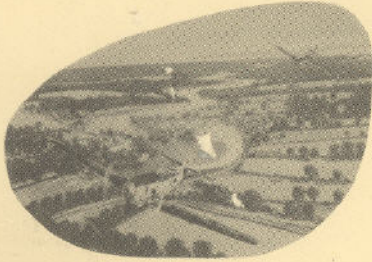
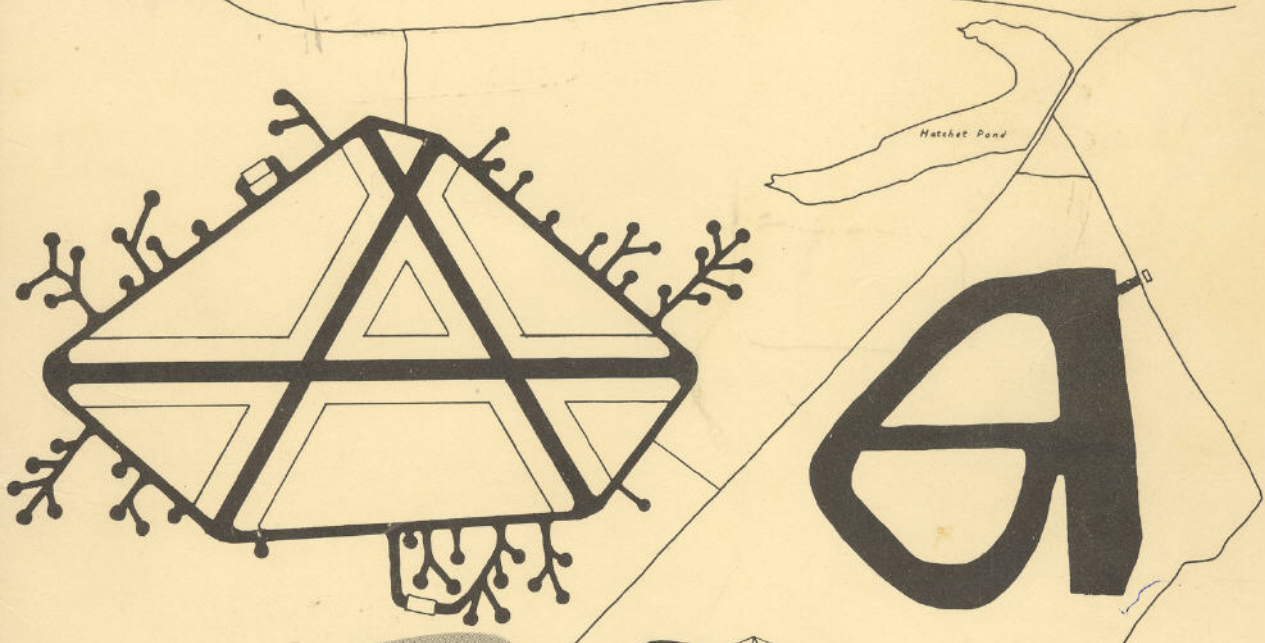
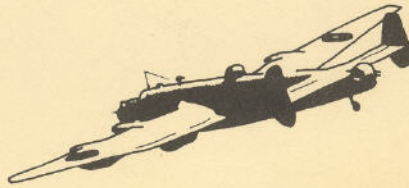
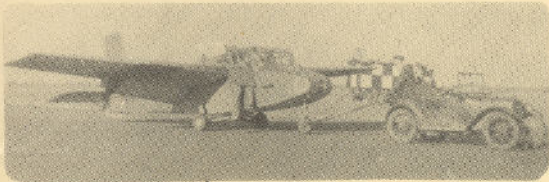
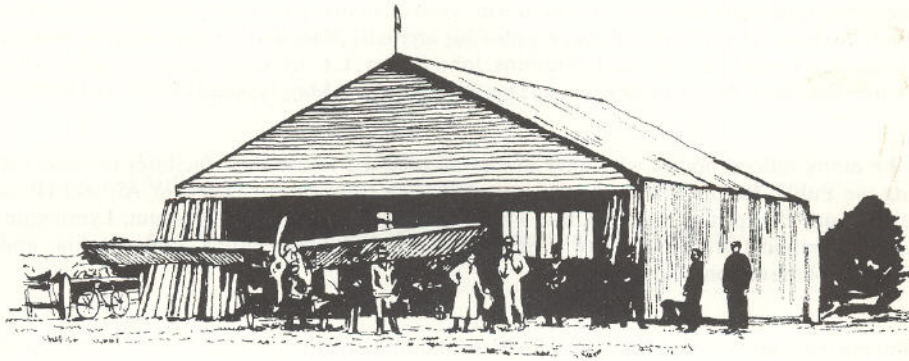


HISTORY OF BEAULIEU AIRFIELD



ROBERT COLES

HISTORY OF BEAULIEU AIRFIELD



ROBERT COLES

Best wishes

Bob Coles

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ROBERT COLES 1982.

17 Lower Buckland Road, Lymington.
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In compiling this record I have met many interesting people who have kindly shared their memories and information relating to Beaulieu airfield, and my grateful thanks go to Lord Montagu of Beaulieu and his mother, the Hon. Mrs. Pleydell-Bouverie, plus his archivist Alan Bartlett (now retired) and Mrs. C. Evans, John Gay, Louis Curl, the late Let Robins, John Bagley, L.E. Bickel, W. Reginald Steel, J. Gould, Mrs. Florence Reedhead, Mrs. Kathleen Gould, Don Willshire, John May, Leonard Holwill and David Sleep.

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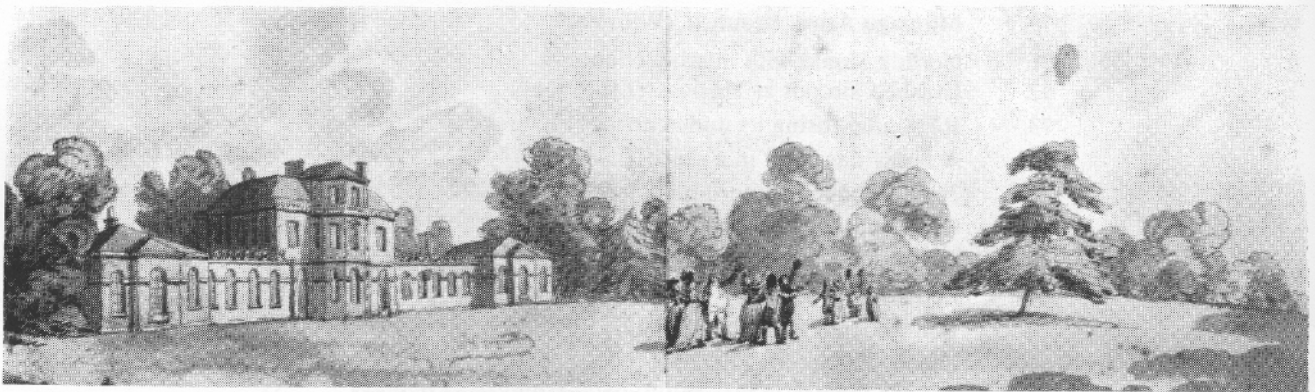


Fig. 1. Balloon sighted from Pylewell House.

A sketch by T. Rowlandson.

INTRODUCTION

The Beaulieu area, and especially East Boldre, has witnessed and provided a site for some of the earliest fliers in this country. If Rowlandson's sketch of Pylewell depicts a manned balloon, which it probably does as the people are waving to it (Fig. 1), then it is most likely that it is the flight performed by Jean-Pierre Blanchard. This took place on the 16th October 1784 and although not the first manned balloon ascent in this country, (Lunardi had achieved this a month earlier), one can hardly imagine the feelings of the New Forest residents at sighting an airborne human being for the first time. Blanchard had ascended at Chelsea and eventually landed at Romsey, and from contemporary descriptions it is quite feasible that his route took him within sight of, if not over, Beaulieu. (Fig. 2)



Fig. 2. Blanchard's Route, 16th October, 1784.



Fig. 3. Photograph taken by C.S. Rolls from his balloon as he left Cowes Week 1909.

Courtesy: Monmouth Museum, Gwent.

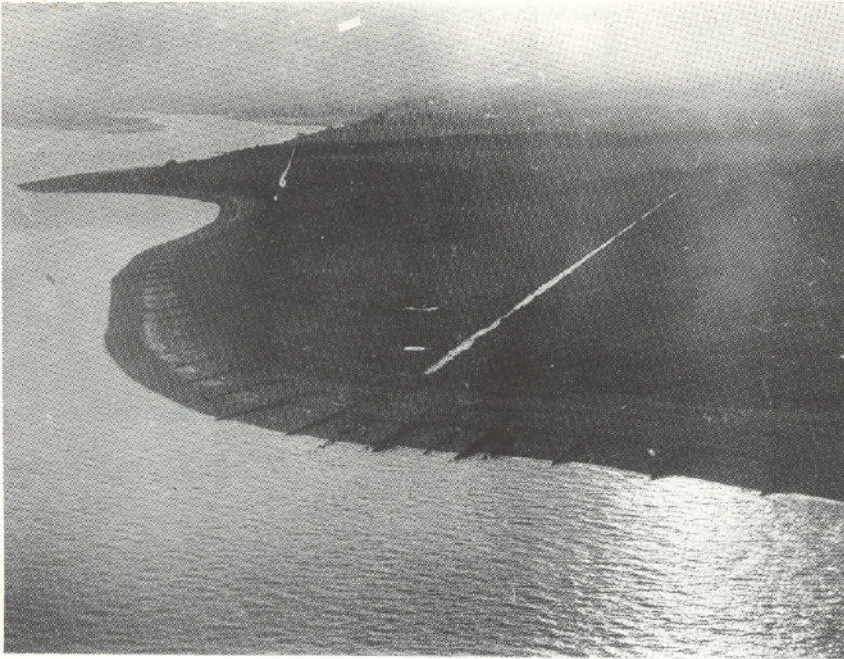


Fig. 4. The mouth of Beaulieu River and Lepe beach.
Courtesy: Monmouth Museum, Gwent.

Quite a few years were to elapse before the next bit of excitement was caused by a balloon — in fact August 1909, (during Cowes week), when the Hon. C.S. Rolls (Fig. 6), made a 2½ hour balloon flight across the Solent from East Cowes to Lymington taking aerial photographs en route, (Figs. 3 & 4) It descended towards Vicars Hill, Boldre, much to the annoyance of the owner, Mr. Pember (Fig. 5) who was worried for the safety of his rare shrubs, but in spite of this a rope from the balloon was secured by some local Boldre men at Pember's Marsh, near the boat house. It was soon released when Rolls threw some sandbags onboard and he eventually landed at Lymington.

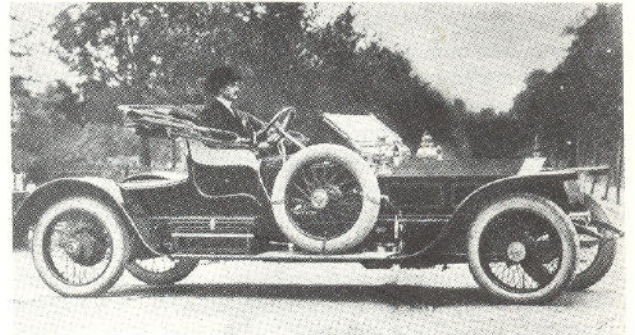


Fig. 6. The Hon. Charles Rolls. His balloon went in the boot of his Rolls Royce Silver Ghost.



Fig. 5. *Courtesy: Chas. T. King.*

Yet another balloon sighting occurred on Tuesday, 15th May, 1913. As Mr. H.K. Clark, a Lymington solicitor, was motoring from Beaulieu Road to Lyndhurst, he saw a large unmanned balloon descending near the railway over Matley Bottom. He managed to chase it on foot and rope it to a furze stump before motoring on to Lyndhurst where he reported it. It was claimed by the Military authorities — it had been accidentally released at Winchester during manoeuvres.

Meanwhile Beaulieu had become directly involved with flying with the establishment on the heath of the New Forest Flying School in 1910, and later almost the same site was taken over by the War Office for use during World War I. During World War II a new airfield was created on the heath, on the north side of the Lymington-Beaulieu road, and this continued in use after the war as a base for the Airborne Forces Experimental Establishment, until 1950, and it was not until 1960 that the Air Ministry finally relinquished possession.

This volume is an attempt to chronicle those last fifty years, from 1910 to 1960, admittedly from a rather blinkered viewpoint. No mention is made of other nearby developments such as Calshot or the other New Forest airfields like Stoney Cross. I must leave the production of a broader study of local aeronautical developments to a more erudite brain.

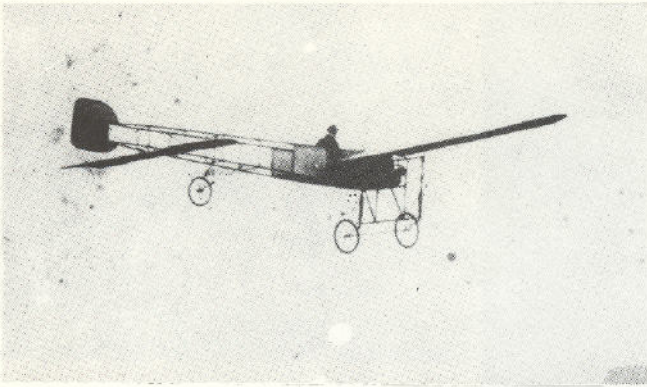


Fig. 7. Photo of "Mr. McArdle flying" on a postcard (postmarked Bournemouth 21.5.1910).

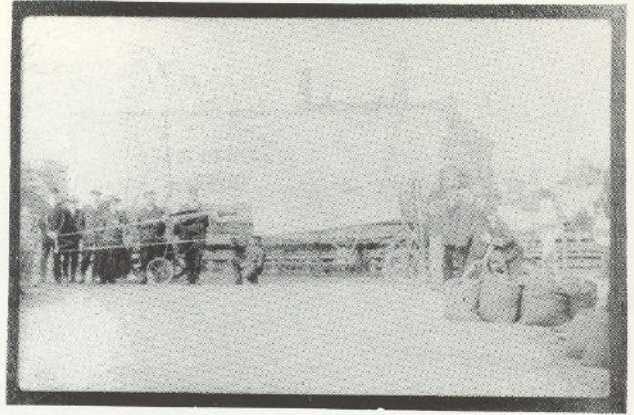


Fig. 8. Drexel's Plane at Brockenhurst Station.

Courtesy: Chris Hobby.

PART I — THE NEW FOREST FLYING SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1

Commencement

The 'School' was established on the Beaulieu Heath near Hatchet Pond — the first recorded flights by the principals of the school, McArdle and Drexel, being made on Sunday, 1st May, 1910. As could be expected they attracted large crowds, about 500 according to a report in the 'Lymington and S. Hants. Chronicle', and flying was carried out daily if weather permitted. The school was reported as owning three Bleriot type monoplanes, each fitted with a three cylinder Anzani engine capable of 2,000 revs/min. and a large shed was built to house them.

The arrival of Drexel's plane in a wagon at Brockenhurst aroused some interest with the locals (Fig. 8). They posed while the horse was connected up to pull the aeroplane to East Boldre. The railway wagon is endorsed 'AEROPLANE', 'J.A. DREXEL LONDON', and '2nd Class PARIS'. Two propellers can be seen tied to the aeroplane's frame.

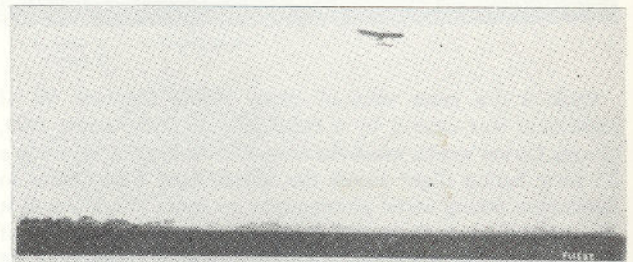


Fig. 9. Drexel being high on a Bleriot over the McArdle and Drexel New Forest Aviation School grounds.

Fig. 9. Drexel over the New Forest Flying School in May 1910.

Courtesy: 'Flight'

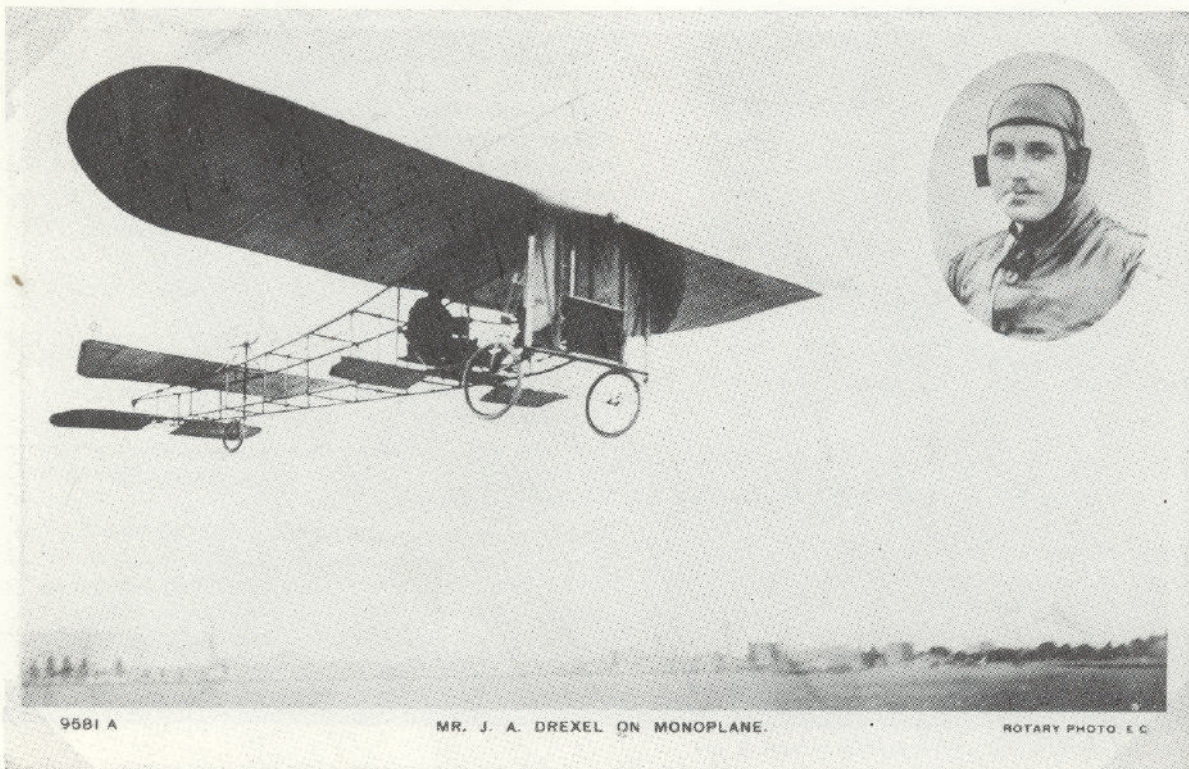


Fig.10. Postcard of Drexel.

Courtesy: Rotary Photo.

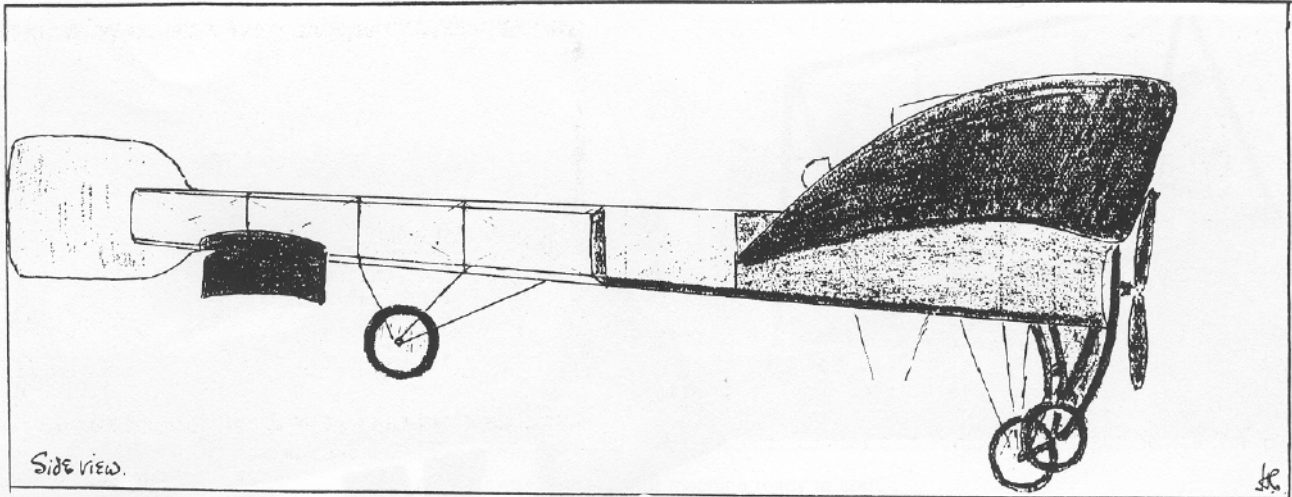


Fig. 11. Sketch in the East Boldre School Log Book by the Headmaster, H.C. Cooper, 9th May, 1910. His predecessor had complained that more than half the pupils had never seen a train. Now they were among the first to witness powered flight.

By the end of May there were seven Bleriot's (three of which had been built in Bournemouth) with three biplanes under construction — one for pupils, the others to the order of clients.

Facilities now boasted of included "a large workshop with competent men to do repairs and free use of about 500 acres of ground". We shall see later what the Office of Woods had to say about this. Robert Lorraine, a wellknown actor, was one of the clients to hire a shed for his biplane when he brought it over from Mourmelon in June, and the advertisement which appeared in *The ABC of Aviation in England* in about July 1910 gives an indication of facilities and charges (Fig. 12).

CHAPTER 2

The People Involved

Starting a flying school required a suitable site (probably suggested by Lord Montagu), aircraft and reliable mechanics (provided by William McArdle), a craftsman to construct and maintain the aircraft (George Gould), and qualified pilots to give the instruction (McArdle and J. Armstrong Drexel). Drexel's connections with high society should have helped in providing introductions to potential pupils.



NEW FOREST AVIATION SCHOOL, BEAULIEU.

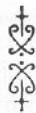
(Station : Brockenhurst, L.S.W.R.)

FINEST FLYING GROUND IN THE COUNTRY (3 Miles by 2 miles flat).

R.A.C. Certificates granted from this School when proficient. :: ::

The School is now open and ready for Full course of Tuition for either — Monoplane or Biplane, £80.

SCHOOL MACHINES.



PUPILS MAY BRING THEIR OWN MACHINES
Sheds will be provided Ground for £1 per week. — **FREE.**

Principals .. { **W. E. McARDLE.**
ARMSTRONG DREXEL.
Certified Aviators British and French Aero Clubs.

Fig. 12. Advertisement of the School.

Courtesy: 'Flight'



Fig. 13. William McArdle.

Courtesy: Allen White.

Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, although not directly involved with the School, encouraged its foundation. His interest in flying commenced as early as 1906 when the 'Daily Mail' offered a £10,000 prize to the first aeronaut to fly from London to Manchester, with two stoppages for petrol, in 24 hours. Lord Montagu added £1,000 of his own money to this prize. Two years later at a luncheon given by the Mayor of Bournemouth, Lord Montagu stated that he would soon be asking the Borough Council for a landing ground, but he does not appear to have taken any more practical steps towards it.

That year, 1908, he had witnessed Wilbur Wright's experimental flight at Le Mans when an altitude of 50-60 feet was achieved and must have been one of the first Englishmen to witness powered flight. He described it ten years later in an article in an American magazine:-

"... it was as if the leaves of the Book of Prophecy had been suddenly opened to me."

Having gained admiration in many quarters as a pioneer of motoring, Lord Montagu's prophecies for the future of flying were listened to, with more respect than might have been the case. He became a member of the Royal Aeronautical Society, the Aerial League and the Society of British Aircraft Constructors, as well as being a founder member of the Royal Aero Club.

From 1909 he was warning the House of Lords of the important military future of the aeroplane and his talk to the Aldershot Military Society in February 1910 (incorrectly recorded as 1911 in some sources) was published as a 13-page pamphlet 'Aerial Machines and War'. A considerable achievement for a Lt. Col. of Volunteers.

At the same time as he was encouraging the formation of the Flying School on New Forest common land, he assumed the rather incompatible role of co-opted verderer of the New Forest.

William Edward McArdle was born in India in 1875 and spent several years in the Merchant Navy before settling in Bournemouth and starting a motor business. His energy built it up to become one of the largest garages on the south coast and he was patronised by the English, Spanish and German royal families. Probably it was his business that brought him into contact with Lord Montagu.

In 1909 he sold his business to make a practical study of aviation, and in the August of that year he built a machine with the assistance of Mr. Gould of Boscombe.

After failing to secure a suitable local flying ground he went to the Voison School at Mourmelon, France, with one of his Bleriot Type XI machines (Fig. 14). He returned to England later in 1909 to try out local flying possibilities at Amesbury but found it unsuitable, so he left to conclude his apprenticeship at Pau. The School there, attended by Bleriot, was becoming overcrowded and accidents were frequent and McArdle did not escape damage to his aircraft. Having stopped to make a slight adjustment to his engine he was run into by another machine. Fortunately only the machines were rendered unrecognisable (Fig. 15). He received his pilot's certificate (No. 72) from the Aero Club de France in April 1910, having passed the three tests required in his Bleriot at Pau.

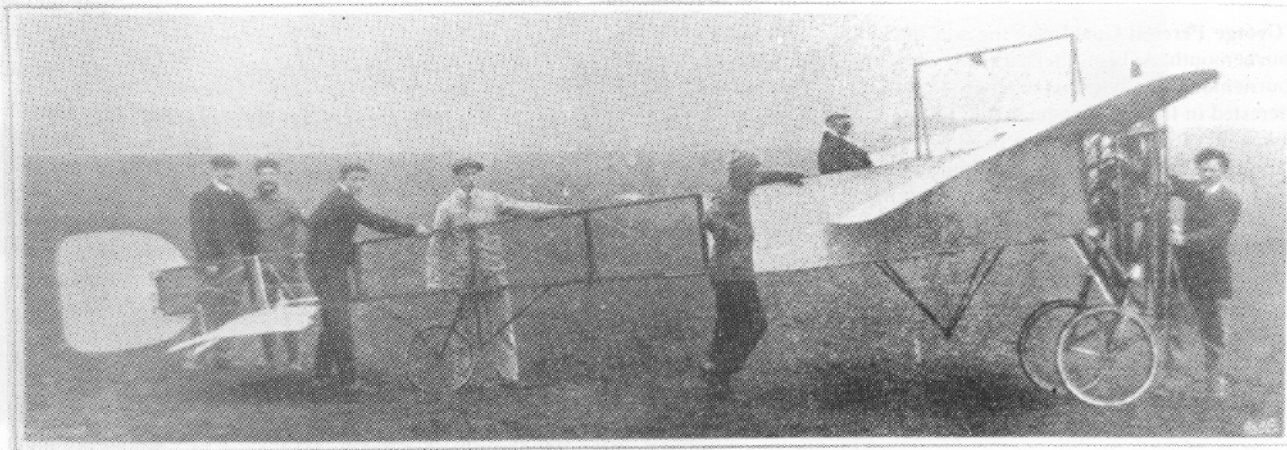


Fig. 14. "McArdle in his Bleriot machine ready to start".

Courtesy: 'Aero'



Fig. 15. Remains of McArdle's machine.

Courtesy: 'Aero'

J. Armstrong Drexel was the third son of Col. Anthony J. Drexel, the head of the Philadelphian banking firm. The Colonel took no interest in banking and chose England as his adopted country where he was a lavish entertainer of European society and royalty. He rented Norris Castle for a whole year merely to have it available for himself and his friends during the single week of the Cowes yacht races. It may have been on such an occasion that the young Drexel met Lord Montagu and flying was discussed.

In January 1910 Drexel enrolled as a pupil at Claude Graham-White's Flying School at Pau. Later he returned to the New Forest Flying School and obtained the Aviator's Certificate of the Royal Aero Club. (the 14th to be granted), on the 21st June, 1910 in a Bleriot. He was reported in the "Lymington and S. Hants. Chronicle":-

"Drexel made the three flights in order to qualify for a pilot airman's certificate, flying between Beaulieu and Brockenhurst 2,000 people were present including Lord Montagu . . . He reached 1,070 ft. cut off his engine at 1,000 ft. and planed down in two wide circles."



Fig. 16. J. Armstrong Drexel.

Courtesy: 'Flight'

This set a new altitude record, and although it only lasted a day or two before being bettered, this aspect of flying continued to be his greatest interest. During his flying at the New Forest School he lived either at Sowley House (Lord Coke's) or the Montagu Arms.

George Percival Gould was the son of a joiner who lived in Bournemouth. At his father's joinery works in Wolverton Road, Bournemouth, he built his first aeroplane in 1909. He had been interested in flying for some time and had built a large box kite (about 6ft. x 15ft.) which he flew in Kings Park. He had now built a plane but could not afford an engine, and thus began the link with McArdle who fitted a Gnome engine and then exhibited it in his showroom as the same type of machine in which Bleriot had flown the Channel. (Fig. 18)



Fig. 17. George Gould.

Courtesy: J. Gould.

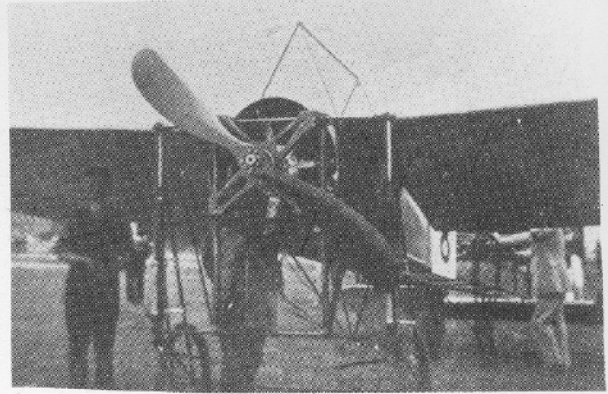


Fig. 19. Drexel's Bleriot. This photograph shows how the 50 h.p. Gnome engine is fitted.

Courtesy: 'Aero'



Fig. 20. McArdle of "cross-country" fame.

Courtesy: 'Aero' 12 July, 1910.

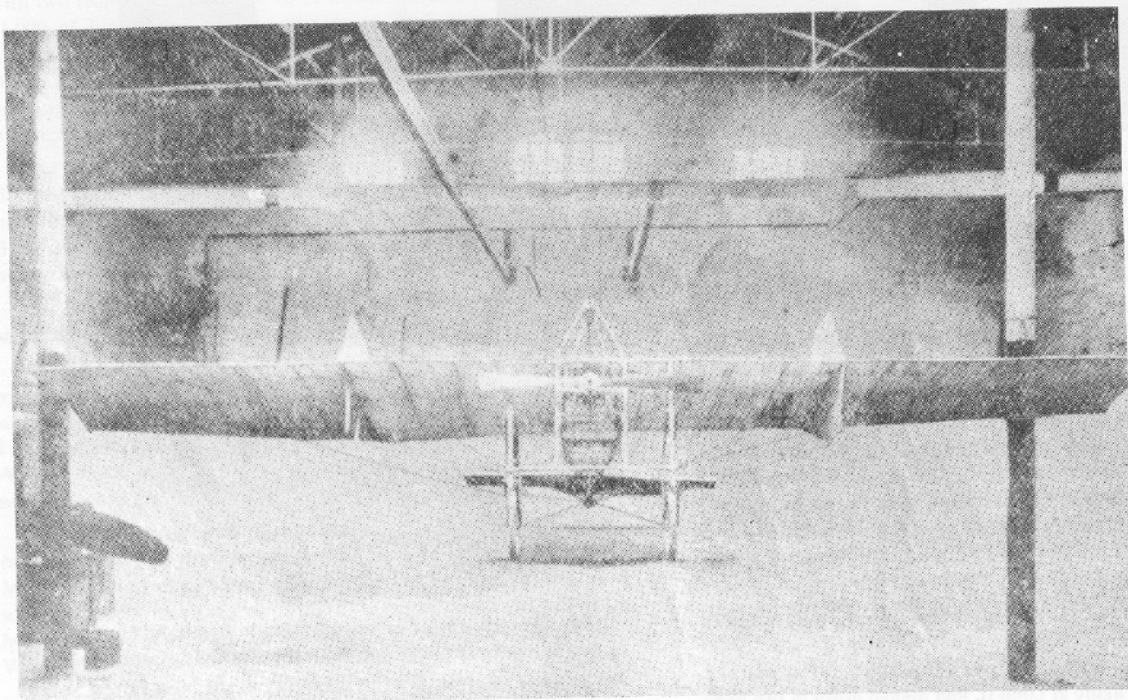


Fig. 18. Bleriot - type monoplane built in Bournemouth.

Courtesy: Dorset County Library.

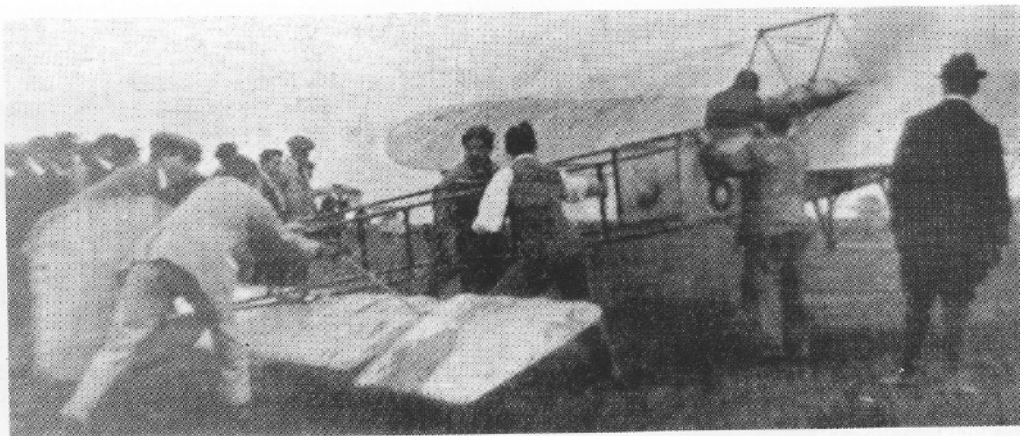


Fig. 21. Armstrong Drexel's Bleriot in leash.

Courtesy: 'Aero'

CHAPTER 3

Air Meetings

Having got together and started the New Forest Flying School in May 1910, McArdle and Drexel now commenced a busy round of Air Meetings throughout Britain and America, including visits to:-

Wallisdown in May
 Bournemouth and Blackpool in July and August
 Lanark (Scotland) in August
 Leopardstown (Ireland) in August, and finally,
 Belmont Park and Philadelphia (USA) in November.

In the process they broke several records, winning prizes and considerable fame. Their first venture at Wallisdown (near Bournemouth) over the Whit weekend was not a success due to soft ground and tricky winds. However, on Wednesday McArdle did manage a flight but Drexel was not so lucky — he crashed but escaped injury.

Writing on June 21st, 1910 McArdle expressed doubts as to the wisdom of flying in public due to their lack of understanding of flying. Echoing Lord Montagu's sentiments he hoped the War Office would realise the importance of aviation and help finance pioneers who had given considerable time and money to the cause. He planned to fly from Beaulieu to a camp twenty miles away to give a demonstration of dropping bombs. This he felt would be more worthwhile than time spent at flying meetings. These sentiments did not prevent him and Drexel continuing to attend the various meetings, presumably because the Government backing he hoped for was not forthcoming.

The Bournemouth Aviation Meeting (11th-16th July 1910)

This had first been discussed at a public meeting in January at Bournemouth's Theatre Royal in connection with other attractions planned for Bournemouth's centenary year. Lord Montagu chaired the meeting.

The Aviation meeting was opened the evening before the competition proper. McArdle impressed his home crowd "... in sensational fashion by a thrilling flight from his Aero School in the New Forest to the Aerodrome — over 30 miles in 38 minutes". He performed this feat in Drexel's Bleriot (Figs. 19 & 20). He had flown over Lymington and rising to 2,000ft. had lost his way in clouds; descending a few hundred feet he found himself over the Needles and so headed north-west to the aerodrome at Southbourne. McArdle, with his disapproval of competition flying, did not appear in the list of prizewinners, but Drexel was not only keen but successful. He collected over £1,000 in prize money for his efforts in speed, sea flight, general merit and altitude flying. Earlier, in March Lord Montagu had started a fund for prize money to be awarded to the best British aviators at this meeting. He was worried that the prize money (over £8,000) would be won chiefly by foreigners thus enabling them to increase their lead over British inventors and manufacturers. He collected the 'All-British' prize on behalf of the winner J. Colmore.

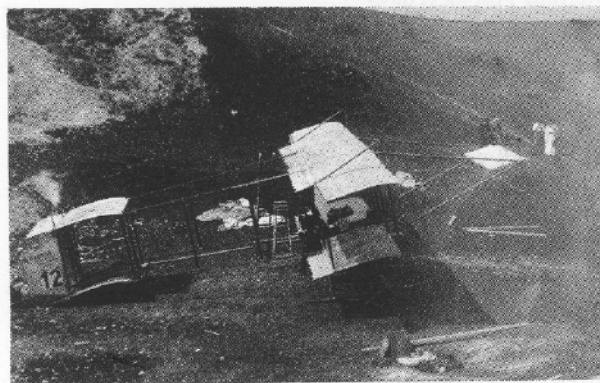


Fig. 22. Loraine's Farman landed on the Isle of Wight.



Fig. 23. Drexel and his two seater Bleriot just before his start for Beaulieu.

Courtesy: 'Flight'

Robert Lorraine, who housed his plane in one of the hired sheds at the New Forest school, gained some fame at this meeting by becoming the first person to land an aeroplane on the Isle of Wight. (Fig. 22). He had a new type of Farman which he had badly damaged while trying to fly from Beaulieu to Bournemouth in bad weather the week before. This he had to practically rebuild in his hangar. With the assistance of his French mechanic, M. Verdrines and some workmen from Southampton, it took three days and nights' non-stop work. It was a slow machine and he lost his way in a thunderstorm during his flight to the Needles on the last day of the meeting and landed on Tennyson Down. It was feared that he had gone down in the Solent and there were several yachts patrolling to help in this eventuality, among them Lord Montagu, Mr. Page Croft MP, and Sir Thomas Lipton. Lorraine returned to Bournemouth three days later on Tuesday, 19th July.

On the same day that Lorraine was returning to the mainland, McArdle and Drexel decided to fly back to their New Forest School. This was considered a very newsworthy occurrence at that time as most aviators would pack their machines up for transport by road to the next point of demonstration. Drexel's trip was especially noteworthy, as he had purchased the Frenchman Morane's double seated Bleriot monoplane (Fig. 23) and decided to carry Harry Delacombe (Fig. 24), a well known newspaper correspondent, as passenger. This report of his appeared in the 'Morning Post' next day:-

"... at 4.30 p.m. there was a nasty gusty wind blowing, and Mr. McArdle, considering the conditions quite unsuitable for our attempt to fly over the sea and forest to Beaulieu, suggested postponing the start, hoping the wind might drop. Mr. Drexel thought, on the contrary, that it might become more blustery and was most anxious to be off. It had been arranged that he and I in the double-seated Bleriot monoplane should start first, followed after a few minutes by Mr. McArdle on the single-seater, as the latter, with only one person to carry, was sure to travel the faster, and probably overtake us en route. There was also the possibility that either machine might drop into the sea (where there was no cordon of motor boats and steam yachts as arranged for the over-sea flights to the Needles last week), be perceived by the other, and perhaps be reached sooner from the definite information it could carry to land. As no change in the weather appeared likely at 6 p.m., we decided to set out. Mr. Drexel thought our safety lay in rising about 1,000 ft. before making the journey, and said it would probably be necessary to encircle the aerodrome two or three times to attain this altitude. A single circuit only enabled us to climb to 350 ft. So round we went again, rising rapidly as we faced the wind, but having great difficulty in keeping our height with the wind astern, the 'lift' being enormously decreased and the position of our machine becoming somewhat like that of a kangaroo sitting on its tail. Mr. Drexel's idea in flying high was: first, the hope of escaping gusts and finding a steadier wind than prevailed below; and, secondly, if the motor should perchance stop, the better change of gliding down either into one of the few small open spaces among the almost endless trees, or else turning about and planing down for the sea, where we had a far better chance than if descending involuntarily among trees, houses, or marshy land.



Fig. 24. Delacombe waiting to take his seat on the machine.

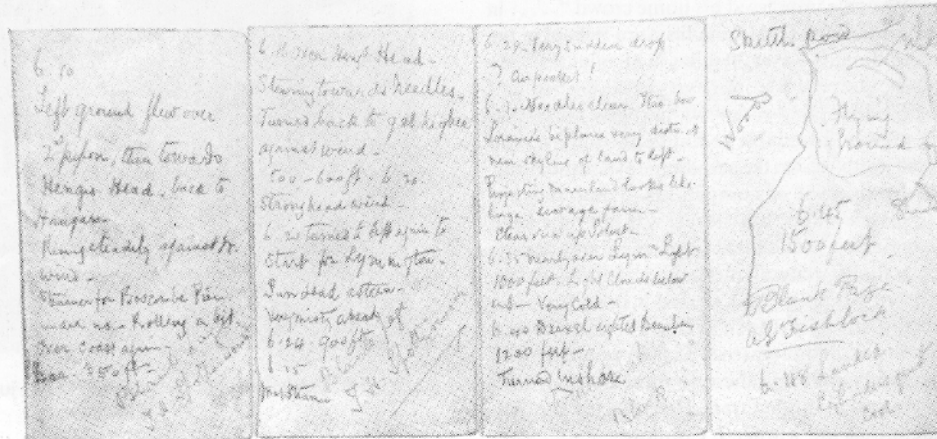
Courtesy: 'Flight'

A Bird's Eye View

"Satisfied at last as to our height, he steered direct from Hengistbury Head towards the Needles, which seemed almost below us, though really some two miles distant. We could see Mr. Lorraine's aeroplane with people surrounding it very distinctly on the high land over Alum Bay, and as we turned to the left over the promontory of Hurst Castle the view up the Solent as far as Southampton on the left and Cowes on the right was clearly mapped out underneath. All this time the wind had been dead astern, and Mr. Drexel had a hard tussle to preserve our altitude to his liking. Once, when he asked me if I could see anything of 'Mac' following, I turned round, distinguished the aerodrome, but saw no machine aloft. I did, however, see that our tail, instead of being horizontal, was horribly out of the level, and momentary thoughts of head resistance and a backward fall flashed through my mind. The placid smile and cool behaviour of my companion would, however, have reassured the most timid, and I was happy in the sensation of unlimited power conveyed by the regular throbbing of the motor and the mighty beats of our propeller-blades as we soared steadily ahead. Suddenly I heard 'Look! there's old Beaulieu!' Following the direction in which he was gazing, I could distinguish nothing but apparently black forest. A winding road and a peculiar shaped patch of water, however, I guessed were his landing marks, and it was with a feeling rather of regret that I saw we were turning sharply to the left, and leaving the friendly sea behind, to fly over country which, from a height of 1,500 ft., looked everywhere literally unapproachable for our frail craft. With a nudge and a grin Drexel put forward the cloche, (sic) and we headed downwards till he was almost standing on his foot tiller, and my feet were pressed against the front part of our little cock-pit. Then at last I realised how much we had been leaning backwards during the flight, for we were rushing through the air at about 80 miles an hour at a bigger angle probably than we had previously assumed in the other direction.

Fig. 25. Photographs of the original leaves from Delacombe's note-book.

Courtesy: 'Flight'





"At once I could make out the road and hangars of the Aviation School to our right, and could see a small crowd of black dots running out on what I had just before mistaken for another patch of murky forest. In three minutes we had glided more than 1,500 ft. downwards, and then came the end of my novel experience, for we landed, and were surrounded by friends, to one of whom I gave the notes I had scribbled on leaves of my pocket-book, signed as blank pages by other friends just before we left the ground at Southbourne. (Fig. 25)

Possibilities of Aeroplane Reconnoitring

"Throughout the run I was entrusted with a rubber ball, by squeezing which a constant pressure is maintained in the feed, and I also constantly leant forward and peeped over our bows to keep Drexel informed of our whereabouts. These minor duties, however, did not prevent me from carrying out my cherished hope of proving the practicability of writing legibly during a flight, and my scribbled log of the trip is sufficiently legible to prove beyond any question that trained officers or men could easily do surveying work of the utmost importance and utility at far greater heights than we reached, for with binoculars and a clearer atmosphere I could have distinguished every necessary detail, and transmitted my impressions to paper with explanatory notes in perfect comfort by stooping below the backwash of our propeller and the ordinary rush of air as we raced along."

Delacombe was keenly interested in bringing home to the naval and military authorities the practical and national purposes to which the aeroplane could be put.

McArdle meanwhile on his flight back to Beaulieu managed to get lost and eventually was forced to land near Fordingbridge. This is his account:-

"Tuesday, July 19th, three days after the close of the first International aviation week held at Bournemouth, I decided to fly our Bleriot monoplane — the same machine which I flew to Bournemouth the day previous to the opening of the meeting — back to Beaulieu to the school ground. The distance as the crow flies is about 20 miles, but to avoid rather bad forest ground we prefer the sea route, which is about 6 or 8 miles longer. Glancing at the watch strapped in front of me, I noticed it was 6.15 p.m., and setting my motor (Gnome) to run 1,200 revs. per minute, I rose steadily from the aerodrome. Drexel had left just 8 minutes before, accompanied by Harry Delacombe. Before leaving the ground I could easily see them in the distance making for the same place as I intended. I at once went up to 500 feet. Unlike our big machine I had no occasion to circle the aerodrome, as I reached this altitude before passing Hengistbury Head, although the machine did not rise as quick as usual owing to a following wind of about 15 miles an hour. Banks of mist at once loomed ominously ahead, and looking towards the land I noticed the mist was much worse than over the sea. I determined

Fig. 26. McArdle causing a minor sensation near Fordingbridge. *Courtesy: Allen White.*

therefore to head direct for Hurst Lighthouse. Flying over the sea the whole way, and rising up to 1,000 ft., on my way, I passed through several banks of mist. I thought it rather strange that these banks of mist should linger idly about, especially considering that it had been blowing fairly hard all day, but the air has a lot of secrets yet to be discovered.

"Passing over Hurst Castle I saw it was 6.25. By that it is evident I was travelling more than a mile a minute, the wind being directly behind. At the moment though I did not think much about pace, except that I appeared to be travelling rather slowly than the reverse. Looking below at Hurst I thought how easy it would be to take a 'snap' of the place, and for a foreigner to disclose some of our naval secrets, should any be visible from above.

"Leaving Hurst behind about three miles, I turned over the mainland direct for our Beaulieu school-ground, on which I calculated I ought to have landed in a few minutes. To the right I saw Southampton, and such a thing as losing my way never occurred to me for a moment, as the whole of the forest and the surrounding country is so entirely familiar to me from having motored over it for the past ten years. Again glancing at my clock I saw it was sixteen minutes to seven. I at once realised that I must have passed my destination. It seemed incredible that I could do this, as the flying grounds are nearly 5,000 acres, I believe, in extent. What height could I be up to have done this? Referring to my recorder I found it registered 1,200 feet, from which height I should have seen it easily. Hoever, facts are facts, so I decided to drop down a little and circle round to pick up a bearing. The third circle brought me into a white cloud of mist which enveloped me for a minute or so, thus completing my mystification. After this nothing appeared familiar that might have helped me out of my quandary, although even then I felt I would find my way. So I dropped low enough to follow a road, which I felt sure would give me a clue. But in this I was disappointed. Road after road I picked out and followed with the same result. Small villages that I must have motored through dozens of times were all alike, unrecognisable. Not until 7.30 did I give up hope of getting to Beaulieu. As a last resource, why not try to find the sea, I thought? I had found it very easy to distinguish water from land at almost any height within sight. So I determined I would mount up, spy out the sea, and return to Bournemouth. After steadily rising to over 2,000 ft. or so, I had, however, to give up this idea, as glancing at my petrol and oil, I found it was nearly all gone. Then and not before did I really

realise the distance I must have travelled to have used 10 gals. of petrol and 4½ gals. of oil. I quickly made up my mind to find a landing spot. Descending at once to a low level I found I was over the heart of the forest, whereas before my final effort to discover the sea I had noticed plenty of possible decent landing places, had I wished to regain terra firma. Now, flying straight on, in as direct a line as possible, in a very few minutes I was over fields and a small town. The fields, although very small, at least offered fairly safe landing, and selecting what appeared to be the largest, I was forced to switch off my motor and do a vol plane. Levelling my machine up just before reaching the earth, I let her fall flat, the tail slightly low. Unfortunately my propeller had stopped in an upright position and stuck in the earth, causing the machine to heel up. Alighting from the front instead of the usual back way, I caught hold of the tail and pulled her down straight, when I found the two front cross-pieces, top and bottom, were damaged. The propeller had a split from the boss down to about a foot from the end. Previous to landing I saw a lot of people, who now rushed up. One of the locals demanded 'Who be 'e?' To which I replied, 'I hardly know myself. Where am I?' 'Thee be about a mile from Fordingbridge', came the prompt reply. And it was then about ten minutes to eight, one hour and thirty-five minutes since I left Bournemouth. I must, therefore, have travelled, circles and straight, something over 70 miles. Dismantling my machine, I proceeded at best speed by motor, hired in the village, to Beaulieu to relieve the anxiety of my wife and friends who were following me by cars. I arrived at 10 p.m., but so difficult a course to follow had I flown that poor Drexel, Grace, Delacombe and Spottiswood hunted the Forest till five o'clock next morning before locating the place of my descent. Hearing at last that I was safe, they at once turned for Beaulieu and rest after nearly nine hours' search. They told me afterwards that I passed right over the ground and sheds — in fact, clean over the machine which Drexel and Delacombe came in. I was then about eight or ten hundred feet high. Believing I was making for Southampton they did not worry about me until it began to get dark. My wife, who was present, assured them I knew the Forest too well to lose myself; I must, therefore, have come down somewhere, owing to motor or other troubles. That I had lost my way never entered anybody's mind.

"Now the real cause of my losing my way was due to my motor not being sufficiently guarded to restrain the oil from flying in my face. Almost impossible as it may be to believe, this formed a film right over my eyes without my being aware of the fact! The consequence of this was that I thought I was in a dense mist until I bathed my face in hot water. After which the mist disappeared, as if by magic, thus

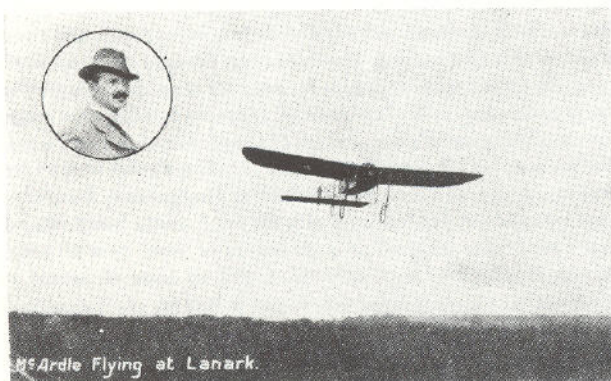


Fig. 27. Souvenir postcard issued at Lanark.

National Series.



Fig. 28. Leopardstown. (left to right) Armstrong Drexel (in his new hat), Harry Delacombe & W. McArdle. *Courtesy: 'Aero'*

accounting for my passing over the school ground and sheds without seeing them. Upon reflection my route must have been as follows:- Bournemouth direct to 3 or 4 miles beyond Hurst, up the Solent, across Beaulieu Heath and village, Hythe, Sowley, across the railway at Lyndhurst Road direct for Lyndhurst, circled over part of the Forest in the direction of Cadnam, back over the Lyndhurst Road Station, turned again near Totton direct for Salisbury, finally circling over Fordingbridge, and landing in an outfield one mile out."

Blackpool Flying Carnival (July 28th-August 20th, 1910)

McArdle and Drexel were next in action at the Blackpool meeting, both making unhappy starts — McArdle on landing his Bleriot apparently warped the wrong wing with the result that he buckled the left wheel and suspension fork, also damaging the framework carrying the motor, the wings, and smashing the propellor.

Harry Delacombe, Drexel's passenger at the Bournemouth meeting, was press steward at this meeting, but was promptly promoted to Secretary for his excellent handling of a difficult crowd situation on the first day. Drexel was soon back to his prize winning form — gaining a merit prize for "his really wonderful flight on Mr. Grace's Bleriot — a machine which had not been tuned up before the flight, and which was quite strange to pilot." He also gained a second for the Duration prize.

Lanark (August 1910)

Once again Drexel was among the prizes and was reported to have won a total of £1,380, coming third overall. He had raised the altitude record to 6,750ft., later corrected to 6,600ft. McArdle had also managed prizes for the fastest single circuit and altitude. (Fig. 27)

Leopardstown, near Dublin (29th August, 1910)

Exhibition flights were performed by several invited aviators and among them were McArdle and Drexel. (Fig. 28)

U.S.A. (November 1910)

McArdle and Drexel were next busy at the Belmont Park, New York, International Air Meeting and from there Drexel went to appear before his home crowds at Philadelphia's Point Breeze Track. He managed to reach a height of 9,450ft. in his Bleriot — unfortunately not quite good enough to capture the world record (9,714ft.).

CHAPTER 4

Gaining Official Permission for the School

In the Spring of 1910 the Office of Woods had refused permission to clear the New Forest heathland at East Boldre for the formation of a flying school. However sheds were erected on private ground abutting the heath and planes were brought out and started there. McArdle and Drexel had taken a three year lease of the sheds and taking French leave, by degrees they cleared the furze from a large area of heath supposedly for litter.

This situation, with great local support, was allowed to continue until September when, with the erection of a timber pylon (Fig. 29), and with more prepared, the Office of Woods felt compelled to act, giving instructions for its immediate removal. Two people now pleaded with the Office of Woods on behalf of the School, the first being Lord Montagu who mentioned in mitigation that they were training two or three army officers and that it was popular with the local inhabitants. The other person was Harry Delacombe (Drexel's passenger from the Bournemouth meeting). Harry Delacombe was now the manager of the flying school and by sheer coincidence knew the Officer of Woods, Sir Stafford Howard. Earlier in his career — he had been Sir Stafford's Assistant Secretary on the Tweed and Solway Fisheries Commission. His personal letter to Sir Stafford appeared to help for, with Lascelles, he visited the site on the 11th October, and from the meeting came a formal request from the School, seeking permission to fill in ruts in the area marked on the plan. (Fig. 30)

Permission for "aviation and clearance of ground" was officially granted on the 18th November by the Office of Woods in return for £1 p.a. "acknowledgement".

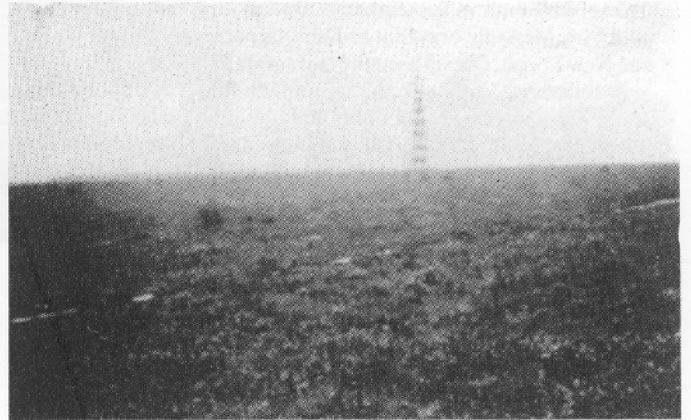


Fig. 29. The pylon.

Courtesy: P.R.O.

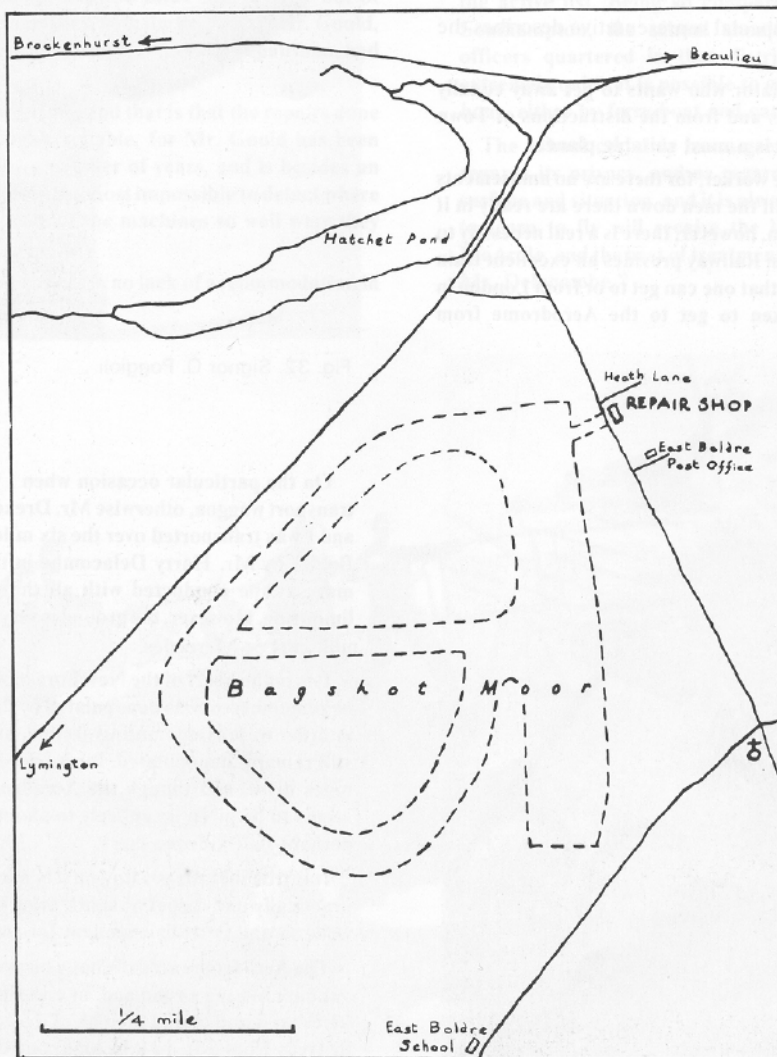


Fig. 30. Plan of the area that the Flying School proposed to clear and level.

CHAPTER 5

The Flying School and its Pupils

The active life of the School appears to have only been about six months from September 1910 to February 1911. McArdle and Drexel were back in September 1910 after the meeting in Ireland, and Mrs. McArdle braved it as Drexel's passenger for a trip over the New Forest. Drexel used the two seater Bleriot for instructing pupils in rising, control in the air, and landing. The pupils at this time were Major H.R. Cooke, R.A. (Fig. 31), and Signor Q. Poggioli (Fig. 32), who had both managed some short flights in a straight line, and Messrs. B.H. Barrington-Kennett (Grenadier Guards) (Fig. 33), A. Aitken (alias 'Wilson') and St. Croix Johnstone (Chicago) who were 'rolling'. They had nine machines but due to the rutted surface two had been demolished, three badly damaged and two slightly damaged. These mishaps must have provided great excitement for the large crowds that were ever present, including VIPs such as Princess Louise of Schleswig-Holstein and Lord Montagu. Kempton-Cannon, a famous ex-jockey (Derby winner), Capt. Sartorius and J.D. Tinline became pupils in November.

In the November 23rd issue of "The Aero" appeared an illustrated description of "A visit to Beaulieu". The illustration (Fig. 34) shows two local boys Clarence Dore who was adopted as the School's mascot, and Let Robins, who is standing in front of the propellor. Robins, then aged 14, was the 'nipper with the oil rag' and checked struts, etc. This repair shop in the picture (a single hangar) was situated on the corner of the present Heath Lane and before its demolition in the 1930's was used by a man making golf tees. There were two other double hangars.

The article by "The Aero" special representative describes the School:-

"For the serious-minded aviator who wants to get away equally from a crowd of experimenters and from the distractions of Town the "New Forest" Aerodrome is a most suitable place.

It is essentially a place for the worker, for there are no amusements within reasonable reach, and all the men down there are really in it for the sake of their work. When, however, there is a real necessity to get to Town the South-Western Railway provides an excellent train service from Brockenhurst, so that one can get to or from London in two hours, plus the time taken to get to the Aerodrome from Brockenhurst.



Fig. 33. Lieut. B.H. Barrington Kennett.

Courtesy: 'Flight'



Fig. 31. Major Cooke on the school Bleriot. Looking over the fuselage to give instructions to the men at the tail is Mr. Roy Delacombe, Harry Delacombe's son and enthusiastic assistant.



Fig. 32. Signor Q. Poggioli.

On the particular occasion when I visited the ground the school transport waggon, otherwise Mr. Drexel's Mercedes, was in hospital, and I was transported over the six miles from Brockenhurst to East Boldre by Mr. Harry Delacombe in the village milk-cart, which, I may say, he conducted with all the dignity and grace of a large limousine. However, the ground is very well worth visiting whether by milk-cart or Mercedes.

It is in the heart of the New Forest, which country, as may perhaps be remembered, was depopulated by the late William the Conqueror in order to provide hunting ground, and for some strange reason it still remains depopulated, for we never met a soul for the whole six miles drive, and though the Aerodrome itself is common land, it seems to be given up entirely to about four New Forest ponies and perhaps half-a-dozen cows.

It is true that the grazing on it is not worth much, as the surface is practically one carpet of short, crisp heather, which is delightful to walk on and is really excellent for rolling an aeroplane on.

The Aerodrome actually has a circuit of about two and a half miles without crossing a road and, by crossing a road with some telegraph wires on it and taking the risk of descending among a few scattered fir trees from 3 ft. to 8 ft. high, one can easily make that two-mile circuit into a circuit of six or eight miles. The ground is practically dead flat, so that at any point of it one can see all over it and watch a machine manoeuvring.

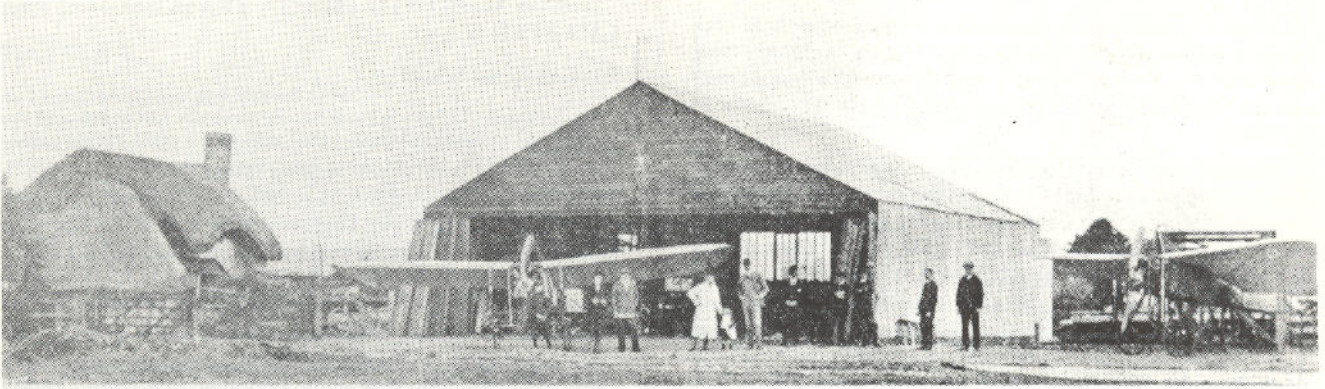


Fig. 34. The Repair Shop & 2 of the school machines. (left to right) Let Robins, Roy Delacombe, Major Cooke, George Gould, Clarence Dore, Harry Delacombe, & the machine crew.

Courtesy: 'Aero'

On the day of my visit things were a little bit slack, as the weather had been bad and a good many of the pupils were away. However, in the afternoon Major Cooke, R.A., turned out and did a really good circular flight on the 25 h.p. Bleriot-Anzani. This was his first circular flight and measured two and a half miles.

The school buildings consisted of three large sheds, one of these being a repair shop and the other two ordinary hangars. The week previous to my visit had been a very bad one, with the result that of the six school Bleriot's only one was in flying order. Drexel smashed up the two-seater in trying to avoid three rustics who got in his way when he was landing, and Signor Poggioli had absolutely made matchwood of his own machine in landing, and the three others were out of commission owing to minor smashes, with the result that Mr. Gould, the firm's chief engineer, works manager, and head repairman, had got his hands fairly full.

One thing, at any rate, is certain, and that is that the repairs done to the machines are thoroughly reliable, for Mr. Gould has been studying flying machines for a number of years, and is besides an excellent mechanic. In fact, it was almost impossible to detect where repairs had been done to some of the machines so well were they worked into the original.

For the present, at any rate, there is no lack of accommodation in

the neighbourhood, for there are several cottages close to the aerodrome where members of the school can be put up, and Mr. Delacombe, who manages the school, has located himself in a charming farmhouse, where there is, I believe, also room still to be had.

Mr. Armstrong Drexel and Mr. W.E. McArdle, the two proprietors of the school, expect to be back from the States before very long, and work will start for the winter.

Mr. Delacombe told me that one of his chief hopes was that the school might be made particularly attractive for men in the Services, and that they were prepared to give very special terms to officers on the active list. Being so comparatively close to Portsmouth and Southampton, the school should offer special inducements to officers quartered in that district, for though the place is so extremely quiet, it is possible to get there from Southampton in an hour, either by ferry-boat and car, or by railway and car, or cycle.

The school certainly has a great deal to recommend it both as regards its privacy, and as regards its suitability in the matter of surface and situation, and it is always certain that those who go there to learn to fly will receive the best of tuition from Drexel and McArdle, and the best of treatment in every way from their manager, Mr. Delacombe."



Fig. 35. George Gould in the cockpit, held back by his machine crew. *Courtesy: J. Gould.*

George Gould is seen in the machine (Fig. 35) being held back by the machine crew — these men were mainly carpenters from Bournemouth. Freddie Schaeffer (not in picture) whose parents ran the 'Cat and Fiddle Inn' at Christchurch, was the head mechanic.

The pupils were now becoming competent pilots and the first to gain his certificate was Maj. Cooke on December 28th. Barrington-Kennett, Tinline, and St. Croix-Johnstone took their tests successfully a few days later at Hendon, the former was to become the first adjutant of the Royal Flying Corps. Aitken and Poggioli were the only other two pupils to qualify at Beaulieu — both in February 1911. Official witnesses to the flights for a pilot's licence were Lord Montagu and Mr. Massey, a local magistrate who lived in the lane at East Boldre which is now named after him. Kempton-Cannon had given up flying on getting married in January.

Among the visitors to Beaulieu was Eric Moon of Southampton (Fig. 36) who achieved his first sustained flight in his self-built Moonbeam Mk. II on the heath. Another was Prince Henry of Prussia and the competitors for the Anglo-German Motor Rally; on Sunday, 9th July 1911, they were entertained by the band of the 7th Battalion Hampshire Regt. and to some exhibition flying by McArdle and Drexel. This was at the invitation of Lord Montagu, who earlier in the year had been unfortunate in losing much photographic equipment used for producing aviation maps. This had been destroyed in a fire on the Beaulieu estate.

CHAPTER 6

Winding up the School

By January 1912 the School had completely run down and the planes put up for sale. They were purchased for an Eastbourne Flying School and a Mr. Fowler attempting to fly one to Shoreham on January 8th crashed into Southampton Water near Calshot Castle and the coastguards there rescued him in their launch. He had decided to turn back to Beaulieu but the strong wind forced him down. His machine somersaulted when it hit the water but he managed to swim clear and the air bag tied to his plane enabled it to be kept afloat and salvaged.

McArdle retained an interest in aviation, though less active, and was recorded as official observer for the flying school at the Bournemouth Aviation Co. in 1916. This was run by F.E. Etches at Talbot Village. A photograph of Christmas 1912 shows a pilot who looks remarkably like McArdle arriving at Southbourne with 'Father Christmas', Cyril Beale.

Drexel in an article in the 'Penny Magazine' in 1914, on high altitude flying, described how in common with other pilots he suffered several times from attacks of nerves and hallucinations, for example he felt the tail was falling off the fuselage. In the war he became chauffeur to Sir John French, the British commander in Flanders, and then joined the Lafayette Escadrille — the American flying unit of the French forces. Like Lord Montagu, during the 1926 strike, he became a train driver, taking out the Flying Scotsman, and finally in 1938 became a naturalised British subject.

George Gould had no more to do with aircraft after the New Forest School closed — he joined the Army Service Corps in World War I, and Delacombe went on to Bristol to continue as a flying manager.

The official end of the school did not come until the 5th July, 1914 when, with the £1 rent not paid, the Deputy Surveyor at Lyndhurst requested permission from the Office of Woods to remove the pylons, etc.

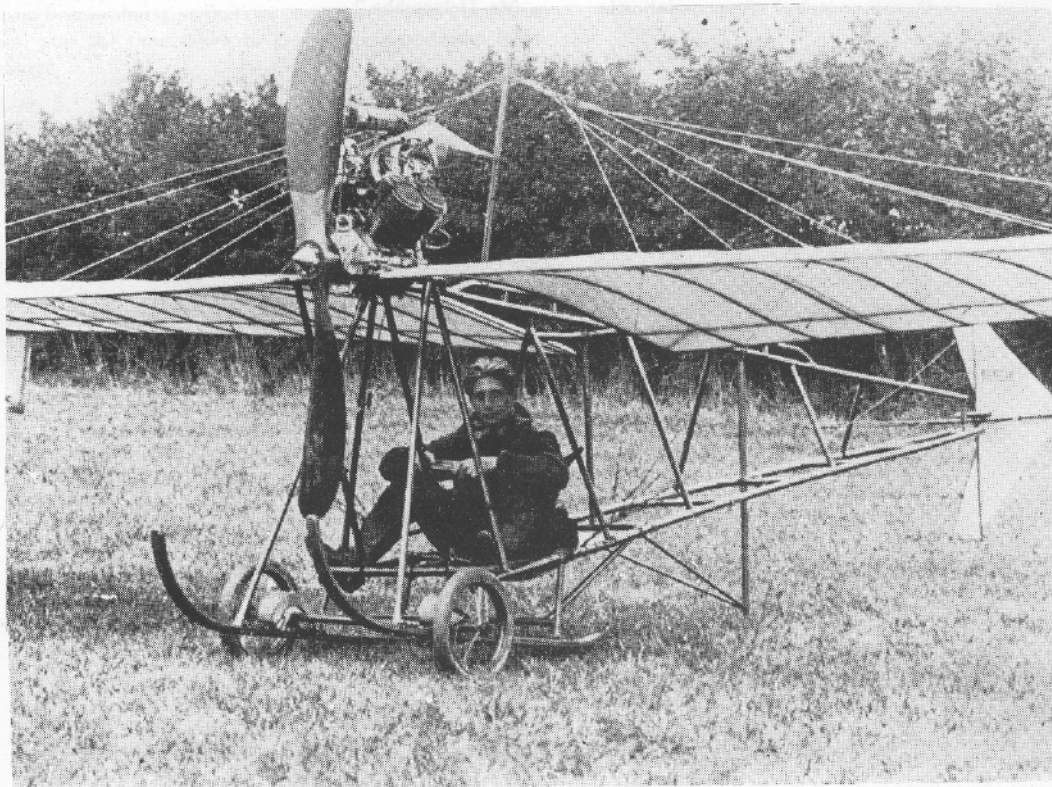


Fig. 36. E.R. Moon and his Moonbeam Mk.II.

**PART II — MILITARY AIRFIELD (WORLD WAR I)
CHAPTER 1**

Site Inspected (1913) and Leased (1914)

After about two year's inactivity at East Boldre, the War Department took out a three year lease on one of the aviation sheds on the 21st March, 1914. The estate agents, Austin and Wyatt of Bishops Waltham, originally offered the two aviation sheds to the Commander of the Aviation Corps at Farnborough in November 1913, and the report of Maj. R. Brooke-Popham, who subsequently inspected them, reads as follows:-

".... there is an area of about 50 acres excellent landing ground, and by cutting the heather and filling up a few holes, this could be extended to about 150 acres, to include the whole area between the Beaulieu-Lymington road and Beaulieu Rails. The land could be purchased cheaply...." (presumably the verderers and commoners would not mind?) "Quite suitable for elementary tuition."

However it then continues:-

".... very bad as a Flying Corps station as outside the aerodrome is a tract of country at least 10 miles across with hardly any landing ground. A failing engine would certainly mean a wrecked machine and probably serious injuries to personnel."

This was thus "sufficient reason to reject it." It may seem strange therefore that in less than four months the W.D. were taking out a lease, but Britain's unpreparedness to meet any air menace was still being propounded by Lord Montagu, in the House of Lords and elsewhere, and perhaps it was thought a military airfield on his doorstep might placate him.

The terms of the lease were as follows:-

- Period: 3 year lease No. 2 Aeroplane shed, subject to six month's notice.
- Rent: 4 shillings per aeroplane per night but not less than £25 p.a.
- Fuel: Landlords to make available 100 gals. petrol and 50 gals. oil each day at current prices.

Among the conditions, the landlords reserved the right to erect other buildings on the Aviation Ground and any sheds, etc., unused by the landlord could be used by the War Department. The landlords were Samuel Biddlecombe of Swinesleys Farm, Beaulieu, and Charles Orman of Sparks Hotel, Freshwater Bay; they were acting as trustees for Eliza House of Monkshorne Farm, Beaulieu.

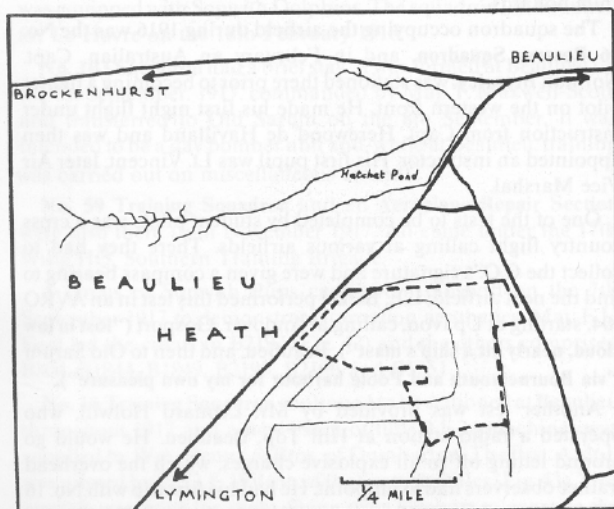


Fig. 37. Flying School area proposed by the War Office, 7th December, 1915, (---) occupying about half the area of the old New Forest Flying School.

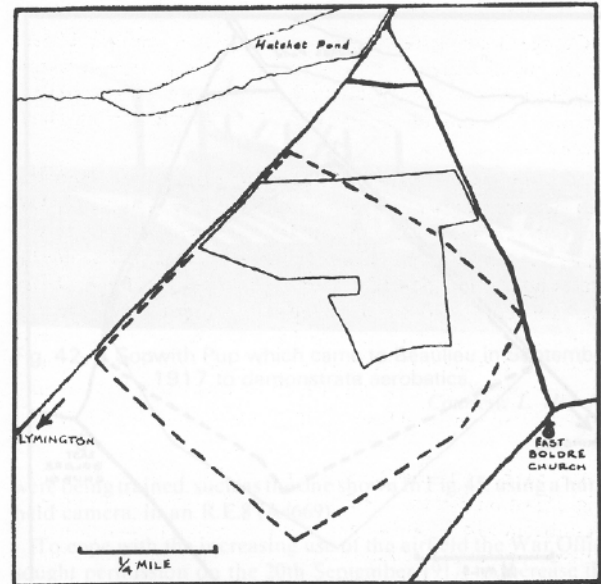


Fig. 38. The original 'T' shaped military airfield, shown with the proposed alteration (dotted) of 31st January, 1916.

CHAPTER 2

Growth of the Military Flying School

In November 1915 it was proposed to use the airfield as a flying school and Capt. Wise of the War Office came to visit the site to seek the necessary permission to use it "for the present emergency only". The Office of Woods and verderers raised no objection — Lord Montagu was entirely in favour. So on 7th December, 1915 the required area was marked out by the War Office, (Fig. 37), and ten days later Agister Evemy was able to report to the verderers that one plane had "just pitched down near the sheds and another expected in the afternoon. Army are filling holes with earth and gravel." A post was next erected to warn people away and three wooden huts erected on the open forest. Also pipes were laid to drain water to a manhole — very important, as anyone familiar with this heath in winter will realise. By the end of January 1916 the buildings had grown considerably in number:-

Technical buildings

Platform for swinging compasses.

Workshops

- Sailmakers' shop
- Carpenters' shop
- Fitters' shop
- Coppersmith and acetylene welders' shop
- Blacksmiths' shop.

Vehicle sheds for 24 vehicles. 19 bays in all comprising 17 bays for lorries, light tenders and car (including 2 lock up bays with pit, and benches as a workshop), 2 bays for trailers, 6 motor bicycles and M.T. Office, plus a platform for washing cars. Power House and stores for petrol, oil, explosives and technical equipment were included and also latrines and a Guard House.

This expansion led to a request by the War Office for more acres, to double the previous site (Fig. 38), but with all the building, suspicions had been aroused locally that the W.O. had more permanent designs on the site. However, Lord Montagu was reassured by them that this was not so.

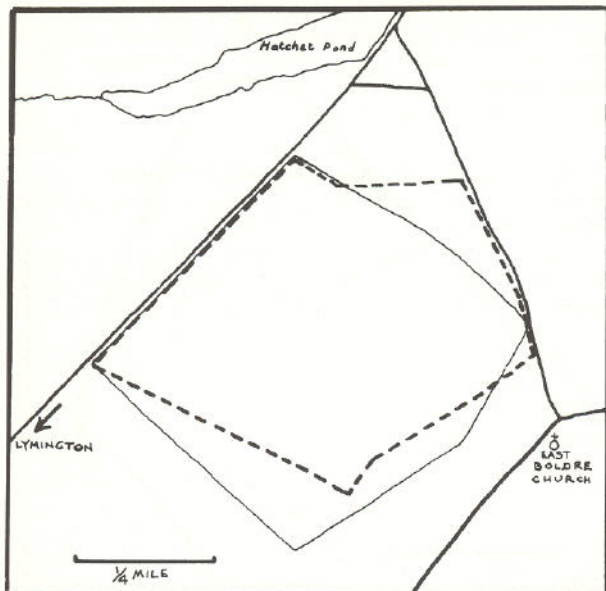


Fig. 39. The alteration of the site (dotted) as proposed on 12th April, 1916.

A new gravel pit was opened for the use of the flying ground and several notices put up forbidding entry to the airfield, whose area was again altered on 12th April — this time slightly reducing it. (Fig. 39)

Several properties in the area were now occupied by the army including Factory Cottage and Forest Room, East Boldre, and in Beaulieu, the Parish Hall, The Studio, a cottage, and rooms over Palace Stables, The House-by-the-Sea and another nearby owned by Mr. Squires. The airfield itself occupied about 211 acres and with the £20,000 or so spent on buildings, suspicions were still fermenting as to the War Office's intentions after the cessation of hostilities. The Deputy Surveyor at Lyndhurst officially would have to object to its continued use but privately admitted that he thought it should stay.

Lord Montagu was most anxious that with the end of the War, the military should leave and took practical steps to ensure this happened. Under a new Bill — "Defence of the Realm (Acquisition of land) Bill" — the War Office would be entitled to retain it. Lord Montagu therefore got Mr. W.F. Perkins, the Forest M.P., to move an amendment — "Nothing in this Act shall apply to the New Forest".

However, construction of the airfield continued and 1916 saw the arrival at the hutment camp of several people who were about to drastically develop the site. First to arrive were two Royal



Fig. 41. A Curtiss JN-4 Jenny at Beaulieu in May 1917.
Courtesy: L. Holwill.

Engineers — Lt. Brooker, in civilian life an Eastbourne builder's manager, and Sapper W.R. Steel (Fig. 40), his surveyor and draughtsman. Some weeks later they were joined by five civilians, namely C. Slatter (a quietly efficient clerk of works who later succeeded Brooker as Resident Engineer), Mr. Moore and Bill Tee (bookkeepers), Mr. Saunders (junior clerk) and Mr. Cooper (a builder's manager).

The hutted accommodation provided them each with separate bedrooms containing a camp bed, oil lamp, and a tortoise stove. An elderly Mr. Stride from Boldre attended to these and the cleaning.

As work proceeded they were joined by skilled and unskilled civilian tradesmen, over military age, and Chinese labourers. The latter, following the County Surveyor's instructions, cleared the site of scrub and heather, levelled the ground by hand (there were no bulldozers), and laid the scrub as a mat foundation for all



Fig. 40. W. Reginald Steel. He spent 3 years at Beaulieu, becoming C.S.M. (Royal Engineers) and second-in-command under the resident engineer.

the new roads on the aerodrome. These Chinese were housed in two temporary wooden huts sited about 100 yards from the main Beaulieu-Lymington road, which was now marked by curved white bollards.

The squadron occupying the airfield during 1916 was the No. 16 Reserve Squadron, and in February an Australian, Capt. Norman Brearley, was stationed there prior to becoming a fighter pilot on the western front. He made his first night flight under instruction from Capt. Herewood de Havilland and was then appointed an instructor. His first pupil was Lt. Vincent, later Air Vice Marshal.

One of the tests to be completed by student pilots was a cross country flight calling at various airfields. There they had to collect the C.O.'s signature and were given a compass bearing to find the next airfield. L.E. Bickel performed this test in an AVRO 504, starting at Upavon, calling at Andover, Gosport ("lost in low cloud, nearly hit a ship's mast"), Beaulieu, and then to Old Sarum ("via Bournemouth and Poole harbour for my own pleasure").

Another test was provided by Mr. Leonard Holwill, who operated a radio station at Hill Top, Beaulieu. He would go around letting off small explosive charges, which the overhead trainee observers had to pinpoint. He had his first trip with No. 16 T.S. on the 1st May, 1917 in an American built Curtiss JN-4 Jenny, A899 (Fig. 41) piloted by Lt. J.B. Fenton. This was the second plane of a batch of six transferred to the RFC from the RNAS. The squadron moved to Yatesbury, Wiltshire, in the following year.

During 1917 the airfield was to house several squadrons, sometimes simultaneously. The first to arrive, **No. 84 Squadron**, was formed there in January, although the C.O., Maj. H.R. Nicholl, did not assume command until the 16th February 1917. At the end of that month the squadron consisted of:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Maj. Nicholl (Sqn. Commander) | |
| Capt. S. Dalrymple (Flight Commander) | |
| Lt. H.B.T. Hope | |
| 2nd Lt. O.W.A. Manning | } Instructors |
| 2nd Lt. C.F. Jax | |
| 2nd Lt. A.V. Sutton (Asst. Equipment Officer. Wireless) | |
| 2nd Lt. R.A. Denne (Recording Officer) | |
| 11 Officers | } undergoing aviation instruction |
| 3 NCO's | |

Machines on charge were three B.E.12a's, one B.E.12 (single seater) with 150 h.p. Raf engine, and two B.E.2c's (two seater Artillery machine) with a 90 h.p. Raf engine. On the 22nd March the squadron moved to Lilbourne near Rugby, before going to France as a scout squadron.



Fig. 43. Lt. G.E. Wilson with his B.E.2e machine in front of one of the large hangars which was sited on the heath opposite the present Post Office.

Courtesy: L. Holwill.

No. 79 Squadron arrived at Beaulieu on the 4th August 1917 having formed at Gosport. It was taken over by Maj. M.W. Noel and acted as a training squadron until 15th December, when it was equipped with Sopwith Dolphins. The squadron left Beaulieu for Le Havre on the 18th February 1918.

No. 103 Squadron had a brief stay. It was formed at Beaulieu on the 1st September, 1917, commanded by Maj. T. Maxwell-Scott, and transferred to Old Sarum on the 8th September. It was intended to be a day bomber unit and, while at Beaulieu, training was carried out on miscellaneous aircraft.

No. 59 Training Squadron and an **Aeroplane Repair Section** were also there from November 1917. All came under the 17th Wing HQ, Southern Training Brigade.

A circus of Sopwith Pups came from Gosport on the 7th September 1917 to demonstrate formation aerobatics. Maj. E.L. Foot led the circus in B2192 (Fig. 42) and the others comprised B804, B1844, B1849, B2193, B2196 and B5251.

No. 16 Training Squadron continued to be stationed at Beaulieu throughout 1917 and a new batch of fifty B.E.2e machines was supplied by Wm. Denny & Bros. of Dumbarton. The first, A1361, was piloted by Lt. G.E. Wilson of the Scottish Rifles (Fig. 43). This aircraft was used for night flying over Gosport to exercise the searchlight crews.

An unusual aircraft seen at Beaulieu on September 13th was a German Albatross D.I. Scout, with 160 h.p. Mercedes engine (Fig. 44). It was captured intact in France. As well as pilots, observers



Fig. 42. A Sopwith Pup which came to Beaulieu in September 1917 to demonstrate aerobatics.

Courtesy: L. Holwill.

were being trained, such as the one shown in Fig. 45, using a hand held camera, in an R.E.8 (A4669).

To cope with the increasing use of the airfield the War Office sought permission on the 20th September 1917, to increase the area again (Fig. 46).

No. 2 Training Depot Squadron was there from at least late 1917 and its C.O. was Lt. Col. G.I. Carmichael, whose log books, etc. survive in the RAF Museum.



Fig. 44. An unusual visitor to Beaulieu, German Albatross Scout. The Officer with his cane, behind the rudder, was in charge of No. 16 Training Squadron's Radio Section.

Courtesy: L. Holwill.

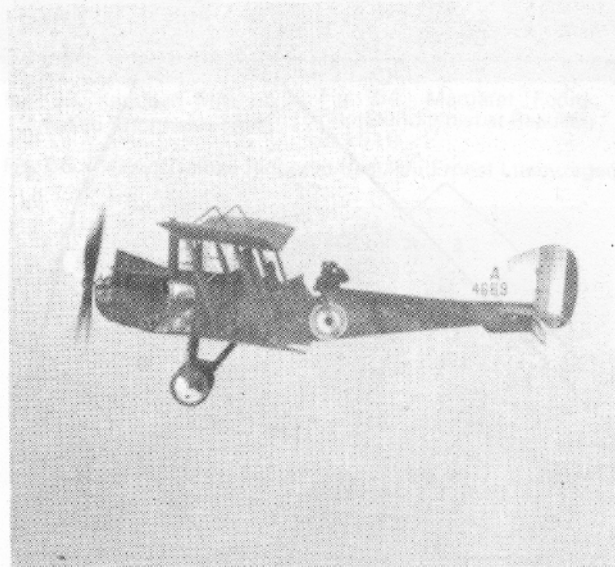


Fig. 45. An observer training to use a camera in an R.E.8 aircraft.

Courtesy: L. Holwill.

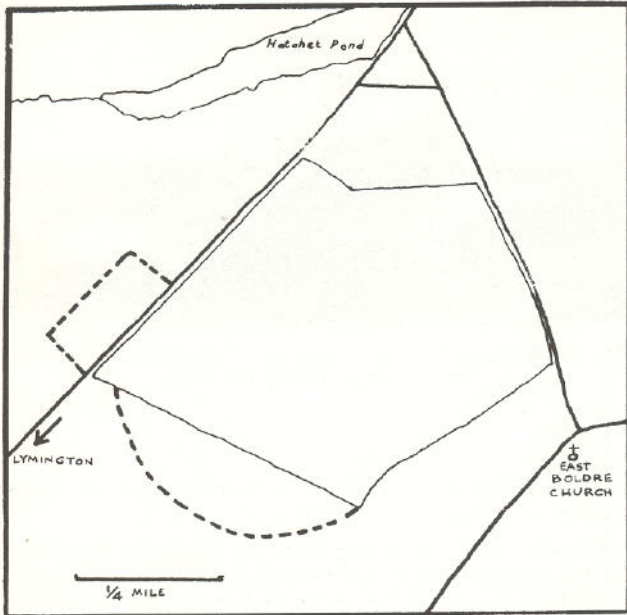


Fig. 46. The extension proposed (dotted) on 20th September, 1917.

One of the young men who came to learn to fly at Beaulieu in late 1917 was John Bradbury, who later settled locally at Hordle. He is shown in the cockpit, sporting his flying boots, and with his motor cycle at Beaulieu — essential for getting about in such an isolated spot (Figs. 47-49). His initial application to join the RFC was refused due to his height (over 6 ft.) but later they became less choosy. After learning to fly at Beaulieu he went to Gosport to complete the "Smith Barry" instructors' course and in 1918 returned to Beaulieu as an instructor until September. He remembers the squadron, under Lt. Col. Carmichael, as being divided into two groups, each having its own Major in command (such as Maj. Guilfoyle).

There were about a dozen Captains and Lieutenants serving as Pilot Instructors, e.g. Capts. Cox, De Haga, Haig and Wood. There was an Engineer Instructor, who lectured on engines, and then there were the Student pilots — about three per instructor, at various stages of competence. It normally took about 20-30 hours to qualify, and instruction usually started in AVRO's and progressed to Sopwith Pups and Camels. The Air Historical Branch of the Ministry of Defence lists the following Training Squadrons as having used Beaulieu during the first half of 1918 — Nos. 1, 3, 70 and 73, plus No. 29 Training Depot Station later in the year.



Figs. 47, 48 & 49. John Bradbury in the cockpit, sporting his new flying boots, and on his Douglas motor cycle at Beaulieu.

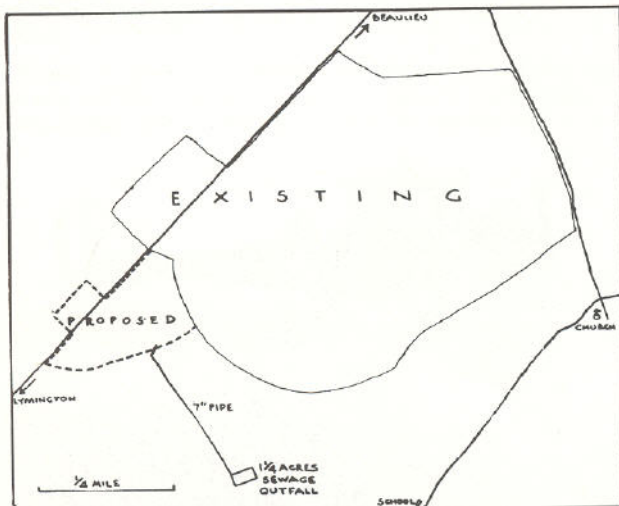


Fig. 50. Additional land required for the airfield (dotted) and sewage disposal, May, 1918.

John Bradbury remembered the camp as being utilised as three separate areas. That nearest East Boldre village was the largest, with three metal hangars and a Bessonau hangar, and housed No. 2 T.D.S. The living quarters (huts) and mess tents (two marquees) were alongside the road. The second area comprised two hangars near the Lymington-Beaulieu road and housed a squadron of BE2c's and BE2e's. A third area sited nearer Hatchet Pond comprised a Bessonau hangar with a squadron forming with Sopwith Dolphins. This was about January 1918, according to John Bradbury's description, and the sites are clearly illustrated in the superb perspective drawing of the airfield done by W.R. Steel, R.E. (Fig. 57) the following year. This drawing was done solely for his own amusement by plotting the buildings onto an ordnance map and afterwards setting it up in perspective.

The drainage system of 1915 was now unable to cope with the increased area and frequently was waterlogged up to 12" deep — the only solution was to walk on planks elevated on bricks, quite a balancing trick, but now in 1918 an elaborate drainage system was installed and a sewage works with revolving distributors over filter beds. The additional land required for this (Fig. 50) was allowed at the Verderers' Court in May.



Fig. 51. Beaulieu W.R.A.F.'s off-duty in Southampton. Matilda Holman (right), & friend, with their merchant seamen boyfriends.

The land added to the north of the Beaulieu road was used to site a large women's hostel — the building stood alone, surrounded by a high wire fence to discourage fraternization. But this did not prevent them having boyfriends as Matilda Holman and her friend (who later became Mrs. Seymour) demonstrate with their Merchant seamen boyfriends in a Southampton studio (Fig. 51).

Women were now performing several vital roles — some as drivers, of lorries or as officers' chauffeurs, some in the Workshop, also on the north side of the road. This workshop comprised a Sewing Room where the material was stitched onto the wings, and a Doping Room where the material was 'dipped' in stiffener. It was a terrible place to work due to the fumes given off by the dope.

Other young women, such as Miss Florence Harvey (Fig. 52) were employed as waitresses in the Officers' Mess. She had joined the WAAF at East Boldre House in 1917. Three girls from Southampton — Kathleen Mitchell (Fig. 53), Margaret Foord (Fig. 54) and Lillian Deller — were shorthand typists. Each day they had to catch a lorry outside Plummers at 7.30 a.m. to travel with a load of female riggers.

Even after the formation of the RAF, in 1918, most of the RFC personnel preferred to retain their army rank and status. This provided them with many perks, e.g. a batman such as Tom 'Billy' Figgins (Fig. 55).

Young lads such as Ernest Lusby (Fig. 56) were also being trained as riggers. He arrived in March 1918.



Fig. 55. Tom Figgins (left) shortly before coming to Beaulieu as an officer's batman.



Fig. 52. Waitresses of the Officers' Mess, Beaulieu. Member No. 33812 Florence Harvey (left) and Matilda Holman. Miss Harvey wears the earlier type of uniform - a fawn dress.



Fig. 53. Kathleen Mitchell, Beaulieu Shorthand typist.

Fig. 54. Margaret Foord, Shorthand typist at Beaulieu in 1919

Fig. 56. (below) Trainee Rigger at Beaulieu Ernest Lusby, aged 17.



BEAULIEU AERO-DROME, HANTS.

AS SEEN FROM AN ALTITUDE OF 5000 FT.

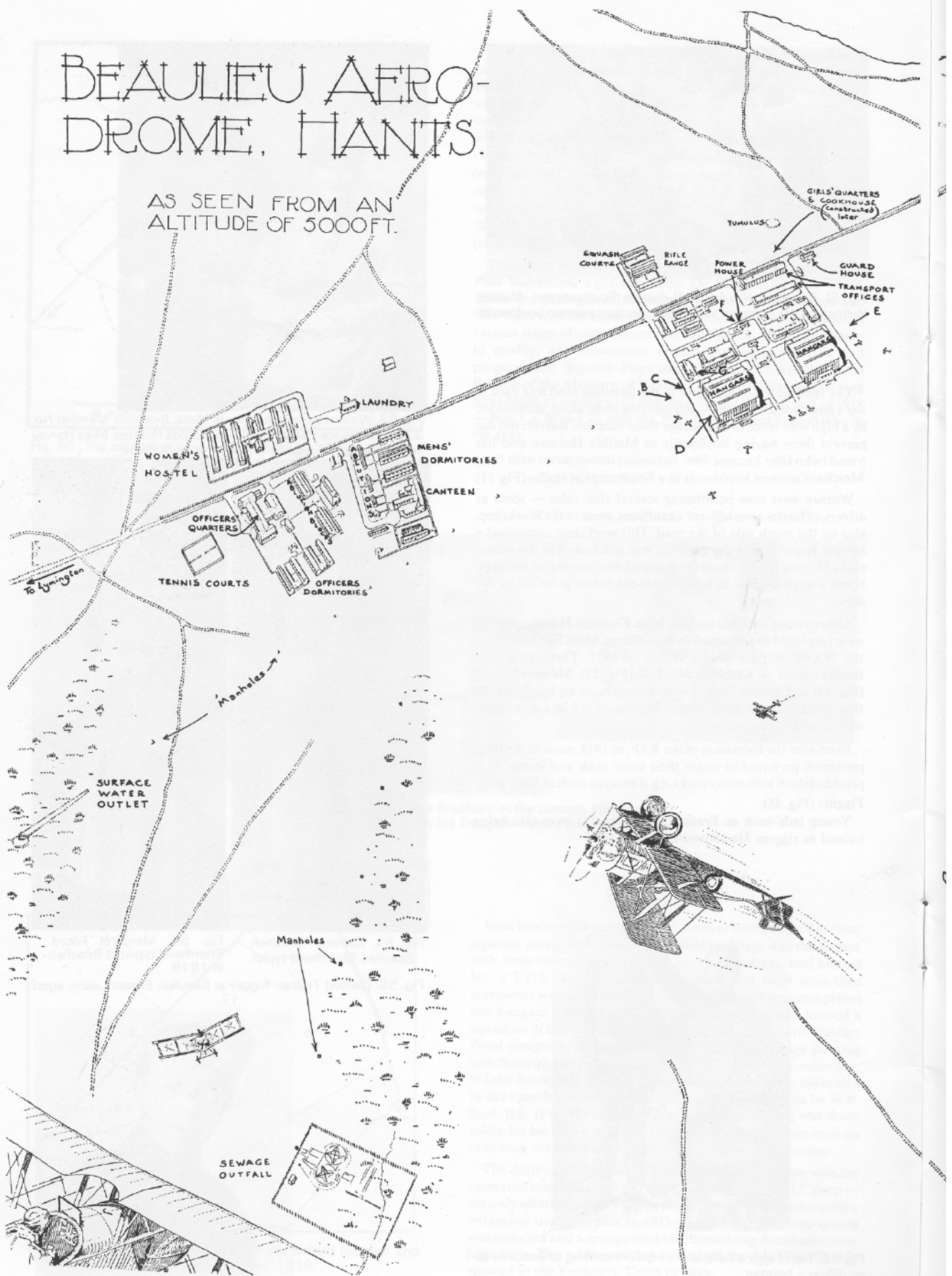
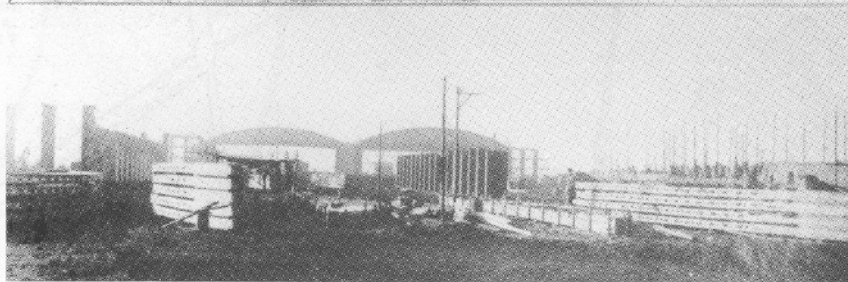
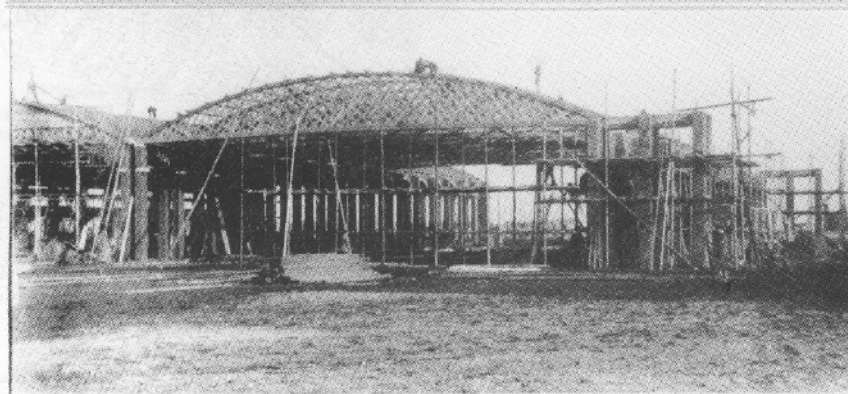
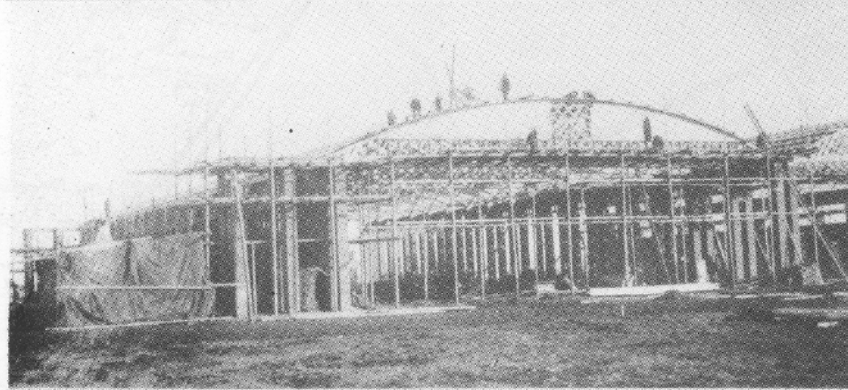
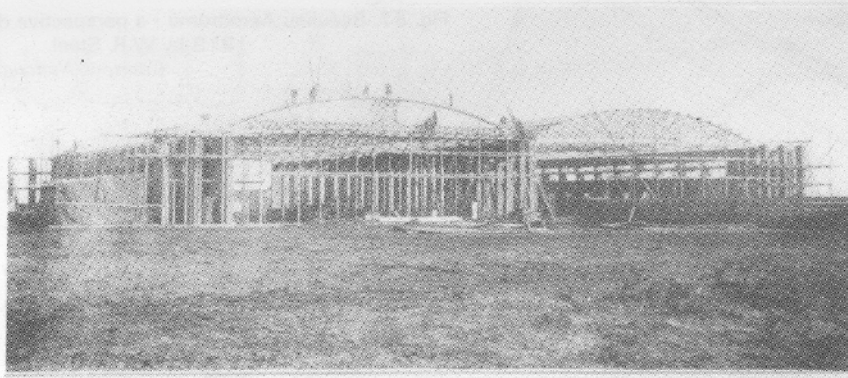




Fig. 57. Beaulieu Aerodrome - a perspective drawing made in 1919 by W.R. Steel.

Courtesy: National Motor Museum.

W. R. STEEL, DEL.



Figs. 58-61. Hangars in the course of erection, 1st February, 1918. Photographs taken from positions B.C.D & E (top to bottom respectively) shown in fig. 57.

Courtesy: National Motor Museum.

In the summer of 1918 it was proposed to aid the transport situation by building a railway to link it with Beaulieu Road Station. It would certainly have assisted in transporting materials, for from the beginning of 1918 a tremendous amount of building was taking place alongside the main Beaulieu-Lymington road. This included two large double hangars (Figs. 58-61) and dormitories (Fig. 62). A power House (Figs. 63-65) was included in the complex of technical buildings, and this provided the camp with electricity, and supplied street lighting, by underground cable (Fig. 66).

To supply the contractors with cold chisels and harden pickaxes, etc., a civilian blacksmith, Mr. Holt, cycled out from Lymington with his son, Les. They worked in a tent on the north side of the Beaulieu-Lymington road.

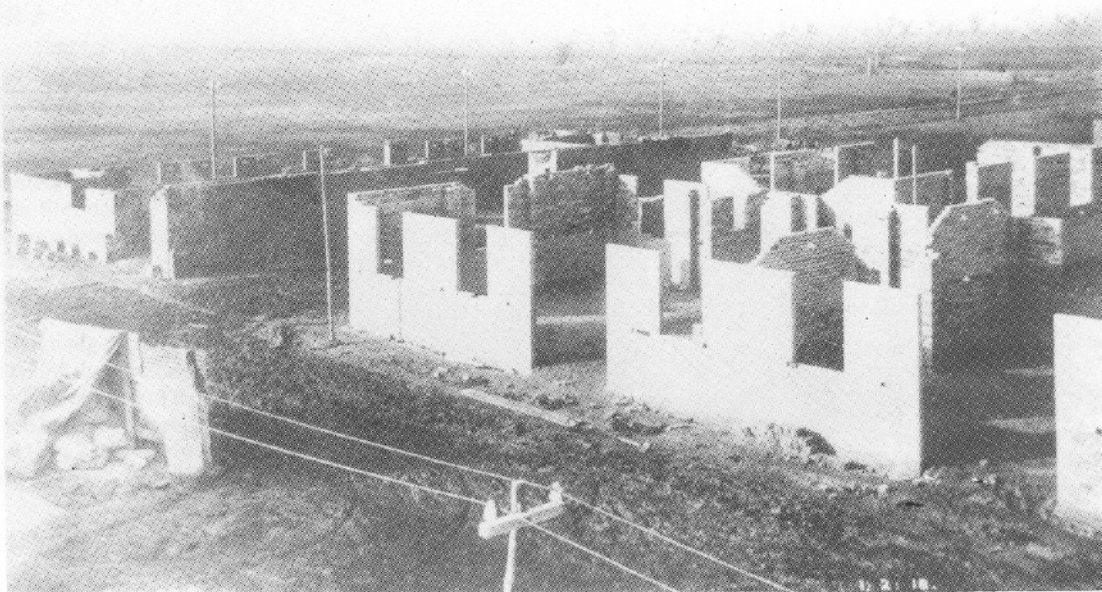


Fig. 62. Dormitories under construction 1st February, 1918.
From position 'G' in fig. 57.

Courtesy: National Motor Museum.

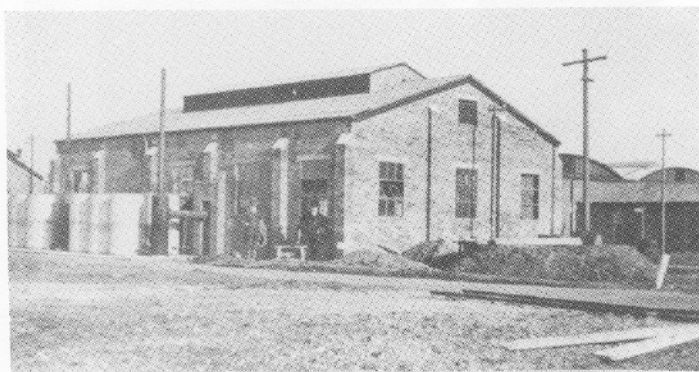


Fig. 63. The Power House, 1918, photographed from position
'F' in fig. 57.

Courtesy: National Motor Museum.

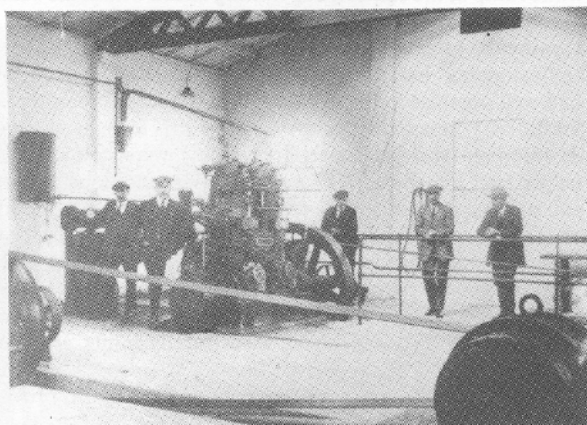


Fig. 64. Power House interior during the first testing. Staff (left to right): An electrician, Consulting Engineer (Naval Officer), electrician, William Tee (Chief Clerk), & Resident Engineer C. Slatter.

Courtesy: National Motor Museum.

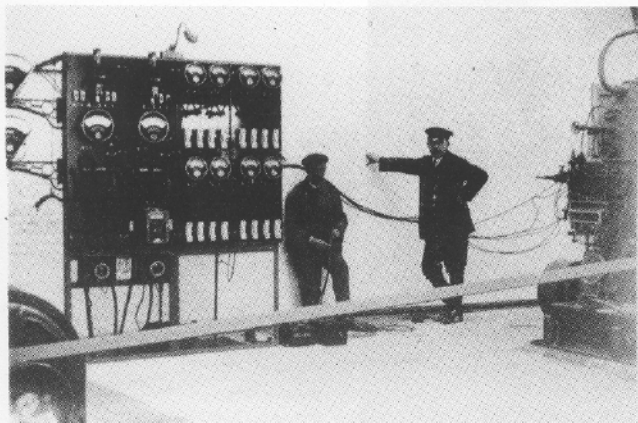


Fig. 65. Power House control panel.

Courtesy: National Motor Museum.

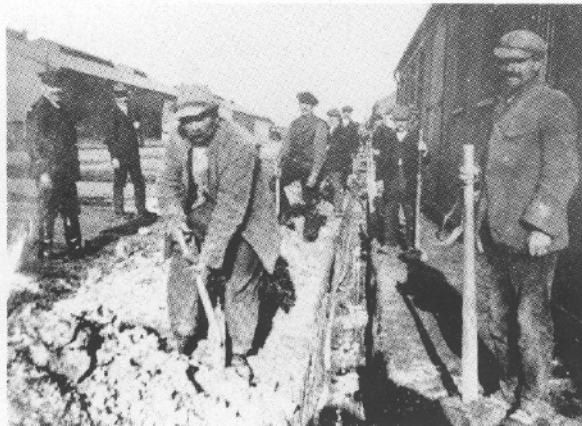


Fig. 66. Laying the electric cables.

Courtesy: National Motor Museum.

Fig. 67.
The New Inn, East Boldre.



Recreation

For other ranks this consisted of the YMCA hut on the camp — where cocoa, sandwiches, and a quiet chat could be had, or the local village pubs at East Boldre, Pilley, Hill Top and Beaulieu were in cycling distance. Returning to camp was assisted by the white rump of the canteen dog trotting ahead within the beam of the cycle lamps. Saturday evening dances took place at the Lymington Literary Institute, but on Band of Hope lines, so “refreshments” had to be sought elsewhere. The Sergeants’ Mess had well organised dances, with an M.C., decorations, a piano, fiddle, refreshments and a lorry load of girls from local villages. At midnight shrieking girls presumably were enjoying being helped back into the lorries, somewhat unceremoniously. Another entertainment was the occasional camp concert, with the usual beer and comic choruses. One such concert almost came to a violent conclusion when Lt. Brooker referred to a large party of coloured labourers present, as niggers. He escaped to his office and W.R. Steel managed to placate them by addressing them as negroes. On Sundays the camp was virtually empty, giving time for roller skating on the hangar floors if so inclined, and in the evening the beautiful Beaulieu Abbey church would provide a peaceful hour. When dark, standing on the canteen counter armed with scale weights as ammunition, one could endeavour to reduce the number of rats scurrying about.

On the whole the memories of Beaulieu were related to me as being mainly happy ones, but there was, of course, one aspect which was far from happy and that was the number of accidents. One of Mr. Steel’s memories was picking up a pair of goggles out of which rolled a human eye.

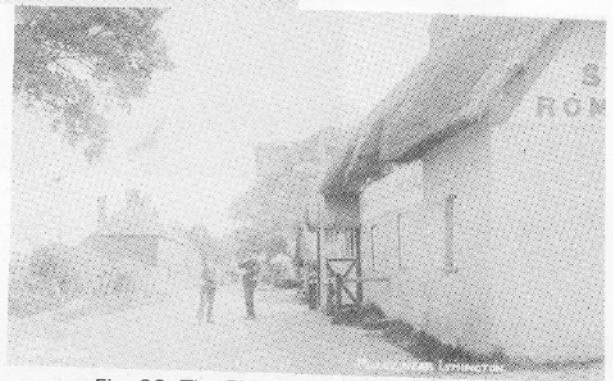


Fig. 68. The Fleur De Lys, Pilley.



Fig. 69. The Royal Oak, Hill Top.



Fig. 70. The Montagu Arms,
Beaulieu.

CHAPTER 3

Accidents

There were many mishaps — some due to mechanical failure, and some due to simply playing the fool. For instance, it is recorded that on one occasion, to add to the fun, but against all the rules, someone took up a single seater plane, with a fellow sitting astride the fuselage and waving with both hands to a gasping audience below. The ground crew were only too well aware of the life expectancy of pilots — when they were asked to volunteer as trainee pilots, out of about two hundred men only a couple stepped forward. To provide against the contingency of slap-happy servicing or sabotage, some of the pilots developed the habit of taking the mechanic up for a flight in the aircraft that he had just serviced. Some of the local houses still bear scars from the flying mishaps — Norfolk House has a pair of broken chimney pots (Fig. 71) from aircraft 2110 clipping them off before crashing into Tinsleys. (Fig. 72).



Fig. 71. Norfolk House, with missing chimney pots.

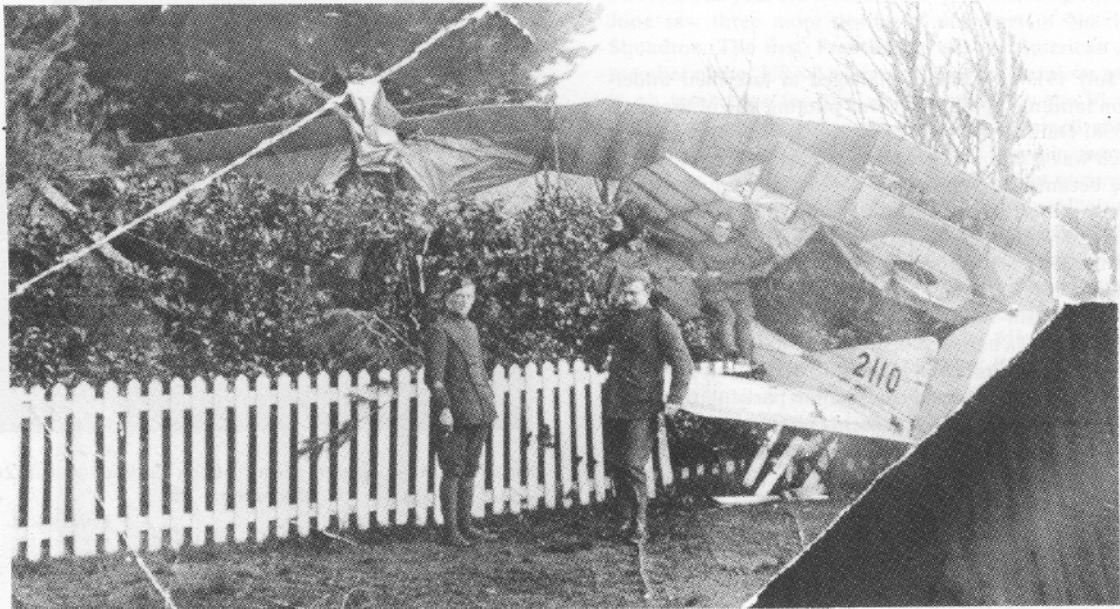


Fig. 72. Crashed aircraft in the garden of Tinsleys, East Boldre, in 1917.

Courtesy: J.H.P. Gay.

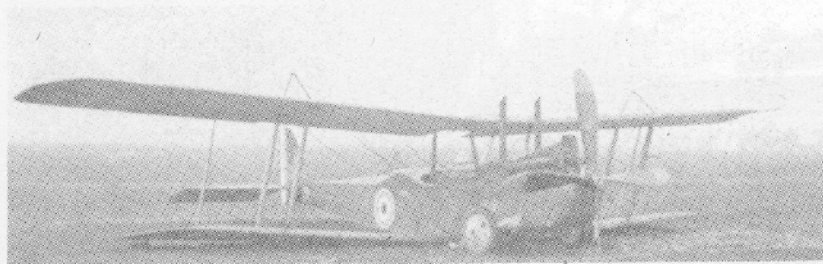


Fig. 73. An R.E.8 (No. A3538) Daimler-built aircraft after losing its undercarriage in the centre of Beaulieu aerodrome 4th July, 1917. The pilot was Lt. Sharples.

Courtesy: L. Holwill.



Fig. 74. A Jenny, B1946, one of a batch of fifty, damaged in a crash landing at Beaulieu on 4th July 1917, when the pilot 2nd Lt. McNulty became ill.

Courtesy: L. Holwill.

On 4th July 1917 two planes managed to lose their undercarriages on landing. Lt. Sharples was piloting one of them, an R.E.8 (A3538) Daimler built (Fig. 73) and 2nd Lt. McNulty the other, which was a Jenny B1946 (Fig. 74); he had crash landed because he became ill. Other pilots developed the unfortunate habit of landing their machines upside down — 2nd Lt. Calvert's B.E.2e has not improved somebody's cabbage patch with his machine (Fig. 75) on September 8th, 1917, and in the same month Capt. Dutton achieved the same result attempting a downwind landing in a Graham-White built D.H.6 (Fig. 76.) The old New Forest Flying School's hangar can be seen in the background on the left and a newer military hangar behind the aircraft's tail. The wind in fact could cause havoc, and on one particularly windy day John Gay remembers as a boy seeing about twenty crashes.

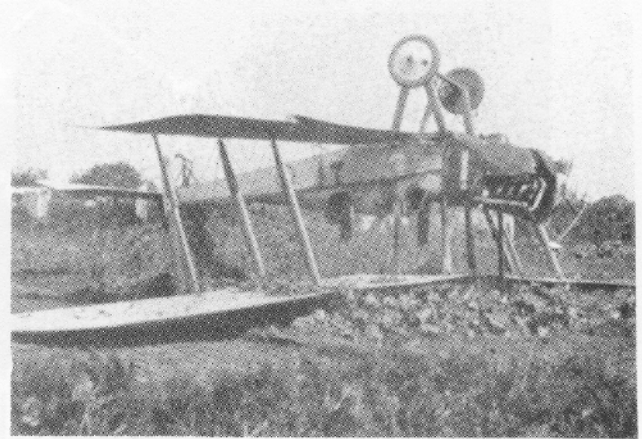


Fig. 75. 2nd Lt. Calvert's unorthodox landing in a B.E.2e on 8th September, 1917.

Courtesy: L. Holwill.

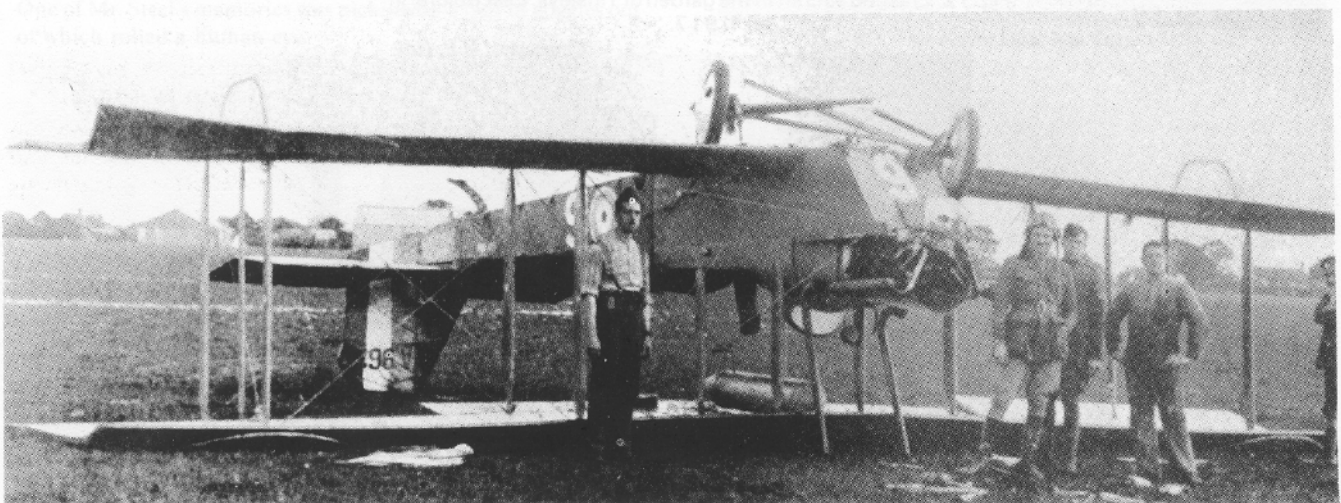


Fig. 76. Capt. Dutton looking nonchalant, by the results of his downwind landing in a Graham-White-built D.H.6.

Courtesy: L. Holwill.



Fig. 77. East Boldre Churchyard.

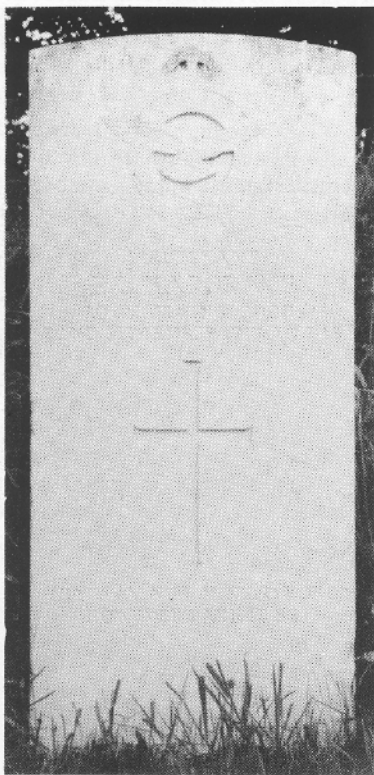


Fig. 78. Lt. Hargrave's stone.



Fig. 79. Embroidered kneeler in memory of Peter Rylands. In St. Mary's chapel, Bucklers Hard.

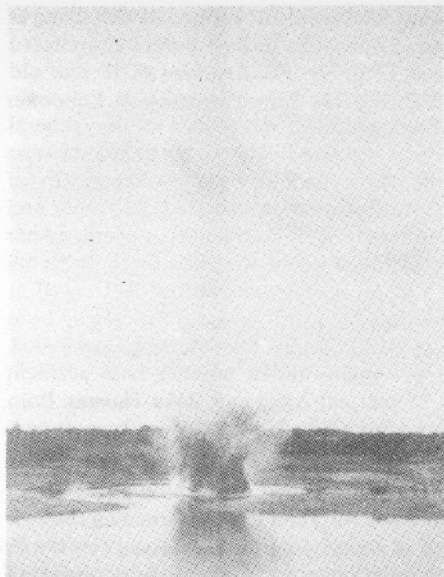
There were over twenty fatal accidents connected with flying at the airfield and twenty headstones in East Boldre churchyard record these sad losses. (Fig. 77). The first was an 18 year old Lieutenant in the RFC (Fig. 78). **Ernest Hargrave**, a Londoner He died on the 22nd September and was given a military funeral five days later. There was a gap of three months before the next recorded fatality — and this was in January 1918, when the first of many Canadians, 2nd Lt. **Joseph Wood** died, aged 22 years, and was given an RFC military funeral. Another Lieutenant, **Arthur Taylor** of the RAF, was also killed that month in "a flying accident" — he was a member of 79th Squadron RFC, aged 21 years. Two more RFC 2nd Lieutenants sacrificed their lives in March, the first a 28 year old Canadian — **Richard Shaw-Wood**, and on the day he was being buried another fatal accident occurred, this time a 25 year old American, **John Thomas**. Both were stationed with No. 1 Squadron. Now not a month was to pass (until November 1918) without at least one fatality recorded.

The most senior and distinguished officer to die was Major **John Lawson Kinnear**, DSO, MC, and this happened on the 28th April during a display of stunt flying. A large crowd saw the 28 year old Major doing rolls, loops and spins, when as one set of wings became detached he spun to the ground, switching off his engine just before impact. He was another member of No. 1 Training Squadron. May 6th saw the demise of 2nd Lt. **Walter Pawson**, a 22 year old member of No. 70 Training Squadron, and June saw three more deaths of members of No. 1 Training Squadron. The first, **Fred Bauer**, was an American aged 22, a member of the "USA Air Service", and the puzzle as to why there is no tombstone for him was answered by the Vicar of East Boldre, who informed me that he was exhumed and reburied elsewhere, presumably in the U.S.A. The other two were both Canadian RAF lieutenants, the first accident occurring on the 3rd June to 22 year old **Alexander Talbot** from Alberta — he was probably typical of the fine young men who were sacrificing their lives. The youngest of a family of seven, he was adored by the rest of his family and was but a few months from graduating in law at Alberta University when he answered the patriotic call that was being made to young men at this time. His sister also came to Hampshire during the War to nurse at Basingstoke.

The other June fatality, also with No. 1 Squadron, was 24 year old **Robert Brown**, and then over six weeks passed before the next — **James Morrison**, on the last day of July — another RAF 2nd Lieutenant in his mid-twenties. The day after he was buried another accident occurred — this time claiming the life of the first non-commissioned officer — 9315 Sgt. **Patrick Hogan** who was 21. He collided with the leader who had turned back to look for him whilst flying in formation. **Jack Bayetto** 'Mad Jack' was the instructor who collided with his Flt. Sgt. pupil killing both himself and the n.c.o. ('Mad Jack' got his name from crazy stunts such as flying in amongst the hangars). His plane came down in the treetops at Clay Hill, and Jack's body landed spreadeagled in the soft earth below making a deep impression — his relatives planted two ornamental trees on the site as a memorial.

One of the skills to be mastered by the trainee pilots was accuracy at firing their machine guns — the training would start on the ground at the airfield's Rifle Range before commencing airborne practice.

A floating target in the Solent was the next stage, near Pitts Deep, and it was during one of these training sessions on the 9th August that the next fatal accident occurred. A telescopic sight was used with the gun and the instructor, **Peter Rylands**, somehow managed not to take his eye off it in time and continued into the sea. He was a mere 18 and during his time at Beaulieu had been befriended by Mrs. Poole of Bucklers Wood, St. Mary's Chapel, Bucklers Hard, was substantially renovated by her in memory of Peter Rylands and bears a brass plaque and embroidered kneeler to that effect (Fig. 79). **Vernon Kidd**, 21 years, was the third and last member of the RAF to be killed in August.



Figs. 80 & 81. Exploding depth charges in Hatchet Pond.

Courtesy: H. Rand.

Another three lieutenants in their early twenties died in September; the first was **Austin Blackie**, the second a Canadian **A.F. Belyea** (his headstone is incorrectly dated), and the third was **Frank Reid** another Canadian, from Toronto. Reid was one of many who crashed into Hatchet Pond but his was the unfortunate fatal one in a DH4 machine. The pond was also used for machine gun target practice and dropping depth charges (Figs. 80 and 81), and one machine even managed to land on it when it was frozen over. October saw the tragic death of two pilots whose aircraft collided — Flt. Cadet **Douglas Baker** and 2nd Lt. **Malcolm Van de Water**, both in their early twenties, though their tombstones and the church register differ for both of them with respect to their ages.

Edward Tapley, an 18 year old RAF 2nd Lt., was killed on the 30th October, and the last fatal accident to occur was that of RAF 2nd Lt. **Wesley Archibald** — his engine burst into flames before he even left the ground one morning. There were other incidents of fire getting out of hand and destroying two aircraft, but no casualties. Lt. **C.R. Tolley** is mentioned by Peter New in "The Solent Sky" as having been fatally injured when he crashed whilst flying at 50' above the aerodrome at East Boldre in 1919.

That ends the sad list of young men who sacrificed their lives. A few crashes had happier endings, at least for the pilot if not the machine. The first was a crash landing on the roof of what was then the East Boldre Post Office in Pages Lane (Fig. 82). Miss Elizabeth Page was dressing on the 24th October 1917 when at 6.55 a.m. the ceiling came down around her head. The pilot was provided with a ladder and descended safely. Mr. Niven, later Sqn. Ldr., managed a couple of local crashes — one into an apple tree in Mr. Stickland's cottage in Heath Lane, and another, perhaps more fateful, at East End near the home of the lady who was to become his wife. Another pilot managed to land on a hangar roof, unhurt, and another on taking off did not gain sufficient height, causing the undercarriage to catch on the branches of a tree, flipping it upside down. The pilot fortunately stayed in the cockpit and was rescued from his inverted position unharmed.

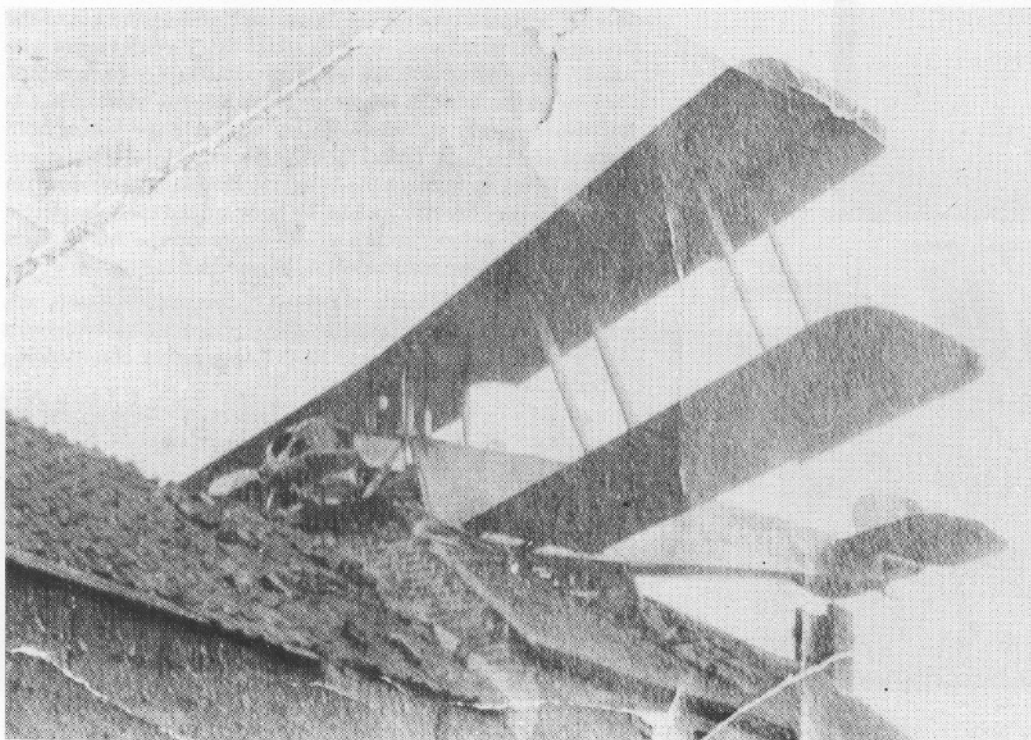


Fig. 82. A crash landing on the roof of East Boldre Post Office.

CHAPTER 4

Lord Montagu

Lord Montagu was naturally interested and involved in what was happening at Beaulieu airfield, as mentioned earlier, and on the practical side he was very interested in aeroplane camouflage. Some of the earliest experiments were conducted on the shore at Beaulieu with machines from Beaulieu airfield. On a national scale he sought to effect improvements in the whole concept and organisation of military aviation — campaigning for the creation of an all powerful Ministry of Aviation instead of, as it then was, responsibility divided between the War Office (RFC) and the Admiralty (RNAS), and he constantly harangued the House of Lords and public meetings etc., to this effect.

In March 1916 he was appointed "Independent Advisory Member" of the Joint War Air Committee, under the presidency of Lord Derby, but both men resigned the following month when they realised they had no powers of action. So Lord Montagu continued to expound his views at public meetings — Birmingham and Brockenhurst (with Col. Cornwallis-West) in April, the Navy League in May, Chelsea and Brockenhurst in July, Bury St. Edmunds in August, and Edinburgh in September. Other schemes, etc., in which he became involved in 1916, was as a witness before the Judicial Committee called to investigate charges against the



Fig. 83. Lord Montagu (right).

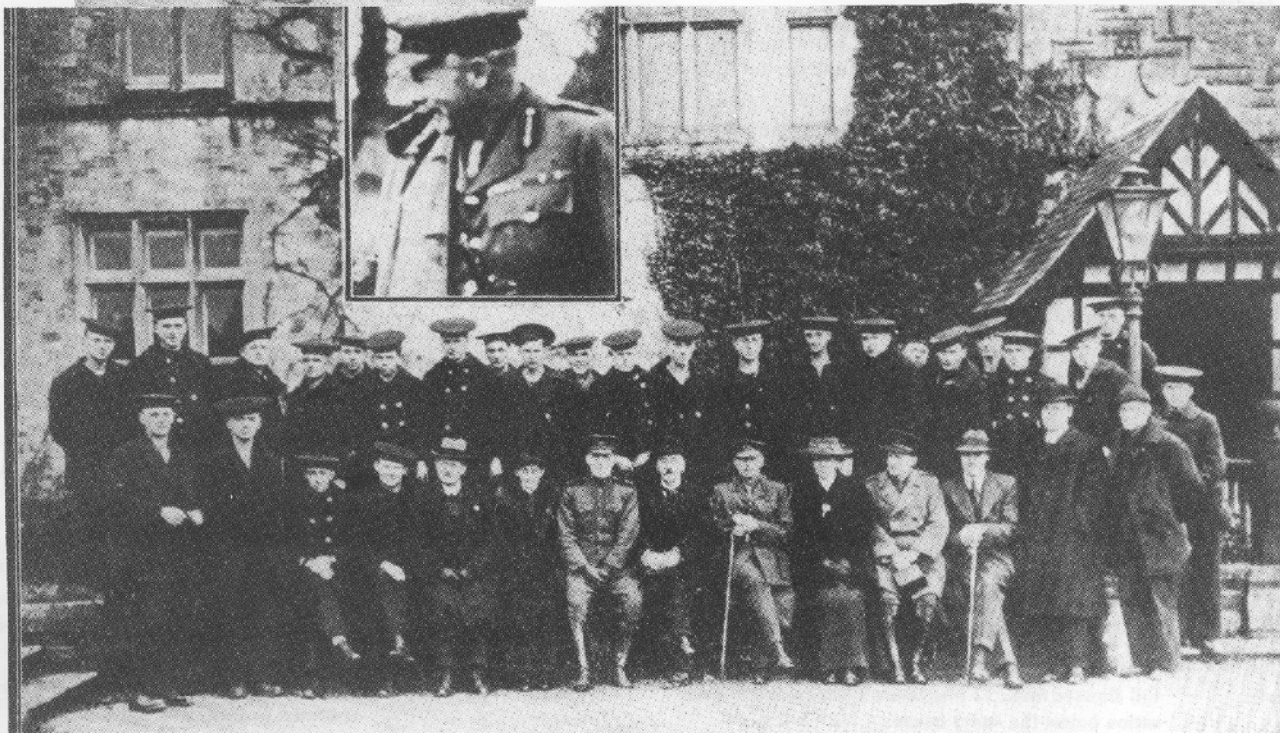
administration and command of the RFC (in May and July), and in September he prepared a special pamphlet "Elementary Facts about Aircraft" for private circulation in both Houses of Parliament.

For some reason he ceased to support the Aeronautical Institute and asked for his name to be removed in October. Also that month he gave his farewell address at Brockenhurst before returning to India on duty (Fig. 83) where he forecast, in Delhi, that within ten years mail and passengers would be conveyed between the two countries. He represented the India Office on the Civil Aerial Transport Committee and played a part in the establishment of an efficient air service in India.

In April 1917 he was back in England for the summer, talking at Westminster in June on the world's Air Routes, and the following month landed himself in some controversy by saying the German air raids on London were justified — "because it was a defended city and housed munitions factories." He was attacked for these views. In September he visited Davidson Aviation Company's works and a photo shows him with the Mayor of Hammersmith, the local MP, and company directors on a platform surrounded by a group of about seven hundred employees. No doubt some rousing speeches were given to try to inspire increased production. His return to India in December 1917 was made via Canada, mainly on a recruiting drive for the RFC. In July the previous year he had predicted that "...in future some of our finest pilots would come from the Dominions", and indeed as we saw in the last chapter, several did try and were killed in the process. Some of the young men we have mentioned may even have been inspired to enlist by hearing Lord Montagu speak, and if so, fate seems doubly cruel that they should come to die in the prime of life, virtually on his doorstep.

Quartered around Southampton were several American naval units and Lord Montagu took pleasure in showing a party of the U.S. naval airmen around Palace House and Beaulieu Abbey before they returned to the States at the end of hostilities. (Fig. 84).

Fig. 84. U.S. Naval Airmen at Beaulieu.



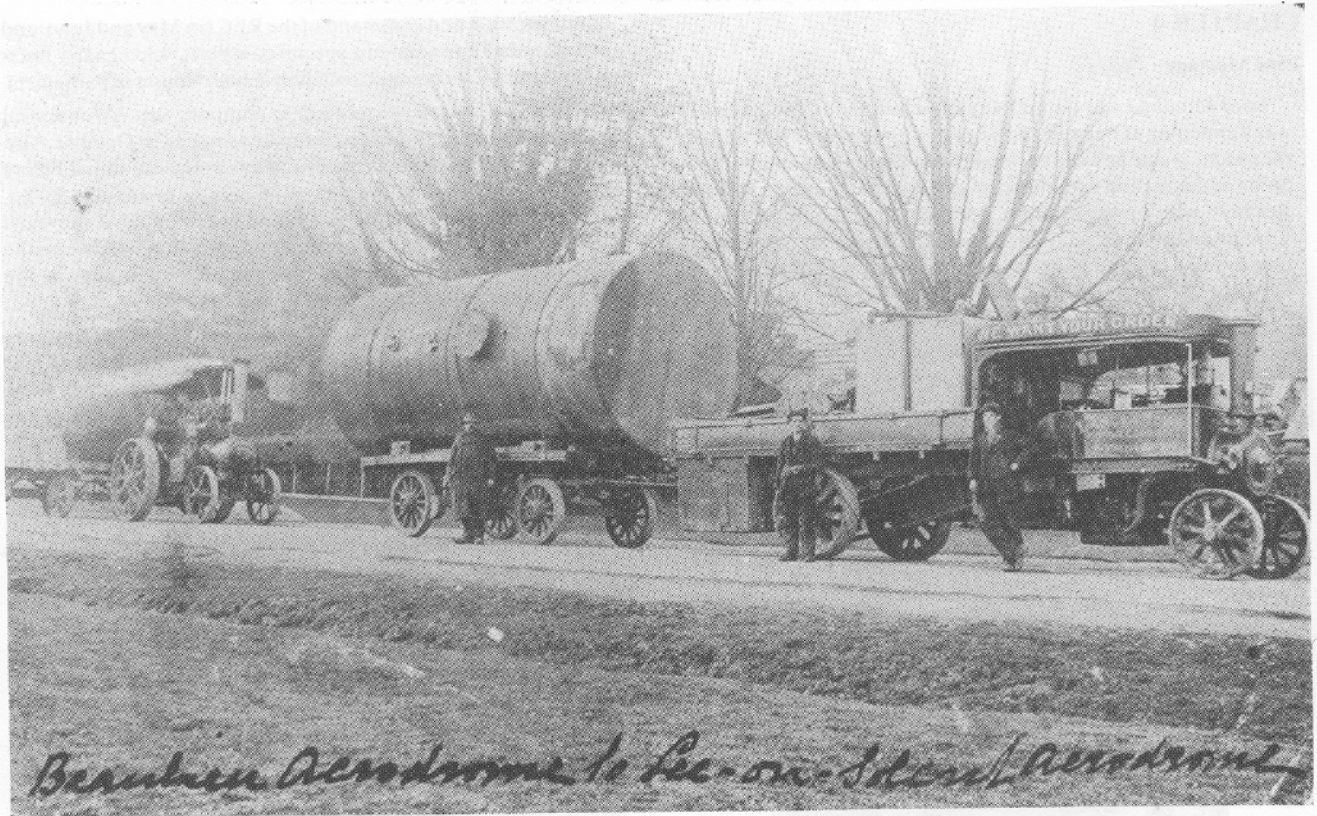


Fig. 85. Underground fuel tanks on their way to Lee-on-Solent aerodrome from Beaulieu, transported by steam wagons of Lance & Sons, Lymington.

Courtesy: Mrs. Lance.

CHAPTER 5

Closure

At the end of the war the vast complex of buildings was, as promised, razed to the ground and the debris removed, but it took four years to achieve this.

The first item to be cleared was the contractor's plant in July 1919 and two months later the Aerodrome buildings were put up for sale. Lymington RDC were considering using the buildings for temporary housing but eventually the buildings were sold off for removal and the foundations allowed to remain, with some compensation being paid by the Ministry to the verderers for settling claims with the commoners (in cases of injury to animals from surviving concrete, etc.).

By June 1921 it was decided to deal with some more of the potential hazards on the site and the W.D. land agent at Portsmouth gave Vardey the contract for the following:-

- (i) Filling in Artesian well and storage tank adjoining,
- (ii) Filling in sewage tanks and for cutting off protruding bolts,
- (iii) Render safe the filter beds and concrete post holes,
- (iv) Fill in trenches around the sewage disposal area.
- (v) Cut small drain to release water from bog,
- (vi) Fill sump hold and well (east of middle camp),
- (vii) Fill Bowser tank, 12 inspection chambers, and excavation below the sump house.

The W.D. assumed that on completion of these works satisfactorily, that the site could be handed back to the Office of Woods, but they obviously overlooked the fact that although the buildings had all been sold down to their foundations, these foundations covered many acres. So the quibbling continued over the next few months between the verderers and the W.D. with the Office of Woods as intermediary. On the 16th March 1922 the verderers decided to accept £500 and to clear the concrete themselves.

In September they obtained two tenders for this reinstatement — one from Bert Forward of Lymington for £604.12.10d. the other from George Witt for £568. The work involved was as illustrated in the plan (Fig. 86) and is described thus in the prospectus:-

- Area A, B, & D - all trenches and holes to be filled,
- batter the edges of concrete beds above ground level,
- clear debris.
- Area C - to be levelled, including the rifle range to be contoured more evenly (Fig. 87).
- X - Y & S - H - pipeline trenches to be filled and rammed (but not H - P).
- Area E - clear debris, etc., fill trenches. Surplus material to be placed in heaps.

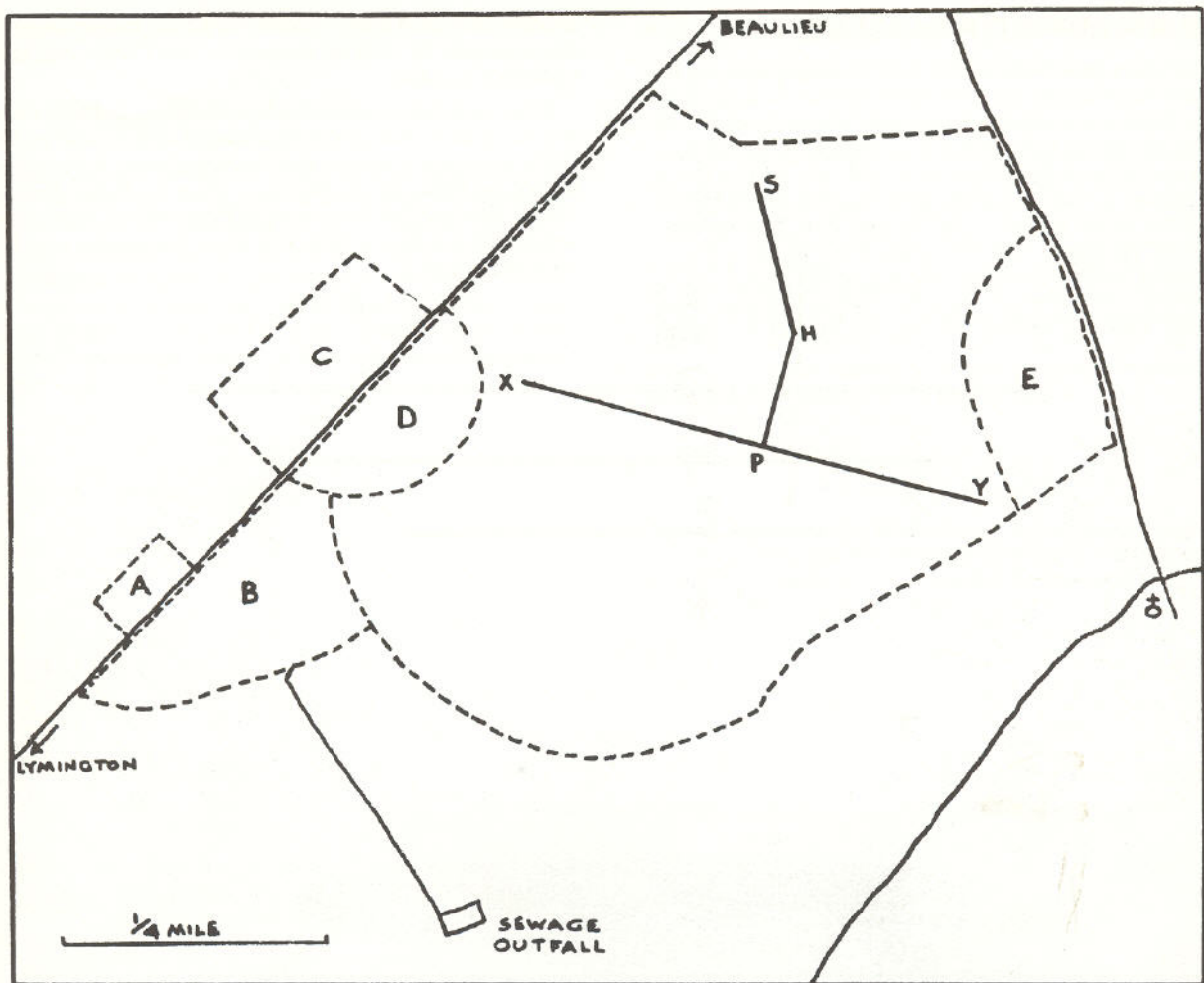


Fig. 86. Plan of the reinstatement of the airfield.

This work must have been performed speedily for within two months the Deputy Surveyor was able to report that the work had been completed to his satisfaction. He finally certified in March 1924 that the £500 had been expended by the verderers on the works mentioned but there were in the meantime several claims for injury to commoners' animals.

It was reported that Lord Montagu was disappointed that Beaulieu thus ceased to be a centre of aerial activity, but this is perhaps doubtful remembering his encouragement to Frank Perkins MP to get the New Forest exempted from the Land Acquisition Bill mentioned earlier. He was perhaps acting as a conscientious verderer, but being a man of vision he would surely have foreseen the noise and disruption that a large airfield would inflict on the area. "It's an ill wind ..." though and with the break up of the airfield Lord Montagu was able to acquire the officers' hard tennis court for virtually a token payment (one shilling) and getting his own workmen to do the removing, plus a specialist firm to advise on relaying. It lasted about forty five years at Palace House. East Boldre village gained the YMCA building as its village hall — the lone surviving building on its original site, and still serving as a focus for many village activities.



Fig. 87. Rifle range cross-section - to be re-contoured (as dotted).

PART III — THE INTER-WAR YEARS

On his return from India in 1919 Lord Montagu continued his interest in aviation and world transport. He had predicted long distance flights, and mapped the routes fairly accurately, advocating imperial air routes to India, Africa, Australia and North America. He was keen to encourage the use of air services by the Post Office and is reputed to have coined the word 'Airgram' for an express aerial letter which would be far cheaper than the equivalent cablegram. He pressed for a landing place in the centre of London and, whilst presiding at a meeting of the London Society, described his vision of a large flat glass roof over St. James's Park or Green Park for aircraft landing. His interest in military

aviation continued with a concern for Britain to keep abreast of developments. In 1920 he chaired the Air Conference at the Guildhall, London.

Beaulieu airfield continued to be used during the 1920's when it was listed as an Automobile Association airfield, and into the 1930's it was still listed as a civil landing ground. It was utilised during the Schneider Trophy races when Sir Sefton Brancker landed there and stayed overnight at Palace House, together with several Air Attaches in 1929. This was a few months after Lord Montagu's death.

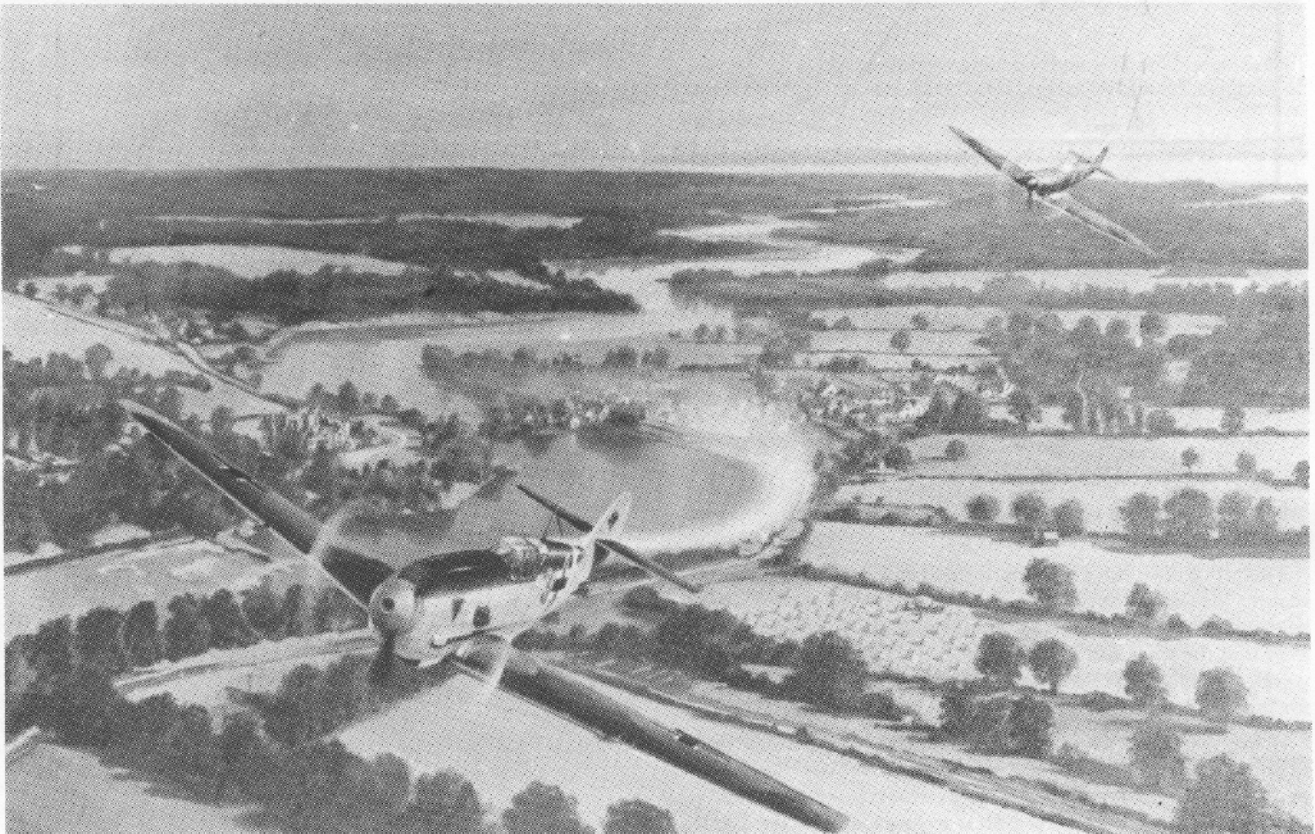


Fig. 88. During the long hot summer of 1940 fighter squadrons were engaged in the Battle of Britain.

This painting by Roger King shows a Messerschmitt BF109E1 of III Gruppe of JG (Jagdeschwader) 54 being attacked by a Spitfire Mk. I on September 9th, 1940.

The 109 has been hit in the coolant tank and a trail of glycol is seen streaming out behind as it flies low over Beaulieu. He lost height, turned out to sea, and came down in the Channel south of the Isle of Wight. The pilot was rescued by the Seenokflugkommando - German equivalent of air sea rescue.

Courtesy: Lord Montagu.

PART IV — MILITARY AIRFIELD (WORLD WAR II)

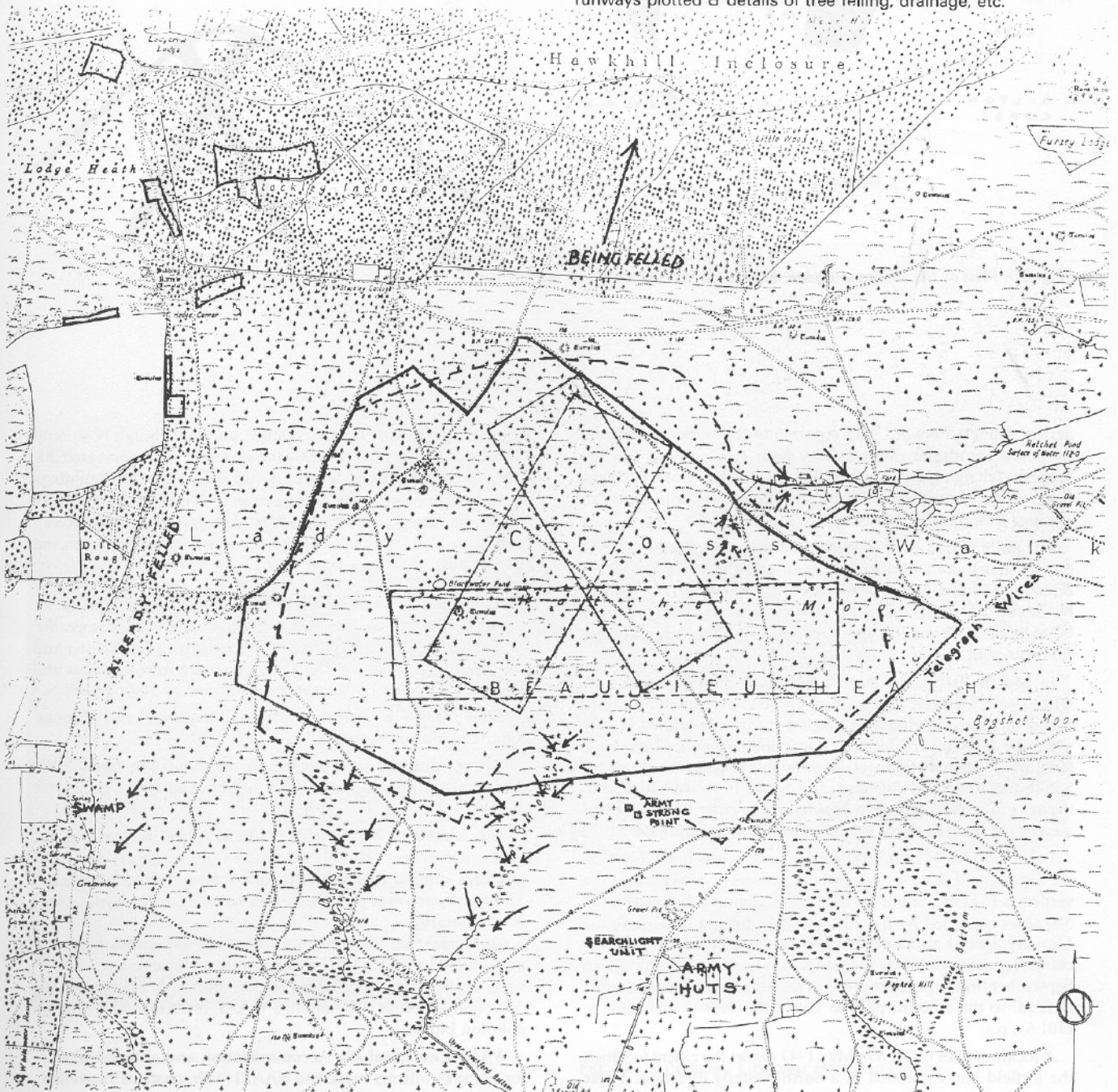
CHAPTER 1

The Site

Bombs had begun to drop on nearby Southampton during the summer of 1940 and one of the first to hit Beaulieu landed in "Gardiner's Ground", Dock Lane, on the 21st January 1941. This high explosive bomb landed near the house which fortunately, being well built, withstood the blast without collapsing and thus there were no casualties. Mrs. Penn Gaskell suffered only scratches when the ceiling and light fitting landed on her in the bath. The bomber was thought to have been returning from a Coventry raid.

The idea of re-creating an aerodrome on the Beaulieu Heath was proposed on the 31st July 1941 by the Air Ministry in a letter to the New Forest verderers, and an Air Ministry map delineates the proposed site on Hatched Moor (Fig. 89). The Inspector of Ancient Monuments sought to excavate the bronze age round barrows on the site before they were destroyed, and this was done by the 12th September when Mowlems, the construction engineers who had been awarded the contract, entered the site with their cement mixers, and within three weeks had erected three buildings (store huts and offices) along the Lymington Road. The local

Fig. 89. An Air Ministry Map showing the proposed site (in solid line) July 1941. Also the later altered perimeter (dotted line) plus runways plotted & details of tree felling, drainage, etc.



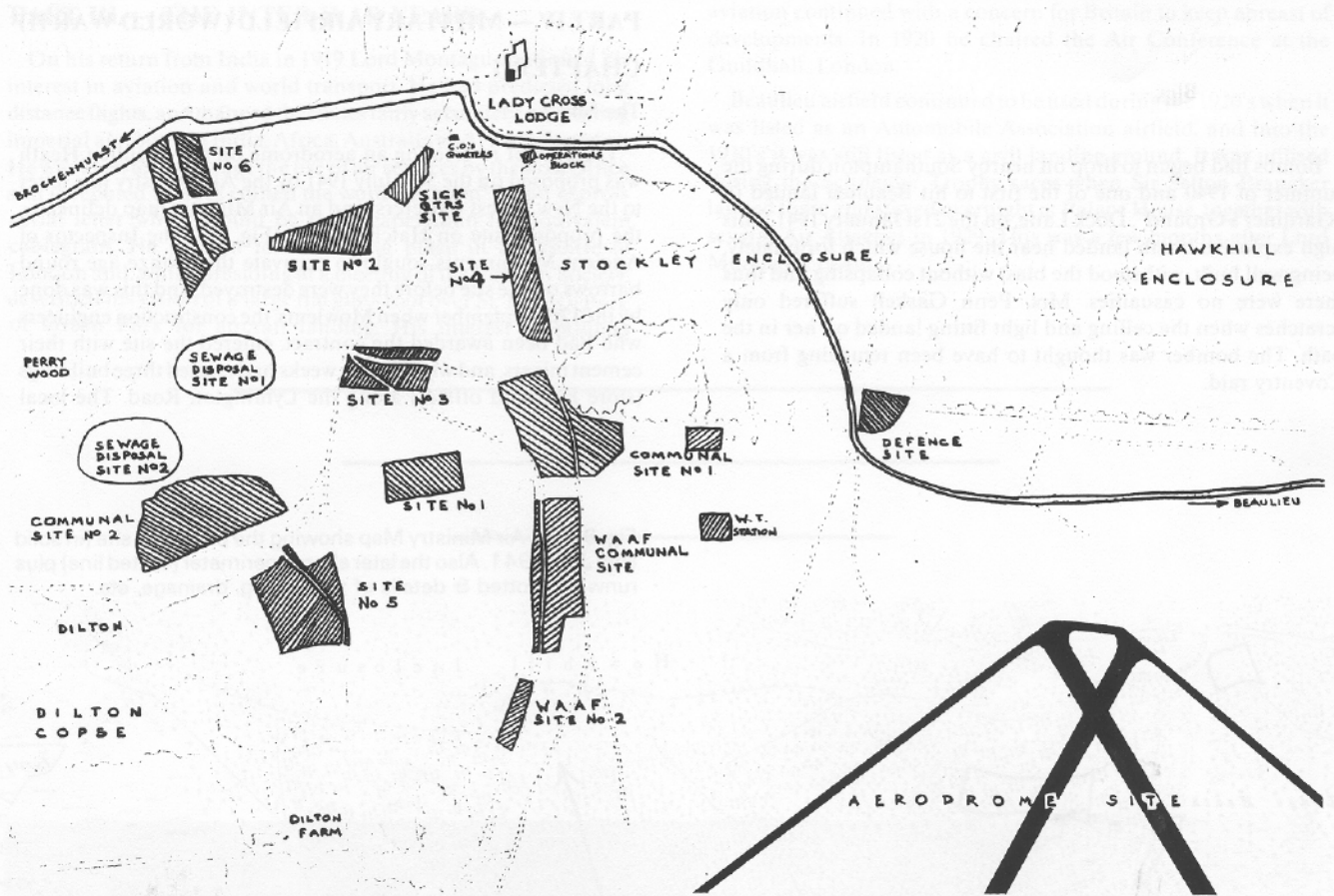


Fig. 90. Plan of the dispersed sites. May, 1943.

agister, Hubert Forward, had reported to the verderers that the proposed aerodrome site was very poor grazing land, but the verderers felt rightly aggrieved that they had received no notification prior to the contractors moving in. Their complaint drew an apology from the Air Ministry.

The perimeter of the proposed area was altered several times during the construction in 1941, and one plan also shows the direction of drainage and the progress of tree-felling (Fig. 89), but by the end of October it was decided that the road frontage should be reduced to about 200 yards instead of half a mile as in the previous plan.

In March 1942 it was agreed that the aerodrome would be fenced with Dennert wire (coiled barbed wire) by the military before any actual flying took place, but this was refuted in July when the Air Ministry declared it was not their policy to provide fencing — “Station personnel should be able to keep runways clear” So the area remained unfenced, and agister Forward had later in the year to request a pass to enable him to enter the prohibited area of the airfield to get access to commoners’ animals.

From the 25th March, 1942 an Agreement was made between the Secretary of State for Air and the Verderers. This granted the verderers £57 per annum for the loss of common rights over the 570 acres occupied by the airfield. This did not indemnify the Ministry against accidents involving commoners’ animals. Any claims for death or injury to these had to be settled separately. In September that year another 443 acres were requisitioned for the airfield, so the amount paid to the verderers was increased to £101.6-. p.a.

A location plan printed in May 1943 shows the extent to which the airfield had expanded in a north-westerly direction. These

were the so-called “dispersed sites” and their rough position is indicated on the plan (Fig. 90), but it should be remembered that there were no defined boundaries to these sites. The buildings, mainly temporary brick construction or Nissen hut, included:-
Defence Site — (opposite Stockley Cottage) comprised officers’, sergeants’ and airmans’ quarters, and armoury, orderly room and picket post.

Sick Quarters Site. As well as the actual sick quarters and an annexe, this site included ambulance garage, mortuary, sergeants’ and orderlies’ quarters, plus a picket post, an air raid shelter and an electric sub station. The **C.O.’s quarters** were adjacent and nearby Ladycross Lodge was requisitioned as Station Offices.

Sites No. 1 - 6 comprised officers’, sergeants’ and airmans’ quarters, plus picket posts.

Sewage disposal sites comprised sedimentation tanks, filter beds, sludge pits, humus tanks, tool houses, and a destructor house.

Communal Site No. 1 included officers’ mess, sergeants’ mess, and other ranks’ NAAFI; the ration store, a grocery and local produce store, a post office, tailor’s, barber’s and shoemaker’s shop, a water tower and fire tender building, and a gymnasium and ablutions.

Communal Site No. 2 included officers’ mess, sergeants’ mess, and other ranks’ NAAFI; catering office, dining room, ration store, and grocery and local produce store, squash court, fuel compound, electric sub station, a WAAF rest room, and various ablution blocks.

WAAF Communal site Accommodation and ablution blocks for all ranks, officers’ mess, and NAAFI (with sergeants’ recreation

room), and sick quarters (not yet completed in May 1943).

WAAF Site No. 2 Airwomen's accommodation and ablutions.

Operations Block was one of the rare buildings constructed with 9" brickwork.

W.T. Station comprised one building only, for transmitting.

The dispersal site plan was printed just too early to include the developments of another area north of the runways. This was the use of Hawkhill enclosure as a bomb store. The Air Ministry wrote in September informing the verderers about the area fenced off. The work had been done without any prior consultation with the verderers, the agreement having been made between the Airfield's Resident Engineer and the New Forest's Deputy

Surveyor. The bombs were kept on large flat concrete bases (some still survive) and brick walls were spanned by large timbers (like telegraph poles) with camouflage on top of them.

A plan initially made in May 1943 but amended two years later shows the development that had occurred on the actual airfield site (Fig. 92). The hangars were made of steel, and the rest of the buildings were mainly either 'temporary brick' or Nissen huts. One exception to this was the Radar Office, which was a timber construction, 15ft. x 18ft. 6in. The aerial photo of 1946 (Fig. 93) shows the airfield and part of the dispersed site area, plus several aircraft. The two additional hangars proposed in the 1945 plan had not been built.

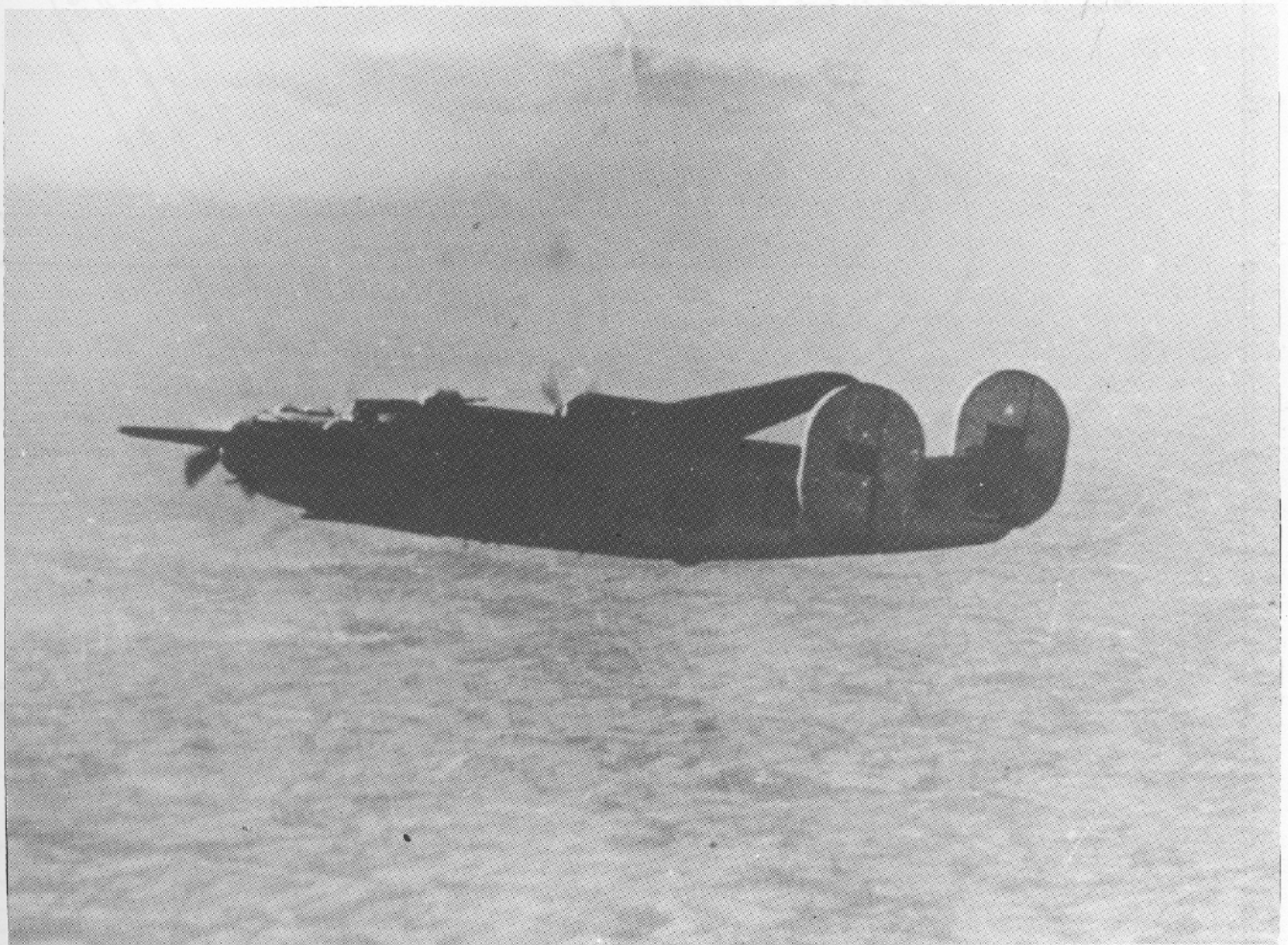


Fig. 91. A Beaulieu Liberator over Hampshire.

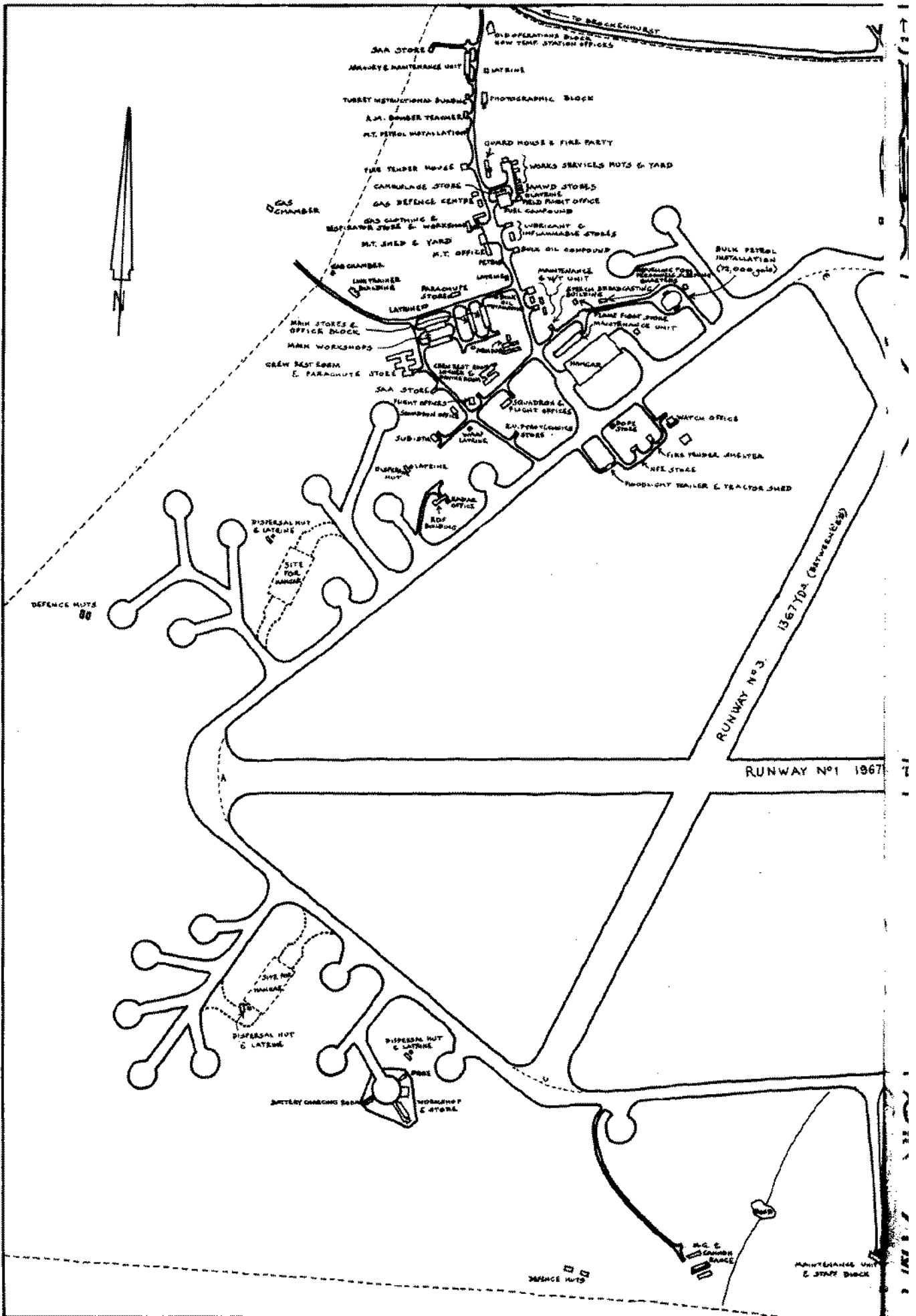
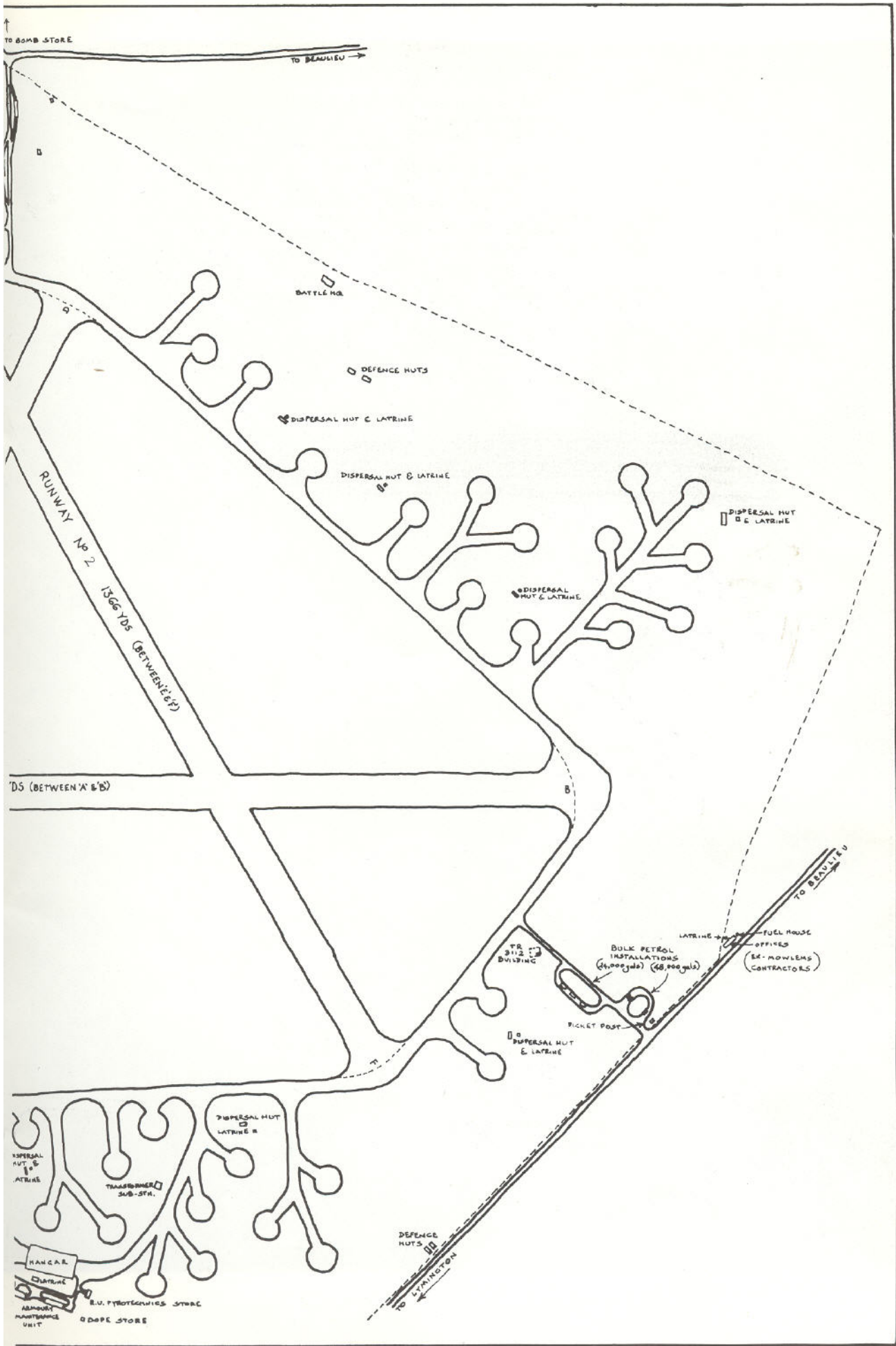


Fig. 92. Plan of the aerodrome site, (amended to May, 1945).



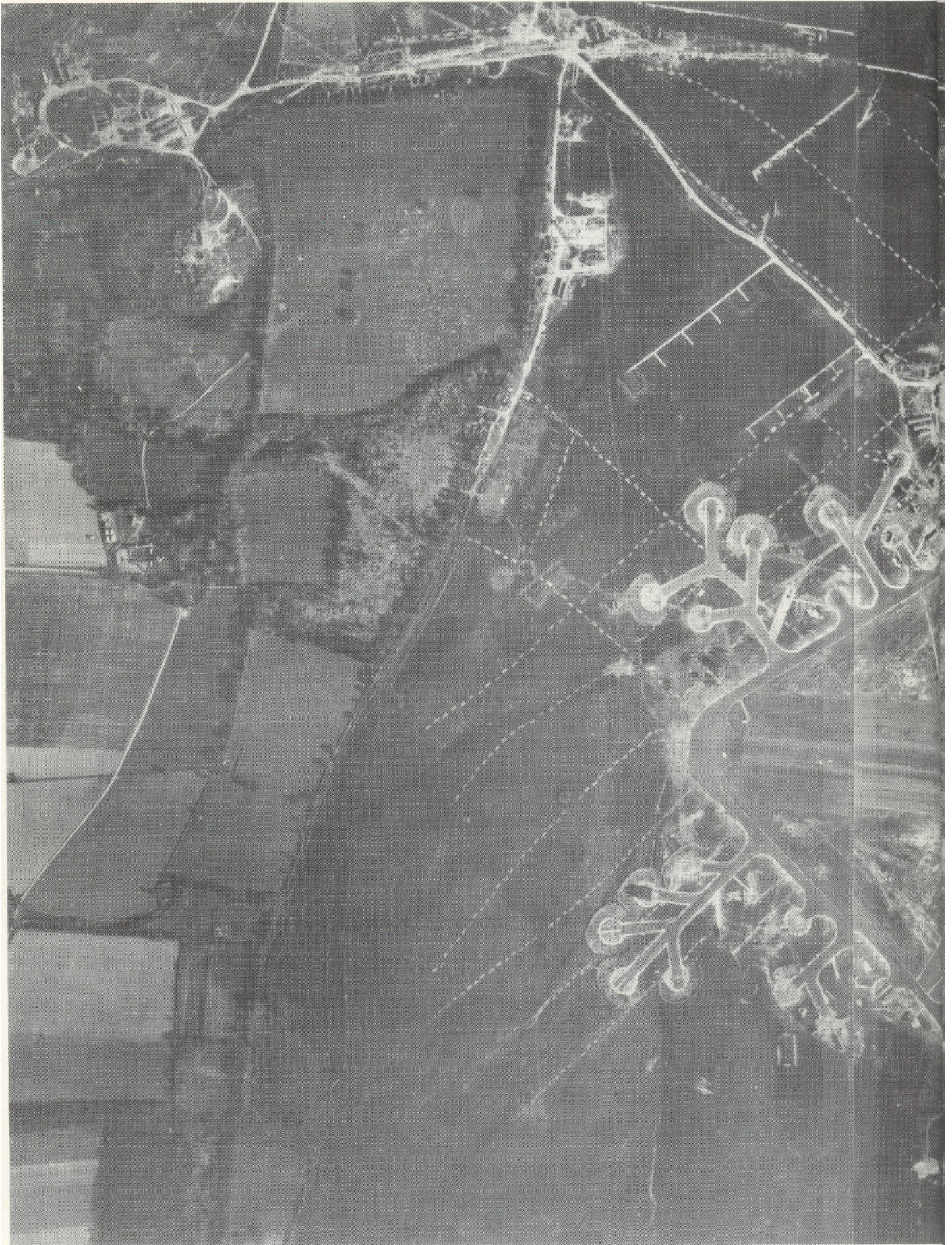
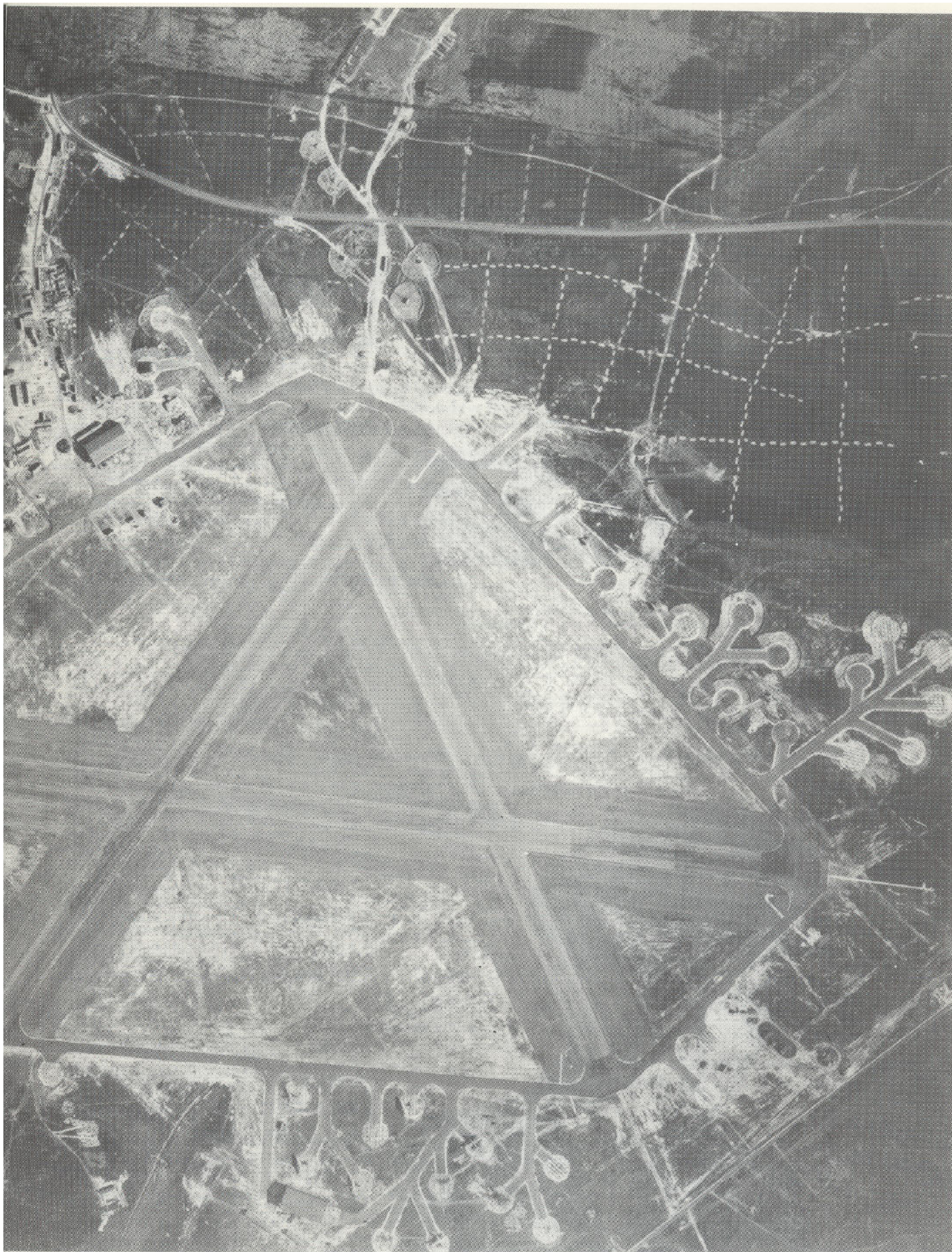


Fig. 93. Aerial photo, 1946.



Photograph of a rug from the collection of the University of Cambridge, Cambridge, England, showing a diamond-shaped rug with a complex geometric and floral pattern. The rug is laid out on a dark, textured surface. The pattern consists of a central diamond shape with multiple parallel lines forming a grid-like structure. The corners and sides are decorated with intricate floral and scrollwork motifs. The background shows a dark, possibly stone or concrete, floor with some faint grid lines.

CHAPTER 2

Use of the Airfield (1942-45)

On the 8th August 1942, Beaulieu airfield was opened as a Coastal Command Station (No. 19 Group) and was first occupied by No. 224 Squadron who flew in three weeks later. The day before the squadron arrived, when the airfield had not even been manned by ground crew, two of its members paid it a visit. As F/O Sleep (Fig. 95) and F/Lt. Arden approached the brand new runway they noticed a tiny spot moving along it, which on landing turned out to be a forester trotting along in his pony and trap. As the enormous Liberator passed him he did not even bother to look up, to David Sleep's amazement. Of course he had seen it all before, remembering aircraft had started landing at East Boldre over 30 years previously! This would have been the last day of civilian use as a 'motorway' for a few years.

On the 9th September there was a fatal crash nearby at Boldre when a Beaufighter which had shot down a Heinkel HE.III south of the Isle of Wight, returned in trouble itself. The observer survived but not the pilot. This was not a Beaulieu aircraft. No. 224 Squadron were employed with Liberators (Fig. 91) on anti-submarine patrols in the Bay of Biscay and south western approaches. The O.C. was W/Cdr. Kearney who was quartered in a house near Hatchet Pond, ideal for witnessing the dinghy drill practised there (Fig. 94). Their first U-boat sinking was on the 20th October when, in dropping the depth charges, the aircraft itself was severely damaged. F/O Sleep managed to crash land at the Lizard (earning himself an immediate DFC) as recorded in



Fig. 94. Dinghy drill on Hatchet Pond, 1942.

his log book and the Sunday Express (Figs. 95 & 96). The following day his squadron brought him and part of his crew back to Beaulieu, and that night he must have thought some sort of revenge was to be enacted as enemy aircraft came over Beaulieu and dropped large numbers of flares. Fortunately, however, the brilliantly illuminated airfield never received the expected follow-up raid.

From October 1942 two squadrons arrived from Yorkshire on loan from Bomber Command, one was a detachment of 158

YEAR 1942 MONTH DATE	AIRCRAFT		PILOT, OR 1ST PILOT	2ND PILOT, PUPIL OR PASSENGER	DUTY (INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)
	Type	No.			
TOTALS BROUGHT FORWARD					
OCT. 20	LIBERATOR	114 H/FL90	SELF. SGT. PATTON.	P/O EDWARDS SGT. ROSE. F/S JOHNSON. SGT. CLIFFORD SGT. LEMSON.	A/S SWEEP. SIGHTED U BOAT IN POSN. 48.25 N. 19.20W. FROM 5000'. ATTACKED FROM 30' FROM WESTERN, ALONG TRACK - FULLY SURRENDERED. TORPEDO DROPPED. TORPEDO EXPLODED ON IMPACT BLOWING 80% ELEVATORS OFF A/C EXTENSIVE DAMAGE. DEBRIS FROM U.B. INCLUDED LONG TUBULAR OBJECT. NOTHING ON SEA AFTER ATTACK - COLUMN OF BLUE SMOKE 200' HIGH. CONTROLS BROKE AS CRASH LANDED PRE-DANMACK. MOST INJURY TO SGT. ROSE - BROKEN LEG. A/C CAUGHT FIRE. [560 N.M. = 650 S.M. TO LAND]. U. B. GIVEN AS SUNK. NOV. 1942. PRE-DANMACK - BEAULIEU
21	LIBERATOR		SELF TH.	SGT. LEMSON SGT. PATTON. F/S JOHNSON	

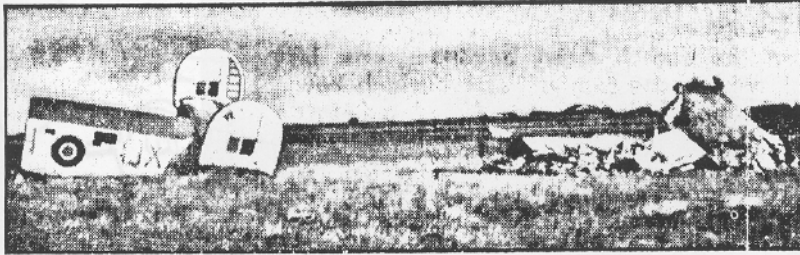
SUMMARY FOR OCT. 1942 LIBERATOR
UNIT. 224 SQDN.
DATE. 31.10.42.
SIGNED: D.H. Sleep F/O



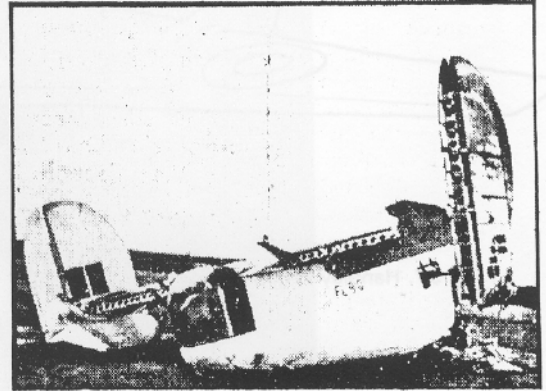
Fig. 95. F/O. Sleep & his Log Book.

Bomber crash-lands in pieces, seven escape

'Blown to a shambles' by own bomb which destroyed U-boat



After the crash. Bits of the Liberator scattered over the field. Yet seven escaped death.



Tail gun turret and both rudders almost unrecognisable.

Immediate D.F.C. for pilot

WHEN a Liberator of Coastal Command bombed a U-boat fair and square on the conning tower from a low level, the explosion shot the bomber 300 feet into the air in a vertical and almost uncontrollable climb.

"Here we go," thought the pilot, Flying Officer David M. Sleep, "on to our back and into the sea." Knowing that he had to get the nose of the aircraft down he yelled out "Push."

The second pilot, Sergeant Samuel E. Patton, of Belfast, who was making only his second operational flight, began "shoving like mad."

"To begin with," said Flying Officer Sleep, "the thing wouldn't move, but eventually, by bracing our hands and knees against the columns and getting other members of the crew to go forward, we got the nose down."

"That put us more or less level, although the aircraft was still climbing a bit. We went back to the scene, but there was no sign of the sub—only a thick column of blue smoke rising for 200 feet."

SOS messages

It was clear that the controls could no longer be relied on. Both pilots were heaving and pushing against the columns—which tried all the while to lean back and take the aircraft higher and higher.



Four of the Liberator's crew (left to right): Flying Officer David M. Sleep (captain), Flight-Sergeant Ronald Johnson (air gunner), Sergeant Samuel E. Patton (second pilot), and Sergeant George T. Lenson (flight engineer).

The radio operator was banging out SOS messages. The flight engineer wallowing in oil, was trying vainly to repair a burst hydraulic pipeline.

The tail-gunner, Flight Sergeant Ronald Johnson, whose home is in Lancaster, escaped from his jammed turret and began to get rid of all extra weight.

"I started heaving overboard everything that would move," he said. "I threw out ammunition belts, heavy equipment and everything. I even tried to jettison the rear-turret, only it wouldn't go."

"The interior of the old Liberator was a shambles. There were holes all over the fuselage, oil

was pouring out all over the place; it was just a mess. Most of the elevators had gone . . ."

The flight engineer, Sergeant George T. Lenson, of Loughborough, as well as trying to repair the hydraulic pipeline, had to jettison two bombs.

Always climbing, the aircraft reached 14,000 feet before the navigator made his landfall after flying over 800 miles of sea. Though the crew had all crowded into the nose as much as possible the climb had been steady.

Now the question arose whether the crew should bale out or take their chance in the belly landing, which was inevitable. All elected to stay with the plane.

Flames in cockpit

"I throttled back," said the pilot, "and without the lift from the engines the nose began to drop."

"As we skimmed over the airfield at 140 miles an hour, something snapped in the controls and the stick went 'dead.' It flopped back uselessly against our bodies."

"The aircraft struck a landing light and crashed with a terrific wallop."

"We slithered over the ground, everything smashing up. Then an uncanny silence, and pitch dark—until a tongue of flame flickered round the aileratt."

"We bounced out in quick time. Two of the radio operators were thrown clear through the escape hatch. I jumped on top of the aircraft to have a look and found Lenson hauling Sergeant Rose, our navigator, through the hatch."

"Our luck was in! When the cockpit went up in flames a few moments later we were all clear."

Three of the crew of seven were injured.

The Sunday Express learns that Flying Officer Sleep, who comes from Longfield Kent, has been awarded the D.F.C., and Sergeant Lenson the D.F.M.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Philip Joubert, head of Coastal Command, decided that this was a case for the immediate award of the decorations.

Fig. 96. A D.F.C. for Beaulieu Pilot 8th Nov. 1942, Sunday Express.

Squadron from East Moor, equipped with Handley Page Halifaxes (Fig. 97). It spent three months based at Beaulieu to strengthen Coastal Command at that stage of the war — convoy movements were taking place in connection with Operation Torch (the Allied invasion of North Africa). The other strengthening squadron was Canadian, No. 405 (Vancouver) Squadron, RCAF, equipped with Halifaxes and Liberators, and this squadron was the one to suffer the greatest losses locally (seventeen men in three separate incidents).

However, it was 224 Squadron which had the first casualties when, on 7th November, 1942, one of their Liberators hit the ground and exploded. The two victims were the pilot, Flight Sgt. Kenneth Crabtree, a 30 year old Yorkshireman, and the Flight Engineer Kenneth Edward Hunt, 20 years old. These, together with the later casualties, were interred in Boldre churchyard (Fig. 98).

The first crash involving 405 Squadron happened on the 15th December 1942 killing five Canadian airmen in a Liberator. They were:-

Flight Sgt. Richard Alan Rollins (22 years), Flight Engineer of Vancouver.

W.O.II Robert William Stewart (24 years), Pilot of Saskatchewan.

Sgt. Harold William Gunn (26 years), Air Gunner of Toronto.

Sgt. Robert James Abadore Shaw (22 years), Air Gunner of Ontario.

Sgt. Albert George Henry Gapes (31 years), Wireless Op./Air Gunner of Carshalton, Surrey.

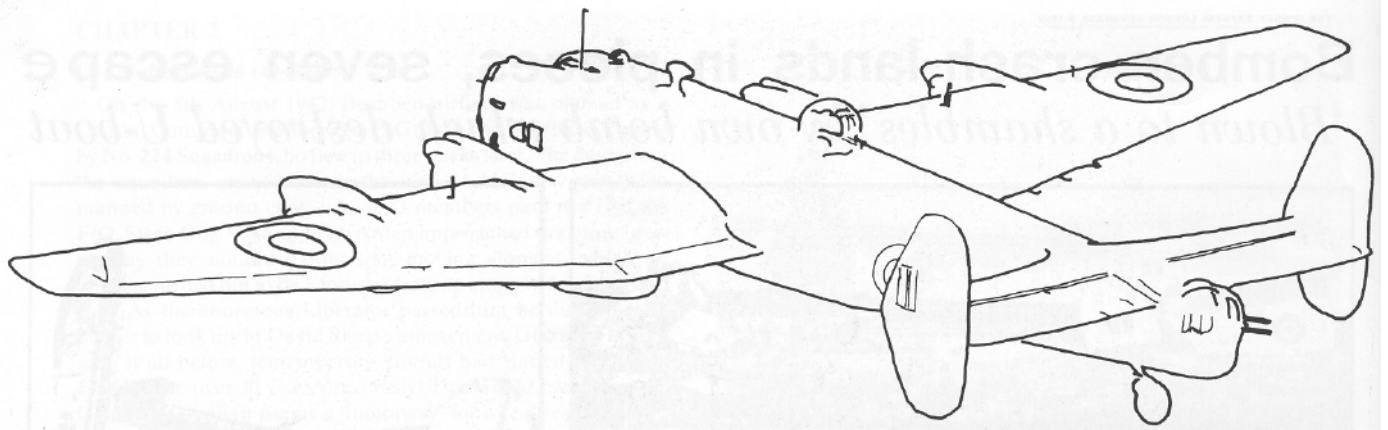


Fig. 97. Handley Page Halifax.

The next accident occurred five days later on Sunday 20th December. Mr. H.J.T. Leal remembers that morning as witnessed from the Isle of Wight. At 6.30 a.m. the Liberators could be heard warming up for their usual patrols and several went on their way. One however circled and headed south west, in difficulties. It turned, lost height and crashed at Eades Farm, near Newbridge, Isle of Wight. The crew were all killed:-

Flying Officer **Ernest Stollery** (21 years), Air Observer of Edmonton.

Flight Sgt. **Norman Albert Van Brunt** (21 years), Wireless Op./Air Gunner (Fig. 99).

Flight Sgt. **Gerald Edward Wagner** (19 years), Air Gunner of Nova Scotia.

Sgt. **Morris William Croft** (20 years), Flight Engineer of Derby.

Sgt. **Michael William Fugere** (29 years), Air Gunner of Toronto.

W.O.II **Lloyd Elsworth Snarr** (22 years), Pilot of New Brunswick.

The third and final crash involving one of 405 Squadron's Liberator bombers claimed another six victims on 21st February 1943:-

Sgt. **Benjamin Frederick John Parker** (23 years), Wireless Op./Air Gunner.

Flying Officer **Carl John Shagena** (21 years), Bomb Aimer.

Sgt. **Benjamin Warren Turner** (24 years), Air Gunner.

Sgt. **Roy Victor McLean** (20 years), Flight Engineer.

Flight Sgt. **Ernest Harold Sellar** (22 years), Navigator of Winnipeg.

Flight Sgt. **Frank James O'Donohoe** (28 years), Air Gunner of Ontario.

The infant classroom at Vicars Hill School, Boldre was knocked about as a result of one of the crashes, and in the church some finely embroidered hassocks bearing their initials and Air Force badges, help serve as a memorial to these young airmen.

With the departure of 405 Squadron in March 1943 the next to arrive was **311 Squadron**, a Czechoslovakian unit (Figs. 100-103) which converted from Wellingtons to Liberators and continued the anti-submarine patrols, etc. With some success, too, as they recorded the destruction of two U-boats, two aircraft and damage to two others. Also they caught a blockade running ship in the Channel and homed in a naval force to sink four German destroyers which were waiting as escort.

On May 7th 1943 there was at last a determined raid on the airfield, with flares dropped prior to the bombing, but no



Fig. 98. Boldre Churchyard. Tombstones of the airmen lost between November, 1942 and February, 1943.



Fig. 99. Gravestone with 'Remembrance Day' poppy.



Figs. 100 & 101. Czechoslovak Squadron Badge and (left to right) Nedved, (not known), Gen. Janousek, Head of Czech Air Force, and Sejbl, C.O. of Beaulieu. January, 1944.

casualties recorded. Prior to that there had been a few lone hit and run attacks by enemy aircraft flying in low. Also 1943 saw two Fortresses in trouble. The first, in July, although on fire landed safely at Beaulieu. The second, on December 31st, was not so lucky. In spite of the searchlights being switched on and the airfield lit by flares to aid the pilot, he circled twice and then inexplicably headed back south, crashing into the sea south of the Isle of Wight.

No. 53 Squadron arrived in September 1943 from Thorney Island, to assist in the anti-submarine patrols, etc. for the next four

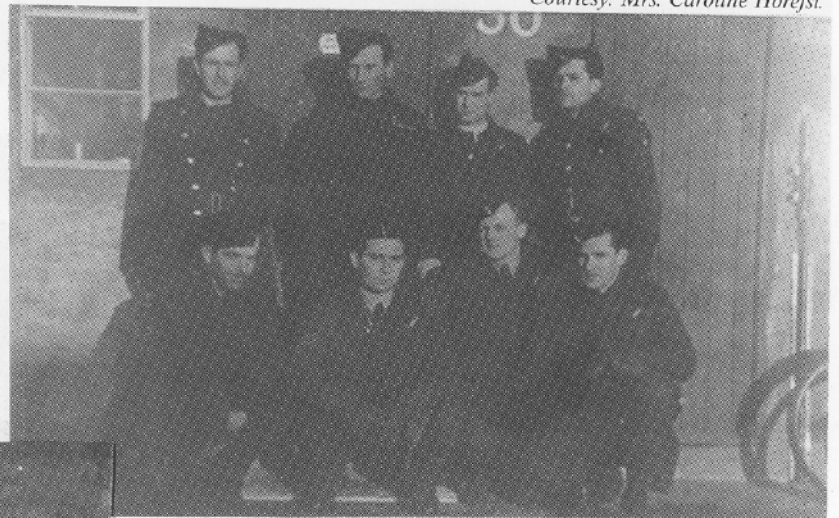
months.

During 1943 a survey was made for suitable airfield sites between Beaulieu River and Lymington River. Two were constructed at Park Farm (Needs Ore Point) and Pylewell House. Temporary runways were laid down in the form of a wire mesh on the fields and blister hangars were erected plus a few fuel tanks. Although these were only used for about seven weeks, the local farmers were deprived of their fields from April 1943 until the end of the War, when American negro batallions were employed to pull them up, but much wire and concrete remains.



Figs. 102 & 103. The Czechoslovak Squadron; No. 311.
 (Above) On Parade.
 (Below) F/LT. Oldrich, Horejsi, W/O. Hala, F/O. Bouda, F/Sgt. Jaros, Sgt. Remenar, Sgt. Katz, Sgt. Slezazek, Sgt. Yanda. at R.A.F. Beaulieu, January, 1944.

Courtesy: Mrs. Caroline Horejsi.



A rather important function of the observers and anti-aircraft personnel was to be able to recognise friend from foe. Occasionally mistakes were made such as in February 1944 when a Stirling bomber was peppered by the Beaulieu area anti-aircraft gunners, but unsuccessfully. The early months of 1944 saw the arrival at Beaulieu of four squadrons mainly concerned with attacking flying bomb sites and invasion targets in N.W. France, and dive-bombing shipping in the Channel. The Americans took over the airfields at Lymington, Sopley, Christchurch and Ibsley, while Beaulieu and Needs Ore Point stayed under RAF control. **257 Squadron** was there during January, **263 Squadron** from January to March (S/Ldr. G.B. Warner, DSO, DFC, handing over command to S/Ldr. H.A.C. Gonay in February). New Zealand's second fighter squadron in the U.K. **No. 486**, commanded by S/Ldr. J.H. Iremonger, joined at this time. These three fighter squadrons were all equipped with Typhoons. Bruce Gilbert, the Southampton bookseller stationed at Needs Ore saw a **Junkers Ju.188** shot down on the 18th April. Mr. H. Leal records that from 7.24 a.m. when spotted approaching Sandown it circled the Isle of Wight flying low and never exceeding 250 m.p.h. It made no effort to attack or avoid the heavy ack-ack fire but continued to drop single red flares until finally shot down by the Typhoon, again making no effort to defend itself. To add to the mystery the wreckage contained 12 bodies whereas the Junkers would normally have a crew of four. Perhaps escaped RAF personnel or had the pilot got lost in bad weather while transferring extra personnel from an inland Luftwaffe airfield to one on the French coast? This incident was witnessed by Neville Shute and used by him in his novel "Requiem for a Wren".

Typhoons from Beaulieu were able to head off an enemy air attack heading for Portsmouth on the 25th May, and the last recorded enemy aircraft to fly over the Isle of Wight went over five days later — a Focke-Wulf FW190 single engined fighter bomber.

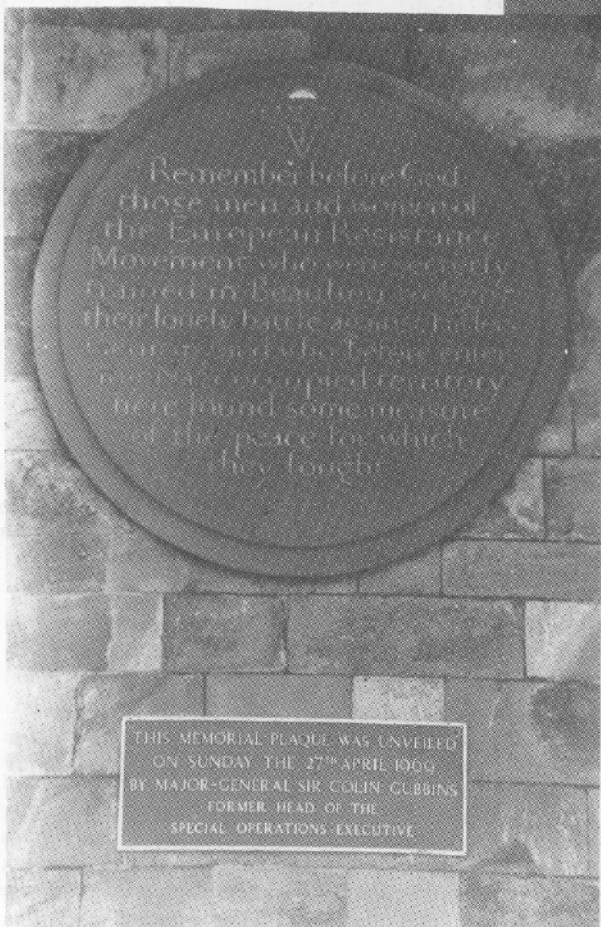


Fig. 104. The Memorial Plaque to The Special Operations Executive.

A bomber squadron equipped with Douglas Bostons had arrived at Beaulieu in February. This was a detachment of **No. 88 (Hong Kong) Squadron** from Blackbushe.

The Americans Take Over

Just to show how cosmopolitan it had all become, the Americans took over the control of the airfield on 5th March 1944, and it became the HQ of the 84th Fighter Wing of the U.S. 9th Air Force. The unit involved was the **365th Fighter Bomber Group (386-8 F.B. Sqns)** which flew P-47 Thunderbolts. Its employment included acting as escort patrols and dive bombing targets in France preparatory to Operation Overlord (the Invasion of Normandy). On June 6th at 3.30 a.m. the activity began on the airfield and Dakotas and Thunderbolts became part of the enormous invasion force heading south. Sadly, a fatal crash of a Typhoon from Beaulieu happened the following day near Calbourne on the Isle of Wight. The above American Thunderbolt bomber squadron left on the 28th June to be replaced by another American bomber squadron from 21st July to 26th August. This was the **323rd Bombardment Group (453-6 B. Sqns)** equipped with B-26 Marauders.

Doodlebugs (unmanned flying bombs) were now arriving over the area and in July three crashed near Beaulieu, one in the river and only one near the airfield.

Transferred Back to RAF

On the 7th September 1944 the airfield was transferred back to the RAF, (to No. 11 Group, A.D.G.B.), but was not used by any fighter units, and so on 5th January 1945 control passed to No. 23 Group, Flying Training Command.

The Special Operations Executive

Before leaving the subject of the use of the airfield in World War II, one ought to mention an especially brave group of people — members of the Special Operations Executive. These were the agents and resistance fighters who were flown into occupied Europe and, as some of their training was performed locally around Beaulieu, they were frequently transported by Lysander from the airfield to the Continent. A memorial plaque exists in the grounds of Beaulieu Abbey (Figs. 104 & 105) and a fine painting by Roger King depicting the aircraft over Beaulieu also commemorates this connection. (Fig. 106). About nine of the larger houses around Beaulieu were used by the S.O.E. (Fig. 107).

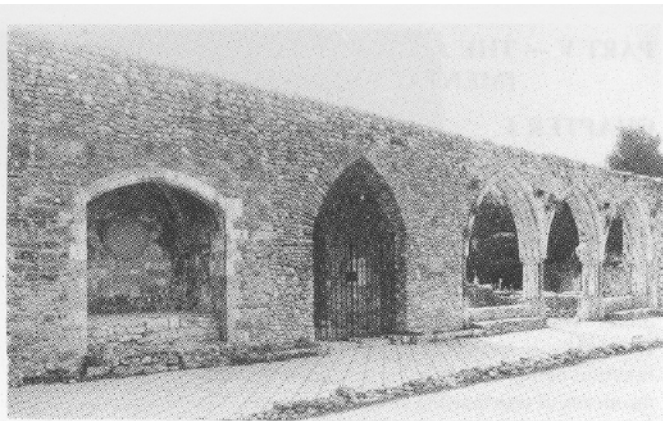


Fig. 105. Beaulieu Abbey Ruins.

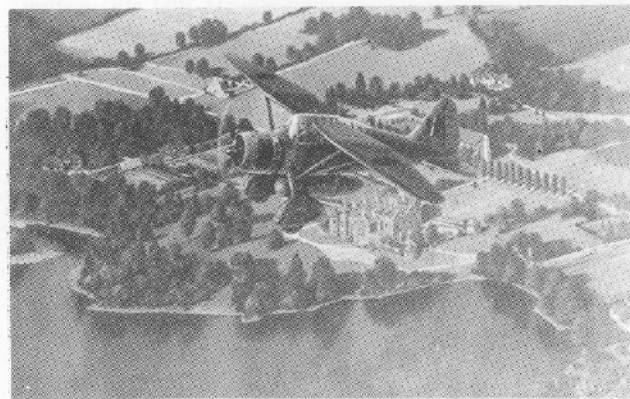


Fig. 106. Painting of a Westland Lysander flying over Palace House, Beaulieu.

Courtesy: Lord Montagu - Painting by Roger King.



Fig. 107. One of the large Beaulieu houses taken over by the S.O.E.

PART V — THE AIRBORNE FORCES EXPERIMENTAL ESTABLISHMENT

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

As stated in the last chapter, the control of Beaulieu airfield passed to No. 23 Group Flying Training Command on the 5th January 1945 and this heralded the arrival of the **Airborne Forces Experimental Establishment**. This was an RAF unit set up in 1941 under Army Cooperation Command to train airborne troops. Eventually it became the AFEE in February 1942, its main function being "to test and to assist in the technical development of the means of transporting airborne forces with their equipment and delivering them on the ground in a serviceable condition so that they could engage the enemy immediately. The Ministry of Supply assumed control of AFEE in 1946" (Information from the Ministry of Technology.)

The move to Beaulieu was made possibly by the retreat of the Germans from northern France, and so the AFEE arrived from Sherburn-in-Elmet (Yorks.) and stayed until 1947, when it moved to Boscombe Down.



Fig. 108. Don Willshire. Flying Wing Adjutant at Beaulieu, 1946.

CHAPTER 2

Organisation

The AFEE was split into three main experimental Flights (A, B and C) each specialising in a different aspect of research. 'A' Flight was concerned mainly with towing gliders (old bombers had been previously used). Some target towing and pick-up trials were also carried out.

'B' Flight experimented with the dropping of men and materials. This involved the development of parachutes and the most suitable methods of packaging such as foam rubber, cardboard, etc.

'C' Flight was involved with helicopters, not in developing them as such, but more in their adaptation for military use — introducing instruments like altimeters and equipment to assist night flying. A fourth section, 'M' Flight was responsible for maintenance and carried out major overhauls in the hangar shared with the helicopter section.

Each 'Flight' was self-contained with its own group of Ministry of Supply researchers. The Station C.O. who brought the unit to Beaulieu in 1946 was G/Capt. Ubee. His staff included the following:-

F/Lt. Roman (Stn. Adjutant),
 W/Cdr. Duder, DSO, DFC and bar (O.C. Flying Wing) (later W/Cdr Gibson),
 F/Lt. D. Willshire (Wing Adjutant) (Fig. 108),
 S/Ldr. Davis (Station Senior Engineering Officer),
 F/Lt. Springett (Engineering Officer),
 F/Lt. Pendleton (Station Equipment Officer),
 Section Officer Williams (O.C. of W.A.A.F.),
 Maj. Baslegate (Army Liaison Officer),
 F/Lt. J.J. Sanders (Station Dental Officer) later F/Lt. P. Holford,
 F/Lt. Pleasants (Station Photographic Officer).

'A' Flight	'B' Flight	'C' Flight
S/Ldr. Palmer (O.C.) (Later S/Ldr. May)	S/Ldr. A. Pitt (O.C.)	S/Ldr. Cable (O.C.)
F/Lt. Hodgkiss	F/Lt. Stagg	Lt. Sox Hosegood R.N.
F/Lt. Hellyar	F/O Davies F/O Matheson	F/Lt. Harper F/Lt. Gillies



Fig. 109. Airwomen at Beaulieu.

Courtesy: D. Willshire.



Fig. 110. Y.M.C.A. time August, 1946.

Courtesy: D. Willshire.

(This list was as remembered by Don Willshire and his late wife, Gladys, whose airfield romance blossomed like several others into marriage.) When G/Capt. Ubee later moved to Farnborough the new Station C.O. was G/Capt. Heath, who stayed until the unit left Beaulieu, and he was transferred to Calshot.

Airforce stations were instructed to invite local dignitaries to the mess and, as in the first World War, were themselves invited to Palace House, this time to enjoy the hospitality of the Hon. Mrs. Pleydell-Bouverie. Their own parties in the Mess would occasionally become a bit high spirited — at one the complete room, walls and furniture, was sprayed with red ink, which did not amuse the C.O., G/Capt. Heath.

The airfield with its dispersed sites would have involved a lot of time walking and thus all personnel had their own numbered cycle, (Fig. 109). Cycling without lights by RAF personnel was unofficially allowed during the War but afterwards about 120 summonses were issued as the police tightened up. At a house near Brockenhurst Station a lady allowed cycles to be left in the garden while their owners went home on leave or weekend pass. But if one had a good bike it was likely that it would be exchanged or 'borrowed'. Motorcycles were also in evidence and these came in useful for towing friends on bicycles, sometimes two at a time, to and from the Montagu Arms. There was also on the camp a 3 litre Bentley which the RAF had rented from a London Garage Co. It was a beautiful car in wonderful condition (c 1930-31 model), and had been fitted with a hook at the back, which for a short time enabled it to be used to tow light gliders into the air. It was returned to London during the summer of 1946 and there was quite a struggle for the pleasure of driving it back.

Snacks and such like were provided on the station by a YMCA

waggon (Fig. 110). At times cattle were allowed onto the airfield to help keep the grass down, and forest ponies would also occasionally find their way in uninvited and have to be chased out.

Prisoners of war were employed. About one hundred Italians were there in 1946 and performed menial tasks such as latrine attendants and during the following year some German P.O.W.s were still there. One of the more famous visitors being Willi Messerschmidt.

The Navy had loaned a whaler to RAF Beaulieu, and Harry Bell, the Lymington Hospital radiographer, helped teach RAF personnel how to sail it. He ran the A.T.C. in Lymington.

CHAPTER 3

Aircraft

The aircraft used at Beaulieu included the gliders Hadrian, Hotspur (H.H.838), Airspeed Horsa II (TL400 and RN379), CG-13A, G.A.L. Hamilcar I (NX858 and RR923), and the large powered glider G.A.L. Hamilcar X (RR986), (Fig. 111) appropriately nicknamed 'Jumbo'. One must not forget 'Trixie' when talking of gliders — this was a prototype General Aircraft GAL55 training glider (NP671) and in 1946 Sqn. Ldr. Palmer at the wheel of an Austin is pretending to act as tug (Fig. 112). 'A' Flight also had a number of 4', 8', 16', 32' Mk. I and 32' Mk. II target gliders, manufactured by International Model Aircraft.

Tugs — Short Stirling IV (LJ989), Handley Page Halifaxes III (576 and NA644), III A (LL615), and IX (RT758), a Lancaster, and Avro York GT1 (MW132).

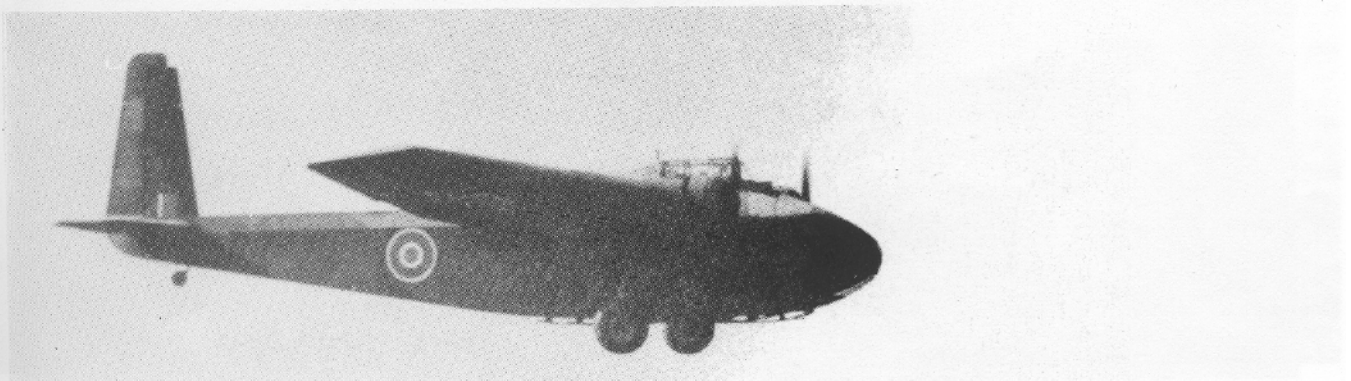


Fig. 111. Hamilcar X powered glider, known as 'Jumbo'.

Courtesy: Aeroplane Monthly.

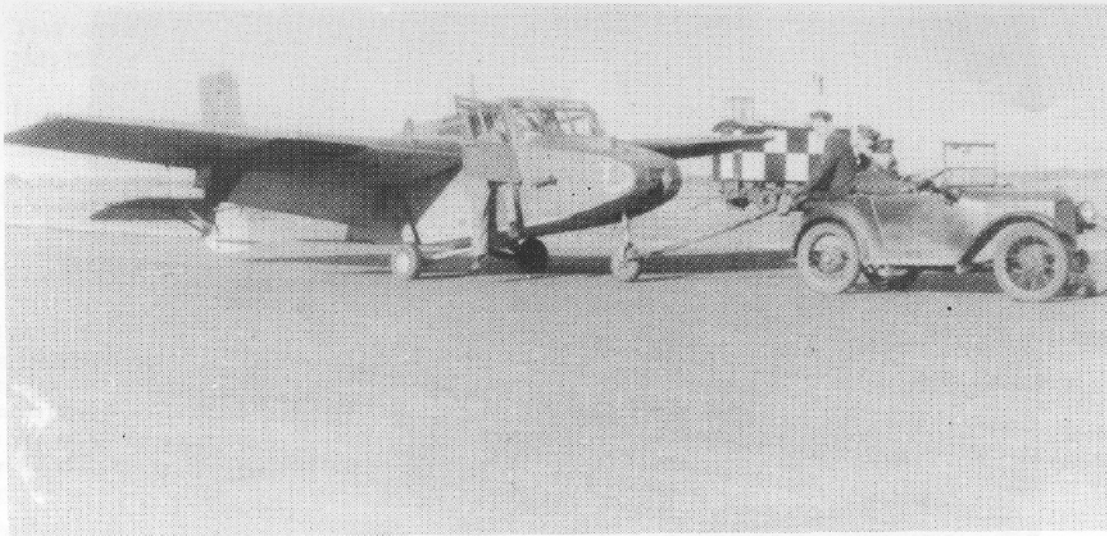


Fig. 112. Squadron Leader Palmer at wheel of Austin pretending to tow the glider nicknamed 'Trixie'.

Courtesy: D. Willshire.

Helicopters — included eight Sikorsky Hoverfly I's (KK974, 978, 987, 989, 994, 996, KL103 and 105) (Fig. 113), one Hoverfly II KN864.

Other aircraft included:-

Anson I (N5351), Avro Anson X (NK530), Lincoln (445), Percival Proctor III (HM319), Auster (GT-V TJ638), and Avro Anson X (MH129) used for mail snatching trials. A 'Wildcat' is also given in the Airfield Historical Research Group's list but this is probably a mistake by an aircraft spotter for Trixie, the stubby nosed glider (GAL55) mentioned previously. Little used aircraft were the Slingsby T.20 prototype (VM109), Miles Martinet (GT.1 HN959) and Supermarine Seafire TT.III (NN303). The latter two being in the Naval section, as also was a Miles Monitor II (NP406); this was the first twin-engined target-tug to be designed as such but after fire problems was replaced by another, NP422 (Fig. 114). A Fairey Firefly I (Z2037) was used for photography by the parachute flight who also used a Fairey Swordfish, a Douglas Dakota III (FD943) and a Handley Page Halifax A VII (PN308).

Wilmot and Mansour, two Ministry of Supply officers had a Supermarine Spitfire TT XVII (SM970) being converted into a target-tug with an electric winch in their small hangar on the south west perimeter of the airfield. Their hangar also housed a Grunau 2B Baby glider and some 'Frog' model aircraft they were developing to test the 'Jetex' model engine, also under development.

The above listings are from the records kindly given by **Don Willshire and John May** — Mr. May was a radio operator in Flying Control and mentions that the RT code for all Beaulieu pilots was 'Drinker' followed by a number, but assured me this had no significance, or only a little.

Some unusual visitors during the AFEE period included a civil Junkers Ju 52/3ms tri-motor aircraft piloted by Gp. Capt. Hinds in mid 1945. It had been previously used on regular flights between Germany and Scandinavia. Gp. Capt. Wheeler, a Trustee of the Shuttleworth Collection, brought a 1910 Depurdussin aircraft to Beaulieu, which would have been good company for the Sopwith Camel that 29 Training Depot rebuilt from various



Fig. 113. Sikorsky Hoverfly KK987 at Beaulieu in January, 1947.

Courtesy: Aeroplane Monthly.

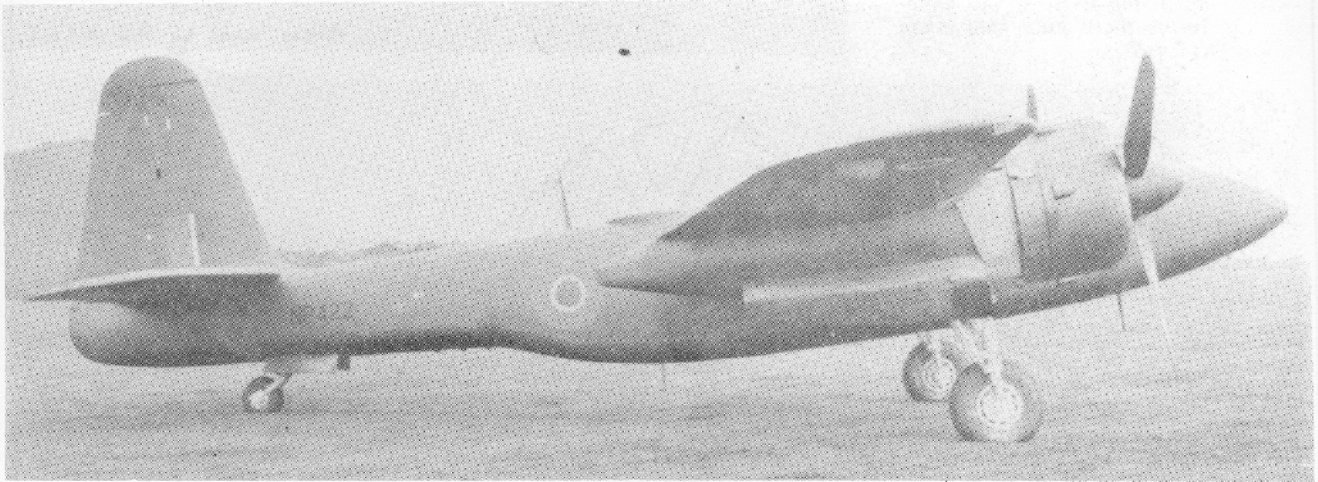


Fig. 114. Target tug NP422.

Courtesy: Aeroplane Monthly.

odd bits and pieces.

As one would expect in an experimental establishment, accidents would occasionally happen. For instance, Don Willshire recalls a Martinet being air tested after repairs, and the under-carriage would not come down. After following the instruction book's method of winding it down by hand, without success, the pilot tried the methods of several other pilots now gathered in the control tower — "Dive and climb", "fly upside down", etc. In the end the pilot had to fly round for an hour to use up the fuel and then do a belly landing on the grass at the side of the runway. He made a perfect landing and climbed out unhurt to greet the fire engine, crash tender, ambulance, etc.

There is one RAF burial in Beaulieu cemetery in May 1945 but I have not been able to link this 25 year old pilot with the AFEE. He was Flt. Lieut. William Geoffrey Eagle, DFC, RAF(VR) of Birmingham.

A tragedy that did happen on the airfield was exactly a year

later. It was on one of the first airfield Open Days since the war and Beaulieu was one of about twenty airfields chosen for this. The pilot, Sqn. Ldr. R.H. 'Smoky' Palmer (Fig. 112) O.C. 'A' Flight, was flying a Seafire III when it broke up in front of the spectators. He had not flown one of these planes for several years as he had been involved with 'A' flight towing gliders or other heavy stuff.

There were three Hafner Rotachutes which had been tested and finished with in 1946, but were still lying around the following year (Fig. 115). They were designed as a one-man rotating-wing glider/parachute, made of fabric and weighing about 76lbs. A 'Rotoplane' was also lying about having been brought to Beaulieu after testing at Sherburn. It was a jeep equipped with a rotor and tail plane plus two fins. It was towed as a glider, becoming known as the Flying Jeep or Rotabuggy, and jettisoned the rotor etc. on landing, but it finished up on the MT inventory as a replacement for a standard type jeep which did not survive a parachute drop.

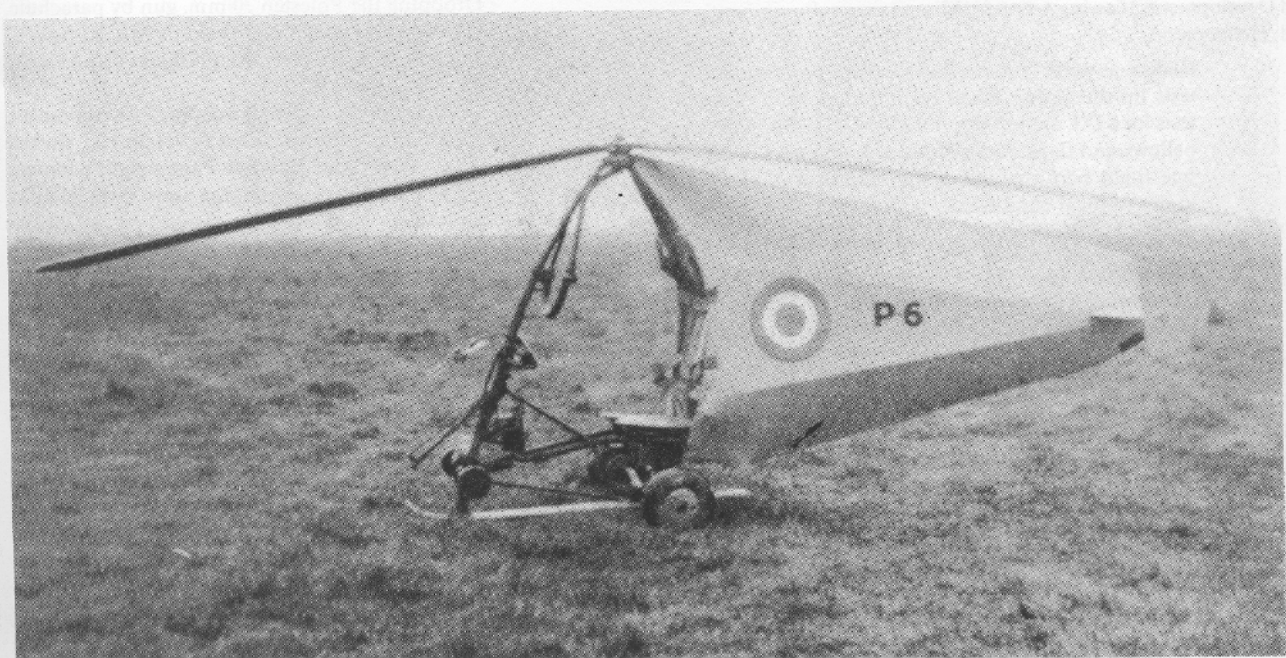


Fig. 115. Hafner Rotachute P.6.

Courtesy: Aeroplane Monthly.

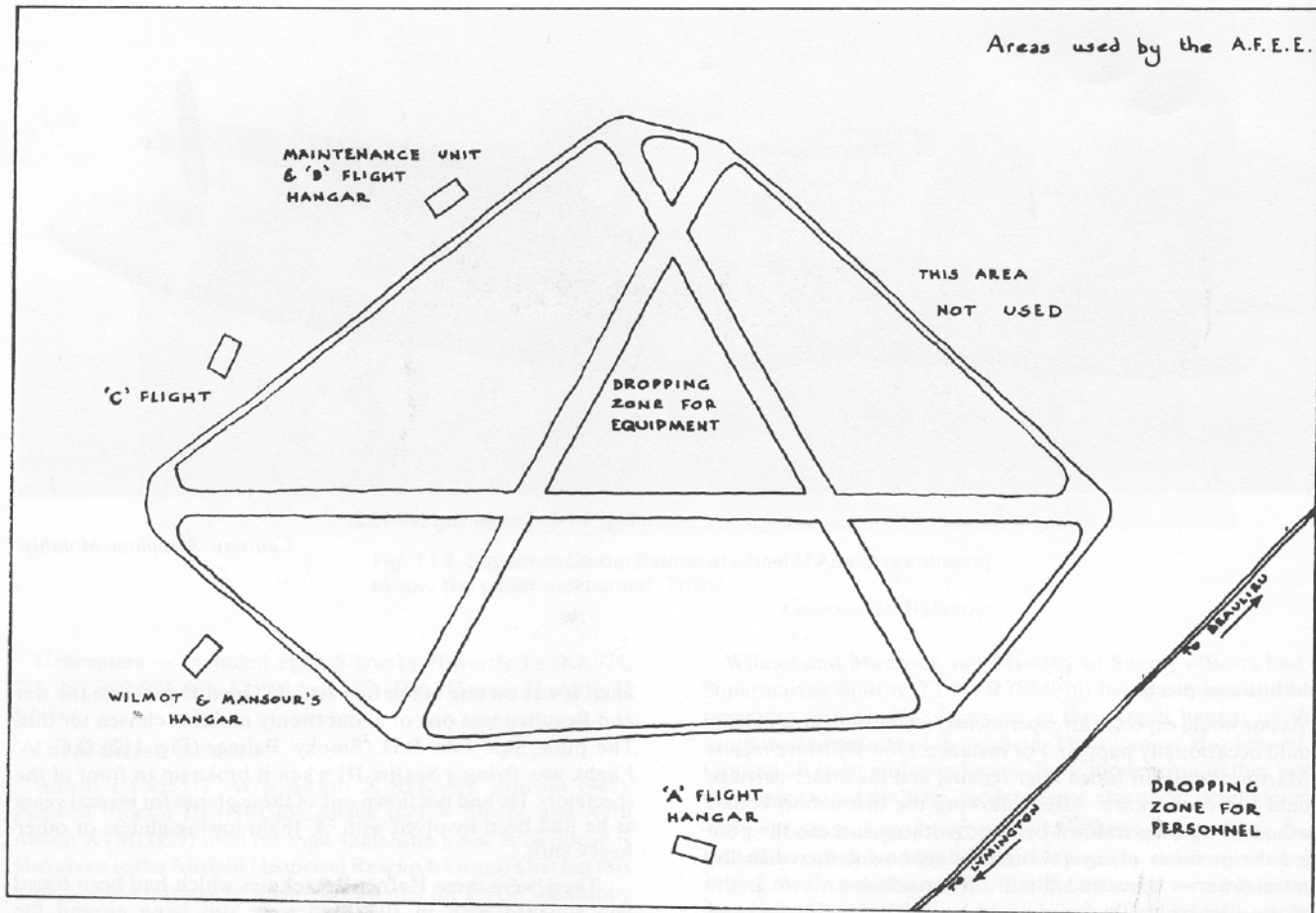


Fig. 116.

CHAPTER 4

The Research

The reports and results of the various research projects carried out by the AFEE while at Beaulieu still survive in their folders at the Public Record Office. The subjects of the Reports are classified under the headings 'Glanders', 'Parachutes', 'Research and Development', 'Towing Aircraft', 'Miscellaneous Equipment', and 'Helicopters'.

- (i) **Glanders.** as well as routine handling and performance tests on the gliders listed earlier, there were flight tests for a D.I. automatic pilot on the CG-13A glider, bellows and flaps in the Hotspur I, and tests of the free flight performance of the Hamilcar X glider under tropical conditions.
- (ii) **Parachutes.** The list of reports includes the following experiments:-
- Dropping wounded aircrew by parachute,
 - Folding trolley Mk. II : dropping tests from various aircraft,
 - Carriage of equipment by paratroops,
 - Special parachutes for dropping A.E.D. at high speeds,
 - Substitution of American G.I. parachutes for British container parachutes,
 - Non-oscillating 'X' type parachute : trials,
 - Parachuting from 'Cuda' floats,
 - Folding trolley for wireless sets : dropping tests from Stirling IV and Dakota aircraft,
 - Free dropping of miscellaneous packages from the Dakota aircraft roller conveyor,
 - Warwick C Mk. III aircraft of troop transport : trials,

- New type auxiliary for 28 ft. flat and 20 ft shaped gore parachutes : tests,
- Miscellaneous packages on toboggans : dropping tests from Dakota aircraft roller conveyor,
- Dropping the Polesten 20 mm. gun by parachute,
- Carriage and dropping Mk. I (T), Mk. III type 'C' and type 'H' containers from Wildcat V and Firefly FR Mk. I aircraft,
- Snatch eliminator for paratrooping with equipment,
- Paratrooping from Halifax A VII and XI aircraft with and without Handley Page freight pannier,
- Two 5 cwt. cars : dropping tests from Halifax aircraft,
- Carriage and dropping of folding bicycles from Dakota and Halifax aircraft,
- Ford 5 cwt. car and 75 mm. pack Howitzer with ammunition trailer : and 10 cwt. G.S. lightweight trailer : dropping tests from Halifax aircraft,
- Carriage and dropping tests of twin Mk. III containers from Halifax aircraft,
- Assessment of type B3 driftmeter for paratrooping,
- Paratrooping from Dakota aircraft at high speed,
- Carriage and dropping of Mk. I(T) and Mk. III containers from Typhoon F.1B aircraft,
- American 'Skyhook' container : dropping tests,
- Improvised packages for parachuting stores : dropping tests,
- Special paratroop green light for actuating interruptor gear,
- Maximum size and weight of loads dropped through parachute exits.



Fig. 117. A jeep & supply containers drop from a Halifax during trials at Beaulieu.

Courtesy: Aeroplane Monthly.

- Warwick C Mk. III as a paratroop aircraft,
- Carriage and dropping of 'F' type containers from Dakota aircraft,
- Stirling V aircraft for paratroop operations and troop transport,
- York aircraft for parachute operations : preliminary trials,
- Roller conveyor system for Stirling V aircraft,
- Automatic release of parachute gear,
- 'X' type parachute with imporous D panels.
- Commando C46 aircraft for paratroop operations,
- Supply dropping from Commando C46 aircraft using Dakota type roller conveyor system,
- Field impregnating sets Mk. I : dropping tests from Dakota aircraft,
- Hudson parachute release gear : automatic release of parachutes on landing.

On the 10th April 1946 F/Lt. Willshire went up with S/Ldr. Pitt in a Dakota to carry out a 'barometric parachute drop', the parachutist jumping out and the parachute opened at a certain height. The civilian parachute tester was Jimmy Driscoll, a veteran of about 200 jumps with the Parachute Regt. He had retired as a Warrant Officer and came back as a civilian. Major Baslegate acted as liaison officer with the paratroops. He lived on Lymington Quay and went up for his first flight in thirty years and viewed his house etc. On landing he covered back in the seat of the Dakota not realising there were brakes.

(iii)

Research and Development reports included:

- Investigation of the forces on equipment during parachute development,
- Extension of glider tow cable theory to elastic cables subject to air forces of a generalised form,
- Effect of the glider on the longitudinal trim of the tug,
- Comparison of the parachute forces during development of 'R' and 'C' type parachutes,
- Hoverfly I helicopter KK978: investigation into the technique of performance measurement on helicopters,
- Focke-Achgelis Fa 223E Helicopter No. V14,
- Cable forces in towed glider flight with hemp and nylon tow cables,
- Performance reduction methods used at AFEE for tug and glider aircraft,
- Vertical landing of a helicopter when the kinetic energy of the rotors is used as a temporary source of power

The Focke-Achgelis submarine kite was tested at Beaulieu using a land rover and trailer. It elevated an observer by means of a rotor blade, who then controlled his descent like a parachute; it was given further tests with a M.T.B. off Calshot but was again unsuccessful.

(iv)

Towing Aircraft

Reports were made on various types of towing aircraft:-

Halifax III NA644, Commando Mk. I C.46, Dakota III, Lancaster II, Halifax VI, Martinet I, Auster V, York C Mk. I and a Halifax A XI. The gliders used in these tests were the Hadrian, Horsa, CG-13A, Hamilcars I and X, Hotspur, TX3/43, Grunau sail plane, TX 8/45, and Horsa II, and the experiments were performed in various climatic conditions, described as 'temperate summer' and 'tropical' the latter being performed in India at times.

(v)

Miscellaneous Equipment

These reports include endurance tests for the pick-up ropes of a Hadrian, and pick-up tests of Horsa I and II gliders by a Dakota aircraft.

Cable laying experiments were performed using the Auster in 1945 and two years later using the Dakota. The Auster was also used in September-November 1945 to perform mail pick-up tests and the detailed report of this by G.P. Norman gives the following information:-

Summary. Tests of an installation in an Auster aircraft of mail pick-up gear have shown that a mail bag containing 20 lbs. of mail can be successfully picked up in flight.

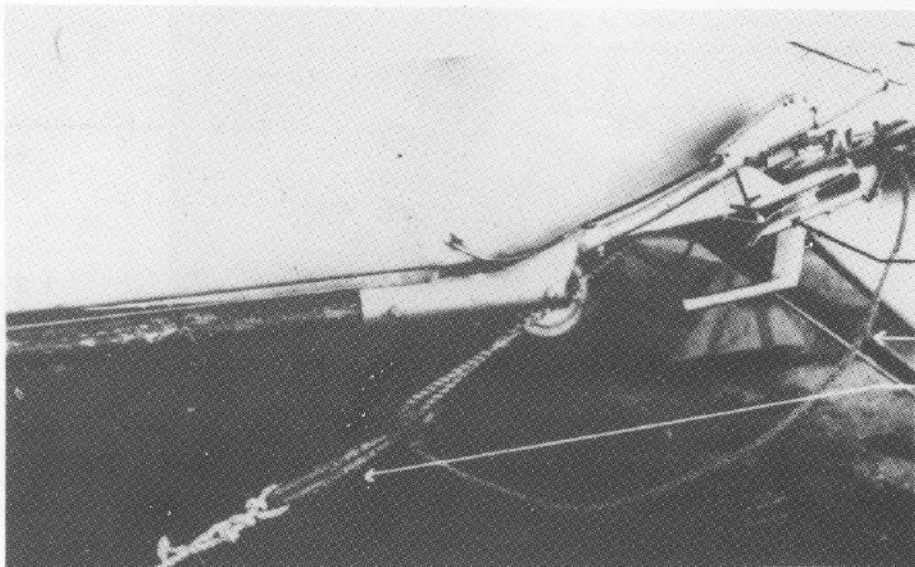


Fig. 118. Pickup Arm in stowed position, nylon rope & weak link connected.

Courtesy: P.R.O.

SPRUNG CLIP FOR SURPLUS ROPE
TIE LINE
WEAK LINK

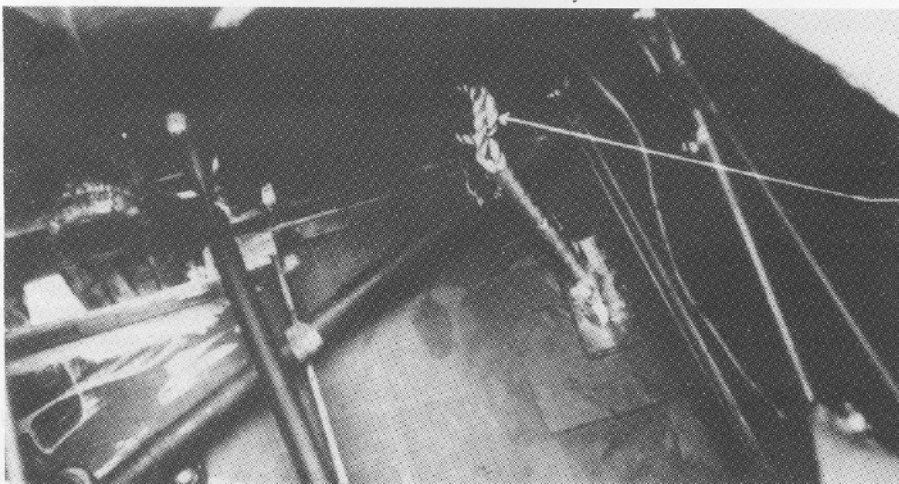
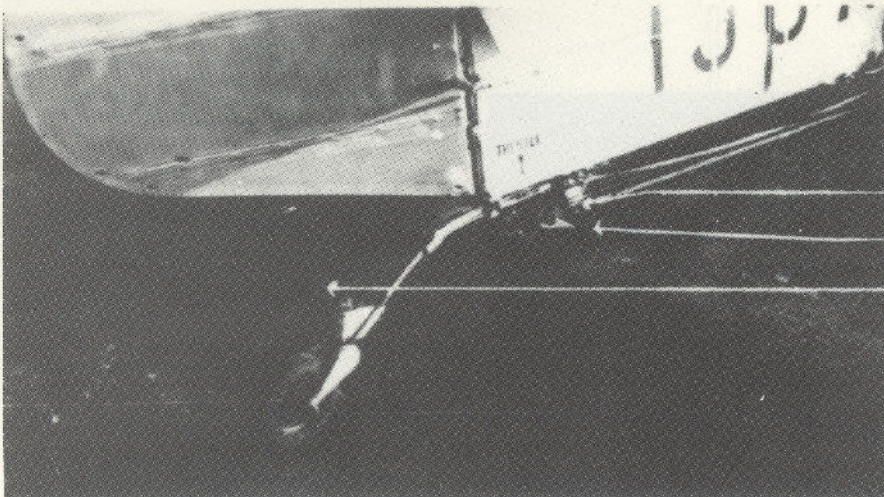


Fig. 119. Attachment point of pickup rope to cross member of airframe.

Courtesy: P.R.O.

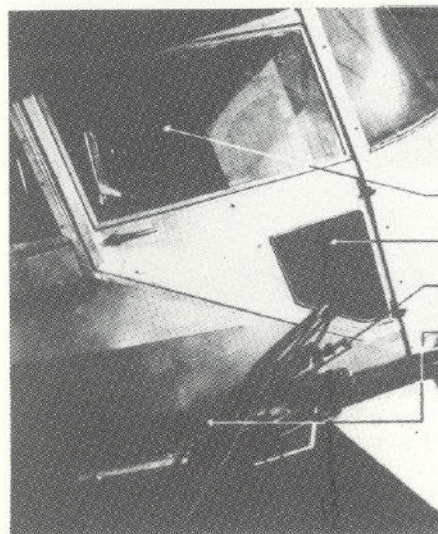
PICKUP ROPE ATTACHMENT POINT, OPERATOR'S SEAT REMOVED.



SPRING RETAINER
 PICKUP HOOK
 TAILWHEEL GUARD

Fig. 120. Tail Wheel Guard.

Courtesy: P.R.O.



REAR WINDOW, OPEN POSITION
 PANEL CUT IN DOOR, OPEN POSITION
 HAND GRIP FOR OPERATING POLE
 BOWDEN CABLE TO REAR
 POLE STOWAGE CLIP

Fig. 121. Modified Door.

Courtesy: P.R.O.

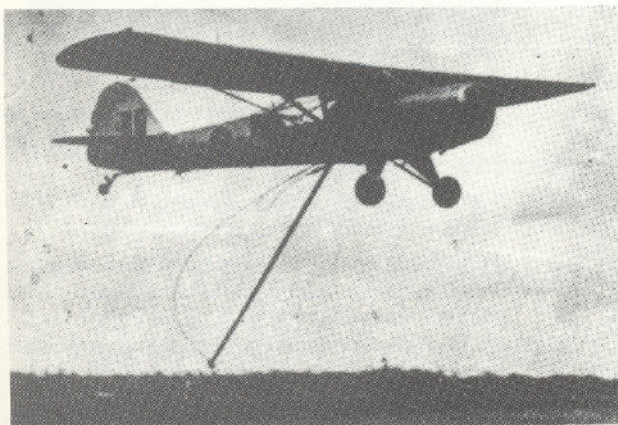


Fig. 122. Auster in flight with pole down & hook in position for pickup.

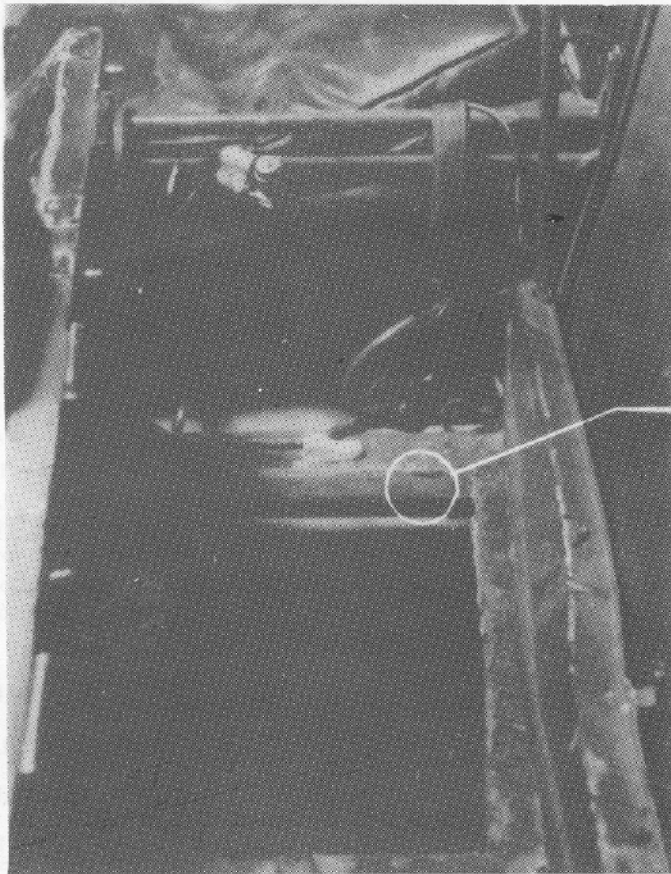
Courtesy: P.R.O.

Description

(i) The Aircraft. Auster V TJ645 fitted with a wooden pick-up arm 12 feet long having a metal track fitted along its upper surface to accommodate the pick-up hook. The arm was attached to the aircraft by a pivot near its forward end, and raising and lowering were carried out manually by hand on the extreme forward end of the arm. In the stowed position the arm was retained by spring loaded catches fore and aft, operated by Bowden cables from the hand raising and lowering grip.

The pick-up hook at the end of a 25 feet length of 3,000 lbs. nylon rope connected through a 1,000 lbs. weak link of double 7/8" manilla rope to an 18" length of 3,000 lbs. nylon rope spliced around a suitable strong point of the aircraft (shock truss at frame 2a). (Figs. 118 & 119)

Tests were tried with the starboard door off (too uncomfortable), rear portion of window openable and hinged panel (Fig. 121), (awkward getting mail bag in past the pilot), and finally with a hole cut in the floor behind the operator's seat. (Figs. 123 & 124)



PROPOSED REVISED POSITION
OF SURPLUS ROPE CLIP.

Fig. 123. Modification - Access hole in floor.

Courtesy: P.R.O.

to perform mail pick-up runs and the detailed report of this by G.P. Norman gives the following information:-
summary. Tests of an installation in an Auster mail pick-up gear have shown that a mail weighing 20 lbs. of mail can be successfully fed up in flight.

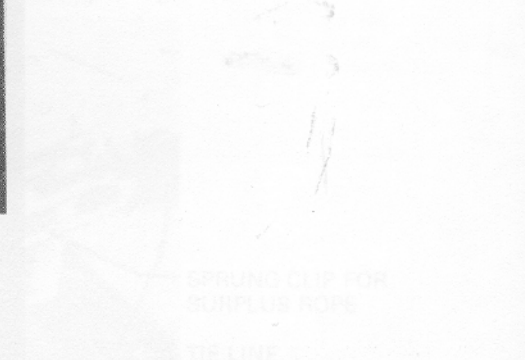
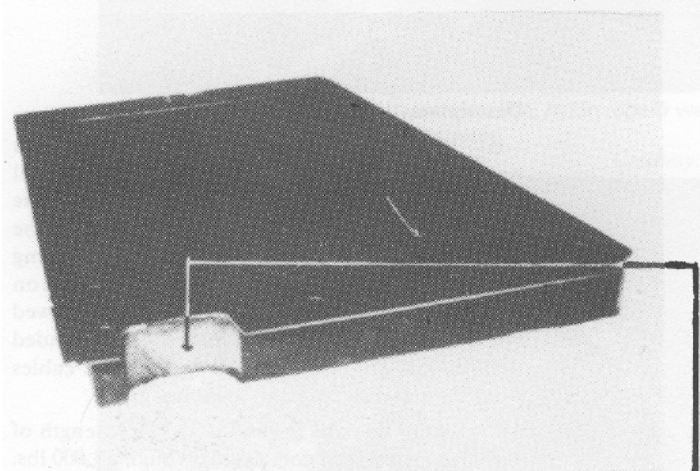


Fig. 124. Detachable Panel for hole.

Courtesy: P.R.O.



RECESS FOR
ENTRY OF ROPE
FOR STOWAGE.

(ii) Ground Station. Two 12 feet poles, wood or metal, are used to construct the attachments for a 50 feet loop of 3,000 lbs. nylon rope (Fig. 125). The mailbag is constructed of reinforced canvas 30" long, 8" diam., with a detachable wooden head. (Fig. 126).

Procedure

- (i) Open near starboard window and remove floor access panel.
- (ii) Lower pick-up arm and feed pick-up hook to end of track.
- (iii) Approach pick-up at 70 m.p.h. A.S.I. level off at 10-14 feet.

Climb steeply just before the pick-up station to avoid mailbag bouncing along the ground after pick-up.

Keep speed down to approximately 50 m.p.h. A.S.I. to allow operator to haul in the mailbag.

Dropping of Mailbag. If required a full mailbag can be dropped out of the hole on the approach to the pick-up Station.

Pick-up experiments are also recalled by Don Willshire involving a Dakota trying to snatch a glider from the ground using a ground station set-up almost identical to the above; and there were also attempts to assess if it were possible to pick up a person using a similar technique. This was performed with dummy models.

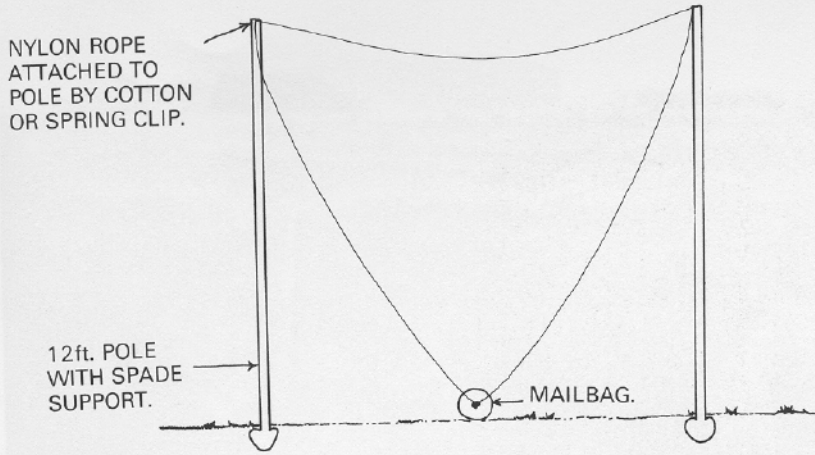


Fig. 125. Ground Station.

CHAPTER 5

Helicopters

The files on the helicopter reports at the P.R.O. were kept closed until 1979, a few year's extension to the usual twenty years for some unknown reason. Beaulieu had been used for a helicopter demonstration in 1944, (before the days of the AFEE), when a Sikorsky R4 helicopter was flown by the American Sox Hosegood. (Fig. 127)

As mentioned earlier, the AFEE's main interest was in testing equipment to put in the helicopter to improve its capability for military uses, and not developing the actual helicopter itself. One of the unit's helicopters, and pilot S/Ldr. 'Jeep' Cable, came in useful for the 1946 Boat Race, when the B.B.C. wanted to provide a commentator with the advantage of an aerial view.

The AFEE were not using Beaulieu airfield to the full and during 1946 squatters had moved in around the first entrance. The Boscombe Down establishment had made the use of the High Post airfield impractical and so the Wiltshire School of Flying sought permission to use Stoney Cross or Beaulieu when Ministry of Supply use finished. Not surprisingly this was refused by the verderers.

Now began a long period of negotiation before the airfield was handed back to the Deputy Surveyor and verderers.

Fig. 126. Mail Bag.

Courtesy: P.R.O.

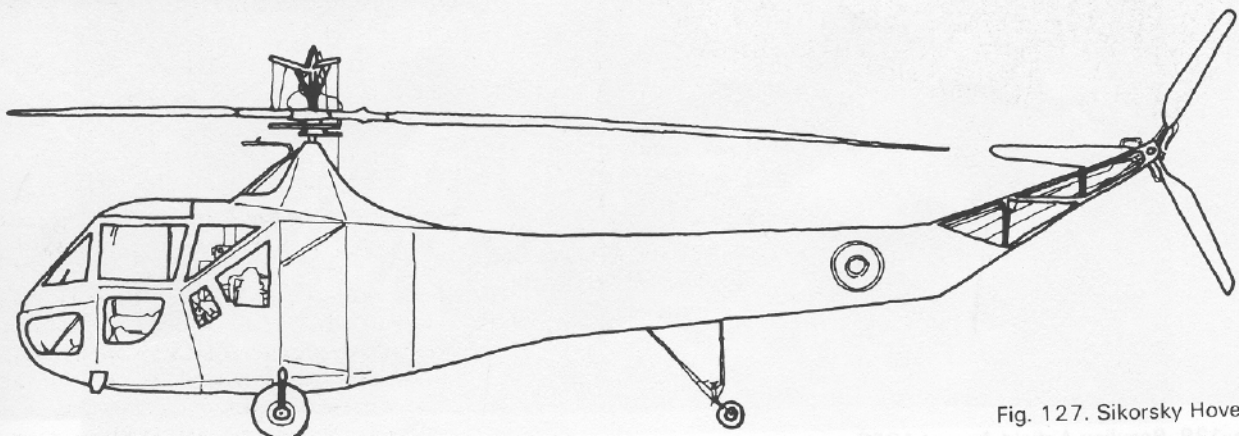
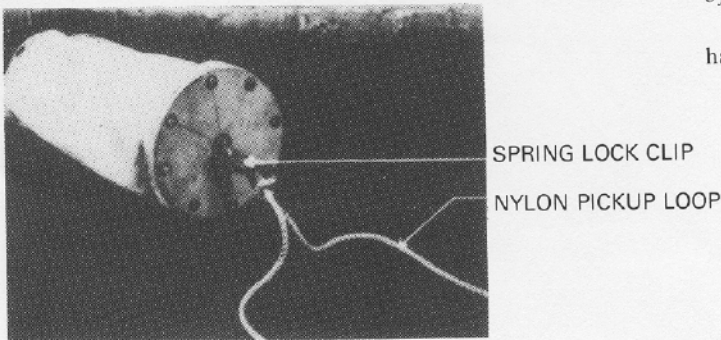


Fig. 127. Sikorsky Hoverfly.

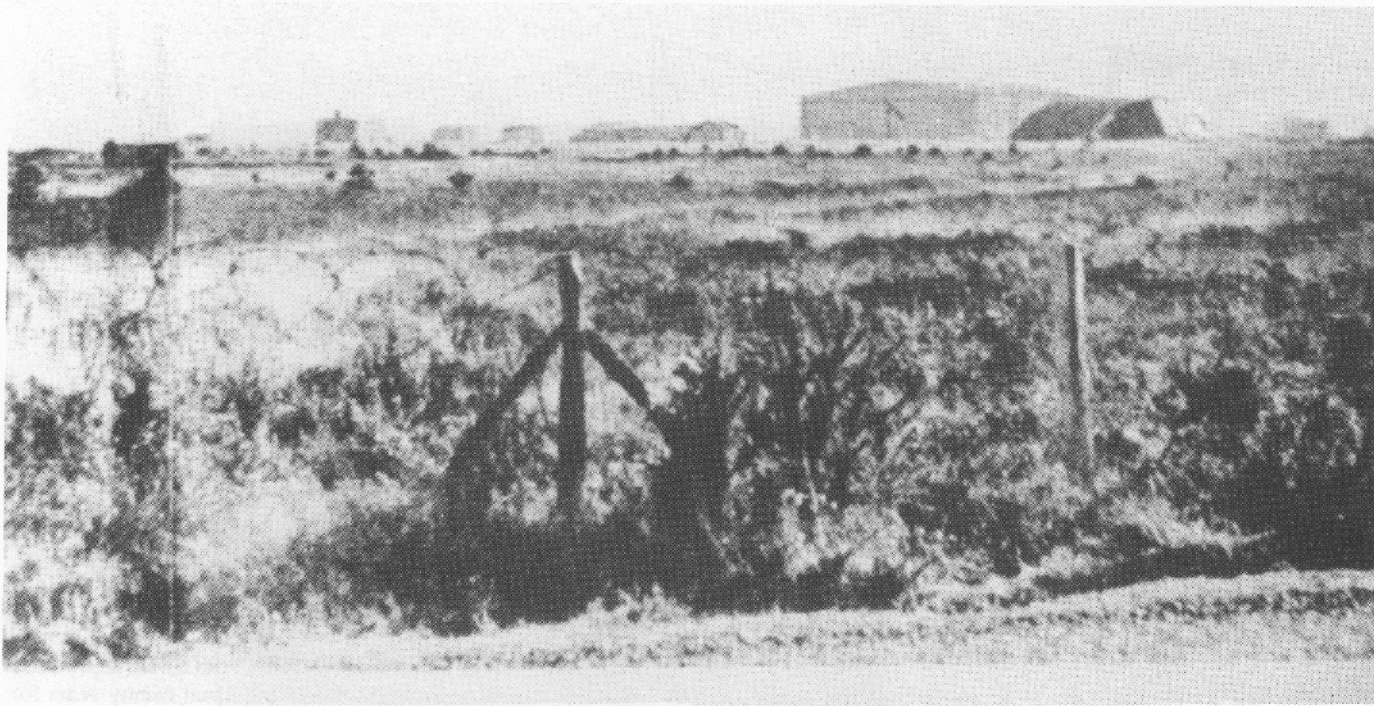


Fig. 128. Beaulieu Aerodrome 1948.

Courtesy: New Forest Association Report.

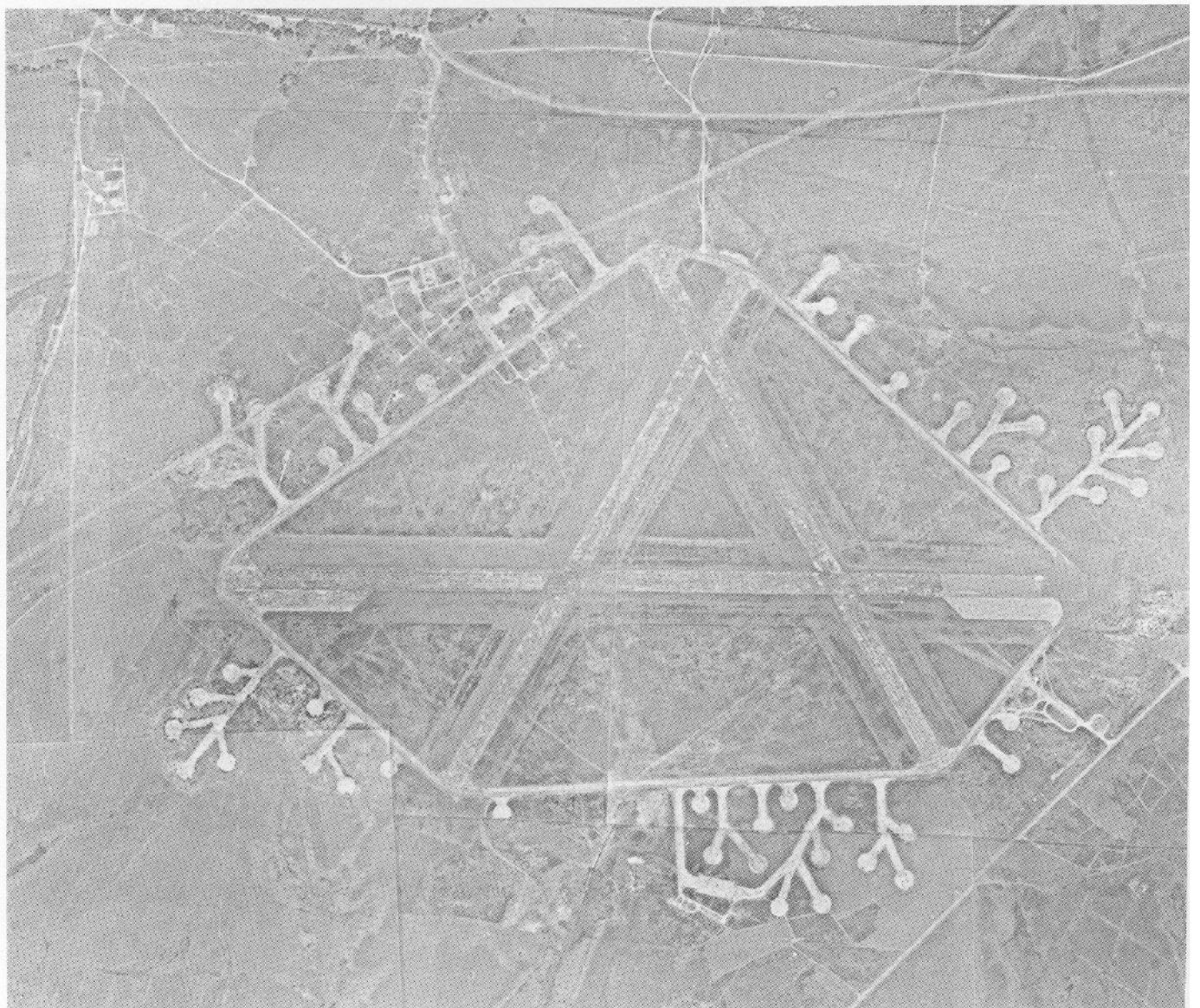


Fig. 129. Beaulieu Airfield August 1968.



Fig. 130. Aeromodellers, 1981.

PART VI—POST-WAR RUNDOWN AND REHABILITATION

Before the end of the war the Deputy Surveyor had claimed that—“if there is any attempt to maintain the aerodromes after the war the Forest will be largely ruined”. The airfields of Stoney Cross and Holmesley were reopened for the Commons’ animals in summer 1947, while the Air Ministry sought to retain Beaulieu so that in the event of war it could be brought into use without delay. Agreement was reached to this effect in 1950 on condition that the airfield would not be used for flying in peacetime. Some areas of the dispersed sites (Fig. 90) had been declared redundant in 1948 and offered to other Government Departments. The New Forest R.D.C. expressed an interest in Site No. 2 and WAAF site for use as housing.

During the crisis of the early 1950’s the rearmament programme meant a large expansion in flying training and the airfield was re-enclosed with a perimeter fence (Fig. 128) to prevent cattle damaging the newly asphalted runway. To compensate for this the verderers’ rent was increased from £101.6.-. to £151.19.-. in March 1951. It was agreed the following year that RAF personnel on station would not exceed 50 and that flying would take place in daylight mostly during fine weekdays—this was in connection with the use of the airfield as a relief landing ground for Tarrant Rushton where Messrs. Flight Fefuelling Ltd., were operating. So naturally when Tarrant Rushton airfield ceased in 1954 the verderers hopefully enquired if Beaulieu Heath was at last going



Fig. 131. Crash at Hilltop.

to be theirs again. But again the Air Ministry were in procrastinating mood, wanting to retain it on a 'Care and Maintenance' basis in case of a future war. The previous year it had been allocated to the U.S.A.F. and intended for development, and although some Americans arrived and started doing up the runways, guardroom, and HQ, it was never operational. In 1956 more sites were released, this time the Bomb Stores and HF/DF sites.

At long last in December 1957 the Air Ministry decided they no longer wished to retain Beaulieu airfield, but it was not until March 1960 that they relinquished possession and even then there were six small matters to complete the reinstatement of the airfield; namely clearing debris, fertilising, harrowing, filling trenches and covering tarmacadam heaps with soil.

During the rehabilitation period the airfield was used for various miscellaneous activities such as the demonstration by the Ford Motor Co., of 13 vehicles used for petrol consumption tests, acceleration and braking tests, etc., in 1956. A Civil Defence exercise was held using the buildings as sites for rescuing bombed civilians. The hangars served as cookhouses.

Various other proposals were refused by the verderers. Norman Jones sought permission to land private aircraft and got approval from the RAF and the local MP but not the verderers. Neither did the Royal Yachting Association with a similar proposal the following year (1957). A scheme to confine camping to twenty four acres of the airfield in exchange for a similar area of Crown Freehold land being made available also met with no success, being thwarted by the Planning authorities. The idea of the proposal was to then ban camping elsewhere in the forest. Another proposal was by the Ministry of Aviation in 1959 to build a long range radar station, occupying six sites at the eastern end of the runway. This met opposition from all quarters — the local Planning Authority, C.P.R.E., and the New Forest Association.

So into the 1960's with large areas of the concrete runways remaining, for motorcyclists to roar round and learner drivers to practice on. The Deputy Surveyor gradually whittled away at this, reducing the 7" thick concrete to crushed hardcore, and even Anthony Pasmore admits that it has "since been transformed to quite reasonable grassland". An aerial photo of 1968 shows this in progress. (Fig. 129).

There had been a mound of about 2,300 cubic yards of gravel just outside the perimeter fence near the Beaulieu-Lymington road. This was sold at auction for £350 but the cheque was not met and so the local auctioneers had to pay the Air Ministry. They managed to find a 'small man' who would remove the gravel over a two-three year period and suggested a £5 p.a. rental to the verderers, pending removal.

Back in July 1958 an approach was made to the verderers by the West Hants Aeromodellers Association to use the airfield again. They had used it earlier in the year, describing it as "**the finest flying field in the whole of England**". The aeromodellers continue to utilise the eastern end of runway No. 1 (Fig. 130).

A privately owned plane paid an unscheduled stop on Beaulieu Heath at Hilltop in November 1979 (Fig. 131). The twin-engined Piper Seneca had left Manchester for Lee-on-Solent with a kidney for a transplant for a Southampton man, and, piloted by its owner, Charles Strasser, had crashed in fog soon after 5 a.m. A report published eighteen months later mentions pilot fatigue, an incorrect cloud base estimate being supplied to the pilot by a ground controller, and an unidentified radio transmission which the pilot interpreted as a signal from a direction finder on the ground. In the event, the kidney although undamaged was not used due to tissue matching difficulties. The pilot and co-pilot both from Stoke-on-Trent, escaped uninjured and so sixty-nine years on from the first crash landings of the New Forest Flying School let us hope that this was the last.

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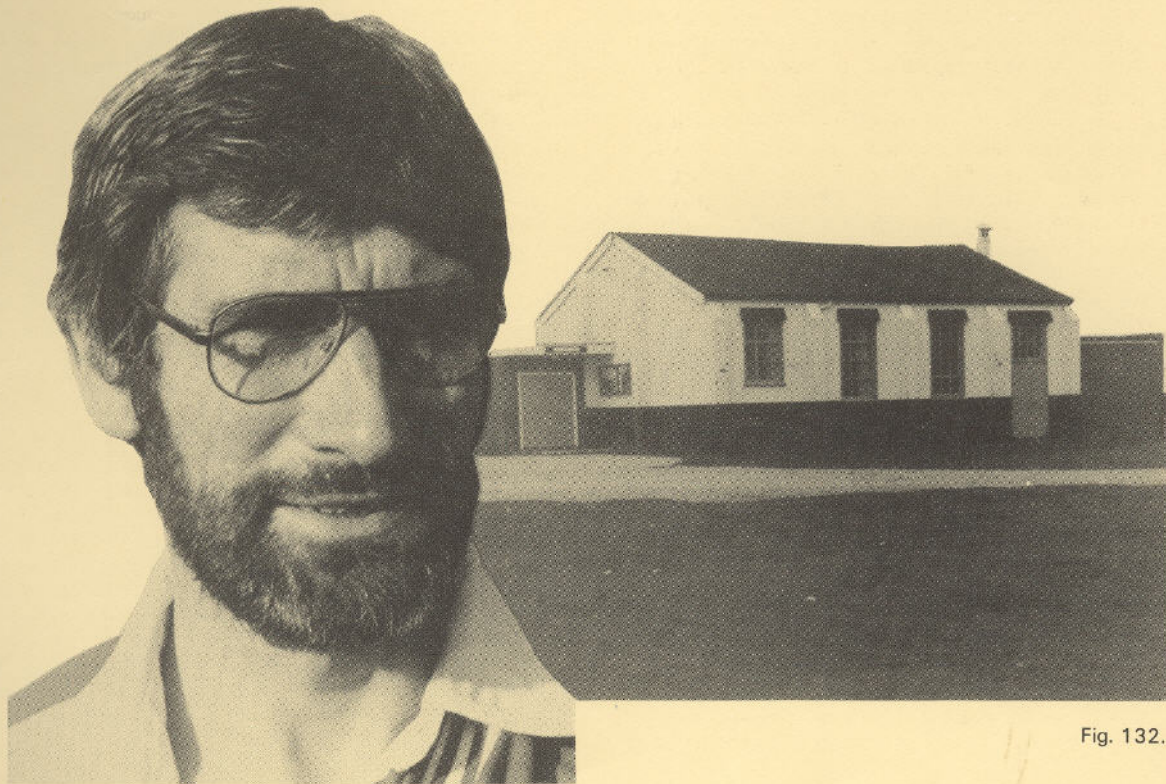


Fig. 132.

BOB COLES (*the author*) spends his working life as a physio-therapist and chiropodist trying to get other people fit, and then attempts to keep himself fit at Lymington Squash Club, refusing to admit that he is really too old!

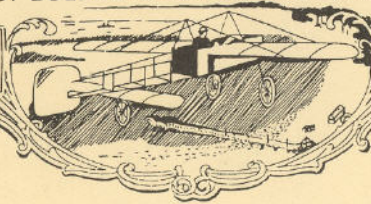
He has for many years had an interest in local history and, when he moved to East Boldre from Lymington seven years' ago, became curious to know more about the lumps and bumps he stumbled over while jogging with the dog over the local heath. Thus began the collection of photos and reminiscences and searches through archives, culminating in this book.

THE EAST BOLDRE VILLAGE HALL is the lone surviving building from the First World War airfield and is now used for all the various village activities, such as the under-5's Playgroup, the Youth Club, and the older generation's Luncheon Club.

NEW FOREST AVIATION SCHOOL

EAST BOLDRE · BEAULIEU · HAMPSHIRE

Proprietors: W. E. MEADLE
J. ARMSTRONG'S DECEL
Plot Licensed Royal Aero Club of
United Kingdom and FLEETWOOD
CLUB



STATION: BROCKENHURST
SCHOOL AND SOUTH WEST
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FLYING BEAULIEU

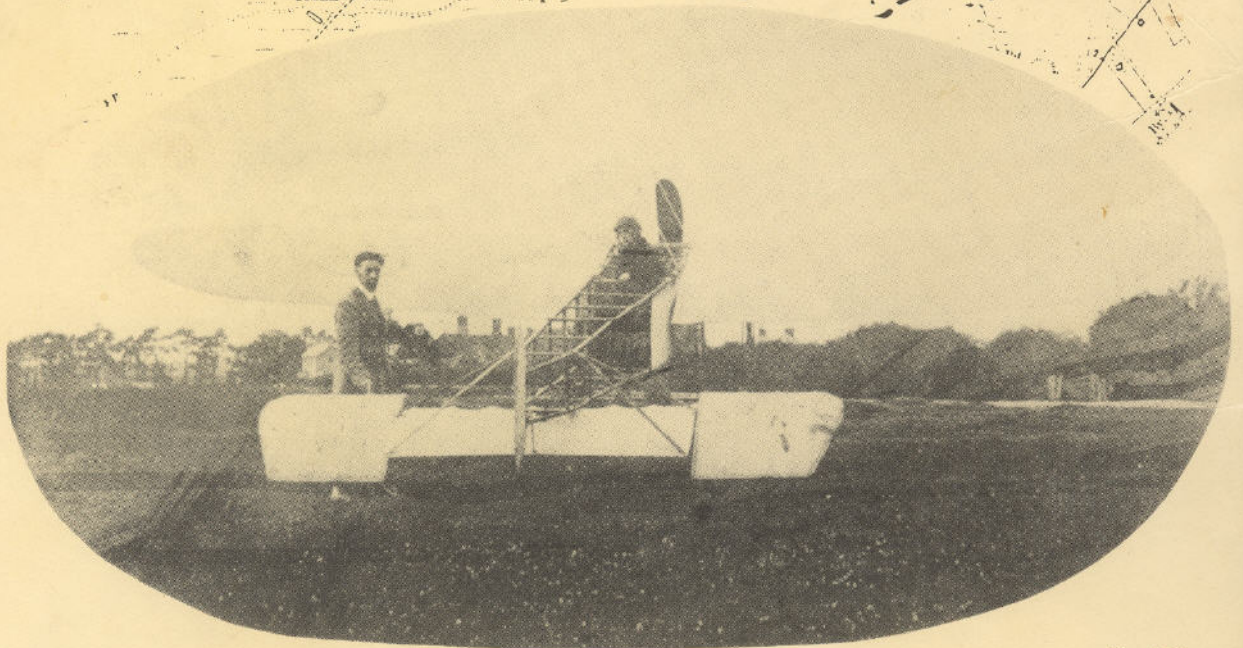
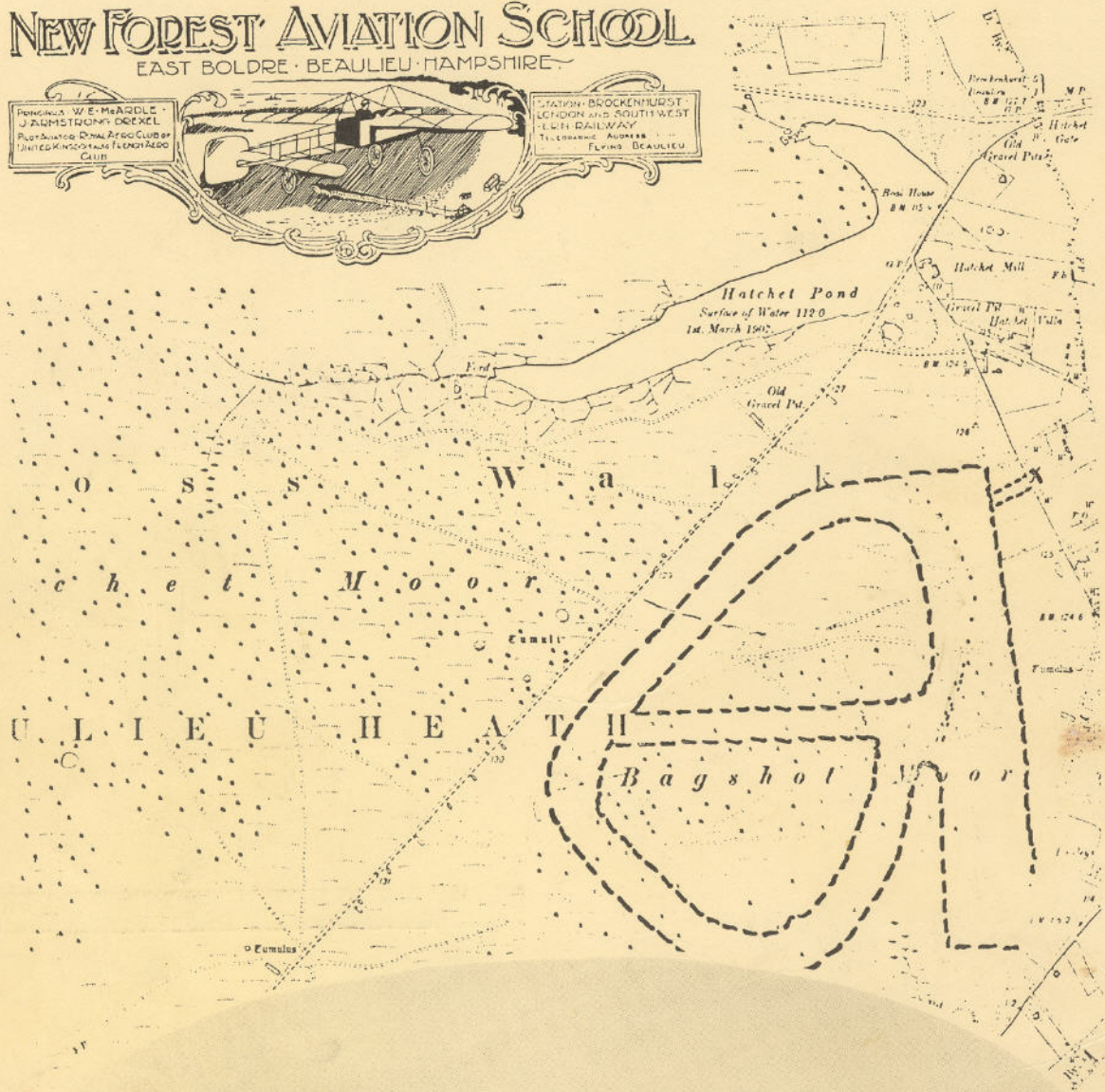


Fig. 133.