

Wings of Defence WW1-WW2

The Legacy of RAF Airbases in South and West Wales During the War

The RAF airbases of Carew Cheriton, Pembrey, St Athan, Llandow, and Valley played crucial roles during World War II, each contributing uniquely to the war effort and leaving lasting impacts on both military operations and local communities. From defending Britain's skies and coastlines to training pilots and maintaining aircraft, these airbases were integral to the RAF's strategy. Their collective efforts ensured that Britain could protect its vital industrial centres, maintain air superiority, and prepare for the eventual Allied victory. Today, their legacies continue to be remembered as essential parts of British wartime history.

The Significance of RAF Carew Cheriton During World War II

RAF Carew Cheriton was a crucial airbase located near Carew in Pembrokeshire, Wales, that played a significant role during World War II. Although it was relatively small compared to other airbases, its strategic importance and the variety of operations conducted there had a notable impact on the war effort, particularly in the defence of the British Isles.



Background and Establishment

Carew Cheriton's history as an airfield date back to World War I when it was initially used by the Royal Naval Air Service. The airfield was repurposed and expanded in 1939, just before the outbreak of World War II, to serve as a Royal Air Force (RAF) base. Given its location near the coast, RAF Carew Cheriton became an essential part of the chain of airfields that protected Britain from enemy incursions, especially from the sea.

Timeline of RAF Carew Cheriton (1939-1945)

1. **1939 - 1940: Establishment and Early Use**
 - RAF Carew Cheriton was reactivated in 1939 at the outset of World War II, having originally been used in World War I.
 - Initially, it served as a base for No. 1 Armament Training Camp, where training on the use of aircraft armament, bombing, and gunnery took place.
 - It also supported Coastal Command's anti-submarine and coastal patrol operations, reflecting its strategic location near the Irish Sea.
2. **1940 - 1941: Coastal Command Operations**
 - In 1940, RAF Carew Cheriton became more actively involved in coastal defence operations under the command of Coastal Command.
 - The station hosted squadrons equipped with aircraft such as the Avro Anson, which conducted reconnaissance, anti-submarine patrols, and convoy escort missions.
 - The airfield was involved in the protection of shipping lanes and the monitoring of German U-boat activities in the Irish Sea and Western Approaches.
3. **1942 - 1943: Training and Anti-Submarine Warfare**
 - Carew Cheriton was heavily used for training purposes, including the training of aircrew in navigation, gunnery, and bombing techniques.
 - The base hosted No. 3 Operational Training Unit (OTU) for a period, which trained crews for Coastal Command roles, particularly in anti-submarine warfare.
 - The training focused on the use of maritime patrol aircraft such as the Lockheed Hudson and the Avro Anson, enhancing the RAF's capability to counter the U-boat threat.
4. **1944: Expansion and Increased Training Role**
 - In 1944, Carew Cheriton's role as a training base was further expanded, supporting the broader Allied war effort, including preparations for D-Day and subsequent operations in Europe.
 - The airfield hosted units that trained for air-sea rescue operations, which were crucial for recovering downed airmen over the sea.
 - It also continued to operate anti-submarine and reconnaissance missions, contributing to the control of the Western Approaches.
5. **1945: Wind-Down and Transition to Post-War Use**
 - As the war neared its end in 1945, the intensity of operations at Carew Cheriton began to decrease.
 - The airfield continued to be used for training and secondary duties as operational needs shifted away from anti-submarine patrols to more training and administrative roles.
 - By the end of the war, the airfield was gradually winding down its wartime activities, eventually closing as an active RAF station in the post-war years.

After the war, RAF Carew Cheriton was eventually decommissioned, and the site was used for agricultural and other civilian purposes. During its operational years from 1939 to 1945, Carew Cheriton played a crucial role in training aircrew and protecting the British coastline from the threat of German U-boats, making it a key component of Coastal Command's wartime efforts.

Role During World War II

Throughout World War II, RAF Carew Cheriton was primarily used as a Coastal Command station. Coastal Command was responsible for safeguarding British waters, conducting anti-submarine warfare, and protecting convoys. Due to its proximity to the Irish Sea and the Atlantic, Carew Cheriton was ideally situated for such missions. Aircraft from the base were frequently dispatched on reconnaissance and patrol missions, searching for German U-boats that threatened the vital supply routes between North America and Britain.

In addition to anti-submarine operations, Carew Cheriton hosted a variety of squadrons that were involved in different facets of the war effort. These included training squadrons, which played a crucial role in preparing aircrew for operational duties. The base was also used for air-sea rescue operations, ensuring that downed airmen over the sea could be recovered, which was vital for maintaining morale among aircrews.

The Aircraft and Operations

Various types of aircraft were stationed at RAF Carew Cheriton, each suited to the different missions flown from the base. The most notable were the Avro Anson and the Lockheed Hudson, both of which were versatile aircraft used for reconnaissance, patrol, and anti-submarine operations. The Avro Anson was crucial in the early years of the war for its role in protecting coastal convoys from German U-boats.



Missions flown from Carew Cheriton were often long and perilous, requiring immense skill from the pilots and crew. These missions were crucial in maintaining control of the seas around the British Isles, ensuring that supplies from allied nations could reach Britain, which was vital for sustaining the war effort.

Strategic Impact

The influence of RAF Carew Cheriton on the war effort can be measured by the success of the Coastal Command missions. By the end of the war, the efforts of bases like Carew Cheriton had significantly reduced the threat posed by German U-boats, ensuring that Britain could receive the supplies it needed to continue fighting. The base also contributed to training

thousands of aircrews who would go on to serve in various theatres of the war, further emphasizing its importance.

Moreover, the presence of RAF Carew Cheriton had a broader impact on the local community. The base brought an influx of personnel and resources to the area, which had lasting effects on the economy and infrastructure of Pembrokeshire. This military presence helped foster a sense of unity and purpose among the civilian population, who supported the war effort in various ways.

Legacy

Today, RAF Carew Cheriton is no longer an active airfield, but its legacy lives on. The site has been preserved as a museum and a memorial, reminding visitors of the crucial role it played during one of the most challenging periods in British history. The museum, housed in the remaining buildings, provides a detailed account of the airbase's history, its operations, and its influence during the war.



In conclusion, while RAF Carew Cheriton may not have been as large or as famous as other airbases, its contributions during World War II were nonetheless significant. The airbase played a vital role in Coastal Command's efforts to protect Britain's shores and sea routes, and its impact extended far beyond its size, influencing both the local community and the broader war effort. The story of RAF Carew Cheriton is a testament to the importance of every part of the war effort, no matter how small it might seem.

[WW2 RAF Servicemen from Carew Cheritan Airbase Memorials Virtual Cemetery Link.](https://www.findagrave.com/virtual-cemetery/1840349)

<https://www.findagrave.com/virtual-cemetery/1840349>

RAF Pembrey: A Crucial Outpost in World War II

RAF Pembrey, located in Carmarthenshire, South Wales, played a pivotal role during World War II as a Royal Air Force (RAF) station. Its strategic position along the Welsh coast made it an essential component of Britain's air defence network. While less renowned than other

RAF stations, RAF Pembrey was integral to both defensive and offensive operations throughout the conflict, contributing significantly to the overall war effort.

Early History and Establishment

The airfield at Pembrey was first established in 1937 as a peacetime training base, but with the outbreak of World War II in 1939, it quickly transformed into a key operational airbase. The site's proximity to the Bristol Channel and the industrial areas of South Wales made it an ideal location for defending against potential German air attacks on British infrastructure and shipping routes.



Timeline of RAF Pembrey (1939-1945)

1. **1939 - 1940: Establishment and Early Operations**
 - RAF Pembrey was established as a fighter station and became operational in 1939, shortly after the outbreak of World War II.
 - Initially, it served as a training base and satellite station, supporting various operational squadrons and providing air defence for the region.
 - It was primarily used for coastal patrols and defence of shipping routes in the Bristol Channel.
2. **1941 - 1942: Fighter Command and Operational Squadrons**
 - In 1941, RAF Pembrey came under Fighter Command control and was used for fighter operations.
 - It hosted various squadrons equipped with Supermarine Spitfires and Hawker Hurricanes, providing air cover, and conducting patrols along the Welsh coast.
 - The airfield also served as a forward operating base for squadrons participating in offensive sweeps over the English Channel and occupied France.
3. **1943: Role Expansion and Training**
 - RAF Pembrey expanded its role to include training, serving as a base for the No. 53 Operational Training Unit (OTU).

- The OTU focused on training pilots in advanced fighter tactics and ground-attack missions, using aircraft like the Hawker Hurricane.
 - It was also used for air-sea rescue operations and supported anti-submarine patrols, reflecting its strategic coastal location.
- 4. 1944: Support for D-Day and Allied Invasions**
- In 1944, RAF Pembrey continued to host fighter and reconnaissance squadrons as the Allied invasion of Europe commenced.
 - The airfield supported Operation Overlord (D-Day) by providing cover for convoys and participating in anti-submarine operations in the Bristol Channel and Western Approaches.
 - During this period, Pembrey also supported the training and preparation of aircrew for deployment to the front lines.
- 5. 1945: Transition to Post-War Operations**
- As the war in Europe ended in 1945, RAF Pembrey began transitioning to peacetime roles.
 - The airfield continued to be used for training and some operational activities, but its importance declined as the focus shifted from combat operations.
 - It hosted the No. 595 Squadron, which was involved in target towing for anti-aircraft training, and other support roles.

After the war, RAF Pembrey gradually wound down its wartime activities, eventually closing as an operational base. It was later used for various military and civilian purposes, including as a weapons range and training facility.

RAF Pembrey's role during the war was multifaceted, reflecting the changing needs of the conflict from defensive air patrols to offensive operations and extensive training programs, making it an important part of the UK's wartime air defence network.

Role During World War II

During the war, RAF Pembrey served primarily as a Fighter Command base, with a variety of fighter squadrons stationed there over the course of the conflict. These squadrons were tasked with defending the South Wales coast and intercepting enemy aircraft that attempted to bomb key industrial targets in the region.

One of the most significant squadrons to be based at RAF Pembrey was No. 92 Squadron, which flew the iconic Supermarine Spitfire. The Spitfire's speed and agility made it the ideal aircraft for intercepting enemy bombers and engaging Luftwaffe fighters. RAF Pembrey's Spitfires were frequently scrambled to protect cities like Swansea and Cardiff, which were targets due to their industrial importance.



The airbase also played a role in training new pilots. With the constant demand for skilled fighter pilots, RAF Pembrey became an essential site for training and preparing aircrew for frontline service. This function was vital as the war progressed, ensuring a steady supply of well-trained pilots to replace those lost in combat.

Significant Operations and Events

RAF Pembrey was the site of numerous significant operations during the war. One notable event occurred on June 23, 1942, when a German Focke-Wulf Fw 190 mistakenly landed at Pembrey. The pilot, unaware he had crossed the English Channel, surrendered to a surprised ground crew, providing the RAF with a valuable intact enemy aircraft for study.

The base was also involved in anti-shipping operations. Coastal Command aircraft operated from RAF Pembrey to protect Allied shipping in the Bristol Channel and intercept German,



supply convoys. These missions were crucial in disrupting the enemy's supply lines and maintaining control of the vital shipping routes around the British Isles.

Impact and Strategic Importance

RAF Pembrey's contribution to the war effort was multifaceted. Its defensive role in protecting South Wales from air raids was vital, especially during the early years of the war when Britain faced the constant threat of German bombing campaigns. The base's strategic location along the Welsh coast also provided an important line of defence against any potential seaborne invasion or commando raids, though these threats never fully materialized.

Beyond its military importance, RAF Pembrey had a significant impact on the local community. The influx of military personnel and resources boosted the local economy and left a legacy in the region. The base became a hub of activity, with civilians working alongside military personnel to support the war effort, fostering a strong sense of unity and shared purpose.

Legacy and Post-War Period

After World War II, RAF Pembrey continued to serve as an airbase for a time before being repurposed for other uses. Today, the site is home to Pembrey Airport, a civilian airfield, and a motorsport circuit. Although many of the original wartime structures have been lost, the airfield's legacy endures in the memories of those who served there and in the history of the local community.

RAF Pembrey's contribution to World War II, though perhaps overshadowed by larger and more famous RAF stations, was nevertheless significant. The base played a key role in defending Britain's western approaches, training new pilots, and supporting the wider war effort through its diverse operations. The story of RAF Pembrey is a reminder of the importance of every link in the chain that secured victory during the war.

Many of the Airmen stationed at RAF Pembrey are buried at St Illtyd Church in Pembrey this is a link to their Virtual Cemetery.

<https://www.findagrave.com/virtual-cemetery/1855516>

RAF St Athan: A Cornerstone of Aircraft Maintenance and Training During World War II

RAF St Athan, located in the Vale of Glamorgan, South Wales, was one of the most important Royal Air Force stations during World War II. Unlike many other RAF bases that were primarily focused on operational flying, RAF St Athan's significance lay in its role as a major maintenance, repair, and training centre. Its contributions were critical to the overall success of the RAF during the war, ensuring that aircraft remained airworthy and that personnel were properly trained to support the war effort.



Establishment and Early History

RAF St Athan was established in 1938, just before the outbreak of World War II, as a training base and maintenance depot. Its strategic location in South Wales, away from the most likely areas of enemy bombing, made it an ideal site for these crucial support activities. By the time the war began, St Athan was already one of the largest and most important RAF stations in Britain.

Timeline of RAF St Athan (1939-1945)

- 1. 1938 - 1939: Establishment and Early Operations**
 - RAF St Athan was established in 1938, just before the outbreak of World War II, and was intended to serve as a training and maintenance base for the RAF.
 - By 1939, the base was fully operational and began its role in training and maintenance activities. It was one of the largest RAF stations in the UK, reflecting its strategic importance.
- 2. 1940 - 1941: Expansion as a Maintenance and Training Hub**

- During 1940, RAF St Athan became the main base for No. 4 School of Technical Training (No. 4 SOT), which trained aircraft mechanics and technicians, crucial for maintaining the RAF's growing fleet.
 - The base also hosted No. 32 Maintenance Unit (MU), which focused on the repair and overhaul of aircraft. St Athan became one of the largest aircraft maintenance units in the RAF, handling various aircraft, including fighters and bombers.
 - The airfield supported numerous operational units, servicing and repairing aircraft that were then returned to active duty.
- 3. 1942: Development of Training Programs**
- By 1942, RAF St Athan had further expanded its training programs. The technical training school trained thousands of airmen in airframe and engine maintenance, as well as other technical roles.
 - The station also took on the training of aircrew in basic flight mechanics and engineering skills, contributing to the broader war effort by ensuring a steady supply of skilled personnel for frontline units.
 - Additional units, such as No. 19 Maintenance Unit, also operated from St Athan, handling salvage and repair of damaged aircraft.
- 4. 1943 - 1944: Continued Focus on Maintenance and Technical Training**
- Throughout 1943 and 1944, St Athan continued to serve as a crucial maintenance and repair hub, processing and overhauling a wide variety of RAF aircraft, including Spitfires, Hurricanes, and Lancaster bombers.
 - The base remained heavily involved in technical training, with No. 4 SOT continuing to expand its curriculum to meet the increasing demands of the war.
 - St Athan also provided specialized training in airframe and armament maintenance, preparing thousands of personnel for roles in squadrons across the RAF.
- 5. 1945: Support for Post-War Transition**
- As the war ended in 1945, RAF St Athan began to shift focus towards peacetime operations, including the demobilization process and continued training of RAF personnel.
 - The base remained a key site for aircraft maintenance and training, supporting the transition of the RAF from a wartime footing to peacetime operations.
 - RAF St Athan also played a role in refurbishing and repurposing aircraft and equipment for post-war use, including for the newly formed British European Airways.

RAF St Athan's extensive facilities and strategic location made it a cornerstone of the RAF's maintenance and training efforts during World War II. Its contribution to training technical personnel and maintaining the operational readiness of RAF aircraft was crucial to the overall war effort. After the war, RAF St Athan continued to operate as a major RAF station, supporting various military and civilian roles.

Role During World War II

During World War II, RAF St Athan's primary role was aircraft maintenance and repair. The base became one of the main sites for the overhaul and repair of a wide range of aircraft, from fighters like the Supermarine Spitfire and Hawker Hurricane to larger bombers such as the Avro Lancaster. The work carried out at St Athan was vital in keeping the RAF's aircraft

operational, especially during critical periods like the Battle of Britain, when the demand for serviceable aircraft was at its peak.



The station housed several Maintenance Units (MUs), which were responsible for the in-depth servicing and refurbishment of aircraft. These units worked around the clock to repair battle-damaged planes, refurbish engines, and update aircraft with the latest technology and modifications. This work was crucial in maintaining the RAF's operational strength throughout the war.

In addition to its maintenance role, RAF St Athan was also a key training centre. The base hosted No. 4 School of Technical Training, which provided essential technical training to RAF ground crew, including engineers, mechanics, and other support personnel. Thousands of airmen passed through St Athan during the war, learning the skills necessary to keep the RAF's aircraft flying. The training provided at St Athan was comprehensive and covered everything from basic aircraft mechanics to advanced avionics, ensuring that the RAF had the technical expertise needed to sustain its operations.

Strategic Importance

RAF St Athan's contribution to the war effort cannot be overstated. By ensuring that aircraft were well-maintained and that technical crews were well-trained, the station played an indispensable role in keeping the RAF's squadrons operational. The ability to quickly repair and return aircraft to service was especially critical during the intense air campaigns of the war, such as the Battle of Britain and the strategic bombing offensive over Germany.

The station's work also extended to supporting the development and deployment of new aircraft types. As the war progressed, RAF St Athan became involved in the preparation and modification of aircraft for special operations and missions, further underlining its importance in the broader war effort.

Impact on the Local Community

The presence of RAF St Athan had a significant impact on the local community in the Vale of Glamorgan. The base became one of the largest employers in the area, drawing thousands of workers from across South Wales. Many local civilians were employed in various roles at the station, contributing to the maintenance and support operations. This influx of personnel and resources helped to boost the local economy during the difficult war years and fostered a strong sense of camaraderie between the military and civilian populations.

Post-War Legacy

After World War II, RAF St Athan continued to serve as a major RAF station, transitioning into the Cold War era as a key training and maintenance centre. The base expanded its operations and continued to play a vital role in supporting the RAF's aircraft and personnel. Although its role evolved over the decades, RAF St Athan remained an essential part of the RAF's infrastructure.

Today, RAF St Athan is part of the Defence Aviation Repair Agency (DARA) and serves as a key site for the maintenance and repair of military aircraft and equipment. The legacy of its wartime contributions lives on, and the station's history is a testament to the importance of support operations in achieving military success.

Conclusion

RAF St Athan's role during World War II exemplifies the critical importance of maintenance, repair, and training in the overall war effort. While the base did not engage directly in combat operations, its contribution to keeping the RAF's aircraft operational and its personnel well-trained was invaluable. RAF St Athan ensured that the RAF could maintain the air power needed to defend Britain and take the fight to the enemy, making it a cornerstone of Britain's air defence strategy during the war.

Many of the Airmen stationed at RAF St Athan are buried mainly at Llantwit Major Cemetery this is a link to their Virtual Cemetery.

<https://www.findagrave.com/virtual-cemetery/1861468>

RAF Llandow: A Vital Airfield in the Defence of Britain During World War II



RAF Llandow, located near Cowbridge in the Vale of Glamorgan, South Wales, played an important role during World War II as a Royal Air Force station. Although it was smaller and less well-known than some other RAF bases, Llandow was strategically significant for its

role in fighter defence, training, and later as a hub for transport operations. Its contributions were crucial in both the defence of Britain and in preparing for post-war activities.

Establishment and Early Operations

RAF Llandow was constructed in 1940, during a time when the threat of German invasion was at its peak. As part of Britain's expanding air defence network, the airfield was built to house fighter squadrons that would protect the industrial and strategic assets of South Wales. Llandow's location made it ideal for covering the Bristol Channel, safeguarding the nearby cities of Cardiff and Swansea, and intercepting enemy aircraft attempting to raid these vital areas.

Timeline of RAF Llandow (1939-1945)

1. 1939 - 1940: Establishment and Early Operations

- RAF Llandow was constructed and became operational in 1940 as part of the RAF's expansion efforts during the early stages of World War II.
- Initially, it was intended as a fighter base, providing support for operations defending the South Wales coast and the Bristol Channel area.
- The airfield's early activities included the use of various fighter aircraft such as Hawker Hurricanes for local defence duties.

2. 1941 - 1942: Training and Operational Squadrons

- In 1941, RAF Llandow became home to several fighter training units. One of the primary units was No. 53 Operational Training Unit (OTU), which trained pilots on the Supermarine Spitfire and Hawker Hurricane.
- The OTU was responsible for training new pilots who had completed their basic flight training, focusing on advanced fighter tactics, gunnery, and operational readiness.
- Llandow also hosted several operational squadrons temporarily, including units transitioning between different aircraft types or undergoing operational workups.

3. 1943: Expansion of Training Role

- RAF Llandow continued to expand its role as a training base, with No. 53 OTU taking on increased responsibilities for preparing fighter pilots for front-line service.
- The training program included intensive courses on dogfighting, navigation, formation flying, and ground-attack techniques, essential skills for fighter pilots during the war.
- The airfield also supported maintenance and repair facilities to keep the training aircraft in operational condition.

4. 1944: Preparation for D-Day and Beyond

- In 1944, RAF Llandow's activities intensified as preparations for D-Day and the Allied invasion of Europe ramped up. The training programs were critical in ensuring a steady flow of combat-ready pilots for the expanding air war.
- Llandow also temporarily hosted operational squadrons tasked with providing air cover for convoys and coastal defence, complementing its primary training role.
- Additional training focused on preparing pilots for the evolving combat conditions they would face in Europe, including operations over France and Germany.

5. 1945: Wind-Down and Post-War Transition

- As the war came to an end in 1945, RAF Llandow began winding down its wartime training activities. The demand for new fighter pilots decreased, and many training units were scaled back.
- The airfield continued to be used for training and some operational duties as the RAF transitioned to peacetime operations.
- Post-war, RAF Llandow was used for various purposes, including demobilization and limited flying training, before eventually closing as an RAF station in the late 1940s.

RAF Llandow's role as a major fighter training base during World War II was critical in preparing the RAF's fighter pilots for combat. Its contribution to the Allied war effort, particularly in the training of Spitfire and Hurricane pilots, helped ensure that the RAF maintained a high level of operational readiness throughout the conflict.

Role During World War II

In its early years, RAF Llandow primarily served as a base for fighter squadrons under Fighter Command. Several squadrons flew from Llandow, including those equipped with the iconic Supermarine Spitfire and Hawker Hurricane. These aircraft were essential in the defence against German bombing raids, which targeted the industrial centres of South Wales, particularly during the Blitz. The squadrons stationed at Llandow were often called into action to intercept enemy bombers and provide air cover for convoys in the Bristol Channel.



One of the most notable squadrons based at RAF Llandow was No. 79 Squadron, which flew Hurricanes during the critical period of the Battle of Britain. While South Wales did not see as heavy air combat as southern England, the presence of these fighter squadrons was vital in maintaining air superiority and deterring German attacks on the region.

Training and Transport Operations

As the war progressed and the immediate threat of invasion diminished, RAF Llandow's role shifted towards training. The airfield became a base for Operational Training Units (OTUs), which prepared pilots for frontline service. These OTUs played a critical role in the continuous need for trained aircrew, especially as the RAF expanded its operations across Europe and the Mediterranean.

In the latter stages of the war, RAF Llandow was also used by Transport Command. The airfield became a hub for transport aircraft, facilitating the movement of personnel and supplies. This role grew increasingly important as the Allies prepared for D-Day and the

subsequent liberation of Europe. The ability to efficiently move resources and reinforcements was crucial to the success of these operations, and RAF Llandow played its part in this logistical effort.

The Llandow Air Disaster

One of the most tragic events associated with RAF Llandow occurred after the war, in 1950, with the Llandow air disaster. A civilian Avro Tudor airliner, returning from Dublin, crashed near the airfield, killing 80 of the 83 people on board. At the time, it was one of the worst aviation disasters in history. Although this event occurred in the post-war period, it remains closely tied to the history of RAF Llandow and is a sombre reminder of the risks associated with aviation.



Impact on the Local Community

RAF Llandow had a significant impact on the local community throughout its operation. The base brought an influx of personnel and resources to the area, boosting the local economy and fostering a sense of shared purpose among civilians and military personnel. The presence of the RAF also helped to protect local communities from the threat of air raids, providing a sense of security during the darkest days of the war.

Legacy and Post-War Use

After the war, RAF Llandow continued to be used by the RAF for a few more years before being decommissioned in 1957. The airfield was later repurposed for civilian use and became the site of Llandow Circuit, a motor racing track, as well as a small private airfield. Some of the original wartime buildings still stand, serving as a reminder of the airfield's historical significance.

Today, RAF Llandow's legacy is preserved through these civilian uses and the memories of those who served there. While it may not have been as prominent as other RAF stations, Llandow's contributions to the war effort were nonetheless vital, particularly in defending South Wales and training the next generation of RAF pilots.

Conclusion

RAF Llandow played a critical yet often overlooked role during World War II. From defending Britain's industrial heartland to training new pilots and supporting transport

operations, the airfield contributed significantly to the overall success of the RAF during the war. Its legacy, marked by both its wartime service and the later tragedy of the Llandow air disaster, remains an important part of the history of South Wales and the broader story of Britain's wartime resilience.

RAF Valley: The Backbone of Fighter and Search and Rescue Training



RAF Valley, located on the island of Anglesey in North Wales, has been a crucial Royal Air Force station since its establishment during World War II. Unlike other RAF bases that were primarily involved in combat operations during the war, RAF Valley played a key role in training and preparing pilots for operational service. Over time, the station evolved into one of the most important training centres for fast jet pilots and, later, for search and rescue operations.

Establishment and Early Operations

RAF Valley was established in February 1941 as a fighter station during World War II. Its location on the northwest coast of Wales made it a strategic site for defending the western approaches to the British Isles, particularly against the threat of German U-boats and bombers targeting the vital shipping lanes and industrial centres of Liverpool and Manchester.

Initially, RAF Valley hosted several fighter squadrons equipped with aircraft such as the Hawker Hurricane and later the Supermarine Spitfire. These squadrons were tasked with providing air cover for convoys and protecting the coastal regions from potential German air and naval threats. The airfield's proximity to the Irish Sea and the Atlantic made it an ideal location for these defensive operations.

Timeline of RAF Valley (1940-1945)

1. 1940: Establishment and Early Operations

- RAF Valley was officially opened on 7 February 1941, though construction began in 1940 as part of the expansion of the RAF's capabilities during World War II.
- The airfield was strategically located to provide defence for the western approaches and to act as a base for air-sea rescue operations, reflecting the RAF's focus on coastal defence and convoy protection.

2. **1941: Fighter Operations and Coastal Defence**
 - RAF Valley initially hosted No. 312 (Czechoslovak) Squadron, flying Hawker Hurricanes, which were responsible for providing air cover over the Irish Sea and protecting convoys from German aircraft and submarines.
 - The airfield also saw the arrival of other fighter squadrons, including No. 615 (County of Surrey) Squadron, which also operated Hurricanes.
3. **1942: Transition to a Training Role**
 - In 1942, RAF Valley's role began to shift primarily towards training as it became home to No. 275 Squadron, which was involved in air-sea rescue operations, and No. 9 Group Pool, which trained fighter pilots.
 - The airfield played a key role in training new fighter pilots in advanced tactics, operational readiness, and air-sea rescue techniques, vital for supporting downed airmen over the Irish Sea.
4. **1943: Expansion of Training Operations**
 - RAF Valley continued to develop as a major training base. It hosted No. 61 Operational Training Unit (OTU), which was responsible for training pilots on the Supermarine Spitfire.
 - The training at Valley included fighter tactics, interception techniques, gunnery practice, and formation flying, preparing pilots for combat roles in Europe.
 - Air-sea rescue operations also continued, providing vital support for pilots and aircrew operating in the western approaches.
5. **1944: Support for Allied Operations**
 - In 1944, RAF Valley's training units continued to support the Allied war effort, especially in preparation for D-Day and subsequent operations in Europe.
 - The focus remained on advanced fighter training and air-sea rescue, with the airfield playing a crucial role in ensuring that RAF squadrons were staffed with well-trained pilots.
 - Training intensified to keep pace with the demands of the war, with pilots often being rapidly deployed to front-line units after completing their courses.
6. **1945: Continued Training and Post-War Transition**
 - As the war ended in 1945, RAF Valley maintained its role as a key training centre, though the scale of operations began to reduce as the demand for new pilots decreased.
 - The airfield continued to support the transition of the RAF to peacetime operations, focusing on retraining and demobilization efforts.
 - RAF Valley remained operational as a training base post-war, transitioning smoothly into a key station for the RAF's continued pilot training programs in the years following World War II.

RAF Valley's strategic location and its role in training fighter pilots and conducting air-sea rescue operations made it a vital component of the RAF's efforts during World War II. Its legacy as a training hub continued well beyond the war, making it one of the RAF's most important training stations.



Role in World War II

Although RAF Valley was not directly involved in large-scale air battles like those seen in southern England, it played a significant role in the broader defence strategy. Fighter squadrons based at RAF Valley conducted patrols and reconnaissance missions over the Irish Sea and the Atlantic, safeguarding the approaches to the British Isles from enemy aircraft and naval activity. These operations were crucial in protecting the convoys that were essential to Britain's war effort, as the nation relied heavily on supplies brought in by sea.

In addition to its defensive role, RAF Valley became increasingly involved in pilot training as the war progressed. The base hosted No. 71 Maintenance Unit, which was responsible for receiving, assembling, and preparing newly delivered aircraft before they were sent to operational squadrons. This ensured that the RAF had a steady supply of combat-ready aircraft throughout the war.

Post-War Evolution: Training and Search and Rescue

After World War II, RAF Valley's role shifted primarily to training. In 1946, the station was designated as a permanent flying training base, focusing on the advanced training of fast jet pilots. The base became home to No. 4 Flying Training School (4 FTS), which trained pilots to fly a variety of aircraft, including jets like the Hawker Hunter and later, the BAE Hawk. The school at RAF Valley became a key part of the RAF's pilot training pipeline, ensuring that the UK's fast jet pilots were among the best in the world.



RAF Valley also played a significant role in search and rescue (SAR) operations. In 1955, the base became the home of No. 22 Squadron, which operated Westland Whirlwind and later, Westland Sea King helicopters. These SAR helicopters were responsible for rescuing downed airmen, stranded sailors, and civilians in distress across the rugged coastlines and mountains of Wales, the Irish Sea, and beyond. The SAR operations from RAF Valley became renowned for their effectiveness, saving countless lives over the decades.



Strategic Importance

The strategic importance of RAF Valley lies not only in its wartime contributions but also in its ongoing role in training the next generation of RAF pilots. The advanced flying training conducted at RAF Valley has been essential in preparing pilots for service in the UK's frontline squadrons, including those flying aircraft like the Eurofighter Typhoon and the F-35 Lightning.

Additionally, RAF Valley's SAR operations, although now transferred to civilian contractors, have left a legacy of excellence and service. The station's role in both defence and humanitarian efforts has made it a vital part of the RAF's overall mission.

Impact on the Local Community

RAF Valley has had a significant impact on the local community of Anglesey. The base is one of the largest employers in the area, providing jobs not only to military personnel but also to civilians in various support roles. The presence of RAF Valley has fostered a strong relationship between the military and residents, with the base often hosting public events and open days. This connection has been vital in maintaining public support for the RAF's mission in the region.

Legacy and Current Role

Today, RAF Valley continues to serve as a premier training base for fast jet pilots, focusing on the advanced phase of pilot training. The station is also home to the UK Military Flying Training System (UKMFTS), which uses the latest aircraft and simulators to prepare pilots for the challenges of modern air combat.

RAF Valley's legacy as a critical training and rescue hub remains strong. Its contribution to the RAF's operational capability and its role in saving lives through SAR missions have made it an enduring symbol of excellence in the Royal Air Force.

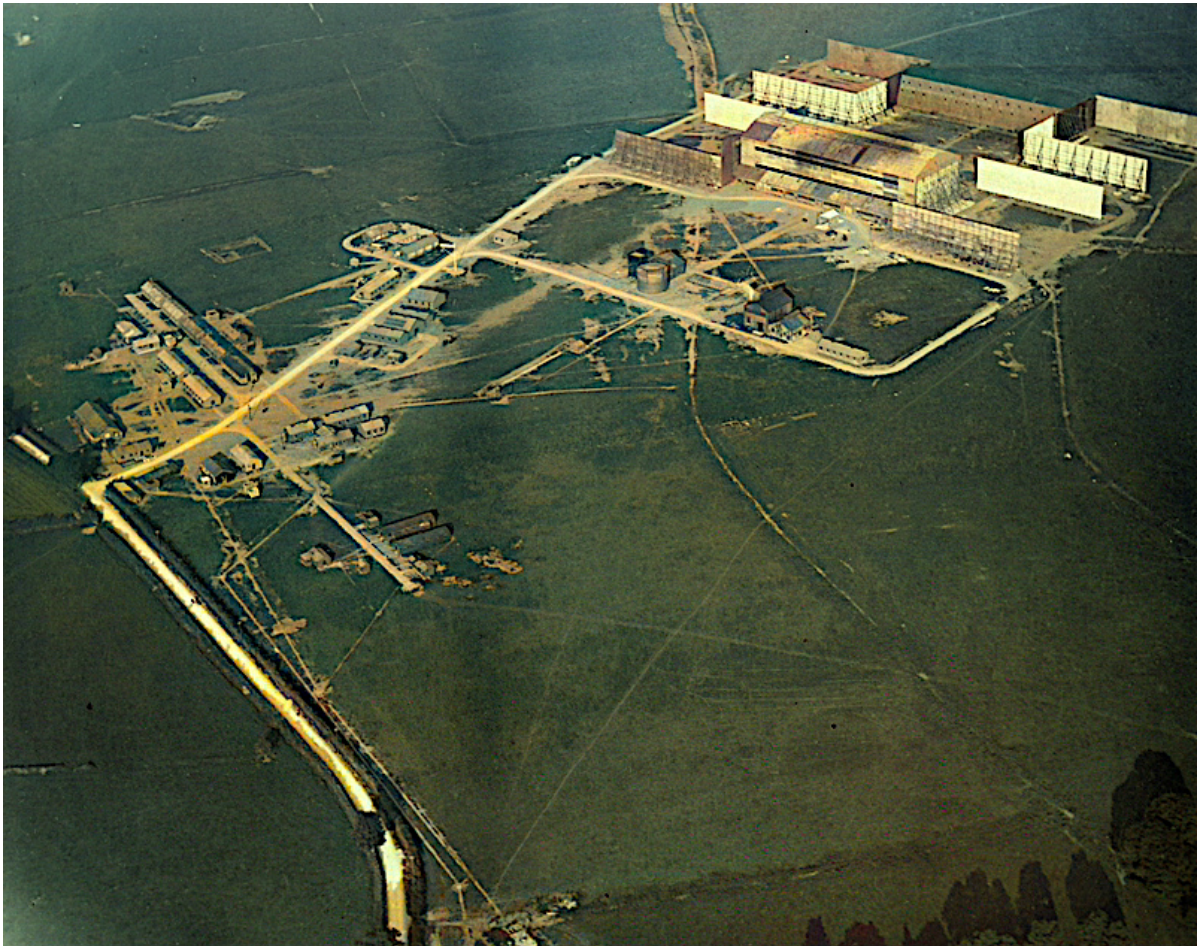
Conclusion

RAF Valley's importance during World War II and its evolution into a premier training and search and rescue base have made it a cornerstone of the Royal Air Force's operations. From its early days defending the western approaches to its current role in shaping the future of RAF pilots, RAF Valley has consistently demonstrated its value to the defence of the United

Kingdom. The station's history and ongoing mission reflect the dedication and professionalism of all who have served there, making it a vital part of the RAF's proud tradition.

In conclusion, the RAF airbases of Carew Cheriton, Pembrey, St Athan, Llandow, and Valley were more than just military installations; they were the backbone of Britain's defence and training efforts during World War II. Each base, with its unique role in safeguarding the nation, training pilots, and maintaining aircraft, played an essential part in the broader strategy that led to Allied victory. The legacy of these airfields is etched not only in the annals of military history but also in the local communities they impacted. As we remember the bravery and dedication of those who served at these bases, their contributions remind us of the vital importance of preparation, resilience, and collaboration in times of crisis.

RNAS Pembroke



The Royal Naval Air Station (RNAS) Pembroke, located near Pembroke Dock in Pembrokeshire, Wales, played significant roles during both World War I and World War II. Its strategic location near the Irish Sea and Atlantic approaches made it a crucial base for naval aviation, especially in roles related to anti-submarine warfare, reconnaissance, and maritime patrol.

Establishment and Early Role:

- RNAS Pembroke was established during World War I as a seaplane station, officially opening in 1914. The base was situated at Pembroke Dock, an area with a long history as a naval dockyard, which made it ideally suited for seaplane operations.
- The primary role of RNAS Pembroke in World War I was to conduct anti-submarine patrols and reconnaissance missions in the Irish Sea and the approaches to the Atlantic, which were critical shipping routes for the Allies.

Operations:

- The station operated various seaplanes, including aircraft such as the Short Type 184 and Felixstowe F.2 flying boats, which were used for long-range patrols.
- RNAS Pembroke was heavily involved in the protection of convoys against the German U-boat threat, which was a significant concern during the war. The seaplanes conducted regular patrols to spot enemy submarines and provide early warning to Allied shipping.
- In addition to anti-submarine warfare, the base also supported search and rescue missions, reconnaissance operations, and the training of naval aviators.

Impact and Challenges:

- RNAS Pembroke's operations helped to mitigate the U-boat threat in the western approaches, though the aircraft were limited by the technology of the time, including relatively short ranges and slow speeds.
- The harsh weather and sea conditions in the Irish Sea posed significant challenges to the aircrews, but their efforts contributed to the overall maritime security of the British Isles.

RNAS Pembroke in World War II

Re-establishment and Role Expansion:

- In World War II, RNAS Pembroke was reactivated in 1939, shortly after the outbreak of hostilities, and was known as HMS Daedalus II.
- During the early years of the war, the base primarily operated as a training facility for naval aircrew, focusing on reconnaissance, anti-submarine warfare, and convoy escort duties.
- As the war progressed, Pembroke Dock became one of the largest flying boat bases in the world, operating aircraft such as the Sunderland and Catalina flying boats, which were crucial for long-range maritime patrols.

Operational Highlights:

- RNAS Pembroke played a vital role in the Battle of the Atlantic, providing critical support in the fight against German U-boats. The flying boats from the station were instrumental in detecting and attacking U-boats, thus protecting vital supply convoys from North America to Britain.
- The aircraft stationed at Pembroke carried out anti-submarine patrols, search and rescue missions, and reconnaissance operations. These missions extended into the

Atlantic, covering a vast area and providing a critical line of defence against the U-boat menace.

- One of the notable aircraft types based at RNAS Pembroke was the Short Sunderland, a large four-engine flying boat renowned for its endurance, heavy defensive armament, and effectiveness in anti-submarine warfare.

Challenges and Legacy:

- The operational challenges of RNAS Pembroke included maintaining operations in adverse weather conditions and the constant threat of enemy action, both from submarines and from the air.
- Despite these challenges, RNAS Pembroke made significant contributions to the Allied war effort, particularly in safeguarding the Atlantic shipping lanes, which were essential for the supply of Britain during the war.
- The base's operations significantly contributed to the reduction in the U-boat threat, playing a pivotal role in the eventual Allied victory in the Battle of the Atlantic.

Post-War Transition:

- After World War II, the importance of flying boat operations diminished with advances in aviation technology and the increased use of land-based patrol aircraft.
- RNAS Pembroke continued to operate in a reduced capacity until it eventually closed in 1959, marking the end of an era for one of the most significant flying boat stations of the 20th century.

Overall Impact

RNAS Pembroke's contributions during both world wars were vital to the maritime security of the United Kingdom. In World War I, it helped defend against the U-boat threat in the Irish Sea, while in World War II, it became a cornerstone of the Allied anti-submarine campaign in the Atlantic. Its strategic role and the brave efforts of its personnel ensured the safety of countless convoys and maintained the vital supply lines that were crucial to the Allied war effort.

RNAS Fishguard



World War I:

Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) Fishguard was established during World War I as a key component of the Royal Naval Air Service, which was part of the Royal Navy. Located in Fishguard, Wales, the air station was strategically positioned on the western coast of Britain, playing a crucial role in maritime patrols and reconnaissance.

The primary mission of RNAS Fishguard during World War I was to conduct anti-submarine patrols and protect the vital shipping lanes from the threat of German U-boats. The base operated a variety of aircraft, including the Short 184, a reconnaissance seaplane used for patrolling and anti-submarine warfare. The base's location allowed it to effectively monitor the waters off the Welsh coast and the approaches to the Irish Sea.

The establishment of the air station at Fishguard was part of a broader effort to expand naval aviation capabilities in response to the growing threat posed by enemy submarines and aircraft. Despite the challenges, including limited resources and the evolving nature of aerial combat, RNAS Fishguard made a significant contribution to the Allied war effort.

World War II:

By the time World War II began, the Royal Naval Air Service had been merged into the Royal Air Force (RAF) in 1918, and the base at Fishguard was operated under the RAF banner. During World War II, Fishguard's role evolved as the strategic needs of the war changed.

In the early years of the war, RAF Fishguard continued to serve as a key location for maritime patrols, but its role expanded to include coastal defence and reconnaissance

missions. The base's location remained strategically important for monitoring the Western Approaches and protecting against potential German incursions.

The introduction of new aircraft types and advancements in radar technology transformed the operational focus of Fishguard during the war. The airfield became an important site for training and operational readiness, contributing to the defence of the UK and the Allied war effort in the Atlantic.

Throughout World War II, Fishguard played a vital role in safeguarding the coast of Wales and ensuring the security of vital shipping routes. Its contributions were integral to the broader efforts of the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy in maintaining maritime security and supporting the Allied campaign.

Legacy:

The history of RNAS Fishguard is a testament to the evolving role of naval aviation and its impact on both world wars. The base's strategic location and operational significance underscored its importance in maritime defence and reconnaissance during a critical period in history.

Today, the legacy of RNAS Fishguard is remembered as part of the broader narrative of military aviation and the efforts of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force in safeguarding the nation during times of conflict.

RAF Hawarden: Strategic and Operational Role in WWII



Location: Near Broughton, Flintshire, Wales

GPS Coordinates: 53.1745° N, 2.9779° W

Overview: RAF Hawarden, located near Broughton in Flintshire, Wales, played a significant role during World War II as a key aircraft manufacturing and training facility. Originally established as a civilian airfield, it was requisitioned by the Air Ministry in the late 1930s and developed into a fully operational RAF base by the outbreak of WWII.

Role and Operations: During the war, RAF Hawarden became a vital part of the British aircraft production effort, most notably serving as a major assembly and testing site for the De Havilland Aircraft Company. The base was involved in the assembly, testing, and delivery of various aircraft, including the iconic Supermarine Spitfire. From 1941, RAF Hawarden housed No. 48 Maintenance Unit (MU), which was responsible for receiving and testing new aircraft before they were delivered to operational squadrons across the UK.

In addition to its role in aircraft production and maintenance, RAF Hawarden also served as a training base. No. 7 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) operated from the airfield, providing advanced flying training to pilots who had completed their initial flight training. This was a crucial step in preparing pilots for combat operations in Europe and beyond.

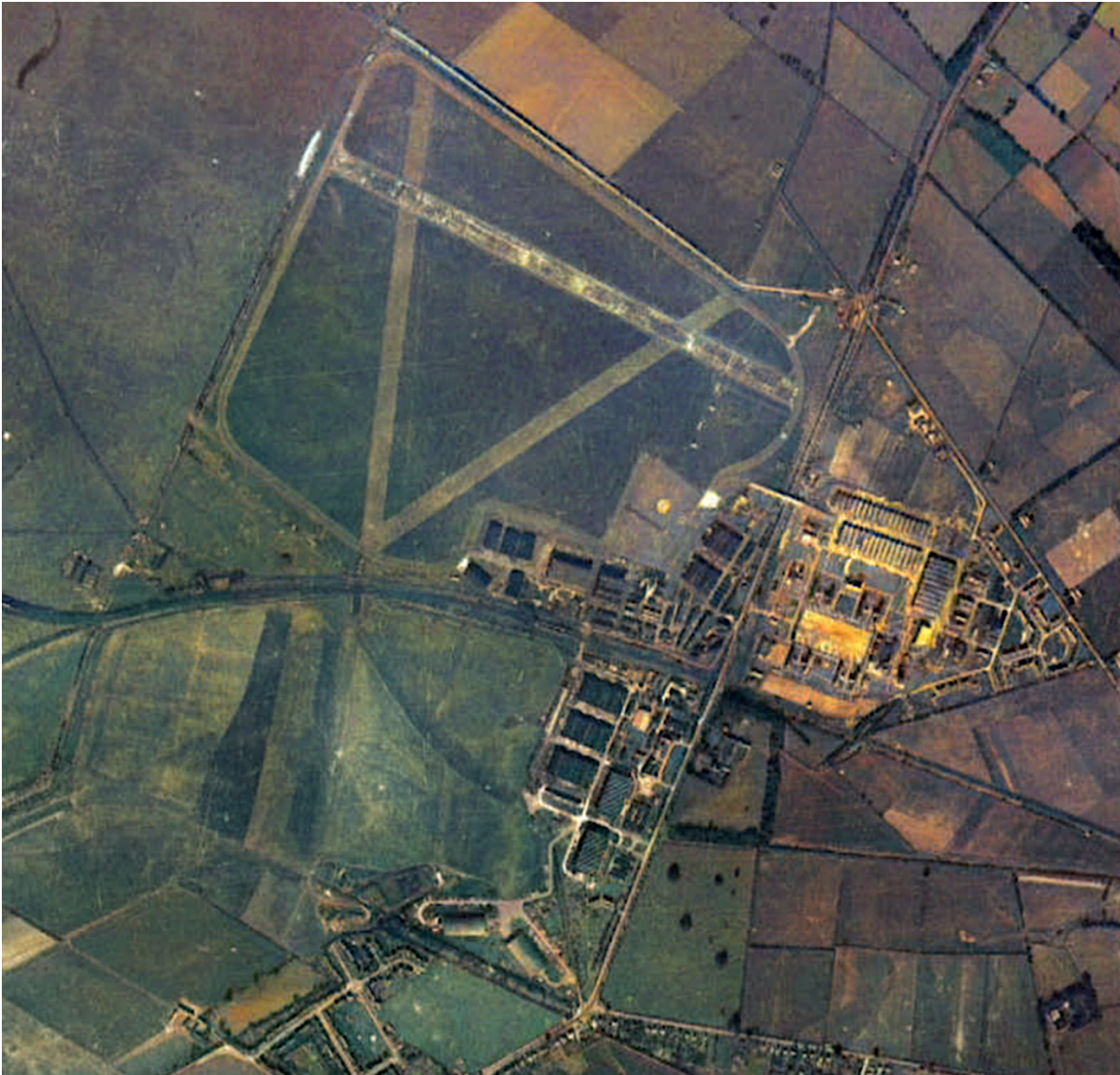
Timeline:

- **1939:** RAF Hawarden was officially established, expanding rapidly to support the war effort.
- **1941:** No. 48 MU and No. 7 SFTS were fully operational at Hawarden, marking the base's peak activity period.
- **1940s:** The base played a crucial role in assembling and testing Spitfires, which were essential to the RAF's defence strategy, particularly during and after the Battle of Britain.
- **1945:** Following the end of WWII, RAF Hawarden's role diminished, and it was eventually returned to civilian use, though it continued to be involved in aircraft manufacturing and testing under private companies, notably as the site of BAE Systems and Airbus operations.

Post-War Legacy: RAF Hawarden's legacy extends beyond its WWII contributions. The site remains active today as Hawarden Airport, supporting aviation manufacturing, including the production of wings for Airbus aircraft. The airfield's history is preserved through its continued use in aviation and its recognition as a significant wartime site in Wales.

Through its strategic contributions in aircraft production, pilot training, and maintenance, RAF Hawarden was a critical component of the British war effort, supporting the RAF's capacity to maintain air superiority during WWII.

RAF Sealand: Strategic and Operational Role in WWII



Location: Near Deeside, Flintshire, Wales

GPS Coordinates: 53.2153° N, 2.9780° W

Overview: RAF Sealand, located near Deeside in Flintshire, Wales, was a significant RAF station with a rich history dating back to its establishment in the First World War. Originally a Royal Flying Corps airfield, it became a permanent RAF base and played a crucial role throughout World War II, primarily as a major maintenance and training facility.

Role and Operations: During WWII, RAF Sealand's primary function was as a maintenance unit, specifically handling the repair, refurbishment, and testing of various aircraft types. It housed No. 30 Maintenance Unit (MU), which was responsible for maintaining a wide array of RAF aircraft, including fighters, bombers, and training planes. This work was critical in ensuring that aircraft were quickly returned to operational status, thus supporting the continuous operational capability of the RAF.

Sealand also served as a hub for the distribution of aircraft parts and equipment, making it an essential logistical component of the RAF's overall war effort. The base played a vital role in the supply chain, ensuring that frontline units received the necessary equipment to remain combat ready.

In addition to its maintenance role, RAF Sealand was involved in pilot and aircrew training. It hosted technical training schools, including the RAF School of Technical Training, where aircrew and ground personnel were trained in aircraft maintenance, radio operation, and other technical skills crucial to the war effort.

Timeline:

- **1916:** Originally established as a Royal Flying Corps station during WWI.
- **1930s:** Developed into a permanent RAF station, continuing its maintenance and technical training roles.
- **1939-1945:** Played a critical role in WWII, primarily through No. 30 MU, focusing on aircraft maintenance, repair, and supply distribution.
- **1940s:** Hosted technical training schools that prepared aircrew and ground personnel for service across various operational theatres.
- **Post-WWII:** Continued to serve as a technical training and maintenance site, adapting to peacetime roles and supporting RAF operations during the Cold War period.

Post-War Legacy: RAF Sealand remained active well into the post-war years, transitioning into roles that supported NATO and RAF peacetime operations. Although it ceased to operate as a full RAF station in the late 20th century, parts of the site continued to be used for military and civilian purposes, including as an Army Reserve Centre and commercial operations.

RAF Sealand's legacy is marked by its pivotal role in aircraft maintenance, technical training, and logistical support, which were essential in sustaining RAF operational effectiveness throughout WWII and beyond. The station's contributions to the RAF's capabilities in maintenance and training were critical to the successful air operations of the Allies during the war.

RAF Rhoose: Strategic and Operational Role in WWII



Location: Rhoose, Vale of Glamorgan, Wales (later became Cardiff Airport)

GPS Coordinates: 51.3988° N, 3.3432° W

Overview: RAF Rhoose was established during World War II in the village of Rhoose in the Vale of Glamorgan, Wales. Although it had a relatively brief military operational history, RAF Rhoose played an important role in supporting the RAF's efforts during the war. The airfield was initially developed as a satellite airfield to relieve the pressure on other nearby bases, such as RAF Llandow.

Role and Operations: RAF Rhoose was primarily used as a relief landing ground and training site. It supported several training units, which used the base for pilot instruction and practice flying. The airfield provided additional capacity for operational training, helping to ensure that pilots were adequately prepared for combat missions. While not directly involved in frontline combat operations, RAF Rhoose contributed to the broader training and readiness efforts essential to maintaining the RAF's operational strength.

In the later stages of WWII, RAF Rhoose was also utilized for storage and maintenance of aircraft. As the war progressed, the need for repair and storage facilities increased, and RAF Rhoose helped accommodate this demand. It operated in conjunction with other bases in the region to maintain a ready reserve of aircraft that could be deployed as needed.

Timeline:

- **1942:** RAF Rhoose was established as a satellite airfield, primarily supporting training operations.
- **1940s:** Functioned as a relief landing ground, aiding in the training of RAF pilots and other aircrew.
- **Post-WWII:** The airfield was gradually phased out of military use, and in 1946, it was identified as a suitable site for a civilian airport to serve South Wales.
- **1950s:** RAF Rhoose was officially closed as a military installation, and the site was developed into Cardiff Airport, which opened for civilian flights in 1952.

Post-War Legacy: RAF Rhoose's transition to civilian use after the war marked the beginning of its new role as Cardiff Airport, the primary airport for South Wales. The transformation from a wartime airfield into a commercial airport highlights the adaptability of military infrastructure to peacetime needs. Today, Cardiff Airport continues to serve as a vital transportation hub, with its origins as RAF Rhoose remembered as a part of its historical legacy.

Though its operational role during WWII was limited, RAF Rhoose played a supportive role in pilot training and aircraft maintenance, contributing to the overall war effort and providing a foundation for the post-war development of civilian air travel in Wales.

[RAF Pengam Moors: Overview and Historical Significance](#)



Location: Pengam area, Cardiff, Wales

GPS Coordinates: Approximately 51.4855° N, 3.13364° W

Overview: RAF Pengam Moors was an airfield located near the city centre of Cardiff, Wales. It was one of the first civil aerodromes in Wales and played a role in both civilian and military aviation during its operational years. Established in the 1930s, Pengam Moors initially served as Cardiff's primary airport, catering to both passenger and mail flights.

During World War II, it was adapted for military use, although it was not a primary RAF station.

Role and Operations: RAF Pengam Moors was primarily a civilian airfield, operated by the Cardiff Corporation from the early 1930s. It became a hub for civil aviation in South Wales, handling passenger services and air mail routes. The airfield featured grass runways, which limited the types and sizes of aircraft that could operate there, making it less suitable for heavy military operations.

World War II: During WWII, Pengam Moors was requisitioned for military use by the RAF and the Fleet Air Arm. Its strategic location near Cardiff made it useful as a satellite airfield and auxiliary landing ground, providing overflow capacity for nearby RAF bases like RAF Llandow and RAF St. Athan. The airfield supported various military activities, including the temporary accommodation of aircraft and personnel.

Military Activities:

- **Support and Auxiliary Roles:** RAF Pengam Moors served as an auxiliary airfield, primarily used for overflow parking and as a dispersal site to reduce the concentration of aircraft at more critical bases.
- **Air Training and Operations:** The airfield occasionally hosted training operations, including basic flying and navigation exercises for aircrew.

Despite its military use, Pengam Moors was not a heavily fortified or fully equipped RAF station, and its primary function remained civilian aviation. The airfield's proximity to Cardiff city centre and the limited infrastructure meant that it was not suitable for large-scale wartime operations.

Timeline:

- **1931:** Opened as Cardiff Municipal Airport at Pengam Moors.
- **1939-1945:** Used intermittently by the RAF and Fleet Air Arm during WWII as a satellite airfield.
- **1945:** Continued limited operations post-war but was soon recognized as unsuitable for expanding aviation needs.
- **1950:** Operations began to transfer to RAF Rhoose, due to its better facilities and expansion potential.
- **1954:** Officially closed as an airport following the opening of Cardiff (Rhoose) Airport.

Post-War Legacy: After WWII, the airfield's limitations became more apparent, especially as aircraft technology advanced and the need for longer, paved runways increased. Cardiff's growing urban landscape also made Pengam Moors less viable for continued aviation use. In the early 1950s, Cardiff's commercial aviation operations were transferred to RAF Rhoose, which had been developed into a more modern airport (now Cardiff Airport).

The site of RAF Pengam Moors was eventually redeveloped, and the area is now occupied by industrial and residential developments. Its role in the early years of Welsh aviation and during WWII is a notable part of Cardiff's aviation history.

RAF St. David's: Overview and Historical Significance



Location: Near Solva, Pembrokeshire, Wales

GPS Coordinates: 51.88635° N, -5.21366° W

Overview: RAF St. David's, located near Solva in Pembrokeshire, Wales, was a significant airfield during World War II. Its strategic position on the western coast of Wales made it an important site for maritime patrol and coastal defence operations.

Role and Operations: During World War II, RAF St. David's was primarily utilized for its role in anti-submarine warfare and coastal defence. The airfield's location was crucial for monitoring and protecting the Atlantic approaches to the UK, particularly against German naval threats.

World War II:

- **Maritime Patrol:** The airfield was equipped with aircraft such as the Catalina flying boats, which were used for long-range reconnaissance and anti-submarine patrols over the Atlantic.
- **Anti-Submarine Warfare:** RAF St. David's played a vital role in tracking and engaging enemy submarines, contributing to the broader Allied effort to secure shipping lanes and protect convoys.

Timeline:

- **1930s:** Initially used as a civilian airfield.
- **1939:** Requisitioned by the Royal Air Force at the start of World War II.
- **1940-1945:** Served as an anti-submarine and coastal defence base. The airfield was involved in regular patrols and operations to secure the western maritime approaches to the UK.
- **Post-WWII:** Continued to be used for various military purposes but gradually diminished in importance as other facilities assumed its roles.

- **1950s:** The airfield was closed and repurposed for other uses.

Post-War Legacy: After its closure, RAF St. David's was redeveloped, and the site has since been used for agricultural and other purposes. The airfield's contribution to WWII, particularly its role in maritime patrol and coastal defence, is remembered as part of Pembrokeshire's wartime history. The site reflects its strategic importance in protecting Allied interests and ensuring the security of vital sea routes during the war.

Today, the former RAF St. David's airfield is a historical marker of the region's wartime efforts and its role in the broader context of WWII maritime defence operations.

RAF Brawdy: Overview and Historical Significance



- **Location:** Near St. David's, Pembrokeshire, Wales
GPS Coordinates: Approximately 51.8806, -5.12923

Overview: RAF Brawdy was a Royal Air Force station located near St. David's in Pembrokeshire, Wales. It was established during World War II and served as a key base for the RAF, the Fleet Air Arm, and later, the United States Navy. RAF Brawdy played significant roles in various military operations, including training, coastal defence, and Cold War activities, making it an important military installation throughout the mid-20th century.

Role and Operations:

World War II: RAF Brawdy was built during World War II, opening in 1944, primarily as a Coastal Command airfield. Its initial role was to support anti-submarine and reconnaissance operations over the Atlantic Ocean. The airfield hosted various squadrons, including those flying the Vickers Wellington, which were involved in long-range maritime patrols to protect Allied shipping lanes from German U-boat threats.

Post-WWII and Cold War: After World War II, RAF Brawdy continued to serve the RAF and, from 1946, the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy. It became a significant base for naval air squadrons, including those flying carrier-borne aircraft such as the Hawker Sea Hawk and de Havilland Sea Vixen. RAF Brawdy was used extensively for training naval pilots, particularly in carrier operations.

In the 1970s, RAF Brawdy was transferred to the RAF once again and was used as a training base for the Tactical Weapons Unit. This unit was responsible for advanced jet training, utilizing aircraft like the Hawker Hunter and, later, the BAe Hawk, to prepare pilots for operational service.

United States Navy Operations: During the late Cold War period, RAF Brawdy was also utilized by the United States Navy as a base for its Oceanographic Air Survey Unit. The unit conducted surveillance and reconnaissance missions over the North Atlantic, contributing to NATO's broader strategic objectives during the Cold War.

Timeline:

- **1944:** RAF Brawdy opened as a Coastal Command base during WWII.
- **1946-1971:** Operated by the Fleet Air Arm, serving as a base for naval air squadrons and pilot training.
- **1971-1992:** Transferred back to the RAF and became home to the Tactical Weapons Unit, focusing on advanced jet training for RAF pilots.
- **1970s-1990s:** Used by the United States Navy for oceanographic and surveillance operations as part of NATO's Cold War efforts.
- **1992:** RAF Brawdy was closed as an RAF station.

Post-Military Use: After its closure in 1992, RAF Brawdy was handed over to the British Army and became Cawdor Barracks, home to the 14th Signal Regiment. The site has since remained under military use, supporting army communications and training functions.

Legacy: RAF Brawdy's long operational history reflects its adaptability and strategic importance, from World War II through the Cold War. It served multiple branches of the UK's armed forces and international allies, playing crucial roles in coastal defence, naval training, and Cold War reconnaissance. Its legacy continues as a site of military significance in Pembrokeshire.

RAF Talbenny: Overview and Historical Significance

Location: Near Talbenny, Pembrokeshire, Wales



GPS Coordinates: Approximately 51.75783° N, -5.14102° W

Overview: RAF Talbenny was established as a Royal Air Force station during World War II. It was an important operational base primarily used by RAF Coastal Command for anti-submarine and maritime patrol missions over the Atlantic. Its strategic location in Pembrokeshire made it a critical site for protecting shipping lanes and engaging enemy submarines during the war.

Role and Operations:

World War II:

- **RAF Coastal Command:** RAF Talbenny opened in 1942 and was used by RAF Coastal Command. It hosted several squadrons that operated aircraft such as the Vickers Wellington, Handley Page Halifax, and Liberators, which were well-suited for long-range patrols and anti-submarine operations.
- **Anti-Submarine Warfare:** The airfield played a crucial role in the Battle of the Atlantic, helping to protect Allied convoys from German U-boat threats. Its aircraft conducted patrols and reconnaissance missions, contributing significantly to the Allied effort to secure vital maritime routes.

- **Support for D-Day Operations:** During the preparations for the D-Day landings, RAF Talbenny also supported missions that helped secure the English Channel and western approaches, ensuring the safety of the invasion fleet.

Post-War Period:

- After World War II, the importance of RAF Talbenny declined as the need for extensive anti-submarine patrols diminished. The base continued to operate in a reduced capacity before being placed on care and maintenance.
- **Closure:** RAF Talbenny was eventually closed as an active airfield in 1946 and was not reactivated during the post-war period.

Legacy: RAF Talbenny's contributions during World War II were critical to the success of Allied maritime operations in the Atlantic. Its role in anti-submarine warfare and coastal patrols helped to protect convoys and secure key shipping routes, making it an important, albeit lesser-known, component of the RAF's wartime strategy. Today, remnants of the airfield can still be found, serving as a reminder of its role in Britain's wartime defence efforts.

RNAS Dale (HMS Goldcrest): Overview and Historical Significance



Location: Near Dale, Pembrokeshire, Wales

GPS Coordinates: Approximately 51.71757° N, -5.19455° W

Overview: Initially established as RNAS Dale (HMS Goldcrest), this airfield was a Royal Naval Air Station before being transferred to the Royal Air Force and renamed RAF Dale. Its strategic coastal location made it an ideal base for both naval and RAF operations during World War II, particularly for maritime patrol and anti-submarine warfare.

Role and Operations:

Royal Naval Air Station (RNAS Dale):

- **RNAS Dale (HMS Goldcrest):** The station opened in June 1941 as a Royal Naval Air Station under the name HMS Goldcrest. During this period, it served as a base for Fleet Air Arm squadrons engaged in convoy protection, anti-submarine operations, and training missions.
- **Aircraft:** The RNAS hosted aircraft such as the Fairey Swordfish and Grumman Avenger, which were used for anti-submarine patrols, convoy escort duties, and reconnaissance missions over the Atlantic Ocean.

Transition to RAF Dale:

- **1942:** In October 1942, control of the airfield was transferred to the Royal Air Force, and it became RAF Dale. Under RAF Coastal Command, the station continued its focus on anti-submarine and maritime reconnaissance missions.
- **RAF Coastal Command:** RAF Dale was used by squadrons operating aircraft like the Vickers Wellington and Handley Page Halifax, which conducted long-range patrols over the Atlantic, targeting German U-boats and protecting Allied shipping routes.
- **Support for Atlantic Convoys:** The airfield played a vital role in safeguarding Atlantic convoys, which were crucial to the Allied war effort, by providing constant aerial surveillance and engagement capabilities against enemy submarines.

Post-War Period:

- **Reduced Operations:** After the end of World War II, RAF Dale saw a decline in operational activity. The reduction in the U-boat threat led to a decreased need for extensive coastal patrols, and the station was gradually phased out of active service.
- **1948:** RAF Dale was officially closed as an RAF station in 1948.

Legacy: RAF Dale's history as both an RNAS and an RAF station highlights its dual service role and strategic importance during World War II. Initially serving the Royal Navy, its transition to RAF control illustrates the collaborative efforts of the UK's armed forces in coastal and anti-submarine operations. Today, the site of the former airfield retains elements of its wartime heritage, reflecting its contribution to the defence of Britain's maritime interests during the conflict.

- in 1948.

Legacy: RAF Dale's history as both an RNAS and an RAF station highlights its dual service role and strategic importance during World War II. Initially serving the Royal Navy, its transition to RAF control illustrates the collaborative efforts of the UK's armed forces in coastal and anti-submarine operations. Today, the site of the former airfield retains elements of its wartime heritage, reflecting its contribution to the defence of Britain's maritime interests during the conflict.

RAF Angle: Overview and Historical Significance



Location: Near Angle, Pembrokeshire, Wales

GPS Coordinates: Approximately 51.67325° N, -5.09875° W

Overview: RAF Angle was a Royal Air Force station located near the village of Angle in Pembrokeshire, Wales. Established during World War II, it played a crucial role in coastal defence, providing air cover for shipping convoys and conducting anti-submarine and search and rescue operations. The airfield's strategic position near the western approaches made it an important base for protecting the vital maritime routes of the Atlantic.

Role and Operations:

World War II:

- **Opening:** RAF Angle was opened in 1941 as part of the expansion of RAF Coastal Command's network of airfields, specifically aimed at bolstering the UK's defences against German U-boats and other naval threats.
- **Fighter and Coastal Patrols:** RAF Angle primarily operated as a fighter and coastal patrol station. It hosted a variety of squadrons and aircraft, including Supermarine Spitfires, Hawker Hurricanes, and later, Bristol Beaufighters, which were used for air defence, convoy escort, and anti-shipping strikes.
- **Anti-Submarine Warfare:** The airfield was heavily involved in anti-submarine operations, using aircraft equipped with depth charges and other weaponry designed to engage and neutralize enemy submarines threatening Allied convoys in the Atlantic.
- **Search and Rescue:** RAF Angle also played a role in air-sea rescue missions, assisting in the recovery of downed airmen and sailors, which was critical given the perilous conditions of the western approaches.

Key Units and Aircraft:

- **Squadrons:** Various RAF squadrons were based at Angle throughout the war, including No. 312 (Czechoslovak) Squadron flying Spitfires, and later, No. 404 (Buffalo) Squadron RCAF with Beaufighters.
- **Aircraft:** Key aircraft operated from RAF Angle included the Spitfire for fighter defence, the Hurricane for both fighter and ground attack roles, and the Beaufighter for long-range strike and anti-submarine missions.

Post-War Period:

- Following the end of World War II, the operational importance of RAF Angle declined. The station was gradually wound down as the need for intensive coastal defence and anti-submarine operations decreased.
- **Closure:** RAF Angle was closed in 1945, shortly after the conclusion of hostilities in Europe, and was subsequently decommissioned as an RAF station.

Legacy: RAF Angle's contribution during World War II was significant in the broader context of protecting the UK's maritime approaches and ensuring the safety of vital supply routes across the Atlantic. Its squadrons and personnel played an essential role in the Battle of the Atlantic, providing air cover, engaging enemy submarines, and safeguarding Allied shipping convoys.

Today, remnants of the airfield can still be found near Angle, serving as historical markers of its wartime significance. The site is remembered as a key part of the RAF's coastal command operations and a vital element of Pembrokeshire's rich wartime history.

RAF Manorbier: Overview and Historical Significance



Location: Near Manorbier, Pembrokeshire, Wales

GPS Coordinates: Approximately 51.64149° N, -4.78359° W

Overview: RAF Manorbier was a Royal Air Force station located near the village of Manorbier in Pembrokeshire, Wales. Established during World War II, it served primarily as an anti-aircraft and weapons training establishment. Unlike many other RAF stations in the region, RAF Manorbier was not an operational airfield for fighter or bomber aircraft but was instead dedicated to the training and development of anti-aircraft gunnery skills, which were critical for the defence of the UK against aerial threats.

Role and Operations:

World War II:

- **Anti-Aircraft Training:** RAF Manorbier was opened in 1933 as an Army anti-aircraft school, but it was taken over by the RAF during World War II. Its primary role was as a firing range and training facility for anti-aircraft gunnery, helping to train personnel in the use of anti-aircraft guns and the tactics required to defend against enemy aircraft.
- **Weapons Development and Testing:** In addition to training, RAF Manorbier was also involved in the testing and development of anti-aircraft weaponry. The station's location near the coast allowed for live firing exercises over the sea, where targets could be towed by aircraft for realistic training scenarios.
- **Support for Coastal Defence:** The skills developed at RAF Manorbier contributed significantly to the coastal defence efforts during the war, enhancing the capabilities of anti-aircraft units stationed around the UK.

Post-War Period:

- **Continued Training Operations:** After World War II, RAF Manorbier continued to serve as a training establishment. The station remained active as an anti-aircraft and missile training facility, reflecting the evolving nature of air defence technology during the Cold War era.
- **Transition to Guided Weapons:** In the post-war years, RAF Manorbier transitioned to the training and testing of guided missile systems, including surface-to-air missiles, which became an increasingly important component of the UK's air defence strategy.

Later Use and Closure:

- The station continued to operate in a training capacity for several decades after the war, adapting to the technological advancements in air defence.
- **Closure:** RAF Manorbier was eventually closed as an RAF establishment and was transferred to the British Army as a missile and air defence training range. It remains under military use, managed as part of the Army's Air Defence Ranges.

Legacy: RAF Manorbier's legacy lies in its contribution to the development and enhancement of the UK's air defence capabilities. From World War II through the Cold War, it played a crucial role in training anti-aircraft gunners and, later, missile operators, ensuring that the UK remained prepared to defend its airspace from evolving threats. The station's

ongoing use as a military training range underscores its enduring importance in the UK's defence infrastructure.

RAF Aberporth: Overview and Historical Significance



Location: Near Aberporth, Ceredigion, Wales

GPS Coordinates: Approximately 52.11468° N, -4.55931° W

Overview: RAF Aberporth was established as a Royal Air Force station during World War II and played a critical role as a weapon testing and training site. Located on the west coast of Wales, its strategic position made it ideal for testing rockets, missiles, and other aerial munitions over the nearby Cardigan Bay. Over the decades, RAF Aberporth evolved into a leading site for the development and evaluation of guided weapons systems, and it continues to operate today, primarily as a testing range under the Ministry of Defence.

Role and Operations:

World War II:

- **Establishment and Early Use:** RAF Aberporth was opened in 1939, originally as an RAF station for training and testing weapons. During World War II, it was primarily used for testing rockets and anti-aircraft missiles, helping to advance the UK's capabilities in aerial warfare.
- **Weapons Testing:** The site was heavily involved in the testing of air-to-ground and air-to-air rockets, which were vital for RAF operations against enemy targets. The isolated coastal location provided a safe environment for these activities, allowing for live firing over the sea without risk to populated areas.

Post-War and Cold War Era:

- **Expansion of Testing Operations:** After World War II, RAF Aberporth expanded its role in missile testing, becoming a key site for the development of the UK's guided weapons systems. This included testing early surface-to-air missiles, air-to-air missiles, and later, more advanced precision-guided munitions.
- **Partnerships and Technological Advancements:** Throughout the Cold War, RAF Aberporth collaborated with other military and defence industry partners, including the Royal Navy and various defence contractors, to test and evaluate cutting-edge weapons technologies.

Modern Use:

- **MOD Aberporth:** In the post-Cold War period, the site was rebranded as MOD Aberporth and continues to function as one of the UK's primary missile and UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle) testing ranges. It is managed by QinetiQ, a defence technology company, under contract with the Ministry of Defence.
- **UAV and Missile Testing:** Today, MOD Aberporth is involved in the testing of advanced weapons systems, including unmanned aerial systems (drones), complex missile systems, and other guided weapons. It provides a secure and controlled environment for both live and simulated weapons trials.

Key Functions:

- **Flight Trials and Testing:** The site supports a wide range of testing activities, including flight trials, telemetry tracking, and weapons evaluation for both UK and international defence projects.
- **Research and Development:** MOD Aberporth also plays a role in the research and development of new weapons technologies, supporting the UK's efforts to maintain cutting-edge defence capabilities.

Legacy: RAF Aberporth's legacy is rooted in its contributions to the UK's military strength through the testing and development of advanced weapons systems. From World War II rockets to modern-day guided missiles and UAVs, the site has continually adapted to meet the evolving needs of the UK's armed forces. It remains a key asset in the UK's defence infrastructure, reflecting decades of technological progress and strategic importance.

RAF Rudbaxton: Overview and Historical Significance



Location: Near Rudbaxton, Pembrokeshire, Wales

GPS Coordinates: Approximately 51.83435° N, -4.9601° W

Overview: RAF Rudbaxton was a Royal Air Force station located near the village of Rudbaxton in Pembrokeshire, Wales. Established during World War II, it primarily served as an airfield for anti-aircraft training and gunnery practice. Its role was integral to the development of anti-aircraft defence tactics, helping to prepare RAF and other Allied forces for the air defence of the UK.

Role and Operations:

World War II:

- **Anti-Aircraft Training:** RAF Rudbaxton was opened in 1943 as part of the RAF's efforts to enhance the training of anti-aircraft gunners during the height of World War II. The airfield provided a base where anti-aircraft units could practice live firing and train in the use of various anti-aircraft guns and associated equipment.
- **Target Towing Flights:** Aircraft based at RAF Rudbaxton were often used to tow aerial targets for anti-aircraft gunnery practice. This was crucial for simulating

realistic combat conditions, allowing gunners to hone their skills against moving targets.

- **Aircraft Operations:** The airfield hosted several types of aircraft for training and support roles, including planes modified for towing targets and for observer duties. Common aircraft types included the Miles Martinet and the Hawker Henley, which were specifically adapted for target towing missions.

Post-War Period:

- **Reduced Operations:** After the end of World War II, the need for extensive anti-aircraft training decreased, and RAF Rudbaxton's operational activities were significantly reduced. The station continued to be used for training purposes but on a much smaller scale.
- **Closure:** RAF Rudbaxton was officially closed as an RAF station in 1946, shortly after the war ended, as part of the post-war downsizing of the UK's military infrastructure.

Legacy: RAF Rudbaxton's primary legacy lies in its role as a training ground for anti-aircraft defence during World War II. The station contributed to the RAF's broader strategy of preparing personnel to defend the UK against aerial attacks, particularly from German aircraft. Although it was not a front-line operational base, its importance in the training and development of anti-aircraft tactics was significant.

Today, little remains of the original airfield, but its contribution to the UK's wartime efforts is remembered as part of Pembrokeshire's rich aviation history. The site exemplifies the numerous smaller, specialized airfields that played crucial support roles in the broader context of World War II.

[RNAS Lawrenny \(HMS Daedalus II\): Overview and Historical Significance](#)



Location: Near Lawrenny, Pembrokeshire, Wales

GPS Coordinates: Approximately 51.71887° N, -4.87991° W

Overview: RNAS Lawrenny, also known as HMS Daedalus II, was a Royal Naval Air Station located near Lawrenny in Pembrokeshire, Wales. Established during World War II, it served as a base for the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm, primarily for training and operational purposes related to coastal defence and anti-submarine warfare.

Role and Operations:

World War II:

- **Establishment and Naming:** The airfield was commissioned in 1942 and was initially known as RNAS Lawrenny Ferry. It was later renamed HMS Daedalus II. The name "HMS Daedalus II" was part of a series of names used for naval air stations and was designated to signify its role as a secondary or auxiliary site related to the main HMS Daedalus, a key naval air station located at Lee-on-Solent.
- **Training and Operations:** The primary function of RNAS Lawrenny was to serve as a training establishment for naval aviators. It played a crucial role in preparing pilots and crews for anti-submarine and coastal defence operations. The airfield supported Fleet Air Arm squadrons engaged in maritime patrols and reconnaissance missions.
- **Aircraft:** The airfield hosted various aircraft types used for training and operational missions. These included the Fairey Swordfish, used for anti-submarine warfare, and other aircraft suited for coastal defence roles.

Post-War Period:

- **Operational Changes:** After World War II, the need for extensive naval aviation training and coastal defence operations diminished. RNAS Lawrenny continued to operate in a reduced capacity, focusing on training and support roles for a time.
- **Closure:** The airfield was officially closed in 1945 as part of the post-war reduction in military infrastructure. The site was subsequently decommissioned and repurposed for other uses.

Legacy: RNAS Lawrenny's contribution as HMS Daedalus II was significant during World War II, serving as a key training base for the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm. Its role in anti-submarine warfare and coastal defence was important for the protection of maritime routes and the training of naval aviators.

Today, the site has been repurposed, but its historical significance remains a part of Pembrokeshire's military heritage. The name HMS Daedalus II reflects the broader efforts of the Royal Navy to maintain and enhance its aviation capabilities during a critical period of conflict.

RAF Llanbedr: Overview and Historical Significance



Location: Near Llanbedr, Gwynedd, Wales

GPS Coordinates: Approximately 52.81078° N, -4.1236° W

Overview: RAF Llanbedr is a former Royal Air Force station located near Llanbedr in Gwynedd, Wales. Established during World War II, it served multiple roles throughout its operational life, including as a base for coastal defence, anti-submarine warfare, and, later, as a training facility. The airfield's strategic location along the western coast of Wales made it an asset during the war and in the subsequent years.

Role and Operations:

World War II:

- **Establishment:** RAF Llanbedr was opened in 1941 as a Royal Air Force station. Its location was strategically chosen for its proximity to the Irish Sea and the western approaches, which were important for maritime patrols and anti-submarine operations.
- **Anti-Submarine Warfare:** During World War II, the airfield was primarily used by RAF Coastal Command for anti-submarine warfare (ASW). It hosted several squadrons that conducted patrols over the Irish Sea to protect Allied shipping lanes from German U-boats.
- **Aircraft:** Key aircraft stationed at RAF Llanbedr included the Vickers Wellington and the Handley Page Halifax, which were used for long-range maritime patrols and anti-submarine operations.

Post-War Period:

- **Training and Other Roles:** After World War II, RAF Llanbedr continued to operate in various capacities. It was used as a training base for several years and later became involved in different military and civil aviation roles.
- **Jet Testing and Development:** In the post-war period, the airfield was used for testing and development of jet aircraft and other advanced aviation technologies. It played a role in the UK's efforts to develop and refine its jet-powered aircraft capabilities.
- **Closure:** RAF Llanbedr was officially closed as an active airfield in 1994. After its closure, the site was transferred to civil use and has been repurposed for various purposes.

Current Status:

- **Commercial and Recreational Use:** The former RAF Llanbedr site is now used for commercial aviation activities, including aircraft maintenance and training. It also supports recreational flying and is home to a flying club.
- **Airfield Preservation:** Efforts have been made to preserve the historical aspects of the airfield while adapting the site for modern uses. Some original buildings and infrastructure from the RAF era remain on-site.

Legacy: RAF Llanbedr's legacy is significant due to its role in coastal defence during World War II and its subsequent contributions to aviation technology and training. The airfield's strategic location and varied use throughout its operational life highlight its importance to both military and civil aviation history.

Today, RAF Llanbedr is remembered as a key site in the UK's defence infrastructure during the war years and continues to serve as a valuable aviation asset in its current role. Its history reflects the broader efforts of the Royal Air Force in protecting maritime routes and advancing aviation technology.

RAF Colwyn Bay: Overview and Historical Significance

Location: Near Colwyn Bay, Conwy, Wales

GPS Coordinates: Approximately 53.2960° N, -3.7270° W

Overview: RAF Colwyn Bay was a Royal Air Force station located near Colwyn Bay in Conwy, Wales. Established during World War II, it was primarily used as an auxiliary airfield and played a role in both coastal defence and training operations. Although not as prominent as some other RAF stations, it contributed to the broader efforts of the Royal Air Force during the war.

Role and Operations:

World War II:

- **Establishment:** RAF Colwyn Bay was opened in 1941 as a satellite airfield for nearby RAF stations. Its role was mainly to support operational activities and provide additional facilities for various RAF squadrons.

- **Training and Auxiliary Role:** The airfield was used primarily for training purposes and as a base for auxiliary operations. It supported operational squadrons by providing additional resources and facilities, including accommodation and maintenance support.
- **Aircraft and Units:** During its operational period, RAF Colwyn Bay hosted several types of aircraft, including trainers and light fighters. It was used by squadrons from other nearby RAF stations for various training and support activities.

Post-War Period:

- **Reduced Use:** After World War II, RAF Colwyn Bay's operational role diminished. The airfield saw a reduction in activity as the need for additional satellite facilities decreased with the end of the war.
- **Closure:** The airfield was officially closed in the late 1940s or early 1950s. Following its closure, the site was repurposed for other uses, and most of the original RAF infrastructure was dismantled or repurposed.

Current Status:

- **Repurposing and Development:** The site of the former RAF Colwyn Bay has since been developed for various civilian uses. The airfield's land has been repurposed, and there are few visible remnants of the original RAF facilities.
- **Legacy:** While RAF Colwyn Bay may not have been as prominent as other RAF stations, its role in supporting the broader RAF operations during World War II remains a part of its historical legacy. Its contributions to training and auxiliary support were important for the effectiveness of RAF squadrons during the war.

Legacy: RAF Colwyn Bay's history reflects the broader network of auxiliary and satellite airfields that supported the RAF during World War II. These smaller airfields were integral to maintaining operational readiness and providing support to front-line units. Though it has been repurposed, the site's historical significance as part of the UK's wartime infrastructure is remembered as a part of Colwyn Bay's aviation heritage.

RAF Llandwrog: Overview and Historical Significance



Location: Near Llandwrog, Gwynedd, Wales

GPS Coordinates: Approximately 53.1032° N, -4.33833° W

Overview: RAF Llandwrog was a Royal Air Force station located near Llandwrog in Gwynedd, Wales. Established during World War II, it served various roles including operational and training functions. Its location in North Wales made it a strategically important site for the RAF during the war, especially for coastal defence and training operations.

Role and Operations:

World War II:

- **Establishment:** RAF Llandwrog was opened in 1941 as an operational airfield. It was used by the RAF for a range of functions including training and coastal defence operations.
- **Coastal Defence:** During World War II, the airfield played a role in coastal defence, supporting operations aimed at protecting the western approaches of the UK from potential enemy threats, including submarines and aircraft.
- **Training:** RAF Llandwrog was also used for training purposes. The airfield supported various RAF squadrons and provided facilities for pilot and crew training. This included basic flight training as well as more specialized training in anti-submarine and coastal defence tactics.

Post-War Period:

- **Operational Changes:** After World War II, the need for the airfield's operational and training roles declined. RAF Llandwrog continued to be used for a period in a reduced capacity, focusing on support and reserve functions.
- **Closure:** The airfield was officially closed in the early 1950s. After its closure, the site was gradually decommissioned, and the infrastructure was dismantled or repurposed.

Current Status:

- **Repurposing:** The site of the former RAF Llandwrog has been repurposed for various civilian uses. The airfield's land has been developed for other purposes, and most of the original RAF facilities have been removed or converted for new uses.
- **Legacy:** Although RAF Llandwrog is not as well-known as some other RAF stations, its role during World War II in training and coastal defence was important. The airfield contributed to the broader efforts of the RAF in maintaining air and coastal security during a critical period.

Legacy: RAF Llandwrog's legacy is reflective of the many smaller and auxiliary airfields that supported the Royal Air Force during World War II. These airfields were crucial for maintaining operational readiness and supporting various facets of the RAF's mission. While the site has been repurposed, its historical role as part of the RAF's wartime infrastructure remains an important part of Gwynedd's aviation heritage.

The RAF and RNAS airfields stationed across Wales during the World Wars were crucial to the United Kingdom's military efforts and strategic operations. These airfields, scattered across the Welsh landscape, played a significant role in both defensive and offensive operations. From providing essential training for aircrew to executing pivotal coastal and anti-submarine patrols, their contributions were instrumental in securing the nation's air and maritime defences.

The Enduring Legacy of Wales's World War Airfields

Each airfield, whether serving as a base for reconnaissance, a hub for training, or a centre for operational missions, was a key component in the broader war effort. Their locations and functions reflected the strategic needs of the time, supporting both the Royal Air Force and the Royal Naval Air Service in their critical roles.

The legacy of these airfields is a testament to the dedication and resilience of those who served. They were vital in shaping the outcome of the World Wars and continue to be an important part of Wales's rich aviation history. As we remember their contributions, we honour the pivotal role they played in maintaining air and maritime security during a time of great global conflict.