

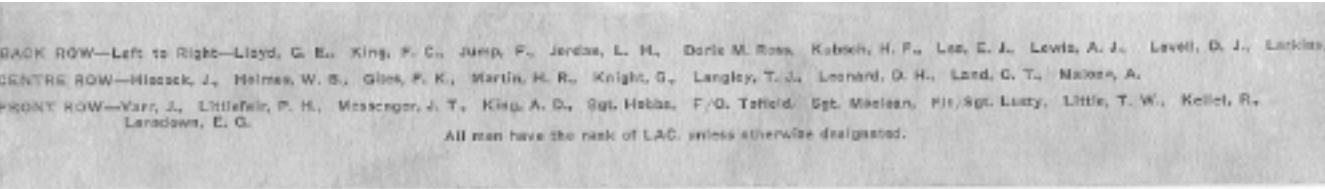


Lost Airfields 1943 to 1946

Perduto Padre Museum of Modern Art Ugo Carà, Trieste

a document by Paul Malone

Beginnings



My father's first training squadron based at Carlisle (Kingston) Elementary Flying School 'Malone A.' Farthest right middle row. Arranged against one of their Tiger Moth training biplanes

Lost Airfields 1943 to 1946

All the airfields my father flew from during his career in the Royal Air Force



Alfred Malone

This catalogue is a documentation of the airfields that my father, Alfred Malone, flew from during his career in the Royal Air Force from 1943 to 1946. These were researched from the pilot logbook that he kept at the time. Though strictly factual, this material was interesting as it traced his flying career from his early training on Tiger Moth bi-planes to one of the most advanced fighters of the time, the Spitfire XVI. The material also traces the closing years of the Second World War and the preparations for the invasion of Japan.

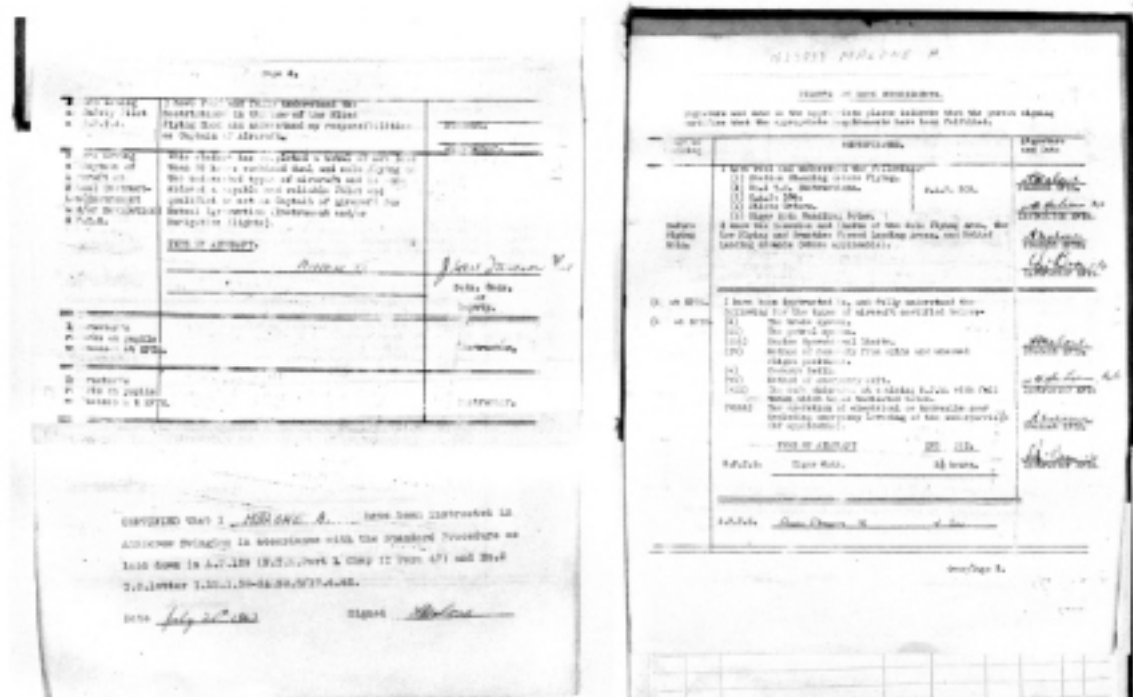
The logbook follows him as he was posted to different airfields. Firstly for his elementary training at Carlisle, further training in Canada and then posting back for active service in Great Britain. I was interested in seeing where these airfields were located, and what had become of them today. Sometimes these airfields are still in use; for instance, Fairwood Common is now Swansea International Airport. Others are ploughed over or used as race tracks or storage facilities. It is surprising that the layout of these lost airfields is still observable, it can sometimes be a subtle change in crop colour or the orientation of a road that gives away the location.

This process was valuable as an historical exercise but also to follow in my father's footsteps in what must have been an exceptional period in his life. He died in 1984, so I was not able to go through these documents with him in person. Regardless, the research facilities provided by the internet were not available in those days and it would have been considerably more difficult to pursue.

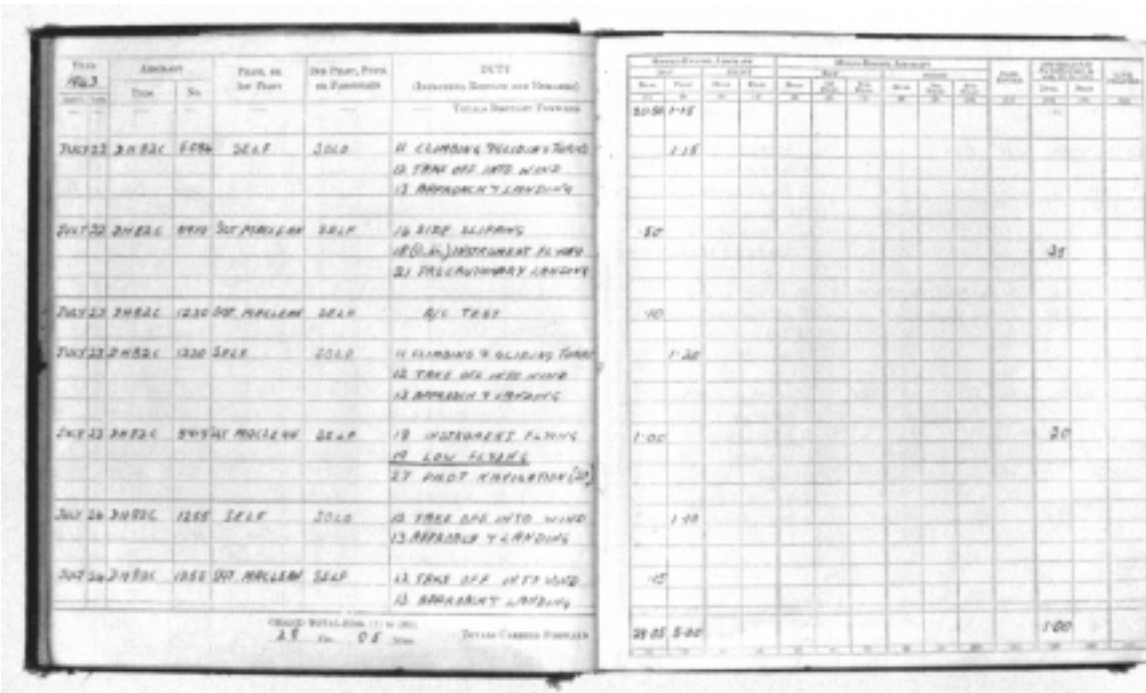
He commenced his training with the R.A.F. In 1943 at the age of 20. From leaving school, to the time he was called up, he worked with the Education Service and returned there after the end of the War. Talking to him personally I had no explanation as to why he entered this particular service though, from an early age, I understood he had a love of engines and all things mechanical. I have been told that, at the age of 14, he and his elder brother re-built an old Model-T Ford and raced it around Arpley Meadows, outside his home town of Warrington. Aeronautics was at the time enjoying an exponential growth in its field and must have appealed as being at the cutting edge of the technology of the time. He had always expressed a wish to fly one of the (then state of the art) Spitfires and indeed in this he achieved his dream.

This interest in all things mechanical continued later in his life when we knew him as a family. There was never any repair challenge that he was not prepared to take on, often to the despair of my mother. This also spilled over into his other love, that of astronomy and the analysis of its different theories. This enthusiasm, attached to an often contrarian world-view, I recognise as something that has been imparted to myself and informs many of the projects that I engage in today.

The Logbook

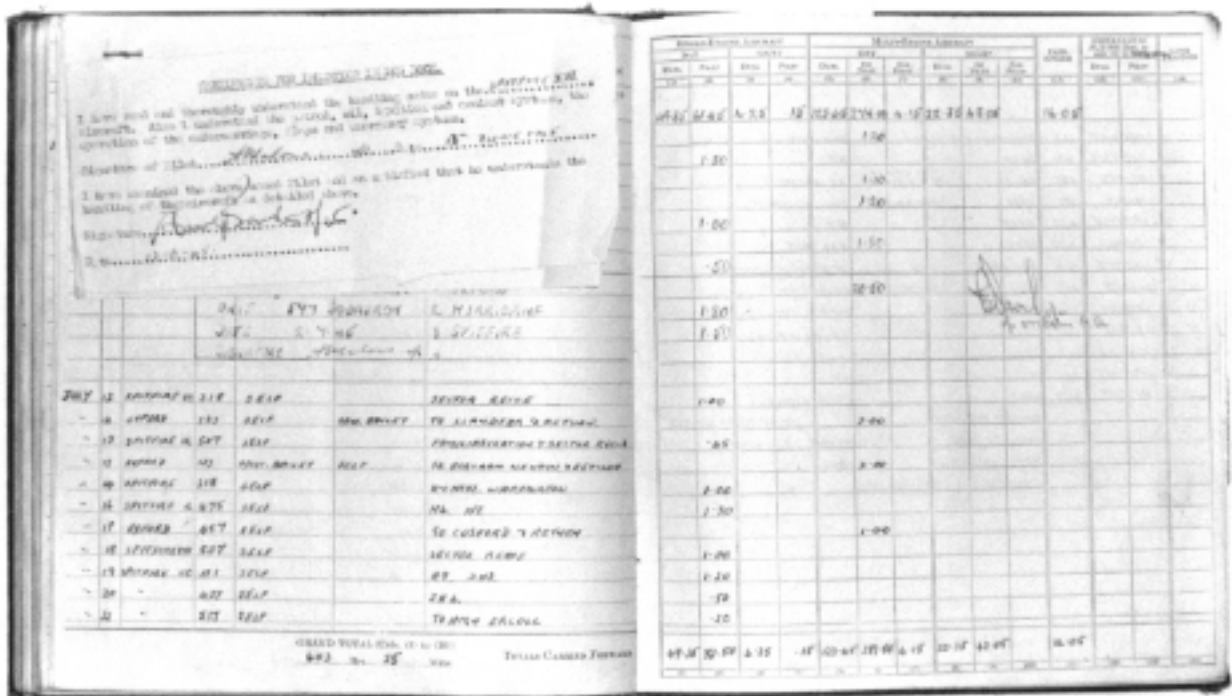


First logbook entry.
Carlisle. July 1943

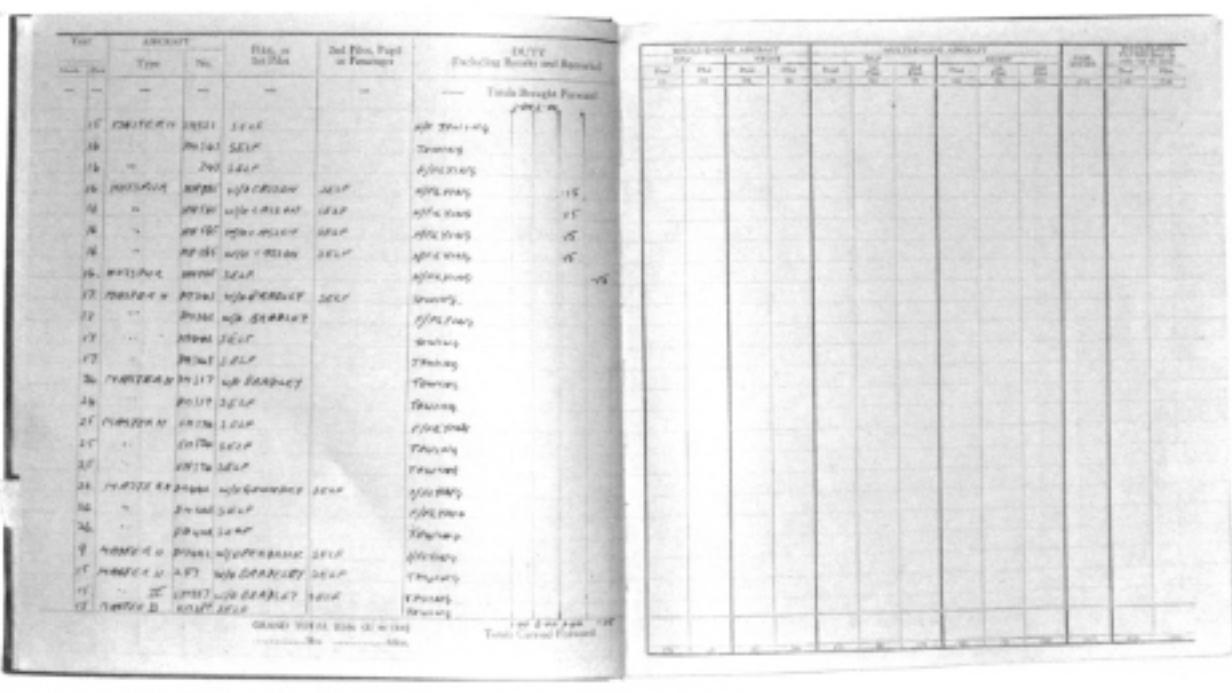


Standard training page.
Neepawa. July 1943

Spitfire XVI accreditation.
Fairwood Common. July 1945

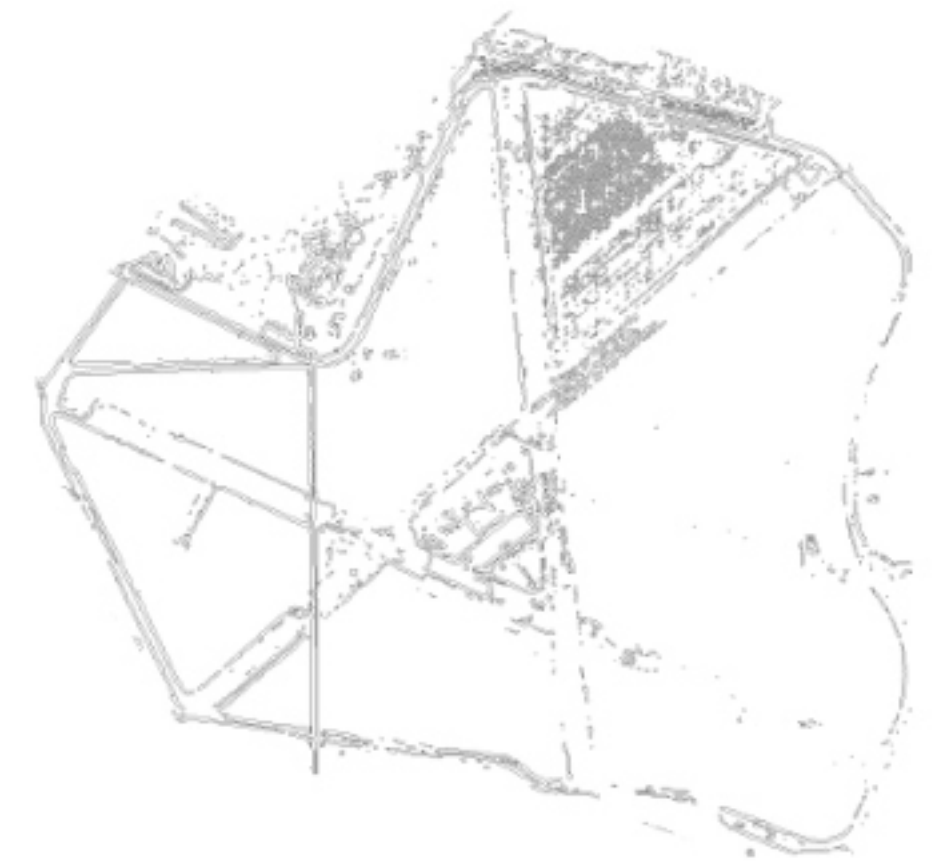


Night flying and towing.
Croughton. April 1946





Carlisle Elementary Training School from the air. Around the time of the late 1930's



The Airfields

Aircraft flown at this location



Tiger Moth DH82c

Squadron : 15

Airfield

Carlisle

Kingstown Elementary Training Flying School

54° 55' 38" N 002° 57' 29" W



Then

RAF Kingstown was where my father received his first pilot training.

The airfield was built in early 1930's as Carlisle Municipal Airport but became uneconomic and was sold to the Air Ministry in 1936.

In 1941 the airfield was redesignated as No. 15 Flying Grading School. Here new cadets would learn to be pilots or to be assessed for their suitability for conversion to conduct either fighter or bomber operations.

It retained this function until the end of hostilities in 1945.

Now

The airfield closed in 1996 and little is now left of the original. The land has been converted to use as an industrial and retail park.

In 1992 radioactive radium was discovered at the site After further investigations it was realised that the RAF had incinerated thousands of luminous dials from the old wartime trainer aircraft in accordance with the disposal policy of the 1940's and 1950's known as "bash, bury or burn". The resulting radioactive ash had been scattered and used during later landscaping of the site. Hotspots of over 250,000 becquerels have since been discovered.

Aircraft flown at this location



Tiger Moth DH82c

Squadron : 18

Airfield

Neepawa

Canada : Elementary TFS

50° 14' 03" N 099° 30' 58" W



Then

After Carlisle, he was transferred to the RCAF Neepawa School in Manitoba, Canada for further elementary training.

Constructed during the Second World War as part of the operation of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, it was one of many Canadian airports, mostly on the Prairies, used to train pilots and other air crew.

Trainees from across the globe spent time in and around small towns throughout Canada, often experiencing severe winter weather for the first time.

Now

Although many of the early buildings have been demolished, the airfield is operated by the Town of Neepawa. It is still used by owners of light and ultralight aircraft, chiefly for pleasure flying and crop dusting.

The airfield is also a centre for hang-glider training.

Aircraft flown at this location



Avro Anson

Squadron : 18

Airfield

Gimli

Manitoba, Canada : Service FTS

50° 37' 41" N 097° 02' 36" W



Then

After elementary training at Neepawa School he progressed to the Service Training Centre at Gimli, Manitoba, Canada.

Constructed during the Second World War as part of the operation of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. It was used to train pilots for the skills needed for war-time operations.

The School was closed in 1945

Now

Gimli was closed as a military airfield in 1971 and is now used partly as an industrial park and also as a motor racetrack. Flying activities continue with a private glider school and it is home to the Government's water bombing squadron for aerial fire-fighting.

Gimli achieved international attention in 1983 when a Boeing 767, which had suffered twin engine failures, executed a 17 mile glide to land successfully without loss of life. Subsequent investigations revealed the cause of the engine failure as insufficient fuel due to the mistaking of imperial measures for metric.

Aircraft flown at this location



Airspeed Oxford

Squadron : BAT1514

Airfield

Fiskerton

Lincoln : Bomber air training

53° 14' 34" N 000° 27' 37" W



Then

Back in Britain, his first posting was to Fiskerton near Lincoln. This was to engage in further operational training. The number 'BAT 1514' appears in the logbook which refers to training flights of the then innovative 'beam approach' system of radio navigation.

Constructed in 1943 this airfield was built as a home for several bomber squadrons which took part in raids across Germany, including Peenemunde and Berchtesgaden

The airfield was also one of the 15 airfields which

Now

As can be seen from the photograph, very little remains of the airfield. It has mostly been returned to agricultural use, the tracks of the original runways visible through the crop patterns and farm access roads.

Aircraft flown at this location



Miles Master 2



Airspeed Oxford

Squadron : 587

Airfield

Culmhead

Somerset : Anti-aircraft support

50° 55' 46" N 003° 07' 42" W



Then

Arriving in Culmhead he was assigned to his first operational squadron (587) but only stayed there briefly before moving on to Castle Bromwich.

Opened in 1941 as a fighter airfield, the first aircraft to land there, allegedly, was an enemy plane that had become lost.

Home to Polish and Czech squadrons it later became the training airfield for the RAF's first Meteor jet aircraft. These were used to intercept V-1 flying bombs over Southern England.

Now

After the war, Culmhead was converted to a glider training school and maintenance unit and eventually closed to flying in 1946.

Subsequently, what was the then precursor to GCHQ set up a small signals intelligence research facility there which closed in 1999.

There is now a small industrial estate occupying the centre. Other parts of the airfield are used as a farm facility.

Aircraft flown at this location



Airspeed Oxford

Squadron : 577

Airfield

Castle Bromwich

Birmingham : Anti-aircraft support

51° 31' 02" N 001° 47' 12" W



Then

He flew from here briefly during September and October 1944.

Originally a First World War airfield, it was converted for use as a test airfield for the nearby Vickers Armstrong aircraft factory. Fighter squadrons were based here also for the defence of the facility.

12,000 Spitfires were produced here during WW2

Now

Post war the airfield reverted to training and civilian use up to 1958.

The Vickers factory was converted to car production and bought by Jaguar.

The airfield was eventually broken up and a residential estate built on the site. The road plan still retains the original South-West orientation of the airfield.

Aircraft flown at this location



Airspeed Oxford

Squadron : 577

Airfield

Wrexham

Night air defence

53° 04' 00" N 002° 57' 01" W



Then

Again, a brief stay at Wrexham with the 577 Squadron.

Originally built as a racecourse, from 1912 it became a venue for air displays to the public. After WW1 it was taken over and made into a municipal ariport.

Upgraded in 1941, its role was to provide night fighter cover for Liverpool and Manchester.

Now

In 1970 it was sold to United Gravel and quarrying operations almost completely obliterated the site. Some of the original buildings have been the subject of archeological preservation orders.

Up to 1994 it was the site of a nuclear hardened bunker and would have sounded the 4 minute warning for the population of Wrexham in the event.

Aircraft flown at this location



Airspeed Oxford

Squadron : 577

Airfield

Fairwood Common

Swansea : Fighter station

51° 36' 19" N 004° 04' 04" W



Then

Attached for a few days in November 1944.
Opened in 1941 as a fighter airfield, the airfield had the responsibility to defend Bristol, South Wales and the Bristol Channel approaches.
It was decommissioned in 1949.

Now

The airfield is now Swansea International Airport.

Aircraft flown at this location



Avro Harvard



Hawker Hurricane



Supermarine Spitfire



Airspeed Oxford

Airfield

Squadron : 587

Weston Zoyland

Somerset : Anti-aircraft support

51° 06' 23" N 002° 54' 30" W



Then

He moved here for a more extended period from March to September 1945. Here he experienced flying a range of aircraft including Hurricanes and Spitfires with the newly formed 587 squadron.

The airfield was one of the oldest in the UK having been founded in the 1920's. It served in an army co-operation role and saw extensive activity during WW2.

It was re-commissioned in 1952 as a jet training school.

Now

The airfield has since reverted to agricultural use.

Flying activity is confined to micro-light aviation and as a base for the 'Sky Watch' civil air patrol.

Aircraft flown at this location



Supermarine Spitfire



Vultee Vengeance



Airspeed Oxford

Squadron : 577

Airfield

Atcham

Shrewsbury : USAAF fighter training

52° 41' 25" N 002° 38' 16" W



Then

He moved here in October 1945 flying mainly Spitfires. One entry found in the logbook - 'Beat up Haigh Hill' - which is RAF slang for 'a low level pass over a populated airfield'.

Opened in 1941, it was turned over to the USA Air Force for training and integration. By the time my father arrived in 1945 it had been returned to the RAF and was used for target towing.

It was decommissioned a year later in October 1946.

Now

After the War the airfield was broken up and today has reverted to agricultural use. The original orientation of the runways can be seen in the field patterns and crop use.

Some of the original buildings are now incorporated into the industrial estate to the West.

Aircraft flown at this location



General Aircraft Hotspur (glider)



Miles Master II

Squadron : No.1 GTS

Airfield

Croughton

Northampton : Glider training

51° 59' 15" N 001° 11' 15" W



Then

After the end of the War in Europe my father moved here in April 1946 to train in flying and towing gliders. This was in preparation for the invasion of mainland Japan.

Opened in 1938, the airfield was designated an 'Emergency Landing Airfield' keeping its landing lights on throughout the night. As such, it received special attention from the Luftwaffe.

Glider training was set up here in 1944 after the Battle of Arnhem when, due to pilot losses, the role was handed from the Army to the R.A.F..

Now

After a quiet period when it acted as a munitions dump, the airfield was leased to the US Air Force and became a major communications hub handling traffic from Iceland to the Western Approaches.

In 2013 the MP Tom Watson called for an 'urgent review' of the activities of Croughton in its role as a clandestine intelligence gathering centre. It was reported as being central in the monitoring of the private phone messages of Chancellor Angela Merkel.

In 2015 it received approval to merge intelligence from Europe, Africa and NATO to fight Islamic State.

Aircraft flown at this location



Miles Master II

Squadron : No.3 GTS

Airfield

Gaydon

Warwickshire : Glider training

52° 11' 08" N 001° 29' 31" W



Then

My father moved here briefly in May 1946 to continue glider training, mainly towing practice.

Opened in 1942, the airfield was used for bombing and air-sea rescue. After the War in Europe it was converted to glider training which closed after the end of the War in the Pacific.

It subsequently became a nuclear capable V-Bomber base and air refuelling centre.

Now

In 1978 it was sold to the British Leyland car manufacturer who used it as a research centre (BL Technologies) and as a test track for Jaguar.

Aircraft flown at this location



Supermarine Spitfire



Miles Master II



Miles Martinet

Squadron : E.A.A.S.

Airfield

Manby

Lincolnshire : Air armament training

53° 21' 31" N 000° 04' 59" W



Then

Moving to this airfield in July 1946, he continued glider and air armament training in preparation for posting to the Far East. He stayed here until October 1946 when his career as a pilot ended. The last entry in his Log is on the 17th when he flew a Miles Martinet 'to Binbrook and Return'.

Opened in 1938, the airfield was used for air armament training and as a Joint Services bomb disposal school.

In 1949 it became an R.A.F. Flying College and a test facility for the new jet aircraft that were then entering service.

Now

Today the airfield is the site of an industrial estate and off-road driving centre. One of the original hangars is used to store grain as one of the European C.A.P. facilities.

The original tracks of the runways can still just be seen as a ghostly 'X' in the crop pattern.

Endings

NATIONAL SERVICE ACTS, 1939 TO 1941

R.A.F. Form 1504/35

RELEASE AUTHORIZATION

PART I

To be completed in this space when needed.

Rank W/O Name Malone

Initials R. Service Malone

Release of this above-mentioned person is hereby authorized on a Class A release, and he is released to Class A of the Service.

It is hereby certified that the above release is valid in the R.A.F. on which it is issued during the following periods:

From 12-2-46 To 12-2-46

31-9-46 22/10/46

(Date of Release from Disposal Order) (Date of Release from Disposal Order)

It is granted 65 days leave on release commencing the day following the date of departure from the Disposal Centre.

R.A.F. Form 1504/35

RELEASE AUTHORIZATION

PART II

Instructions to Class II releasees to report for Employment

You have been released on take up employment.

Initials R. Name Malone

Rank W/O Service Malone

Release of this above-mentioned person is hereby authorized on a Class A release, and he is released to Class A of the Service.

It is hereby certified that the above release is valid in the R.A.F. on which it is issued during the following periods:

From 12-2-46 To 12-2-46

31-9-46 22/10/46

(Date of Release from Disposal Order) (Date of Release from Disposal Order)

It is granted 65 days leave on release commencing the day following the date of departure from the Disposal Centre.

R.A.F. Form 1504/35

RELEASE AUTHORIZATION

PART III

Instructions to Class II releasees to report for Employment

You have been released on take up employment.

Initials R. Name Malone

Rank W/O Service Malone

Release of this above-mentioned person is hereby authorized on a Class A release, and he is released to Class A of the Service.

It is hereby certified that the above release is valid in the R.A.F. on which it is issued during the following periods:

From 12-2-46 To 12-2-46

31-9-46 22/10/46

(Date of Release from Disposal Order) (Date of Release from Disposal Order)

It is granted 65 days leave on release commencing the day following the date of departure from the Disposal Centre.

Release document 1946



Alfred Malton (second from left) with the 577th Spitfire Squadron.
Probably taken at Castle Bromwich airfield in late 1944 as the photo is marked 'Birmingham Post' on the reverse.



Casa C.A.V.E. 2011

This catalogue was initially produced for the 'Perduto Padre' exhibition at the Casa C.A.V.E. project space in Sistiana, Trieste, Italy in June 2011. Originated and curated by Fabiola Faidiga.



MUMU Trieste 2015

This edition has been revised for the exhibition of the same name at the Museum of Modern Art Ugo Carà, Trieste, 2015.

The exhibition runs from 20th November to 12th December 2015



Welcome aboard! Airspeed Oxford with two friends

Photograph by Alfred Malone

Satellite images : Google Earth

Historic aeroplane images : Wikipedia

Research, artbook layout and design : ©Paul Malone 2015

www.paulmalone.co.uk

