



RAF Culm Head Airfield



Surviving features



Aircraft Fighter Pens
Intended to house two twin-engined aircraft.



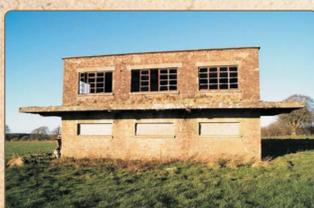
Blister Hanger
Used for storage and maintenance of small aircraft.



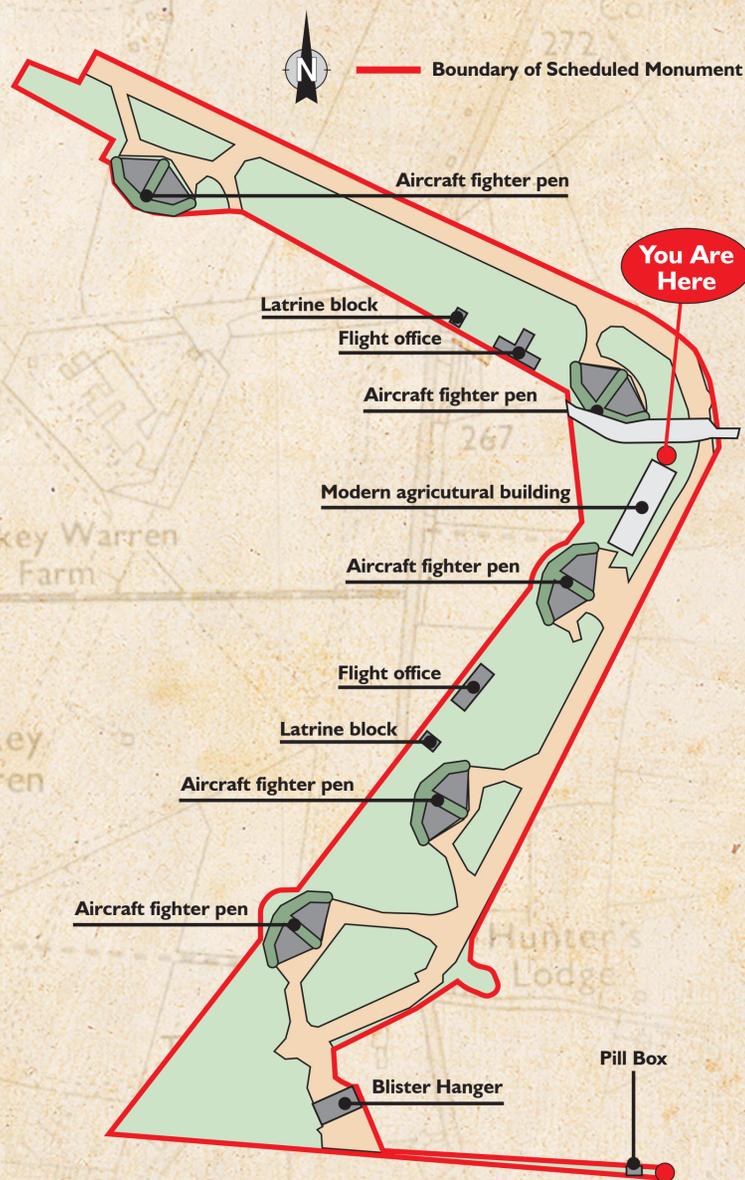
Flight Offices
Office accommodation for each flight located close to the fighter pens.



Pill Boxes
Equipped with loopholes for rifles and machine guns.



Control Tower
Located to the north of the airfield



Historic Background

RAF Culm Head was constructed as RAF Church Stanton during 1940-41, whilst Britain was under threat of invasion following Nazi Germany's successful conquests in Western Europe.

RAF Fighter Command was under intense pressure as the German's mounted extensive air raids culminating in what became known as 'The Battle of Britain'.

This was the first of three airfields to be built on this East West plateau of the Blackdown Hills, its geographic location providing quick access to both the English Channel and the Atlantic Ocean.

July 1940 - May 1942

Although the airfield was not officially opened until 1st August 1941, it was brought into service during June to provide shelter from bombing raids for aircraft from RAF Exeter.

The first Squadrons that served here were with the Polish 2nd Fighter Wing Nos 312, 302 and 306 originally equipped with Mk II Hurricanes, superseded by Spitfire Mk V. A Research Flight also conducted barrage balloon cable cutting experiments.

June 1942 - Dec 1943

In June 1942 Czechoslovakian Squadrons including Nos 313 and 312 armed with Spitfires took over from the Polish until June 1943. During their stay the tables of power started to turn and the defenders became attackers with sorties across the English Channel into enemy held territory.

In December 1943, the identification of the airfield changed to Culm Head because of confusion with other airfields with the prefix Church, such as Fenton and Broughton.

A Naval Fighter Wing came with Seafire IIIs, Nos 894 and 897 Sqns pursuing enemy shipping in the English Channel and providing fighter cover for a RAF Typhoon Sqn.

In March 1944 Nos 156 Sqn returned with Mk IX Spitfires staying just a month, Nos 610 - 286 and 587 Sqns with Spitfire Mk XIVs followed.

July 1944 - Aug 1946

In July, with the battle for Normandy at its peak, Nos 126, 131 and 616 Spitfire Sqns arrived, acting as bomber escorts and conducting attacks ahead of ground troops. Situated well away from prying eyes, Culm Head made history when Nos 616 Squadron were equipped and trained with the allies first two operational jet propelled aircraft, British Gloster Meteor fighter.

By November 1944, RAF Culm Head was placed under care and maintenance until January 1945 when it became active again under Flying Training Command as a satellite to RAF Exeter and Nos 3 Gliding Training School until July 1945. The airfield then returned to care and maintenance until August 1946 when it closed.

This site is a Scheduled Monument protected by an Act of Parliament and it is a criminal offence to damage or deface the site or to use a metal detector.

What remains of RAF Culm Head today is a reminder of the sacrifices made by those of many nations who served here during WWII.



Crashed 126 Sqn Spitfire
© Into the Valley - Charles H Young



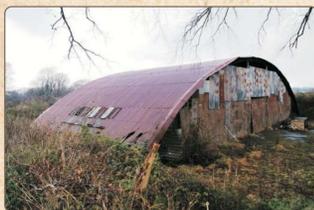
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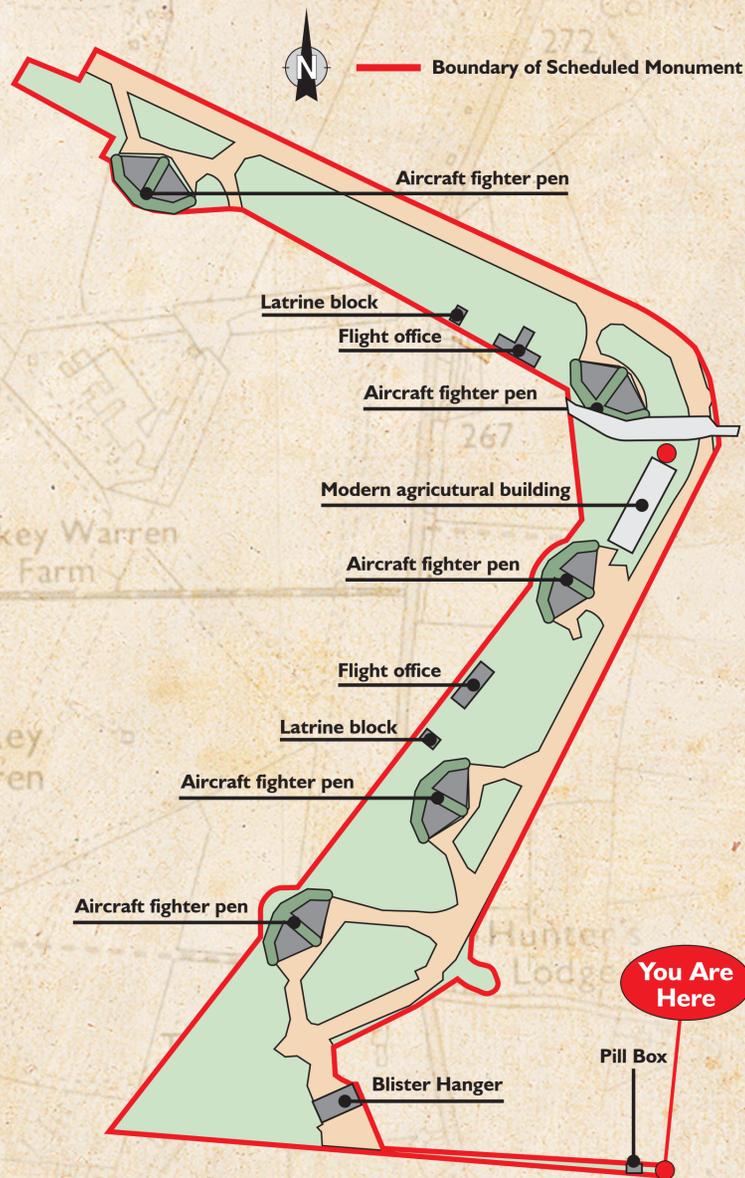
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