

The Forest at War: **RAF Beaulieu**

Imagine standing here during the Second World War; the roar of a Liberator aircraft taking off on a mission to track down enemy submarines and the buzz of hundreds of people living, training and flying here.

Across the south of England many airfields were built for the war effort. The New Forest was important with 12 airfields in the area. Beaulieu was one of the largest, playing several roles including a coastal command centre, a D-Day fighter base and an early helicopter experiment site.

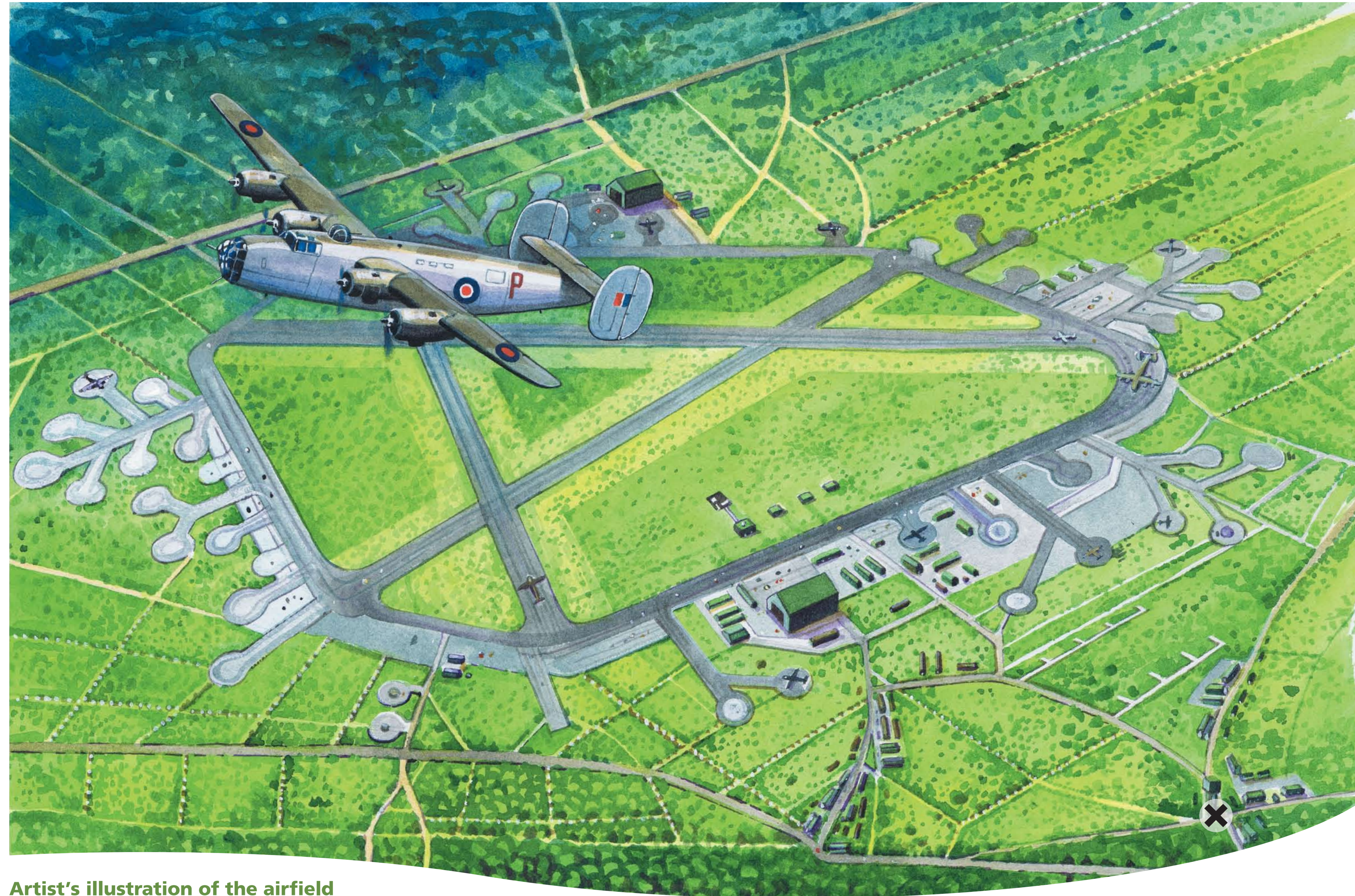
Opened in 1942 the airfield played its part in the Battle for the Atlantic with both RAF and later Czech squadrons stationed here. Missions left to search out U-boats and protect vital supply convoys.

In early 1944 the RAF flew Typhoons from here; from March to August the United States Army Air Force flew Thunderbolt fighters and Marauder bombers including missions supporting the battle for Normandy.

From late 1944 to 1950 the site was used by the Airborne Forces Experimental Establishment to test parachutes, gliders and early types of helicopter. The site was returned to the Forestry Commission in 1959.

At its height there were three runways, two hangars, ammunition dumps, tens of accommodation blocks and even a cinema and a gym. Many concrete roads and hard standings remain as does the original water tower now used by Roundhill campsite which is marked on the map with an X.

This panel commemorates the brave men and women who served here and is a memorial to those who paid the ultimate price.



Artist's illustration of the airfield with a RAF Liberator bomber

Visit www.newforestnpa.gov.uk to find out more.

With thanks to Alan Brown and the Friends of the New Forest Airfields.

