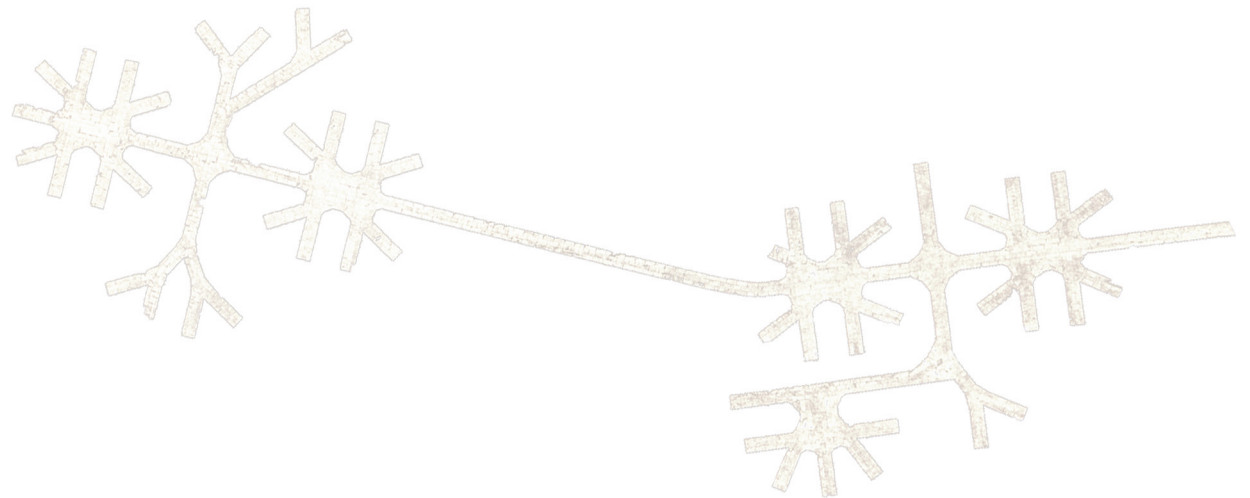
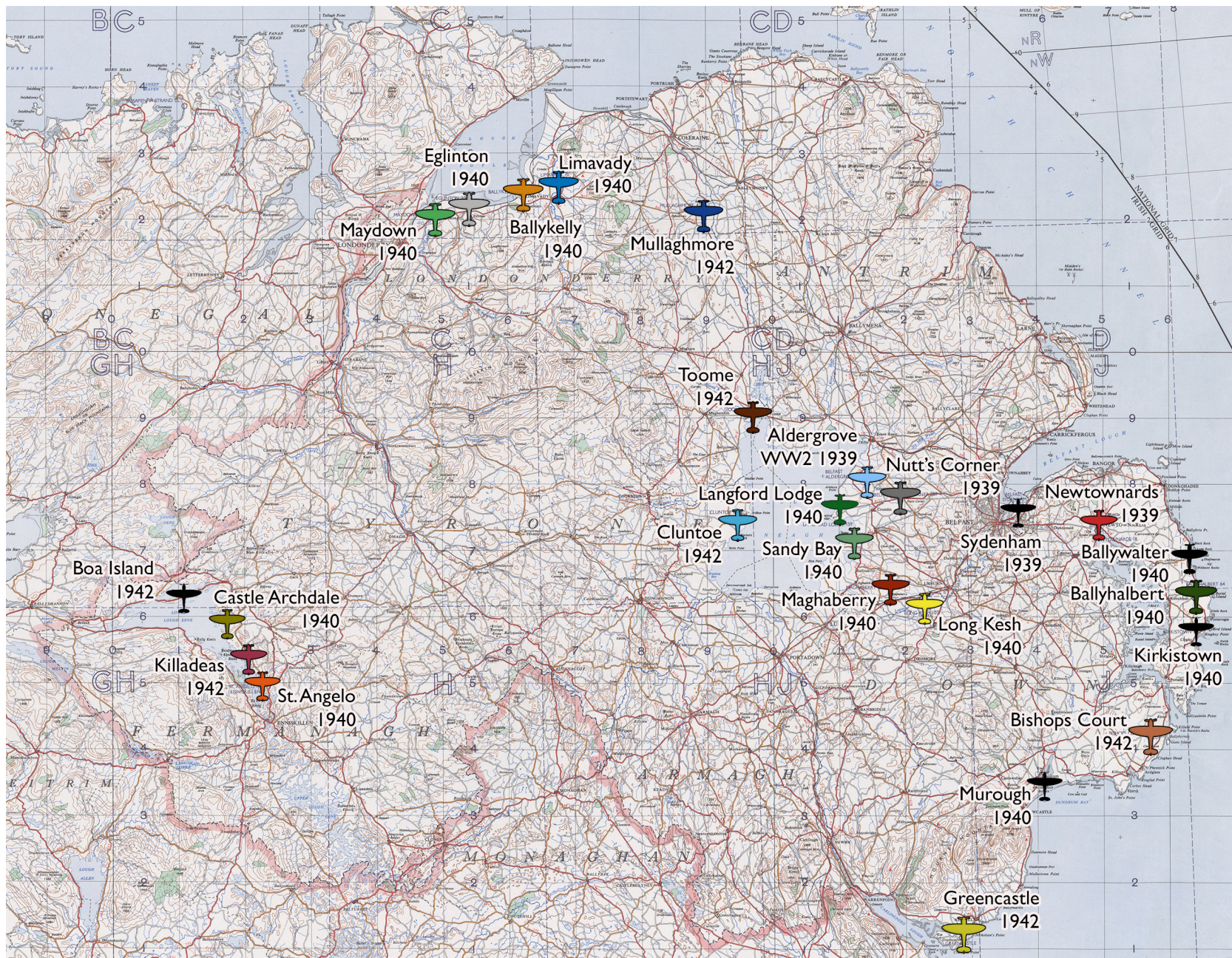


Rediscovering the Aerodrome

By Laura Wing





Coloured coded aircraft feature in the book
(black coloured do not feature).

1963 Map

Introduction

Our familiar landscapes are often forced to alter through World Wars and conflicts. It can result in leaving a unique imprint, in which these can represent either it's accomplishments or defeats. The development of military aviation sites increased dramatically during the Second World War for all of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Presently, some of these military sites still stand today as they intertwine as past and present. Often stuck in time, with no formal classification as a heritage site, neither conserved nor regenerated, their fate often lies with Mother Nature.

This body of work collectively rediscovers the airfields of Northern Ireland, the structures that stand the test of time offer us a chance to reflect on the Second World War. This work does not depict the harrowing scenes of the front line but instead you are invited to view the wider perspective. The essential cogs that provided the fight for victory, the flying training camps, aircraft maintenance units but also the Royal Air Force Coastal Command that engaged with the German U-boats for the Battle of the Atlantic. The influx of these military airfields would also require the participation from communities around these sites, as they often would be displaced from home and their livelihoods.

It was not possible to offer a conclusive catalogue of every known airfield in Northern Ireland but instead the imagery reflects a personal journey through discovering these sites.

By combining historic source imagery and recent aerial imagery it was also possible to see how these airfields, their runways leave a lasting imprint, some only faint but still present. We can not physically preserve all of these sites but if we continue to record the story and in this case the image, we can encourage the conversation between generations and help to preserve this legacy into heritage.



The Runway



The Control Tower



The Dock



The Battle HQ



The Bird's Eye View



The Hangar



The Runway



The Control Tower



The Operation Blocks



The Defensive Structure



The Bird's Eye View



The Hangar



The Runway



The Control Tower



The Machine Gun Range



The Bird's Eye View



The Defensive Structure



The Hangar



The Runway



The Control Tower



The Refuelling Jetty



The Bird's Eye View



The Defensive Structure



The Hangar



The Runway



The Control Tower



The Norden Bombsight Structure



The Bird's Eye View



The Pillbox



The Hangar



The Nissen Hut



The Bird's Eye View

Long Kesh 54.4912 -6.1126

Constructed in 1940 the airfield was configured into 3 runways, the standard A frame. Other features included hardstandings in the frying-pan shape. This shape and separation was utilised for parking aircraft around the perimeter track, to greatly decrease collateral damage if there was an air attack. The two T2 hangars were actually constructed for the Ministry of Aircraft Production (not the Air Ministry like the airfield), these modified hangars were 4ft 6in taller in order to house and assemble the Sterling Bomber. The defensive structure comprises of two type-26 pillboxes with a shared entrance passage, this conjoining design is bespoke to this airfield and is not featured on any of the original site plans.

The Bird's Eye View uses aerial imagery from 1968 and 2018.



Nutt's Corner 54.6323 -6.1566

Constructed in 1939 the airfield was configured into 3 runways. The hardstands were spectacle loop type, which could hold a greater number of parked aircraft but still provide some separation in case of an air attack. This airfield became an important Coastal Command Station but also its role as a Transatlantic Ferry Terminal, excepting delivery of American aircraft was just as significant.

The Bird's Eye View uses aerial imagery from 1951 and 2018.



Toome 54.7544 -6.4927

Constructed in 1942 the airfield was configured into 3 runways and utilised hardstandings in the frying-pan shape. This Station was mainly used by USAAF for the 3rd Combat Crew Replacement Centre Group, in which training was carried out for combat/bombing crews to replicate procedures needed for operations in European Theatre. The Norden Bombsight building was used to house this piece of equipment. The bombsight was used to improve accuracy for bombing at high altitudes and unique to airfields that were occupied by the USAAF, another can be seen at Cluntoe.

The Bird's Eye View uses aerial imagery from 1953 and 2018.



Ballyhalbert 54.4984 -5.4673

Constructed in 1940 the airfield was configured into 3 runways, in which the main runway was extended twice (not documented why this was). This Station took the role as key RAF Fighter Command for Northern Ireland and mainly operated the Spitfire. The Control tower is a 518/40 type watch office with meteorological section. In close proximity to the watch office there are two buildings that are the fighter station satellite operations blocks much like the ones at its Satellite Station Kirkistown.

The Bird's Eye View uses aerial imagery from 1951 and 2018.



Castle Archdale 54.4799 -7.7294

Constructed in 1940 as a flying boat station the alighting areas (take off areas) were situated just past the islands. The islands held most of the moorings for the Catalina and Sunderland flying boats, these islands also acted as cover from the elements from Lough Erne. The refuelling jetty would have been used by a barge to take the fuel out to the mooring aircraft. The dock is not listed on site plans but by docking measurements it would have been used to service the Short Shetland flying boat however the end of War meant the aircraft was never actually put into production.

The Bird's Eye View uses aerial imagery from 1957 and 2018.



Killadeas 54.4228 -7.6787

Constructed in 1942 as a flying boat station it operated mainly Catalinas and Sunderlands from Lough Erne. Much of the construction was carried out by the US Government in preparation for joining the War, Nissen huts were commonly used as the accommodation



St Angelo 54.3951 -7.6434

Constructed in 1940 the airfield was configured using just 2 runways, as geographically there was only space for 2 in comparison to the standard A frame shape. As the most westerly airfield many aircraft would have landed here from America if problems arose when flying.



Cluntoe 54.6191 -6.5428

Constructed in 1942 in the configuration of the standard class A airfield of 3 runways, bordered with a perimeter track. This airfield was mainly operated by the USAAF 2nd Combat Crew Replacement Centre Group, in which training was given to combatant crews to adjust to European weather. The Control tower featured is a 12779/41 type.



Bishops Court 54.3042 -5.5709

Constructed in 1942 the airfield was configured into a standard 3 runway class A airfield, the hardstandings included frying-pan and spectacle loop, in which to hold as many parked aircraft as possible. The airfield was intended for USAAF Combat Crew Replacement Centre Group but was never taken on but rather was used as a division for Coastal Command Liberators. The Control Tower is a 343/43 watch tower type.



Greencastle 54.0409 -6.0303

Constructed in 1942 the airfield was configured into 3 runways. Being a Satellite Station to air depot Langford Lodge, multiple hardstandings were built on which up to 100 aircraft could be stored. USAAF 5th Combat Crew Replacement Centre Group utilised this airfield and gave ground training to bomber crews. The Control Tower featured is a 12779/41 type but modified for smaller front windows 15371/41 type



Limavady 55.0703 -6.9270

Constructed in 1940 the airfield was configured into 3 runways with a perimeter track as its border and extensive frying-pan type hardstandings. Its key role as Coastal Command saw many bespoke features to its defence, including an additional Battle HQ. One on the outskirts of the perimeter track the other in the middle of the airfield (not documented in site plans), this was probably placed for the likely attack from the Germans landing on the centre of the airfield. The Control Tower is a 518/40 watch office and the Bellman Hangars were just the one type that featured on this airfield.



Eglinton 55.0455 -7.1691

Constructed in 1940 the airfield was mainly operated by The Royal Navy, it still comprised of a class A airfield shape and utilised many hardstandings. Off many of these were blister hangars that would have been used by Spitfires. The defensive structure, are interconnecting pillboxes that would have offered defensive directly to the airfield in case of an air attack from the Germans.



Mullaghmore 55.0247 -6.5994

The airfield was constructed in 1942 with the intention of being used by USAAF for the 6th Combat Crew Replacement Centre Group, however the unit never became operational. The third runway actually became a perimeter track so the traditional A class airfield was not achieved for this station. Its only role briefly went to US 82nd Airborne Division to dry out paratroopers' parachutes that had been used in Italy.



Newtownards 54.5835 -5.6795

This smaller airfield of a 3 runway configuration also utilised a small strip of grass runway and was requisitioned from civilian flying to military in 1939. The pillbox is a type 22 it also features on top, a tail boom from a Miles Aerovan which was used as wind sock. The defensive structure is bespoke to this airfield and would have been utilised if attacked from the airfield or Strangford Lough. The machine gun range found at Newtownards was a familiar structure found at most airfields.



Aldergrove 54.6634 -6.2117

The airfield was used during the First World War although construction for concrete runways commenced in 1941, in which 4 runways were built. The blister hangars could be covered with earth and grass as to camouflage from reconnaissance or attack.



Maghaberry 54.5208 -6.1791

The airfield was constructed in 1940 and featured the standard 3 runways with frying-pan, spectacle loop hardstandings. It was the Satellite Station to Long Kesh and similarly, it too had modified T2 hangars to accommodate the assembly of the Sterling Bombers.



Langford Lodge 54.6186 -6.2889

This airfield was constructed in 1940 in a 2 runway configuration, it was selected as a air depot for the maintenance and repair of USAAF aircraft and had many dispersals to accommodate aircraft. Many of the structures were constructed by the Ministry of Air Production and then occupied by the contracted company Lockheed Overseas Corporation.

Bird's Eye View using aerial imagery from 1959 and 2017



Sandy bay 54.5852 -6.2632



Ballykelly 55.0512 -7.0170



Maydown 55.0310 -7.2339



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Action Stations 7 by David Smith (used at the start of the project to locate sites)

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Francis, P. (1993). Control Towers. Ware: Airfield Research Publishing.

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