



New Forest
World War 2
Airfields
nfw2airfields.info

Guide to The New Forest World War 2 Airfields

Route One

Prepared by Steve Williams

Route One – From the South-West of the New Forest

This route visits RAF Christchurch, RAF Holmsley South, RAF Winkton, RAF Hurn, RAF Bisterne, RAF Ibsley and RAF Stoney Cross.

This route also includes optional detours to The Signals Research and Development Establishment at Christchurch and Steamer Point, RAF Sopley radar station and Ashley Walk Bombing Range and an information Detour to Purbeck Radar, a very important research and development site at Worth Matravers that developed the radar used at RAF Sopley.

More information and the articles mentioned in this route can be accessed via my website nfw2airfields.info

The route starts at the **Somerford roundabout** at the East end of the Christchurch by-pass where the A337 leaves the A35 as the A35 turns north into the Forest.

[///pitch.tulip.raves](http://pitch.tulip.raves) Lat/Long 50.7427 -1.7408 imo

RAF Christchurch / Christchurch Airfield

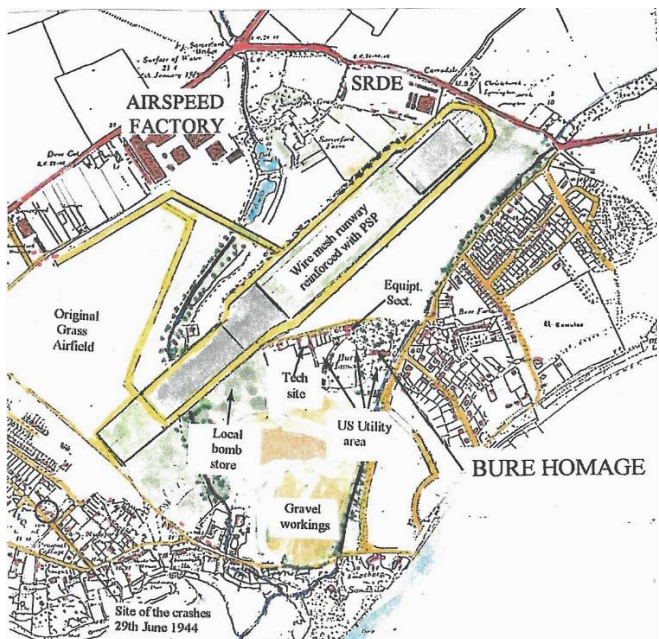
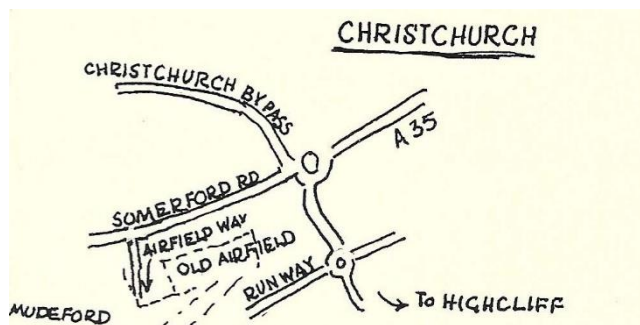
This is probably the most interesting of the New Forest airfields as it existed as a civilian airfield before and after The War and was an important research and development site as well as a centre for aircraft manufacture. The airfield opened as a civilian airfield in 1926 and finally closed in 1966.

During the 1930's a number of small airlines flew scheduled passenger services from Christchurch using the de Havilland Dragon Rapide bi-plane. At the outbreak of War, the Airfield was taken over by the RAF.

In early 1940 a Special Duties Unit was formed at Christchurch for the evaluation of radar equipment and other so called "Churchill's Wizard Technologies" including a process to disperse fog at airfields. Important aircraft and glider construction took place at Christchurch and for 3 months in early 1944 an Advanced Landing Ground was established on the airfield providing a base for 3 USAAF squadrons of P-47 Thunderbolts.

The site occupied by Christchurch airfield is now built upon with housing and industrial / retail parks, but it is possible to drive around what was, roughly, the perimeter of the airfield. Those who know something about aviation will notice that many of the roads have been named after famous aviators or aircraft and the road named The Runway, follows the track of the airfield's main runway. With the exception of a small

plaque, very little can be seen today, but the following plan and picture should give you a good idea of the airfield in 1944.



Christchurch Airfield around 1944



Pictures by Squadron Leader Frank Hayward



Christchurch airfield from the South by Squadron Leader Frank Hayward

Driving Directions Around the Boundary of the Former Airfield

From the **Somerford** roundabout take the B3059, the Somerford Road for 0.9 mile.

Just passed the Londis store, turn left onto Sandown Road.

Continue onto Mudeford Lane

Once you have passed the school look out for De Haviland Way on your left.

Turn left into De Haviland Way.

At the T junction with The Runway, turn left. (Note an Optional Diversion is available – see below)

At the Hoburne roundabout with the A337, turn left. The main runway used to start near this roundabout.

At the next roundabout you are back at the **Somerford Roundabout**.

Optional Detour

Signals Research and Development Establishment at Steamer Point. A very important, secret military communications research and development establishment was here during World War 2, it remained in operation until 1976 when it merged with other research organisations and moved to Malvern.

Areas of research included:

- Satellite communications
- Battlefield communications
- Optical fibres
- Image intensifiers for night vision equipment

The base of the large satellite communication dome, and two smaller domes can still be seen, along with the remains of some buildings and sentry posts.



The base of the large radar dome



The two smaller domes stood here

At the T junction with The Runway, turn right, then next left onto Bure Lane. Signed Steamer Point.

Take the third right onto Seaway Avenue. Signed Steamer Point.

Carry on until you see the sea and beach huts. Bear left onto Penne Way and the Steamer Point car park.

[///ode.dirt.topped](http://ode.dirt.topped) Lat/Long 50.7345 -1.7252

Return along Seaway Avenue to turn right onto Bure Lane.

At the A337, Highcliffe Road, turn left, the second roundabout is the **Somerford Roundabout**.

RAF Holmsley South



Runway 36 at Holmsley



Reminder of the Airfield at Holmsley South



The remains of runway 12



The New Forest Airfields Memorial

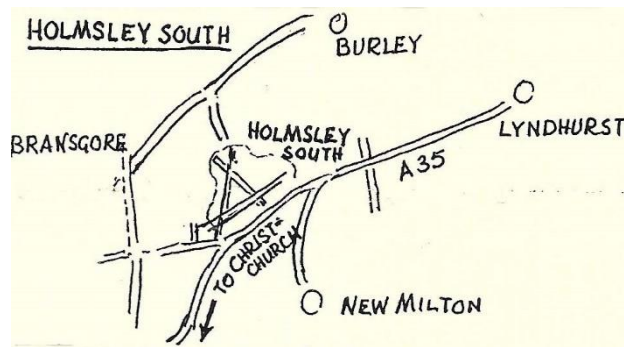
RAF Holmsley South was one of the major concrete runway airfields. It was operational from September 1942 to October 1946. Anti-submarine, bombing and fighter operations flew from Holmsley South

An aerial view of Holmsley South still clearly indicates the overall layout of the station but only small amounts of the runways, taxi ways, perimeter track and aircraft parking bays remain today. A few buildings remain, some hidden in the woods and most on private land. There are two caravan parks on the former airfield site as well as a small industrial and storage site.

The New Forest Airfields Memorial erected is situated in the South-West corner of the airfield on one of the aircraft dispersal bays.

The Airfields Memorial was erected in 2002 to remember the 25,000 service personnel and 10,000 civilians, many from overseas, who operated the twelve airfields during early 1944, during the preparation for, and execution of Operation Overlord, or D-Day. Services of remembrance are held each year on Memorial Day, Remembrance Sunday and in early September to mark the anniversary of the dedication of the memorial.

Directions to RAF Holmsley South Airfield



From the Somerford roundabout take the A35 in a northerly direction towards Lyndhurst.

After 3.8 miles turn left onto Lyndhurst Road. Sign posted Holmsley Camping.

After 0.5 mile turn right onto Forest Road and the Holmsley Airfield site. Signposted to the Airfield Memorial.

Airfield Driving Directions

You are now following the course of the 36 / 18 runway.

///adhesive.punters.blacked Lat/Long 50.7872 -1.7034

Just opposite the camp site you will have a great view along the main 07 / 25 runway on your right.

As you drive along Forest Road, you will see part of the remains of runway 12/30 on your left.

Take the first turn right towards the Holmsley camp site and at the car park you will have a good view back across the airfield.

/// relished.things.vine Lat/Long 50.7908 -1.6951

Go back to Forest Road and turn right.

Turn first left onto Black Lane and continue on Black Lane. Just before you turn into Black Lane you can see remains of the 18/36 runway.

As the road opens out after the trees, you will see the FONFA New Forest Airfields Memorial on your right.

/// regal.itself.hurls Lat/Long 50.7878 -1.7056

Optional Detour

RAF Sopley Radar Station and RAF Sopley Camp

RAF Sopley was not an airfield; it was initially a World War 2 secret radar station codenamed "Starlight" which opened in December 1940 with a Type 8 radar developed at the Telecommunications Research Establishment, Purbeck, and the Air Defence Experimental Establishment at Christchurch airfield. The system was known as Ground Controlled Interception or GCI. This guided night fighters from RAF Middle Wallop to their interception targets. The mobile radar was located in a disused farm about a mile to the west of the main RAF Sopley Camp, which was built in the 1950s to provide training facilities and accommodation for the radar station. In 1959 RAF Sopley became an air traffic control station and training establishment, this finally closed in 1974 when the service moved to West Drayton.



In 1979, the Camp was the reception centre and initial home for Vietnamese Boat People.



The Aviation Heritage Centre is in the former Sopley Camp emergency generator building, on Mosquito Way at the western end of the Heatherstone Grange development. This is the only building remaining from the Sopley Camp. The Radar and control room bunker were located further along Derritt Lane towards Sopley, along the small single track road towards Ripley. The bunker still exists but is not generally accessible.

For more information I suggest you read John Levesley's fascinating history of RAF Sopley.

Directions to RAF Sopley and RAF Sopley Camp

From the Airfields Memorial continue along Black Lane to Forest Road, turn right.

At the T junction with Lyndhurst Road, turn right.

In about 1 Mile, turn right onto Harrow Lane, towards Bransgore. Where Harrow Lane joins Ringwood Road turn right onto Ringwood Road towards Bransgore.

At the crossroads in the middle of Bransgore, by The Crown Inn, go straight across and continue on Ringwood Road

Take the second left onto Derritt Lane towards Sopley. You will see the Heatherstone Grange estate on your right, this is built on the site of the former RAF Sopley Camp.

[///doors.guesswork.suspend](http://doors.guesswork.suspend) Lat/Long 50.7807 -1.7536

RAF Winkton

RAF Winkton was one of the Advanced Landing Grounds with two steel tracking runways. It was operational from April to July 1944 and was used by three squadrons of the USAAF 404th Fighter Group operating P-47 Thunderbolt fighter-bombers.

There are little recognizable remains of the airfield, but when viewed from the Farm Shop car park, the open land and the tree lines do indicate where the runways were. The plan below is of RAF Winkton but it also gives an idea of how a typical ALG was laid out.

Dan Tanner's farm shop, PYO and Bakery is located where Winkton's two runways intersected and there are display boards with information about the airfield in the Bakery. Do not miss the opportunity to visit this great Farm Shop and the bakery for light refreshments whilst learning about the former airfield. The cakes and pastries are amazing!!

The picture below shows the information board that is on display in the Bakery seating area.

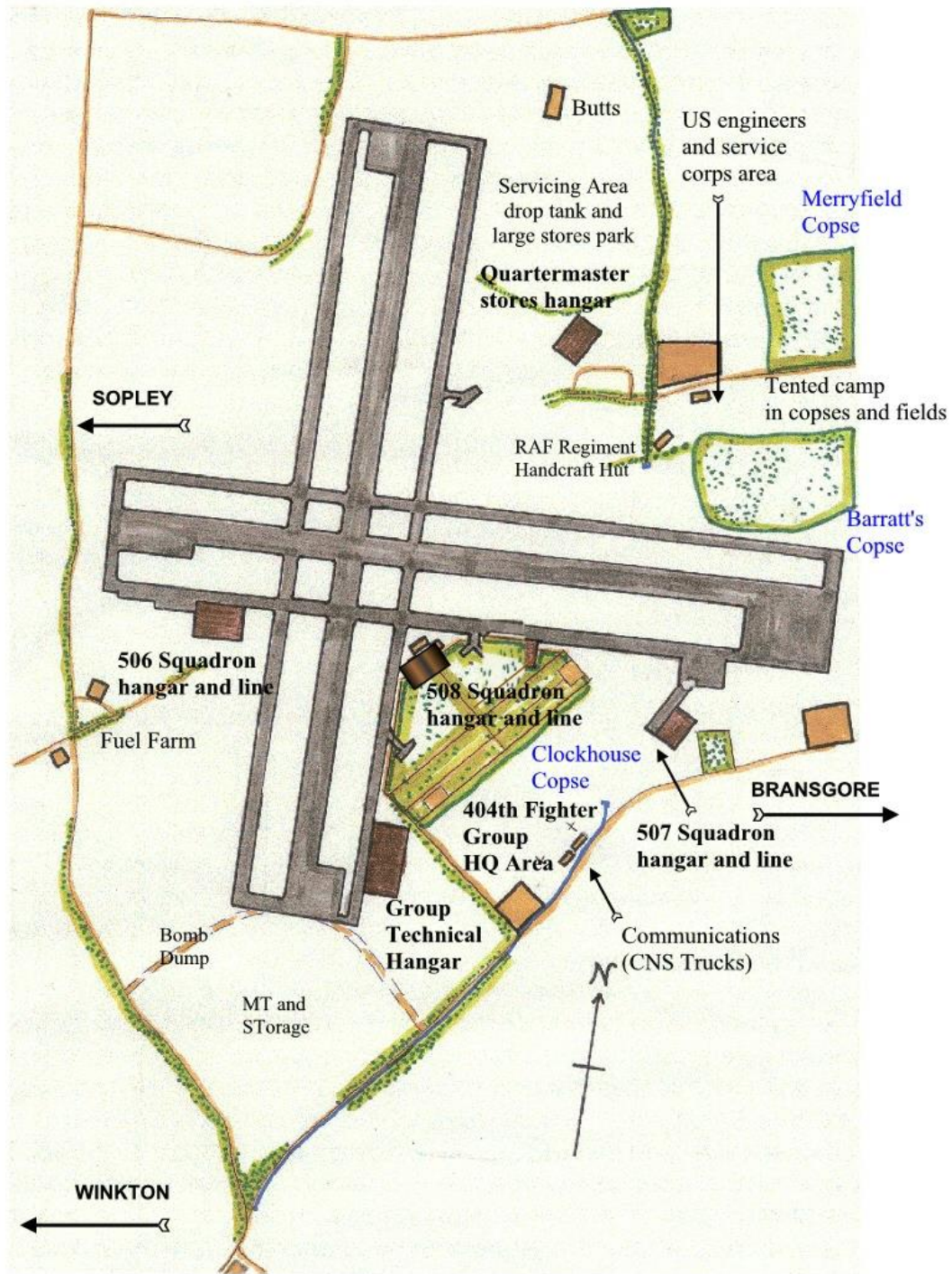
FONFA
Friends Of The New Forest Airfields

P-47D-22 507th Fighter Squadron
Y8

RAF Winkton
USAAF Station 414

Airfield constructed in 1943
USAAF 9th Airforce to prepare the facilities required for the 1000 Airmen and seventy-five P-47 Thunderbolt aircraft
404th Fighter Group arrived April 1944
404th went operational on May 1st 1944 with three Fighter Squadrons (506th, 507th and 508th) flying dive bombing, armed reconnaissance, and escort missions over occupied Europe
On D Day 6th of June, the whole group flew four beach protection patrols over the invasion fleet and beaches
404th continued to fly an operations from Winkton until early July 1944 when they moved to Normandy
Winkton closed and returned to agriculture in August 1944

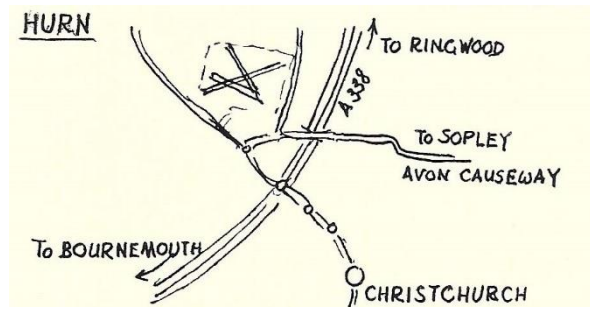
For more information please go to <https://fonfa.co.uk>



Plan of RAF Winkton

For more information, please read John Levesley's fascinating history of RAF Winkton and its construction.

Directions to RAF Hurn



From the Farm Shop and RAF Winkton continue on Derritt Lane into Sopley Village.

Turn left at the junction, (beware of oncoming traffic) and then follow the road right, around the Woolpack Pub onto the B3347, Ringwood Road. (The Woolpack offer tasty food and hospitality, the garden is lovely in the Summer)

After about one mile turn left onto Avon Causeway, sign posted to Hurn. (If not going to RAF Hurn, go straight ahead at this junction following the directions to RAF Bisterne below)

On Avon Causeway, as you approach the bridge over the A338, you will see the entrance to The Avon Causeway pub on your right. This is the former Hurn Station, it has some very interesting rooms and artefacts. It is also a good place for a drink, a snack, or a comfort break.

At the roundabout in Hurn, take the second exit onto the B 3073, Parley Lane.

You can follow this road around the south and east perimeter of the airport.

[///nerve.nods.frames](http://nerve.nods.frames) Lat/Long 50.780 -1.8512

RAF Bisterne

RAF Bisterne was another of the Advanced Landing Grounds that was used by the USAAF 371st Fighter Group with P-47 Thunderbolt fighter bombers. It was in use from March to June 1944, however Bisterne had to close for two periods, each of 10 days, to repair problems with the steel runways. On both these occasions the units transferred to RAF Ibsley. The airfield was returned to agricultural use so there is little to see of the original airfield. The two runways were to the West and South of Bisterne Farm.

You can gain access to Bisterne Airfield and a commemorative plaque on foot along the bridleway between two What3Words points:

[///solar.jubilant.gobbles](http://solar.jubilant.gobbles) at the East closest to the plaque on the wall, and

[///universal.abacus.tweaked](http://universal.abacus.tweaked) at the B3347 end

You can park at either end of the bridleway. The plaque is located on the wall of the long low building near the large barns. The building opposite was used for senior officer accommodation. Tented accommodation was used for junior officers and other ranks.

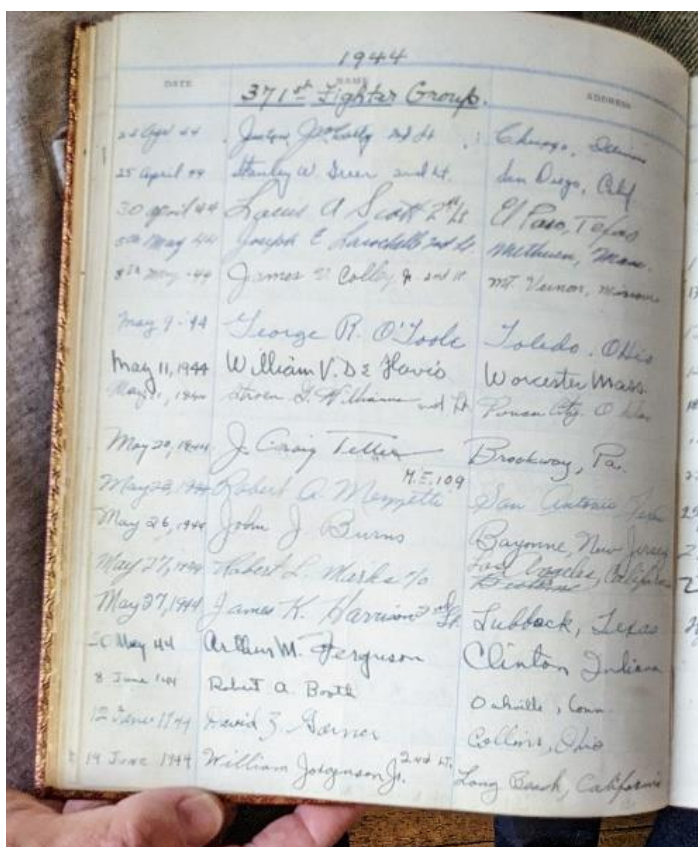
Please note that this is a very hard-working farm with livestock and electric fences, so keep to the
bridleway.

A little to the south of the airfield is Bisterne Manor. During the time that the USAAF Fighter Group was at
Bisterne, the owners made available parts of the Manor for the Officers for use as a club.

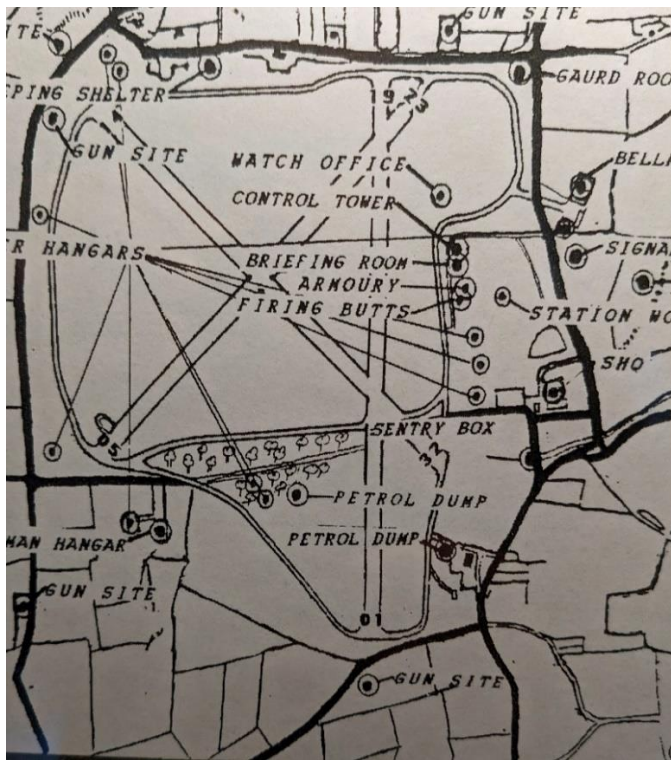
The FONFA website contains a copy of a letter written by one of the officers where he describes the peace
and tranquillity of the Manor, not to mention the enjoyment of a hot bath!

The owners maintained a guest book that was signed by all the visiting officers. This wonderful record of
the many officers who were stationed at Bisterne is maintained by the current owners of the manor house.

The manor is usually opened as part of the annual Heritage Open Day programme in early September.



RAF Ibsley



Ibsley Airfield 1944

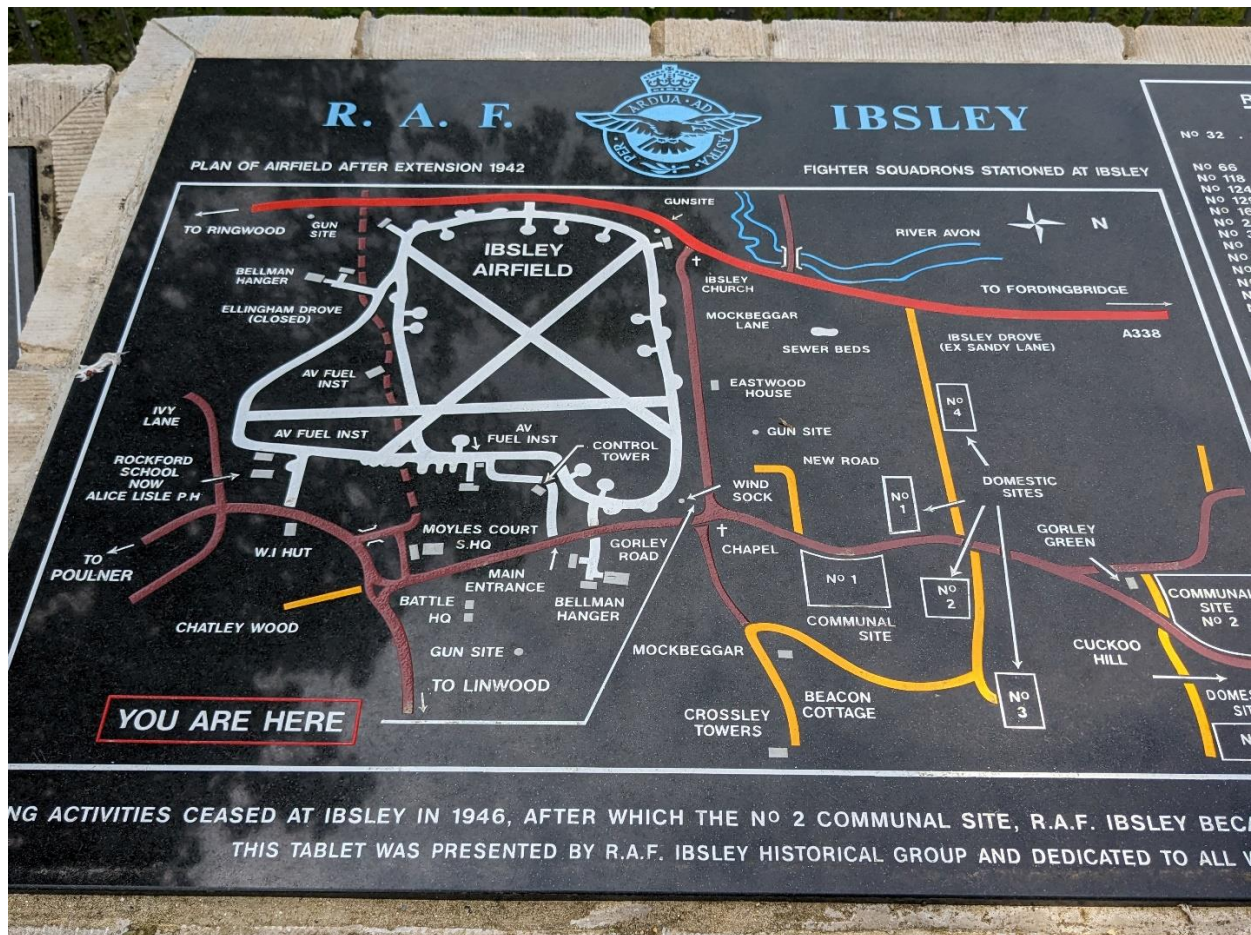


Ibsley Airfield 2022

RAF Ibsley was operational from 1941 to 1947 and it was used by many different RAF and USAAF formations at various times during this period. During the war years, the main RAF aircraft were Hurricanes and Spitfires and the main USAAF aircraft were P-47 Thunderbolts and P-38 Lightnings. From 1945 to 1947 RAF Transport Command used Ibsley.

The USAAF units based at RAF Bisterne moved to Ibsley for two periods, each of 10 days, whilst the runways were repaired at Bisterne.

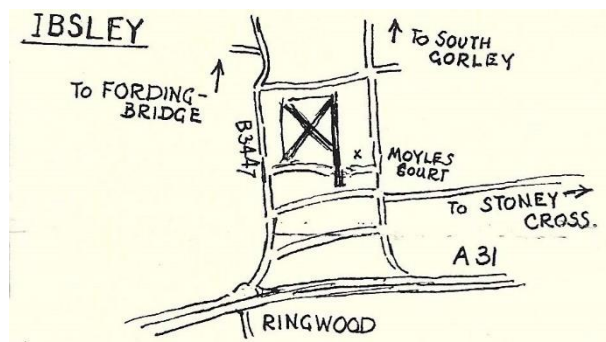
There is very little left to see today, the shell of the control tower is on private land near the North-Eastern boundary. There is a small section of runway 01 to the south as the of Ellingham Drive. There is a small stone memorial to the airfield located at the crossroads in the North-East corner of the site (see below).



RAF Ibsley Memorial

In 1941, RAF Ibsley was used for filming scenes for the film "First of the Few" starring David Niven. Some operational squadron pilots and ground crew took part in the film.

Directions to RAF Ibsley.



The B3447 should read A338.

Re-join the B3347, the Christchurch Road, turning right towards Ringwood.

Continue along the B3347 through Ringwood, to the roundabout at the junction with the A31.

Take the second exit from this roundabout onto the A338, the Salisbury Road.

After about 0.9 mile, a little past the Shell garage take the third right turn onto Ivy Lane. This road follows the Southern Boundary of Ibsley airfield. There is little to see today as the area has been extensively worked for sand and gravel and is now a nature reserve and water park.

At the Junction of Highwood Lane, turn left. Shortly, you will see the entrance to the Alice Lisle pub on the left.

///worms.chats.melons Lat/Long 50.8720 -1.7747

This was formerly the Rockford Primary School. In 1940, it was requisitioned for use as part of RAF Ibsley. It is located adjacent to the end of the main runway and its gardens offer good views across the lakes where the airfield once stood. This is a good place for a refreshment and comfort break. This is a very popular Pub so please book if you wish to take refreshments. thealicelisle.co.uk

Continue on Highwood Lane and bear left to cross the ford at Dockens Water and arrive at Moyles Court School. The main school building, formerly Rockford Manor House, the home of Alice Lisle, was used as the Station Headquarters between 1940 and 1946. The remains of the Group Battle Headquarters bunker is located in the woods on the hill opposite the school and is accessible via a footpath from the road.

Just before the school, turn left onto Ellingham Drove. Turn right at the T junction and continue on Ellingham Drove to the car park for the Blashford Lakes Nature Reserve. Just behind Moyles Court school you will cross the path of the main 01/19 runway. You will also pass the remains of a few former airfield buildings on your right. The car park on the right is very close to the centre of the former airfield and there are remains of 05/23 runway around the car park. The Bird Hide provides great views across the lakes to the North of the former airfield.

///lamenting.good.sharper Lat/Long 50.8746 -1.7861

Continue along Ellingham Drove to the A338, Salisbury Road and turn right towards Fordingbridge and Salisbury.

After approximately 0.75 of a mile, you will see the Old Beams Inn thatched pub on the right. This pub dates back to the 11th Century and it was frequented by many of the airmen based at RAF Ibsley. Unfortunately, the interior has been dramatically extended and modernised so much of the original character has been lost.

Just before The Old Beams Inn and the former church, turn right onto Mockbeggar Lane. Continue along Mockbeggar Lane to cross-roads. This road represents the Northern boundary of the former airfield. The RAF Ibsley memorial is located on the right-hand side at the crossroads. Park near the crossroads to visit.

///vanish.sway.geese Lat/Long 50.8832 -1.7735

Much of the domestic accommodation of the airfield was to your left in Mockbeggar.

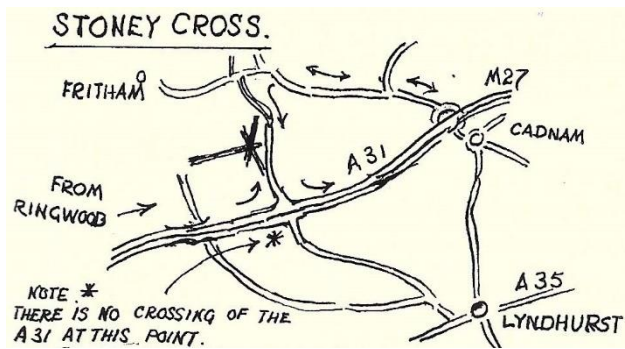
At this crossroads, turn right towards Rockford and Moyles Court School. Continue along this road until you reach Moyles Court School.

RAF Stoney Cross

RAF Stoney Cross was one of the major concrete runway airfields built in the New Forest after the Battle of Britain. It was operational from November 1943 to January 1948

During the war in Europe, RAF Stoney Cross was used by both the RAF and the USAAF for bomber and fighter operations and during the early phase of the war Coastal Command carried out anti-submarine activity from Stoney Cross. In the run up to D Day the USAAF xxxxx Fighter Group flew P-38 Lightnings from Stoney Cross before they relocated to Normandy in early July 1944. Following the end of hostilities in Europe Stoney Cross became a major staging post for RAF transport flights to the Far East.

Directions to RAF Stoney Cross



From the front of Moyles Court School, continue to cross the ford at Dockens Water and then turn sharp left up the hill signposted Linwood for 2.1 miles.

Pass the Red Shoot pub and then follow the road around a signed left-hand bend on to the single-track road.

Continue for a further 1.6 miles and follow the road around a number of bends.

After a prominent right-hand bend continue for a further quarter of a mile to a left junction sign posted Stoney Cross. Turn left.

After a further 1.5 miles you will be at the entrance to Ocknell Pond on your right. You are now at the western end of RAF Stoney Cross's 25/07 runway.

[///clouiding.oath.filed](https://clouiding.oath.filed) Lat/Long 50.9081 -1.6728



Runway 07 from the entrance to Ocknell Pond



The Orientation Board at Stoney Cross Plain

Directions around the Airfield

Continue along this road to drive along the line of the main runway to the T junction with Forest Road. Towards the far end of the road, you will see two strips of concrete along the side of the road. These indicate where the other runways intersected the main runway.

Turn right onto Forest Road. Forest Road follows the line of the Eastern perimeter track. After 0.25 of a mile turn right into the Stoney Cross Plain car park. The car park is on the apron for one of the Squadrons and you will be adjacent to the 15/33 runway. There is an orientation board in the car park.

Return to Forest Road and turn left. After 0.3 of a mile take the third turn on the right into the Janesmoor Pond car park. This turning is near the end of the N/S runway.

///into.sympathy.feuds Lat/Long 50.9210 -1.6519

As you drove along Forest Road, you will have passed the entrance to Long Beech campsite on your right. This was the location of a domestic camp, featured in many of the Memories recorded on the FONFA website. These are memories of life on the camp and in the New Forest just after the war by former residents of Long Beech.

The Janesmoor Pond car park is the end of this Airfield Route.

To exit the Forest via the M27 or A31, return to turn right to continue along Forest Road until you reach the junction with the B3078. Turn right onto the B3078, Roger Penny Way, towards Bramshaw. In Bramshaw continue on the B3079 towards junction 1 of the M27 and the A31.

If you are looking for refreshments after your drive around the airfields, a small detour will take you to **The Bell in the Forest** at Brook. This is a fine pub with good food.

To continue on the second airfields driving route:

At the roundabout at Junction 1 of the M27 take the second exit onto the A31 towards Cadnam.

At the next roundabout take the second exit onto the A336, Southampton Road.

Continue on the A336 to Netley March and the A326 roundabout.

Take the third exit onto the A326 towards Marchwood, Hythe and Fawley.

Continue on the A326 and the start of the directions on route 2.

To exit the Forest to Ringwood and Bournemouth, turn right along Forest Road until you reach the junction with the B3078. Turn left onto the B3078, Roger Penny Way, and at the first junction, just after the Telegraph Hill car park, bear left to continue on the B3078 towards Godshill and Fordingbridge. After this junction, this road marks the Northern boundary of the World War 2 Ashley Walk Bombing Range.

At the junction with the A338, turn left towards Ringwood, at Ringwood turn right onto the A31 and then turn left onto the A338 to Bournemouth.

Optional Detour – Ashley Walk Bombing Range

A feature of great importance during World War 2 was the Ashley Walk Bombing Range. This isolated area of heathland was used to test almost every type of bomb developed during the War. The range consisted of several different target types including air to ground attack, mock ship targets, aircraft pens, gun emplacement, bomb fragmentation areas and the Ministry of Home Security target (known locally as the Sub Pens).^{3esx} Sir Barnes Wallis was a frequent visitor to the range and his massive Grand Slam (at 22,000 lbs, the largest bomb ever detonated on British soil) and Tall Boy bombs were tested here. The huge crater made by the Tall Boy bomb is now a lake. Most of the structures and craters have long since disappeared but there are still a few remnants of the structures and an interesting concrete arrow that is large enough to be seen by satellite photographs.

An excellent description of the Bombing Range can be found at:

<https://www.airshowsresent.com/ashley-walk-bombing-range.html>

The Ashley Walk car park and the start of the footpath across the range is on the left-hand side of the B3078 just before the village of Godshill.

///supply.kilt.snapping Lat/Long 50.9397 -1.7362

A detailed route for a walk across the Bombing Range can be found at:

<https://newforestcarparkwalks.wordpress.com/2017/11/25/5-ashley-walk/>

Information Detour – Purbeck Radar

Our area hosted several very specialised research and development establishments during World War 2 and one that is not well known, but was critical to enhancing our military capability, was known as Purbeck Radar. Whilst the site of Purbeck Radar is not along this route, and many have never heard about it, you might find the history of this incredible site an interesting Information Detour.

From May 1940 to May 1942 Worth Matravers on the Isle of Purbeck was the nerve centre for radar development in the UK which employed up to 2,000 people. Top radar scientists tried out innovative ideas for better radar systems: with longer range, and for navigation in aircraft. When we think of radar today, we think of a rotating aerial and a display which looks like a map - this was first built at Worth Matravers. The radar used at RAF Sopley for Ground Controlled Intercept was developed at Worth Matravers.

A link to the Purbeck Radar website <http://www.purbeckradar.org.uk/index.html> is on my website.



The Purbeck Radar Memorial at Worth Matravers



Purbeck Radar in the early 1940s

Thank you for using my guide to the New Forest World War 2 Airfields

I hope that you have enjoyed visiting the Airfield and exploring the aviation Heritage.

Lore information on these airfields is accessible via my website nfww2airfields.info

If you have any feedback and comments, please drop me an email at nfww2airfields@gmail.com