Touring the Twelve New Forest Airfields

Route One

Route One – From the South-West of the New Forest

This route visits RAF Christchurch, RAF Holmsley South and the New Forest Airfields Memorial, RAF Sopley and the FONFA Heritage Centre, RAF Winkton, RAF Hurn, RAF Bisterne, RAF Ibsley and RAF Stoney Cross.

The route starts at the **Somerford roundabout** at the East end of the Christchurch by-pass where the A337 leaves the A35 as the A35 turns north into the Forest.

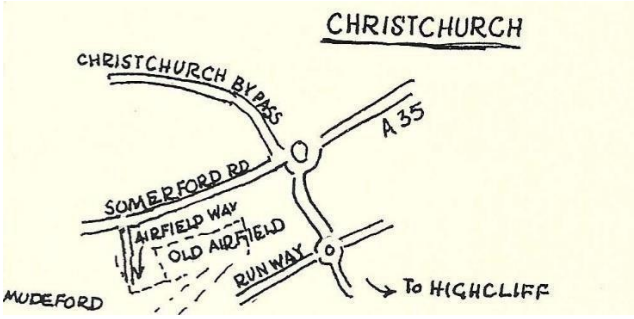
What3Words pitch.tulip.raves Lat/Long 50.7427 -1.7408

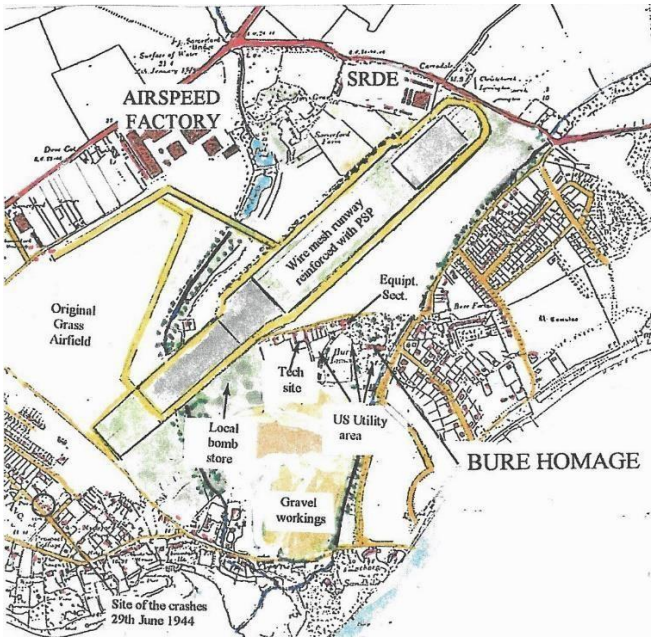
RAF Christchurch / Christchurch Airfield

I believe that this is probably the most interesting of the New Forest airfields as it existed as a civilian airfield before and after The War and was an important research and development site as well as a centre for aircraft manufacture. The airfield opened as a civilian airfield in 1926 and ultimately closed in 1966.

In early 1940 a Special Duties Unit was formed at Christchurch for the evaluation of radar equipment. Aircraft construction took place and for 3 months in early 1944 an Advanced Landing Ground was established on the airfield to provide a base for 3 USAAF squadrons of P-47 Thunderbolts.

The site occupied by Christchurch airfield is now built upon with housing and industrial / retail parks, but it is possible to drive around what was, roughly, the perimeter of the airfield. Those who know something about aviation will notice that many of the roads have been named after famous aviators or aircraft and the road named The Runway, follows the track of the airfield's main runway. Very little can be seen today but the following plan and picture should give you a good idea of the airfield in 1944.





Christchurch Airfield around 1944

Pictures by Squadron Leader Frank Hayward

Driving Directions Around the Boundary of the Former Airfield

From the **Somerford roundabout** take the B3059, the Somerford Road for 0.9 mile.

Just passed the Londis store, turn left onto Sandown Road.

Continue onto Mudeford Lane

Once you have passed the school look out for De Haviland Way on your left.

Turn left into De Haviland Way.

At the T junction with The Runway, turn left. (Note an Optional Diversion is available – see below)

At the Hoburne roundabout with the A337, turn left. The main runway used to start near this roundabout.

At the next roundabout you are back at the **Somerford Roundabout**.

<u>Optional Diversion</u>

Signals Research and Development Establishment at Steamer Point. A very important secret military radar and communications research establishment was here during World War 2, it remained in operation until the 1970s. The base of a large satellite communication dome, and two smaller domes can be seen along with the remains of some buildings and sentry posts.

At the T junction with The Runway, turn right, then next left onto Bure Lane. Signed Steamer Point.

Take the third right onto Seaway Avenue. Signed Steamer Point.

Carry on until you see the sea and beach huts. Bear left onto Penne Way and the car park.

What3Words code.dirt.topped Lat/Long 50.7345 -1.7252

Return along Seaway Avenue to turn right onto Bure Lane.

At the A337, Highcliffe Road, tun left, the second roundabout is the **Somerford Roundabout**.

Holmsley South / New Forest Airfield Memorial

Runway 01 at Holmsley

The New Forest Airfields Memorial

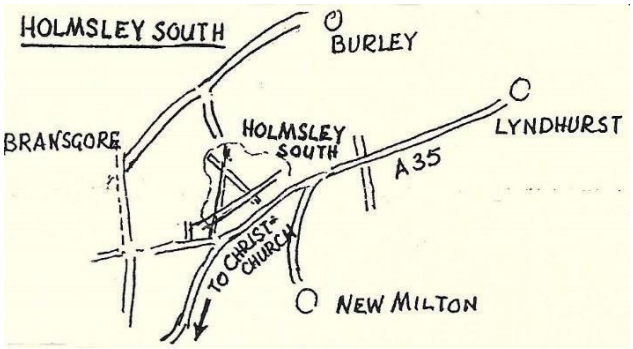
Holmsley South was one of the major concrete runway airfields. It was operational from September 1942 to October 1946. Anti-submarine, bombing and fighter operations flew from Holmsley South

An aerial view of Holmsley South still clearly indicates the overall layout of the station but only small amounts of the runways, taxi ways, perimeter track and aircraft parking bays remain today. A few buildings remain, some hidden in the woods and most on private land. There are two caravan parks on the former airfield site as well as a small industrial and storage site.

The Friends of the New Forest Airfields New Forest Airfields Memorial is situated in the South-West corner of the airfield on one of the aircraft bays.

The Airfields Memorial was erected in 2002 to remember the 25,000 service personnel and 10,000 civilians, many from overseas, who operated the twelve airfields during early 1944, during the preparation for, and execution of Operation Overlord, or D-Day. Services of remembrance are held each year on Memorial Day, Remembrance Sunday and in early September to mark the anniversary of the dedication of the memorial.

Directions to Holmsley South Airfield



From the Somerford roundabout take the A35 in a northerly direction towards Lyndhurst.

After 3.8 miles turn left onto Lyndhurst Road. Sign posted Holmsley Camping.

After 0.5 mile turn right onto Forest Road and the Holmsley Airfield site. Signposted to the Airfield Memorial.

Airfield Driving Directions

You are now following the course of the 36 / 18 runway.

What3Words adhesive.punters.blacked Lat/Long *50.7872 -1.7034*

As you drive along Forest Road, you will see part of the remains of runway 12/30 on your left.

Take the first turn right towards the Holmsley camp site and at the entrance to the campsite you will have a great view along the main 07 / 25 runway and its taxi ways. What3Words relished.things.vine Lat/Long 50.7908 -1.6951

Go back to Forest Road and turn right.

Turn first left onto Black Lane and continue on Black Lane. Just before you turn into Black Lane you can see remains of the 18/36 runway.

As the road opens out after the trees, you will see the FONFA New Forest Airfields Memorial on your right. What3Words regal.itself.hurls Lat/Long 50.7878 -1.7056

RAF Sopley, Sopley Camp and the FONFA Heritage Centre

RAF Sopley was not an airfield; it was initially a World War 2 secret radar station codenamed "Starlight" which opened in December 1940 with a Type 8 radar developed at the Telecommunications Research Establishment, Purbeck and the Air Defence Experimental Establishment at Christchurch airfield. The system was known as Ground Controlled Interception or GCI. This guided night fighters from RAF Middle Wallop to their interception targets. The mobile radar was located in a disused farm about a mile to the west of the main RAF Sopley and Sopley Camp which were built in the 1950s. to provide training facilities and accommodation for the radar station. In 1959 RAF Sopley became an air traffic control station and training establishment which finally closed in 1974. The Camp is possibly best known as the initial home of the Vietnamese Boat People. The FONFA Heritage Centre is located in the former Sopley Camp emergency generator building, on Mosquito Way at the western end of the Heatherstone Grange development.

For more information I suggest you read Kelvin Holmes's fascinating history of RAF Sopley which you can Purchase at the Heritage Centre..

Directions to RAF Sopley and Sopley Camp

From the Airfields Memorial continue along Black Lane to Forest Road, turn right.

At the T junction with Lyndhurst Road, turn right.

In 1.4 Miles at the crossroads with Ringwood Road, turn right towards Bransgore. Please take care at this junction as visibility is limited.

At the crossroads in the middle of Bransgore, by The Crown Inn, go straight across and continue on Ringwood Road

Take the second left onto Derritt Lane towards Sopley

At the Heatherstone Grange estate on the right, take the second turn right onto Marryat Way, and follow the map below to Mosquito Way and the FONFA Heritage Centre.

What3 Words doors.guesswork.suspend Lat/Long *50.7807 -1.7536*

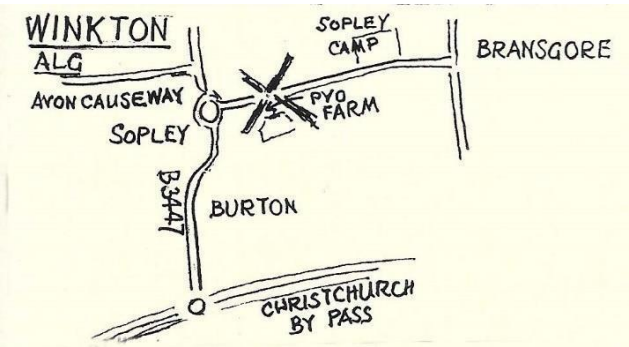
Please note that the Heritage Centre is only open on Sundays between April and October. Please see our web site https://fonfa.co.uk for details.

RAF Winkton

RAF Winkton was one of the Advanced Landing Grounds with two steel tracking runways. It was operational from April to July 1944 and was used by three squadrons of the USAAF 404th Fighter Group operating P-47 Thunderbolt fighter-bombers. (Do not miss the opportunity to visit this great Farm Shop)

There are no recognizable remains of the airfield, but the open land does indicate where the runways were.

Directions to RAF Winkton



From the FONFA Heritage Centre return to Derritt Lane and turn right towards Sopley.

After 0.75 of a mile, you will see Dan Tanner's Sopley Farm Shop on your left.

What3Words soulful.pillows.radically Lat/Long *50.7759 -1.7661*

This is a good place to stop as the point where the car park joins Derritt Lane was intersection of the two runways at RAF Winkton.

RAF

Hurn

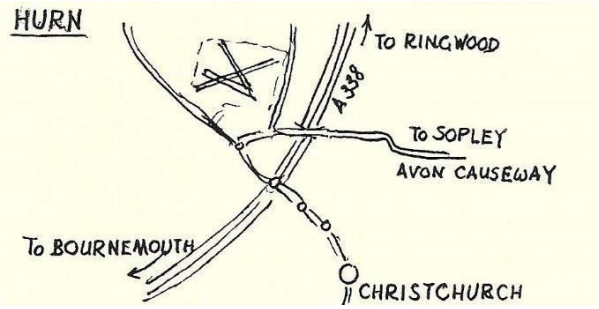
RAF Hurn was operational from 1941 to 1946 and was used by both the RAF and USAAF primarily as a transport and fighter base. In 1969 it became known as Bournemouth Airport.

From the early 1960s to 1980s, Hurn was an important aircraft manufacturing centre for the BAC 1-11. Today Tui Airways and Ryanair operate daily flights to different holiday destinations and European Air Cargo fly a fleet of Airbus A340 freighters from Bournemouth.

Some of the best views of the airport are from the Bournemouth Aviation Museum which is located on the south side of the B3073, Parley Lane.

Please note Hurn is something of a detour off the main route and there is little of the former RAF station to see as it is now Bournemouth International Airport, although you will probably see some aircraft such as A340s and B737s. If you choose to include it in your drive, please be aware of the security and parking arrangements which all limit the amount that you can see. It is possible to drive around part of the airfield on the B3073, Parley Lane which is just outside the security fence, but there are no parking places. Access to the terminal is also limited, as you are directly into a paid car park where the drop off or turn around areas are. There is a minimum charge of £8(checked August 2026) for up to 30 minutes.

Directions to RAF Hurn



From the Farm Shop and RAF Winkton continue on Derritt Lane into Sopley Village.

Turn left at the junction, (beware of oncoming traffic) and then follow the road right, around the Woolpack Pub onto the B3347, Ringwood Road. (The Woolpack offer good food and hospitality, the garden is lovely in the Summer)

After about 1 mile turn left onto Avon Causeway, sign posted to Hurn. (If not going to RAF Hurn, go straight ahead at this junction following the directions to RAF Bisterne below)

On Avon Causeway, as you approach the bridge over the A338, you will see the entrance to The Avon Causeway pub on your right. This is the former Hurn Station, it has some very interesting rooms and artefacts. It is also a good place for a drink, a snack or a comfort break.

At the roundabout in Hurn, take the second exit onto the B 3073, Parley Lane.

You can follow this road around the south and east perimeter of the airport.

What3Words nerve.nods.frames Lat/Long 50.780 -1.8512

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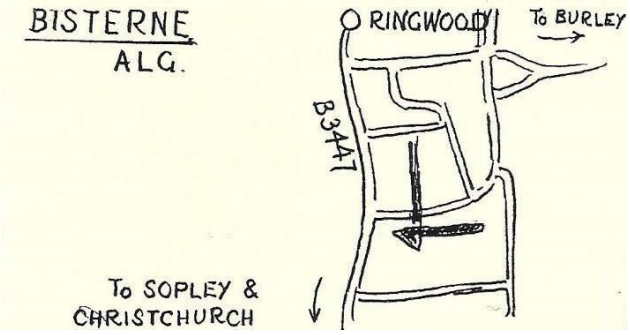
RAF Bisterne

RAF Bisterne was another of the Advanced Landing Grounds that was used by the USAAF 371st Fighter Group with P-47 Thunderbolt fighter bombers. It was in use from March to June 1944, however Bisterne had to close for 2 periods, each of 10 days, to repair problems with the steel runways. On both these occasions the units transferred to RAF Ibsley. The airfield has returned to agricultural use so there is little to see. The two runways were to the West and South of Bisterne Farm.

Bisterne Manor, a little South of the airfield was used as the Officers mess accommodation and the guest book hold a wonderful record of the many officers who visited. The Manor is usually opened as part of the annual Heritage Open Day programme in early September.

Directions to RAF Bisterne



Please Note the B3447 should read B3347.

Reverse your journey back along the B3073, Parley Lane to the Hurn roundabout. Take the first exit onto Avon Causeway.

At the end of Avon Causeway turn left onto the B3347, Ringwood Road.

After 2.4 miles, after passing St Paul's Church and the village hall on your right, turn right onto Dragon Lane. The airfield was on your left.

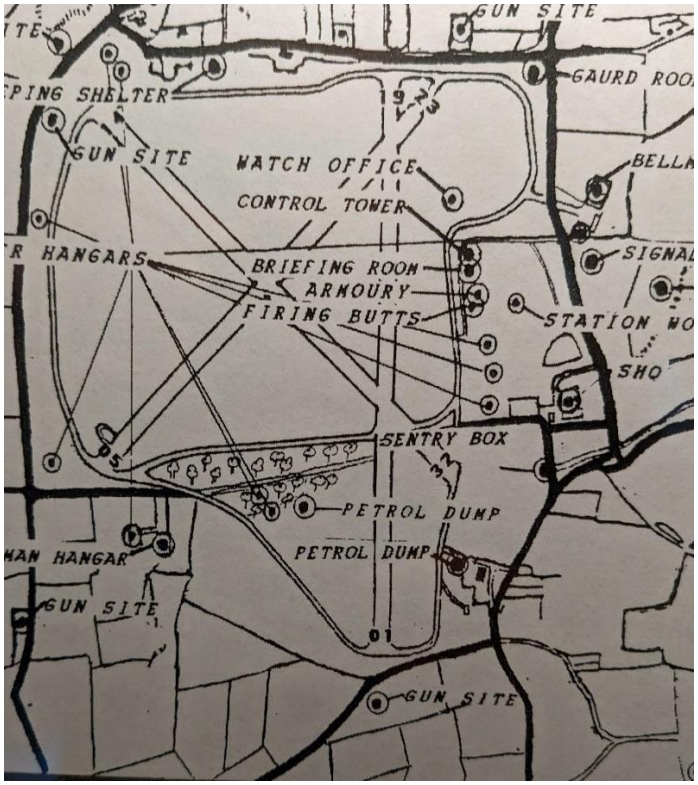
What3Words excellent.margin.sports Lat/Long *50.8134 -1.7836*

Continue past the entrance to Bisterne Farm to the end of Dragon Lane and turn left.

After just over a quarter of a mile turn left onto Rod Lane. This will take you along the Northern boundary of the airfield until you meet the B3347, Christchurch Road.

Ibsley

RAF



Ibsley Airfield 1944

Ibsley Airfield 2022

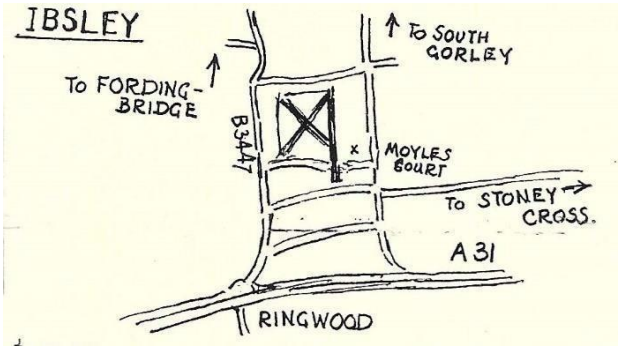
RAF Ibsley was operational from 1941 to 1947 and it was used by many different RAF and USAAF formations at various times during this period. During the war years, the main RAF aircraft were Hurricanes and Spitfires and the main USAAF aircraft were P-47 Thunderbolts and P-38 Lightnings. From 1945 to 1947 RAF Transport Command used Ibsley.

The USAAF units based at RAF Bisterne moved to Ibsley for two periods, each of 10 days, whist the runways were repaired at Bisterne.

There is very little left to see today, the shell of the control tower is on private land near the North-Eastern boundary. There is a small section of runway 01 to the south as the of Ellingham Drive. There is a small memorial at the crossroads in the North-East corner of the airfield site.

In 1941, RAF Ibsley was used for filming scenes for the film “First of the Few” starring David Niven. Some operational squadron pilots and ground crew took part in the film.

Directions to RAF Ibsley.



The B3447 should read A338.

Re-join the B3347, the Christchurch Road, turning right towards Ringwood.

Continue along the B3347 through Ringwood, to the roundabout at the junction with the A31.

Take the second exit from this roundabout onto the A338, the Salisbury Road.

After about 0.9 mile, a little past the Shell garage take the third right turn onto Ivy Lane. This road follows the Southern Boundary of Ibsley airfield. There is little to see today as the area has been extensively worked for sand and gravel and is now a nature reserve and water park.

At the Junction of Highwood Lane, turn left. Shortly, you will see the entrance to the Alice Lisle pub on the left.

What3Words worms.chats.melons Lat/Long *50.8720 -1.7747*

This was formerly the Rockford Primary School. In 1940, it was requisitioned for use as part of RAF Ibsley. It is located adjacent to the end of the main runway and its gardens offer good views across the lakes where the airfield once stood. This is a good place for a refreshment and comfort break. This is a very popular Pub so please book is you wish to take refreshments. thealicelisle.co.uk

Continue on Highwood Lane and bear left to cross the ford at Dockens Water and arrive at Moyles Court School. The main school building, formerly Rockford Manor House, the home of Alice Lisle, was used as the Station Headquarters between 1940 and 1946. The remains of the Group Battle Headquarters bunker is located in the woods on the hill opposite the school and is accessible via a footpath from the road.

Just before the school, turn left onto Ellingham Drove. Turn right at the T junction and continue on Ellingham Drove to the car park for the Blashford Lakes Nature Reserve. Just behind Moyles Court school you will cross the path of the main 01/19 runway. You will also pass the remains of a few former airfield buildings on your right. The car park on the right is very close to the centre of the former airfield and there are remains of 05/23 runway around the car park. The Bird Hide provides great views across the lakes to the North of the former airfield.

What3Words lamenting.good.sharper Lat/Long *50.8746 -1.7861*

Continue along Ellingham Drove to the A338, Salisbury Road and turn right towards Fordingbridge and Salisbury.

After approximately 0.75 of a mile, you will see the Old Beams Inn thatched pub on the right. This pub dates back to the 11th Century and it was frequented by many of the airmen based at RAF Ibsley. Unfortunately, the interior has been dramatically extended and modernised so much of the original character has been lost.

Just before The Old Beams Inn and the former church, turn right onto Mockbeggar Lane. Continue along Mockbeggar Lane to cross-roads. This road represents the Northern boundary of the former airfield. The RAF Ibsley memorial is located on the right-hand side at the crossroads.

What3Words vanish.sway.geese Lat/Long *50.8832 -1.7735*

Much of the domestic accommodation of the airfield was to your left in Mockbeggar.

At this crossroads, turn right towards Rockford and Moyles Court School. Continue along this road until you reach Moyles Court School.

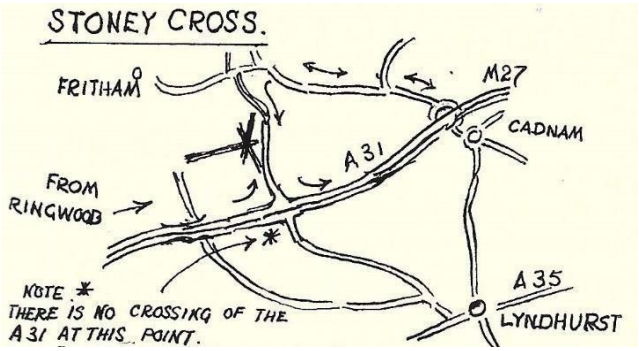
RAF

Stoney Cross

Operational from November 1943 to January 1948

During the war in Europe, RAF Stoney Cross was used by both the RAF and the USAAF for bomber and fighter operations and during the early phase of the war Coastal Command carried out anti-submarine activity from Stony Cross. Following the end of hostilities in Europe Stoney Cross became a major staging post for RAF transport flights to the Far East.

Directions to RAF Stoney Cross



From the front of Moyles Court School, continue to cross the ford at Dockens Water and then turn sharp left up the hill signposted Linwood for 2.1 miles.

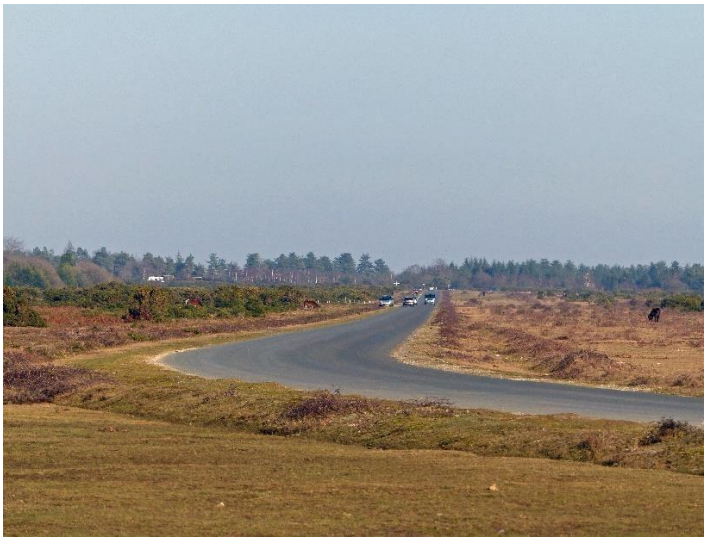
Pass the Red Shoot pub and then follow the road around a signed left-hand bend on to the single track road.

Continue for a further 1.6 miles and follow the road around a number of bends.

After a prominent right-hand bend continue for a further quarter of a mile to a left junction sign posted Stoney Cross. Turn left.

After a further 1.5 miles you will be at the entrance to Ocknell Pond on your right. You are now at the western end of RAF Stoney Cross's 25/07 runway.

What3Words clouding.oath.filed Lat/Long *50.9081 -1.6728*



Runway 07 from the entrance to Ocknell Pond **The Orientation Board at Stoney Cross Plain Directions around the Airfield**

Continue along this road to drive along the line of the main runway to the T junction with Forest Road.

Turn right onto Forest Road. Forest Road follows the line of the Eastern perimeter track. After 0.25 of a mile turn right into the Stoney Cross Plain car park. The car park is on the apron for one of the Squadrons and you will be adjacent to the 15/33 runway. There is an orientation board in the car park.

Return to Forest Road and turn left. After 0.3 of a mile take the third turn on the right into the Janesmoor Pond car park. This turning is near the end of the N/S runway.

What3Words into.sympathy.feuds Lat/Long *50.9210 -1.6519*

As you drove along Forest Road, you will have passed the entrance to Longbeech campsite on your right. This was the location of a domestic camp, featured in many of the Memories recorded on the FONFA website. These are memories of life on the camp and in the New Forest by former residents of Longbeech.

The Janesmoor Pond car park is the end of Airfield Route One.

***To exit the Forest via the M27 or A31**, return to turn right to continue along Forest Road until you reach the junction with the B3078. Turn right onto the B3078, Roger Penny Way, towards Bramshaw. In Bramshaw continue on the B3079 towards junction 1 of the M27 and the A31.*

To continue on the second airfields driving route:

***A**t the roundabout at Junction 1 of the M27 take the second exit onto the A31 towards Cadnam.*

At the next roundabout take the second exit onto the A336, Southampton Road.

Continue on the A336 to Netley March and the A326 roundabout.

Take the third exit onto the A326 towards Marchwood, Hythe and Fawley.

RAF

Continue on the A326 and the start of the directions on route 2.

***To exit the Forest to Ringwood and Bournemouth**, turn right along Forest Road until you reach the junction with the B3078. Turn left onto the B3078, Roger Penny Way, and at the first junction, just after the Telegraph Hill car park, bear left to continue on the B3078 towards Godshill and Fordingbridge. After this junction, this road marks the Northern boundary of the World War 2 Ashley Walk Bombing Range.*

At the junction with the A338, turn left towards Ringwood, at Ringwood turn right onto the A31 and then turn left onto the A338 to Bournemouth.

Optional Detour – Ashley Walk Bombing Range

A feature of great importance during World War 2 was the Ashley Walk Bombing Range. This isolated area of heathland was used to test almost every type of bomb developed during the War. The range consisted of several different target types including air to ground attack, mock ship targets, aircraft pens, gun emplacement, bomb fragmentation areas and the Ministry of Home Security target (known locally as the Sub Pens).3esx Sir Barnes Wallis was a frequent visitor to the range and his massive Grand Slam (at 22,000 lbs, the largest bomb ever detonated on British soil) and Tall Boy bombs were tested here. The huge crater made by the Tall Boy bomb is now a lake. Most of the structures and craters have long since disappeared but there are still a few remnants of the structures and an interesting concrete arrow that is large enough to be seen by satellite photographs.

An excellent description of the Bombing Range can be found at:

https://www.airshowspresent.com/ashley-walk-bombing-range.html

The Ashley Walk car park and the start of the footpath across the range is on the left-hand side of the A3078 just before the village of Godshill.

What3Words supply.kilt.snapping *Lat/Long 50.9397 -1.7362* A detailed

route for a walk across the Bombing Range can be found at:

https://newforestcarparkwalks.wordpress.com/2017/11/25/5-ashley-walk/

Thank you for using my Airfield Driving Directions, I hope that you have enjoyed exploring the New Forest and its aviation Heritage.

If you have any feedback and comments, please drop me an email at fonfa2010@gmail.com