that parts of the RAF site were still visible into the 1990s.

CHIGWELL ROAD, WOODFORD

All we really know of this landing ground is that it was listed in a Metropolitan Police document as an airfield in 1921. As such it was subject to police inspection by officers from the station at Mornington Road, Woodford Wells.

Although there was a World War 1 landing ground situated at map reference 5136W 0002E (placing it immediately to the south of the school off St. Barnabas Road, Woodford Green), the exact location of this airfield remains a mystery. The modern A113 Chigwell Road extends northwards along the Roding Valley from South Woodford, crosses the Southend Road, and terminates just beyond the location of the former Claybury Asylum in Woodford Bridge, somewhat east of the map reference.

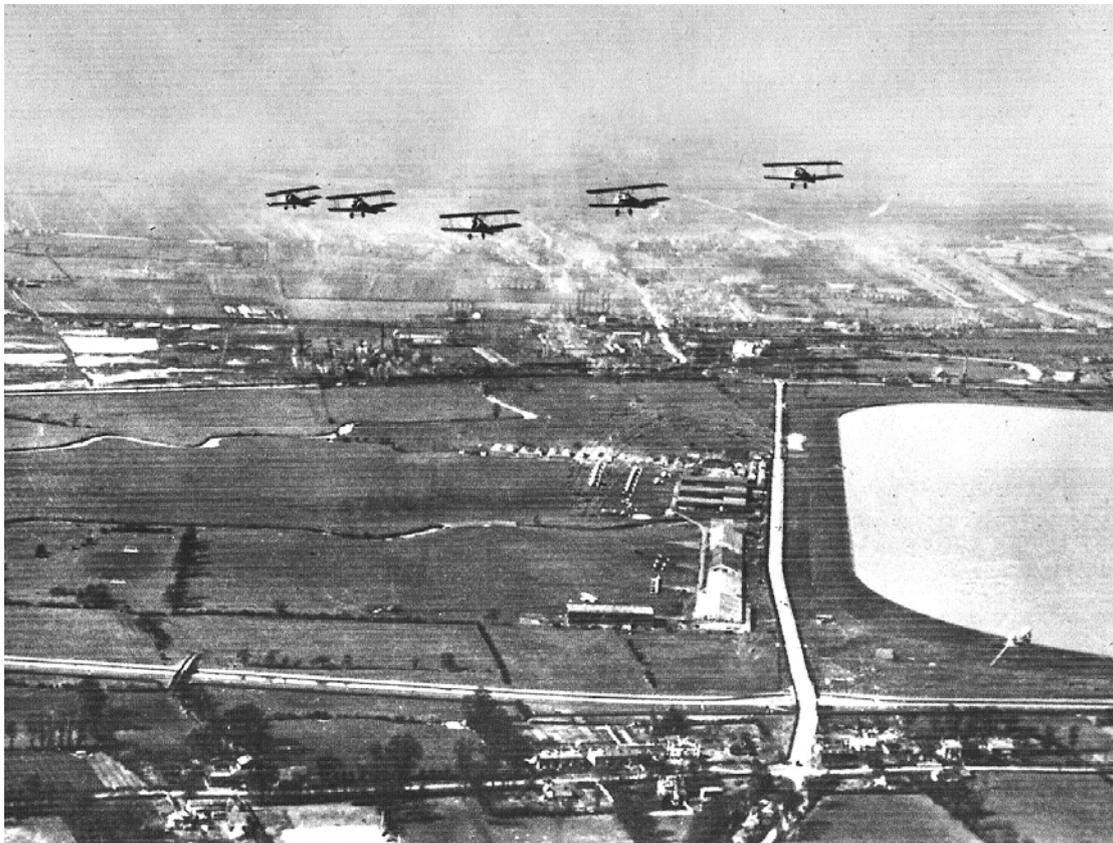
It is tempting to ascribe the location given as Claybury, Woodford for the ground collision between a Miles Hawk and an Avro 504N at an Aerial Pageant held on September 30, 1934, to this airfield, although the mention of Claybury tends to place this further east. It might equally be assumed that the location mentioned for this ground collision was a section of level ground adjoining the River Roding and the Asylum.

Grid References: Chigwell Rd, Woodford TQ412910

RNAS CHINGFORD

Located just north of London between Chingford and Ponders End railway station this airfield was officially opened as a second class landing ground for the Royal Naval Air Service in April 1915. Situated in 150 acres, the site was 1,500 yards by 400 yard. Most, if not all, of the buildings associated with this landing ground, hangars and barracks, were situated within the northern section of the site, the former along the perimeter alongside the Lea Valley Road linking Chingford to Enfield and the barracks at the western side.

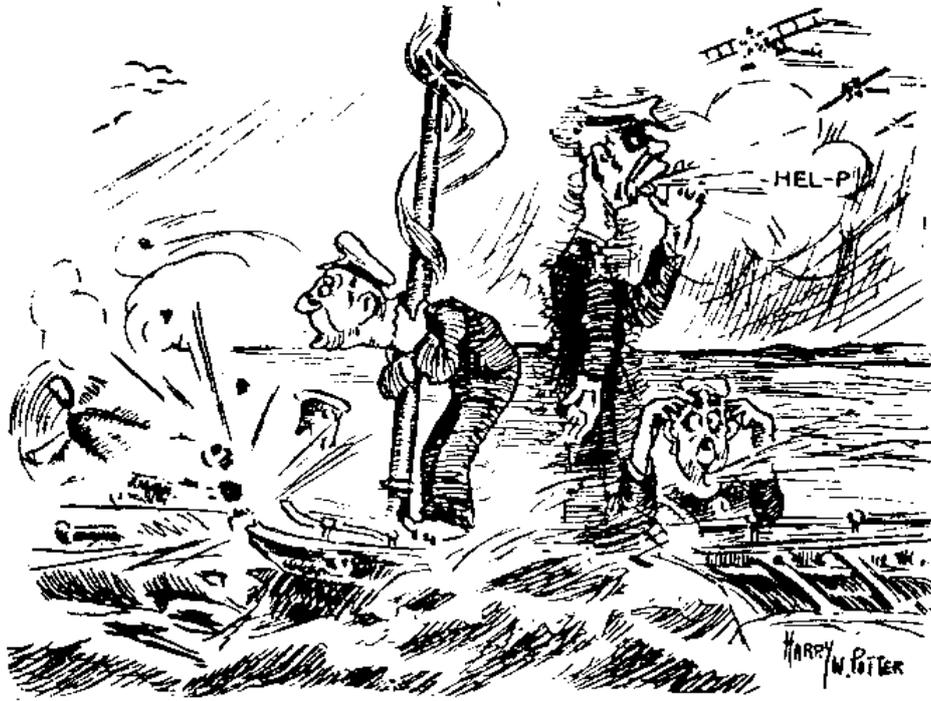
Unfortunately the clay soil that was to be ideal for the building of reservoirs, led to severe problems for an airfield in wet weather. Although it was a hazard that collected its share of fliers, the large King George VI reservoir, lay to the north of the airfield and provided a useful landmark for the young trainee fliers who made up the main pilot strength of the station.



The airfield came under 49 Wing and was used by 44 Squadron whilst they were on home defence duties as well as being a depot and main training base. It later became 207 Training Depot Station, being linked to Hainault Farm.

Types noted at this station include:- Farman Longhorn, de Havilland DH6, Airco DH9A, BE2, Bristol Bullet and F2B Fighter, Grahame-White XV, and even the rare Avro 503 and Sopwith TF2 Salamander.

The site closed to operations when 54 TDS disbanded on February 7, 1919. The site was itself engulfed in a newly constructed, 'William Girling' reservoir. [See also HALL LANE].



(Specialty drawn for "The Chingflir" by Pte. H. W. POTTER, R.A.M.C.)

Chingford – a cartoon depicting aspects of the reservoir from the Chingflir magazine



CHIPPING ONGAR [Willingale]

After the United States was drawn into the Second World War as a result of attacks upon its bases in the Pacific by the Japanese from December 1941, it was agreed that American forces would also be deployed to Europe to fight the forces of Nazi Germany.

A major result of this decision was the arrival of large numbers of aircraft and servicemen in the United Kingdom. In the eastern half of England, primarily East Anglia, large acreages of prime farmland were taken over for the construction of air bases situated within easy flying distance of Germany and the occupied territories. Initially older RAF bases were earmarked for American use, with additional facilities and new concrete runways. The older stock was insufficient for the numbers of aircraft expected, and in June 1942 formal government approval was given for work to start immediately on five new bomber bases in East Anglia. In July 1942 authorisation was given for a further twenty-two new airfields in the Eastern Counties, among these were Chipping Ongar and Matching.

As USAAC Station 162, Chipping Ongar was situated near Willingale, Essex (and known by the villagers there as 'Willingale' as it was some 2 miles north east of Chipping Ongar). It was also nearer to the village of Fyfield than the Great War flying field known by that name had been, thereby seeming to continue a tradition of naming to confuse both friend and foe alike!

Allocated to the 8th Air Force on August 10, 1942 as a heavy bomber base it was initially intended that it would be constructed by the end of 1942 using civilian contractors, many of whom were to come from all parts of the British Isles. These men were working directly for the RAF but before much work was undertaken on the site, men of the 831st Engineer Battalion of the US Army arrived with more sophisticated equipment. It is the US group who constructed the major part of Chipping Ongar between August 1942 and July 1943.

The site was provided with three concrete runways, one of 6,000 feet, aligned 030, and two of 4,200 feet, aligned 090 and 150. In addition to two of the standard British pattern T2 hangers, each just capable of housing three of the largest of bombers in use with the U.S. forces, there were 48 dispersal loops, 2 large loops and a pan for aircraft storage. Originally, in May 1942, the Air Ministry intended that each Allied bomber airfield would receive four of these hangers, but in the event few did.

No details of the exact effort required to construct Chipping Ongar have been found. It is known that similar airfields used around 1,000 men to complete an airfield consisting of some five hundred buildings, thirty miles of drains and a sewage plant sufficiently large enough with a population of around 2,500. In the case of Chipping Ongar the population was given as 2,770. Over a million manhours' work, a million cubic yards of concrete and a million pounds went into each airfield.

Due to a change in policy, the heavy bombers never arrived and Chipping Ongar was first occupied by smaller bombers of the 8th Air Force which arrived as construction was in its final stages.

From June 1943, this was to be a briefly used site operating American Martin B-26 Marauder bombers of the 387th Bombardment Group. The group consisted of the 556th, 557th, 558th and 559th Bomb Squadrons bearing the marks FW, KS, KX and TQ respectively. Operations started in mid-August 1943 and, after a total of only 29, ceased with the 8th Air Force on October 9 in the same year. Re-assigned to the 9th Air Force the 387th applied new markings to their Marauder bombers and went on to complete a further 204 missions.



The 387th were primarily engaged in striking targets in occupied Europe, in particular those associated with V weapons. As D-Day approached, targeting was switched to enemy held airfields and communications. As Allied forces advanced, so did the 387th, and the unit left Chipping Ongar for Stony Cross in Hampshire prior to flying out to France after its final operation on July 18, 1944.

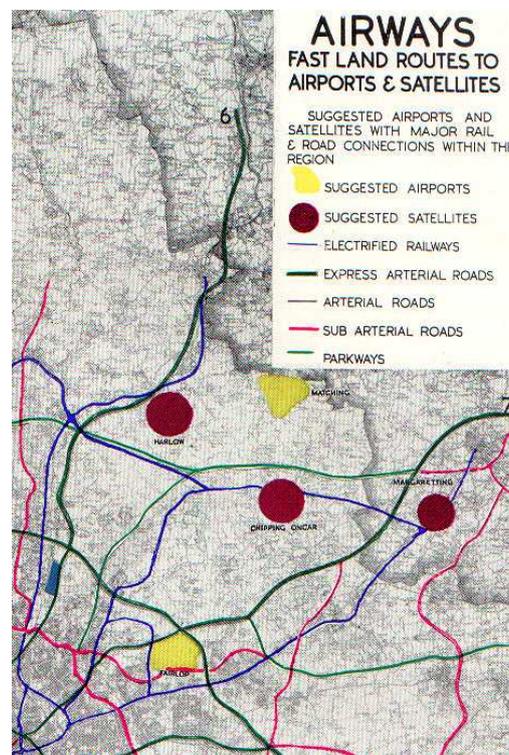
After the departure of the Marauder aircraft the airfield passed to the control of the USSTAF and for a period, in terms of the number of men there, was little used. For a short while the airfield was allocated to the large-scale storage of 15 seat Waco CG-4 Hadrian glider whilst they awaited use on Operation Market Garden at Arnhem, in the event they were not used. Nonetheless, the presence of these inert flying forms resulted in visits by a variety of the, mainly

US, C-46 and C-47 transport aircraft employed as tugs. The airfield was only used on a single airborne mission in March 1945.

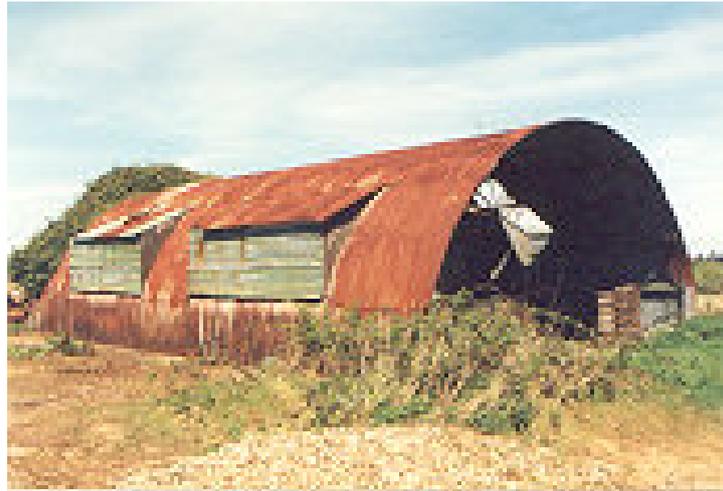
In March 1945 the site was handed over to the RAF Bomber Command, transferring to Technical Command in the June, a satellite to Hornchurch. It was however virtually deserted until finally abandoned to the civilian care of Reserve Command in October 1948. The site was returned to agricultural use, then being returned to the original owners early in 1959. The runways and concrete were broken up for hardcore in the mid-1960s.

Although a small number of the former buildings, including the operations block, and sections of the peri-tracks, most reduced in width, remain. Overall the surviving structures remaining, all either abandoned or in agricultural use, are far fewer in number than its near neighbour Matching which had a similar background of use. Defence works such as the pill boxes evident at North Weald and Hornchurch, are not to be found, as the shift of war at the time the site was constructed made them superfluous. Some three-quarters of the encircling perimeter track remains in place although most of the spectacle dispersal sites have now gone with the width reductions, the exception is a gap in the north-west corner of the site. Abutting this gap, a short section of the peri-track on the western side of the airfield, close to the end of runway 3, is maintained full width as a private landing strip.

Another notable exception to the decay of major sections of the fabric or the former airfield is the airfield's sewage disposal site situated at the northern end of the airfield. Originally dispersed outside the perimeter, this facility remains in use by the local populace of Willingale into the 1990s.



In the Airways chapter of the 1944 Greater London Plan the existing facilities at Chipping Ongar were being proposed as the basis for a satellite civil airfield for the post-war years. The matter was taken no further and much of the infrastructure was knocked down or ripped up. During the 1960s and 1970s planners were again looking for a suitable site for a new London Airport. Before eventually and painfully deciding upon Stansted, one of the proposals was for a massive new airport to be constructed at a site named Willingale. Never to proceed beyond the proposal stage, the site would have involved part of the Chipping Ongar site in a vast commercial airfield.



DAGENHAM

An early site leased by the Aeronautical Society for use by its members, Dagenham was situated close to the local railway station beside the River Thames and adjacent to Dagenham Dock. On the north bank of the river, it was afforded a roadway access almost enclosed on all four sides by water. It was east of the dock and provided an all important stretch of flat land. In spite of its many good points it proved to be a 'White Elephant' which failed to find favour with the majority of the 'Society's members.

Featuring a rough surface that was deemed by members as unsuitable for flying early aircraft from, its prime assets were its nearness to the Woolwich Free Ferry, a little to the west, and the four sheds and a clubhouse standing there.

During the summer of 1909 a range of aeroplanes were housed at the Dagenham experimental flying ground, including:-

[a] The Neale Pup, designed by an electrical engineer from London, J Neale, was a single seat monoplane powered by a 9hp JAP engine. This tractor layout machine was propelled by a propeller of 6feet 6inch diameter through 3:1 gearing. The landing gear was three bi-cycle wheels in standard forks set in what became a standard fashion with two at the front one to the rear.

[b] The Baden-Powell Quadruplane, designed by Major B F 5 Baden-Powell, the brother of the Chief Scout. This type was a 22 foot span bi-plane fitted with a 50hp Antoinette engine'

[c] Saul Quadruplane No 1 was designed by G Deverall Saul and built by Handley Page. Powered by an air-cooled engine of 8-12hp it is known to have been flown, although not to a great height, when under test by Frederick Handley Page.

[d] A large Voisin bi-plane, owned by Mr C Moreing was kept at the ground who also owned a ...

[e] an even larger 100 foot long airship with a 120hp ENV engine. A garage to house this was kept on site.

Having failed to attract sufficient members to make the flying field a viable proposition the Aeronautical Society accepted an offer of £40 for three of the buildings from Frederick Handley Page on January 14, 1910. Dismantled they were taken to Barking.

The site did not sever its aeronautical surroundings. Just up the road in Dagenham and Goodmayes Park, in the early 1930s, Sir Alan Cobham regularly launched his 'National Aviation Day' public awareness tours of Britain. Popularly known as 'Cobhams Circus', a large fleet of aircraft flew around the country offering air experience flights.

The South Essex Regional Planning Report of 1931 [prepared in 1930] mentioned that there were proposals for a Ford Air Port in connection with the Dagenham Works, where aeroplane will probably be constructed in large numbers. The report suggested that negotiations with the Air Ministry were at an advanced stage but nothing ever came of the plan.



Sir Alan Cobham 'National Aviation Day' event at Dagenham

Aside from aeronautical parts manufacture undertaken on the site in the Second World War, the final recorded act for Dagenham's part in aviation history came at the end of the 1930s. In May 1938 Viscount Forbes, the Earl of Granard, acquired the five year old, 12 passenger, Douglas DC-1 prototype NC223Y from the United States and registered it in Britain with the intention of flying it across the Atlantic as G-AFIF. In the event the aircraft was not flown across the sea and ended up as deck cargo that arrived at London Docks in June of the same year.

The aircraft was found too large to pass through dock gates still more used to horse and cart traffic than grounded outside loads like an American passenger aeroplane, and was consequently taken ashore at Dagenham by lighter. Once on dry land the aircraft was erected on Dagenham Common by engineers from the Dutch airline KLM and flown to Croydon for further engineering work by Captain W Rogers of Imperial Airways Ltd.

The sole example of this advanced Douglas design, a type which led to the world-beating DC-3 airliner, spent only a short while at Croydon before Viscount Forbes sold it to a French company which in turn traded it to Spain. Surviving the Spanish Civil War, the aircraft was finally written off after a crash in December 1940.

In September 2004 a new helipad was set up to serve East London and the City area. It was just 15 minutes via the A13 from Excel and the city airport (which bans all rotor craft) and 20 minutes from Canary Wharf. The Breeze Helipad is sited on the Ford Dagenham estate and incorporates reception building with separate VIP and flight crew lounges, Internet access for weather and flight information, rest rooms, refreshments and secure car parking. With east London lacking any helicopter facilities at all and LCY fixed wing executive facility becoming increasingly crowded the new landing place should prove popular with the rotary fraternity. <http://www.flybreeze.com>

DAMYNS HALL FARM

Damyns Hall, Upminster, is situated south of the main town close to the junction of Gerpins Lane with the Aveley Road and to the west of the M25 motorway.

This post-war farm site has a small airfield but this is better known locally as a microlight flying site rather than for operating larger examples of small aircraft.



FAIRLOP/ ESSEX AIRPORT, ROMFORD

Often assumed to be on the same site as the adjoining Great War Hainault Farm airfield, but actually a little to the west of there, south of Forest Road, and not to be confused with Forest Farm which was both earlier and civil as well as being 'across the road'.

Long before it became a fully constituted aerodrome the site was used as a base for early flying operations before the Great War. Amongst others, Frederick Handley Page flew his early designs of aircraft from Fairlop after he had concluded that the products of his short lived Barking factory would fare better there. In 1910 Handley Page acquired the right to fly from a 500 yard by 1,000 yard section of playing field. Although the name is the same, it is uncertain whether the exact location of the 1910 Fairlop equated to the later site of the same name, Hainault Farm or, more likely, even the sports field on the north side of Forest Road. This dates from prior to 1921.

The Handley Page types known to have used the Fairlop site include the Type D, or HP4, a monoplane with a 35hp Green engine for the April 1911 Olympia Aero Show. Work began on it at Barking in October 1910 and it appeared as intended, but still unflown, at the show. It first flew at Fairlop on July 15, 1911 but crashed on its return. This machine was rebuilt quite easily, re-emerging as with a 50hp Isaacson engine and flying on several occasions from Fairlop.

Another flown from Fairlop was the Type E, or HP5, also a monoplane powered by a 50hp Gnome. The first two seat designed by the company, it first flew at Fairlop on April 26, 1911. This machine was little more than a more robust, two seat, version of the Type D. Just to confuse matters, both the Type D and the Type E became generally known as the "Yellow Peril". Handley Page left the area in 1912.

In the Great War flying was undertaken from Hainault Farm, to the east of Fairlop proper. The next to appear was a gliding operation set up at Fairlop by F E Darlow around 1930. After the gliding started Darlow went on to become the Secretary of another brainchild of his, the Herts & Essex Flying Club at Broxbourne. Later still, around 1936, there was a great deal of controversy over plans by the local authority and City of London to set up an airport on this site. Nothing was ever agreed and the idea fell by the wayside.

The 1936 report on aviation in Essex [Air planning in the county of Essex, Norman & Dawbarn April 1936] made no mention of Forest Farm but included a major section on the proposed airport and Fairlop.

FAIRLOP PLAIN, ILFORD.

Reference has been made to an area of 1,052 acres east of the London & North Eastern Railway at Fairlop proposed for aerodrome and recreational purposes by the Ilford Borough Council. An area of 600 acres bounded to the north by Forest Road, to the east by Hainault Road, to the west by the London & North Eastern Railway, and to the south by Paynter's Road and Aldborough Road, is scheduled for the aerodrome.

Immediately to the north of this site an area of some 75 acres, occupied by Recreation Grounds, is scheduled as open space. Areas to the north of Forest Road

on each side of these grounds are at present undeveloped. To the south and south-east of the site considerable areas are zoned for houses at twelve to the acre. To the east the country is undeveloped and in agricultural use. West of the London & North Eastern Railway the area is largely built up. To the north and south-east beyond the zones already referred to large industrial areas are planned.

A further area of some 30 acres to the south-east of the site has been proposed as open space.

The site is generally very level and it would appear possible to construct an airport upon it in accordance with Air Ministry requirements without exceptional grading operations.

We regard this site as one of the most important in the London area, and we recommend the reservation of sufficient space for the construction of a major terminal airport giving runs of 2,000 yards in eight directions, as suggested in

The RAF moved into this site at the start of the Second World War (26.9.1940) and by July 1941 permanent runways had been laid down, with station buildings generally sited to the Underground railway side nearer Barkingside. The runways were tested on September 1 and the airfield became fully operational by September 10. In spite of this it was not officially declared to be a satellite airfield to Hornchurch until November 12 that year and actually opened as 24 Balloon Centre with Balloon Command as tenants. Marking that event 603 squadron moved in with Spitfire's from the parent station. Use by conventional fighter aircraft gave way to barrage balloons in September 1944.

In the Airways chapter of the 1944 Greater London Plan the pre-war intention to place an airport at Fairlop was revisited. The existing facilities were assumed in the plan to lead to one of a number of London Airports. In the event it was to close in August 1946 and no further airport proposals were made including Fairlop. In truth the encroaching housing made the whole idea out of the question and it was beyond consideration again by the 1960s search for a new London airport.

Although the airfield closed it remained largely in being in spite of the ravages of gravel extraction for decades afterwards.

FOREST FARM, FOREST ROAD, BARKINGSIDE

The airfield now identified as Forest Farm was immediately adjacent to Fairlop but on the north side of Forest Road next to the farm of the same name. It was listed by the police as being a site under their jurisdiction in 1920/21.

Sited to the north of Forest Road the farm buildings were close to the Fairlop Station on the single track Woodford and Ilford Branch of the Great Eastern Railway (GER). A large field to the east of the farm buildings, and abutting the recreation ground, was probably the flying area. Whilst adjacent to both Fairlop airfield and the recreation ground undoubtedly used by Handley Page, for the purposes of this review it is treated as a separate entity because it, like Hainault Farm, was given a specific separate identity.

Forest Farm was in the hands of the Chalmers family. A David Chalmers had worked it prior to the Great War, but in 1921 it was in the names of the Misses Isabella and Mary Chalmers.

The modern Forest Farm, including buildings with 'build date' markings bearing a strong similarity to those at Hainault Farm ['VR 1855'], still situated to the north of Forest Road, is by Fairlop railway station, now on the London Transport Underground Railway system Central Line.

One source gives the exact location as being that now occupied by a car showrooms, to the east of the farm, but there is a field that might have been large enough for 1920s aircraft in between the two groups of buildings present in modern times. A map dated 1921 does not show any structures on the east side of the potential flying area at that time. Nonetheless, the exact site of the flying area in 1921 has not been recorded and therefore the possibility of flying being undertaken from an area south of Forest Road [the same site as Fairlop] cannot be ruled out.

The 1936 report on aviation in Essex [Air planning in the county of Essex, Norman & Dawbarn April 1936] made no mention of Forest Farm but included a major section on the proposed airport and Fairlop.

Mapping: Forest Farm TQ455910



FYFIELD

The airfield was a small Great War flying field site for the RFC situated to the north of Ongar.

It was only ever equipped with temporary buildings and tentage, the landing ground was small even by the standards of the time. It was set in just 25 acres of land and offered a flying area 370 yards by 350 yards.

Under 49 Wing it was used by 39 [HD] Squadron that was variously based at Suttons Farm, Hainault Farm and North Weald in the war years. It saw operational use only as a satellite for a detached flight late in 1916. It was closed immediately after the war and no traces of it now remain.

HALL LANE, CHINGFORD

A civil airfield listed as being subject to police inspection and licensing by officers from the King's Head Hill, Chingford, police station in 1920-21. It would appear not to be confused with the Royal Naval Air Station of Chingford and was in all probability merely a section of flat marshland immediately to the east of the River Lea, and presumably immediately to the south of the RNAS field.

The title of Hall Lane suggests the location as being in an area immediately north of the present A406 North Circular Road, Hall Lane itself being a relatively short stretch of housing lined roadway off to the east. It has been found with other locations [see Fyfield] that the title may not refer to the true location. Most of the flat open area of the early 1920s remains as marshland, but it is now so interspersed with structures relating to water treatment, reservoirs and pumping stations, that it would be difficult to ascribe any specific area as being suitable for aircraft use in that period.

It is not known how long this area was in use as an aircraft landing ground.

Mapping:

Hall Lane, Chingford

TQ367942

Permanently or Temporarily licensed aerodromes known to the Police to have been used since 1920 or to be in use now.	Police Station concerned	Distance in miles (approx.)
1. Forest Farm, Forest Road, Barkingside	Barkingside	2
2. Hainault Farm, "	"	3
3. New Barns Farm, Buckhurst Hill	Woodford	1½
4. Chigwell Road, Woodford	Woodford	2
5. Hall Lane, Chingford	Chingford	1½
6. Abbey Wood Marshes	Abbey Wood	½
7. Graham White Aerodrome, Hendon	-	-
8. Handley Page " Cricklewood	-	-
9. Stag Lane, Edgware	-	-
10. Sunbury by River Thames	Sunbury	2
11. Near Bath Road Harmondsworth	Harlington	2½
12. Byhurst Farm, Leatherhead Road, Chessington	Surbiton	3
13. Broom's Farm, Woodstock Lane, Ditton	Ditton	1
14. West Hill, Epsom	Epsom	1
15. London Terminal Aerodrome, Waddon	-	-

NOTE: In the case of aerodromes Nos. 7, 8, and 15, it is probable that Police action will not be necessary.

HAINAULT FARM

Occupying an area bounded by Forest and Hainault Roads, the Hainault Farm site opened in 1915 as a landing ground. Preserved marks on some of the buildings suggest that the oldest buildings are dated around 1855. EIIVR 1855111. The 1910 'Fairlop' site used by Handley Page limited for aircraft testing appears to have been further to the west.

It was to be best known as the base for 39 (Home Defence) Squadron, although this unit did not actually arrive until 1916 and eventually left when the location of the unit was centralised at North Weald. Two of this squadron's aircraft intercepted and shot down Zeppelin airship's whilst based at Hainault Farm. On the same night, September 24, 1916, L32 was brought down at Great Bursted and L33 at Little Wigborough.

The airfield was closed in 1919 and supposedly immediately returned to agricultural use.

A police document issued in 1921, which gave instructions to local police at Barkingside relating to the continued civil licensing of the site, flies in the face of this supposed closure date.

In any case its complete return to its agricultural past was briefly interrupted by the City of London purchasing the site in the 1930s. It was intended that, suitably renamed, this site (and the adjoining site of Fairlop) would serve as a major airport. Most of the, mainly political, controversy appears to have taken place around 1936. In the event neither this nor Fairlop remained in aviation for any length of time. In spite of the continued ravages of extensive gravel extraction, a number of the original airfield buildings remain along the east side of the Hainault Road.

Types noted operating from this site included the BE2c, BE2e, BE12, BE12 and the Bristol Scout.



Mapping:
Hainault Farm

TQ468912

HORNCHURCH/SUTTON'S FARM

When Britain and Germany went to war in August 1914, the likelihood of air raids on the London area was seen as a small threat. After four attacks, a some deaths, in a little over a year greater notice of the threat was taken and a Home Defence system inaugurated. One of the resultant flying fields selected was a fog affected field at Sutton's Farm.

Situated between Hornchurch and Rainham off the A125 the Hornchurch site was originally named after the nearby farm. A part of the Suttons Farm land was given up to requisition to provide a landing ground late in 1915 and canvas hangers and tentage erected to the south of the farmhouse. Later more substantial buildings were erected in the same area.

Famous in the Great War defence of London as one of a number of bases for the fighters of 39 (HD) Squadron (along with Hainault Farm, North Weald and Fyfield), this squadron moved in during March 1916 but moved out and concentrated at North Weald in 1917. Other units replaced this squadron in the role of Home Defence for the remainder of the war years.

Only a year or so after the war the airfield was closed, most of the newly built buildings dismantled and the whole site returned to agriculture.

It was to be a slightly different site immediately to the west of the farm returning to become an RAF service airfield, again as Suttons Farm, on April 1, 1928. On January 1, 1929 it was re-named Hornchurch. A few of the original buildings were available for the re-opened site, among these being the transport shed, women's quarters, blacksmiths shop and guardroom.

The Essex Flying Club were operating from a site, also known as 'Hornchurch', in the late 1930s. This aero club owned an ex-602 squadron Westland Wapiti, J9618, from January 1938, but the aircraft that was never registered with civil marks and was presumably broken up during the war for scrap.

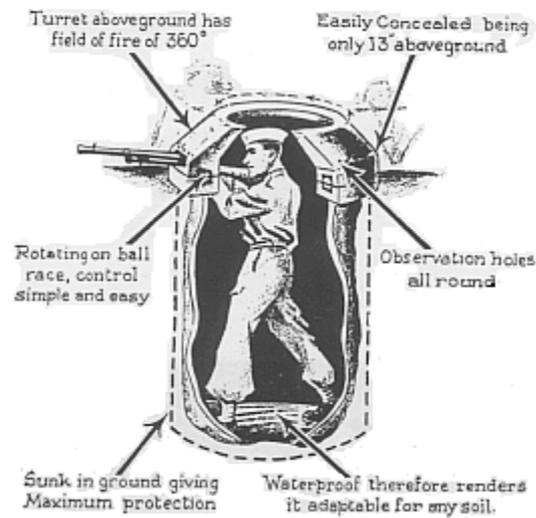
After a hectic few years during the early part of the Second World War, fighter squadrons ceased to be stationed there in February 1944 and the airfield took on a subsidiary role supporting, amongst other duties, the repair of properties damaged during the V1 and V2 attacks upon the South-East. The one time fighter station passed to RAF Technical Training Command in June 1945, this downgrading of its role being followed by its placement on a care and maintenance basis from 1947. Even the establishment of an Aircrew Selection Centre at Hornchurch from April 1, 1952 failed to stem the tide turning against an airfield that could no longer support the types of jet aircraft increasingly coming into service with the modern RAF.

The station finally closed with the disbandment of the holding party on July 1, 1962. It was sold (for £517,000) to allow gravel extraction followed by infilling by refuse, a duty which it completed by 1979.

Most of the site was taken over by housing and very little aerodrome remains except in the grassed area now designated as a country park. In this can be seen a section of perimeter track, aircraft dispersal areas, air raid shelters and a pillbox or two.



THE TETT TURRET



MATCHING

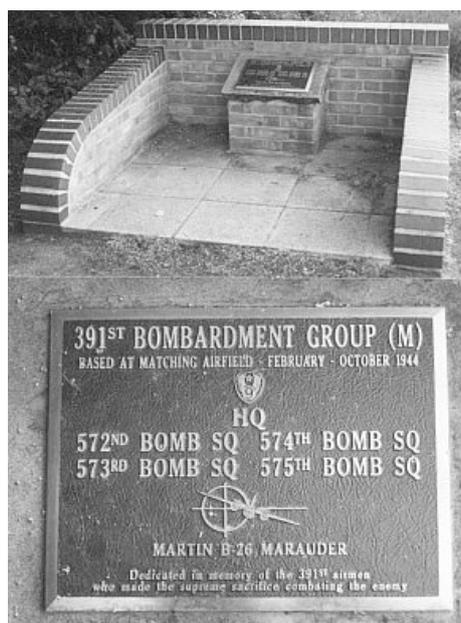
Created as a result of the same pressures which saw the construction of nearby Chipping Ongar [which see], Matching was ordered in the summer of 1942.

According to most references, Matching airfield was located 1 to 1½ miles north east of Matching Green, Essex and 5 miles east of Harlow and the M11 motorway. It would appear that this version of distance relates to the nearest military buildings as in fact the perimeter of the airfield was less than half a mile from the centre of Matching Green. Incorporated within the perimeter were such existing features as "Stock Hall" outside Matching Green.

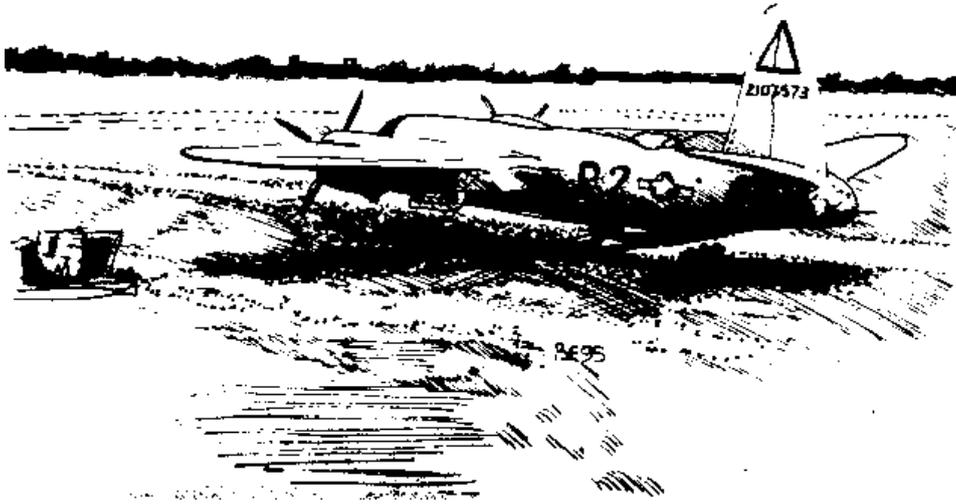
As Station 166, Matching was allocated to the United States forces in Europe as a base for bombers of the 8th Air Force on August 10, 1942.

Built by the 834th and 840th Engineer Battalions of the US Army during 1943, the base featured one concrete runway of 6,000 feet, aligned to 200 degrees, and two of 4,200 feet, aligned to 140 and 270. As became the norm, only two of the intended four dispersed T2 hangers were provided, but 50 loops were provided for aircraft dispersal. The population of the airfield was intended to number 2,658 persons.

Although specifically built for the use of American forces, Matching became another briefly used American airfield, the 8th Air Force never actually moving aircraft in there before control was passed to the 9th Air Force in October 1943. In January 1944 a unit of the 9th, the 391st Bomb Group moved in with its Martin B-26 Marauder medium bomber, and operated from this field for a matter of months between February 15 and September 1944. The primary targets were V weapon sites, and communications in occupied Europe.



Operations in support of D-Day in May and June 1944 led to the 391st being moved forward in support of the ever expanding area of Allied control in Europe. On September 19 the unit left for France.



Late in 1944 38 Group, RAF, started to use the airfield for training. The Operational & Refresher Training Unit, equipped with British Short Stirling IV bombers retained an operational role and was additionally held in support of operational unit losses. Its primary task remained that of affording 38 Group crew practice facilities.

In the Airways chapter of the 1944 Greater London Plan Matching was suggested as being a post-war airport for London. The attraction was the extensive existing facilities, London [Heathrow] after started its days with the passenger terminals under canvas. The proposals came to nought.

Even as the report was being published Stirling's from Matching towed 14 Airspeed Horsa gliders as part of Operation Varsity, the Rhine Crossing in late March 1945. As the war in Europe drew to a close, the majority of the Stirling's were replaced by Handley Page Halifax III bombers in the same role. This unit moved out after the war, on October 15, 1945, allowing the airfield to progressively return to agricultural use. In the meantime the only aircraft still on site were large numbers of wrecks from the earlier occupations, these remained until broken up on the site. As was the case with many abandoned airfields, security lapsed to such a degree as to fall only upon the shoulders of the local farmer.

Young children from far and wide drew up on their bicycles, sneaked onto the airfield, and set to pillage both the aircraft hulks and large piles of stored anti-radar "window" and various small stores occupying some of the abandoned buildings.

In later years many of these almost new buildings took on light industrial use. Re-use and development of buildings somewhat clouded the situation as a number appear to have suffered from the dismantling of sections or complete

buildings, activity occasionally associated with subsequent re-siting in another part of the former airfield perimeter, in a manner perplexing to the historian. Both of the former T2 hangers have been removed, one being sold off for a large sum to serve the "Aces High" company on the west side of North Weald airfield. The source of a Blister hanger now sited near the control tower is yet to be ascertained.



Although the main runways and dispersal sites were either broken up entirely, or reduced to narrow strips to serve as extremely sturdy farm tracks, large sections of the former taxi-ways were retained in their original form. Today a number of public roads pass through areas formerly within the security zone, some sections of which utilise the line of former airfield roads and runways. Near to the re-used control tower ["Watch tower" to the RAF users], the roadway between Matching Green and Anchor Lane in the east utilises a section of the No3 runway at a point where it intersected with the former No.1 runway. Of the latter, much of the former thick concrete is now gone, leaving substantial strip of moss covered concrete along its former line to the north and south of the main road.

MAYLANDS

The aerodrome was situated by Maylands Farm alongside the A12 road from London to Chelmsford near Harold Wood, until 1931 it was one of only a few permanent civil aerodromes in Essex.

Maylands Aerodrome was first set in 1928 as a private landing ground for A.H. Matthews Avro 504K, G-EBSJ. Four other aircraft soon arrived on Site. Inland Flying Services Limited was set up by AB Forsyth and RMB Ward in 1928 to operate Avros on joyriding etc - Initially operated Avro 548 G-EBPJ, which crashed there 31 July 1928 and later, in 1929 Avro 504K G-AAFE and G-AAFT. The company specialised in joy riding from small fields all over Essex. This company changed its name to Inland Flying and Motor Services Ltd in 1929, taking out the first aerodrome licence from March 30 that year.

There was another company also operating there - British Flying & Motor Services Ltd using two DH.6s G-EBPN & G-EBVS. Inland bought them out in 1929.

In April 1930, the business moved to the Isle of Wight and became Wight Aviation Ltd and ultimately Portsmouth, Southsea & IoW Aviation Ltd.



A 1927 de Havilland DH60X Moth at Maylands. It crashed there in August 1938.

The South Essex Regional Planning Report of 1931 [prepared in 1930] failed to acknowledge the existence of Maylands although it did mention the aerodrome utilised by Inland Taxis, Ltd. This was said to be situated near Harold Wood Station, but had been abandoned by the issue of the report in 1931. Also mentioned was the re-use of the Great War landing at Southend [Rochford] even though it was not acquired for use until 1933 and opened in 1935. Clearly the report was based on an assumption that the move to the Isle of Wight would sound the immediate death knell of the small airfield.

The field first came into its own with the setting up of the air taxi business of E.H. Hillman, a local bus operator, in November 1931. The company, Hillman Airways, set up a number of national and international passenger services,

including some to Southend. As the company took over larger aircraft, in particular the Dragon Six, they had to move their operations to Stapleford Tawney.



Hillman's first de Havilland DH84 Dragon is service is launched by Amy Johnson at Maylands.

In January 1936 it was reported that a syndicate had purchased the Maylands site and sell off a section of it as a golf course. This early sale of part of the airfield had in fact merely returned the aerodrome to a size similar to that it had been before Edward Hillman had arrived.

The 1936 report on aviation in Essex [Air planning in the county of Essex, Norman & Dawbarn April 1936] made no mention of Maylands.

Although reduced in size by the selling off of land to accommodate the golf course, Maylands remained in operation as a light aircraft base for the Romford Flying Club with their Moth aircraft G-AAPG and G-ABTG and the single BAC Drone equipped Drone Flying Club. A former Chief Engineer with Hillman's, R.O. "Jack" Cross, established Essex Aero Ltd which was later moved to a new base in Gravesend. Another resident company, Premier Aircraft Constructions Ltd., built three Gordon Dove aircraft in 1937, but this business ceased with the war.

The majority of the buildings were supposed to have been finally destroyed by fire when German bombs were dropped on February 6, 1940. Many sources pour scorn on this explanation for the subsequent losses in aircraft and hangars, but in the absence of proven alternatives, the losses remain ascribed to 'enemy action'.

The site, now bounded by a section of the M25 motorway, it is now wholly set aside to the support of the great god golf, but the aviation heritage is marked by displays in the club-house.

NAZEING COMMON

The North Weald airfield 'Decoy' site, 42 Decoy Site, during the 1939-45 war lay four miles to the west at Broadley (or Nazeing) Common. A dummy airfield for RAF North Weald it was both a daytime 'K' site and nighttime 'Q' site.

It was wholly contained within the land of Lodge Farm. Not an airfield in the accepted sense, it nonetheless served as a landing ground to at least two aircraft during its short operational life up to 1942.

Early in the war years the Army had set up a searchlight unit and spotting equipment at the end of Lodge Farm Road and some of the soldiers were billeted on the farm. This area had been occupied by the Observer Corps [later ROC] since the Spring of 1938.



Nazeing dummy airfield had grass runways on which were placed deceptive aircraft believed to have been constructed by such as film studios. Although there was on site accommodation in a barrack block it is believed that the connection with RAF North Weald was strong. Under certain meteorological conditions airmen from the airfield used to take Beacon and Flare Path equipment to Nazeing to support the night time decoy activity. It is believed that the Germans were aware of Nazeing's status and had broadcast propaganda to that effect to England.

A section of the site still remains to modern times. It has never proven economical to remove the earth mounded 'air raid shelter' like structure said to have contained a generator and lighting panel for its operational role as control bunker to the site.

The unprotected accommodation building formerly used as living quarters for the care crew finally collapsed in the 1990s after years in use as a farm storage building. The compound in which it stood remains alongside the main

road and opposite the southern section of Back Lane, overlooked by the old 'King Harold's Head' public house.



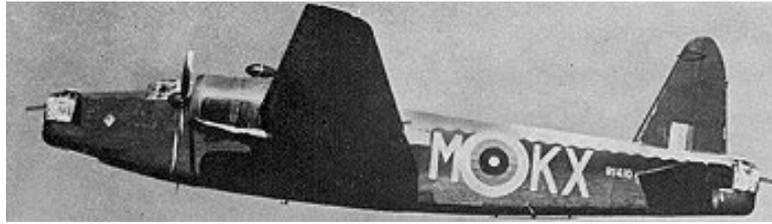
Also near this public house was an Alan Williams Turret located in the south-east corner of the field. A steel cupola manned by two men, such structures were commonly used as airfield perimeter defences. One of the manning crew operated the rotation of the turret and the second fired the gun – usually a machine gun. The Nazeing example was preserved by the Imperial War Museum Duxford in 1995.



The suggestion that the location was meant to represent North Weald is far from apparent. Far from level, a small stream running from east to west also intersects it. From the air in daytime it would normally appear just as fields, but at night it took on a whole new mantle of cunning.

Whatever the actual success of 42 Decoy site in the war effort - it was bombed a number of times - it was quite convincing enough for at least one RAF crew.

On May 17, 1940 Vickers Wellington P9231 of 9 Squadron found itself short of fuel whilst returning from an operational flight and took advantage of a fully lit 'airfield' flarepath on the unidentified airfield below it.



In spite of the unsuitable nature of the site the experienced hands of the pilot put the Wellington down in a near perfect landing between the lights and drew to a halt at the end of the line of flares after they hit an obstruction at fairly slow speed. Very little damage was caused. The aircrew was picked up after the resident RAF ground crew made arrangements. The aircraft was dismantled and removed.



A few months later a report from the Observer Corps post at the top of the hill on Nazeing Common resulted in the return of the same recovery crew to the farm. This time their visit was to dismantle and take away a second unexpected visitor. A Percival Proctor had landed on high ground near to the farmhouse.

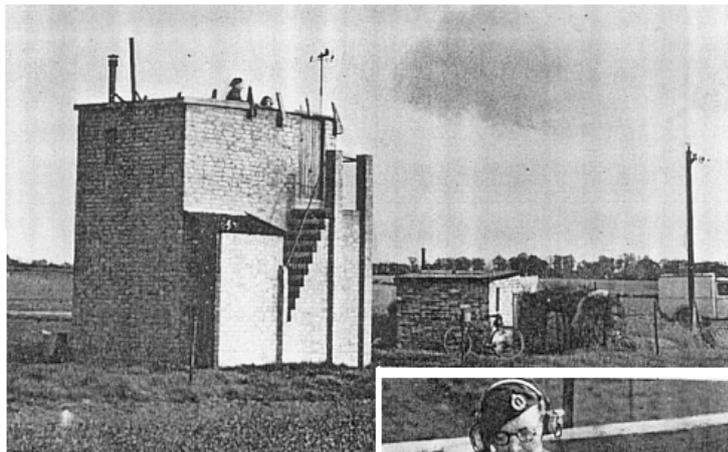


The Observer Corps site situated on the edge of the dummy airfield dates from March 1938 when some local residents were approached by the Essex

Police authorities to form an Observer Post for use in the war that appeared inevitable. Before the war Nazeing Common was gated and fenced to enclose Commoners Cattle, a cricket table and a small golf course. After the war the latter did not return.

The Nazeing post, was originally a collection of sandbags known as B4 and then Mike 3 before becoming George 3 on 9th November 1944.

Keen interest in the part-time Observer Post was evident. Inevitably as war loomed the manning arrangements became less informal and from 20.00hrs on 24th August, 1939 the post was manned full time. It was to be nine months – 10th May 1940 - before the first enemy aircraft was reported in the vicinity of the post. Six days later the Wellington made its landing on the 'airfield'.

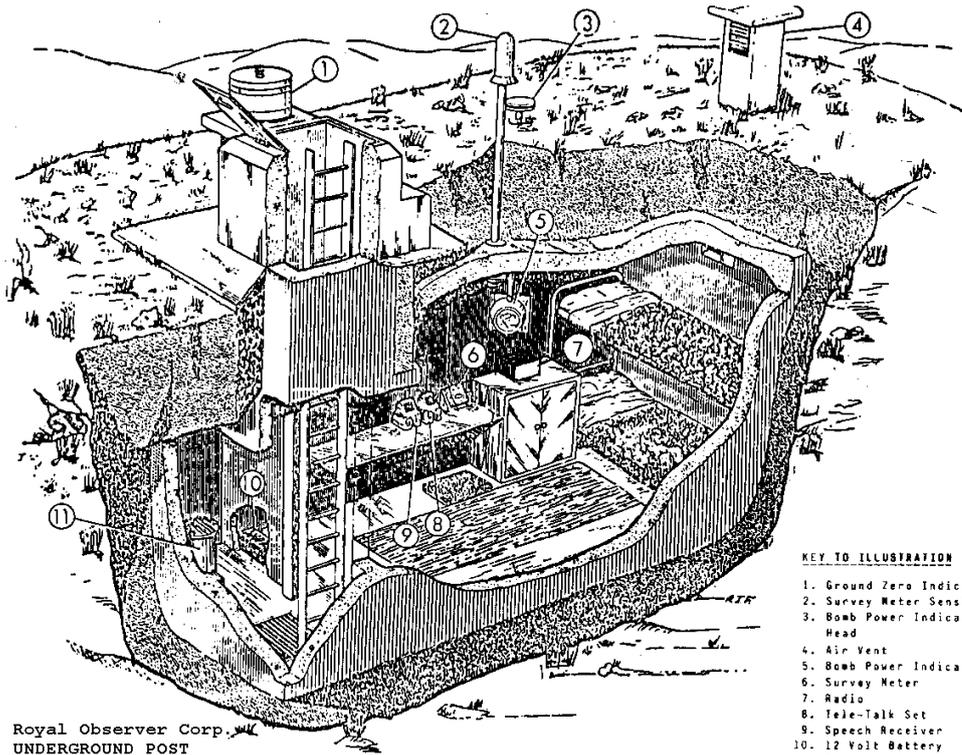


G3 Nazeing.



The structure was altered during the war. Construction of the brick built structure was commenced on 7th September 1943 and completed by 15th October. Thus rebuilt it survived operationally until the end of the war before finally closing at 1700hrs on May 12th 1945.

After the war the site was resurrected to serve as part of the Nuclear War defences under the Civil Defence scheme improvements brought about by the 'Cold War'. The remains of that underground shelter are there today, the entry door welded shut to deter potential looters.



Royal Observer Corp.
UNDERGROUND POST

KEY TO ILLUSTRATION

- 1. Ground Zero Indicator
- 2. Survey Meter Sensing Head
- 3. Bomb Power Indicator Sensing Head
- 4. Air Vent
- 5. Bomb Power Indicator
- 6. Survey Meter
- 7. Radio
- 8. Tele-Talk Set
- 9. Speech Receiver
- 10. 12 Volt Battery
- 11. Chemical Closet

NEW BARNS FARM, BUCKHURST HILL

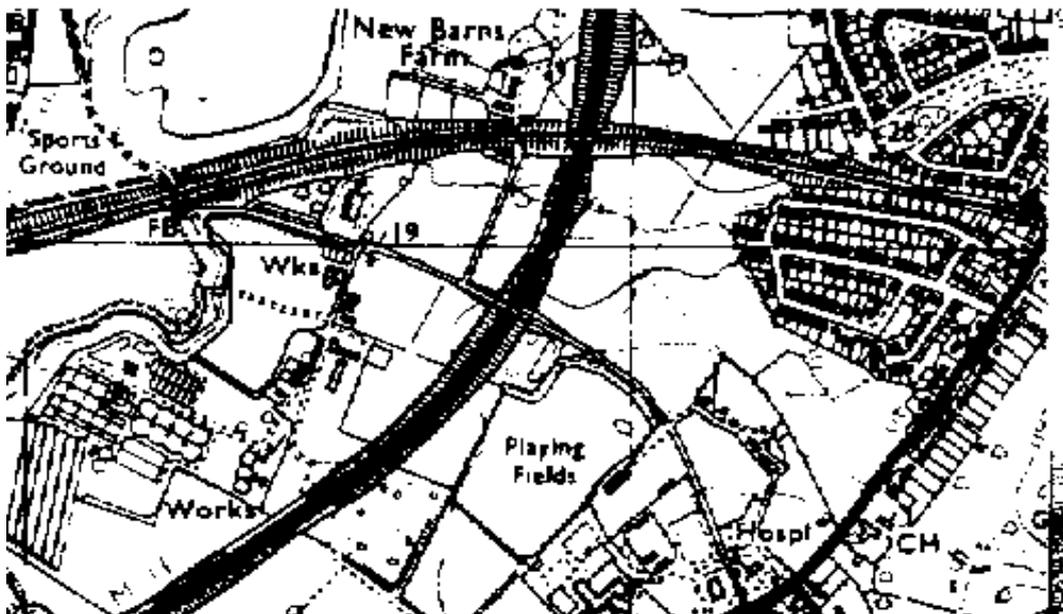
A civil aerodrome listed in a Metropolitan police document as being subject to police inspection and licensing by officers from the Mornington Road, Woodford, police station in 1920.

In 1921 New Barns Farm was in the name of James Torrance and, it appears, changed hands in 1922, the new occupiers being the Furze family. In 1925 Cecil Edwin Furze was the farmer. In view of the apparent date for these occupancy changes it is possible that it was Torrance who applied for the aerodrome licence and subsequently no longer required it.

Although the exact lie of the 1920 aerodrome is conjecture, the modern New Barns Farm is situated north of Luxborough Lane, Chigwell to the east side of the River Roding and the west of the M11 motorway. It appears to consist of the original, 1920, buildings.

In 1920 the farm buildings were split by the single track Woodford & Ilford Branch of the Great Eastern Railway (G.E.R.), the farm being provided with its own underpass bridge beneath the railway and beyond to join up with Roding lane by way of a dirt track. This dirt track appears to have received some attention from the wartime works associated with RAF Chigwell (Chigwell 11), in that a long section of it is now concreted - one short section being set as an extremely narrow dual carriageway.

The farm lane now runs parallel with, and close to, the M11 motorway. The one time G.E.R. is now a, peak hours only, section of the London Transport Underground Central Line between Chigwell and Roding Valley.



New Barns Farm

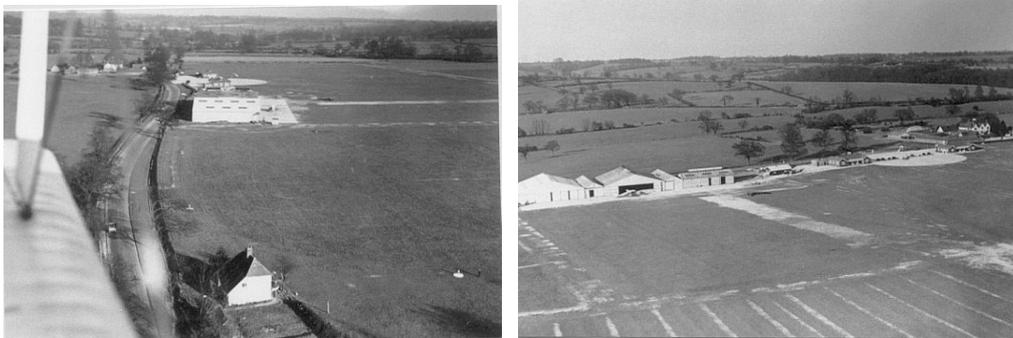
TQ430933

A 1936 report on aviation in Essex [Air planning in the county of Essex, Norman & Dawbarn April 1936] made no mention of New Barns Farm.

STAPLEFORD

Situated alongside the A113 road between Chigwell and Ongar, plans for the airfield were first placed before the local authority in mid-April 1934. The green field site was located as being at Arnold's Farm, Stapleford Tawney, this farm actually being on the opposite side of the A113.

Mr. S.J. Davies, a builder and contractor of Mawney Lane, Romford applied for permission to erect four structures, a clubroom, offices, lavatories and a hangar for Hillman's Airways on the site. The buildings surrounded a concrete apron area, the office and club building's each being of a similar design sited either side of the apron. These were merely the first of numerous buildings to be built. Later in the year petrol pumps, additional hangars and a store were added. Permission to build a canteen beside the main gate was sought early in 1935, this structure being completed early in March of that year.



Views of Stapleford in 1934

Stapleford Tawney was first opened on June 23, 1934 as the base for Hillman's Airways. The airline had outgrown its previous base at Maylands ('Essex Airport, Romford'). During the period that Hillman's operations were in place the Stapleford Tawney site was better known as "Essex Airport, Abridge", but a whole host of confusing terms existed. These included: London East Airport, Stapleford Abbots and, most confusing of all in view of the existence of the one time Loughton airfield, 'Abridge'.



Hillman obtained 180 acres of land near the village of Stapleford on a 25-year lease and laid out an aerodrome 1,300 yards by 900 yards. Three hangars with a concrete apron in front were built and a small passenger and administration building erected.

Within weeks of Hillman arriving the airfield was hosting a Stapleford - Liverpool - Isle of Man - Belfast service run by Hillman's. It was unfortunate that the airline moved to Gatwick in June 1935 and was absorbed into British Airways, leaving the airfield almost empty. During this quiet period the prototype of the Bromley-by-Bow built Foster Wikner Wicko F.W.1, G-AENU, was flown from the airfield using the disused Hillman's facilities.

In 1936 a report on aviation in Essex [Air planning in the county of Essex, Norman & Dawbarn April 1936] stated that Stapleford had been left by Hillman because it was less well served than Croydon and was likely to see its future in the sporting and club aircraft area.

The RAF took over the airfield in 1938 for 21 Elementary and Reserve Flying Training School (21 E&RFTS) operated by Reid & Sigrist and using Tiger Moth, Hawker Hind, Hart and Audax aircraft. The unit moved out when war came.

Requisition by the government led to the enlargement of the airfield and the construction of an 18 feet wide perimeter track around 2½ miles of the airfield. With the expansion the airfield now had three grass landing areas laid out and offering between 1,000 to 1,200 yards each. For safety and security a number of newly constructed areas were set aside from the original aerodrome, few of these were to continue in use after the war.

Over the following war years a number of different units called the airfield "home", leading to the grass runway seeing use by such diverse types. Initially the alternative home base for North Weald fighter units and their Hawker Hurricane's, in later years a whole new spectrum of aviation appeared.

After the pre-war training Tiger Moth's and Hawker Hart's came further Tiger Moth's, Airspeed Oxford's and Dominie's of No.2 Camouflage Unit which was responsible for inspection of the deception art of others. An Air-Sea rescue unit, 277 Squadron, used the Westland Lysander and Supermarine Walrus from the airfield in 1941. In 1942 Boulton Paul Defiant's joined the unit. Army co-operation came next in March 1943, resulting in the return of Tiger Moth's and the arrival of the first Auster AOP machines. After D-Day the airfield became the base of ground units although aircraft visited quite often and training gliders were operating in the evenings and weekends.

The war years had resulted in the addition of a large number of buildings to the airfield, the most dominating being a 100 x 150ft hangar sited on the east side of the main entrance.

Two V2 rocket weapons landed, and exploded, on Stapleford Tawney late in the war. On November 20, 1944 one of these weapons blew a 60 feet hole in

the middle of the airfield. Worse came with the explosion at 3.30pm on February 23, 1945. The rocket landed on the main camp buildings killing 17 people and injuring 50 others.

The airfield fell into disrepair after the war, much of it returning to agricultural use, these parts only being rescued from further dereliction by the movement of the Frogley brothers and Herts & Essex Aero Club from Broxbourne in 1953. Not the entire site was given up. As early as September 1949 proposals were in hand to undertake non-aeronautical operations in buildings sited on the eastern side of the entrance. Over the ensuing years there was production of motor body packing cases and electrical goods in this area of the site.



The Frogley family sought to acquire some 155 acres of the land from the airline successor to Hillman's earlier operation, BOAC, in the closing months of 1948, but it was the summer of 1950 before they were on site. The brothers repaired some of the buildings on the airfield and commenced light aircraft flying, initially with Tiger Moth' and Auster's, a style of operation which continues to the present day. Among the building projects was the repair of the original Hillman hangars, the eastern section of which had been badly damaged by enemy action.

Cycle and motor racing started on the peri-track on Sunday's in the late summer of 1952. The activity drew complaints from neighbours, this leading to an admonition for Roger Frogley from the local authority. The noise from loudspeakers appears to have successfully subdued for a February 1954 application for the running of a motor racing circuit, complete with a new time-keepers building on the east side of the peri-track, was passed by the local planning department on July 13, 1954. Nonetheless, this project was not proceeded with.

In the years that followed two aircraft projects were born on the airfield. one, the Edgar Percival EP9, was fairly successful, the other, named Tawney Owl, was not proceeded with after failing its first flight test. The Percival project occupied the majority of the existing, Hillman, hangarage and led to additional hangars being built on the west side of the airfield in 1956.



Today, although Herts & Essex, and a member of the Frogley family, still own and sub-let the airfield, flight training is carried out by others such as the Stapleford Flying Club.



The original hangars remain with remarkably little change. Note flight control cabin [centre]