

## West Berkshire Countryside Society

**West Berkshire Countryside Society** was formed in January 2012 to provide an umbrella group for four long-established environmental groups. These were *The Friends of the Pang, Kennet & Lambourn Valleys, The Bucklebury Heathland Conservation Group, The Pang Valley Conservation Volunteers* and *The Pang Valley Barn Owl Group*.

Our remit is to continue their work of promoting and improving the landscape of West Berkshire by practical conservation work and by introducing people to the countryside, its work, history and wildlife, through the medium of talks and conducted walks – of which this is one.

Members of **West Berkshire Countryside Society** currently pay a £15 annual subscription for individual and family membership to provide a financial resource. Those members who wish to, make up volunteer working parties to undertake practical conservation tasks.

Non-members are very welcome to join our tasks and our conducted walks for which we make no charge. Non-members are also welcome at our talks for which we make a small charge.

If you would like more information about our activities or would like to join us and help with our work, please visit our website:

[www.westberkscountryside.org.uk](http://www.westberkscountryside.org.uk)

### References:

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West Berkshire  
Countryside Society

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## ‘WORLD WAR 2 AT HAW FARM’

**A short walk around the World war 2 airfield at Haw Farm in Hampstead Norreys Parish.**

**About 1¼ miles or 2 km.**

**Ordnance Survey Explorer Map  
158 – ‘Newbury and Hungerford’ will be useful**

There are no hills on this walk but surfaces can be uneven and muddy.

**Haw Farm belongs to Yattendon Estate Ltd and permission must be obtained to stray off the Public Rights of Way and the Permitted Paths. The area is also a Registered Airfield and care must be taken to avoid aircraft taxi-ing, taking off and landing.**

## TIME LINE

- 1938 Work started on the construction.

### 1940

- Summer. Airfield commissioned as a satellite of Harwell. Personnel initially lived in tents.
- 16 Sept. Bombed. Three bombs dropped. No damage.
- Wellington 1s of 15 OTU using HN for training.
- 24 Sept. Wellington burnt out on landing.
- 17 Oct. Mid air fire – 2 dead
- 26 Nov. Crash due to engine stalling. Burned out 3 dead

### 1941

- 20 March. Station Defence Ex. 20<sup>th</sup> Guards Brigade attacked Harwell and Hampstead Norreys. Two battalions attacked HN and were held off.
- HN bombed
- April. Middle East Delivery Flight formed.
- 9 May. Three Wellingtons left for Egypt via Gibraltar and Malta.
- 12 May. Bombed. Ten bombs and 100+ incendiaries. One aircraft damaged.
- May - December. 218 Wellingtons to Gibraltar. 11.5% aircraft casualties.
- September. First flights direct to Malta. 14 by end of year.
- 16 Sept. Wellington overshot runway (pilot error) burned out. One dead.
- 24 Sept. Ferry Wellington crashed near Abingdon – engine trouble. All dead.
- October. Wellington crashed near Blewbury. 3 dead, 4 injured.
- Oct. Wellington hit tree near end of runway. Total loss 5 dead, 1 injured.
- Oct. Wellington crashed after takeoff. All killed (10).
- Nov. Wellington crashed on takeoff. Crew survived.
- Dec. Wellington hit trees and crashed near Hermitage. One dead.

### 1942

- January – June. 330 aircraft sent to Middle East from Harwell and H.N

### 1943

- April. Wellington crashed (both engines failed). All dead.
- Sept. Wellington crashed near Pangbourne. Three dead.
- Oct. Overseas deliveries ceased.
- Nov. Wellington crashed near Chieveley. Four dead.
- 10 Nov. Lancaster tried to land at HN after a raid on Mondane. Two engines cut and it crash landed at Frilsham (? Near Home Farm). Crew survived.
- On several occasions aircraft were diverted to HN after raids.

### 1944

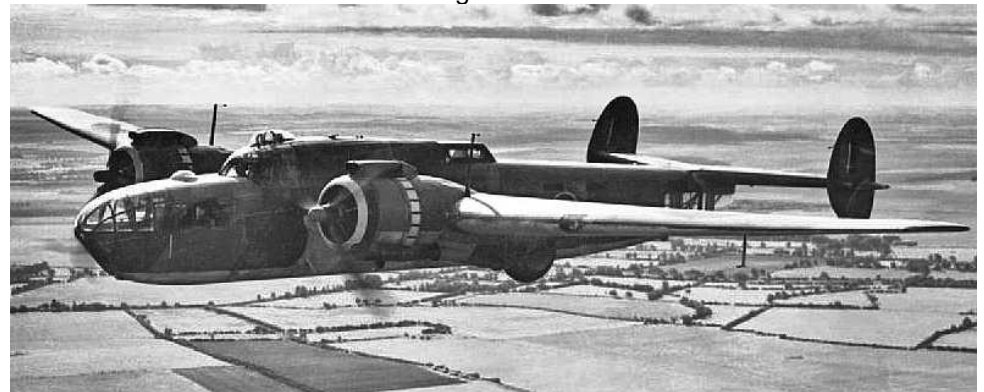
- 1 April. Operational Refresher Training Unit formed 20 Albamarles, 9 Whitleys, 33 Tiger Moths, Horsa gliders. Training Glider Pilots for D Day.
- 1 April. Forced landing in field on Yattendon Road.
- 14 May. Horsa landed near Four Points pub.
- 5 June. Operation Tonga. 9 aircraft and gliders involved.

### 1945

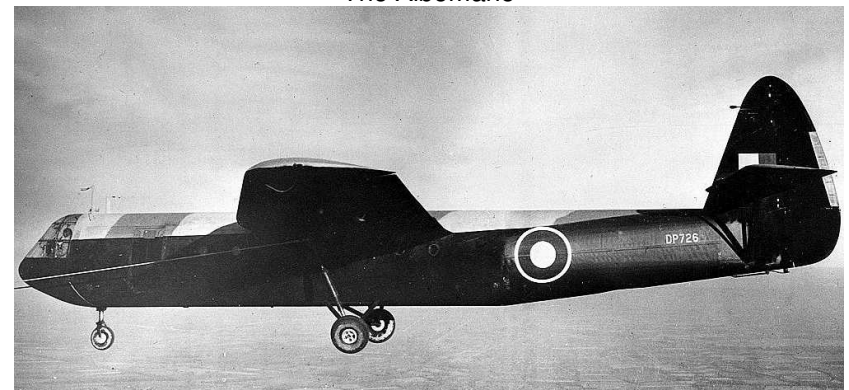
- 15 Mar. Mosquitoes arrived at HN. 8 April. Last glider left.
- 22 July. Put into 'Care & Maintenance'



Wellington bomber

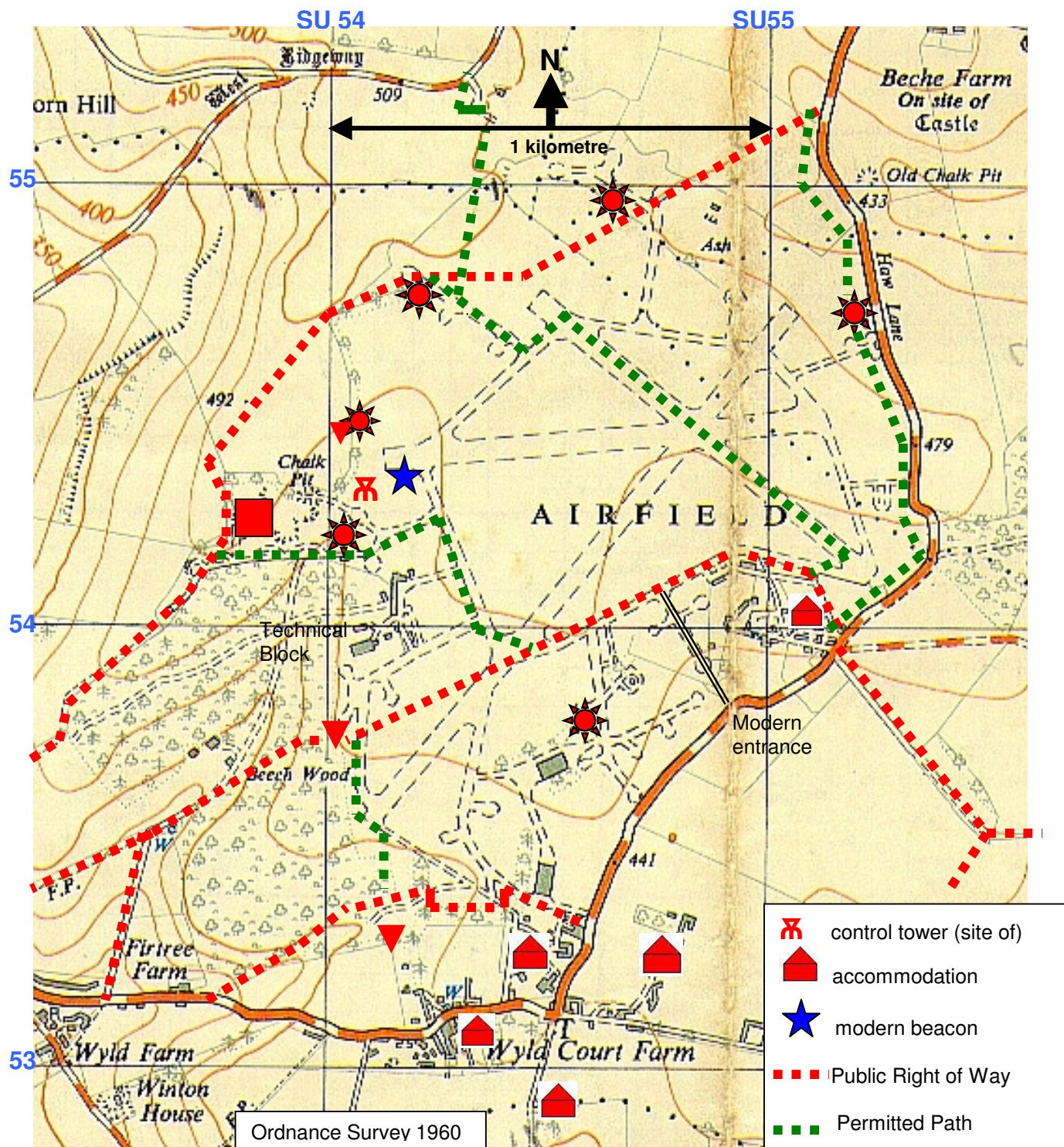


The Albemarle




The Horsa Glider






Ordnance Survey 1960

-  control tower (site of)
-  accommodation
-  modern beacon
-  Public Right of Way
-  Permitted Path



 Type 27 Pill box



 Air raid shelter



 Munitions store



## The Wellington bomber

The *Vickers Wellington* was designed in the mid 1930s using a geodesic construction designed by Barnes Wallace. The fuselage was built from 1650 aluminium alloy elements fitted with exterior wooden battens over which Irish linen was stretched and stiffened with dope to form the outer skin. The lattice gave such strength that blowing out one side's beam would still leave the aircraft as a whole intact. Many Wellingtons returned home with large areas missing – damage that would have destroyed other types of aircraft. However, the system made the aircraft difficult to modify for other roles. Initially the aircraft was powered by two Bristol Pegasus engines.

Wellingtons were built at Weybridge, Broughton and Blackpool. 11,461 were built and during a competition in October 1943 workers at the Broughton factory assembled a Wellington in 23 hours and 50 minutes and it took off 58 minutes later, but usually it took 60 hours to assemble an aircraft. The last one was built on 13 October 1945.

Wellingtons were first used operationally against German shipping on 4 September 1939 and two aircraft were shot down. Bomber Command Wellingtons flew 47,409 missions and 1332 aircraft were lost in action.

## The Albemarle

The Air Ministry specified an aircraft that could be built by manufacturers outside the aircraft industry and without using light alloys. It was therefore built using wood and steel. Armstrong Whitworth won the contract and built 600 Albemarles between 1941 and 1945 using about 1000 subcontractors. The aircraft was fitted with the very powerful Bristol Hercules engine. The fuselage was made in three sections of unstressed plywood over a steel tube frame. Only 30 aircraft were built as bombers, the remainder were built as transports. In this role they could carry ten fully armed troops. They were also extensively used as glider tugs.

Albemarles took part in many major airborne operations including the invasions of Sicily and Normandy and at Arnhem. Of the 600 built, 17 were lost on operations and 81 in accidents.

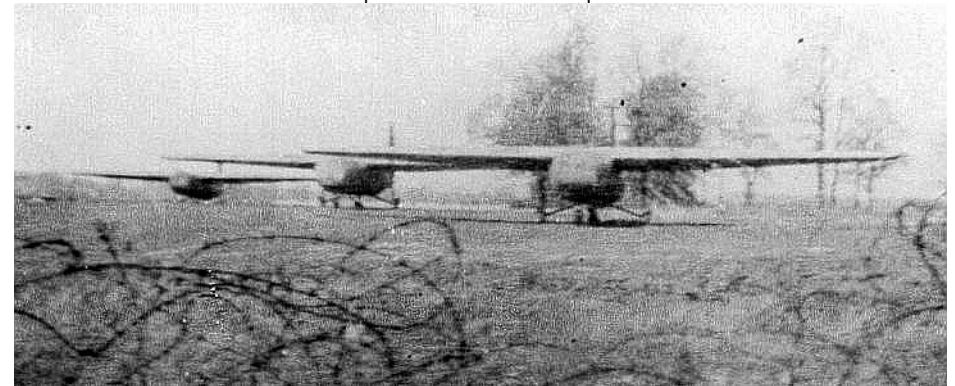
## The Horsa glider

With a wingspan of 88 ft (27m) and a length of 67 ft (20m) the Horsa was considered a sturdy and highly manoeuvrable glider. Extra large wing flaps enabled it to glide steeply and allowed the pilot to land in a small area. The fuselage was built of wood in three sections and it was fitted with wooden wings. The tricycle undercarriage was used for take off and was jettisoned for operations where the glider landed on a nose wheel and skids. The towing line was fixed to points on both wings and contained a telephone link to the towing aircraft.

Horsas could carry 30 troops or a Jeep or a 6 pounder anti-tank gun. Their first operation was against the Heavy Water Plant in Norway on 20 November 1942 and their last was when 440 gliders carried the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division across the Rhine in March 1945.



Albemarle glider towers awaiting disposal at Hamstead Norreys  
Kind permission of Tom Chapman.



Horsa troop carrying gliders at Hampstead Norreys.



Doppler VHF Omni-range radio beacon marking the centreline of the airway to and from Heathrow.