

RAF Station Fairlop – Overview



(David Martin)

A visit, some years ago, to St Clement Danes, the Central Church of the Royal Air Force, in central London, was the inspiration for this crest. In the floor of the church are crests of most RAF Stations – most that is, except Fairlop.

When operational in 1941, Fairlop was designated to be a satellite of Hornchurch, and not eligible for a crest.

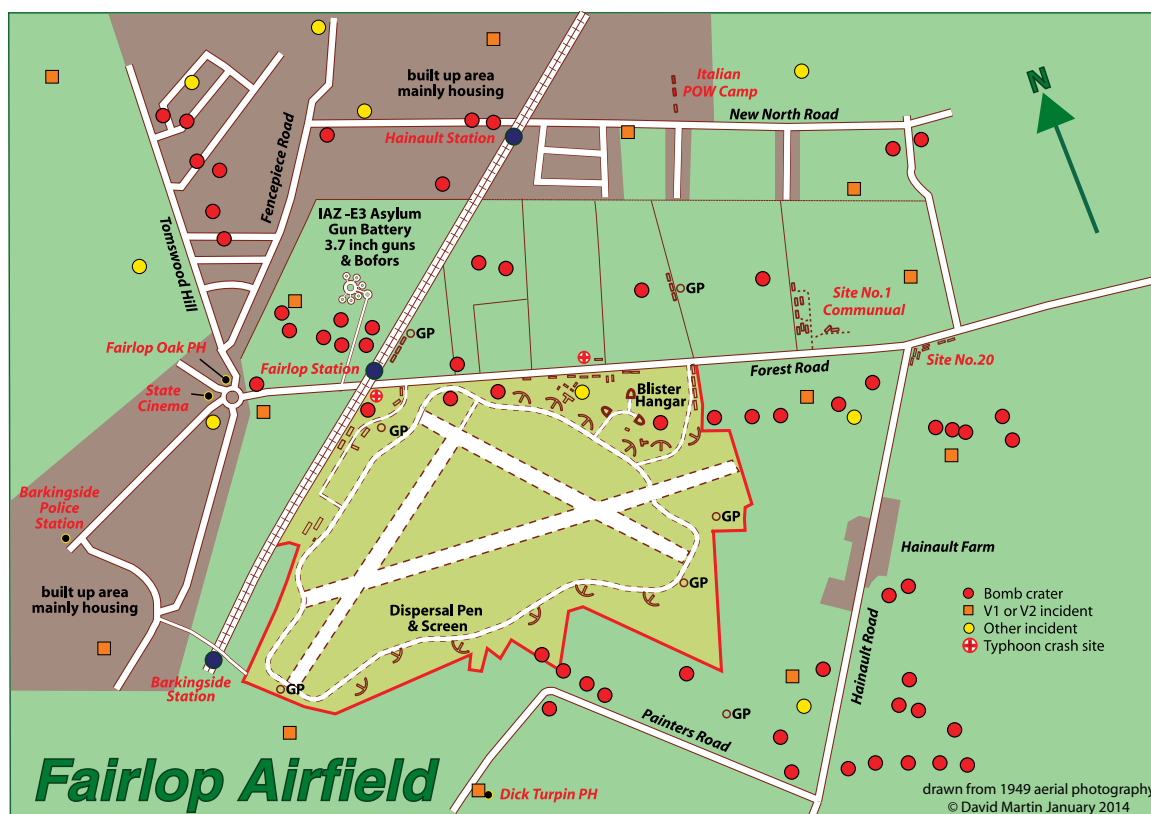
Although this crest is unofficial, the dedication, service, injuries and deaths of those men and women who served, is justification that one should exist.

It shows the four main types of aircraft, which flew from RAF Station Fairlop: Spitfire, Hurricane, Typhoon and Mustang with a background of the Fairlop Oak.

Look at the Fairlop Roll of Honour and remember.
Lest we forget.

In 1937, the City of London purchased 1,000 acres of Fairlop Plain land with the intention of turning it into a civil airport. The government rejected the scheme and with the prospect of war looming, the plans were abandoned. At the start of World War 2, the Air Ministry requisitioned the site.

On 26 September 1940 the site was handed over to the contractors Messrs, Sims, Sons and Cooke, to construct an airfield fit for fighters. When the building site was handed over, Mr John B. Noyle took up his duties as Resident Engineer.



The first undertaking, the construction of NE – SW runway (1,000 yards) was delayed by the harsh winter of 1940/41. The next undertaking, the second runway North – South (1,000 yards) and a portion of the perimeter track followed. This was followed by the East- west runway (1,000 yards), then the perimeter track was completed.

Three extended runways were constructed, one at 1,600 yards (1,463 Metres) and two 1,100 yards (1,005 Metres) with accommodation and services for 1,400 RAF personnel.

The site was well defended to the east and south by a series of gun posts, pill boxes and four LAA sites with the addition of the Inner Artillery Zone (IAZ) E3 Asylum Battery, equipped with 3.7 inch guns and Bofors.

By July 1941 the runways were complete and on 1 August 1941 the Air Ministry set an establishment for RAF Station Fairlop.



Aerial Photograph taken in 1949

(Aerofilms HAS/UK/49/213 96)

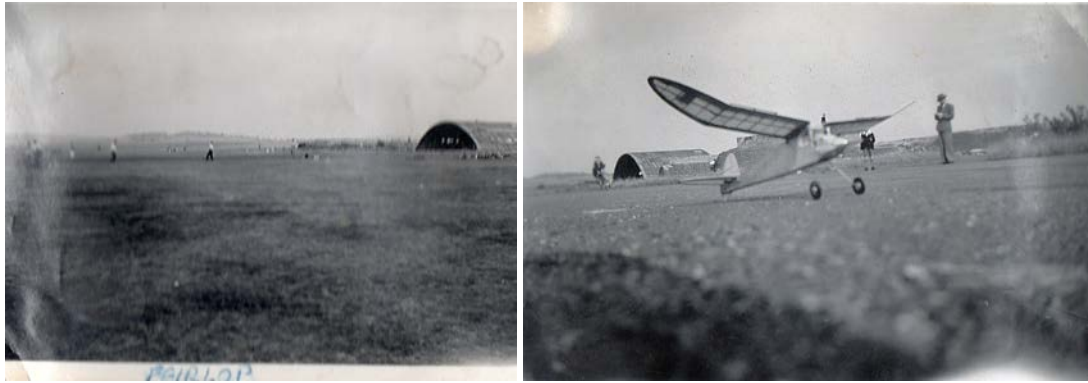
Top left can be seen the A3 Asylum Battery. Also Fairlop and Barkingside stations with a train in transit in between.

Either side of the railway embankment allotment plots are visible, part of *the Dig for Victory* campaign.

The three concrete runways are visible, the strange markings unexplained. The hard standings of the Miskins Hangars are in place, as are the Dispersal Pens.

Painters Road and Aldborough Hall (darkened area in the shape of a 7) are clearly visible. Two bomb craters can be seen, one near the bend, another on the other of the road in a small field with trees.

The nearby perimeter track has a series of lines, which could be where aircraft engines were warmed up, flattening the grass.



Photographs taken at Fairlop c.1946.

Two Miskin Hangars are in shot. The model aircraft in view is a Keil Kraft Slicker.

(Geoffrey Goldsmith)

The airfield was equipped with 23 hard standings for dispersal, and 12 Blister Hangars, (designed by Graham Dawbarn, patented by Miskins and Sons in 1939).

These hangars enabled aircraft to be serviced in all weathers. (See Fact File)



A Miskins Blister Hangar on the north side of Fairlop

(Imperial War Museum TR514)

Official records show that Harry Broadhurst C.O. of Hornchurch was the first to land at Fairlop. Leading Aircraftsman Class 2 John Wilkinson, one of the first to serve at Fairlop, said that unique honour fell to an unknown pilot flying a small-unidentified aircraft carrying small boxes, which landed at Fairlop prior to the runways being completed. It hit first a scaffold pole and crashed into a steamroller with disastrous consequences.

603 Squadron, the first to arrive at Fairlop, were beset with problems, namely inclement weather, which often severely hampered operational activity of all those posted at Fairlop during winter months throughout the war. In the Operation Records Books (ORB's) several scribes mention bad weather.

Notable events.

Participation by squadrons in the Channel Dash of 1942

Dieppe Raid of 1942

Planned participation in Operation Overlord by 93 Embarkation Unit.

Some serving personnel and pilots were killed on site and two Junkers Ju 88, (a German Luftwaffe twin-engine aircraft) crashed on or near the airfield.

A large unnamed aircraft crashed into the railway embankment.

In 1944 two Boeing B17s landed on the airfield low on fuel and a third with engine trouble. The USAAF must have worked hard to get them airborne using a runway more suitable for single engine fighters.

A North American P51 (Mustang), a Vickers Wellington (twin engine bomber), a Douglas DC3 (Dakota) and a Republic P47 (Thunderbolt), also landed at Fairlop in difficulty.

All aircrew were treated well, especially those who spent Christmas Day on the airfield!



Top Photos: (David Martin)

Lower left: (Wikipedia) **centre:** (RAF) **right:** (FamilyFriendsFirearms USA)

Site No. 4 (near the 2012 Redbridge Cycling Centre on Hog Hill) was converted for use by Women's Royal Air Force (WAAF), 6 Officers, 10 Sergeants and 92 other ranks.

Amongst the squadrons were personnel of 17 nationalities, mostly men, but in August 1944 WAAFs of 24 Balloon Centre arrived, 6 Officers and 147 other ranks.

During their stay one WAAF was killed and, nervous conditions were manifest, due, probably to the number of V2 incidents in the locality. They remained until April 1945 when the Centre was disbanded.

Two deaf aircraftmen were wounded by a Spitfire, which ran into them on the perimeter track.

The airfield was defended by 5 Squadrons of RAF Regiment. These Squadrons were trained to take part in the defence of a beach landing by Landing Craft Infantry.

93 Embarkation Unit, were formed to deal with RAF Personnel, stores and equipment through a special Port in **Operation OVERLORD**. Whilst at Fairlop they dealt with 840 tons of equipment and stores.

5 September 1944. They made a dry landing in a Landing Craft Tank (LCT) at Dieppe loaded with 25 tons of stores and 613 tons of ammunition.

For the month of **September 1944** they handled RAF POL (Petroleum, Oil, Lubricants) - 4681 tons, Ammunition - 1789 tons, General Stores - 160 tons, Vehicles - 32, Personnel - 281. The LCT returned to England loaded with crashed aircraft.

Squadrons who served at RAF Station Fairlop

It should be noted that some Squadrons were stationed at Fairlop more than once, but to avoid confusion only the first posting is mentioned.

Year	Squadron	Arrival Date	Aircraft types		
1941	603	11 November	Spitfire Va & Vb		
1942	64	3 postings	Spitfire V & IX		
	411	5 February	Spitfire V		
	313	30 April	Spitfire Vb	Magister	Tiger Moth
	122	3 postings	Spitfire IX		
	65	18 May	Spitfire Vb & Vc		
	81	2 postings	Spitfire Vb	Magister	
	122	3 postings	Spitfire IX		
	154	1 August	Spitfire IX ?		
1943	350	15 March	Spitfire Vb & Vc		
	19	5 April	Spitfire Vc	Tiger Moth	Harrow
	182	5 April	Typhoon 1b		
	247	5 April	Typhoon 1b		
	602	29 April	Spitfire Vb		
	65	18 May	Spitfire Vb & Vc		
	245	28 May	Typhoon	Hurricane	Tiger Moth
	239	23 June	Mustang 1	Tiger Moth	
	302	19 August	Spitfire Vb & Vc		
	317	21 August	Spitfire IX		
	164	2 postings	Hurricane IV		
	195	22 September	Typhoon 1b	Hurricane	Tiger Moth
1944	193	24 February	Typhoon 1b	Auster	Tiger Moth