



Dave H Fagan

Copyright Dave H Fagan 2015

Copyright of images remain with the original contributors

Fourth edition. November 2019...

INDEX Part 1

Introduction & Prewar 1926-1939	1
The War Years	16
Civil Flying post-war....	35
The Gliding School.....	49
De Havilland's Fire Service.....	66
Closure.....	93
The Airlines and Christchurch.....	101

Introduction.

Christchurch aerodrome was part of my life right from the day I was born in 1942 in a house only 400 yards from the western airfield boundary. Although my family left Christchurch from time to time we always came back and, in the 50s, when I first became interested in aircraft, I spent a lot of time at the airfield watching the aircraft.

The sight of Ambassadors, and later the Sea Vixens, taking off and passing what seemed like only a few feet above the roof of the house was quite spectacular.

Later, I spent a decade working at SRDE on the eastern end of the field and was working there when the airfield finally closed. The death struggle was prolonged, with Tom Marshall still operating out of the Flying Club area as late as 1970, even after housing had started to encroach on the field.

My final involvement with the airfield came in 1995 when my wife and I moved into a house built on the airfield - roughly halfway along the hard runway!

So, I felt that the history of this little aerodrome should be told, from it's earliest beginnings, through it's time as the original Bournemouth Airport - the war years - and it's subsequent gradual decline, inevitable perhaps, once Hurn blossomed in the 40s and 50s.

Thankyou to all who have contributed to this, both the many photos and information given initially to my Christchurch website and also thanks to my proofreaders David Keeble and Keith Cheesman. Many photographs have been contributed by John Levesley and the Friends of New Forest Airfields, also, via John came a collection of photos from Mrs Ruth Freeman of Highcliffe. These were taken by her husband John.

This second edition is the first update. There are a lot of small additions to the information. Some corrections as well. In addition, all the photos of Christchurch civil aircraft residents and visitors have moved in to volume 2 to prevent the Volume 1 from becoming too cumbersome. More photos have emerged but I still lack good photos of the various hangars.

There will inevitably be omissions and possibly even some errors (shock! horror!) in this work. If you can correct or add to this please contact me by eMail at daveg4otu@aol.com Updates will be published from time to time.

CHRISTCHURCH

GAUC until 1960, then EGHA

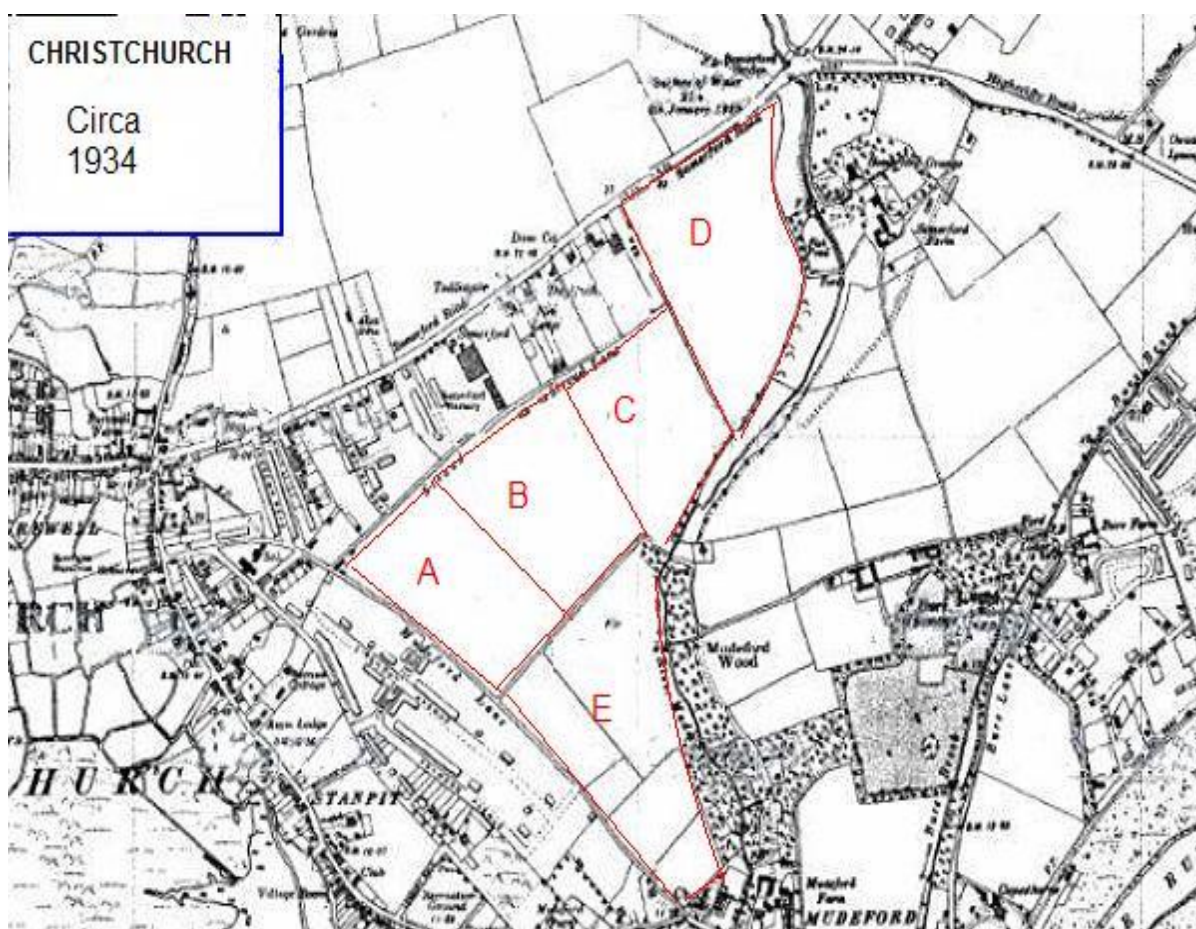
Lat/Long 50 44 03N/01 44 53W. Grid ref SZ 186933. 20ft ASL.

Ident "XC", later "CT". USAAF Station #416.

RUNWAYS. Originally Grass: N/S 1000yds, NE/SW 1000yds, E/W 1000yds, NW/SE 950yds.

1943 Steel Matting runway, QDM 245/065 1650x50yds, Removed post 1945.

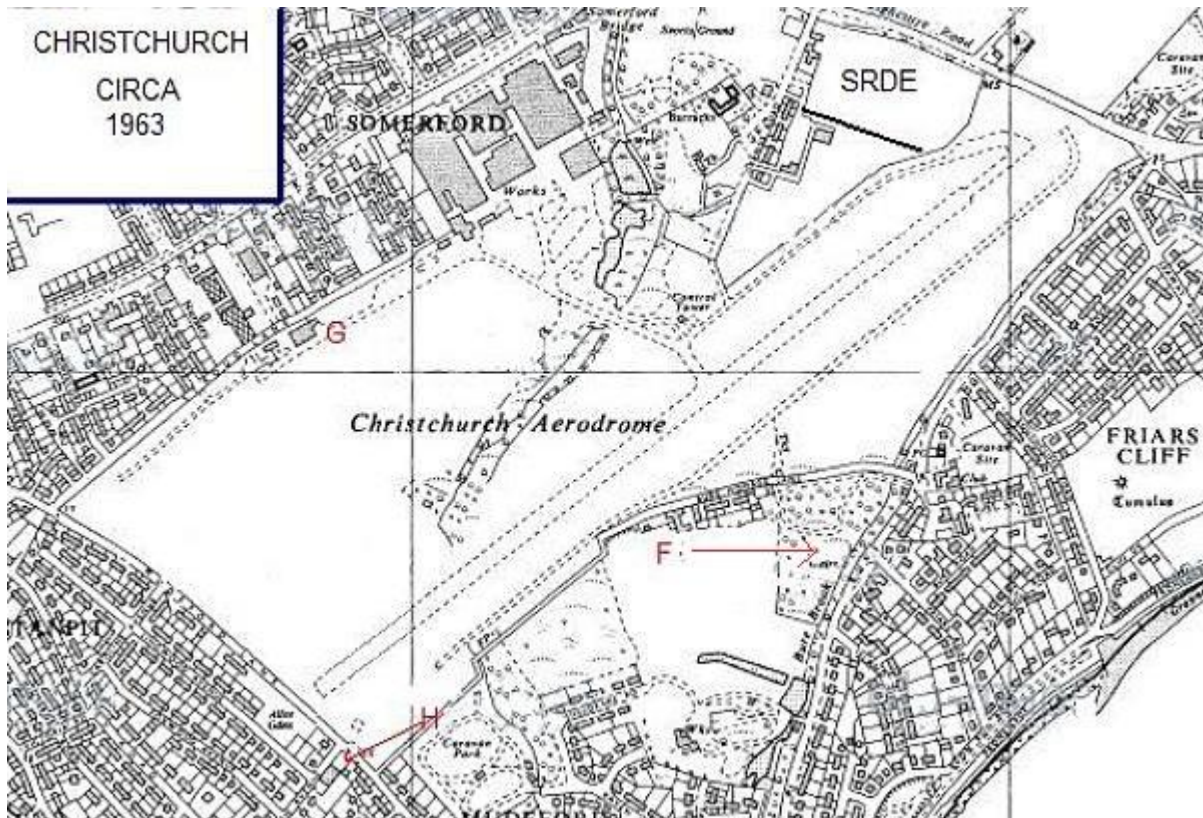
Replaced by Tarmac over an earth & concrete mix base 4484x100ft in 1954.



By 1961 when the airfield was home to de Havilland and the Christchurch Flying Club, the hardened runway(1650 yd...QDM 060/240 ...load factor 40) was in use.

ATC was on 122.5, 135, 54, 123.3, 117.9 and 256.1.

AVCATY, AVTUR, AVTAG, 100/130 Oct and 73 Octane fuels were available.



CHRISTCHURCH Airfield maps showing the various boundaries.

Key to Maps

A = 1926 "Burrys Field"

D = 1930 F C Fishers airfield (Somerford Bridge)

A+B+C = 1933/34 Shamrock and Rambler Air Station.... A+B+C+D = 1935 Bournemouth Airport....A+B+C+D+E = 1941 Christchurch Airfield.

By this time Airspeed's factory had been built on the northern part of area D

By 1943 the area occupied by the hard runway in the lower map was being prepared for the arrival of the USAAF in March 1944

F = "Weeforgan" home of John Marshall (Christchurch Aero Club). Buildings to the east were the outbuildings of Bure Homage , used by 405FG as a PX etc. The 405FG used Bure Homage house (in the wooded area to the east) as an HQ.

G = Flying Club

H = Portsmouth Aviation Hangar outside airfield boundary, occupied post war by 89GS (later 622GS)As can be seen from the maps above, the evolution of Christchurch Airfield was complex. The first beginnings were in July 1926 on the area known as "Burry's field" (part of Mudeford Farm - owned by Mr Burry - area "A" on the map) which was used for pleasure flights.

Among the users was " Surrey Flying Services" offering joyrides at 5 shilling a ride..



In May 1928, the Bournemouth & District branch of the Hampshire Aero Club operated from fields adjacent to the Somerford Grange. Initial operations were one day per week but this increased to two days (Wednesday & Thursday) after the closure of Ensbury Park Aerodrome. Instruction was by Lt. Swaffer who would fly an aircraft in from Hamble for the purpose. During September 1928 the club used the Simmonds Spartan G-EBYU (owned Isle of Purbeck Light Aeroplane Club, Worth Matravers) on some Wednesdays



Avro 504K G-EBVL being towed past cottages at Purewell.

The next step was when Francis Colborne Fisher (see photo above), a recently qualified pilot (he qualified for his licence on 16th May 1928 - licence No.8277) leased the area marked as "D" near Somerford Bridge from Grange Estate. He operated pleasure flights from there for four summer seasons using an Avro 504K, until his lease ran out. Meanwhile Burry's Field also continued to operate and was listed in the AA Aviation Dept "Register of Landing Grounds" with a landing run of 650yds and another of 400yds. The aerodrome was also occasionally known as Somerford during the 20s/30s. By 1933 Fisher had flown over 19,000 passengers. In 1933 the AA Register of Landing grounds had this entry for Christchurch....

Christchurch SZ 17 92 AA Landing Ground - A.F Burry, Mundeford Farm. Fuel: J Campbell (Christchurch) Ltd, Purewell, also York Garage, Barrack Road & Somerford Garage, Street Lane. Transport: from York Garage. Hotel: King's Arms, Castle Street, Christchurch. Telephone: Public phone box at Purwell Cross Roads. No hangars. LG: 650yds

On 30th April 1933, Alan Cobham's National Aviation Day display (generally, but unofficially, known as his Flying Circus) came to Christchurch and attracted over 8,000 spectators. However the noise of the display on the Sunday morning, which was audible in Christchurch Priory during morning service, was to have repercussions the following year when a formal application for Planning Permission for the future airport was made.

In 1933 Burry started operating from areas "A+B+C" as the Shamrock and Rambler Air Station. The manager was Mr C Fletcher and the landing run given as 650yds. An inaugural flight by a Western Airways DH Dragon on May 14 1934 was spoiled by the fact that the aircraft mistakenly landed at Fisher's Field. The Fisher Aviation Company (formed by Francis Fisher and H. Clive Smith) made a formal application to the Christchurch Council for planning permission to establish an aerodrome in 1934. The application was initially refused on the grounds that:

1. It would spoil the development of an a residential area.
2. The noise would interfere with amenities and be injurious to public health.
3. Too far from Bournemouth(6.5 miles) and too close to Christchurch(1 mile)
4. It would affect a nursing home at a distance of 1,000yds.
5. Aeroplanes would be a danger to local historical buildings.
6. Aeroplanes would interfere with Divine Service.

In March 27th 1934 the application was allowed on appeal to the Ministry of Health at a public enquiry held in Christchurch. The eventual outcome was that Fisher took over the running of the erstwhile Shamrock and Rambler Air Station.

Below is the report on the successful appeal that appeared in Flight 26 April 1934.

PROPOSED AERODROME AT MUDEFORD

Te of the first cases of its kind has recently been decided in connection with the proposal of the Fisher Aviation Company to establish an aerodrome at Mundeford, on the outskirts of Christchurch.

The company, the partners in which are Mr. F. C. Fisher, R.A.F.O., and Mr. H. Clive Smith, submitted plans for an aerodrome to the local authority. These were rejected by the Council on the ground that they conflicted with the local Town Planning Scheme. The company promptly appealed to the Ministry of Health, and a public inquiry was held at Christchurch on March 27, presided over by Mr. W. D. Lockhart. of the Ministry of Health. At the hearing Mr. Alan Goodfellow represented the appellants, who were opposed by the Town Clerk of Christchurch, on behalf of the Council, and various local solicitors representing interests in the neighbourhood.

The main points of the opposition were: -

- (a) That the establishment of an aerodrome would spoil the development of the area for residential purposes.

(b) That the noise of the aeroplanes would seriously interfere with the amenities of the district and would be injurious to public health.

(c) That the site selected was too far away (6 miles) to serve Bournemouth, and at the same time too near- (one mile) for the comfort of Christchurch.

(d) That it would have an injurious effect on a local nursing home about 1,000 yards away.

(e) That the aeroplanes would be a danger to Christchurch's historical buildings.

(f) That the aeroplanes would interfere with Divine Service. Particularly strong objections were raised on this last point owing to the visit of an Air Circus one Sunday last year. It was alleged that the machines on this occasion had repeatedly flown round the church tower during the hours of Divine Service at a very low height, and that the owners had explained, in answer to complaints, that the direction of the wind made this unavoidable, notwithstanding the fact that the church was nearly three-quarters of a mile away from the flying ground. There was also strong opposition by local builders, who were afraid of the effect of an aerodrome on their building schemes.

For the appellants, Mr. Goodfellow called Mr. F. C. Fisher himself, Mr. Ivor McClure, of the A.A., who had inspected the site as an aerodrome consultant, Mr. James Hembrow, F.K.I.B.A., who gave expert evidence in connection with aerodromes from a town planning point of view, Mr. Forder, the editor of the Christchurch Times, who gave evidence as to local feeling in the matter, and Councillor F. Clarke, who, although the oldest member of the Council and himself a builder in the locality, was all in favour of aviation and progress generally. In this connection it is interesting to note on the cross-examination of the witnesses opposing the aerodrome that all of them claimed to be in favour of the development of flying and establishment of aerodromes—provided that the aerodromes were not established near them!

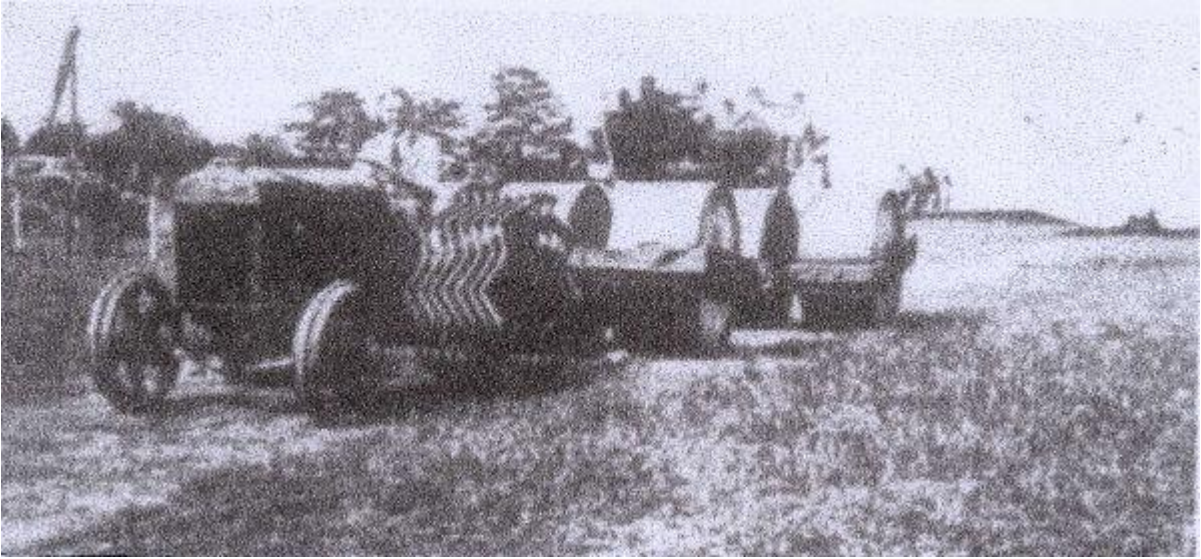
As the result of the Inspector's report to the Ministry of Health, the Fisher Aviation Company has now been informed that its appeal has been allowed, which will presumably mean that the local authorities of Christchurch will have to alter their town planning scheme and give the proposed area the full benefit and protection of being scheduled as an aerodrome.

It is interesting to note that at last year's Airports Conference the Minister of Health gave an assurance that his department appreciated the importance of aerodromes and landing grounds, and this case may be taken as an indication that the Minister is prepared to implement his assurance in all proper cases

Bournemouth Airport Ltd was formed with Alan Cobham as Chairman and Francis Fisher as managing Director and from February 1935 Christchurch became known as "Bournemouth Airport" encompassing areas "A+B+C+D".

The 94 acre site was purchased for £17,000 in March 1935. Grandiose plans for a terminal building came to naught and what eventually emerged was a wooden hut.

The pictures on the next page (from Colin Richards and Christopher Balfour) show (TOP) Francis Fisher rolling the surface of the field and (LOWER) the terminal area of the airfield in 1936.



New services were operated by Cobham Air Routes to Guernsey and Croydon using Westland Wessex aircraft, and a hangar was built to accommodate the aircraft overnight. Over the next five years airline services were operated to Cardiff & Shoreham (Channel Air Ferries Ltd), and to Ryde (IOW) by PSIOWA as well as other minor airlines. By June 1935 full customs facilities were available although these were withdrawn the following year. For more information on airline operations see the Christchurch Airlines section.

Below: Advert for the Bournemouth Flying Club (circa 1937)

**BOURNEMOUTH
FLYING CLUB**

SUBSIDISED BY THE AIR MINISTRY

**OPENING CEREMONY
of NEW CLUB & BAR
to be performed at an early date
BY the President of the Club
THE RT. HON. THE EARL OF NORMANTON**

AN INVITATION ● Anyone interested in attending
this Ceremony, in learning to Fly,
or joining the Club, should write
or particulars of membership,
Flying charges, etc.

The Secretary, BOURNEMOUTH AIRPORT, CHRISTCHURCH

In July 1935 Flight reported that "*BOURNEMOUTH and Poole have decided on a joint purchase of land near Bear Cross for use as a municipal airport, a project which will cost about £15,000.*" Although some land was purchased nothing came of the idea and Christchurch remained the Bournemouth airport until after WW2 when Hurn became available.

There was an active flying club, the Bournemouth Flying Club (also the brainchild of Francis Fisher), which in 1938 had a fleet "*which includes a Heron, a Martin, a Swallow, a Robin, three Sparrows, and three Avis's*" (Flight March 1938) - a considerable rise from 3 Moths and a Widgeon listed the preceding year. The 1937 rates were given as: Instruction and advanced dual, £2 an hour; solo from £1 10s. an hour; contract rate from £1 7s. an hour. Members subscription was £2 2s.

Francis Fisher was the instructor and secretary. Capt the Rt Hon the Earl of Normanton was the President and Sir Alan Cobham was the Vice-President. In 1937 additional hangars were erected to accommodate the club's expanding fleet. By 1938 an additional instructor was available - this was David G Biggart. Other notable members were Roderick A F Farquharson who owned BA Swallow G-ADJN (used by the club); Walter S Coates, (ex RAF), a farmer, who held B Licence No.1661; and Edgar K P Ince who qualified with the Bournemouth club. Looking after the aircraft was Mr E D Whiting, the

chief ground engineer. In March 1938 the Airworthiness Company started doing overhaul and repairs in a new hangar. The Flying club remained very active over the following years and the March 10 1938 issue of Flight recorded that.....

"Sideslips were barred in the landing competition held on Sunday at Christchurch, and this was won by Mr F Sparrow, a particularly good performance since, at the time, he had not made his first solo. Four new members joined the Bournemouth Flying Club during last week, and the names of two add to the steadily growing ornithological collection which includes a Heron, a Martin, a Swallow, a Robin, three Sparrows, and three Avis's. Last week's flying total was 31 hours 15 minutes."

An Empire Air Day was held there on 28th May and once again Flight recorded... *"The Bournemouth Flying Club, with a fine day and a good flying programme, assisted in the success of the aerodrome's Empire Air Day display. Crazy flying was demonstrated by the club instructor in the new Avro Mongoose, and the substantial cheque sent to the Air League Benevolent Fund was proof positive of the reception of the display."*

The Flying Club joined the Civil Air Guard Scheme in September 1938 and commenced training pilots for the RAF. This continued until the outbreak of war in 1939 with the cost to pilots of 2/6d (12.5p) per hour. Francis Fisher, a reservist, was called back to the RAF along with his mechanic, Mr E.D. Whiting. Both of these gentlemen survived the war and returned to Christchurch post-war. The Flying Club aircraft were requisitioned by the military.

The photo below shows the area to the west of Mudeford Lane in 1938.





ABOVE: Luftwaffe photo of Christchurch, probably circa 1938 as the Airspeed factory is not visible.

The War Years

During 1939 the Air Defence Experimental Establishment (later the Signal Research and Development Establishment) was built on the North east corner of the airfield and opened in September 1939. The establishment was to be involved in the development of RDF/Radar in conjunction with a site at Steamer Point and also at Worth Matravers (near Swanage).

In the early days of 1940 the Airspeed factory, built on part of the original Fisher's Field site, commenced production. This factory officially opened on 22nd of March 1941, and when fully completed produced Horsa gliders as well as Oxfords and Mosquitos during WW2. It is notable that the Christchurch factory was the only location where Horsas were produced, assembled and flown out. All other Horsa producers (Harris Lebus etc.) made only parts which were assembled elsewhere by RAF maintenance units. Picture on the next page shows the factory being constructed in spring of 1941. Note the Beaufighter, Hereford and Whitley of the SDF.



BELOW: A 1941 RAF photo showing aircraft dispersals along the western edge of the field (Mudeford Lane) and the camouflage painted roads.



After the war, as part of De Havilland, the factory produced the Ambassador airliner, Vampires, Sea Venoms and Sea Vixens before closure in 1962. The Luftwaffe reconnaissance photo below shows the field as it was in February 1941 with the Airspeed factory clearly visible at the northern end of the small grass field.



On the next page is another Luftwaffe map showing Airspeed and SRDE in 1941. The Luftwaffe seemed to think that SRDE was part of Airspeed.

GB 7456b c
 Map für den Dienstgebrauch
 Bild Nr. F 10076/116 (Lit. 3)
 Aufnahme vom 11. 12. 40

Christchurch

Flugzeugzellen-Reparaturwerk

Länge (westl. Greene.) 1° 44' 10" Breite 50° 44' 18"
 Mitversung: - 11' 00" (Mitte 1940) Zielföhe über NH 10 m
 Maßstab etwa 1 : 1.000

Genat. 5. Abt. JANUAR 1941
 Karte 1: 100.000
 GB/E 30



W-Teil	1. Fabrikgebäude	etwa 20.000 qm
	2. Fabrikgebäude im Bau	etwa 3.000 qm
	Verwaltung, Verwaltungs- und Lagergebäude	etwa 1.800 qm
O-Teil	3. Fabrikations- und Montagehalle	etwa 1.600 qm
	4. Werkstätte und Lagergebäude	etwa 1.300 qm
	5. Verwaltungs- und sonstige Nebengebäude	etwa 2.000 qm
Gesamtfläche nicht verfügbar		Bekannt Fläche etwa 41.000 qm
Gesamtumfang: W-Teil etwa 251 x 300 m, O-Teil etwa 200 x 200 m		

Here is a list of known air raids on Christchurch . The three right-hand columns are Injured/Killed /Total.

16/08/1940	17/08/1940	Night	Highcliffe,Christchurch	0	0	0
16/08/1940	17/08/1940	Night	Highcliffe,Christchurch	0	0	0
25/08/1940	26/08/1940	Night	Christchurch, Dorset	0	0	0
27/08/1940	28/08/1940	Night	Christchurch, Dorset	0	0	0
28/08/1940	29/08/1940	Night	Christchurch, Dorset	Unspecified	0	Unspecified 2
28/08/1940	29/08/1940	Night	Burton, Christchurch	0	0	0 unexploded bomb
28/09/1940	29/09/1940	Night	Christchurch, Dorset	0	0	0
05/10/1940	05/10/1940	Day	Christchurch, Dorset	Unspecified	0	Unspecified "few casualties"
08/10/1940	09/10/1940	Night	Burton, Christchurch	0	1	1
20/11/1940	21/11/1940	Night	Christchurch, Dorset	0	0	0
03/12/1940	04/12/1940	Night	Hurn, Christchurch	0	0	0
12/12/1940	13/12/1940	Night	Christchurch, Dorset	0	0	0
21/12/1940	22/12/1940	Night	Christchurch, Dorset	0	0	0
17/01/1941	18/01/1941	Night	Christchurch, Dorset	0	0	0
13/03/1941	14/03/1941	Night	Christchurch, Dorset	0	0	0
09/05/1941	10/05/1941	Night	Christchurch, Dorset	0	0	0
11/05/1941	12/05/1941	Night	Christchurch, Dorset	0	0	0
15/06/1941	16/06/1941	Night	Christchurch, Dorset	0	0	0
07/07/1941	08/07/1941	Night	Christchurch, Dorset	0	0	0
08/02/1942	09/02/1942	Night	Christchurch, Dorset	0	1	1
11/08/1943	12/08/1943	Night	Christchurch	0	0	0
14/05/1944	15/05/1944	Night	Christchurch	1	3	4

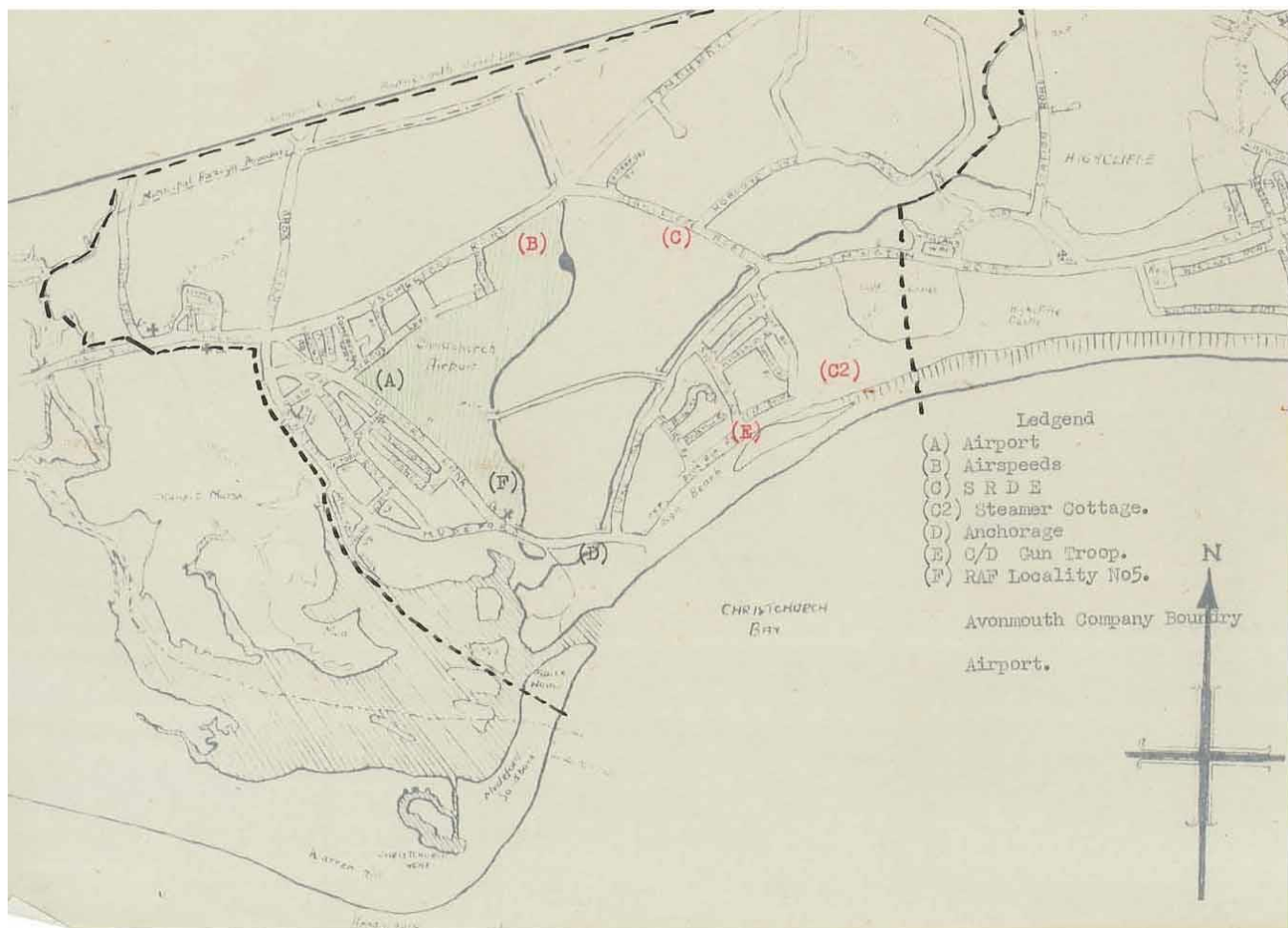
In April 1940, the airfield was taken on charge by 22 Group RAF with HQ RAF Christchurch initially in the Clubhouse on the north side of the field. In May 1940 the Air Defence Research & Development Establishment at the north-eastern end of the airfield acquired the services of [Special Duties Flight](#) with a mixed bag of aircraft, to take part in the experiments with Radar. The SDF operated such types as the Blenheim, Avro 504K, Scott Viking gliders, and eventually, 3 Hurricanes for defence. Many of the SDF aircraft were flown out to Sway overnight to avoid damage from Luftwaffe attack.



The Air Ministry photo above from 12th April 1942 shows the camouflage painted roadways extended and completed. Clearly visible are the three blister hangars that were built by Mudeford Wood with a number of aircraft parked along the edge of the airfield beside the woods. The Mudeford Lane hangar later used by Portsmouth Aviation can be seen at bottom centre. The Commanding Officer (CO) of RAF Christchurch was Wing Commander 'Jackie' Horner. In addition, the Fleet Air Arm sent aircraft for Radar trials from HMS Raven at Eastleigh, though these were only transient visitors. A Bellman hangar was erected in spring of 1940 on the land to the northeast of Dennistoun Avenue (between flying club area and Somerford Road - previously known as Street Lane). The Bessonneau hangar can be seen to the left of the Bellman in the photo above. During the following years between March 1941 and April 1942, 5 more hangars were built. There were 3 aforementioned Blister hangars, two on the northwest side of Mudeford Woods and one at the south-western tip of the woods. The large hangar at the junction of Mudeford Lane and Warren Avenue (erected by early 1942) was eventually used by Portsmouth Aviation who, in 1941, had become a contractor in the Civilian Repair Organisation for the servicing and repair of Airspeed Oxfords. They also had premises at Scott's Hill Lane (Amsterdam House) in Christchurch. Aircraft (minus wings) were towed along public roads between there and the airfield - frequently

the towing was done by Francis Luxmoore (a director of Portsmouth Aviation). The Christchurch operation was overseen by Frank Dyson as works Manager.

In 1943 the ADRDE was taken over by SRDE (Signals Research and Development Establishment). This establishment was to remain on the site until the 1970s. SRDE is shown at "C" in the Home Guard map from 1943 (below- from the New Forest National Park Authority website)





This photo (kindly provided by Christopher Balfour) shows the PS & IOWA (Portsmouth Aviation) works Fire Brigade - winners of the Emergency Services Organization Panel Challenge Cup on 26th Nov 1942. If you recognise anyone in the photo please [E-Mail me](mailto:daveg4otu@aol.com) at daveg4otu@aol.com



The Air Ministry photo above shows the field in March 1944 after work on laying a runway for the coming USAAF Fighter units had started.

Between 24 March and 8 April 1943 the steel mesh (BRC/British Reinforced Concrete Mesh) runway was compacted and laid by Company A of the USAAF 833rd Engineers Aviation Battalion on land to the south of the existing airfield. They also constructed a shooting-in-butt and bomb storage revetments.





In the spring of 1944 the airfield passed into the control of the USAAF who moved in March 1944 when the [405th Fighter Group](#) commanded initially by Col James Ferguson and then by Col Robert L Delashaw (from 26th April) arrived with 509/510/511 Squadrons, equipped with P-47D Thunderbolts. The 405FG was officially established at Christchurch on the 7th of March with it's HQ in Bure Homage House and tented accommodation. The USAAF left soon after D-Day following a not uneventful stay and the airfield was returned to RAF control. The 405Group moved to Picauville in Normandy .First aircraft departed Christchurch on 29th June and the move was complete by 11th July.

Other US Army units based locally were...

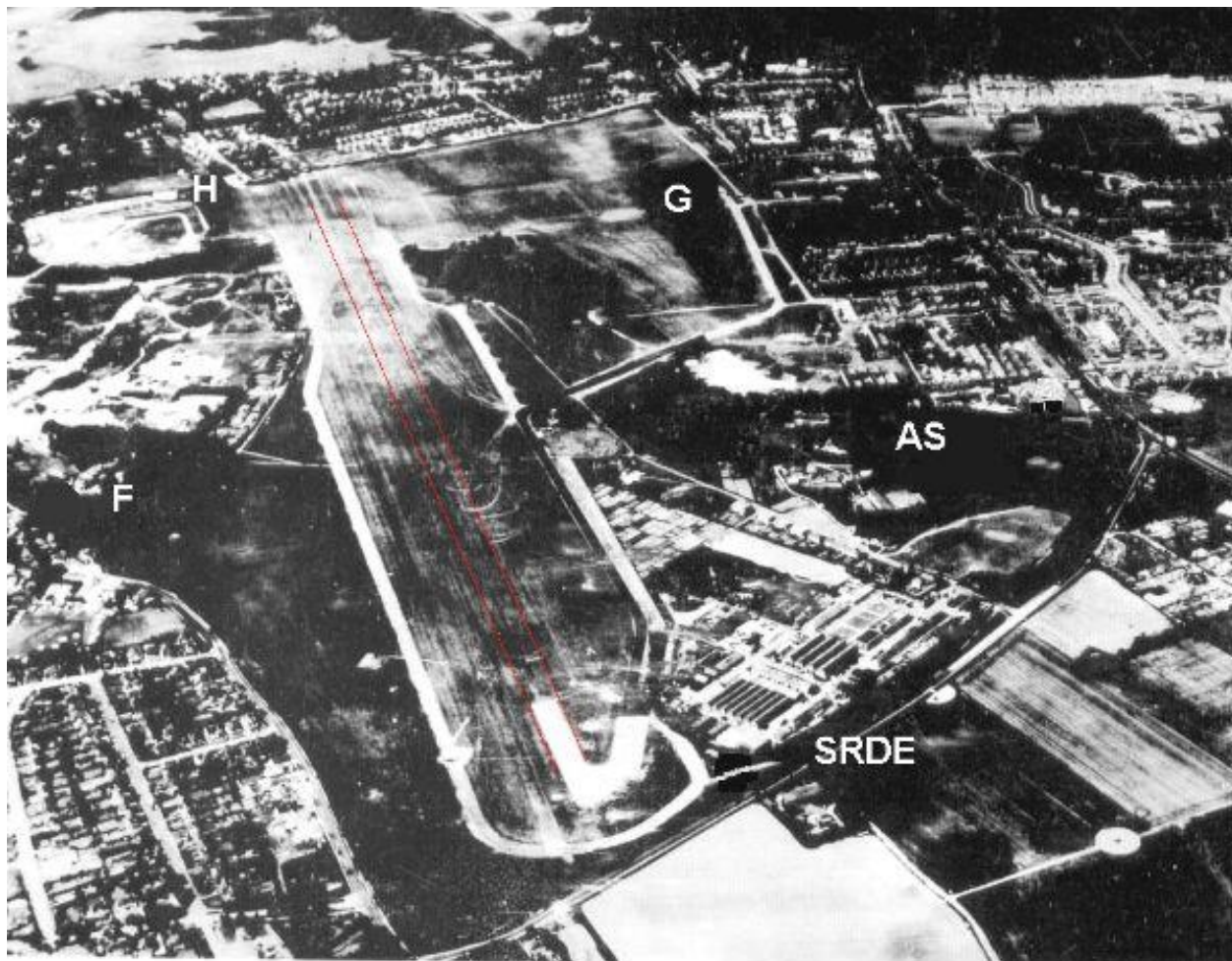
APO Ech Location Unit Pre 1974 County Coordinates

696	90	Christchurch	21	Weather Squadron, Detachment ZF	Hampshire	VU6114
029	29	Christchurch	29	Quartermaster Company	Hampshire	VU6114
696	90	Christchurch	40	Mobile Comm Squadron, Detachment ZF	Hampshire	VU6114
696	90	Christchurch	43	Bomb Disposal Squadron	Hampshire	VU6114
595	93	Christchurch	215	Medical Dispensary (Aviation)	Hampshire	VU6114
149	94	Christchurch	312	Service Group, 334 Service Squadron	Hampshire	VU6114
149	94	Christchurch	857	Chemical Company (Air Operations), Detachment A	Hampshire	VU6114
149	94	Christchurch	1109	Signal Company (Service Group), Detachment A	Hampshire	VU6114
149	94	Christchurch	1243	Quartermaster Company (Service Group), Det A	Hampshire	VU6114
595	93	Christchurch	1298	Military Police Company (Aviation), Detachment A	Hampshire	VU6114
149	94	Christchurch	1813	Ordnance Supply & Maintenance Company	Hampshire	VU6114
595	93	Christchurch	2059	Engineer Fire Fighting Platoon (Aviation)	Hampshire	VU6114
149	94	Christchurch	2210	Quartermaster Truck Company (Aviation), Det A	Hampshire	VU6114

(Next page TOP) Shows 405FG tents pitched in the grounds of Bure Homage. Note the Horsa glider in the distance. (LOWER) Photo by J Clear, shows Stars and Stripes hanging in Christchurch Priory, presented to the Priory in June 1944 by Group Executive Officer, Edgar J Loftus.







Previous page: Air Ministry May 1944. Large numbers of P-47Ds are parked around the airfield .ABOVE Aerial view of the field in 1944 looking west. The red lines show the approximate location of the later hard runway. "AS" is the Airspeed Factory, "SRDE" is the Air Defence Research Establishment (later SRDE), "G" is the Flying club location, "F" is the 405FG HQ and "H" the off-airfield Hangar used by Portsmouth Aviation and later by the Gliding School.

The Air Ministry photo below from Dec 12th 1946 shows the airfield deserted...military units gone and civil flying yet to restart.



The next two photos (via Colin Richards and Geoff Kingman-Sugars) show the field looking east: (TOP) in 1950 after removal of the wartime runway and (LOWER) in 1952 before the laying of the hard runway in 1954. See following page for key to the notations (by Geoff Kingman-Sugars).



P2: Standard FW3 Type 22 hexagonal pill-box but with addition of corrugated asbestos fake roof to disguise its purpose.

P3: Standard FW3 Type 22 hexagonal pill-box adjacent to derelict two-storey house.

P4: Standard FW3 Type 22 hexagonal pill-box.

P5: Standard FW3 Type 22 hexagonal pill-box.

P6: Pickett Hamilton Fort hydraulically-operated retracting Pill-Box. Retractable down to ground level to allow aircraft to be taxied/towed over it.

P7: Standard FW3 Type 22 hexagonal pill-box

SRDE: Signals Research and Development Establishment (originally The Air Defence Research and Development Establishment). Operated by the Ministry of Supply, later the MoD and eventually the Department of the Environment.

T: Bellman hangar - the Bessoneau hangar was to the east of it.

W: Compass swinging area, finally used as a site for up to two glider winches.

X: Approximate crash-site of G-ACDI - no injuries other than dented pride for doing a 'turn-back' in a Tiger Moth.

Y: Approximate crash site of G-AHVV (two occupants killed).

Bure Homage Mansion, seen below, was used during 1944 as a headquarters by the 405FG, USAAF, and later in the early 50s by the Royal Signals.





After the USAAF departed, the airfield reverted to 11 Group RAF control. The main activity was the repair by Airspeeds of Horsas which returned from the continent both by air and, in the case of badly damaged aircraft, by sea. In late 1944 Railway Air Services announced that services would resume in the spring of 1945 to Shoreham, Ryde and the West Country. However these services were never started. A further proposal by PSIOWA that Isle of Wight Aviation commence services to Ryde was stillborn, and the original Bournemouth Airport Company, still extant in February 1944, was wound up.

In the spring of 1945 it is believed that Portsmouth Aviation at Christchurch were involved in the modification of 51 Ansons as ASH Radar trainers, confirmation of this would be most welcome. In March 1945 control passed to Transport Command. The main activities continued to be production (Mosquitos) from Airspeed, Radar trials, and Glider pick-up training. On 28th January 1946 control of the airfield passed to the Ministry of Aircraft Production, and this became the Ministry of Supply on 1st April 1946. In 1945 the BOAC Gliding Club was formed - sharing the ex-Portsmouth Aviation hangar with the 89 GS.

In the post war years the Bure Homage buildings were used for a time by the Royal Signals. The photo below shows the main Bure Homage building c1950.



Flying after WW2

Civilian flying returned slowly to Christchurch after the war. In May 1946 the Christchurch Times "Air Correspondent" reported that "It is now learned that Squadron Leader Fisher has opened negotiations with the Ministry of Civil Aviation for the re-opening of the club at Somerford aerodrome, and I was present in the hangars at the beginning of this week when he started moving his fleet of aircraft back on to his old stamping ground " Mr Fisher told the Times ""It will be a great source of pleasure to our old members, particularly to those who have been flying in the R.A.F. during the last six years, to be able to come back to their old haunts. Furthermore, there are many young people throughout the country who have not yet had the opportunity to fly and are keen to learn. They have studied the subject of aviation and have been imbued with the spirit that made Britain show the world that her flyers were second to none. It will be our job to try and bring their ambitions within their reach." On the subject of air charter services S/Ldr. Fisher said, " It is a little too early yet to go into great detail on this matter. All I can tell you at present is that we are planning to offer aerial transport to all parts of the world from Christchurch. Cost should be no greater than first class surface travel is at the present time."

Things perhaps not moving quite as fast as originally envisaged, in November 1946 Air Review reported that Francis Fisher, having been recently demobbed, was seeking to re-open the Bournemouth Flying Club at Christchurch just as soon as the necessary permission to resume operations was granted by the Ministry of Supply.

The MoS were at that time the controlling authority for the aerodrome. Mr Fisher's intentions were to commence with a fleet comprising DH.60G G-AAHI, two BA Swallows G-AEGN & G-AEVA, the Avro Cadet G-ADFD, a Taylorcraft Plus G-AFJP, two ex-RAF Miles Magisters and two Miles Falcons. Air Review further stated that the aircraft were undergoing reconditioning at the firm's (Bournemouth Flying Club) own workshops under the supervision of the Chief engineer, Mr Whiting. Once operational, the club intended to charge £3 5s. per hour for instruction with a cheaper rate for solo flights.

His first attempts were vetoed by the Ministry and it was not until 1948 that organised club flying resumed at Christchurch..

Below is the report that appeared in the Christchurch Times on May 4th 1946 in its entirety

FLYING CLUB TO START AGAIN SOON

(By Air Correspondent)

C.T. May 4, 1946

"In the world of sport before the war, Christchurch was chiefly known as one of the centres of the yachting and angling fraternities. But in aviation circles it was also well known as the headquarters of one of the most popular of the pre-war flying clubs.

Known as the Bournemouth Flying Club, and under the direction of Mr. F. C. Fisher, the aerodrome at Somerford was a centre of flying activity for many keen amateur aviators, both local and from further afield. Headquarters of the local Civil Air Guard training scheme, it was also the pick-up point for air charter services and scheduled air lines. It is now learned that Squadron Leader Fisher has opened negotiations with the Ministry of Civil Aviation for there-opening of the club at Somerford aerodrome, and I was present in the hangars at the beginning of this week when he started moving his fleet of aircraft back on to his old stamping ground.

PRESENT GENERATION AIR-MINDED.

"It will be a great source of pleasure to our old members, particularly to those who have been flying in the R.A.F. during the last six years, to be able to come back to their old haunts." said S/Ldr. Fisher. "Furthermore, there are many young people throughout the country who have not yet had the opportunity to fly and are keen to learn.

They have studied the subject of aviation and have been imbued with the spirit that made Britain show the world that her flyers were second to none. It will be our job to try and bring their ambitions within their reach."

On the subject of air charter services S/Ldr. Fisher said, "It is a little too early yet to go into great detail on this matter. All I can tell you at present is that we are planning to offer aerial transport to all parts of the world from Christchurch. Cost should be no greater than first class surface travel is at the present time."

At the beginning of the war, S/Ldr. Fisher's fleet of aeroplanes was requisitioned for service purposes. Their familiar red and silver finish will be well remembered by Christchurch residents. The squadron leader himself was on the reserve of Air Force Officers and went back into the Royal Air Force as an instructor, subsequently becoming a staff officer at Training Command.

HIGH STANDARD OF GROUND MAINTENANCE.

The ground servicing and maintenance of all his aircraft before the war was of an exceptionally high standard in the capable hands of Mr. E.D. Whiting. A veteran of the R.F.C. and R.A.F. in World War One, he re-joined the service in 1939. I had the pleasure of meeting Squadron Leader Whiting in Cairo during the desert campaign in 1942. His job there---and subsequently in North Africa---was "right hand man" to the fighter pilots of the Desert Air Force; when their machines were damaged, S/Ldr Whiting took them into his care, and in a matter of days---sometime hours, the

aircraft were back in service. All connected with the club will be glad to know that S/Ldr Whiting was today back in the hangers preparing the Bournemouth Flying Club's new fleet of aircraft to take the air. He will be in charge of all ground maintenance. "

In 1948, Portsmouth Aviation, by now doing non-aviation work, closed their premises in Scott's Hill Lane. Also in 1948 the South Hants Ultra Light Aero Club took up residence operating out of a hut at the southern end of Mudeford Wood. Of note is that the club's president, Lord Ventry, was the man behind the building of the "Bournemouth" airship G-AMJH, the gondola of which lingered on for many years in the 622GS hangar. Other luminaries who were members included Sir Donald Bailey (of Bailey Bridge fame) and George Errington, the Airspeed test pilot. A flying display took place on August 20th 1949. However the club did not prosper and was dissolved on 13 October 1950. See the South Hants Ultra Light Aero Club chapter later in this book for photos of the air display and other events associated with the club.

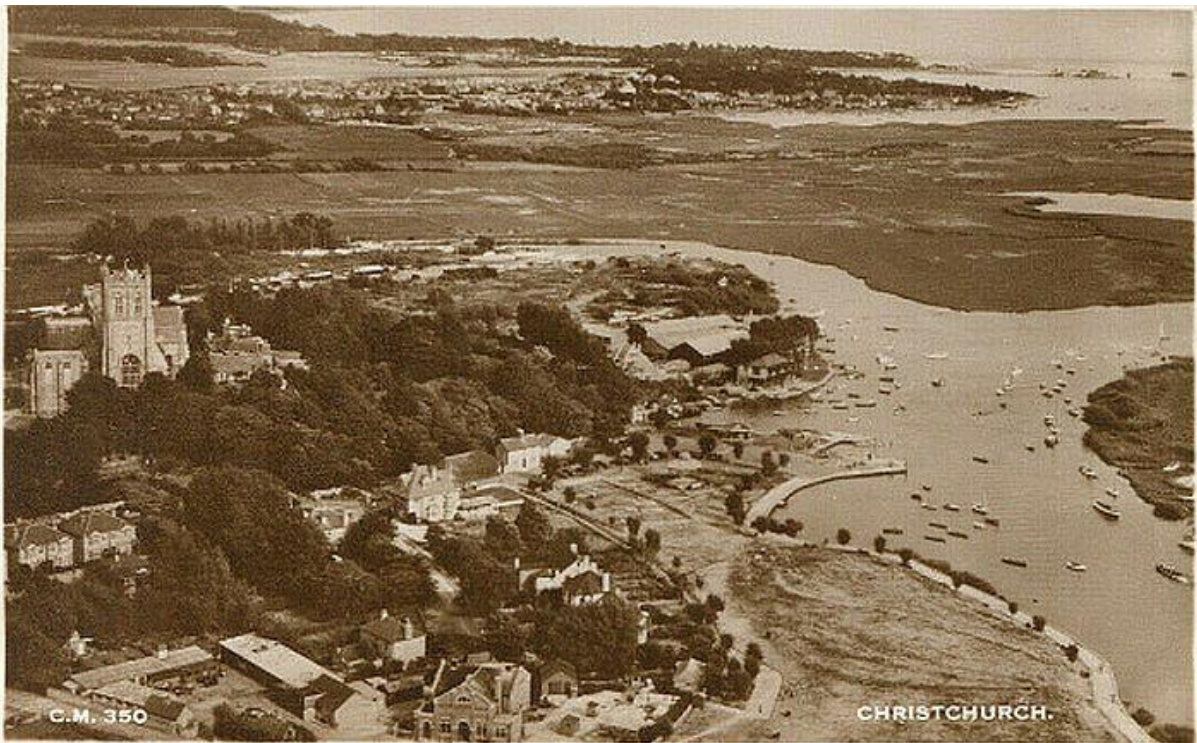
The following appeared in the "Sailplane and Glider Oct 1949:"

AIRWAYS AERO CLUB, HURN :A group has recently been formed within the Airways Aero Club, Hurn Branch, who operate in the Bournemouth area. Necessary qualifications for entry are the Royal Aero Club's Gliding "B" and "C" Certificates - which accounts for the small number of group members at present. However, a gradual influx of members is expected in the near future. The initial demand for soaring facilities has been met by recently acquiring a "Kirby Kite II", whose condition is absolutely first class. Launches will mainly comprise of aero-tows, using the group's own "Tiger Moth" aircraft. Flying commenced on September 1st this year, and the programme to date has consisted of aircraft familiarization only. An abundance of optimism is equally shared by the members, for many among the few are literally thirsting for their "five hours" and such.

Members: R. Downes, I. E. Baker, R. Haigh (Chairman), R. Hayter (C.F.I.), J. Nunn, P. Squelch, Haigh (Jnr.), G. A. Joynes, Mackinlay, J. Allan, G. E. House, Bampton.

However it appears that this group was still-born.

This postcard from the 1950s shows Christchurch with the airfield in the distance at top left and centre.



On the next page a cutting about the "Bournemouth" airship. Not a success, the gondola finished its days at the back of the Warren Avenue hangar.

WORK STARTS ON NEW AIRSHIP

"Star" Reporter

THE first airship to be built in Europe since the war is now being constructed at Christchurch, Hants, aerodrome.

Nearly 100 feet long and designed to carry three or four passengers, it will probably be in the air by next Summer.

Pioneers of the venture are the only two licensed airship pilots in this country—Lord Ventry, 49, bachelor, and Squadron-Leader T. P. York-Moore.

They have gathered other aeronautical enthusiasts, including Mr A. C. Leith, chairman of the South Hampshire Ultra-Light Aeroplane Club, and a number of the club members.

Lord Ventry, sponsor of the scheme and a former RAF pilot, was with barrage-balloon units during the war. He is at present in America gaining experience on airships there.

Work has started on the airship's car, which is being modelled on the lines of a modern aircraft fuselage.

The envelope has already been secured from the Air Ministry and is stored at Godalming.

"We hope to revive interest in airships by this venture," said Mr Leith today. "We believe that airships can be built which are perfectly safe."

When the car is finished it will be transported to Britain's pre-war home of airships—Cardington, Beds—where it will be assembled with the envelope.

After tests at Cardington, it is hoped to fly the airship to Bournemouth next summer.



The picture above shows the western end of the aerodrome in 1950.

In November 1950, Flight reported that "At a recent meeting in Christchurch, former members of the South Hants Ultra-Light Aero Club agreed to dissolve that organization and make a serious attempt to establish a new club. It will be known as the Christchurch Aero Club and will operate from Christchurch airfield, where the S.H.U.L.A.C. has been located for the past two-and-a-half years. It is the Club's intention to give its members the opportunity to fly at the cheapest possible rates and to step up considerably the amount of flying done locally. The newly elected chairman is Mr E B Weston."

The new "Christchurch Aero Club", founded by brothers John Hutton Marshall and Thomas Hutton Marshall along with Ted Gould, Capt Francis Fisher and others, came into being, and on Saturday December 9th 1950 the Club held an informal dinner to introduce members to their new headquarters. The club operated initially from a site in the centre of the field at the western end of Mudford Woods. The initial instructors were Capt Fisher, Sqn Ldr (Flt Lt at the time) Ron Hayter (RAFVRT) and later on John Potheary. John Marshall was the club's Chief Engineer.

A plan to use the fuselage of an Airspeed Horsa (possibly RN371 - adjacent to Bure Lane on the south side of the field) as a clubhouse was abandoned when the fuselage was vandalised, and in June 1952 a reorganised club under the heading of Tom Marshall moved to the north side. Around this time the three original Blister hangars were removed.

The new 'club' premises were in the western side of the old RAF Officers Mess building. The eastern side of that building was occupied by the groundsmen (Airspeed/De Havilland employees) that kept the airfield in trim. It is probable that the club initially were using the old Bessoneau hangar, but this was destroyed in a winter storm in 1954

On August 15th 1952 Flight stated that "CHRISTCHURCH AERO CLUB, inaugurated on June 14th, has now received Ministry of Civil Aviation recognition. Headquarters are on the De Havilland airfield at Christchurch, Hants, in accommodation made available by the company. The venture has been financed, and is managed, by Mr Tommy Marshall, a Bournemouth business-man; so far, the club has a fleet of two Tiger Moths and one Auster and membership of 25. Sixty-four members of the air section of the De Havilland sports and social club who have been flying at Thruxton, Portsmouth, and Eastleigh under the " £1 an hour" scheme will also use the club. The three instructors are Mr E J H Thornton, Mr R Hayter (commander of No.89 A.T.C. Gliding School at Christchurch), and Mr Davis, a Wimborne schoolmaster. The club has a licensed bar and facilities for catering. It is hoped soon to arrange a dawn patrol, to which the nearby holiday resort of Bournemouth should be an added attraction."

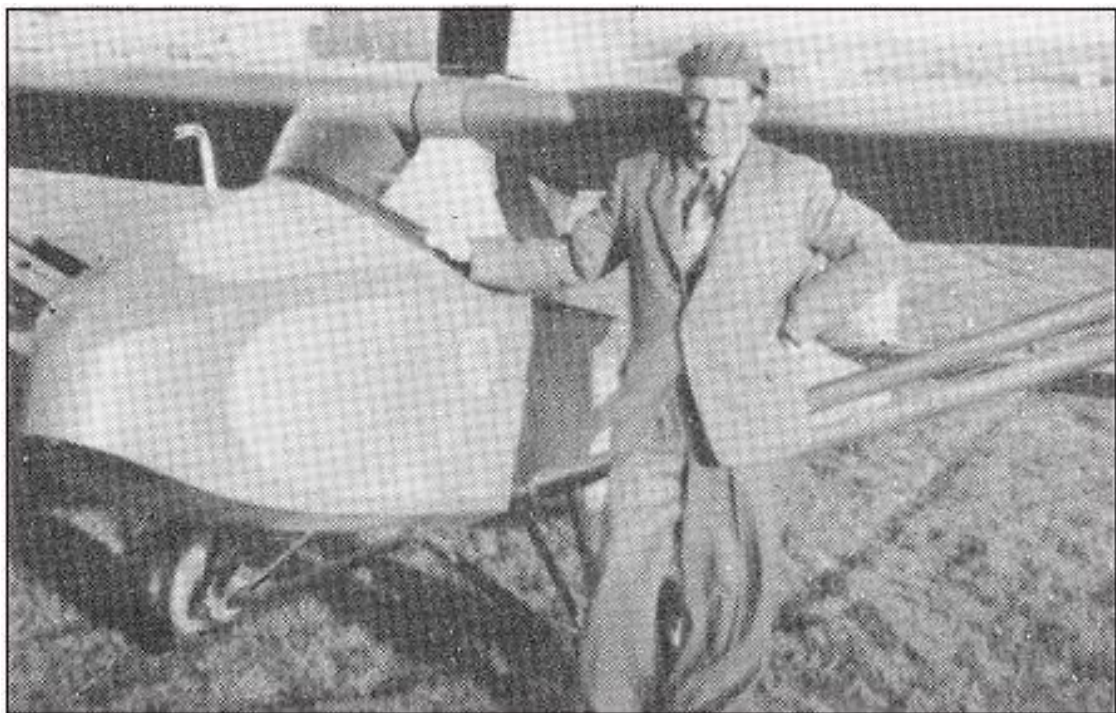
By 1953 the CFI was John Pothecary assisted by Johnny Stone and occasionally, by Ron Hayter.



Left to Right: Tom Marshall, Frank Bellinger, John Marshall, Sue Marshall, John Stone, (unknown), Eric Thornton, (unknown), Gwyne Johns.



Tom Marshall and Ted Gould.



Ted Gould and G-AEKV, his Kronfeld Drone (photo via Geoff Kingman-Sugars).

Late in 1955 a Vickers-Armstrongs Works Flying Club was formed at Christchurch. The Club members were able to fly in the Christchurch Aero Club aircraft for 6 shillings per hour - the remainder of the cost (about 90%) being subsidised by Vickers-Armstrongs. By July 1956 the club had 35 members with 85 on their waiting list.

In about 1956 an additional 'clubhouse' was built and the operational side of the club moved into that area with the social side of the club remaining in the old Officers Mess building. It was about this time that Bert Hawkins took over as CFI and the Blister hangar was built (varying dates - 1955-56) for the engineering side of the CAC. The hangar was not one of the three original blisters at Christchurch but was "imported", parts possibly from Warmwell and one of the Lymington strips. In February 1957 the club was operating 3 Tiger Moths, a Gemini and four Austers. Flying rates for the Austers and Tigers was £3 15s. per hour whilst the Gemini cost £7 15s. per hour. Flying hours in 1956 totalled over 2,600 (of these 826 hours were flown by the Vickers-Armstrongs Hurn Flying Club). This was at a time when fuel was rationed due to the Suez crisis.

In 1957 the British Women Pilots' Association held a successful flying meeting at Christchurch on September 28-29.

In the spring of 1959 the Aero Club was approached by the Dorset County Council with a view to investigating the possibility of opening the disused RAF Warmwell airfield as a municipal airport for Weymouth, possibly using the field from 1960 for pleasure flying. This came to nothing and the Club soldiered on at Christchurch. On the next page is a reproduction of the Aero Club's Newsletter for March 1959 with mention of Warmwell. (Thanks to John Levesley)

By 1961 Christchurch Aero Club was offering instrument-rating training and practice and advanced multi-engine training using Airspeed Oxford aircraft previously belonging to the College of Air Training. Flying rate for the type was £16 per hour, with special contract rates for 20 or more hours.

The club eventually closed, the last pilot (Gerald Hardy) gaining his wings there in 1965 after instruction by John Potheary.

The blister hangar was dismantled and taken to Warmwell for use by The Sand & Gravel Company Ltd.

NEWS FROM CHRISTCHURCH

1959 has been long enough with us now to show that it has nothing out of the ordinary to offer in the way of weather. The fog, rain, gale sequence is here as usual and reflects in the monthly flying totals.

However, Easter and a busy flying season is approaching, and we think it time to inform Members of plans for the spring and summer.

Members will have seen mention of Warmwell in the local press. The Club has been approached by the Dorset County Council to open this disused R.A.F. aerodrome as a municipal airport for Weymouth and Dorset. This may be used for pleasure flying next year, but the Club does not anticipate moving until a Ministry decision is made regarding De Havillands and Christchurch, probably not for at least two years.

But why not fly over and have a look at its ideal situation - by ideal we mean well removed from the zone controlled by the Ministry whose job it is to assist civil aviation.

During the Easter period we shall be training five A.T.C. cadets and the three Tigers at present in service will be hard worked, so we advise Members to book well in advance. Whilst on the subject of booking, you are asked to note that aircraft and instructors are available from 9 a.m. until last light with no break at lunchtime, seven days a week.

The Club has recently purchased three twin engined De Havilland Rapides, and two of these will be in service throughout the summer, one for pleasure flying and the other for charter and hire by Club members.

Among the events for which we suggest Club members hire this machine are the Royal Aero Club rally at Deauville, which is a three day event (July 4-7). The price, including luxury accommodation and two grand banquets, will be £10.0.0. per person. The Paris Air Show on June 21 and 22, at £10.0.0. per person and the National Air Races at Coventry on July 12 at £3.10.0. each are other events which it is advisable not to miss.

On Tuesday March 31, a film show will be held at the Air Centre and two films each dealing with the development of aviation during the past fifty years will be shown. Starting time will be 7.30 p.m. in order to give a sizeable interval for the usual refreshments.

The Skydivers Club has now commenced to use the Rapide for mass (all five) dropping. The first try out was at Sandown last month. If we can coax the Rapide plus five burly sergeants and a lightweight pilot beyond 15,000 ft. we hope to obtain a British delayed drop record.

March 1959.

T.H. Marshall.

Secretary.



Desford G-AGOS outside the new hangar (Dave Welch).

The images on the following pages show a Christchurch Aero Club advert from the 50s, then the four pages of a Club Brochure from the same era (From Colin Richards). Photos on the next pages by J.W.Kitchenham.



CHRISTCHURCH AERO CLUB

◀ PLEASURE ▶

◀ FLIGHTS ▶ from 12/6

SEE BEAUTIFUL BOURNEMOUTH FROM THE AIR.

Flights are in comfortable Single and Twin Engine Cabin Aircraft.
Reduced rate for Parties of Eight.

CHARTER FLIGHTS :—United Kingdom and Europe, up to Eight
Passengers approx. 6d. per passenger mile. Please write or phone
for full details.

**WHY NOT
LEARN TO
FLY YOURSELF**



This is a Ministry Approved Flying School, and 30 Hours Instruction will obtain you a
FULL PILOTS LICENCE. WHY NOT BOOK NOW FOR A 30/- TRIAL LESSON

AT THE

**CHRISTCHURCH AERO CLUB
DENNISTOUN AVENUE, SOMERFORD**

PHONE CHRISTCHURCH 1689

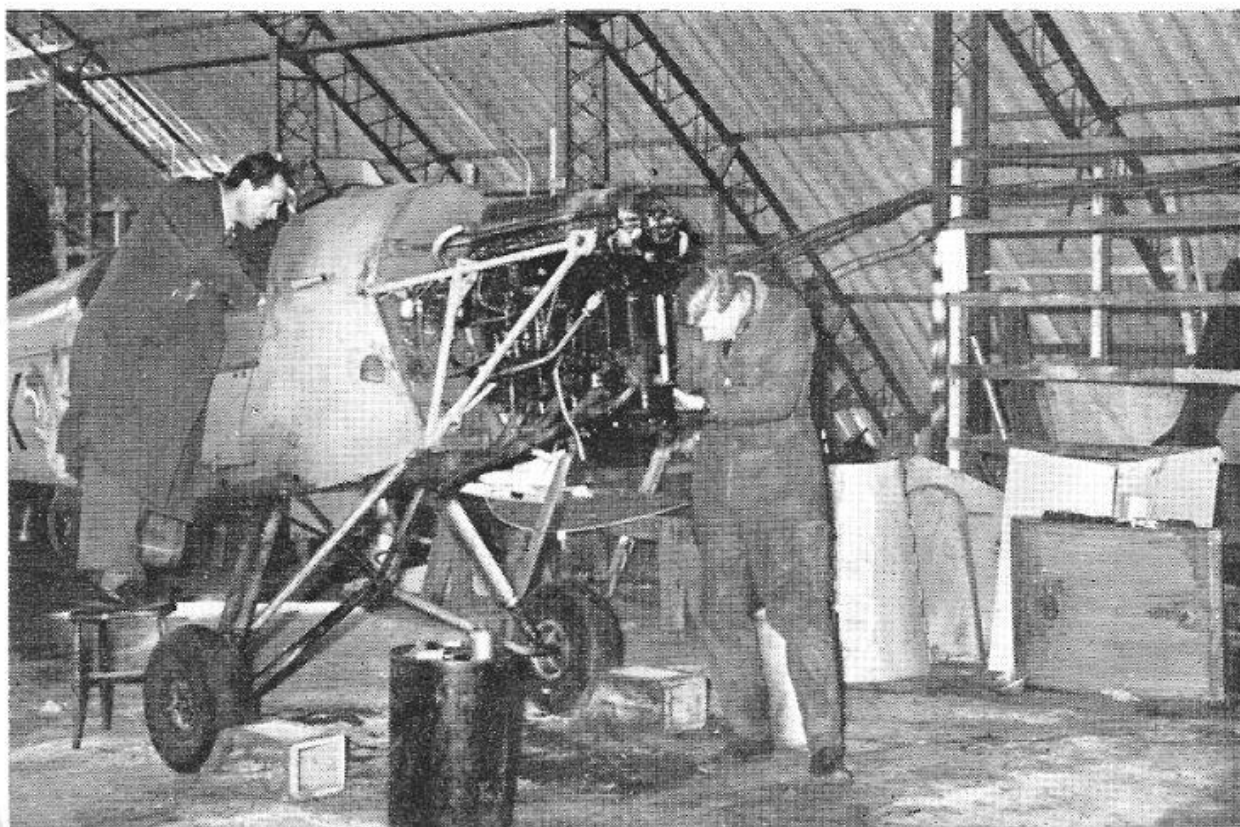
(No. 1 Bus from Bournemouth Square)



THE CHIEF FLYING INSTRUCTOR, MR. B. E. J. HAWKINS, *J. W. Kitchenham, A.I.B.P.*
WITH PUPIL, MISS G. CAZALET *Winton, Bournemouth*

OVERHAULING A "TIGER MOTH"

J. W. Kitchenham, A.I.B.P., Winton, Bournemouth



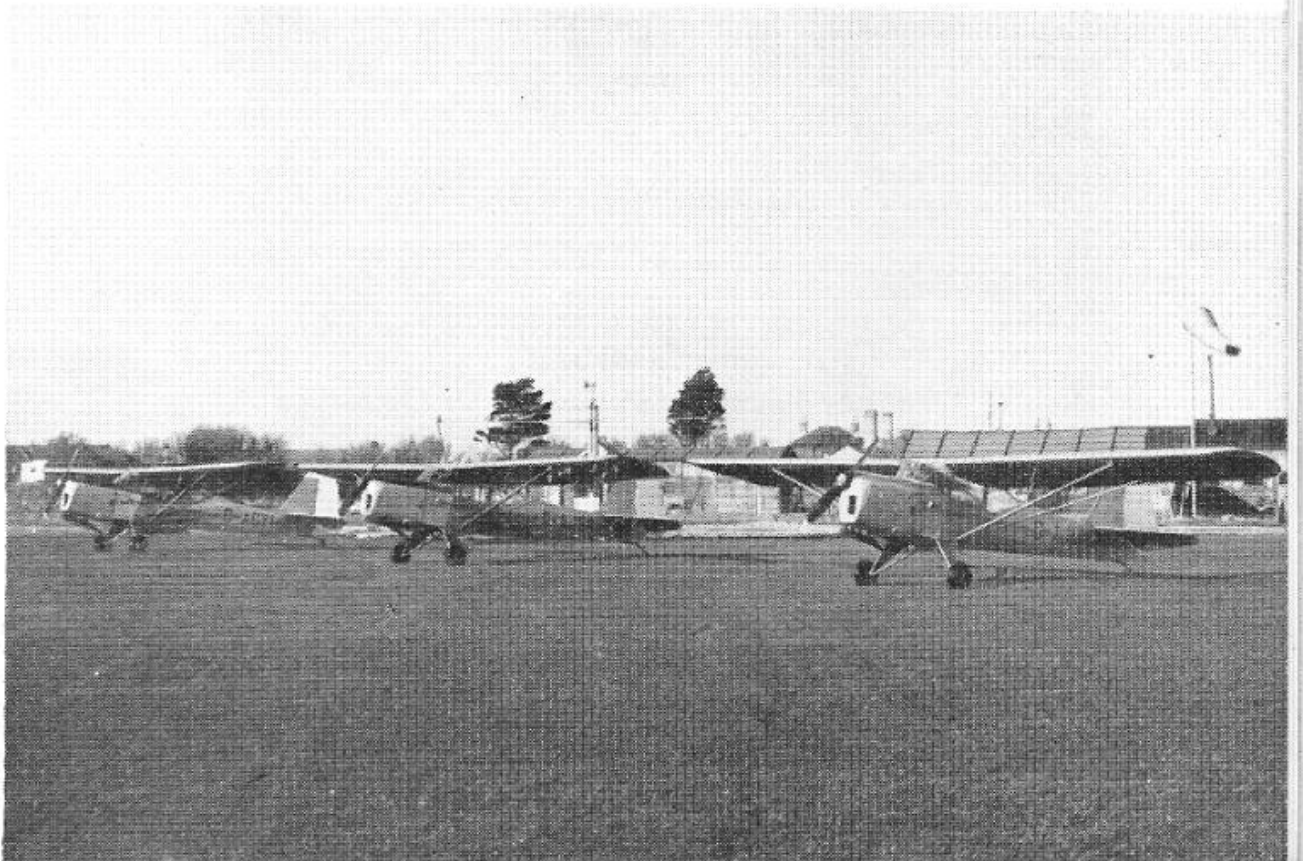


THE BAR

J. W. Kitchenham, A.I.B.P., Winton, Bournemouth

THREE OF THE CLUB'S "AUSTERS"

J. W. Kitchenham, A.I.B.P., Winton, Bournemouth



CLUB CHARGES

			£	s.	d.
Flying Membership, per annum	..	..	2	2	0
Social Membership, per annum	..	..	10		0

No Entrance Fee.




FLYING RATES

			£	s.	d.
Auster (dual or solo) per hour	..	..	3	15	0
Tiger Moth (dual or solo) per hour		..	3	15	0
Short pleasure flights from 10s. per person.					

Horsa Gliding School

There was apparently a Horsa Gliding School, but at the moment
, just who operated it is unclear.

The image below shows an order for 4 USAAF men to present
them selves at the school in May 1944.



R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS
440TH TROOP CARRIER GROUP
Station 462

APO 133, US ARMY
9 May 1944.

SPECIAL ORDERS)
NUMBER 83)

1. Par 3; SO 82, this No., dtd 2 May 1944, is hereby revoked.
2. The following named PW, as indicated, WP fr this Sta, on temp dy, to Horsa Glider Sch, Goodford, Christchurch, rptg to the CO thereof not later than 10 May 1944. EM will take personal clothing, blankets, and mess equipment. Travel by MA, rail and/or govt owned vehicle is attd. TWX 91-5 P 432-02 A 212/40425. Auth TWX Hq 50th TC Wg, M282C, dtd 2 May 1944. Upon completion of such temp dy EM will return to proper orgn and Sta.

Cpl. Arthur L. Fronberg	39 110 412	(559) 96th TC Sq.
Pfc. Robert Reifonauer	16 024 021	(559) 95th TC Sq.
S/Sgt. Ranold A. Rye n	37 318 940	(559) 98th TC Sq.
Sgt. Charles W. Russell	28 232 963	(559) 97th TC Sq.

The Gliding School

On the southwestern tip of the field the No.89 Glider School (later 622GS) operated for many years from a hangar just outside the airfield boundary in Warren Avenue. The concrete compass swinging circle visible in the photos above was used by the GS as a hardstand for their glider winches. The Royal Aero Club recorded that on 14th Jan 1945, George Bryant Podger was awarded "A" Gliding Certificate No.2345. During the mid-50s the CO of No.622 Gliding School was S/L Ron Hayter and the Adjutant was F/O Keith Ball, (the then landlord of the Saxon Arms pub on the road to Hengistbury Head and later the first landlord of the Somerford Hotel).



Slingsby TX.1 TS354 and Beaverette Armoured car(photo via John Levesley)

In 1951 89GS achieved the best results for any ATC School with 72 "A" certificates and 15 "B" certificates for 5,307 launches.

The School was very active and in 1954 was second in the country in terms of the number of Cadets trained with a total of 75.

Amongst the "customers" of 622GS were the cadets from No.171 (Christchurch) Squadron ATC, one of whom (Geoff Kingman-Sugars) provided much of the information here. A detached flight formed at Homefield School near Tuckton in 1956. This later became No.2330 (Homefield School) Sqn ATC. The photos that

follow show the Detached Flight on a visit to Calshot on 10th August 1958 (the aircraft behind the group is the SARO Princess flying boat G-ALUN), and a Summer camp visit to Duxford.



Those identified so far in these photos:

Calshot photo:

Back row: Geoff Kingman-Sugars, P/O Paul Bilson RAFVRT (OC of detached flight and first CO 2330 (Homefield School) Sqn ATC), and Civilian Instructor Mr Ken(?) Irvine

Middle row: Dave Cox-Moody (Ldg Cdt), ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?

Front row: Paul Logan (Cdt Cpl), ?, ?, ?, ?, Roger Hunt (Ldg Cdt), Chris Goodall (Ldg Cdt)

Duxford photo:

Back Row: LdgCdt Pete Markham, CdtCpl ?, CdtSgt Geoff Sugars,
Adult WO Col Jarett, F/O Ousley, Flt/Lt Robbins, P/O Bob
Haines, Cdt FSgt Roger Randall, Cdt Sgt Pete Ousley, Cdt Cpl ?,
Cdt 1st Cl ?

Front row: Cdt ?, Cdt ?, Cdt ?, Cdt ?, Cdt 1st Cl
Howells, Cdt ?, Cdt 1st Cl Randall Jnr

Gliding A Certificates awarded to 89GS during 1945.

2356 John G B Little 13-01-45

2403 Kenneth Charles Bray 04-03-45

2471 Reginald James Harris 04-03-45

2968 David Richard George Burnett 07-07-45

3011 Roy Newton Benwell 21-07-45

3199 Peter Charles Garrett 21-07-45

3314 David Roy Hooper 09-09-45

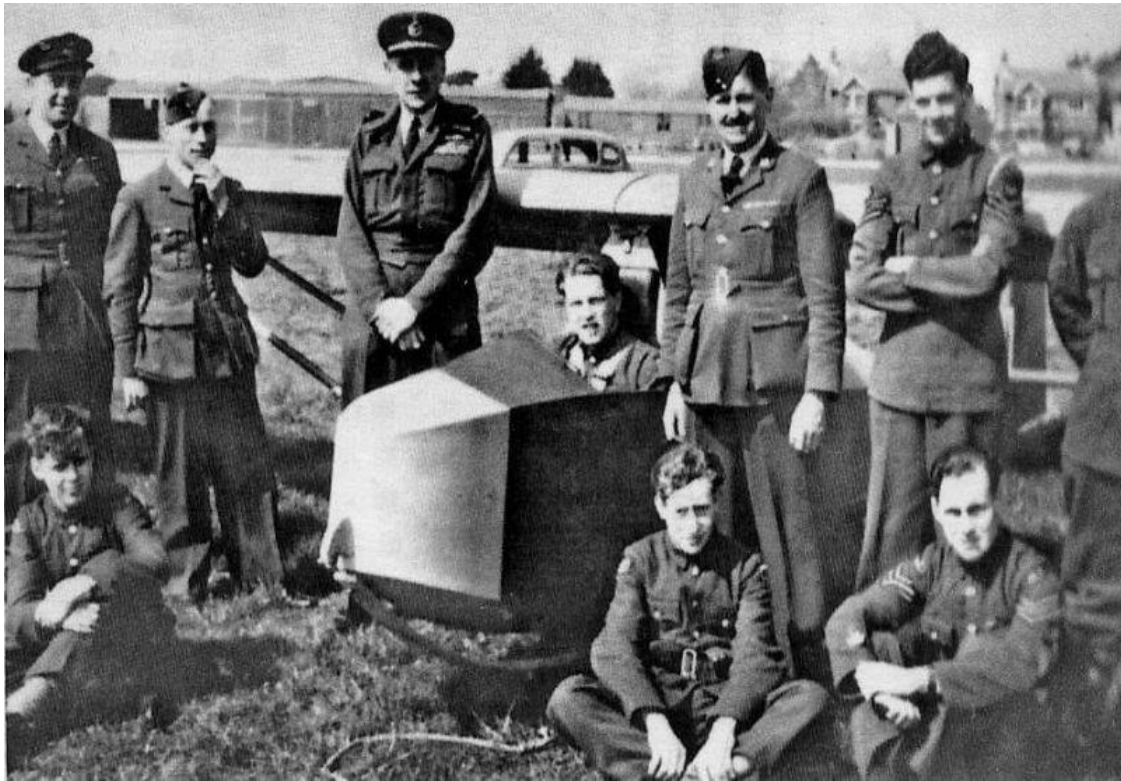
3338 John Douglas Jones 16-09-45

3397 Sydney Barwell Ockelford 16-09-45

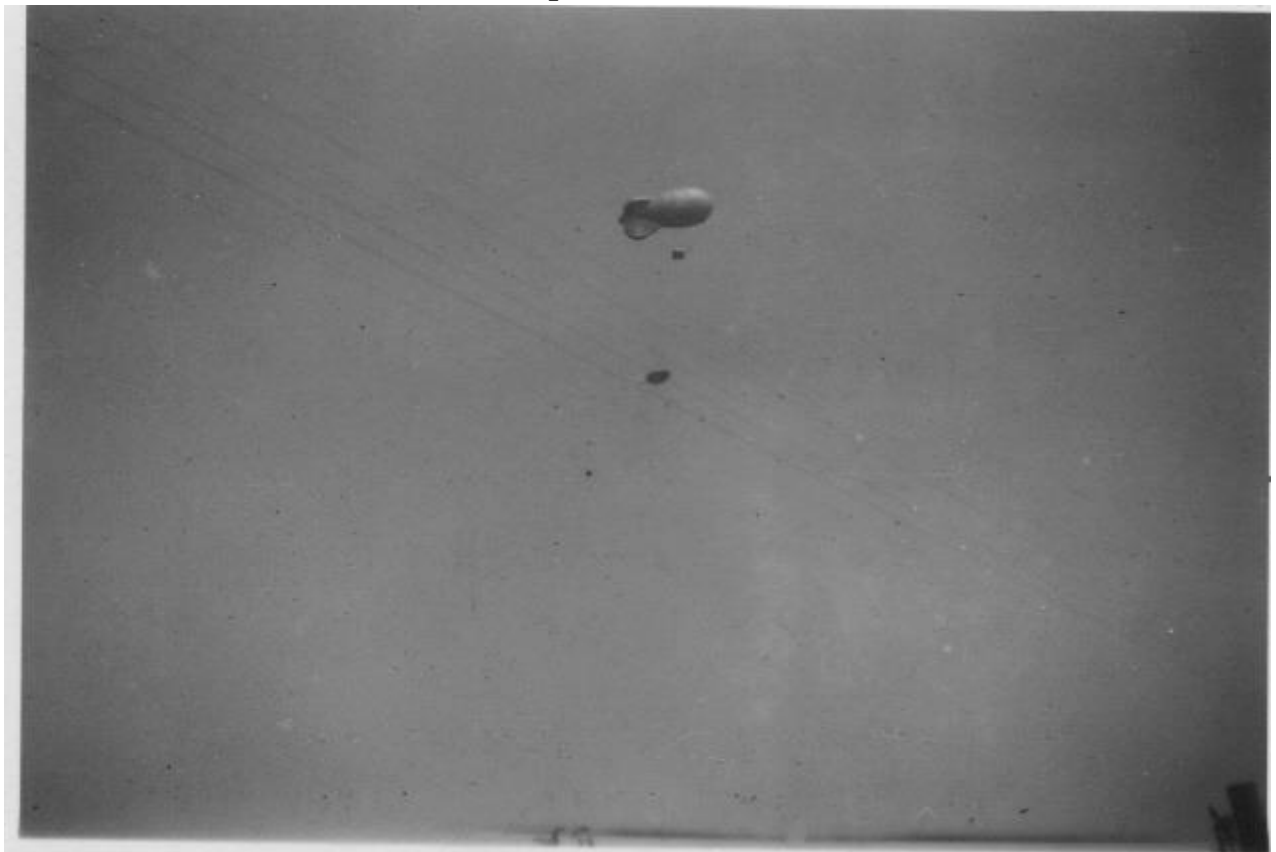
3480 John Edward Stickland 25-08-45

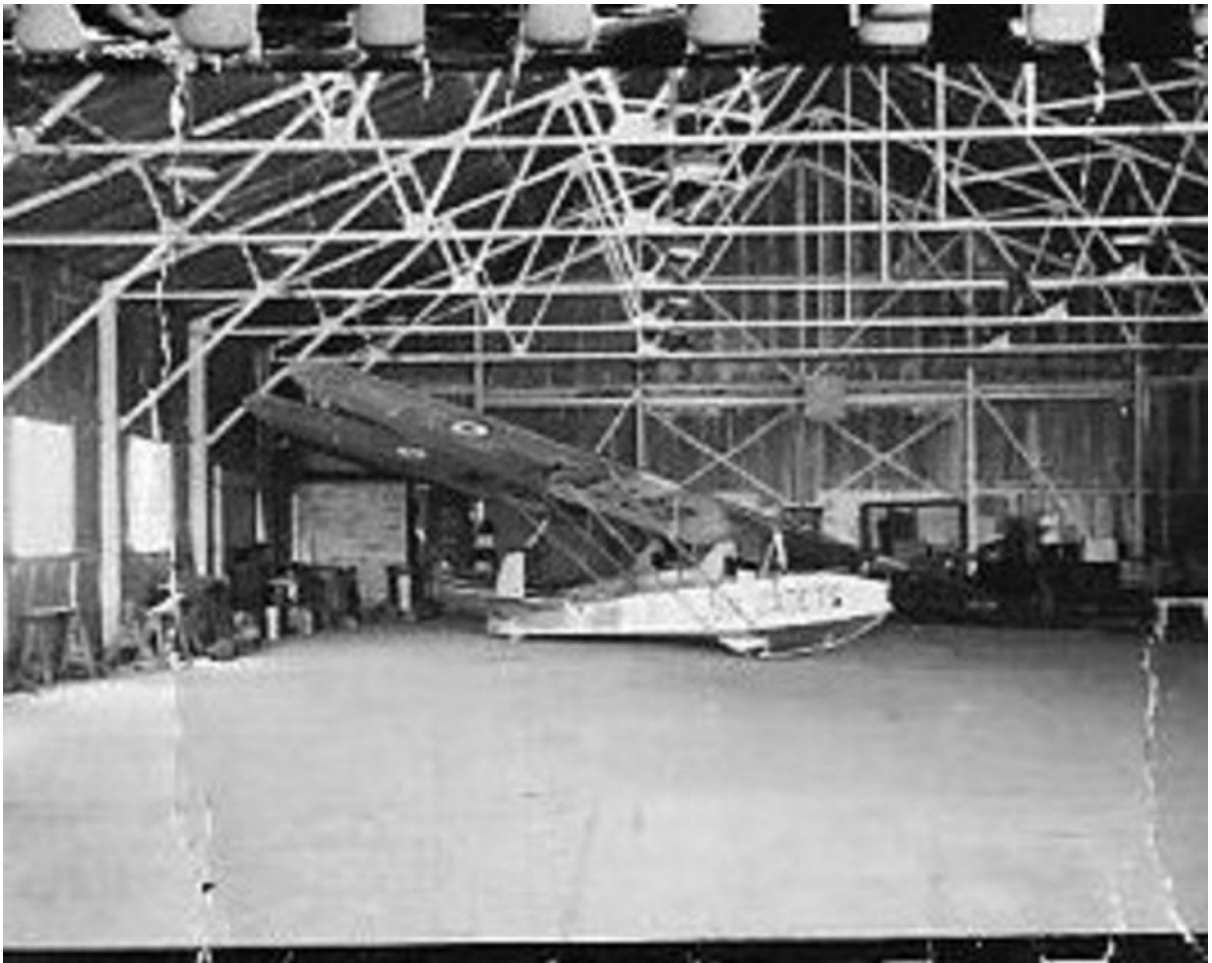
3618 Bernard Edward Thomson Oxbarrow 17-06-45

The 622GS continued to operate from Christchurch until July 1963 when, with closure of the airfield imminent, the school moved to Old Sarum in Wiltshire. Their hangar at Warren Avenue was demolished in July 1964. The picture on the next page from Colin Pomeroy (additional detail from John Potheary) was taken during a visit by the Commandant Air Cadets (centre left, in battle dress) the Officer Commanding 622GS, Flight Lieutenant Ron Hayter is second from the left. Standing with arms folded is Johnny Allen - later a flight engineer on Concorde. The sergeant seated on the right is Peter Course - later deputy manager of Hurn. More photos of 622GS are on the Military residents pages



At some point around 1949/50 parachute training using a barrage balloon and winch , took place on the airfield in the area normally used by the Gliding School. The pictures on the next page (from John Geall via John Levesley) show this activity. A parachutist can be clearly seen passing behind the telephone wires





The picture above shows the interior of the hangar at Warren Ave.



De Havilland



Postwar (1950) view of the airfield and the Airspeed factory. Clearly visible are two of the three blister hangars erected during the war. The third was at the extreme western end of the woods and can be seen in the March 1944 vertical view. Also visible are the four grass runways and the wartime runway used by the USAAF and by De Havilland thereafter.

A Mosquito is visible parked by Mudford Woods.

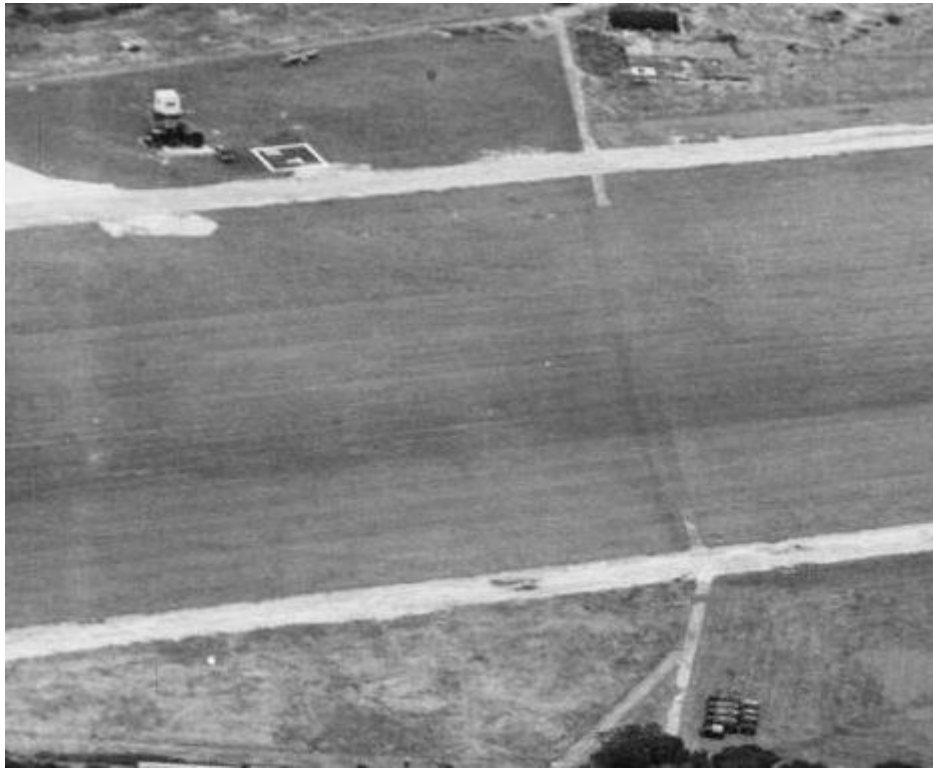
At the top right the Gliding School hangar is visible. The grass area immediately to the left of the hangar was fenced off and became a caravan park shortly after this picture was taken.



The control tower at Christchurch with a Sea Venom (Photo from Paul Francis).

Airspeed/De Havilland continued to operate their factory at the north-eastern corner of the field, dealing initially with overhauls of Horsas, but later building Vampires, Sea Venoms, Sea Vixens and Ambassadors. In the 1955 picture (next page), two Ambassadors are visible outside the factory. Compare this picture with the 1950 photo at the start of this section, and the Council housing development on the north side of Somerford road is very apparent. The photo below shows the airfield from the south at around the same date (1955).





This picture shows the signal square beside the grass runway circa 1950.



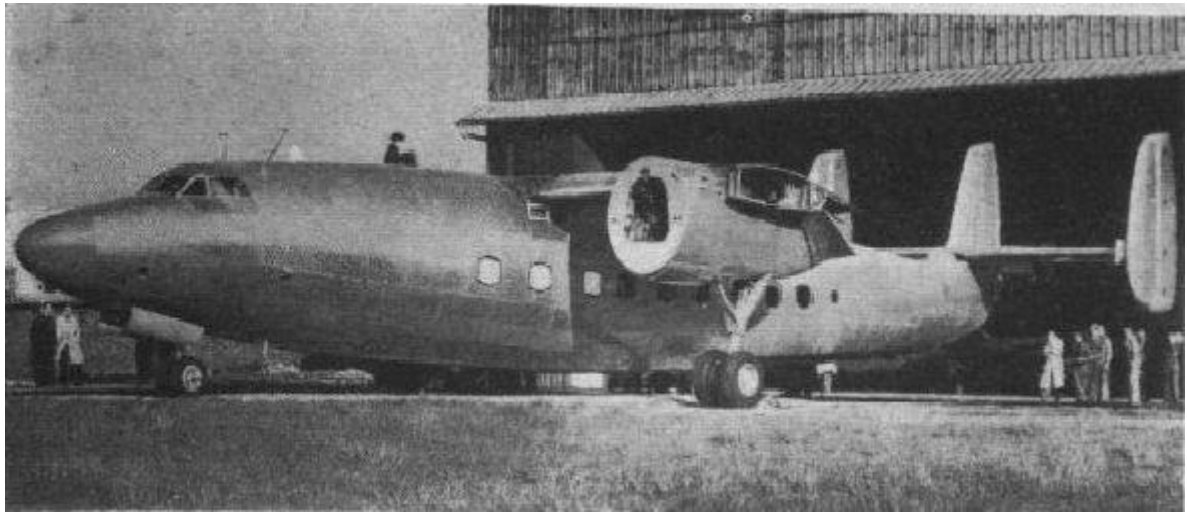
In 1954 the Military Experimental Engineering Establishment from Christchurch laid a hard runway on the site of the WW2 wire mesh runway using a revolutionary new technique combining concrete and soil. The runway, 4480x100ft and 6 inches deep, was laid in a matter of weeks using 3 Howard single-pass soil stabilisation plants. The surface was then topped off with

various experimental tarmac finishes to a depth of 2 inches. The main beneficiaries of this exercise were De Havilland who were by now turning out Vampires and Sea Venoms.

Flight reported on the runway construction in October 1954:

"SOIL-STABILIZATION - i.e., the improvement of soil as a "structural" material, usually by the introduction of a binding agent such as cement - is being increasingly employed in runway construction. One of the largest runway stabilization projects to be carried out in this country has recently been completed at Christchurch, Hants, Airfield, which is operated by the de Havilland Airspeed Division under lease from the Ministry of Supply. The project has involved the replacement of a permanent grass runway by a stabilized-soil runway 4,500ft in length and 100ft in width. The subsoil was found to be of a satisfactory nature, but it was necessary to remove the turf and topsoil to a depth of 6in and to use gravel to regain the required level. Topsoil of a high organic content, such as existed at this site, cannot be economically cement-stabilized.

The work was carried out without interruption of flying activities. Soil stabilization to a depth of 6in was performed very largely by Howard single-pass soil-stabilization plant, made by Rotary Hoes, Ltd, of Horndon, Essex. Three complete "trains" of this equipment were employed, usually working in echelon. Two trains were hauled by crawler tractors designed and made by the same company for this specific duty. The work was completed at a rate of 270 sq-yd/hr for each train, this time included final rolling. The final tar or bitumen surfacing added to the soil cement was of the minimum thickness necessary to give protection from mechanical and climatic damage. Preliminary trials included stringent tests with Service aircraft on seven different types of surfacing. As a result, three types were selected for long-term test. Part of the runway will be surfaced with tar and chippings, part with a 2in tarmac carpet, part with Jetcrete, a special emulsion developed to withstand the effects of use by jet aircraft. The work forms part of a Ministry of Supply experimental programme and is being carried out by the Military Engineering Experimental Establishment, Christchurch, with the co-operation of Royal Engineer units of the Army".



The prototype Ambassador G-AGUA nearing completion at Airspeed Christchurch.

This photo (From Gordon Marle via Everett Jones) shows the field probably in late 1940s ...certainly before 1954 when the hard runway was laid. Notable is the Bessoneau hangar (mid foreground) next to the T hangar. This was destroyed by a gale in the 1954 winter. Camouflage paint still visible on the T hangar.



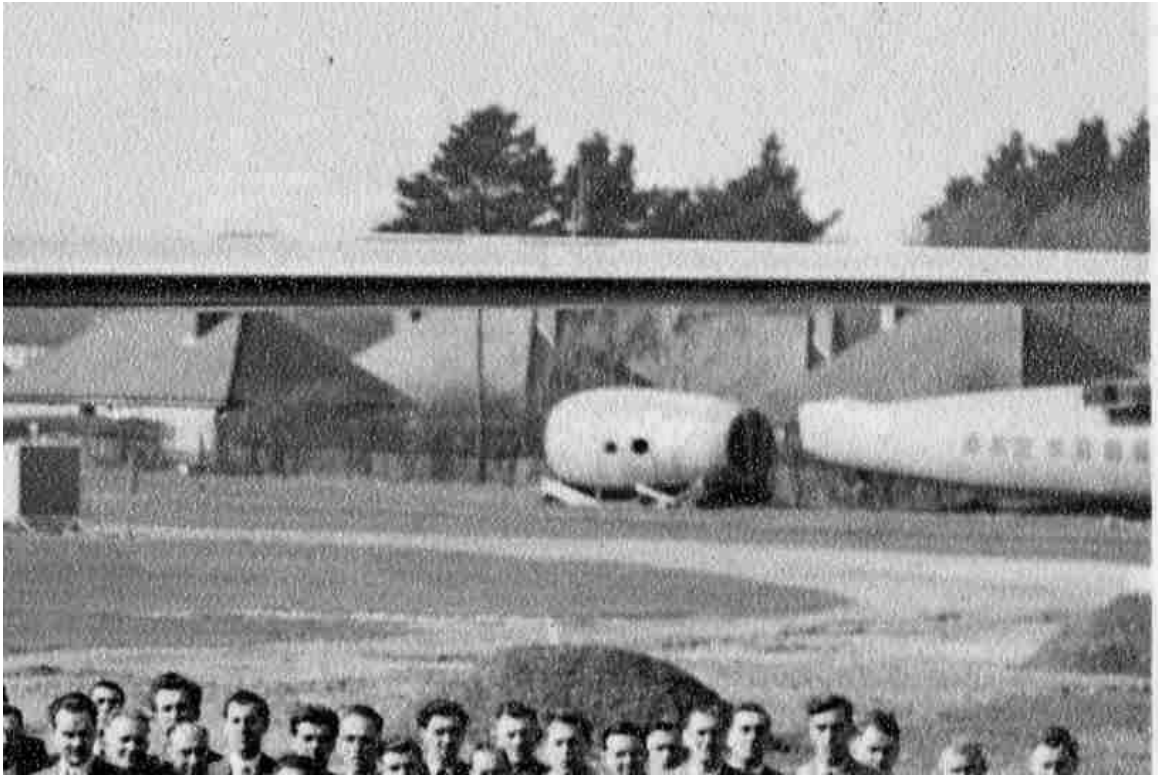
The photo below (from Mike Phipp) show the Ambassador prototype undergoing engine tests. Note the single fin!



The picture below (also from Mike Phipp) shows prototype Ambassador with (presumably) those involved in the build.



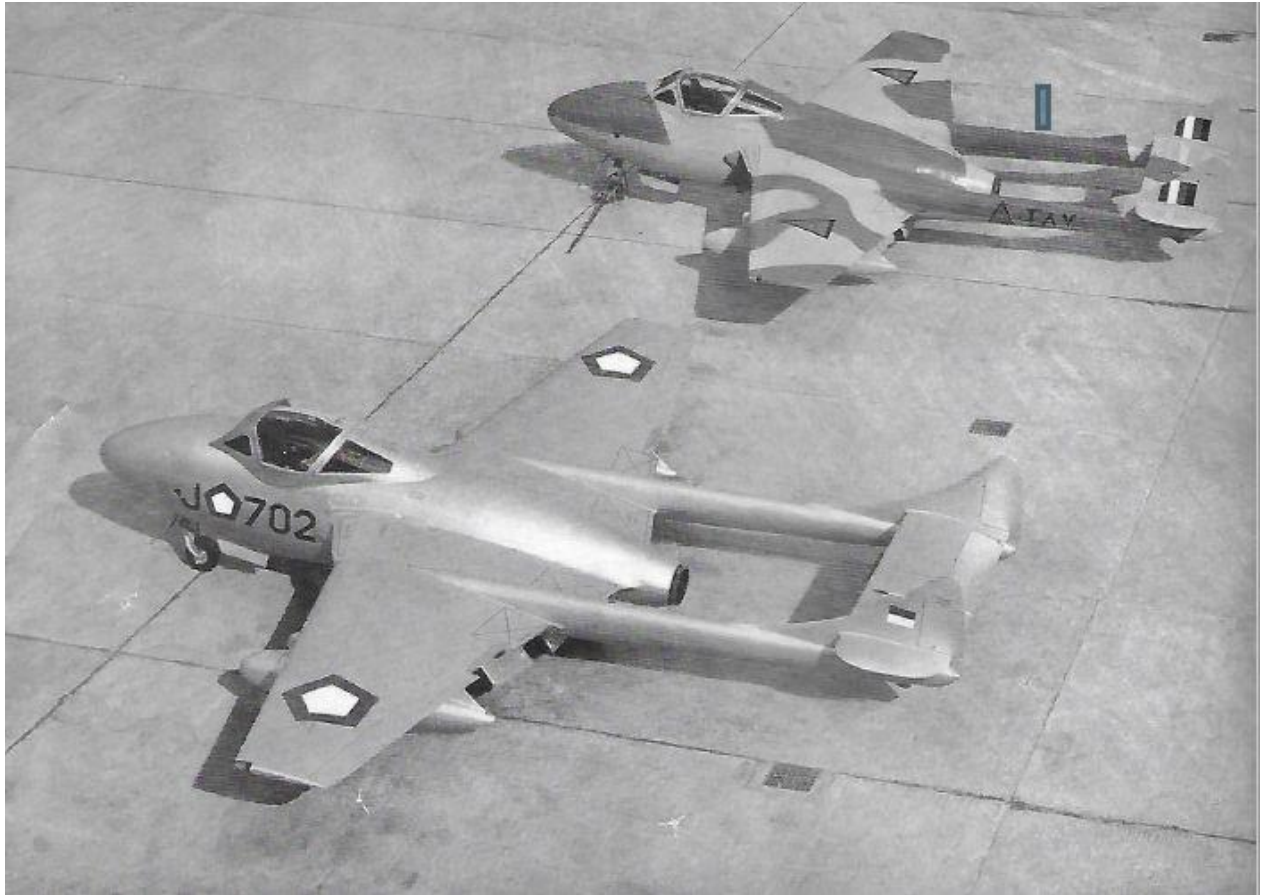
In the photo above some sections of fuselage may be seen in the distance. There was a "scrap" area beside the fence between the Flying Club hangar and the DH flight shed where these items rested along with other bits and pieces. The next image is an enlargement of that area.



Also there were two Vampire fuselages in that storage area...



Dates for these - 1950s.



The photo above shows Vampires for Indonesia and Iraq awaiting delivery.

With the advent of heavier and faster jets such as the DH110 (later to become the Sea Vixen) some thought was given to safety. A crude but effective arrestor system was installed near the western end of the new runway. This consisted of a cable across the runway (for a naval type arrestor hook to engage) attached to two lines of heavy anchor chains laid along side the runway. In addition a blast fence was installed at the eastern end to protect traffic on the Lyminster Road. This consisted of wattle fencing which, whilst OK for lesser things, proved to be unable stand up to the jetblast of the DH110 (prototype of the Sea Vixen).

BELOW: The first Sea Vixen XJ474 on the compass swinging pad at Christchurch in March 1957. Outside the Flight shed, date unknown (Photo via Colin Richards).



The De Havilland Fire Service

De Havilland maintained a Fire Service on the airfield to provide cover, not only for the factory but also for cover of flight operations. Thanks to Mrs P. Tolhurst and Keith Cheesman we can see some of their activities circa 1954.

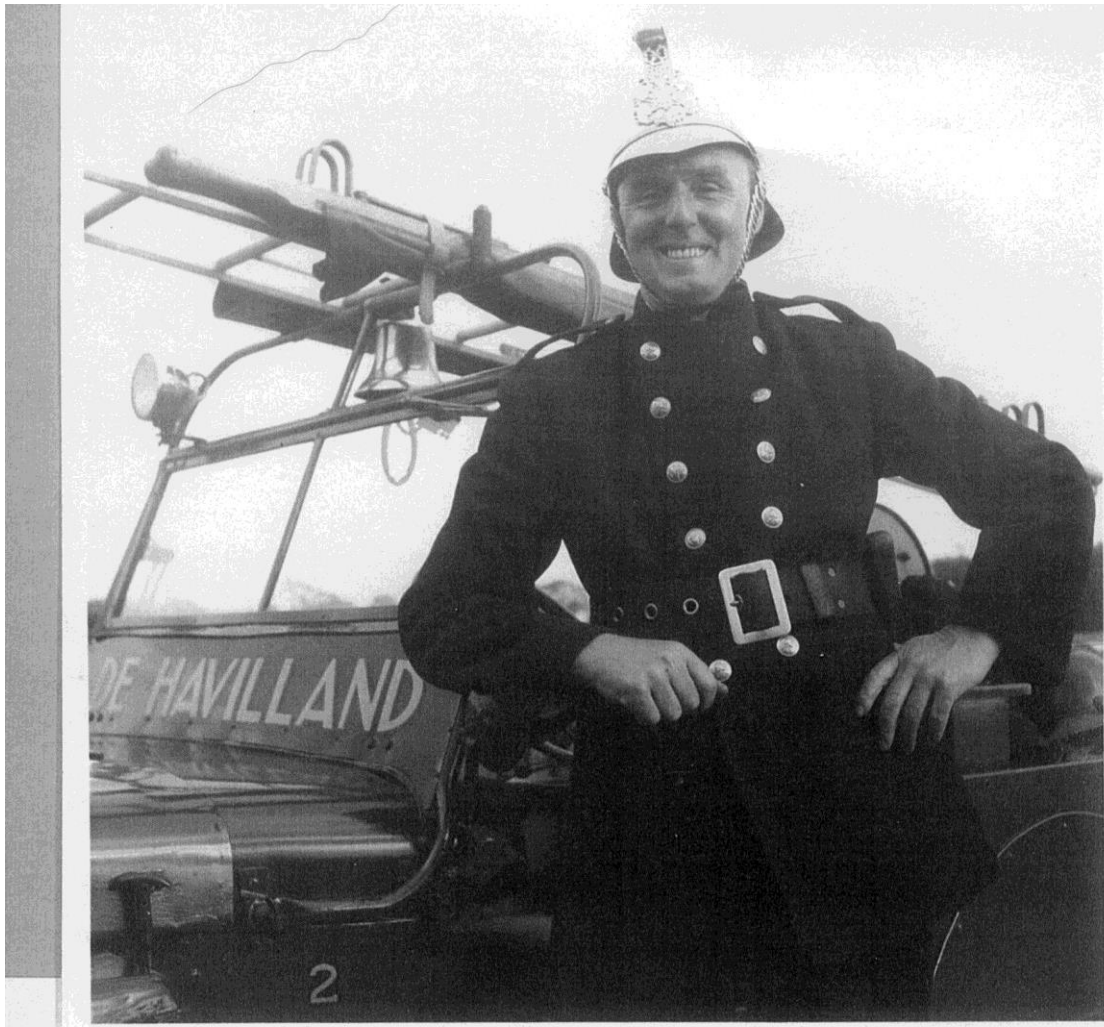




1953

Chick = Self.

Deputy Chief Wilson (father of Mrs P Tolhurst) and Fireman "Chick" Tarrant.

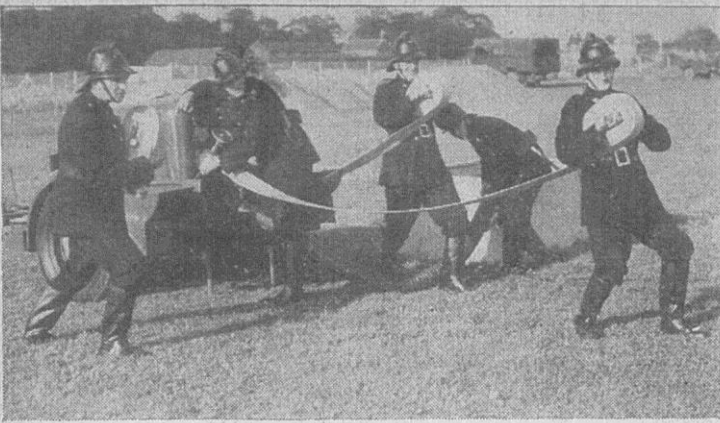


Hatfield
 1954
 The Old Fellow
 at Last



A Good
 Show for
 1954
 The South C
 at Hants
 Day Trophy
 Cup
 at Dorset
 3 at Hants

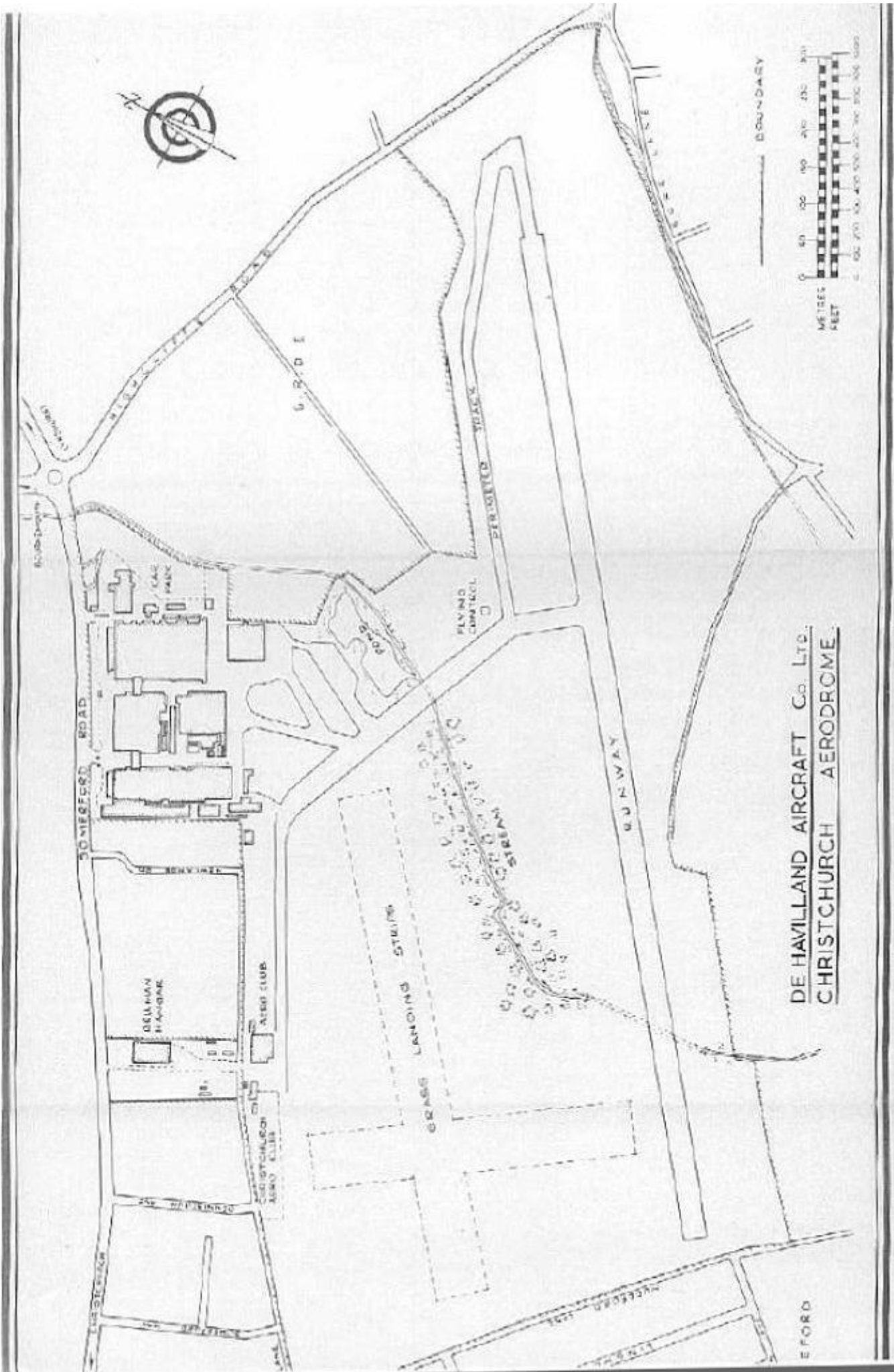
3rd October 1954 at Hatfield after winning the DH firefighting contest. (previous page) Newspaper report below.



THEY'RE HOT at keeping cool are these five firemen at de Havillands' Somerford factory, seen practising fire drill on the aerodrome. Teams from Somerford recently swept the board in fire-fighting contests at Hatfield, against 23 other teams in the D.H. enterprise. The full Somerford team was Chief Officer R. T. Gauler, Deputy Chief W. Wilson, Sub-officers R. Tarrant and S. Taylor, and Firemen R. Barnes, R. C. H. Gauler, F. Dear, J. Courtney and E. Parker. They won the four-man hydrant, and four-man dry pump drill contests, and were 1st and 2nd in the wet pump drill.



Next page: Map of the field as at August 1961 from a De
Havilland brochure. (thanks to Fred Weeks)



DE HAVILLAND AIRCRAFT Co. LTD.
CHRISTCHURCH AERODROME

Airspeed and de Havilland photos (some from the Freeman collection).

The following photos were taken by John Freeman who worked at Christchurch . They were kindly contributed by his wife Ruth Freeman (via John Levesley and FONFA)



Above:Horsa I RX773 at Christchurch, this was a Harris-Lebus built aircraft,Below : RN377, a Christchurch-built Horsa II



...



The picture above and the two following show the result of a storm In 1943 that lifted

an aircraft from the ground and deposited it in the trees. The aircraft is an Austin-built version serial is believed to be HG985 , the damage occurred on 30 Jan 1943.





VP194, one of the last batch of Christchurch built Mosquitos.

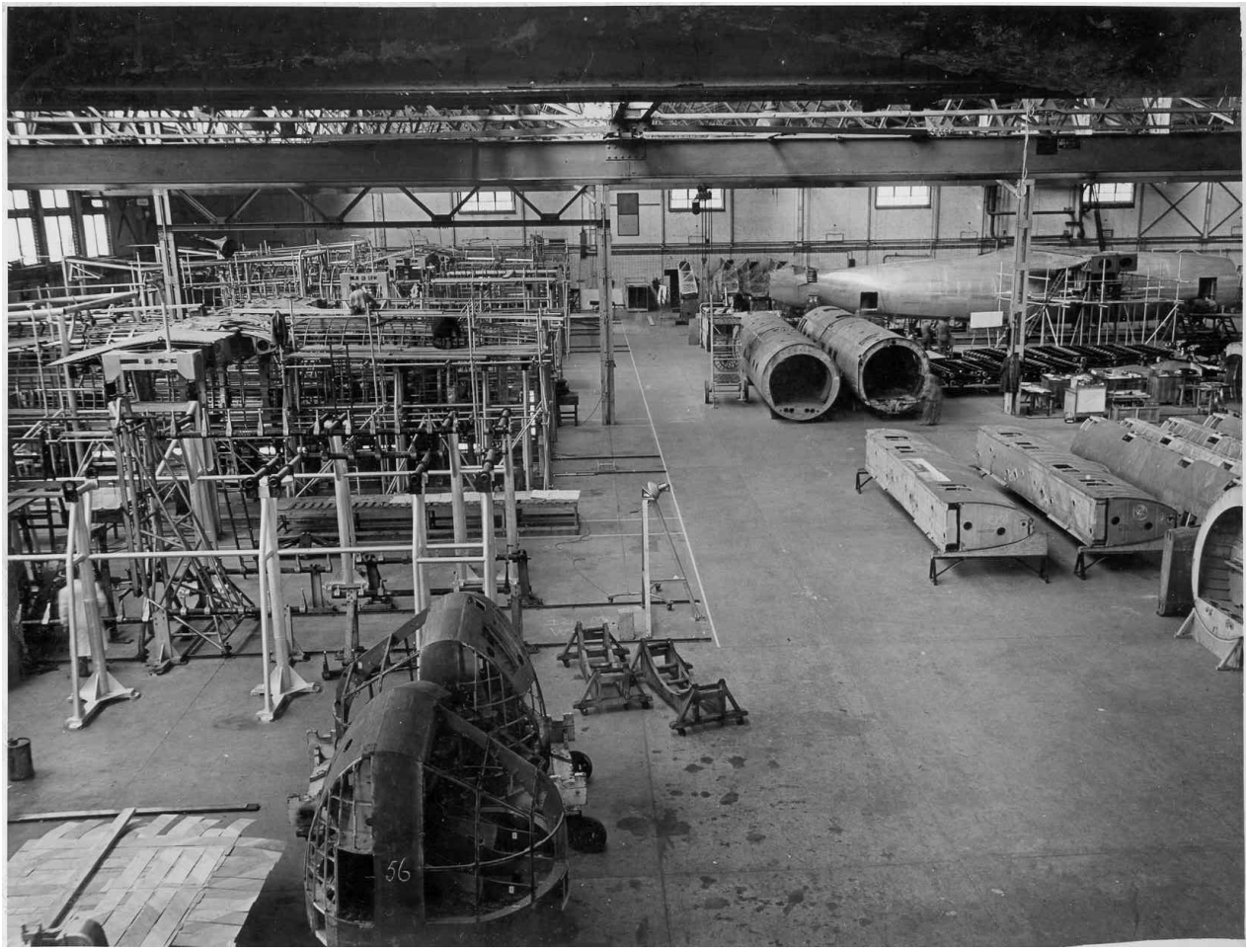
More Airspeed and de Havilland photos.



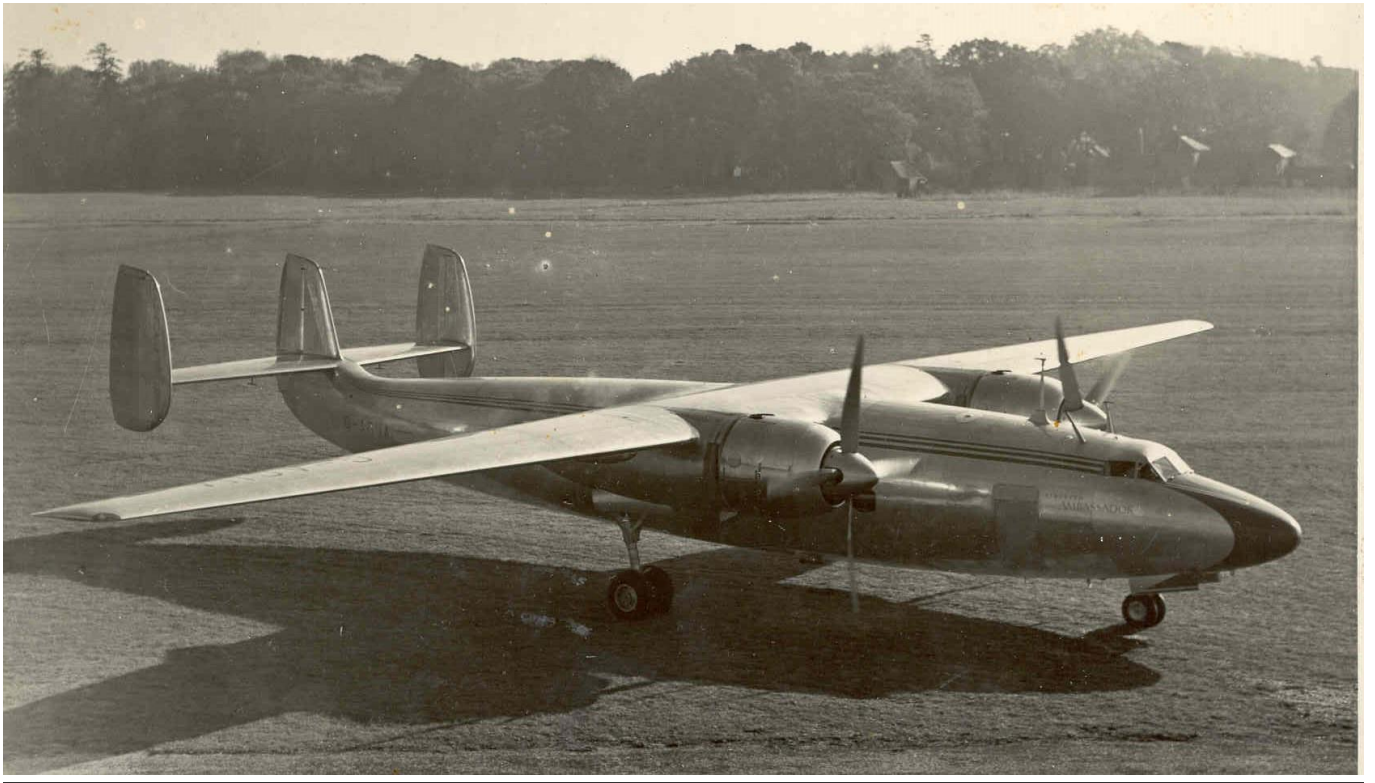
RN310 Horsa II awaiting delivery. Note the Oxfords in the background. (Airspeed photo)



Another picture of RN310



The main component assembly shop. First production Ambassador plus Horsa parts.



G-AGUA, the prototype Ambassador.





Another view of G-AGUA. Note the Warwick (Centaurus ETB) by the hangar. Below: a rear view of G-AGUA.





G-AGUA, prototype Ambassador takes off from Christchurch (above). G-AGUA engine tests (below)

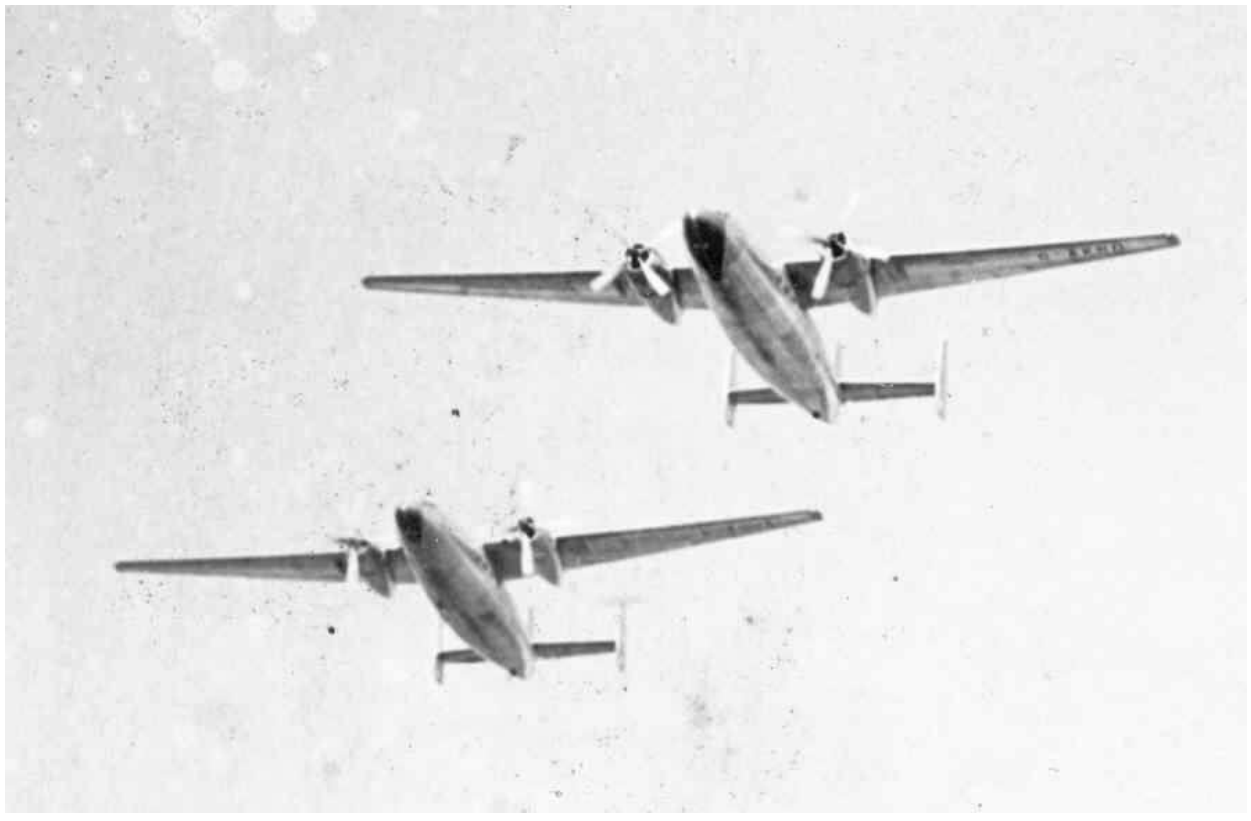




De Havilland picture of G-AGUA.



The two prototype Ambassadors being prepared for flight. The second prototype, which was pressurised, is in the background



The two prototypes in flight



Ambassador production.

The next seven images are from George Marle (via Everett Jones)

Ambassador production.



Flight Shed
visitors



George Errington setting course.... and with George Briggs.

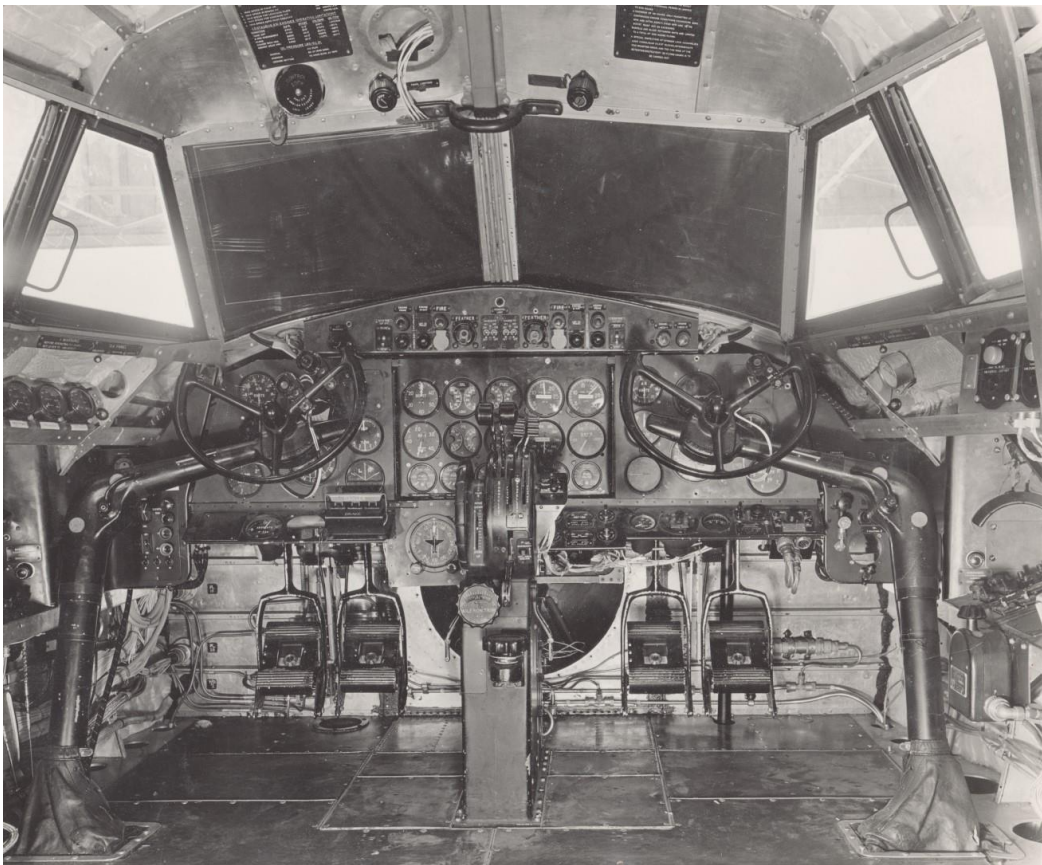




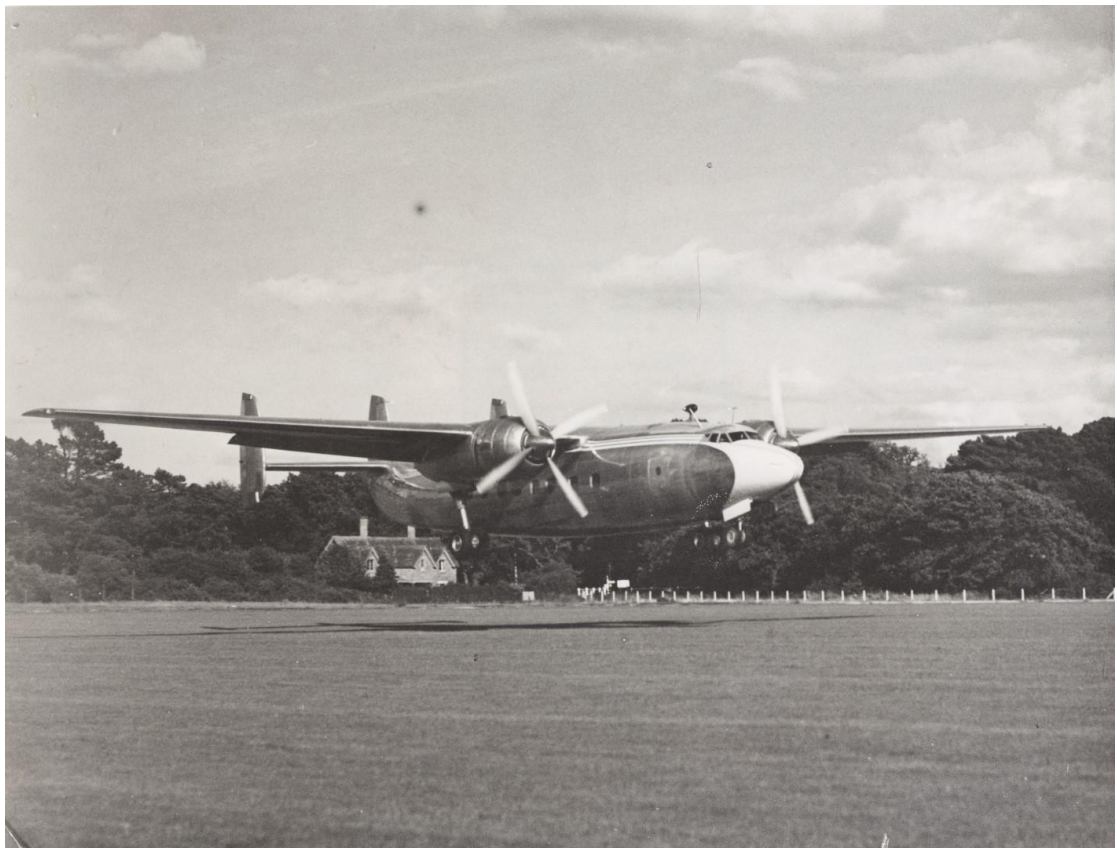
"Johnnie ,George and Gordon"



G-ALFR.



Front office.



G-AKRD , first take-off(previous page) and first landing.



G-AKRD second prototype Ambassador



The last Ambassador delivery to BEA, March 1953.



The above two pictures were taken before the delivery flight of the last Christchurch built Sea Vixen, XJ611 to Hatfield. The Pilot was Peter Barlow.

Closure

However , time was running out for Christchurch ,and following termination of De Havilland's lease and the closure of their factory in 1962,the airfield rapidly declined.There was some discussion on Flight Refueling moving in from Tarrant Rushton where there was pressure for the airfield land to be returned to its owner ...this came to nothing .Another possible plan by Beagle Aircraft to take over the factory buildings failed to materialise. Beagle said that initial costs there would result in an increase in Beagle prices at a time when they were striving for export sales. They instead acquired premises in Stony Lane Christchurch where they have remained to the present day.

The Air Traffic Control departed in July 1963 and the Aero Club closed in 1964.The airfield officially closed at the end of 1964,although occasional aircraft movements took place for several years after that date. The Club hangar was removed in 1966.My last fixed wing sighting at Christchurch was early 1970- but even after that there were occasional helicopter arrival/departures at SRDE (located at the eastern end of the field).Although SRDE (Signal Research and Development Establishment) used a helipad on their Sports Field (outside the airfield boundary)for civil visitors, military (mainly AAC) helicopters usually landed on the old airfield just outside the SRDE south-eastern perimeter fence where an access gate existed

However, eventually all activity ceased and the airfield, by now owned by the Ministry of Aviation, was sold off for housing, industry and schools. Today nothing remains of the original airfield except some of the Airspeed buildings, and streets named after aircraft. The picture below, taken in 1967 from one of the new houses in the western corner of the airfield, looks northeast, with the De Havilland /Airspeed buildings in the distance .By this time those buildings were occupied by new businesses such as Revvo Castors and Shand Kydd(wallpapers) .



The Christchurch Times newspaper carried the following article and map on July 11th 1969. (*Comments in italics are mine*)

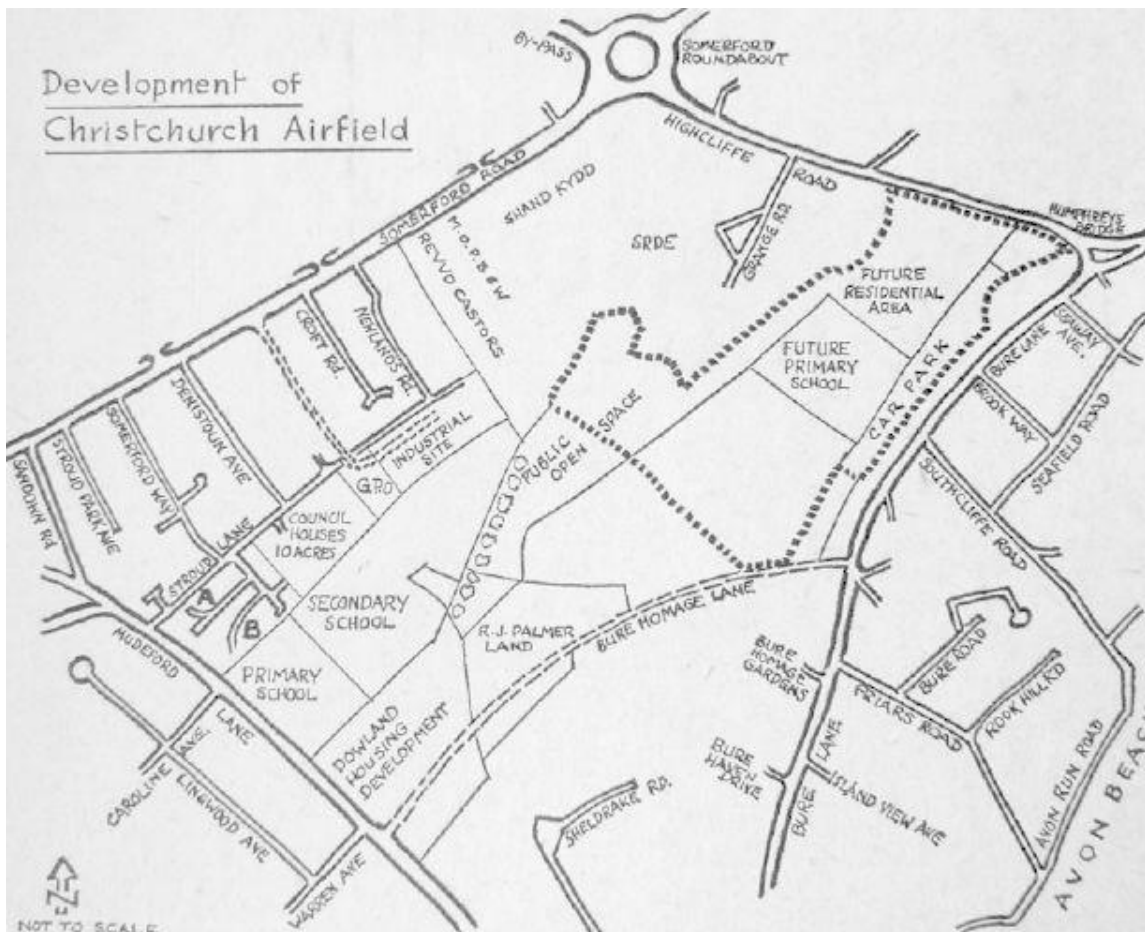
At the moment, the development of the main part of Christchurch Airfield consists of little more than lines on a map, although, around the perimeter, the future is already taking shape.

This drawing illustrates proposals so far recorded for the use of the former aerodrome, of which ten acres in the western corner (between Mudeford Lane and Stroud Lane) have already been developed with 113 council houses. (*The photo above was taken from the garden of one of the mentioned houses*) These houses form Stage I and Stage II of the council's housing, and many of them have already been sold by the council to former tenants. They are marked A and B on the map.

Stage III is at present being developed. The ten acres will have 113 houses and 24 flats and this will complete the council housing planned for the airfield at present.

The Planning Application stated "Planning approval is being sought for private residential development further south.

The Downland Housing Society plans a development including homes for old people, and an application has been made by local builder Mr. R. J. Palmer for more houses on the adjacent land. A new "Industrial Access Road" running off Somerford Road (indicated with broken double lines between Denistoun Avenue and Croft Road) will lead first to a General Post Office depot and later to other factories on the industrial site. It is located between Viking Motors and Price and Tarling. The junctions of Somerford Way and Denistoun Avenue with Somerford Road are shown closed on the Town Hall's proposed layout, whilst the entrance to Sandown Road is to be "improved with traffic lights." (*didn't happen*) Bure Homage Lane will be widened (on the airfield side) to become a new Ring Road running from Mudeford Lane to Bure Lane. The existing belt of trees in the area reserved in the map for Open Space will be retained. The area enclosed in a black dotted line in the eastern corner of the airfield between Highcliffe Road and Bure Lane is to be "retained by SRDE". (*This plan was later modified somewhat particularly the extreme northeastern corner of the site*)



The picture below - from the late 60s judging by the antenna tower, shows the view to the east towards the SRDE compound. The pillbox is P3 on the photos higher up this page. (photo via Colin Richards)



The picture (circa 1965) above shows one of the few remaining buildings



The encroaching housing (c1965) Picture from Colin Richards..

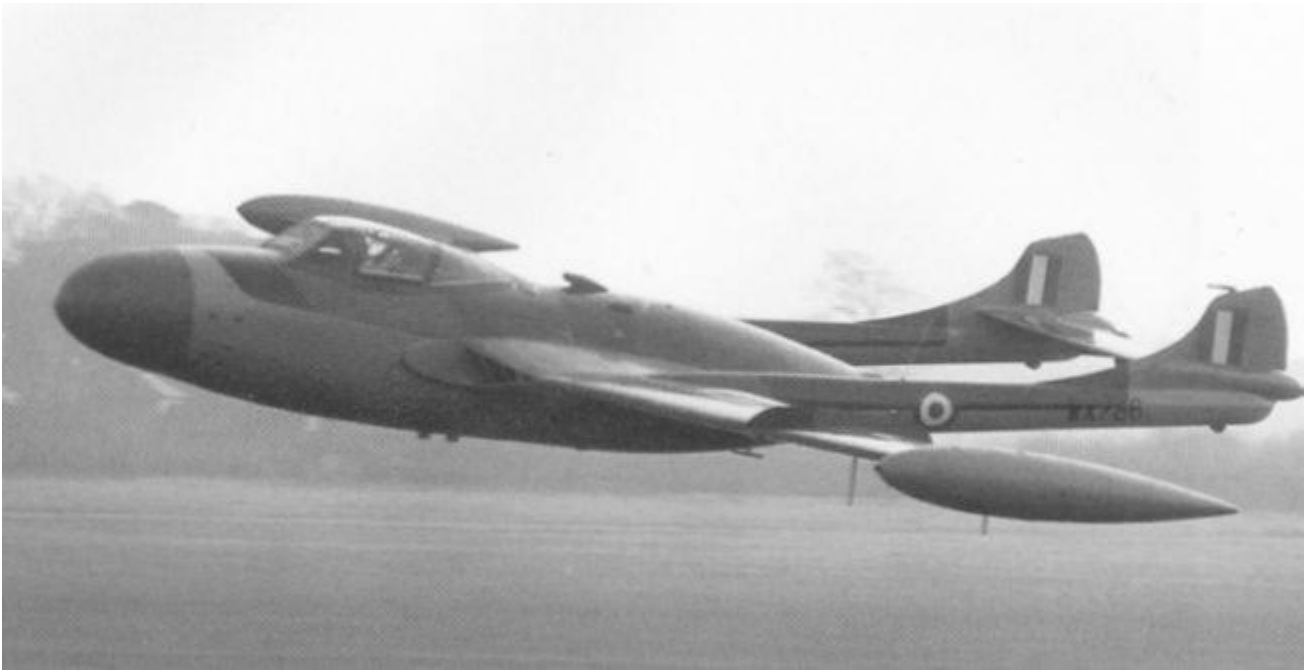


The 1972 photo above shows that housing starting to cover the

field in the north-western corner and also across the runway.



Another view of the building ...1972.



Venom NF.3 WX786 departing on delivery 5th January 1954



Above: 2010 view of the airfield site with only a few of the Airspeed/DH buildings remaining to identify the location.

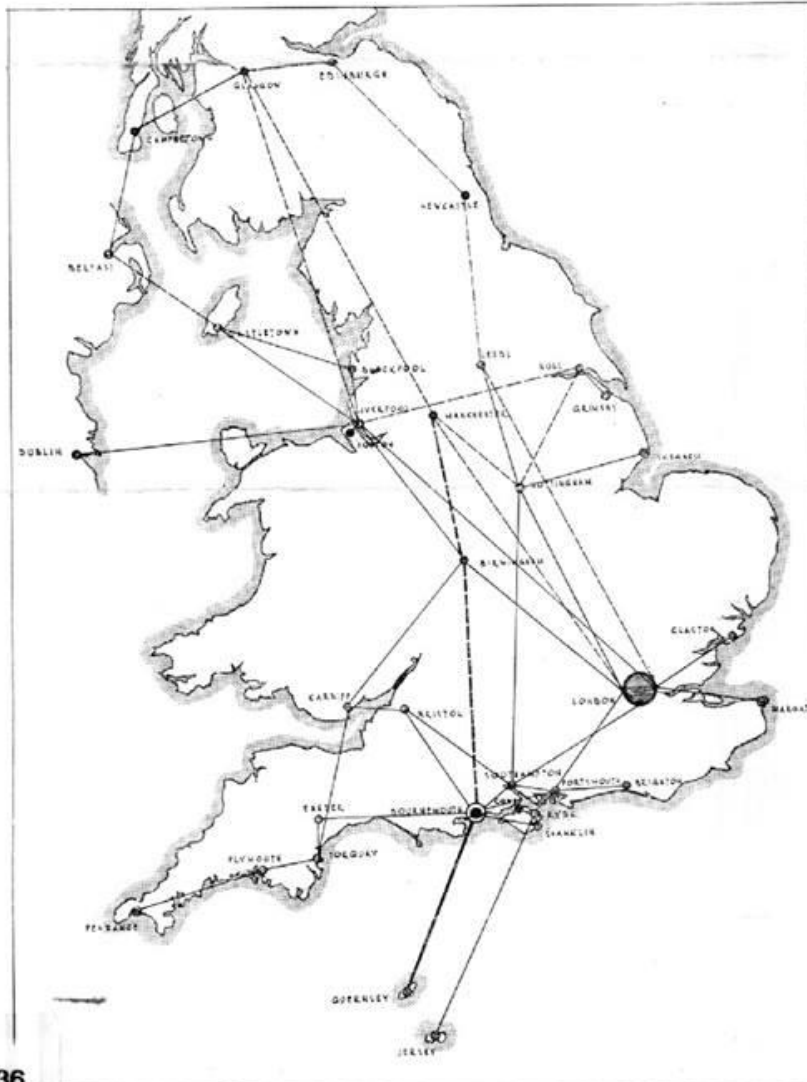


One of the few remaining original Airspeed buildings now used by light industry seen in 2010. By 2020 the last buildings were being demolished. (Photo below by Mike Phipp)



BOURNEMOUTH AIRPORT LIMITED

AIR ROUTES of the BRITISH ISLES



U 769.536

Showing the Prominence and Strategic Position of
BOURNEMOUTH AIRPORT
and the proposed new air line Manchester-Birmingham-
Bournemouth—to be operated by Bournemouth Airport Ltd.

Airlines and Christchurch in the 1930s

Air Charters Ltd : Set up in April 1938 to operate air taxi services with a Fox Moth and a Puss Moth.

Air Dispatch : In November 1936 initiated a Croydon-Portsmouth-Southampton-Christchurch-Teignmouth (Torquay)service. The fare from Christchurch to Croydon was £3-3-0 return. During WW2 the company became involved in overhaul and maintenance of RAF aircraft .
G-ACFV Avro642 . ????? DH Dragon



Channel Air Ferries (previously Olley Air Service): Operated from 1936 till 1941 using DH Dragons... routes to Croydon-Brighton- Bembridge , Shoreham,Bristol & Cardiff, Brighton- Ryde- Christchurch-Bristol-Exeter-Plymouth- Lands End- Scilly Isles. Some services were operated in conjunction with Railway Air Services.



Cobham Air Routes (Alan Cobham) :on May 6th 1935 Cobham Air Routes commenced a Croydon-Portsmouth-Christchurch-Guernsey service using four Airspeed Envoy IIs and a Westland Wessex. There were plans for a hangar to be erected at Christchurch. Pilots were Messrs. C Bebb, P Beresford and R Ogden. However after the Wessex (G-ADEW)suffered an engine failure and ditched south on the Needles on July 4th 1935 with the loss of the pilot Mr R Ogden, services ceased and the airline was sold to Olley Air Services. The sole passenger on board was picked up by a passing vessel, the "Stanmore" and taken to Fowey.

G-ABAJ Westland Wessex.

G-ADBA AS6J Envoy.

G-ADEW Westland Wessex.

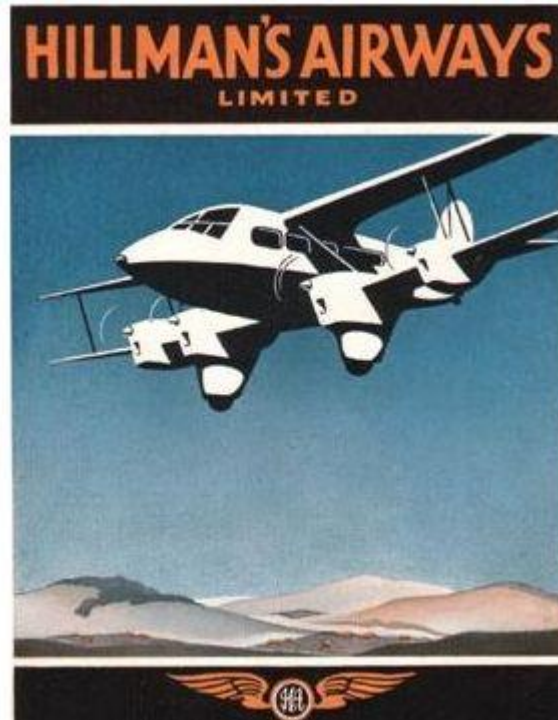
G-ADFZ Westland Wessex.

G-ABXN Airspeed Courier.G-ABXN

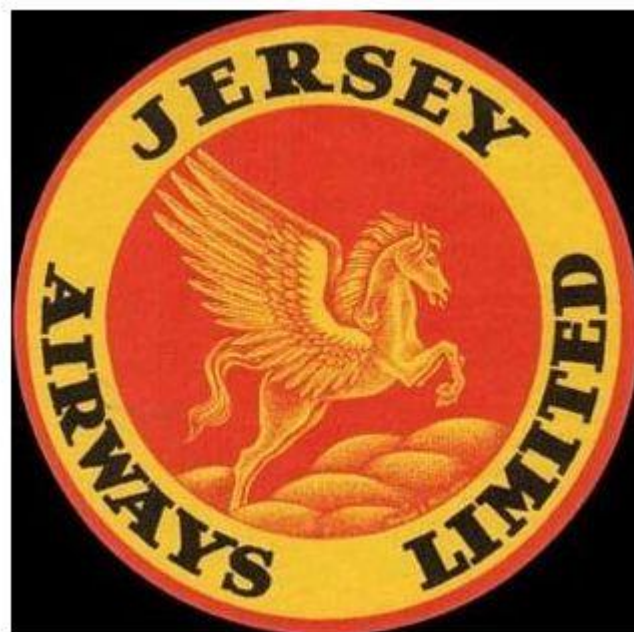


Crilly Airways: Operated daily service to Bristol in 1936. The original intention was to use 4 Fokker F.XII aircraft (G-ADZH/I/J/K) purchased in 1935. However these aircraft were pooled with British Airways for a London -Lisbon service so it is unlikely they ever visited Christchurch. More than likely the company used it's DH Dragon aircraft for the Christchurch- Bristol service. The company ceased trading on September 9, 1936.

Great Western and Southern Air Lines Limited: Formed by the merging of Channel Air Ferries and Railway Air Services in December 1938 .In March 1939 GW&SAL applied for a licence for a service once daily in each direction between Shoreham and Bournemouth, and in addition, four times in each direction between Ryde and Bournemouth. The latter service would be jointly operated with PSIOWA. The fare to Ryde was 17/6d return and to Shoreham £2-1-6d.



Hillman's Airways: operated charter flights to Christchurch using DH Dragons (1934)



Jersey Airways: Heston-Southampton- Jersey - Christchurch on request...used 14 DH.84s (see photo next page) and DH.89As(extant 1933-45).



Jersey Airways Plane



Portsmouth Southsea and Isle of Wight Aviation Ltd (P.S.I.O.W.A.): Commenced with a Portsmouth to Ryde and Christchurch service on 14-05-34 using Westland Wessex aircraft. However, due to the poor state of Christchurch's grass runway the service was suspended after a short time. Once the running of the airfield had been taken over by Francis Fisher service recommenced.. There were six flights a day - seven days a week using Westland Wessexes and DH Fox Moths. In 1935 the Bournemouth - Isle of Wight run operated 4 times a day from April 15th, increasing to 5 times daily during the peak summer months. The service was to be operated by Airspeed Couriers equipped with Marconi A.D.6N. sets and Sperry artificial horizons and directional gyros with Reid and Sigrist turn and bank indicators.. By 1936 PSIOWA was expanding fast and, over the next few years ran numerous services covering the Hampshire, Sussex and Isle of Wight area .An international route to Paris was also serviced. PSIOWA also did charter work to various destinations including Christchurch. Locally PSIOWA had premises in Scott's Hill Lane at Christchurch where later during the war, as " Portsmouth Aviation"(which is still in business today at what was Portsmouth Airport), they

undertook work servicing Airspeed Oxfords- the actual aircraft being held at the Warren Avenue Hangar ..

G-ACLR AS5A Courier.
G-ACLT AS5A Courier.
G-ACRF DH Dragon II.
G-ACLF AS5A Courier.
G-ACNZ AS5A Courier.
G-ACVF AS5B Courier.
G-ADAY AS5A Courier.
G-ADCA AS6J Envoy .
G-ACCA DH83 Fox Moth.
G-ACIG DH83 Fox Moth.
G-ABVB Westland Wessex.

G-ACTS Monospar ST.10

G-ADPK, G-ADPL Monospar ST.25

G-ABVN Monospar ST.4.



Provincial Airways: Daily flights Croydon-Southampton (Eastleigh)-Christchurch-Weymouth-Plymouth-Newquay-Hayle using a DH Dragon and two Fox Moths. Operations commenced on 19 March 1934. The company quoted the Shamrock and Rambler coach company as their Bournemouth agents. Their 1935 Summer timetable showed two flights westbound to Torquay (Haldon) ,Plymouth, Newquay and Penzance at 10.55AM and 5.55PM, and two easterly flights to Southampton, Portsmouth and CroydonBournemouth was a request stop.(1934-35)..

G-ACBW,G-ACDL,G-ACKD DH 84 Dragon
G-ACEX.G-ACCF.G-ACEY DH83 Fox Moth.
G-ACIV Puss Moth



Railway Air Services (predecessor of BEA): Started in 1938...services: Christchurch -Ryde-Brighton.Brighton-Ryde-Bembridge- Christchurch. Southampton-Bristol-Cardiff. The summer 1938 timetable shows three flights daily weekdays (two on Sundays) from and to Ryde (One the flights was actually operated by PSIOWA but bookable via RAS).



Western Airways Ltd (Norman Edgar) of Bristol: Operated twice daily to Bristol and Cardiff using DH.84 Dragons from 1934-1936.Services commenced on Sunday 12th May 1934.The Bristol-Bournemouth service was suspended for the winter from October 7th 1934.The Summer 1935 timetable shows two flights daily to and from Bristol and Cardiff , arriving Bournemouth(Christchurch) at 11.10 and 6.40PM .A day return to Bristol cost 29/6d(approx £1.48) and Cardiff 39/- (approx £1.95)..The service was taken over by Crilly Airways until at least September 1936 when Crilly went bankrupt.

END of PART One