

8 MILITARY



Plate 5: Brunton Airfield

Key Historic Landscape Characteristics

- Historic landscape types: military airfield (active and disused), military site (active and disused)
- Important border zone since Roman times
- Strategic and defensive role since medieval times in border warfare between England and Scotland and in later, wider conflicts

Northumberland has a long history of facing conflict owing to its position on the border with Scotland, but also because of its accessible beaches along the east-facing coast. The county has been an important border zone since Roman times and it has played a key part in the defence of England since medieval times, a factor recognised by the inclusion of four important battlefields on the national register (Halidon Hill, Homildon Hill, Otterburn and Flodden). Northumberland has witnessed centuries of cross-border warfare which ended in the 17th century, the Civil War and the threat from Scotland in the 18th century following the 1715 Rebellion, as well as the threat from France and Germany in the 19th century and the World Wars of the 20th century. However, many of the individual structures associated with these events are too small to be recorded by HLC, for example pillboxes, batteries, and barracks, and others have taken on a new role in modern times as heritage sites for tourists, eg. forts, castles and town walls (see Ornamental types).

In the 20th century Northumberland became home to one of the Ministry of Defence's training areas, at Otterburn, where vast tracts of moorland have been used for training exercises since it opened in 1911. However, despite (or even because) of this military presence the character of the ranges remains largely as upland rough pasture and moorland, with the infrastructure of the military making only a minor impact on the character of the landscape and therefore it is not included here (see Rough Land types); the exception is Otterburn Camp itself. Similarly, Hadrian's Wall has not been recorded as a single military area, as the dominant character is usually agricultural and the remains are not extensive enough to be recorded by HLC; in addition certain forts have been recorded as heritage sites (see Ornamental types). Active military sites are limited to RAF Boulmer and the British Army

presence at Otterburn and Albemarle; the number of disused sites is greater with several airfields and two batteries near Blyth.

The military types identified by HLC are: **military airfield (active)**, **military airfield (disused)**, **military site (active)**, and **military site (disused)**. These types occupy a total area of 641ha (0.12% of the county) and comprise 20 polygons (1.17% of the total).

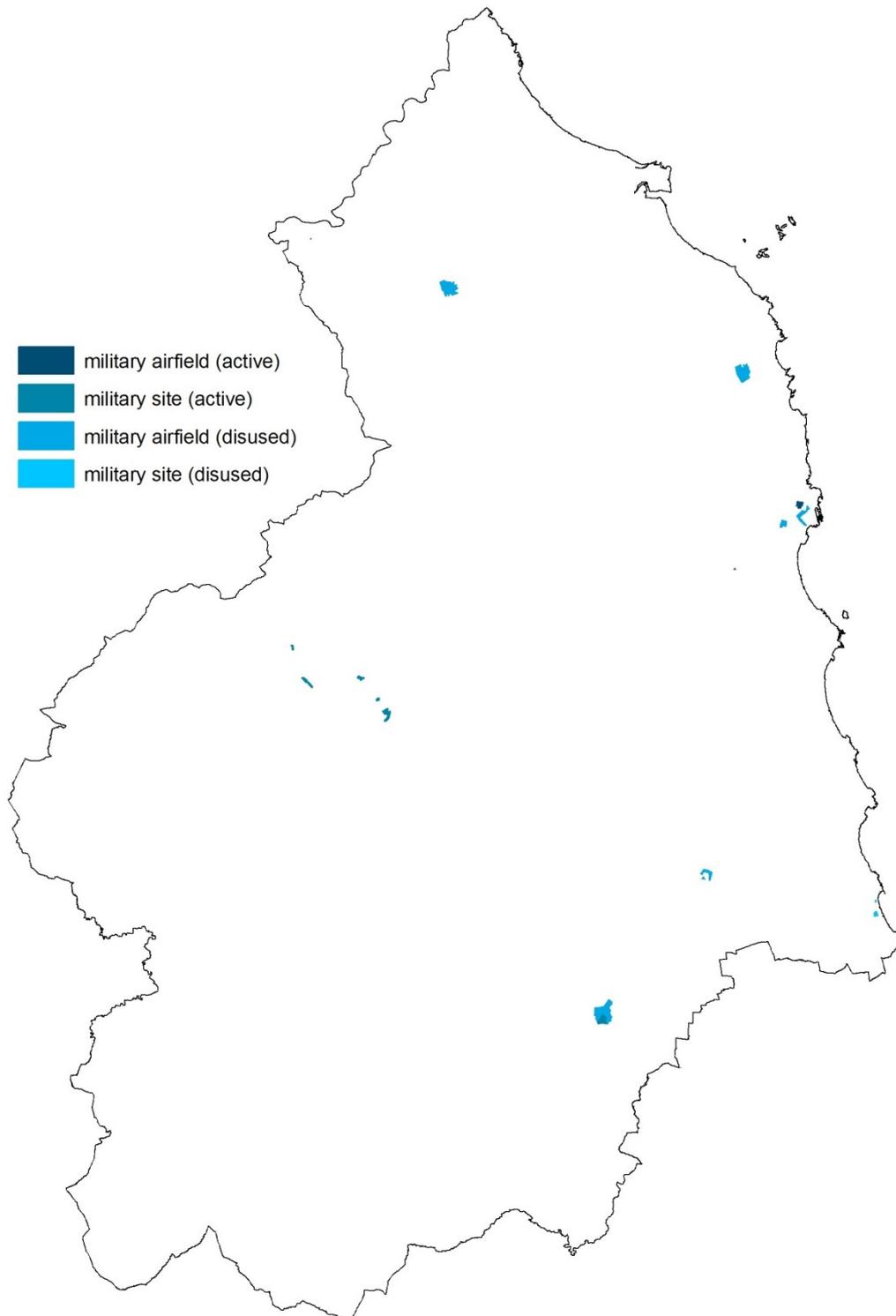


Figure 23: Military HLC types.

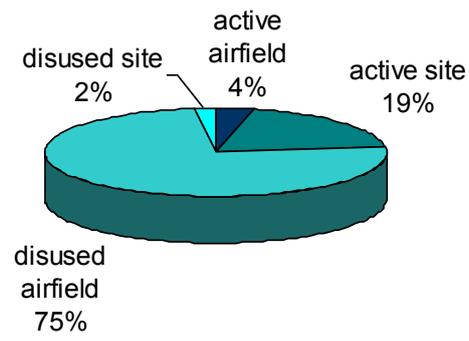


Figure 24: Proportions of Military HLC types

8.1 Military airfield (active)

Key Features:

- Only one active RAF station at Boulmer
- Total area = 23ha
- Percentage of county = 0.004%
- Number of polygons = 1



There is only one active RAF station in Northumberland, at Boulmer on the Northumberland coast. Here the operations site is home to the NATO Control and Reporting Centre and the School of Fighter Control; a domestic site nearby is home to administrative and support functions as well as Search and Rescue helicopters. Neither modern camp uses the nearby old Second World War airfield, although it was reactivated in 1953 as an Air Defence Control Centre. A new site was chosen

nearby and opened in 1954 as 500 Signals Unit. Although Boulmer's future has been in some doubt since the beginning of the 21st century, with proposals to close and relocate to RAF Scampton in Lincolnshire by 2012, its long term future is still under review and it remains an active station within Strike Command.

No archaeological sites are recorded within the small area of Boulmer RAF station.

Rarity: extremely rare
Trajectory of change: new
Susceptibility: low

8.2 Military airfield (disused)

Key Features:

- Second World War airfields
- Total area = 483ha
- Percentage of county = 0.09%
- Number of polygons = 8



The earliest airfields in Northumberland were created in the First World War for the Home Defence squadrons to defend against Zeppelin attacks, for example at Cramlington and Acklington, and Woodbridge (now Milfield) was used as a landing ground. By the end of the war there were more airfields in the North East than at any other time, but virtually every one closed when hostilities ceased in 1918. At Cramlington, the former Royal Flying Corps airfield reopened as the Newcastle Aero Club in 1925 and, although they moved to Woolsington (now in Tyne and Wear) in 1935, the airfield remained in use by enthusiasts until the beginning of the Second World War, but no trace remains today.

The airfields identified by HLC are all Second World War in date. Seven were built in Northumberland at this time (at Acklington, Boulmer, Brunton, Eshott, Milfield, Morpeth and Ouston) and between them they played an important role in the defence of Tyneside, convoy protection and fighter pilot training. Only Eshott is in regular use, but the remains of some survive remarkably intact, notably Ouston and Brunton. At Ouston, under army ownership,

a virtually complete airfield survives at Albemarle Barracks with the control tower, runways and perimeter track all intact (Chorlton 2005).

Some of the airfields had a short active life, closing immediately or soon after the war – Brunton in 1945, Milfield in 1946, Eshott and Morpeth in 1948. Acklington closed in 1972 and part of the airfield converted to a prison and the remainder was opencast mined, leaving no trace except a pillbox. A few airfields have found related uses as homes for gliding, parachute and flying clubs, and are included in Communications broad HLC type.

The number of archaeological sites in this HLC type is small and not all periods are represented. Nearly half the records are of prehistoric remains and largely due to archaeological work carried out on the former Milfield airfield site where Neolithic structures and other prehistoric features have been excavated as well as some early medieval features. The two modern records are directly associated with Milfield and Ouston airfields (a commemorative monument and pillbox).

Rarity: rare

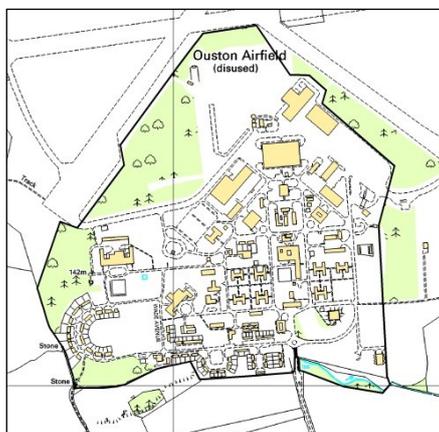
Trajectory of change: new

Susceptibility: low

8.3 Military site (active)

Key Features:

- Total area = 122ha
- Percentage of county = 0.02%
- Number of polygons = 9



The British Army has two active sites in Northumberland – Albemarle Barracks and the Otterburn Training Area (OTA). The Otterburn ranges are part of the Army Training Estate and cover more than 24,000ha, providing training on major artillery systems. As mentioned above, the training area has not been plotted as a distinct historic character type because the character of the ranges remains as upland rough pasture and moorland, with the infrastructure of the military having a minor impact on the character of the landscape. Here, only the area of Otterburn Camp has been mapped. Opened in 1940, the camp

accommodates visiting troops who may spend several weeks training at Otterburn. Albemarle Barracks is the home of 39 Regiment Royal Artillery and its role has changed considerably in recent years, from infantry training to the home of a heavy armoured regiment.

Within these small areas only a small number of archaeological sites are known. They include only medieval, post-medieval and modern remains, ranging from a possible deserted village to Redesdale army camp and the former Ouston airfield.

Rarity: very rare

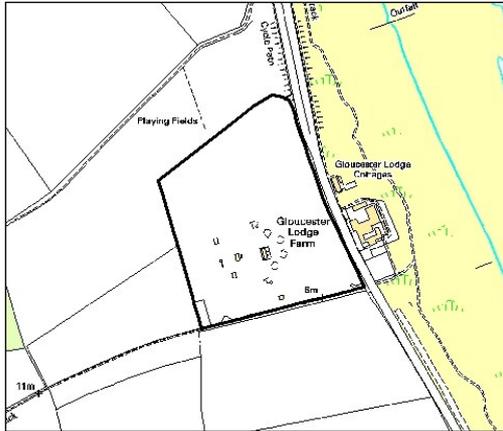
Trajectory of change: new

Susceptibility: low

8.4 Military site (disused)

Key Features:

- Total area = 11ha
- Percentage of county = 0.002%
- Number of polygons = 2



The two coastal batteries which comprise this HLC type were part of Britain's World War coastal defences. Blyth Battery was built in 1916-18, in response to the bombardment of Hartlepool further down the east coast, to prevent enemy landings and engage motor torpedoes, as well as protect the submarine base in Blyth Harbour. The battery was re-armed in 1940 at the beginning of the Second World War and a new coast battery was built a little to the

south, at Gloucester Lodge. These two batteries were charged with defending the town and harbour at Blyth from enemy ships and amphibious craft as well as from aircraft.

The archaeological sites associated with this HLC type are all components of the batteries, including search light bases, pillboxes and the batteries themselves.

Rarity: extremely rare

Trajectory of change: new

Susceptibility: low