

Chapter 9 – Settling in at ETOUSA – Missions from England

The Saturnia arrived at Gourock, Scotland, in the Firth of Clyde on April 3, 1944 and the airmen entrained for Halstead, Essex, England, arriving on April 5, 1944, at Station 154, Gosfield, Essex, England, where they were joined by their flying crews.

Gourock (Scottish Gaelic: *Guireag*, pimple-shaped or rounded, pronounced [kurlak]; *GOOR-uck*) is a town falling within the Inverclyde council area and formerly forming a burgh of the historic county of Renfrewshire in the west central Lowlands of Scotland. It has in the past functioned as a seaside resort on the Firth of Clyde. Its principal function today, however, is as a popular residential area, extending contiguously from Greenock, with a railway terminus and ferry services across the Clyde.



The Gourock pier is still visible in this recent photo. The train station where the airmen embarked for air bases in England can be seen at water's edge just above and slightly right of the pier.



The train ride from Gourock to Gosfield Airbase in Essex, England was an arduous two-day 400 mile journey for the airmen who had just completed an uncomfortable 11 day trans-Atlantic crossing on the troop ship Saturnia. They were unaware they would be flying their first combat missions in two weeks.

Gosfield was given the code name "Station 154", just one of over 300 airbases used by allied forces in the UK.

Stations Used By 9th US Air Force

Airfield		Dates	Unit	Map	
		Last Update : 23 November 2002			
	No. 149	Birch, Essex	4 April 1944 to 16 April 1944	410th Bomb Group	
	No. 154	Gosfield, Essex	16 April 1944 to 27 September 1944	410th Bomb Group	
	No. 161	Boreham, Essex	11 March 1944 to 24 July 1944	394th Bomb Group	
	No. 162	Chipping Ongar, Essex	1 July 1943 to 21 July 1944	387th Bomb Group	
	No. 164	Great Dunmow, Essex	29 September 1943 to 2 October 1944	386th Bomb Group	
	No. 165	Little Walden, Essex	7 March 1944 to 18 September 1944	409th Bomb Group	
	No. 166	Matching Green, Essex	26 January 1944 to 18 September 1944	391st Bomb Group	
	No. 168	Rivenhall, Essex	15 April 1944 to 4 August 1944	397th Bomb Group	

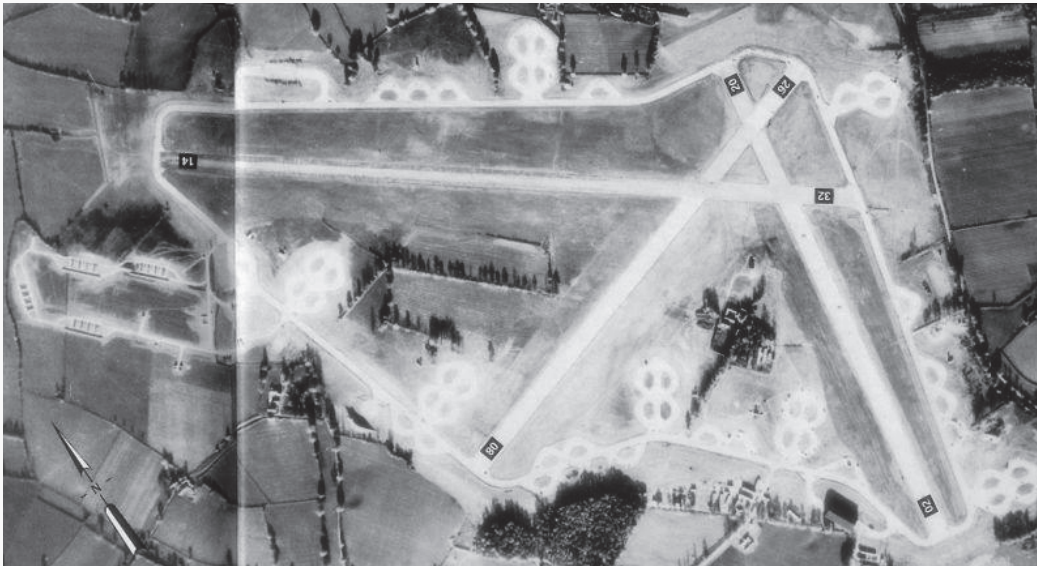
Stations Used By 9th US Air Force

Airfield			Dates	Unit	Map
	No. 169	Stansted, Essex	9 February 1944 to 30 September 1944	344th Bomb Group	
	No. 170	Wethersfield, Essex	1 February 1944 to 21 September 1944	416th Bomb Group	
	No. 358	Earls Colne, Essex	16 October 1943 to 21 July 1944	323rd Bomb Group	
	No. 408	Beaulieu, Hampshire	21 July 1944 to 26 August 1944	323rd Bomb Group	
	No. 452	Stoney Cross, Hampshire	21 July 1944 to 1 September 1944	387th Bomb Group	
	No. 455	Holmsley South, Hampshire	24 July 1944 to 20 August 1944	394th Bomb Group	
	No. 460	Marks Hall, Essex	16 October 1943 to 18 September 1944	9th Bomber Command	
	No. 485	Andrews Field, Essex	12 June 1943 to 25 September 1944	322nd Bomb Group	
	No. 492	Hurn, Hampshire	4 August 1944 to 30 August 1944	397th Bomb Group	

Royal Air Force Station Gosfield
 USAAF Station AAF-154

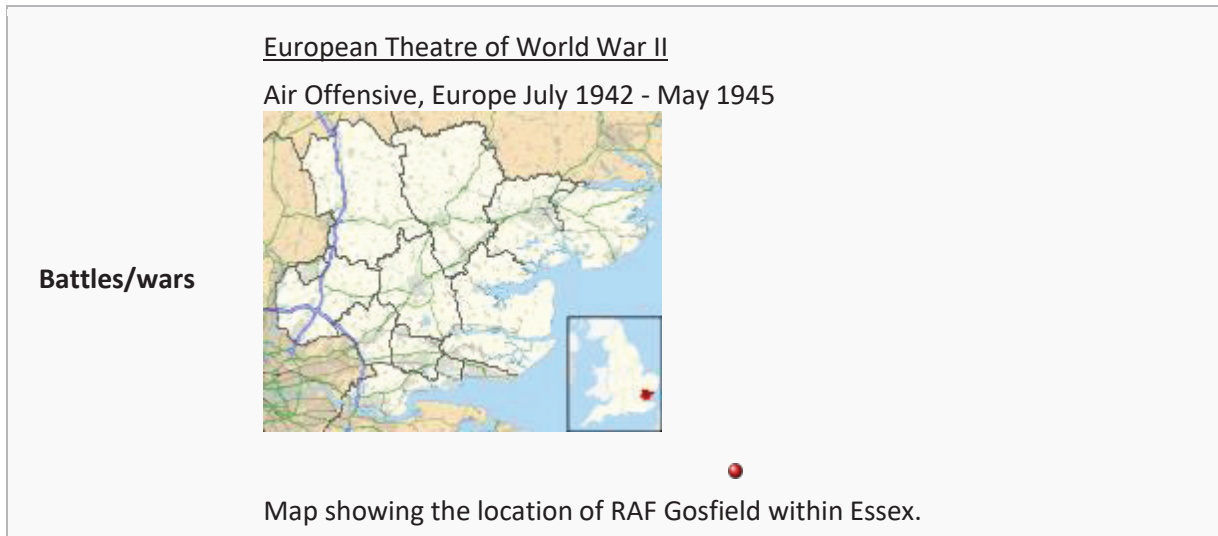


Located Near Halstead, Essex, England



1945

Type	Military airfield
Coordinates	 <u>51°57′11″N 000°34′48″E</u> <u>51.95306°N 0.58°E</u>
Location code	GF
Built	1943
In use	1944-1946
Controlled by	<u>United States Army Air Forces</u> <u>Royal Air Force</u>
Garrison	<u>Ninth Air Force</u> <u>RAF Bomber Command</u>
Occupants	365th Fighter Group 397th, 410th Bombardment Groups No. 299 Squadron



RAF Station Gosfield is a former World War II airfield in Essex, England. The airfield is located approximately 5 miles (8.0 km) north of Braintree; about 40 miles (64 km) north-northeast of London

Opened in 1943, it was used by both the Royal Air Force and United States Army Air Force. During the war it was used primarily as a combat airfield, with several fighter and bomber units stationed at it. After the war it was closed in 1955 after being held in reserve for many years.

Today the remains of the airfield are located on private property being used as agricultural fields.

Overview

Gosfield had been utilized as a landing ground during World War I but it is not known if this was a factor in the Air Ministry surveyor's visit to the area during the winter of 1941-42 when selecting locations for Class A bomber airfields. The site was eventually included in the grouping of 15 such airfields in August 1942 that were allocated for the USAAF Eighth Air Force Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress groups then training in the United States.

Gosfield was also one of the airfields where the main construction work was carried out by US Army engineers. The 816th Engineer Battalion (Aviation) arrived at Gosfield on 16 August 1942 where they began setting up tented accommodation. Shortages of construction equipment and other problems caused delays in the early months. By December 1942, the overall airfield building program was in crisis and falling further behind schedule due to the lack of labour and resources. By March 1943, most of the 816th's men were transferred to the more advanced site at RAF Andrews Field. Full-scale construction of Gosfield was resumed in August and by mid-October 1943 the main elements of the landing area had been completed. The 833rd Engineer Aviation Battalion arrived in October 1943 and helped complete Gosfield, including buildings and the drainage system. However, by the time it was completed the Eighth Air Force no longer required the airfield and it was passed to the control of the US Ninth Air Force.

On December 10, 1943 the airfield was bombed by the Luftwaffe. Four men of the 833rd EAB, Stacy J. Lindsey, George E. Reilly, Norman Shotnakoff Jr., and Fred Svensson, were killed when one of the raiders sprayed their hut with cannon fire; and fifteen others were wounded.

The airfield was built to the Class A airfield standard, the main feature of which was a set of three converging runways each containing a concrete runway for takeoffs and landings, optimally placed at 60 degree angles to each other in a triangular pattern. It consisted of three runways of 6,000 ft (14/32), 4,200 ft (02/20), and 4,000 ft

(08/26). 50 "Loop" and 1 "Frying Pan" hardstands were constructed connecting to an enclosing perimeter track, of a width of 50 feet.

The ground support station was constructed largely of Nissen huts of various sizes. The support station was where the group and ground station commanders and squadron headquarters and orderly rooms were located. Also on the ground station were where the mess facilities; chapel; hospital; mission briefing and debriefing; armory and bombsite storage; life support; parachute rigging; supply warehouses; station and airfield security; motor pool and the other ground support functions necessary to support the air operations of the group. These facilities were all connected by a network of single path support roads.

The technical site, connected to the ground station and airfield consisted of at least two T-2 type hangars and various organizational, component and field maintenance shops along with the crew chiefs and other personnel necessary to keep the aircraft airworthy and to quickly repair light and moderate battle damage. Aircraft severely damaged in combat were sent to repair depots for major structural repair. The Ammunition dump was located on the north side of the airfield, outside of the perimeter track surrounded by large dirt mounds and concrete storage pens for storing the aerial bombs and the other munitions required by the combat aircraft.

Various domestic accommodation sites were constructed dispersed away from the airfield, but within a mile or so of the technical support site, also using clusters of Maycrete or Nissen huts. The Huts were either connected, set up end-to-end or built singly and made of prefabricated corrugated iron with a door and two small windows at the front and back. They provided accommodation for 3,278 personnel, including communal and a sick quarters.

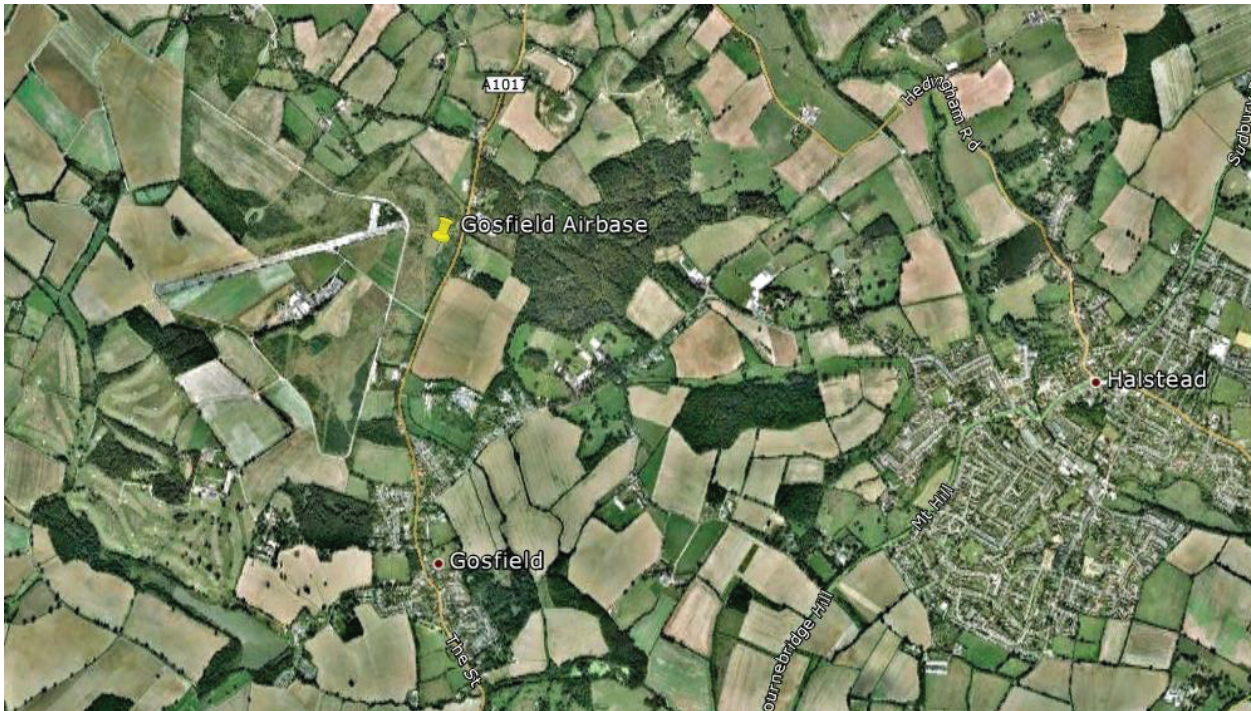
RAF Gosfield - 397th BG - 410th BG - 365th FG -



Rear view, it is only from the back that the original building can be identified, the three top floor windows on the right side and the long thin window on the far right (the 8ft high staircase window) show the original buildings dimensions. The two windows on the left side are in the new extended section 2002 (© Robert Truman)

RAF Gosfield - 397th BG - 410th BG - 365th FG -	
Airfield:	Operational fighter and bomber
Opened:	/1943
Closed:	/1945
Code:	GF
USAAF Station:	154
Runways:	3x - concrete with wood chips
Hangars:	2x - T2
County:	Essex
Location:	6 miles S of Braintree
OS Ref:	TL778312
©:	All photographs copyright © as stated
RAF Gosfield - 9th USAAF - IX USAAF -	
RAF Gosfield airfield - 365th FG - 397th BG - 410th BG -	

The remnants of Gosfield Airbase can still be seen via satellite today in the rolling farm country of Essex, England



SECRET

596TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (M)

397TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (M) Station 168, England





10 June 1944

SUBJECT: **April Installment (1944) of Squadron History.**

TO : Historical Section, IX Bomber Command, APO 140, U.S. Army.
(through 397th Bombardment Group (M), APO 140, U.S. Army)

The first several weeks in the ETO were spent by both ground crews and air crews with familiarization courses and study to prepare for combat in this theatre. We were ordered to leave Station 154, Gosfield, Essex, England and proceed to new base at Station 168,

“Station 168” was the code name of the AAF Airbase at Rivenhall and was home to the 397th BG, the “Bridge Buster’s” from April to August 1944.

USAAF Station AAF-168	
	
Located Near Silver End, Essex, England	
	
<u>Rivenhall</u> airfield photographed in April 1944 with the B-26 Marauders of the 397th Bombardment Group parked on the grass, while the P-51 Mustangs of the 363d Fighter Group still on the dispersal loops.	
Type	Military airfield
Coordinates	 51°51'19"N 000°38'23"E 51.85528°N 0.63972°E
Location code	RL
Built	1943
In use	1944-1946
Controlled by	United States Army Air Forces Royal Air Force
Garrison	Ninth Air Force RAF Bomber Command
Occupants	363d Fighter Group 397th Bombardment Group Nos. 295, 570 Squadrons
Battles/wars	European Theatre of World War II Air Offensive, Europe July 1942 - May 1945
	
RAF <u>Rivenhall</u> , shown within Essex	

Rivenhall was known as **USAAF Station AAF-168** for security reasons by the USAAF during the war, and by which it was referred to instead of location. It's USAAF Station Code was "RL".

397th Bombardment Group

On 5 April 1944 Martin B-26 Marauders of the 397th Bombardment Group started to arrive at Gosfield after a trans-Atlantic crossing from Hunter Army Airfield, Georgia by the southern route via Africa.

However, no sooner had they arrived than they were moved on to RAF Rivenhall when that airfield was vacated by the 363d Fighter Group on 14 April. On the day following the departure of the 363d, the first Martin B-26 Marauders of the 397th Bombardment Group arrived.



Rivenhall Airfield, England April 1944

The group consisted of the following operational squadrons:

- 596th Bombardment Squadron (X2)

History

The 596th was established in early 1943 as a B-26 Marauder medium bomber group. Initially it was an Operational Training Unit under the Third Air Force in the southeastern United States. It was realigned as an operational squadron and deployed to European Theater of Operations (ETO), and assigned to Ninth Air Force in England in early 1944.

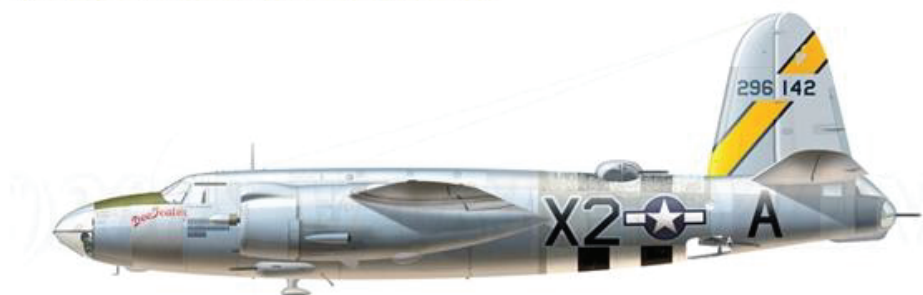
Engaged in tactical bombardment of enemy targets in France and the Low Countries in the spring of 1944, also participated in the extensive bombardment of the D-Day invasion area in preparation for the Operation Overlord landings in France. After D-Day, moved from England to Advanced Landing Grounds in France, providing tactical bombardment of enemy strong points as well as bridges, railroads and other targets in support of Allied ground forces during the Northern France Campaign. Supported the Western Allied invasion of Germany during the spring of 1945, continuing combat operations against enemy targets in Germany until the German Capitulation in May 1945. Squadron demobilized in France during the summer of 1945, returning personnel and equipment to the United States. Inactivated as a paper unit during December 1945.

- 597th Bombardment Squadron (9F)
- 598th Bombardment Squadron (U2)
- 599th Bombardment Squadron (6B)

The group's identification marking was a yellow diagonal band across both sides of the vertical tailplane.

George's plane was B-26 X2 SN 296-143

596th Bombardment Squadron



Squadron Markings: X2 Fuselage Codes

597th Bombardment Squadron



Squadron Markings: 9F Fuselage Codes

598th Bombardment Squadron



Squadron Markings: U2 Fuselage Codes

599th Bombardment Squadron



Squadron Markings: 6B Fuselage Codes

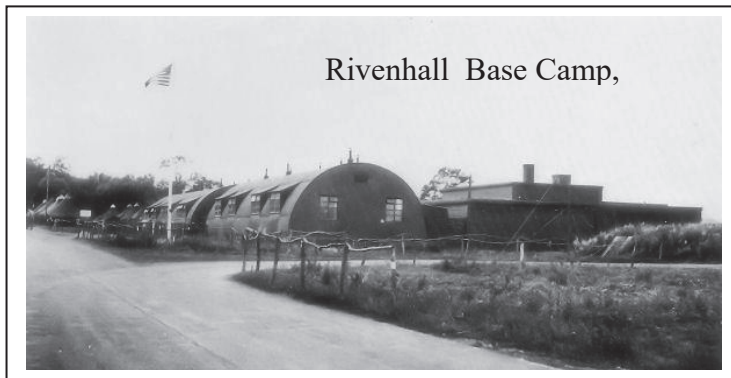
Over the next few days, more than 60 'bare metal' B-26s were to be seen on the Rivenhall hardstands. Although fresh from the training grounds in south-eastern United States, and having only reached the UK early in April, the 397th undertook its first combat mission on 20 April: an attack on a Pas de Calais V-1 site.

During its tenure of Rivenhall the 397th undertook 56 bombing missions, 32 of them attacks on bridges. Other targets were enemy airfields, rail junctions, fuel and ammunition stores, V-weapon sites and various military installations in France and the Low Countries. During these missions a total of 16 B-26s were missing in action and several others wrecked in crash-landings at the base.

Early in August, officially on the 5th, the 397th transferred from Rivenhall to RAF Hurn in Hampshire, to give the Marauders a better radius of action as the break-out of the Allied forces from the Normandy beachhead meant that potential targets were receding.

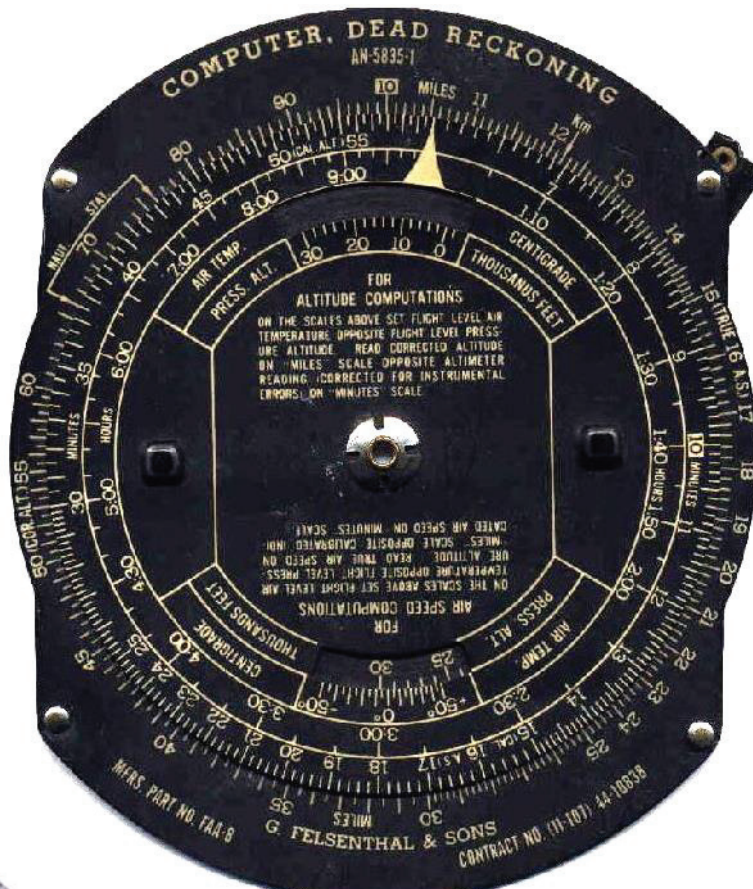


The "Excalibur" shoulder patch worn by the airmen at Rivenhal



Rivenhall Base Camp,

Dead Reckoning computer carried by all pilots



A fighter pilot's strip map for a mission into Germany.

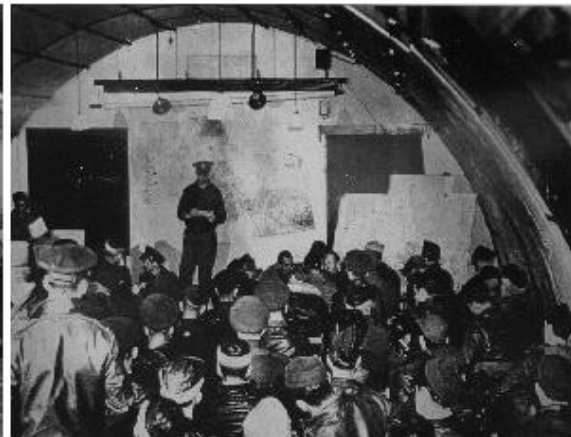


This signaling mirror was a part of every airman's survival kit.

The Briefing



Every briefing is a matter of life and death. Some men will not return. Air crews listen attentively, professionally, to the details of the mission. But almost subconsciously each man is appraising his odds; depth of penetration into enemy skies; expected flak and fighter resistance; friendly cover or lack of it; aircraft position in flight, squadron, group, wing.





Milk run photo from Rivenhall site. Formation of Martin B-26Bs of the 397th Bomb Group. Closest two aircraft are B-26B-55-MA S/N 42-96137 (9F-Y) and 42-96191 (9F-N) "Milk Run Special" of the 597th BS, 397th BG, 9th AF. The other B-26's are from the 598th Bomb Squadron. (U.S. Air Force photo)

42-96137 was shot down on May 13, 1944.

42-96191 was shot down on June 24, 1944.



General view of the airfield as it stood in 2002, looking almost due west. Silver End village is top left, Bradwell village top right. All 2,000 feet of the main runway still intact, as are both the T-2 aircraft hangers. Sick quarters (Allshot's farm) bottom centre. The former communal site is bottom left, including the station cinema and chapel. The northern side of the airfield has already suffered the ravages of gravel extraction



A view of the south eastern side of the airfield and hanger 1. The admin site and operations block are behind the hanger in the wooded area. The control tower was demolished after it became unstable following an explosion, but would have occupied the area now outlined by a small copse of trees almost dead centre of this shot. Note the extended roofline of hanger 1 which was converted by the "Marconi" company post war.



View of the Western side of the airfield centered round Hanger 2. The taxi-way and a good number of loop type aircraft standings are still evident in this shot.



Communal site. Huts on this site included the post office, tailors, barber, and shoemaker's shops, local produce store, rations stores, and the gymnasium.



The base hospital and sick quarters were built in and around "Allshots Farm" on the South Eastern side of the airfield. Like a lot of the buildings that survive on the airfield, they have now been put to alternative use. The two dark coloured oval huts in the centre of the photo were part of the base sick quarters, each hut containing a 22 bed hospital ward.

The white hut on the far left of the picture, now used as a repair centre for motor vehicles was formally the base mortuary.



This building at the rear of the communal site was the generator house. It would have contained two electrical power generators for the base.



Picket Post guarding the entrance to the site of base operations.



Double span Nissen huts sited to the rear of the operations block provided use as station offices



Interior shot of one of the office buildings on the operations site. During wartime this building would have been laid out with desks, typewriters, telephones, and bustling with administrative personnel. Post war, this building and many others like it were used to provide temporary accommodation to many Polish servicemen, who on release from POW camps did not wish to return to their homeland.



Operations buildings. From left to right, crew briefing room, office annexe, station office building.
To the rear is the roofline of the base operations block



Base operations block, the nerve centre of the airfield. A windowless reinforced concrete blast proof building with its own self contained power generators and clean air ventilation system, protecting its occupants from indirect bomb blasts and the dreaded (and thankfully never implemented) poison gas attack.



Looking down Rivenhall's main runway 10-28. Although suffering the effects of over 50 years of weathering, the runway is still intact in 1996. Beyond the trees and to the right of the runway would have been the bomb store. This area has already been cleared for gravel extraction.



Buildings on the communal site photographed in 1996. To the left is the generator house, and to the right the gymnasium. Later when the RAF occupied the airfield this building was converted into the station cinema.



More communal site buildings as photographed in 2001. This building is believed to have housed the barbers shop, shoemaker, and tailors shops.



The generator house in 2001, now in use as a vehicle repair shop.



Side view of the gymnasium / cinema in 2001.



Another view taken of the same building. The side steps and door were a later addition and would have led up to the projection room.



The same view photographed in 2001. Note how the buildings have been rejuvenated by the private enterprises now putting them to good use.



Eastern taxi-way leading up to Rivenhall's main runway 10-28. To the right would have been more loop type aircraft hardstands to the back of Allshot's Farm and the base sick quarters.



These two buildings stand close to the site of the control tower. To the left, a store for the hydrogen & Nitrogen bottles used for weather balloons. To the right, a store for the floodlight trailer and its tractor tug.



Interior shot of Hanger two. Having long since finished with aircraft servicing and repair, the building is now content to be used as a temporary grain store.



Hanger two photographed from the taxi-way. The post war altered roofline can clearly be seen from this shot.



Hanger two viewed from the Southwest end.



Iron bars protecting the windows clearly indicate the importance of this building. It was in fact the Norden bombsite store.



Photograph shows the remains of the main runway at Rivenhall stretching into the distance with an old Marconi radar dish in the foreground. ©Paul Osbourne






Rivenhall is rapidly fading into the countryside today but the image from the black and white 1944 aerial- photograph still matches the satellite view today



	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Rivenhall</h2>	
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1944-45 (© USAAF via Brian Gibbons, 397th Bomb Group Historian)

RAF Rivenhall airfield	
Airfield Today:	Agriculture, industry
Tower Type:	Watch Office for all Commands 12779/41 with small front windows 15371/41
Tower:	Demolished in the 1960s
News:	<p>2009: Currently there are plans to demolish everything remaining at Rivenhall and build an incinerator and waste site.</p> <p>Another victim of the Government's 'brownfield' scheme to build on historic airfield sites?</p>
History:	<p> 01/44 to 04/44, 380th, 381st, 382nd and 383rd Fighter Squadrons of the 363rd Fighter Group from Keevil with P-51B Mustangs. First mission 24/02/44, the 363rd FG flew 20 missions from Rivenhall losing 16 P-51's in action before moving to Staplehurst.</p> <p> 04/44 to 08/44, 596th, 597th, 598th and 599th Bombardment Squadrons of the 397th Bombardment Group from Gosfield with B-26 Marauders. First mission 20/04/44, the 397th Bomb Group flew 86 missions from Rivenhall losing 16 B-26's in action before moving to Hurn.</p> <p> 10/44 to 01/46, RAF 295 Sqn Stirlings, flew night operations to Holland and Denmark in support of resistance units and 04/45, took part in Operation Varsity, the Rhine crossing. 04/45 to 01/46, 570 Sqn Stirlings.</p> <p>Post-war the airfield was used to house ex-PoW Polish soldiers and by Marconi.</p>

RAF Rivenhall



2009 (© Gillian Westall)

RAF Rivenhall airfield

Airfield:	Operational
Opened:	/1943
Closed:	/1945
Code:	RL
USAAF Station:	168
Runways:	3x - concrete, tarmac
Hangars:	1x - Blister, 2x - T2
County:	Essex
Location:	2 miles N of Rivenhall
OS Ref:	TL820206
©:	All photographs copyright © as stated
RAF Rivenhall airfield	
RAF Rivenhall - 363rd FG - 397th BG - 295 Sqn - 570 Sqn -	

Starting April 20, 1944, missions were run everyday weather conditions permitting. George's pilot was George Parker who is listed here on many of the missions.

SECRET (continued)

596TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (M)

397TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (M) Station 168, England

10 June 1944

SUBJECT: April Installment (1944) of Squadron History.

Rivenhall, Essex, England, on April 15, 1944. This was by authority of Letter Order (370.5) Movement Troops, dated April 12, 1944, effective April 15, 1944.

We flew our first combat missions starting April 20, 1944 and flew missions regularly during the month, a summary of which follows:

MISSION NO.1. 20/4/44 TARGET-Le Plouy Ferme (Noball) RESULTS-Poor (Cloud).

The following crews of the 596th participated in mission:

Col. Coiner, CO of the 397th Group. Capt. Marovich, Armament Officer, and enlisted crews of the 596th Squadron flew as gunners. Major McLeod flew as deputy leader. Lts Broan, Hayes, Roberts, **Parker**, King, Estes, Brown and crews flew in first box formation.

MISSION NO.2. 21/4/44 TARGET-Fruges-Bois de Coupelle (Noball) RESULTS-Good.

Col. Coiner led this mission. Capt. Marovich and enlisted crews of the 596th flew as gunners. Major McLeod was deputy leader. Lts Broan, Hayes, Roberts, Estes, **Parker**, King, Brown and crews flew in first Box.

MISSION NO.3. 22/4/44 TARGET-Vacqueriette (Noball) RESULTS-Poor.

Col. Coiner led this mission. Capt. Marovich and enlisted crews of the 596th flew as gunners. Lt Broan and crews flew as spare ship on this mission.

MISSION NO.4. 23/4/44 TARGET-Benerville(Gun Positions) RESULTS-Good.

COL. Coiner led this mission. Capt. Marovich and enlisted crews of the 596th flew as gunners. Capt. Boyar and Capt. Evans and Lts Jordan, Colahan, Flowers, Hoch and crews flew in second box.

MISSION NO.5. 25/4/44 TARGET-Bois Cequerel (Noball) RESULTS-Poor (Visib)

Col. Coiner led this mission. Capt. Marovich and enlisted crews of the 596th flew as gunners. Major McLeod, Lts Illanes, Hayes and crews flew window ships for the formation.

MISSION NO.6. 26/4/44 TARGET-Ghislain (MY) RESULTS-Poor.

Captains Rhodes, Evans, Boyar, Lts. Hoch, Flowers, Brown, **Parker**, King, Jordan, Roberts, White and crews flew in first box.

MISSION NO.7. 27/4/44 TARGET-Ouistreham-Caen (Defense Wks) RESULTS-Very Good.

Major McLeod and crew led the second Box. Captains Weltzin, Evans and Lts. Flowers, White, Illanes, Estes, Roberts, Colahan, Broan, **Parker**, Brown and crews flew in the second box. Captain Boyar and crew flew spare ship.

MISSION NO.8. 28/4/44 TARGET-Mantes-Gassicourt (MY) Weather 10/10ths.

Major McLeod and crew led first box. Captain Boyar and Captain Evans and Lts. Jordan, Flowers, King, Hayes, Colahan, Roberts, **Parker**, White, Brown and crews flew in first box.

MISSION NO.9. 29/4/44 TARGET-Mantes-Gassicourt (MY) Recall-Weather.

Col. Coiner and crew of the 596th led the second box. Captains Weltzin, Rhodes, Evans and Lts. Hayes, King, Jordan, White, **Parker**, Broan, Roberts, Brown and crews flew in the second box.

MISSION NO.10. 30/4/44 TARGET-Lettinghem (Noball) RESULTS-Good.

Lt. Col. Winingham led second box with 596th crew. Captains Rhodes, Boyar, Evans, Weltzin and Lts. Hoch, Hayes, Jordan, Estes, Brown, **Parker**, Broan, Goodnow, Cannop and crews flew in the second box.

During this month, we received copy of G.O. 75, par1, dated March 27, 1944, Hq Ninth Air Force, increasing Combat Crews per Squadron from 15 to 21 crews. In keeping with this order, the following crews joined the squadron:

Lt. Walter, and crew, Lt. Wegman and crew, and Lt. Julius and crew. These crews were assigned per par 1, S.O. 107, Hq AAF, Station 236, APO 639, dated 19 April 1944.

There were no losses in action from our Squadron, no killed or wounded. There were no awards or decorations to members of the unit. The strength of the unit as of April 30, 1944 was 77 Officers and 318 enlisted men. Sgt. John T. Brewer wounded 30 April 1944 on Mission No. 10 (Lettinghem).

{SIGNED}

JOHN R. NEALE
1st Lt., Air Corps,
Squadron Historian

Although the missions of April were going well none of these details were known back home since everything was classified . The only information available to the public in this pre-internet era were delayed newsreels and newspapers, much of which were spun to impress the enemy with the strength and success of the Allied Forces. Hazel kept a scrapbook of everything she could find.

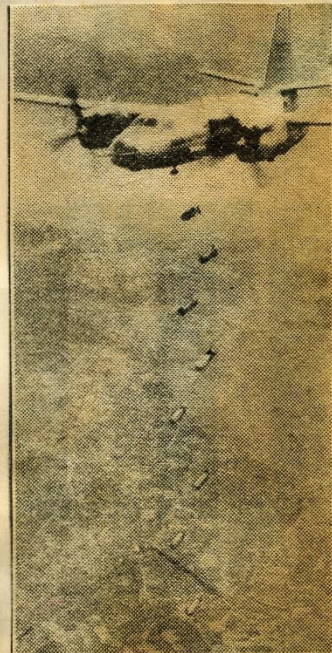


At the time of this photograph, April 8, 1944, George was on the troop ship Saturnia crossing the Atlantic in route to these English air bases



Four B-26's of the United States Ninth Air Force begin the return trip as their bombs explode on the Nazi-held Schiphol Airdrome, Amsterdam, Holland, one of the largest airfields in Europe

April 22, 1944



A B-26 Marauder dumps its load



100TH MISSION COMPLETED. (Official U. S. Signal Corps foto via A. P. Wirefoto)
 Crewmen of Mild and Bitter, a B-26 Marauder bomber of 9th Air Force, gather in front of plane in England to celebrate completion of 100th mission over Continent. L. to r., Lieut. Lee Rice, Johnston, Ohio; Lieut. Harry Harp, Blytheville, Ark.; Capt. Paul Shannon, Attica, Kans.; Sergt. Wallace Bond, Mesa, Ariz.; Sergt. Robert Johnson, Grand Rapids, and Sergt. James Brandemihl, Bozeman, Mont.

May 12th, 1944



(U. S. Army Air Force Photo from International SOUNDphoto)
ON INSPECTION TOUR of U. S. Army 9th Air Force Marauder medium bomber fields in Britain, Gen. Eisenhower (center) watches armorers load up the bomb-bay before the B-26's takeoff on mission. The Marauders yesterday got in their licks for Invader "Ike."



(Official U. S. Army Air Forces foto from A. P.)

ON THE NOSE. Huge column of smoke rises from Nazi rail junction at Busigny, in northern France, as Yank bomber of 9th Air Force gets direct hit. Yesterday nearly 1,750 U. S. bombers and fighters smashed into Germany for fifth time this week to pound an aircraft assembly plant at Tutow and rail yards at Osnabruck.

Marauders' second raid

Striking for the second time yesterday, Marauders and Havoc light bombers of the Ninth Air Force attacked in the evening military objectives in Northern France and the Poix airfield near Abbeville.

The bombers were escorted by R.A.A.F., R.N.Z.A.F. and Allied Spitfires.

Earlier in the day more than 150 Marauders had to circle their targets till they could find holes in the clouds to bomb objectives along the northern coast of France.

Small forces of R.A.F., R.C.A.F. and Allied Bostons, Mitchells and Spitfire bombers also attacked military objectives in Northern France.

Sent from England

Flak was weak

Flak, too, was generally weak, and only one plane is missing from the whole day's operations. These were the targets:

Bostons and Mitchells, with Spitfire escort—Hirson, Northern France.

Fortresses and Liberators, with Mustangs and Thunderbolts—Pas de Calais.

Mustangs and Thunderbolts—Namur and Haine St. Pierre, Belgium.

Fortresses and Liberators, with Thunderbolts, Lightnings and Mustangs—marshalling yards at Brussels (Belgium), Rheims, Troyes, Metz and Sarreguemines (France).

Marauders and A-20 light bombers, with Spitfires and Mustangs—Douai and Mantes-Gassicourt (France) and Charleroi-Montignes and Monceau-sur-Sambre, near Charleroi (Belgium).

Atlantic Wall Raids Resume On a Big Scale

By WALTER CRONKITE

London, May 15 (U.P.)—Some 1,200 Allied bombers and fighters, paced by B-17 Flying Fortresses and B-24 Liberators, blasted French coastal fortifications, railway and airfield targets today, roaring through heavy clouds over the Continent to maintain the pre-invasion pressure on Hitler's Atlantic Wall.

Resuming heavy bomber operations after bad weather Sunday broke a non-stop month-long assault, 200 Fortresses and Liberators made the short flight to the bomb-pitted Pas-de-Calais region of northern France shortly after breakfast.

All Bombers Return.

Escorted by some 200 P-51 Mustang fighters of the 8th Air Force, the American fliers reported "eight-tenths" cloud over the French coast, and worse inland. Temperatures at 20,000 feet were 20 below zero.

No enemy fighters rose to combat the bombers as they dumped hundreds of tons of explosives and fire bombs on Field Marshal Gen. Karl von Rundstedt's anti-invasion defenses. All bombers returned safely. One fighter was missing.

Lieut. Claude E. Wilson, Fortress lead bombardier from Dallas, Texas, said: "Despite the cloud, we had a good bomb run and put our bombs right in there."

Criel Airfield Blasted.

As the bombers returned, other Allied air fleets roared across the Channel to continue the bombardment of the enemy's defenses.

U. S. 9th Air Force B-26 Marauders and A-20 Havocs attacked a big freight yard in northern France and the Criel airfield, one of the belt of airdromes circling Paris, during the morning. Escorted by P-38 Lightning fighters, the bombers set fire to the main hangar. The medium and light bombers met no enemy fighters. All returned safely.

Escorted American P-47 Thunderbolt fighter-bombers also were over occupied France, pounding military installations in the north.

Thunderbolts Strike

U. S. 9th Air Force Marauders and Havocs attacked a big freight yard in northern France and the Criel Airfield, one of the belt of Nazi Airdromes circling Paris. Escorted by Lightnings, these bombers set fire to the main hangar 25 miles north of the old French capital. They met no enemy fighters and all returned to their bases.

American Thunderbolt fighter-bombers also were over France, planting their loads on military installations in the north.

Clearing weather before dawn permitted fast-flying RAF Mosquitos to dart to Cologne to give that German industrial and rail center another hammering. Military objectives in France and the Low Countries also were bombed and mines were laid in enemy waters. No British plane was lost.

Marauders to Fly Without Paint

A U. S. Medium Bomber Base in England, May 13 (P).—American B-26 Marauder bombers attacking German installations are adopting the practice of American heavier bombers and will fly again with silver sides and bellies. Unpainted planes are considerably lighter, can fly 10 miles an hour faster and yet are no more conspicuous. Paint will be left on the planes' tops, however, to blend the machines with shrubbery while grounded and to protect fliers' eyes from glare.

Lighter Bombers In Wide Attacks

NAPLES, May 16 (AP).—Poor visibility grounded the heavy bombers of the Mediterranean Army Air Force yesterday, but Marauder (B-26) and Mitchell (B-25) medium bombers were sent against Italian harbors, bridges and industrial installations, flying a total of 1,800 sorties.

Mitchells attacked harbor installations at Piombino, scoring hits on the docks and starting several fires. They lashed at steel works in Portoferraio, and a railway bridge at Orvieto, probably cutting both approaches. Marauders went after rail bridges at Pontedera, the Pisa viaduct north of Livorno harbor on the Ligurian Sea, and Acona on the Adriatic coast.

Heaviest attack by the Mitchells was on the steel foundry, docks, warehouses and shipping at Portoferraio, which is on the island of Elba. The bombers caught two medium-sized vessels steaming out of the harbor and trapped one in a full bomb pattern.

Highlights of these attacks were two major operations by the B-26 Marauders of the 9th Air Force, bringing their total to 15 major blows in the last 10 days. In their first attack the Marauders pounded vital railway spans at Liege-Seraing and Liege-Renory, far inside Belgium, losing five planes in a furious German anti-aircraft barrage.

Later in the day, they returned to smash the rail center of Amiens and other rail and military targets in northern France and Belgium.

Soldiers, sailors and flyers were also under orders to keep a tight lip so there was no communication from them other than an occasional birthday telegram. This telegram arrived in early May of 1944.

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Nonetheless, George was in harms way – and everyone knew, as bombardier, he had a front seat.



No news was good news. But that didn't stop a bomb from dropping on the families in New York in early May. Bad news travels fast – and it was very bad news indeed. Mike Iriarte was missing in action!