



Listed Buildings/ Monuments

In

Durrington



Buildings 455 and 456 (Five Aircraft Hangars)

Durrington Camp, Durrington

5 Wood Road, Durrington, Wiltshire

Grade II * - Listed 1st December, 2005

Aircraft hangars. 1910, for the War Office. Corrugated iron over steel frame.

PLAN: five gabled sheds, each of 5 bays with their gables facing the road. To the right of the 3 on the left is a range of offices under the sweep of the roof, the two hangars to the left - separated by a gap of approx. 1.5metres - at a lower level.

EXTERIOR: Original sheeting to all sheds with the exception of the front (W) elevation which has had block infill to front doorways and flat-roofed addition. these having block infill to former doors. Steel casement windows to sides and rear.

INTERIOR: steel truss roof, with portal framing and steel grooves in concrete and stone flag floor for former sliding doors to front. Flight offices with original joinery including matchboarded partitions and lining and doors.

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HISTORY: Built in June 1910, and retaining internal details such as the matchboarded office and evidence for the original sliding doors, these survive as the earliest known aircraft hangars in Europe. They are thus amongst the most historically significant structures associated with the pioneering phase of powered flight, ranking in terms of their early date with the remains of the Wright Brothers workshops and the resited 1910 Boeing workshop at Seattle, which have been given Landmark status by the US government.

The flying field at Larkhill, now partly developed by housing and subsequent tree planting, was Britain's first military airfield. The War Office, mindful of the interest taken by other powers in the Wright brothers' arrival in Europe in 1908, had encouraged experimental flying over its training areas from 1909. The War Office had given Horatio Barber, who had purchased an aeroplane at the Salon de l'Aeronautique in Paris, permission to erect a shed there in April 1909, being followed by Claude Cockburn (later to have a major role in naval flight training at Eastchurch in Kent) with a Farman and Captain J D B Fulton with a Bleriot. Sir George White, who adapted the workshops of his Bristol tramway empire at Filton for his British and Colonial Aeroplane Company in 1910, built two hangars at Larkhill in June of the same year, adding to two more sheds already under construction for the War Office. The Bristol Aeroplane Company, as it became known, then made Larkhill the first of a series of civilian schools where army officers also received their first flight training (invariably at their own expense). By the end of September the company - which became one of the world's largest aviation manufacturers - was collaborating with the War Office, who built the surviving end-opening hangars in 1910, in army manoeuvres on Salisbury Plain, centred on the observation of artillery and troop movements. A significant and ground-breaking development in the 1910 Autumn Manoeuvres was the successful transmission of radio messages by aeroplane to the Bristol hangar. In July 1911 Larkhill served as a control point for the Daily Mail's 'Circuit of Britain' air race. Many prototype aircraft were flown from Larkhill, whose flying demonstrations - often including trips around Stonehenge - attracted great publicity. 53 of the 109 pilots who qualified in 1911 were Bristol-trained, and flying schools on the Bristol pattern were established in Spain, Germany and Italy in 1912. Until the Central Flying School at Upavon opened on 17 August 1912 the Bristol Flying Schools at Larkhill and Brooklands - besides their role in training civilian pilots - were the army and navy's principal training establishments. On the formation of the Royal Flying Corps in April 1912 the former No 2 Company of the Air Battalion became 3 Squadron of the RFC: it test-flew from here many examples of aircraft considered for use by the RFC.

In this early period - prior to the completion of the barracks at Netheravon airfield in early 1914 - men were billeted in Bulford Camp and officers at the Bustard Inn. The Bristol School at Larkhill was closed in June 1914, merging with the company's other school at Brooklands in Surrey and Old Sarum to the south becoming after 1918 the principal base of operations for the annual Army exercises constructed on Salisbury Plain. The position of the original flying field is marked by a small concrete plinth.

(N South Parker, Aviation in Wiltshire, South Wiltshire Industrial Archaeology Society Historical Monograph No 5, May 1982; G White, Tramlines to the Stars - George White of Bristol, Bristol, 1995; C H Barnes, Bristol Aircraft since 1910, London, 1964; Wessex Archaeology, Stonehenge Military Installations (report for English Heritage), 1998)

(British Listed Buildings)



Durrington - Aircraft Hangars, Durrington Camp Larkhill *(Photo courtesy of Bob Wood 2012)*