

HERITAGE OF FLIGHT

in South Lincolnshire



CELEBRATING OUR AVIATION HISTORY

Contents

Wartime Legacy	3
Military Abbreviations	4
Aviation sites	5
Bomber County	6
Man to be proud of	7
Aslackby	8
Buckminster	9
Barkston Heath	10-11
RAF Belton Park & RAF Alma Park	12-13
Vale of Belvoir; incident log	14-15
Bottesford	16-17
Caythorpe	18-19
Folkingham	20-21
Fulbeck	22-23
Grantham / Spitalgate	24-25
Harlaxton	26-27
Crew Memorials; Lancaster and Spitfire	28-29
North Witham	30-31
Saltby	32-33
Little America	34-35
South Witham	36-37
St Vincents (Grantham)	38-39
Woolfox Lodge	40-41
Cold War Radar	42
Bomber Command Memorial	43
Battle of Britain Memorial	
Flight Visitor Centre	
RAF Scampton Heritage Centre	44
Lincolnshire Aviation	
Heritage Centre	
Newark Air Museum	45
Places to visit in South Kesteven	46-49
Places to stay in South Kesteven	50-51
How to get here	52



Produced by South Kesteven District Council. We would like to acknowledge contributions made to this publication from Howard Heeley, Down to Earth Promotions, Group Captain Bill Taylor, de Havilland Support Ltd, Phil Bonner, Aviation Heritage Lincolnshire and the individual history groups from key airfield sites.

Wartime Legacy

South Lincolnshire has for too long been Bomber County's forgotten chapter, with its airfields and actions pivotal to milestones in airborne military conflict.

During WWII, Operation Chastise, immortalised as the Dambusters raid, Operation Overlord (D-Day), Operation Market Garden (Arnhem) and the deception pre-D-Day trickery of Operation Glimmer all involved local airfields.

On the night of 617 Squadron's Dambusters raid by Lancaster bombers in 1943, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur 'Bomber' Harris and bouncing bomb inventor Barnes Wallis waited at Grantham's Bomber Command HQ in St Vincents for news that Germany's Möhne and Eder dams had been breached. Many hailed it as the turning point of the war.

In 1944, the building was HQ for the USAAF Air Force's 9th Troop Carrier Command to co-ordinate the allied airborne assault for D-Day.

On June 5th none other than General Dwight Eisenhower, Allied Supreme Commander, stopped by the North Witham Pathfinder base to shake hands

with his 101st Airborne Paratroopers. They took off late that evening as the first combat troops to be dropped in France four hours before the beach landings.

On 6 June, Folkingham, Saltby and Barkston Heath launched waves of C-47 Dakota aircraft to drop allied paratroopers in the main D-Day offensive.

Operation Glimmer, Bomber Command's deception operation in advance of the D-Day landings involved aircraft from Woolfox Lodge. Across the district, other airfield sites played their part, many with their own lasting memorials.

Our proud aviation heritage, from WWI through WWII and into the Cold War, has prompted the publication of 'Heritage of Flight', inspiring imaginations and evoking a thousand memories. We hope it encourages you to explore, marvel at the aviation heritage on the doorstep and ponder the district's significant role.

We owe a huge debt of thanks to the service personnel from across the globe who served here. It is our salute to airborne endeavour and sacrifice.

Heritage of Flight is also available online on www.heritageofflight.co.uk

Our 'Aviation Trail' pocket guide will help find airfields and memorials, discover places to visit and the charm of our market towns.



Military abbreviations

AADA	Advanced Air Depot Area	OTU	Operational Training Unit
AAP	Air Ammunition Park	PHU	Personnel Holding Unit
ACS	Aircrew Commando School	RAF	Royal Air Force
ADG	Air Depot Group	RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
AFC	Australian Flying Corps	RAFVR	Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
AFU	Advanced Flying Unit	RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force
AIB	Accident Investigation Branch	RFC	Royal Flying Corps
BAT	Beam Approach Training	RFS	Refresher Flying School
BDTF	Bomber Defence Training Flight	RLG	Relief Landing Ground
BGF	Bomber Gunnery Flight	ROC	Royal Observer Corps
OCTU	Officer Cadet Training Unit	RU	Resettlement Unit
DTE	Defence Training Estates	SAM	Surface to Air Missile
ELG	Emergency Landing Ground	SFTS	Service Flying Training School
FTS	Flying Training School	TAD	Tactical Air Depot
HCU	Heavy Conversion Unit	TCG	Troop Carrier Group
HD	Home Defence	TCS	Troop Carrier Squadron
JETS	Joint Elementary Training School	TCW	Troop Carrier Wing
IRBM	Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles	TDS	Training Depot Station
LFS	Lancaster Finishing School	TS	Training Squadron
MC	Maintenance Command	USAAF	United States Army Air Force
MSU	Maintenance Sub Unit	USAF	United States Air Force
MU	Maintenance Unit	WRAF	Women's Royal Air Force
		WWI	World War One
		WWII	World War Two

Aviation Sites

- 1 Aslackby: memorial to British & American parachute and glider troops
- 2 Buckminster: 38 Squadron tackling WWI Zeppelin threat
- 3 Barkston Heath: launched two major WWII airborne assaults
- 4 Belton: first RAF Regiment depot and training ground
- 5 Belvoir (Vale of): aircraft crash sites in the Vale
- 6 Bottesford: Manchesters, Lancasters and Dakota C-47 aircraft
- 7 Caythorpe: shrine to airborne forces through the years
- 8 Folkingham: USAAF Troop Carrier Command & Thor missiles
- 9 Fulbeck: USAAF Troop Carrier Command & Screaming Eagles
- 10 Grantham / Spitalgate: WWI, Tiger Moths, Bomber Command and WWII training
- 11 Harlaxton: Australian WWI fighter squadron & WWII relief landings
- 12 Long Bennington: Lancaster crew memorial
- 13 Ropsley: Spitfire pilot memorial
- 14 North Witham: D-Day Pathfinders 82nd & 101st Airborne Divisions
- 15 Salby: D-Day operations with 82nd Airborne Division
- 16 South Witham: Air Ammunition Park & Tallboy bomb store
- 17 St Vincents: Home to 5 Group Bomber Command and USAAF HQ
- 18 Woolfox Lodge: Operation Glimmer D-day deception operation
- 19 ROTOR radar: underground radar control bunker



Bomber County



Lancaster 'Just Jane' at the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre

South Lincolnshire's rich aviation heritage has its roots in the RAF expansion programme as war loomed again in the mid-1930s.

By 1940 the throttle was fully out in the search for prospective airfields. It was to be a war where aviation was used to devastating effect.

Lincolnshire's location on the east of the country made it the ideal launch pad for potential bomber offensives. Saltby, Folkingham, Fulbeck and North Witham were the result.

The Air Ministry demanded larger airfields, with facilities hidden to reduce risk of attack. Any trees and hedges that needed grubbing up were retained on maps for security reasons and waste oil and creosote used to imitate ground shadows to deceive enemy aircraft.

Bombers needed a main runway of

1,829 metres with subsidiary runways of 1,463m and up to 41 cm of concrete. Fighters needed 1,280 and 1,006 metres respectively. They could not be steeper than 1 in 30; hence the attraction of Lincolnshire's wide open and relatively flat spaces.

Even Lincoln Cathedral played its part, as a landmark for pilots during WWII.

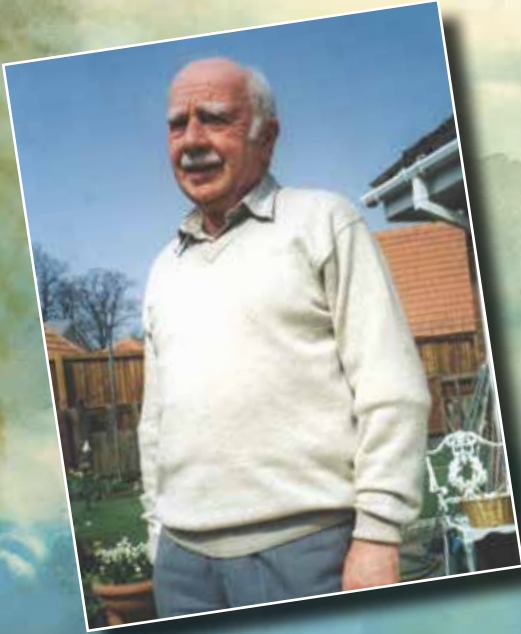
Its Airman's Chapel houses the Memorial Books of 1 & 5 Groups, RAF Bomber Command.

Lincoln itself was one of the top five manufacturing centres of the Great War, with more than 5,000 aircraft constructed in city factories.

By the end of the war in 1945 the county had 49 operational airfields.

Of these, 28 were bomber bases, more than any other in Great Britain.

Man to be proud of



When we selected our front cover picture, we thought it was a random choice.

But it includes a WWII wireless operator and instructor who personifies the commitment and professionalism of our aircrew, so perhaps other forces were at work ...

Stan Bray (above and kneeling

Parachuting from a doomed aircraft over Leeds in 1944, he landed to meet a local who said.. "Does tha' know lad, I paid half a crown before war to see a chap jump out of a plane and I've seen five of you this morning for nowt!"

Log book extract: "Bombing – MULHEIM – sortie completed. Bombed red T1 from 20000. Numerous small fires. Plenty of light flak. Evasive action – diving turn to port and starboard and climbing turns. Flak hole in front of MU turret."

centre front cover photo) logged 475 day and night flying hours by the time of his de-mob in 1945, surviving to tell countless tales of crashes, and close shaves in a wartime flying career started on Wellingtons, using Woolfox as a satellite station.

Typifying the international friendships that survived the war, he crewed-up with an Australian pilot who later became his best man!

Moving on to Lancasters and flying out of Bottesford, they flew their first operational sortie on June 22, 1943 with a 4 hrs 55 mins night-time raid on Mulheim – just five days after first joining their operational squadron. In January 1945 he turned down a voluntary op delivering a Stirling to Northern Ireland for scrapping. The aircraft crashed near Annesley Woodhouse near Mansfield, killing all on board. It left Stan with bitter regrets over the lost crew and especially the student who replaced him on that ill-fated op - but alive to enjoy a well-earned retirement.

Aslackby

Location:

on the outskirts of Aslackby close to the A15

Units Commemorated:

British 1st Airborne Division; 1st & 4th Parachute Brigade 'Red Berets'; United States 17th, 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions; United States 52nd Wing, 313th Troop Carrier Group – 29th, 47th, 48th and 49th Squadrons.

A stone tablet and plinth memorial in Aslackby village cemetery commemorates the role of British and American parachute and glider borne troops, pilots and aircrew that operated from nearby RAF Folkingham airfield during World War II.

The memorial was established by Aslackby and Laughton Parish Council, supported by South Kesteven District Council and various military

associations, whose details are listed on the memorial. The memorial was originally dedicated in July 1994.

Supporting military associations: Bourne Branch of the British Legion, United States members of the 29th and 47th Troop Carrier Squadron Associations, comrades who served in the Anglo-American Airborne Army, relatives, friends and local parishioners.



Aslackby memorial

Buckminster

Location:

no trace of the airfield remains

Dates of Operation:

1916 to 1919 – World War I
landing ground

Squadrons / Units:

28 Squadron

90 Squadron

A small grass landing field was established at Buckminster in September 1916 for use by Home Defence Squadrons. The first squadron to be based there was 'C' Flight of 38 Squadron, which had its headquarters across the county boundary in Melton Mowbray.

Equipped with FE2b biplanes, 38 Squadron undertook night patrols to attack any Zeppelins operating over the East Midlands. The squadron moved out

in May 1918 and was replaced by 90 Squadron, which was operating Sopwith Camels and Avro 504s, again used as night fighters. Squadron headquarters were at Buckminster and 'A' Flight operated at Leadenham.

After the end of World War I, the unit was disbanded in 1919 and the site returned to agriculture. Buckminster was never reactivated and today there is no trace of Buckminster airfield.



Barkston Heath

Location:

close to the B6403 road (Ermine Street) and the A153 road near Ancaster

Dates of Operation:

1936 to 1942 – Relief Landing Ground & training base

1942 to 1944 – Upgrading & under construction

1944 to 1945 – 9th USAAF base – Station 483

1945 to 1946 – Maintenance Command base & RAF Regiment

1948 to 1966 – Relief Landing Ground

1966 to 1983 – Various uses including civilian flying

1983 to 1989 – Bloodhound missile base

1989 to current – RAF training base

Squadrons / Units:

5 Group Aircrew
Commando School
9th USAAF 52nd Troop Carrier Wing (TCW)
61st Troop Carrier Group (TCG) with 14th, 15th, 53rd & 59th Troop Carrier Squadrons (TCS)
349th TCG with 23rd, 312th, 313th & 314th TCS
40 Group Maintenance Command
RAF Regiment
25 Sqn Bloodhound missiles
85 Sqn Bloodhound missiles
Joint Elementary Flying Training School

RAF Barkston Heath's current role as a Relief Landing ground (RLG) for RAF Cranwell, mirrors its first activity in 1936.

In December 1942 the Aircrew Commando School (ACS) arrived from RAF Winthorpe providing training and discipline for 5 Group aircrews between

Operational Training Unit (OTU) and Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU) courses.

Concrete runways and hard standings were cast during 1943, and, like other local bases, RAF Barkston Heath was allocated to the 9th United States Army Air Force (USAAF) 52nd Troop Carrier Wing (TCW) and known as Station 483.

The first units of the 61st Troop Carrier Group (TCG) arrived with Douglas C-47s from Sicily in February 1944, comprising the 14th, 15th, 53rd and 59th Troop Carrier Squadrons (TCS). All four trained locally for parachute dropping and glider towing, with various assault gliders. Many of the T2 hangars were erected alongside the Ermine Street.

Flying returned to Barkston Heath in 1948-1966 as a RLG - again for RAF Cranwell's Harvards, and later Piston and Jet Provosts. In 1983 Bloodhound SAM missiles were moved from RAF Germany.

It is currently home to the Joint Elementary Flying Training School (JEFTS), run by Babcock PLC and operating Mk II Firefly two seat trainers for all three branches of the British forces.

Squadrons from Barkston Heath took part in D-Day (Operation Overlord) dropping men of the 82nd Airborne Division in France.

They also participated in the Arnhem campaign (Operation Market Garden) helping to deploy the 1st Parachute Brigade of the British 1st Airborne Division by glider in Holland in September 1944. The 61st TCG moved to France in March 1945 and was replaced at Barkston Heath the following month by the 349th TCG with 23rd, 312th, 313th & 314th TCS with their Curtis C-46 and C-47 aircraft; who then also moved to France.



Awaiting their departure to infiltrate behind enemy lines at Arnhem are the paratroopers from the 1st Parachute Battalion.

'We Shall Remember Them ...'

A new memorial has been created at RAF Barkston Heath to commemorate its own vital role in Operation Overlord and Operation Market Garden and that of key satellite airfields. Hewn from local stone and with engraved panels listing dates and activities, the memorial sits just within the perimeter fence near the guard room. It can be viewed by appointment.

The current control tower at RAF Barkston Heath

RAF Belton Park & RAF Alma Park

Location:

Belton House: close to the A607

Alma Park: close to the B6403 road (Ermine Street)

Dates of Operation:

1941 to 1946 – RAF Regiment HQ & training bases

Two stately homes close to Grantham, Belton House and Alma House (later demolished), have proud connections to the Royal Air Force Regiment; a unit with its origins in Iraq during the 1920s and the formation of No 1 Armoured Car Company.

At the outbreak of World War II the RAF

conducted its own airfield defence and security but the risk of invasion saw around 14,000 troops deployed to help defend airfields.

In autumn 1941 the Air Ministry requisitioned Alma House and established an HQ for this new RAF unit, with first training sessions in the grounds of RAF Alma Park. The RAF Regiment was officially formed by Royal Warrant on 1st February 1942, but outgrew the space at Alma Park and moved to nearby Belton House, to be known as RAF Belton Park and widely accepted as being the first RAF Regiment Depot.

The regiment soon relieved the Army of airfield security duties, adopting the two thousand series for its squadron numbers, ranging from 2701 to 2850. It grew to 80,000 men with 280

Squadrons / Units:

Royal Air Force Regiment

squadrons of 185 men.

At the end of the war the RAF Regiment was retained as part of the RAF. The Depot moved from RAF Belton Park to RAF Catterick, North Yorkshire, in 1946 and the bases at RAF Alma Park and RAF Belton Park closed in the summer of 1946.

During World War I both of these sites were training camps for the Machine Gun Corps, where approximately 18,000 soldiers received their training before going out to the Western Front. The name of Alma House is perpetuated by a modern industrial estate. Belton House is now operated by the National Trust.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/belton-house



Belton Park in WWI

Vale of Belvoir; incident log

The Vale of Belvoir once echoed to the sound of World War II bombers and troop carriers.

Belvoir Castle itself is a prominent landmark in the Vale of Belvoir and overlooks 16,000 acres of woodland and farmland. In the past the estate has hosted the International de

Havilland Moth Club Rally and its peaceful pastures still harbour wreckage from crashed aircraft.

Aircrew nationalities that lost their lives illustrate the international nature of the flight training activities that were taking place across the district. Two incidents typify the losses:



A Stirling bomber like the one that was lost at Breeder Hills.

Breeder Hills Stirling

4 miles west of Grantham close to the Sedgebrook to Woolsthorpe by Belvoir road.

A Short Stirling Mk III, EF186 (GP-V), from 1661 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU), based at RAF Winthorpe, crashed whilst out of control at Breeder Hills near Grantham on December 4th 1944. The aircraft had taken off at 2030 hours to undertake the adverse weather part of their HCU Course. The crash happened at 2055 hours, shortly after the aircraft entered cumulus nimbus cloud while practicing recovery from unusual flight attitudes. The Stirling had a crew of nine and is thought to have met icing problems. The crew are commemorated with a memorial at Newark Air Museum.

Stirling aircrew killed:

RAAF, F/O Gordon Roch Campbell (Instructor)

RAFVR, F/S Derrick John Standring (Pilot)

RAFVR, Sgt William Ley Howarth (Flight Engineer)

RAFVR, Sgt Leslie George Diggins (Flight Engineer)

RAFVR, Sgt Eric William Heaton

RAFVR, Sgt Alma Louis Terry

RAFVR, Sgt - Anthony Winn (Wireless Operator)

RAFVR, Sgt Bernard Stowe (Air Gunner)

RCAF, Sgt Kevin Cyril Glinz (Instructor)

Knipton Lancaster

Location: south west of the village of Knipton

On the 4th April 1944, Lancaster R5726 from No 5 Lancaster Finishing School (LFS) at RAF Syerston crashed at 1545 hours close to Branston village at the southern end of Knipton reservoir.

The aircraft was on a flight from Syerston – Shrewsbury – Shaftesbury – Syerston, which included a practice bombing run at the Wainfleet Range on the Lincolnshire coast. A detailed record of the incident is noted on the Accident Investigation Branch (AIB) report.

A local eyewitness noted a thunderstorm in the area just before the crash and that they had heard an aircraft diving at high speed above the clouds. Then as the aircraft came out of the clouds it started to disintegrate before crashing into the ground and catching fire.

The AIB report also notes: “parts were distributed up to 2½ miles from the main impact point.” On the mainplane (wing) it stated: “starboard one was not recovered and is believed to have fallen in a reservoir over which the wreckage was scattered.” It also noted: “Loss of control was probably accentuated by presence of icing and bumpiness in the cumulo-nimbus cloud.”

The crew of Lancaster R5726 was largely comprised of Australian airmen:

RAAF - F/O J D Murray (Pilot)

RAFVR - SSgt S Chappell (Flight Engineer)

RAAF - F/O W L Towers
(Navigator / Bomb Aimer)

RAAF - F/S W H Keeble, (Navigator)

RAAF - Flt Lt GO Grimwood
(Wireless, Air Gunner)

RAAF - F/S R G Williams (Air Gunner)

RAFVR - Sgt R E J Sisley (Air Gunner)



The recovered wing tip from Lancaster R5726 is displayed at Newark Air Museum.

Bottesford

Location:

close to the Long Bennington to Bottesford road near Normanton

Dates of Operation:

1941 to 1943 – 5 Group Bomber Command (parent station)

1944 – US Troop Carrier Command

Base – Station 481

1944 to 1945 – RAF Bomber Command training base

Post 1948 – Farming & light industrial use

RAF Bottesford stretched across different counties with the technical site infrastructure located in Lincolnshire and major parts of the runways and the old watch office in Leicestershire.

Built as a parent station, its early construction included several hangars.

RAF Bottesford opened as a Bomber Command airfield in autumn 1941 as part of 5 Group and its first squadron was 207 Squadron that operated Manchesters. The squadron and base eventually became one of the first to receive Lancasters, but 207 Squadron left in September 1942.

467 Squadron, a largely Australian crewed squadron, started training in January 1943 and remained for around 12 months. The Australian connections remain strong until this day.

In summer 1943 Bottesford was allocated for US Troop Carrier Group use and became the headquarters for the 50th Troop Carrier Wing (TCW). It also acted as a reception base for C-47 aircraft and soon received the 436th Troop

Squadrons / Units:

207 Squadron

467 Squadron RAAF

USAAF 50th Troop Carrier Wing (TCW)

436th Troop Carrier Group (TCG) with 79th, 80th, 81st & 82nd Troop Carrier Squadrons (TCS)

‘Gee’ School

440th Troop Carrier Group (TCG) with 95th, 96th, 97th & 98th Troop Carrier Squadrons (TCS) 1668 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU)

Carrier Group (TCG) with 79th, 80th, 81st & 82nd Troop Carrier Squadrons (TCS).

Extra hangars were constructed in the build-up to Operation Overlord (D-Day), and store Horsa gliders and others. The base also hosted the 'Gee' School, which trained C-47 navigators to operate this navigation aid.

In March 1943 the 436th TCG moved south and was replaced by the 440th Troop Carrier Group (TCG) with 95th, 96th, 97th & 98th Troop Carrier Squadrons (TCS), which trained with the 82nd Airborne troops that were deployed in Leicestershire. During April the 440th TCG also moved south with the remainder of the 50th Troop Carrier Wing (TCW).

Bottesford once again returned to RAF use when 1668 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU) arrived in July 1944. Training mainly with Lancasters, 1668 HCU adopted a bomber defence training role with the addition of a flight of Spitfires and Hurricanes.

A crew prepares to board their Lancaster at RAF Bottesford.



Air and ground crew pictured at RAF Bottesford.



Refurbished wartime buildings still being used at Bottesford.

The nine wartime T2 aircraft hangars and original buildings have been modified by current owners the Roseland Group as modern warehouses, offices, workshops and storage. The original Watch Office is offices retaining many original features.

Roseland's new head office facility – attached to part of the original Squadron Headquarters - was inspired by a World War II control tower in Archerfield, Australia, as a fitting reflection of wartime Australian connections.

RAF Bottesford was also known as RAF Normanton and RAF Long Bennington – reflecting an RAF affection for the nearest town or village with the best public house.

Caythorpe

Location:

St. Vincent's Church, Church Lane,
Caythorpe - close to the A607 Lincoln/
Grantham road

Rarely can a village church have become such a shrine to the airborne forces - from two World Wars through Rwanda and The Falklands to the modern conflicts of Iraq and Afghanistan.

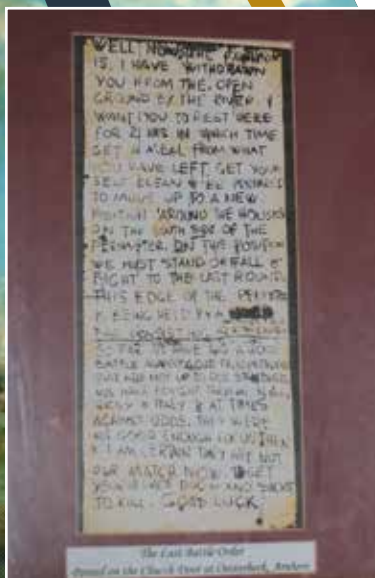
Nestled amidst bustling wartime airfields

and under Lincolnshire skies once echoing to the sound

of allied aircraft, St Vincent's Church in Caythorpe commemorates the district's aviation heritage with a poignant range of memorial plaques, artefacts, displays, two stunning stained glass windows and the Arnhem Aisle.

That mission was 'Operation Market Garden' and the connections between the soldiers and the village have been commemorated on 'Arnhem Sunday' on the first Sunday every September.

The strong bond with Caythorpe is recognised and supported by the Parachute Signals Squadron and its Old Comrades' Association, and supported by present members of 216 Signal Squadron when operational commitments allow. The Squadron commissioned a specially woven carpet incorporating the Badges of the



The Last Battle Order posted on the church door at Oosterbeek, Arnhem



The second Airborne Signals window



The patterned carpet in the Arnhem Aisle

Parachute Regiment and Royal Signals, presented and laid in the aisle.

In 1994 on the 50th Anniversary of the Arnhem mission, No.216 Parachute Signal Squadron donated the first stained glass window to the church in memory of Airborne Signallers, including the two soldiers who fell in the Falkland Islands War of 1982.

Also on this north wall of the church are the Memorials to those men from Caythorpe who were killed in the two World Wars and one to the 13 Signallers serving with 1st Airborne Signals in North Africa, Sicily and Italy, 1942-45.

Around the church are artefacts showing the unit's history including The Last Battle Order posted on the church door at Oosterbeek, Arnhem.

A further recognition of this association is the large boulder of Falkland Island stone with a memorial plaque, brought to St Vincent's in 2000.

A second Airborne Signals stained glass window was dedicated on 9th September 2012. This was to remember the Airborne Signals members who have lost their lives on operations since 1994 and included the campaigns: Rwanda, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Macedonia, Afghanistan and Iraq.

A plaque on the wall of the north aisle of the church explains the Arnhem connections.

“On September 15th 1974 the North Aisle was named The Arnhem Aisle and was dedicated by the Bishop of Grantham to the memory of the men of the First

Airborne Divisional Signals who were billeted in the Parish and neighbourhood before flying to Holland in their valiant attempt to establish a bridgehead over the River Rhine at Arnhem. September 17th 1944.”

Folkingham

Location:

turn off A15 into Temple Road by the Robin Hood & Little John public house through the village towards the Forestry Commission Temple Wood site. Drive 200 meters to a gate from where you can view the former airfield & remains of the Thor missile bunkers. This is a private site with no access.

Dates of Operation:

1940 to 1942 – RAF decoy site

1943 to 1945 – 9th USAAF

base – Station 484

1945 to 1959 – Maintenance Command

1959 to 1963 – Thor missile base

The first aviation use was in 1940 when a decoy site was established for RAF Spitalgate and reports indicate that it was bombed several times.

This role ceased in August 1942 with the decision to build the airfield.

On completion in late 1943

Folkingham was

allocated to the 9th United States Army Air

Force (USAAF) 52nd Troop Carrier Wing (TCW) and became known as Station 484.

The first units of the 313th Troop Carrier Group (TCG) arrived with their C-47s from Sicily in January 1944. The 313th TCG comprised of the 29th, 47th, 48th & 49th Troop Carrier Squadrons (TCS); the last element arrived on 5th March 1944.

The 313th TCG dropped troops from their C-47's on D-Day as part of Operation Overlord, for which they were awarded their second Distinguished Unit Citation. They followed this operation in the autumn by dropping troops from the 1st Parachute Brigade at Arnhem and Nijmegen, quickly followed by glider releases as part of the back-up landings. 313th TCG left for France in February 1945.

Squadrons / Units:

9th USAAF 52nd Troop Carrier Wing (TCW)

313th Troop Carrier Group (TCG) with 29th, 47th, 48th & 49th Troop Carrier Squadrons (TCS)

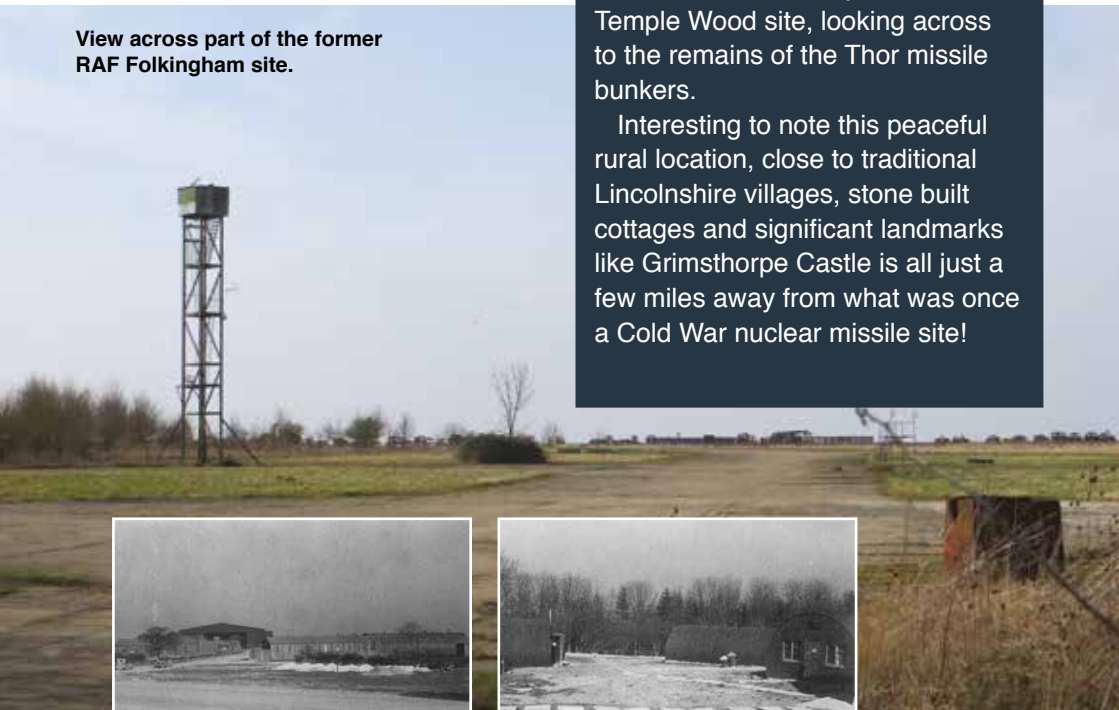
RAF Maintenance Command

223 Squadron – Thor IRBM, (Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles)

The base was placed under control of Maintenance Command in June 1945 and many RAF Regiment units transited through Folkingham whilst being disbanded. At this time the base was under the control of RAF Belton Park.

Brief spells followed as a Civil Defence training site and a motor racing test circuit. This site was most notably used by famous British Racing Motors (BRM). This was a British Formula One motor racing team that had its headquarters nearby; behind Eastgate House on the Spalding Road in Bourne.

View across part of the former RAF Folkingham site.



In the late 1950s Folkingham became a Thor IRBM base, operating within the North Luffenham Missile Wing of 3 Group Bomber Command.

Three missiles were located on the base between December 1959 and August 1963 and they were operated by 223 Squadron. The base eventually closed and large areas sold off in 1967. Much returned to agriculture, with some runway areas used for vehicle and transport storage.

Parts of the site can be viewed from near the Forestry Commission Temple Wood site, looking across to the remains of the Thor missile bunkers.

Interesting to note this peaceful rural location, close to traditional Lincolnshire villages, stone built cottages and significant landmarks like Grimsthorpe Castle is all just a few miles away from what was once a Cold War nuclear missile site!



Wartime hangar and buildings at Folkingham



Nissen accommodation huts at Folkingham

Fulbeck

Location:

close to the A17 on the Stragglethorpe to Brandon (Marston) road. This is a private site with no access.

Dates of Operation:

1940 to 1942 – Relief Landing Ground (RLG)

1943 to 1943 – RAF training base

1943 to 1944 – 9th USAAF base – Station 488

1944 to 1945 – RAF Bomber Command base

1945 to 1959 – Maintenance Depot

1956 to 1960s – RLG

Current – mixed use including Defence Training Estates (DTE) use

In 1940 Fulbeck was a Relief Landing Ground (RLG) for RAF Cranwell, then allocated to 5 Group Bomber Command.

Concrete runways were laid allowing gunnery training for 1485

Bomber Gunnery Flight (BGF) and flying resumed for Cranwell's

Service Flying Training School (SFTS).

By May 1943 it was home to 1506 Beam Approach Training (BAT) Flight. 1485 BGF operated briefly with Lancasters from Heavy Conversion Units (HCUs) at Swinderby and Winthorpe.

Fulbeck was then allocated to 9th USAAF 53rd Troop Carrier Wing (TCW) and renamed Station 488. The first unit was the 434th Troop Carrier Group (TCG) with 71st, 72nd, 73rd & 74th Troop Carrier Squadrons (TCS) undertaking intensive training with C-47s, gliders and practice parachutist drops.

442nd Troop Carrier Group (TCG) soon moved to Fulbeck with 303rd, 304th, 305th & 306th Troop Carrier Squadrons (TCS), later transferring to 9th USAAF 50th Troop Carrier Wing (TCW) and dropping parachutists near

Squadrons / Units:

1485 (Bomber) Gunnery Flight

RAF College – Service Flying Training School (SFTS)

1506 Beam Approach Training (BAT) Flight

9th USAAF 53rd Troop Carrier Wing (TCW)

434th Troop Carrier Group (TCG) with 71st, 72nd, 73rd & 74th Troop Carrier Squadrons (TCS)

442nd Troop Carrier Group (TCG) with 303rd, 304th, 305th & 306th Troop Carrier Squadrons (TCS) – later transferred to 9th USAAF 50th Troop Carrier Wing (TCW)

440th Troop Carrier Group (TCG)

49 Squadron

189 Squadron

Automatic Gun Laying Turret Training Flight

55 Maintenance Unit (MU) – changed to 255 MU

93 MU – Air Historical Branch Collection

Defence Training Estates (DTE)



Fulbeck's former watch room



Sir Archibald Sinclair is introduced to a 49 Squadron crew (Newark Air Museum Archive)

the Normandy beaches in Operation Overlord (D-Day Landings).

During August –September 1944 the 440th Troop Carrier Group (TCG) used Fulbeck to prepare for Operation Market Garden (Arnhem), dropping elements of the 101st Airborne Division 'The Screaming Eagles'.

In late September 1944 5 Group RAF took control of the airfield and 49 Squadron and 189 Squadron arrived. Lancasters from the Automatic Gun Laying Turret Training Flight operated from Fulbeck as did the Bomber Command Film Unit.

In April 1945 an Equipment Disposal Depot was established as part of 55 Maintenance Unit (MU), renumbered to 255 MU. Hangars housed industrial storage racking for thousands of tonnes

of spares.

In November 1953 Fulbeck housed the Air Historical Branch Collection of historical and captured aircraft; some now displayed at the RAF Museum at Hendon, other rare types sadly scrapped. In 1956 a RLG was re-established at the airfield.



Captured German aircraft Bf 110 G4/R3/B2 pictured at RAF Fulbeck (N Franklin Collection, Newark Air Museum Archive)

A memorial close to the site entrance has a stone set on a base in the shape of a propeller.

In Fulbeck village churchyard there is a rose bush and plaque close to the lynch gate presented by the 931st Air Refuelling Group, USAF.

Grantham / Spitalgate

Location:

off the A52 on the way out of Grantham (currently Prince William of Gloucester TA Barracks).

Dates of Operation:

1917 to 1919 – Royal Flying Corps (RFC) / Royal Air Force (RAF) training base {RFC / RAF Spittlegate}

1922 to 1928 – RAF 'heavy bomber' base

1928 to 1937 – RAF training base {RAF Grantham}

1937 to 1938 – RAF Bomber Command base

1938 to 1975 – RAF training base in various roles {RAF Spitalgate}

1975 to current – Army base {Prince William of Gloucester Barracks}

In 1917 a landing ground on Spittlegate Hill, Grantham, became an aerodrome for the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) with various squadrons undertaking training. The site's role included

parenting nearby Harlaxton, fully formalised when Spittlegate was chosen as the

Headquarters 3 Training Group in April 1918.

Post World War I saw various squadrons move through Spittlegate as they disbanded. This included 100 Squadron, which moved to the base from Baldonnel, Ireland, where it had been operating against Sinn Fein. The site also had a spell as home to Britain's only 'heavy bomber unit', with Vimys, DH9A, Fawns and Horsleys.

Reverting to the training role in 1928, it was renamed RAF Station Grantham, with 3 Flying Training School (FTS) formed there operating Tiger Moths. Various types were used at the base until 3 FTS moved south and 5 Group Bomber Command took over briefly. A spell in Care and Maintenance followed and Training Command returned

Squadrons / Units:

49 Training Squadron (TS)

11 TS

83 Squadron (Sqn)

15 & 37 TS {24 Training Wing}

Disbandment of 29 Sqn, 43 Sqn & 70 Sqn post-World War I

100 Sqn, 39 Sqn

3 Flying Training School (FTS)

113 Sqn, 211 Sqn, 106 Sqn, 185 Sqn

12 Service Flying Training School (SFTS)

12 (Pilot) Advanced Flying Unit (AFU)

17 FTS (renamed 1 FTS),RAF Central Library

Officer Cadet Training Unit (OCTU)

RAF Mess Staff School

HQ 3 Police District

Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF) Depot

2 Gliding Centre

in October 1938 with 12 Service Flying Training School (SFTS).

RAF Grantham and its grass runways were used extensively as the home to 12 (Pilot) Advanced Flying Unit (AFU). Excessive usage saw Somerfield Tracking steel mesh system used to help protect the surface, but it was not successful. Some of the aircraft were also deployed to Harlaxton.

Authorities then decided to rename the airfield as RAF Spitalgate; this spelling due to a typing error, not discovered until 1952.

A wide range of training units came through Spitalgate, which was

granted the Freedom of the Borough of Grantham on 10th July 1952. This continued until the 1970s when the base was closed through RAF defence cuts.

It transferred to the Army on 20th April 1975 and is now the Prince William of Gloucester Barracks as part of the Territorial Army Royal Logistic Corps.



WRAF crest from RAF Spitalgate



Harvard trainers at Spitalgate via P H T Green Collection

Harlaxton

Location:

to the rear of Harlaxton Manor, off road between Hungerton and Spittlegate Level, Grantham

Dates of Operation:

1916 to 1920 – Training base

1930s – Relief Landing Ground

1939 to 1947 – Satellite base to RAF Grantham / Spitalgate & Emergency Landing Ground

Late 1940s to 1991 – Royal Observer Corps post / bunker

Squadrons / Units:

44, 26 & 54 Training Squadrons

68 Squadron

98 Squadron

20 & 53 Training Squadrons (40 TDS)

12 Pilot Advanced Flying Unit

17 Flying Training School (FTS)

Royal Observer Corps (ROC)

Harlaxton aerodrome opened as a Royal Flying Corps (RFC) training base in 1916 with 44 Training Squadron its first unit.

It was expanded with 26 and 54 Training Squadrons. 68 (Australian)

Squadron RFC was formed there in

January 1917 by Australian

personnel and the unit worked up to become a fighter squadron and moved to France the following September.

In August 1917 88 Squadron was formed there from the training squadrons, and it developed into a day bomber squadron. The original training squadrons moved on and 20 and 53 Training Squadrons moved to Harlaxton in 1918 and became 40 Training Depot Station (TDS), training pilots in the fighter and reconnaissance roles. Operations at Harlaxton were gradually run-down until closure in 1920.

Permanent buildings remained until the early 1930's but were then moved - just before the site reopened as a Relief Landing Ground (RLG) in the mid-1930s.

The site was enlarged at the outbreak of World War II and



Remains of a wartime air raid shelter on the former RAF Harlaxton site.

Harlaxton Manor was requisitioned by the RAF for use as the Officer's Mess and also used as temporary accommodation of the 1st Airborne Division during the preparations for Operation Overlord (D-Day). This role is commemorated by a Pegasus badge, displayed in the grounds of Harlaxton Manor, now the British Campus of the the University of Evansville, Indiana, USA.

The airfield reopened in April 1945 until 1947 as a RLG for 17 FTS from RAF Spitalgate. Part of the site on

the north-eastern edge was used to establish the Grantham ROC post and later an ROC nuclear reporting bunker, which eventually closed in 1991. Most of the site was returned to private use in 1958.

Some building structures survive but they are all on private land and not freely accessible. The surface features and hatches to the Grantham ROC post are just visible through dense undergrowth from the roadside.

some wooden buildings were replaced by brick buildings with a small control tower. Harlaxton became a satellite base to RAF Grantham housing 12 (AFU) and eight small hangars were built to house Battles, Ansons, Oxfords and later Blenhiems.

Grass runways at the base were an Emergency Landing Ground (ELG) and In some cases accommodated Stirlings and Wellingtons. Damage from emergency landings started to affect the training role, however this stopped.

World War I fighters in a hangar at Harlaxton.
W J Taylor Collection



Crew Memorials; Lancaster and Spitfire

Location:

up a small gated track off the Long Bennington to Bottesford road, just before the turn off to Staunton in the Vale.

Location:

east of Grantham just off the A52. St Peter's church is open daily.

Long Bennington

This memorial site commemorates the crew of Lancaster LM311, 467 Squadron RAAF, which crashed on 13th July 1943 whilst attempting an emergency landing at RAF Bottesford.

Lancaster LM311, L – Liz'beth, was noted for its nose art. The aircraft is reputed to have secured its

name from the fiancée of one the crew who served as a WAAF at RAF Bottesford. Another version indicates that it was named after the mother of the youngest crew member: 19-year-old wireless operator Sgt Patrick Donlevy from the small village of Pathhead, in Midlothian, Scotland.

The aircraft, although flying with an 'Australian' squadron was largely crewed by Scotsmen.

Their target on 12th/13th July had been the Italian city of Turin. It was their 14th Op with the squadron but their first to Italy. Damaged over the target, the crew managed to fly back to England. They were in contact with their home airfield and trying to make an emergency landing. Lancaster LM 311 struck the ground and exploded in a massive

Lancaster Crew

Pilot, Sgt C A Chapman

– RAAF (aged 20)

Flight Engineer, Sgt J Greenwood

– RAFVR (aged 25)

Navigator, Sgt A E Micheals

– RAVR (aged 21)

Wireless Op, Sgt P Donlevy (aged 19)

Air Bomber, Sgt N C Smith

– RAVR (aged 21)

Air Gunner, Sgt W Bruce

– RAVR (aged 20)

Air Gunner, Sgt W S Buchanan

– RAVR (aged 20)

fireball. The crash alarm sounded at nearby RAF Bottesford and the base fire engines attended the burning plane, but sadly all crew members were either killed by the impact, or the subsequent fire.

An anonymous account of the incident and photographs of the crew can be viewed in Bottesford Parish Council Rooms. These were presented by former members of 467 Squadron RAAF to mark the 50th Anniversary of the end of the World War II in 1995.



Memorial site to the crew of Lancaster LM311

Ropsley

Little Humby Spitfire pilot Sergeant William Philip Dales was lost on 5 November 1941 flying with 611 Squadron, aged just 22.

A modern commemorative stained glass in St Peter's church depicts him with two family dogs. It reads:

“To the Glory of God and in memory of William Philip Dales a beloved younger son of Little Humby who did not return from an operational flight over Ostend 5th November 1941. Aged 22. Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends.”

Based at RAF Hornchurch, Essex Sgt Dales was flying a Spitfire ‘Rhubarb Op’ (a low-level fighter operation attacking ground targets) over northern France / Belgium. He was lost, believed

shot down in murky conditions near to Ostend, classed as ‘missing’ and commemorated on panel 42 of the Runnymede Memorial.



Stained glass window in memory of William Philip Dales.

North Witham

Location:

close to the A151 Corby Glen to Colsterworth road, with off road parking in the 'Twyford Wood' Forestry Commission car park.

Dates of Operation:

1942 to 1945 – 9th USAAF base – Station 479

1945 – 5 Group airfield

1945 to 1946 – Maintenance Command base & RAF Regiment

1948 – Closed and subsequent forestry planting

Construction work on North Witham began in late 1942 and the following year it was allocated to the 9th United States Army Air Force (USAAF) as Station 479.

It became an important location as the Headquarters for the 1st Advanced Air Depot Area (AADA),

responsible for supply and maintenance of all of the bomber and troop carrying aircraft of the 9th USAAF.

The AADA was sub-divided into 12 Air Depot Groups (ADGs) and typically ADGs paired up to form a Tactical Air Depot (TAD). North Witham itself housed one TAD with others deployed to other 9th USAAF bases to carry out maintenance work.

Soon another important unit was formed at North Witham, the US 9th Troop Carrier Command Pathfinder Group with specialist aircrew trained to use radio navigation aids for airborne operations.

They came into their own on 5th June 1944 when they took off at 21.59 hours with aircraft delivering troops from the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions into Northern France, where

Squadrons / Units:

9th USAAF HQ Unit for 1st Advanced Air Depot Area (AADA)

1st Tactical Air Depot (TAD)

US 9th Troop Carrier Command Pathfinder Group

they established radio location beacons in the drop zones in advance of the main D-Day airborne assault by allied forces.

Like most 9th USAAF units operations at North Witham moved to Northern France in early 1945 and the base was handed over to 5 Group Bomber Command. The site was placed into Care and Maintenance in June 1945; some parts used for bomb storage and other areas like the domestic site taken over by the RAF Regiment. This saw North Witham becoming yet another site for handling the demob of returning unit members; again as a Sub-Depot of Belton Park.

259 Maintenance Unit (MU) was also formed there in July 1945 before moving on to Woolfox Lodge in August

1945. Structures such as loading ramps and crane tracks (still visible) were added to the short southern runway to assist loading and unloading of munitions.

Military site activities ceased in 1948 and around 650 acres were planted with trees by the Forestry Commission.



Twyford Woods is a 'must visit location' for anyone seeking the sensation of walking on the original wartime concrete of an American World War II base. Allow an hour to walk south from the small public car parking area to the remains of the

former watch office and back.

Large areas are now densely wooded but history floods back in the centre of the former wartime runways beset by the same gusty winds that lofted C-47's skyward.

Some areas of concrete have been reclaimed by mother-nature as the woodland encroaches, but others feel almost ready to use! Remember the thoughtful words of one aviation researcher who commented: "D-Day was under way the moment the wheels of the first C-47 left RAF North Witham at 21.59 on the night of 5 June 1944."

Saltby

Location:

off the Sproxton to Skillington road; or by foot from the Viking Way, which passes close to the memorial. The airfield is an active aviation site, so please be aware of planes and gliders.

Dates of Operation:

1942 to 1943 – RAF training base

1943 to 1945 – 9th USAAF

base – Station 538

1945 – RAF training base

1943 to 1945 – 9th USAAF base

1945 to 1955 – Maintenance Command

1971 to current – civilian gliding site

Located south-west of Grantham on Saltby Heath, the airfield was originally constructed by Mowlem as a satellite for RAF Cottesmore and initially housed No. 14 Operational Training Unit (OTU) with Wellingtons.

RAF Saltby was allocated to the 9th United States Army Air

Force (USAAF) 52nd Troop Carrier Wing (TCW) and became known as Station 538. The first units of the 314th Troop Carrier Group (TCG) arrived with their C-47s and S-53s from Sicily in February 1944. The 314 TCG comprised of the 32nd, 50th, 61st and 62nd Troop Carrier Squadrons (TCS).

The various TCSs worked with the men of the 82nd Airborne Division who had been deployed locally; including parachute drops and glider launches.

Squadrons from Saltby took part in D-Day (Operation Overlord) dropping men of the 82nd Airborne Division in France and followed up by supply drops and some tactical operations throughout the summer of 1944.

Squadrons from the

Squadrons / Units:

14 OTU

9th USAAF 52nd Troop Carrier Wing (TCW)

314th Troop Carrier Group (TCG) with 32nd, 50th, 61st and 62nd Troop Carrier Squadrons (TCS)

1665 HCU

349th TCG

RAF Maintenance Command

Buckminster Gliding Club

base also participated in the Arnhem campaign (Operation Market Garden).

On September 17th aircraft from Saltby parachuted over 1,100 men north of Renkum in two separate waves. On September 18th British forces were deployed from the base, with 800 Polish troops on September 19th.

Over the winter of 1944-45 the base was involved in regular reinforcement and supply drops as part of the Ardennes campaign; before leaving for Poix, France, in March 1945. Saltby briefly returned to RAF control with 1665 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU) followed by a brief spell of American operations with a detachment from the 349th TCG flying British troop to Norway in May 1945.

In the early 1970's aviation returned with the formation of the Buckminster Gliding Club, now flourishing with a good reputation in the UK gliding community. www.buckminstergc.co.uk

Its connections with the armed forces remain strong. During the 2000's a Community Local History Group was established between the gliding club and local people. It displays history boards and plaques in the club house and raised funds and secured grants for the impressive Saltby Memorial - officially dedicated on the 2nd September 2007.

To see the memorial, follow directions to the gliding club. This is a private road and open most days but please respect the speed limits - and stay off surrounding crops.



USAAF personnel at Saltby



The Saltby memorial

Little America

Seventy years ago American accents rang through the streets of Grantham as the town became a command centre for the American 9th Air Force Troop Carrier Command responsible for American airborne forces. D-Day assault

ordination was from Grantham's former Bomber Command HQ with surrounding airfields coming under command from St Vincents.

On 5 June, 1944, the eve of D-Day, 20 C-47 aircraft took off from RAF North Witham. Each carried 30 elite troops from the 101st and 82nd US Parachute Infantry Regiments.

They were the D-Day Pathfinders, with a top secret mission to land in France hours ahead of the Allied Air Assault, guiding the airborne invasion force to the drop zones.

On 6 June, 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division flew from RAF Barkston Heath aboard C-47 and C-53 aircraft of the 14th, 15th, 53rd and 59th Troop Carrier Squadrons



A common sight in Grantham during WWII

from the 61st Troop Carrier Group USAAF.

Over 1100 paratroops climbed aboard the 72 aircraft and headed to Drop Zone Tango to take part in the D-Day assault.

That autumn, on the morning of the 17th September, 1944, 1st Parachute Brigade of the British 1st Airborne Division also deployed from RAF Barkston Heath, again in C-47 aircraft of the 61st Troop Carrier Group of the USAAF.

D-Day was under way the moment the wheels of the first C-47 left RAF North Witham at 21.59 on the night of 5th June 1944



American servicemen enjoyed the town

South Witham

Location:

Close to the South Witham to Castle Bytham road, with off road parking in the Forestry Commission Morkery Wood car park.

Dates of Operation:

1942 to 1956 – Air Ammunition Park (AAP)

1956 – Closed and returned to forestry

The ancient Morkery Woods between South Witham and Castle Bytham was first surveyed as a possible Air Ammunition Park (AAP) in late 1941.

Such sites were also officially known as Ammunition Depots, Explosive Storage Units, and unofficially as 'Bomb Dumps'.

This site was chosen for its woodland terrain, a natural camouflage and able to suppress the effects of any accidental explosions. Narrow concrete roadways, still navigable, were laid throughout the wood with a range of brick storage facilities to protect weapons including 'Iris' and 'Handcraft' type huts for incendiary devices.

100 MU officially formed at RAF South Witham in March 1942. Ordnance deliveries and dispatches were made by road, but the railheads at South Witham and Castle Bytham then allowed increased use of the railway network. Additional capacity was built in with special sidings at South Witham, gradual annexation of other local areas for storage including on local country lanes and verges.

Squadrons / Units:

100 Maintenance Unit (MU)
under the control of 42 Group
Maintenance Command
Instructors School
93 Maintenance Sub Unit (MSU)
RAF Mobile Disposal Flight

The extended camp gradually became a major supply point for the Royal Air Force with Headquarters in Stocken Hall at the southern end of the woods. On 19th November 1942 the site was fortunate to survive a near miss when a 158 Squadron Halifax bomber crashed in flames close by. Men from 100 MU rescued all of the aircrew from the burning bomber.

Famous boxer Freddie Mills served at RAF South Witham, where he helped supervise the loading and unloading operation at the railway station. Whilst based here he fought for and won the British Championship against fellow RAF comrade and reigning champion Len Harvey, in near record time. He was later posted elsewhere.

Throughout World War II the site evolved and more specialised storage facilities were added. This included

special storage huts for weapons like the Barnes Wallis designed Tallboy bomb, responsible for sinking the Tirpitz. The bases of storage huts can be seen alongside the intersection of the roadways.

Munition storage continued at South Witham until 1956 when the site was returned to forestry.



A Tallboy bomb being loaded onto a Lancaster

Glimpses of the site's previous role are visible as you walk through the forest. Close to the car park at the northern end, the base of entrance guard hut is still located alongside the South Witham to Castle Bytham road. The northern car park covers the location of one of the 'Iris' huts and foundations can be seen around this area.

If you walk through the woods to

the southern boundary of the site, you can look across to Stocken Hall, which has now been divided into private residences. Also along the southern boundary of the woods you can find more than a dozen bases of the 'Handcraft' huts some with steps still in situ, which were used to store incendiary devices. A round walking trip to this area from the car park takes about 45 minutes.

St Vincents (Grantham)

Location:

a private residence off St Vincents Road, Grantham.

Bomber Command Head Quarters
USAAF Air Force's 9th Troop
Carrier Command

Located at the foot of Spittlegate Hill, St Vincents Hall in Grantham was built in 1865 as the home of local industrialist Richard Hornsby, founder of the engine and machinery manufacturer company Richard Hornsby & Sons.

The property was purchased by the Air Ministry in 1923, but not occupied until August 1926 when 23 Group moved in and used the hall as their headquarters to control various flying training units until 1937. Two years later 5 Group Bomber Command moved to St Vincents from RAF Mildenhall in Suffolk.

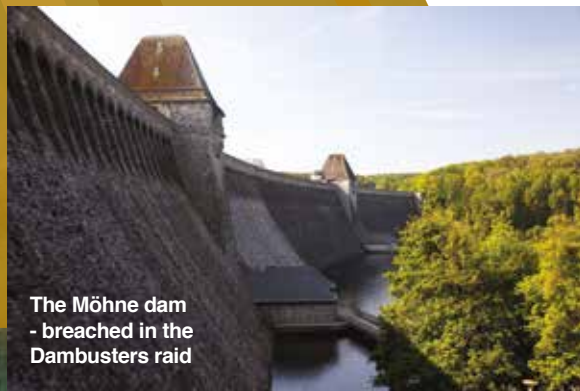
It was during this period of usage that possibly the most famous operation in British aviation history was co-ordinated from St Vincents - 'Operation Chastise'.

This was an attack on German dams carried out on 16th /17th May 1943 by 617 Squadron, subsequently known as the "Dam Busters Raid" and immortalised on the big screen.

On the night of the raid Air Chief Marshal 'Bomber'

Units Commemorated:

RAF HQ – 23 & 5 Group;
USAAF 9th TCG HQ; RAF 7 Group; former Council offices



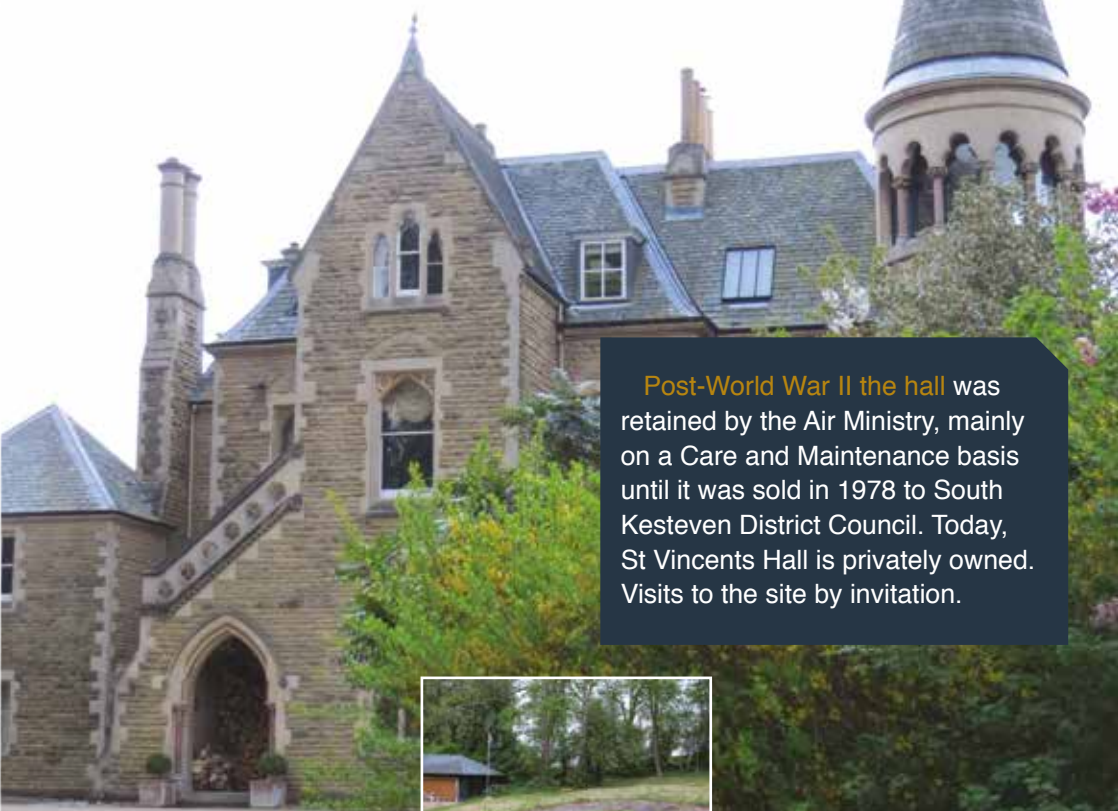
The Möhne dam
- breached in the
Dambusters raid

Harris, Barnes Wallis and various RAF officers waited at St Vincents before receiving confirmation that the raid had indeed breached Germany's Möhne and Eder dams.

In 1944 the building became the headquarters for the USAAF Air Force's 9th Troop Carrier Command

and the co-ordination centre for another major aviation milestone; the allied airborne assault for D-Day.

9th Troop Carrier Command remained there until mid-1945 to include brief joint tenancy arrangement with 7 Group Bomber Command, who oversaw all training units.



Post-World War II the hall was retained by the Air Ministry, mainly on a Care and Maintenance basis until it was sold in 1978 to South Kesteven District Council. Today, St Vincents Hall is privately owned. Visits to the site by invitation.



St Vincents Hall,
Grantham

RAF roundel in the grounds of St Vincents

Woolfox Lodge

Location:

Alongside the A1 near Greatham

Dates of Operation:

1941 to 1944 – 5 Group airfield

1945 – Training base

1960 to 1964 – Bloodhound Surface to Air Missile base

“Very successful operation, 218 Squadron completed Glimmer exactly to schedule, with no casualties, and simulated an extremely effective convoy”

Squadrons / Units:

61 Squadron

218 Squadron

1651 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU)

62 Squadron (part of 151 Wing, RAF North Luffenham)

RAF Woolfox Lodge was opened as a Relief Landing Ground (RLG) for nearby RAF Cottesmore in 1941 and then as a satellite base to RAF North Luffenham with 61 Squadron flying both

Manchesters and Lancasters.

The base was awarded full station status in June 1943 with three typical tarmac runways, five hangars plus temporary accommodation for nearly 1,400 people.

By early 1944 Woolfox Lodge was home to 218 Squadron, operating Stirlings. In mid-May the squadron selected its best crews to undertake timed training flights - designed for 'Operation Glimmer', the major deception operation flown by Bomber Command as part of the D-Day Landings.

'Operation Glimmer' saw aircraft dropping 'window'

(small metal strips) in progressive patterns close to the Pas De Calais, whilst below small boats towed radar reflective balloon. The aim was to simulate a large fleet of naval vessels and draw the German forces away from the real invasion area. Bomber crews flew their modified Stirlings in precise elongated circuits with replacement aircraft merging seamlessly to avoid gaps.

The bombers were staged in two mile gaps parallel to the French coast. Once in position they would spend two and a half minutes flying toward the coast, dropping chaff at 15 second intervals. Aircraft then turned to head away from the coast for 2 minutes 10 seconds. By repeating this circuit, the wide cloud of 'window' edged toward the coast just like a real naval fleet.

These complicated orbits produced the desired effect of simulating a small invasion force heading across the English Channel towards Boulogne. The operation was noted as follows: "Very successful operation, 218 Squadron completed Glimmer exactly to schedule, with no casualties, and simulated an extremely effective convoy".

After 218 Squadron moved away from Woolfox Lodge, 1651 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU) moved in to the airfield where they trained crews for the RAF's transport squadrons.

Post-World War II Woolfox Lodge was a relief landing ground but by spring 1954 the runways had deteriorated, forcing the airfield to cease flying. In the late 1950s the Air Ministry reclaimed part of the airfield as a Bloodhound Surface to Air Missile (SAM) site, acting as a defence for the nearby V Bomber bases and Thor Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile IRBM sites.

62 Sqn operated the missiles at Woolfox Lodge from 1960 through to 1964 in a secure site close to the side of the A1 trunk road, as part of the 151 Wing, RAF North Luffenham. The site is now used for industrial and commercial purposes and several former military buildings remain on the site, including the derelict airfield watch office.



Stirling bomber as used by 218 Squadron on Operation Glimmer (Newark Air Museum Archive)

Cold War Radar

An isolated bungalow near Market Deeping hides a legacy of the Cold War, an underground radar control bunker with a protected operations room capable of withstanding a nuclear blast.

The UK radar system was run down towards the end of the Second World War but urgently overhauled to bolster air defences against nuclear and Cold War threats under the codename Rotor.

170 radar sites were consolidated to 66 sites. The west coast had surface bunkers or semi-sunk ones. The distinctive feature of this east coast site was the



bungalow serving as access and guardroom to the bunkers.

RAF Langtoft, also known as RAF Market Deeping, was originally a Class 2 night landing ground for 90 Home Defence (HD) Squadron operational at Buckminster from August 1918 to June 1919. One location is listed as one and half miles from Deeping St James railway station, another is on the A16 Stamford to Spalding road between Frognall and Deeping Common.

In WWII it became a Ground Control Intercept (GCI) station as part of RAF Digby Sector and became operational in spring 1943 for fighter and searchlight control.

Post World War II the station was upgraded to its new radar role and became operational in summer 1953. The station was only operational for a short period of time and went into Care and Maintenance in summer 1958, before being sold off.

Bomber Command Memorial

In WWII Bomber County hosted 27 of the UK's 83 Bomber Command stations and a new memorial will pay tribute to its 25,611 county-based airmen killed during the war.

The steel 50m tall 'Spire with Names' will be built on Canwick Hill with a magnificent view across to Lincoln Cathedral.

Some 55,000 aircrew died in raids over Europe between 1939 and 1945, the highest loss rate of any major branch of the British armed forces. Less than one crew in eight survived 50 missions and half of all aircrew were lost before they completed 10 raids.

Lincoln's Spire will be accompanied by concentric

curved walls listing names of the men who lost their lives as listed in the Rolls of Honour in Lincoln Cathedral.

Alongside the memorial will be a world-class interpretation centre, The Chadwick Centre, to recount the whole story of Bomber Command with individual stories of those who served and of those who suffered.

A purpose built Education Centre will have extensive exhibitions, reference library and research portals to provide an enthralling visitor experience.

The memorial was the idea of the Lord Lieutenant of Lincolnshire, Tony Worth, whose father served with the RAF through most of the war.



**To donate or keep track of progress:
www.lincsbombercommandmemorial.com**

Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Visitor Centre

The world famous Battle of Britain Flight is a unique concept, drawing visitors from all over the world. It's a partnership between the Royal Air Force and Lincolnshire County Council operating a Lancaster, five Spitfires, two Hurricanes, two Chipmunks and a Dakota.

These are no museum pieces.

Airworthy aircraft continue to thrill crowds at commemorative events all over the UK and hangar tours allow visitors to watch BBMF technicians working to keep these magnificent aircraft fit to fly. Access to exhibition areas, shop and car park is free. BBMF hanger is by guided tour only with small charge.



RAF Scampton Heritage Centre

The centre is on the famous bomber base from which 617 Squadron, led by Wing Commander Guy Gibson, flew their legendary raid in May 1943. The centre covers the history of the base from 1917 up to its present day use as the home of the Red Arrows – and including its role as a V-force base for Vulcan bombers and their Blue Steel missiles.

See where the Dambusters film was shot, possibly the grave of Guy

Gibson's Labrador dog and the Museum of RAF Firefighting. Photo ID required by visitors



Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre



The centre is the only Airfield Museum recreated to its original design on an original WWII airfield. This privately owned centre was set up by farming brothers Fred and Harold Panton as a memorial to Bomber Command, and their older brother Christopher who was shot down and killed in a bombing raid over Nuremburg in March 1944.

It holds a rare Avro Lancaster,



Lancaster NX611 'Just Jane', available for four-engine engine taxi runs. It also has the original 1940 control tower. Exhibits on The Home Front and Escape and Evasion give a wider perspective on wartime Britain.

Newark Air Museum

The UK's largest volunteer-managed aviation museum with 74 aircraft and cockpit sections from across the history of aviation. The types displayed range from a Tiger Moth biplane to the mighty Vulcan bomber; star attractions include Russian MiG fighters and the Swedish Saab Viggen fighter / bomber. Two large display hangars house more than 50 airframes and display 40 aero engines and artefacts.

Contacts

RAF Coningsby

t. 01522 782040

e. bbmf@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Cranwell Aviation Heritage Centre

North Rauceby, near Cranwell

Cranwell's Royal Air Force College has

a fascinating exhibition tracing the early

years of the airfield from its origins as

Royal Naval Air Service Station and the

establishment of the College as the world's

first Military Air Academy.

t. 01529 488490

w. www.cranwellaviation.co.uk

Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre

t. 01790 763207

e. enquiries@lincsaviation.co.uk

w. www.lincsaviation.co.uk

RAF Scampton

t. 01522 738361

w. www.raf.mod.uk/rafscampton

Newark Air Museum

t. 016367 07170

e. enquire@newarkairmuseum.org

w. www.newarkairmuseum.org

Places to visit in South Kesteven



Belton House Grantham

(National Trust)

Belton Nr. Grantham, NG32 2LS

Perfect English country house set in landscaped parkland. Explore delightful gardens and lakeshore. Restaurant, gift shop, adventure playground.

Open mid March to end of October.

Closed Mondays and Tuesdays.

Tel: 01476 566116

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/belton



Woolsthorpe Manor Grantham

(National Trust)

Water Lane, Woolsthorpe by Colsterworth, NG33 5PD

The 17th century birthplace and family home of Sir Isaac Newton who formulated some of his major works here. The interactive science discovery centre in the grounds explains his life and theories.

Tel: 01476 860338

www.nationaltrust.org.uk



St Wulfram's Church

Church Street, Grantham, NG31 6RR

St Wulfram's Church is a 13th-14th century church of noble proportions with one of the finest steeples in the country at 282 feet. Also crypt, chained library, visitor centre and coffee shop.

Tel: 01476 561342



Manor Stables Craft Centre

Lincoln Road, Fulbeck

Nr Grantham NG32 3JN

Manor Stables set in the beautiful village of Fulbeck offers a unique centre for traditional and contemporary crafts. Gift shops, tea rooms and

Master Saddler and woodcraft.

Tel: 01400 272779

www.cuttinglane.com



Burghley, Stamford, PE9 3JY

One of the most impressive Elizabethan houses in England, with 18 treasure-filled state rooms boasting a world-renowned collection of tapestries, porcelain and paintings, sculpture garden, Gardens of Surprises and Deer Park. Open 11am-5pm daily (last admission 4.30pm). House closed Fridays.

Tel: 01780 752451

www.burghley.co.uk



Brownes Hospital

Broad Street, Stamford, PE9 1PF

Almshouse built in 1475, original furniture and stained glass. Open

Saturdays and Bank Holidays

May – September 11am – 4pm

Sunday guided tours by appointment

Tel: 01780 763746

www.stamfordcivicsociety.org.uk



Grimsthorpe Castle

Grimsthorpe,

Nr Bourne, PE10 OLY

Built in 1540 for a visit by Henry VIII, state rooms with collections, tapestries and paintings. Three thousand acres of landscaped parkland, gardens, adventure playground, cycle trail and hire shop. Open April to September – Thursday, Sunday and Bank Holidays (Sunday to Thursday June to September).

Tel: 01778 591205

www.grimsthorpe.co.uk

**For more information
on the district visit:**

[www.southwest
lincolnshire.co.uk](http://www.southwestlincolnshire.co.uk)

Places to visit in South Kesteven

Bourne Heritage Centre

**Baldocks Mill, 21 South Street,
Bourne, PE10 9LY**

Once a working mill, now a heritage centre displaying information and artefacts relating to the town. One floor devoted to Raymond Mays with BRM cups. Other displays feature the heritage of Bourne and Charles F Worth. Open all year, Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays 2pm-4pm
Tel: 01778 422775



Stamford Arts Centre

St Mary's Street, Stamford, PE9 2DL

Drawing on a rich heritage dating from the eighteenth century, Stamford Arts centre aims to provide the best live arts for the area developing an ever widening range of theatre, cinema, music, workshops and exhibitions. Coffee shop and bar.

Tel: 01780 763203

www.stamfordartscentre.com

Stamford Guided Town Walks

With Jill Collinge Blue Badge Guide, discover why Stamford is recognised as one of the finest stone towns in Britain. For private or group guided walks.

Tel: Jill on 01780 410780

Email: jillcollinge2002@hotmail.com

www.stamfordtours.co.uk



Stamford Town Hall

St Mary's Street, Stamford, PE9 2DR

The historic building was purpose built in 1728 and houses an extensive collection of regalia. Visit the new Malcolm Sargent Room. Open for free guided tours every Friday 10am-3pm.

Tel: 01780 753808

**For more information
on the district visit:**

**[www.southwest
lincolnshire.co.uk](http://www.southwest
lincolnshire.co.uk)**



Harlaxton Manor

Harlaxton, Nr Grantham, NG32 1AG

Masterpiece built in the 1830s, now a private residential college. Guided house tours for groups by appointment.

Tel: 01476 403000

www.harlaxton.ac.uk



The Guildhall Arts Centre

St Peter's Hill, Grantham, NG31 6PZ

Set in the heart of the town, this Victorian Building can be identified by its magnificent clock tower. Today it is a lively arts centre with theatre, music and workshops taking place, together with a coffee shop and South Kesteven District Council's tourist information centre.

Tel: 01476 406158



Wyndham Park

Hill Avenue, Grantham, NG31 9BB

Wyndham Park in Grantham has been awarded the prestigious Green Flag status for a second consecutive year.

The park features the Old Pavilion Tea Room, open 10am till 4pm seven days a week, an outdoor paddling pool, two bowling greens, tennis courts, model boating pool, playground and sensory garden.

www.wyndhamparkforum.org.uk

Belvoir Castle

Belvoir, Nr Grantham, NG31 1PE

A romantic 19th century turreted castle Set high on a hill, home to the Duke of Rutland. Staterooms, art treasures, formal gardens, re-enactments and family events held regularly.

House and gardens open from May to August. Please see website for events, opening times and prices.

Tel: 01476 871026

www.belvoircastle.com

Grantham Museum



Since its reopening in 2012, Grantham Museum has gone from strength to strength, hosting some nationally acclaimed exhibitions. A volunteer run museum since the closure by Lincolnshire County Council in 2011, the museum operates as an educational charity to encourage members of the local community and visitors from further afield to embrace the heritage of Grantham and the surrounding area.

A fascinating exhibit space dedicated to the Dambusters includes exhibits that were once found in the command centre at St Vincents, as well as artefacts including a bouncing bomb and maps used to plan the operation.



"Grantham Delivering D-Day" (see pictures below) is the latest exhibition to open at Grantham Museum and offers visitors the chance to learn about the impact the American Forces had on Grantham. Including audio and video footage, as well as uncovered items from the local airfields, this exhibition gives the chance to truly understand what life was like in Grantham at the time of D-Day. It pays tribute to the lives of serviceman from both sides of the Atlantic who never returned, and ensures that future generations never forget the sacrifices they made to secure our freedom.



**A SPECIAL SUMMER EXHIBITION
AT GRANTHAM MUSEUM**

GRANTHAM DELIVERING
D-DAY

PLUS PERMANENT DAMBUSTERS DISPLAY

**OPEN: THURS-SAT 10AM-4PM
OR OTHER TIMES BY
PRIOR ARRANGEMENT**

**A fascinating collection
of WWII memorabilia,
artefacts, audio and video
to commemorate the role of
Grantham & local airfields in
the liberation of Europe**

**Grantham Museum, St Peter's Hill
Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG31 6PY
01476 568 783
info@granthammuseum.org.uk
www.granthammuseum.org.uk
@granthammuseum**

How to get here



Road

The A1 provides excellent links to the district along with the A15 which tracks a direct line through the heart of Lincolnshire to the M180 offering ease of north/east travel. There is also easy access via the A14, A16, M1, M6 and A52.

Places within 30-90 minutes journey time include Lincoln, Nottingham, Cambridge, Leicester and Peterborough.



Rail

The East Coast Main Line passes through Grantham making the journey to Grantham from London King's Cross just over an hour.



Air

For those travelling from further afield there are several international airports within easy reach.

EAST MIDLANDS AIRPORT

Located within an hour of South Kesteven, East Midlands Airport is close to the major cities of Nottingham, Derby and Leicester.

www.eastmidlandsairport.com

BIRMINGHAM AIRPORT

Situated in the heart of the UK, Birmingham Airport has an excellent motorway network enabling easy access to many areas of the country.

www.birminghamairport.co.uk

ROBIN HOOD AIRPORT

Near Doncaster, the Robin Hood Airport is close to the cities of Sheffield, Leeds, Hull, York and Lincoln.

www.robinhoodairport.com

STANSTED AIRPORT

Conveniently situated just off the M11 motorway in Essex, yet within easy driving distance of Lincolnshire.

www.stanstedairport.com

HULL TRAINS WEBSITE

www.hulltrains.co.uk

CROSS COUNTRY TRAINS WEBSITE

www.crosscountrytrains.co.uk

NATIONAL RAIL WEBSITE

www.nationalrail.co.uk

EAST COAST TRAINS WEBSITE

www.eastcoast.co.uk

For further information on anything contained in this publication please telephone 01476 40 60 80 (ext 6498 or 6440) or email pr@southkesteven.gov.uk