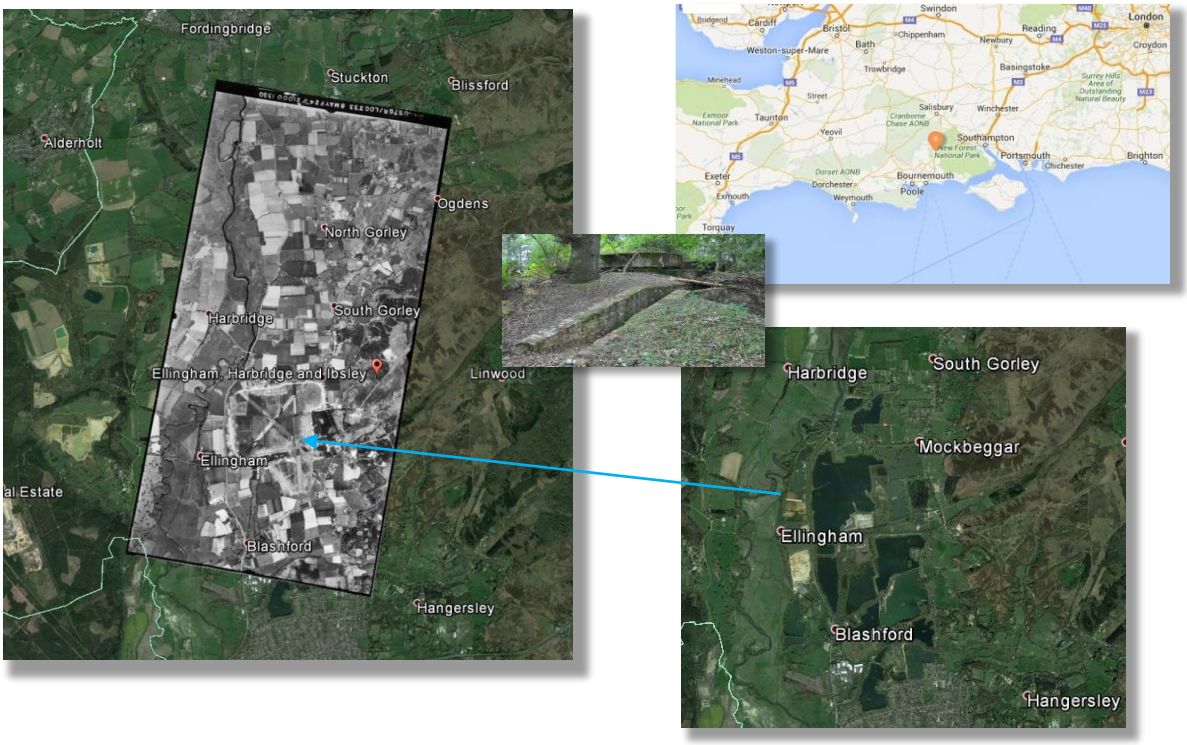
<u>Ibsley Air Base, Southhampton England</u> – April 1, 1944

Royal Air Force Station Ibsley or more simply RAF Ibsley is a former Royal Air Force station in Hampshire, England. The airfield is near the village of Ibsley, about 2 miles (3 km) north of Ringwood and about 85 miles (137 km) southwest of London. Ibsley was known as USAAF Station AAF-347 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 "IB".

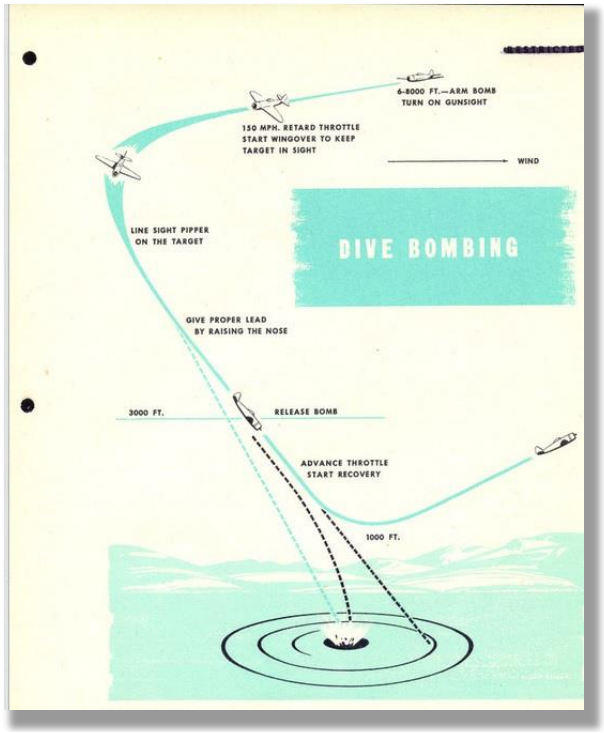
Opened incomplete in 1941 as a fighter base satellite, it was used by both the Royal Air Force and United States Army Air Forces. In the Second World War it was used primarily as a fighter airfield. After the war it was closed in 1947. It eventually had three concrete runways, 18 hardstandings plus 18 double pen dispersals and two Bellman plus 12 blister hangers.

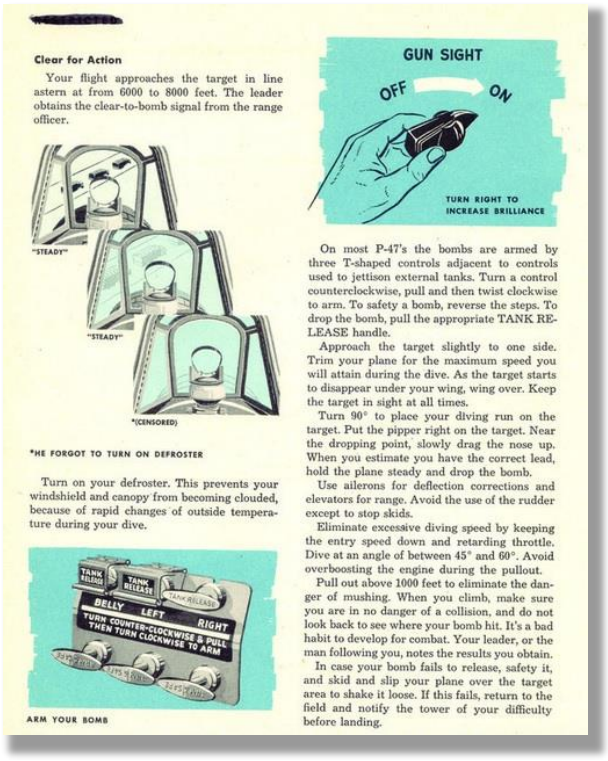
P-47's at Ibsley

Today the remains of the airfield shown below on the left in a 1944 photo overlaid on a modern day satellite image are mostly quarry lakes, with an abandoned control tower overlooking the water.



Almost immediately after their arrival, members of the 48th began a rigorous training program, flying, dive and glide bombing, night flying, low-level navigation, smoke laying, reconnaissance, and patrol convoy sorties. Having had a burning desire to be a dive bomber pilot, Lt. Harrison must have felt like he was in Disneyland. He would now put the experience he gained by buzzing his brother's farm in Ohio to good use.





Dive bombing had been experimented with on offensive operations as early as the First World War. The concept was simple – the forward movement of any bombing platform would have a pronounced effect on any bombs dropped, resulting in a forward movement of the bomb rather than a simple vertical drop. This in turn led to problems with accuracy and the requirement for specialist bombsights to try to calculate a large number of variables involved. In theory, if an aircraft were to dive vertically down on top of a target, most of these variables would be eliminated, leading to far greater accuracy. However, the control response needed to actually pull out of the dive meant that particularly heavy aircraft were not able to attempt this maneuver. Furthermore, the stresses on the aircraft on pulling out of the dive were considerable enough to require strengthening of the airframe, resulting in the need for specialized design and manufacture to guarantee a good combination of safety and accuracy. Also, as heavier aircraft with large bomb loads were not suited to this role, the accuracy which came with dive bombing also brought the penalty of a smaller bomb load – hence, dive bombing was very much a precision attack against selected targets rather than a strategic attack.