

BROADWELL

In 1943 Broadwell was planned for the U.S.A.A.F., to be used either as transport or observation station. It opened in 46 Group, R.A.F. on 24th January 1944 and within a month two squadrons of Dakotas had arrived. These were Nos. 512 and 575 squadrons which flew in from Hendon on 14th February. During the four months until D-Day the squadrons were engaged in "nickelling" and "bullseye" operations and also took part in a number of exercises such as "Dreme", "Tour", "Mush" and "Nark". In operation "Tonga" on the 6th June 1944 thirtytwo Dakotas of 512 Squadron and 21 Dakotas of 575 Squadron dropped 952 paratroops on two DZs in Normandy. Later that same day 37 Dakotas towing Horsa took part in operation "Mallard" followed by a further ten aircraft in container drops in "Rob Roy".

Throughout July and the months that followed both squadrons transported bombs, MT spares, personnel and equipment from the U.K. to A.L.Gs in Normandy, returning with casualties. During the period 17-23rd September both squadrons were engaged in operation "Market". On the first day 46 Dakotas released 41 Horsa west of Arnhem, while on the second day 47 Horsa were successfully released on the LZ. Supply drops occupied the next three operations and many aircraft were damaged by flak.

During the autumn and winter both squadrons were busily engaged on freight runs to the Continent bringing back casualties from the Front. On occasions further glider exercises were held.

On 21st March 1945 both squadrons flew to Gosfield to carry out operation "Varsity" (crossing of the Rhine) on 24th March, after which they landed at B.56 before returning to Broadwell on the 25th. In May 1945 POW evacuation became the chief task of the squadrons.

On 6th August No. 512 Squadron was transferred to Melbourne and 575 Squadron to Holme. As replacements Nos. 10 and 76 Squadrons arrived for final ACSLA training until the end of the month when they left for overseas via Portreath. Another squadron that was posted

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in was No. 77 which later left for India.

On 5th October 1945 No. 271 Squadron with Dakotas arrived from Odiham to carry out Continental passenger and casualty schedules. Broadwell was transferred to 47 Group two days later.

Later in October freighter training flights to India were begun and by December 271 Squadron was treeping to India almost exclusively. In April 1946, treeping to India having been completed the squadron began a service to the Continent, flying to Naples via Le Bourget. During the summer destinations included Vienna, Naples, Buckebourg, Malta, Frankfurt, Gatow, and Athens using Blackbushe and Croydon as termini.

On 1st December 1946 No. 271 Squadron was renumbered 77 Squadron, moving to Manston on the last day of the month. On this day Broadwell was reduced to C & M.

A CHRONOLOGICAL DIARY OF EVENTS, RAF BROADWELL

24. 1.44 Station transferred from 70 Group to Transport Command.
3. 2.44 G/C R L Crofton MBE, AFC assumed Command of the Station.
4. 2.44 S/L W E Dowling reported for formation of personnel for RAF Station Down Ampney.
7. 2.44 Advance party under S/L Dowling moved to Down Ampney.
9. 2.44 S/L A W Bennett reported on posting to RAF Station Blakehill Farm for formation of that Station from this Station.
11. 2.44 Advance party of No 512 Squadron arrived from RAF Station Hendon. Advance party of 575 Squadron also arrived from Hendon.
14. 2.44 Main Party of No 512 Squadron under the Command of Wg Cdr Blennerhasset arrived on the Station. Squadron equipped with Dakota aircraft. Main Party of 575 Squadron under the command of Wg Cdr Jefferson arrived from Hendon. Squadron equipped with Dakota aircraft.
First Gliders landed on the Station.
16. 2.44 Night flying practice commenced by squadrons, this consisted of circuits, landings and general recognition of district, Gooseneck flares were utilised for lighting.
17. 2.44 Wg Cdr B A Coventry posted to Command No 512 Squadron.
29. 2.44 Officers Commanding No 91, 92 and 93 Forward Staging Posts reported for the purpose of the formation of their Units.
7. 3.44 Approximately 1 Officer and 20 Other Ranks of the Royal Engineers arrived to construct an army camp for airborne troops, assisted by a party of 1 Officer and 60 Other Ranks of the 8th, 9th and 12th Paratroop Battalions.

16. 3.44 91 Forward Staging Post left Broadwell to proceed to RAF Down Ampney. Nos 92 and 93 FSPs to Blakehill Farm.
20. 3.44 Advance Party of No 2807 Squadron RAF Regiment arrived.
23. 3.44 Main body of No 2807 Squadron RAF Regiment arrived.
1. 4.44 A number of flying aids were brought into use including angle of Glide indicators.
3. 4.44 94 Forward Staging Post proceeded to Odiham for Exercise 'Blighty'. The itinerary of the Exercise included Odiham on 4.4.44 and West Malling on 6.4.44. One Dakota of 512 Squadron provided the air lift.
4. 4.44 Exercise 'Dreme' carried out. Aircraft from 512 and 575 Squadrons took part.
9. 4.44 Exercise 'Tour' laid on; 35 aircraft from this Station from 512 and 575 Squadrons took part.
17. 4.44 3 Dakota C-47s from 575 Squadron were ordered to perform a NICKEL Operation during the night. The selected target was Vire in the Cherbourg peninsula. In all approximately 400,000 leaflets were dropped on this sortie.
19. 4.44 During the early morning one aircraft came to grief while towing a glider and crashed near Carterton.
21. 4.44 Exercise 'Mush' commenced with Parachute dropping; 19 aircraft took off between 06.25 and 06.41. Weather conditions were good and 284 troops were dropped. Glider operations followed at 07.50; 18 gliders were released satisfactorily over LZ. Next stage of the operation was supply dropping by 30 C-47s, 98% of the supplies were dropped as ordered.

22. 4.44 4 aircraft of 512 Squadron carried out a Nickeling operation against a target in Northern France.
23. 4.44 No 2792 (AA) Squadron arrived from Fraserburgh.
24. 4.44 Three unexploded enemy bombs were dropped during the early morning.
A nickeling operation was carried out by 6 aircraft of 512 Squadron and 4 aircraft of 575 Squadron on targets in France.
25. 4.44 Nickeling operation, 6 aircraft of 512 Squadron operated over Vire and 6 aircraft of 575 Squadron operated over St Lo.
28. 4.44 A 'Bullseye' was carried out successfully by 6 aircraft of 512 and 575 Squadrons.
29. 4.44 The Bomb Disposal Squad from RAF Station Harwell commenced work on the 2 unexploded bombs.
A Halifax aircraft from Rufford crash landed on the aerodrome just off the main runway.
30. 4.44 Another 'Bullseye' successfully carried out.
2. 5.44 Six aircraft of 512 Squadron and 6 of 575 Squadron transferred to RAF Station Leicester East on opening.
3. 5.44 First of the unexploded bombs was raised. Exercise 'Braddle' took place. Thirty aircraft took part, plus 30 gliders. Personnel of 270 Polish Regiment were carried.
4. 5.44 Second bomb, which was also a 500 lb HE was raised. All bomb disposal personnel returned to RAF Station Harwell.
5. 5.44 Exercise 'Confirmation II' carried out by 512 and 575 Squadron.

- 7-8.5.44 Exercise 'Nark' carried out.
10. 5.44 Exercise 'Noggin'. Ten aircraft of 512 and 575 Squadrons dropped troops of 2nd Polish Battalion.
11. 5.44 Exercise 'Nark II' took place.
12. 5.44 Exercise 'Nark III' carried out.
Three aircraft from each squadron participated in Exercise 'Kismet' dropping paratroops at Netheravon.
- 17-18.5.44 512 and 575 Squadrons carried out Pannier dropping exercise with 15 aircraft each at Northleach.
19. 5.44 Exercise 'Exeter' concluded. Large scale exercise to land gliders, drop paratroops, and set up ground aids on DZ at the North Aerodrome at Netheravon. Role of 512 and 575 Squadrons was to drop 300 troops of the 6th Airborne Division, 15 aircraft from each squadron taking part. Aircraft from 5 of 38 Group Stations towed the Gliders. The King and Queen were on the DZ to watch the drop.
21. 5.44 Exercises 'Consternation' and 'Gulliver' carried out.
An Air Despatch Letter Service was inaugurated.
25. 5.44 9th Battalion Parachute Regiment arrived on the Station.
26. 5.44 25 American Dakotas from Ramsbury collected gliders from the Station.
28. 5.44 An exercise was held to test out and accustom everyone in the working of the Station Defence Scheme.
2. 6.44 The order was received to 'seal' the Station at 1400 hours.

3. 6.44 Approval was given for the closing of the Alvescot-Shilton Road. Briefing of crews for operation 'Overlord' commenced.
5. 6.44 RAF Regiment Squadrons provided guards for marshalled aircraft. The final briefing took place at 20.00 hours of 59 crews (6 spare) for operation 'Tonga'. 32 aircraft of No 512 Squadron and 21 of 575 took off with full loads for Normandy. The first aircraft captained by Wg Cdr Coventry (512 Sqn) was airborne at 23.14 hours. No 575 aircraft followed, the first aircraft captained by Wg Cdr Jefferson being airborne at 23.29 hours. All aircraft were airborne by 23.36 hours. All aircraft returned to Broadwell safely after successfully completing the operation. The last aircraft (575 Squadron) landed at 03.45 hours on 6th. 952 troops had been dropped on 2 DZs.
6. 6.44 Broadwell was detailed to supply 37 aircraft and gliders for operation 'Mallard' (18 of 512 and 19 of 57 Squadron). The gliders were loaded with troops and equipment. The first aircraft took off at 18.37 hours. Ten crews - five each of 512 and 575 Squadrons for re-supply operation 'Rob Roy'.
7. 6.44 The Station was 'unsealed' at 20.00 hours.
17. 6.44 15 aircraft of 575 Squadron took off for landing strip B5 at 0600 hours via Holmsley South. One became u/s at Holmsley South. 14 aircraft transported 191 RAF personnel and kit from Holmsley South to B5. The aircraft returned to Broadwell bringing 254 casualties. This was the first operational sortie made by Air Ambulance Pool stationed at Broadwell. Penicillin was used

- for the first time in the Operating Theatre at Station Sick Quarters.
19. 6.44 The tannoy system started operating throughout the Station. Ten aircraft of 575 Squadron detailed to transport fighter personnel from Bolt Head and Harrowbeer to West Malling.
20. 6.44 15 aircraft of 512 Squadron transported 269 RAF personnel of 124 Wing from Hurn to landing strip B6.
- 21.22.6.44 Casualties were evacuated to this Station from Normandy by Blakehill Farm aircraft.
23. 6.44 17 aircraft of 575 Squadron transported personnel of 611 and 64 Squadrons from Deanland to Harrowbeer.
25. 6.44 11 aircraft of 512 Squadron took off for Landing Strip B7 via Ford. 168 RAF personnel of 122 Wing and 3 Army personnel were transported from Ford to B7.
27. 6.44 11 aircraft of 575 Sqn took off for Landing Strips B6 and B7 via Holmsley South. 133 personnel of 129 Wing plus kit and 18 bomb racks were transported to Landing Strip B6 and 9 personnel of 122 Wing plus 3000 lbs of kit and 80 lbs radar equipment to Landing Strip B7.
28. 6.44 Two aircraft of 575 Sqn transported 8 RCAF personnel of 430 Sqn and 4 RAF from Odiham to B8. Casualties brought back. 2807 Squadron RAF Regiment withdrawn from the Station and proceeded to South Coast to combat the flying bombs.
29. 6.44 Blakehill Farm aircraft landed casualties at Broadwell. 2792 Squadron RAF Regiment withdrawn from the Station, proceeded to South Coast to combat the flying bomb.

1. 7.44 Group Capt R L Crofton MBE, AFC posted to Leicester East to Command and Wg Cdr N E Morrison AFC to Broadwell to command. 15 aircraft of 512 Sqn carried 157 personnel of 123 Wing from Hurn to B10, brought back casualties from B8 to base, and returned 91 personnel of 123 Wing to Hurn.
2. 7.44 Two aircraft of 575 Sqn carried bombs to B8 and brought back casualties.
3. 7.44 Four aircraft of 512 Sqn carried supplies to B8 and returned with casualties.
4. 7.44 Six aircraft of 575 Sqn took miscellaneous cargo to B8, and returned with casualties and passengers.
5. 7.44 Six aircraft of 512 Squadron flew miscellaneous cargo to B8, returning with casualties.
6. 7.44 Three aircraft of 575 Sqn carried aircraft spares, fuses and exploders to B8, and brought back wounded.
7. 7.44 Three aircraft of 512 Squadron carried a jeep and miscellaneous equipment to B14.
Returned with casualties.
8. 7.44 Three aircraft of 575 Sqn carried supplies and equipment to B18.
Returned with casualties.
9. 7.44 Two aircraft of 512 Sqn carried personnel and kit of 85 Group and 146 Wing from Deanland and Hurn to B14 and B15. Returned with passenger and casualties. Four aircraft of the same squadron took off with miscellaneous RAF stores and 2 passengers to B14.

10. 7.44 Three aircraft of 575 Sqn carried equipment and miscellaneous stores to B14. Returned with casualties and passengers.
11. 7.44 Five aircraft of 512 Squadron took passengers and freight to B14. Returned with casualties.
12. 7.44 Three aircraft of 575 Sqn carried bombs and MT and aircraft spares to B14. Returned with Allied casualties and one German POW. 16 Dakotas conveyed personnel of 93 Forward Staging Post from Watchfield to Thorney Island.
13. 7.44 Three aircraft of 512 Squadron carried bombs, mail and stores to B14. Returned with casualties.
Group Captain N E Morrison took over command of RAF Station Broadwell from Group Captain R L Crofton.
14. 7.44 Four aircraft of 575 Squadron carried 2 passengers, a jeep for ACM Sir Arthur Tedder and general RAF stores to B14. Returned with casualties.
15. 7.44 Three aircraft of 512 Sqn carried bombs, MT spares and general stores to B14. Returned with casualties. Two aircraft of same squadron moved 4 Officers and 15 Other Ranks of 84 Group from Tangmere to B14. Returned with casualties.
16. 7.44 Three aircraft of 575 Sqn took freight and passengers to B14. Returned with casualties.
- 17-18.7.44 Freight and passengers to B14 by 512 Squadron aircraft. Returned with casualties.
19. 7.44 General RAF equipment to B14 by 512 Sqn aircraft. Returned with casualties and one POW.

20. 7.44 Aircraft of 575 Squadron carried general equipment and a bag of special mail for General Montgomery to B14. Returned with casualties.
21. 7.44 One aircraft of 512 Sqn took camp kit and stores and 13 personnel of 132 (Polish) Wing to B7. Returned empty.
22. 7.44 One Dakota piloted by Gp Capt Morrison took off for B2 and returned to Northolt with the Prime Minister and Party the following day. Aircraft of 512 and 575 Squadrons flew to B7 with RAF and Army stores.
23. 7.44 Aircraft of 512 Squadron carried RAF equipment to B14. Returned with casualties.
- 24-26.7.44 Aircraft of 575 Squadron carried stationery and general equipment to B14. Returned with casualties.
27. 7.44 Four aircraft of 512 Squadron took comforts, equipment and spares to B14. Returned with casualties. One aircraft of 512 and 2 of 575 left to convey passengers and aircraft spares of 142 Wing from Hartford Bridge to Landing Strip A8 of the USAAF. Returned the next day with casualties from B14. 30 aircraft on exercise 'Rowanberry'.
- 28-31.7.44 Aircraft of 512 and 575 Squadrons carried general equipment to B14 and returned with casualties.
- The Inspector General of the RAF ACM Sir L Hewitt and Air Cdre Fiddement visited the Station.
- August 44 Aircraft of 512 and 575 Squadrons continued to carry freight to the Continent, throughout August. From 28 to 30, Squadron aircraft carried food for the relief of Orleans.

VIPs carried during August included the following:

Mr Winston Churchill, General Holles, Commander Thompson and Supt Hughes.

Lady Limerick, Duchess of Marlborough visited the Station on 14th and 29th.

13. 8.44 18 aircraft of 512 Sqn transported 144 personnel and equipment of 613 Servicing Echelon from Manston to B6. Returned with casualties from B14.
19. 8.44 20 aircraft of 512 squadron took off for Rennes in company with 20 aircraft of 575 Sqn to carry out operation 'Wallace'.
22. 8.44 14 aircraft of 512 Sqn conveyed the Main Party of 132 Wing to B16 and returned empty.
- September 44 The airlift of supplies continued to the middle of the month - both squadrons warned for impending operation.
16. 9.44 Briefing for Operation 'Market'.
17. 9.44 Wg Cdr Jefferson, OC 575 Sqn, led a formation of 22 aircraft of 512 Sqn, 20 of 575 Sqn plus 1 aircraft of 437 Sqn flying with 512, towing Horsa gliders. 41 gliders with 544 Troops of 1st Border Regiment, No 1 Airborne Division with 22 jeeps, 18 trailers, 30 motor cycles, 17 cycles, 34 handcarts and 7 anti-tank guns were released at the LZ west of Arnhem between 1307 hours and 1321 hours. All aircraft returned safely to base.
18. 9.44 2nd phase of operation 'Market'. 47 gliders were released at the LZ with 431 troops of 2nd Staffs Regiment and 47 troops of 1st Border Regiment. Jeeps, motor cycles, cycles, guns, trailers handcarts dropped.

19. 9.44 Supply drops to the Airborne Troops at Arnhem.
20. 9.44 Second supply drop at Arnhem.
23. 9.44 Aircraft of 575 Squadron, commanded by Wg Cdr Jefferson flew to Brussels Evere (B56) on attachment for operations in support of the Airborne Division at Arnhem. G/C Morrison, Officer Commanding RAF Broadwell also went with the detachment as Liaison Officer.
- 24-25.9.44 Operating from Brussels Evere, 575 Squadron aircraft dropped supplies of food and ammunition to the airborne troops.
26. 9.44 13 aircraft of 512 Sqn carried personnel and equipment from Twinwood Farm to Brussels Melsbroek.
- From Brussels Evere with 575 Sqn detachment, S/L Wicht with S/L Williamson as Navigator flew in an Auster aircraft to a landing strip in the forward area south of Nijmegen. This strip was under the control of 30 Corps, Second Army and the object of the flight was to liaise with 30 Corps regarding supplies required.
- The airlift of supplies continued to the end of the month, and throughout October, November and December. SAS passengers were also carried.
- G/C Franklin assumed Command Stn Broadwell September 44.
- 2.12.44 An Air Despatch Letter Service by night was commenced. A regular nightly run with mail from Northolt to Le Bo^urg^et and Brussels. Two aircraft of 512 Sqn were the first to operate and the 2 schedules were carried out on time satisfactorily.

- 28.12.44 9 aircraft of 575 Sqn and 11 aircraft of 512 Sqn returned to base today from airfields to which they had been diverted on 26 December. 302 USA Troops had been carried to Denain Prouvy by these aircraft and 9000 lbs of kit. The airlift of RAF freight and personnel, SAS personnel, stores, Army freight and passengers to and from the Continent continued.
- February 45 The programme for lifting the troops of the 6th Airborne Division from Nivelles to this country commenced 22 February.
- March 45 During the month the Air Ambulance Pool flew 194 sorties returning with casualties to Down Ampney.
- April 45 Aircraft commenced returning with British ex-POWs released by the Americans in their advance. These were brought back to RAF Stations Oakley, Wing, Westcott and Hartford Bridge.
- May 45 WAAF personnel were lifted from Croydon to Maldegan by 575 Sqn aircraft, returning with casualties to Hartford Bridge and Down Ampney. Air lift of supplies and return of ex-POWs continued. Group Captain C T Weir assumed command of RAF Station Broadwell.
3. 8.45 Advance parties of Nos 10 and 76 Squadrons arrived.
6. 8.45 Nos 512 and 575 Squadrons together with 4512 and 4575 Servicing Echelons proceeded to Melbourne and Holme-on-Spalding Moor Nos 10 and 76 Squadrons commenced training.
27. 8.45 No 8 MPSU moved to RAF Station Thrupton.
28. 8.45 Nos 10 and 76 Squadrons moved to Stations, St Mawgan and Portreath.

29. 8.45 Advance Parties Nos 77 and 78 Squadrons arrived
30. 8.45 No 77 Sqn arrived to commence their final ACSEA training. The arrival of 78 Sqn was cancelled in view of its possible departure to Middle East.
- September 45 Training Support Training Unit continued with the training of 77 Squadron throughout the first 3 weeks of the month.
- 5.10.45 271 Dakota Squadron moved in from Odiham to carry out Continental Passenger and Casualty Schedules.
- 7.10.45 RAF Station Broadwell transferred to HQ 47 Group.
- 5.10.45 Main Party of 4271 Servicing Echelon arrived at Broadwell.
- 6.10.45 Rear Party of 4271 Servicing Echelon arrived from Odiham completing the arrival of entire Echelon.
- March 46 Group Captain P D Holder assumed Command of the Station.
5. 4.46 RAF Stn Broadwell, 271 Squadron and 4271 Servicing Echelon transferred from 47 Group to 46 Group.
20. 4.46 Information received that 100 POWs have been allotted for employment on this Station.
23. 5.46 Group Captain Holder posted. Group Captain J E W Bowles DFC arrived for Station Commander duties.
100 German POWs arrived.
- 1.12.46 271 Squadron renumbered 77 Squadron and 4271 Servicing Echelon renumbered 4077 Servicing Echelon.
- 30.12.46 Advance Party of 77 Sqn and 4077 Servicing Echelon left for RAF Manston.

- 31.12.46 Main Party of 77 Sqn and 4077 Servicing Echelon moved out.
RAF Station Broadwell reduced to 'closing down' party basis.
14. 2.46 The Station reduced to caretaking basis pending disposal.
1. 1.47 Group Captain J E W Bowles posted to HQ 46 Group.
6. 1.47 Squadron Leader Wilson arrived to take over Closing Down Party.
15. 1.47 S/L E Howett arrived to take over Closing Down Party.
8. 1.47 Rear Party 77 Squadron and 4077 Servicing Echelon moved out to
Manston.
31. 3.47 Closed down.