

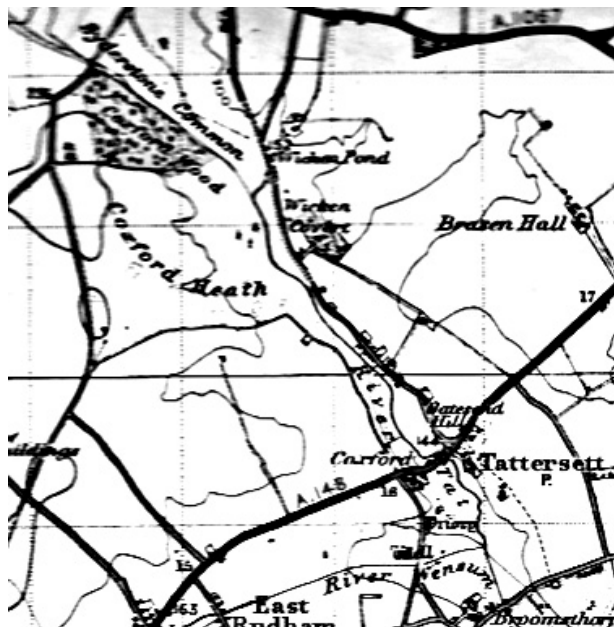
COXFORD HEATH DECOY AERODROME

JIM BALDWIN

With thanks to David Callaby

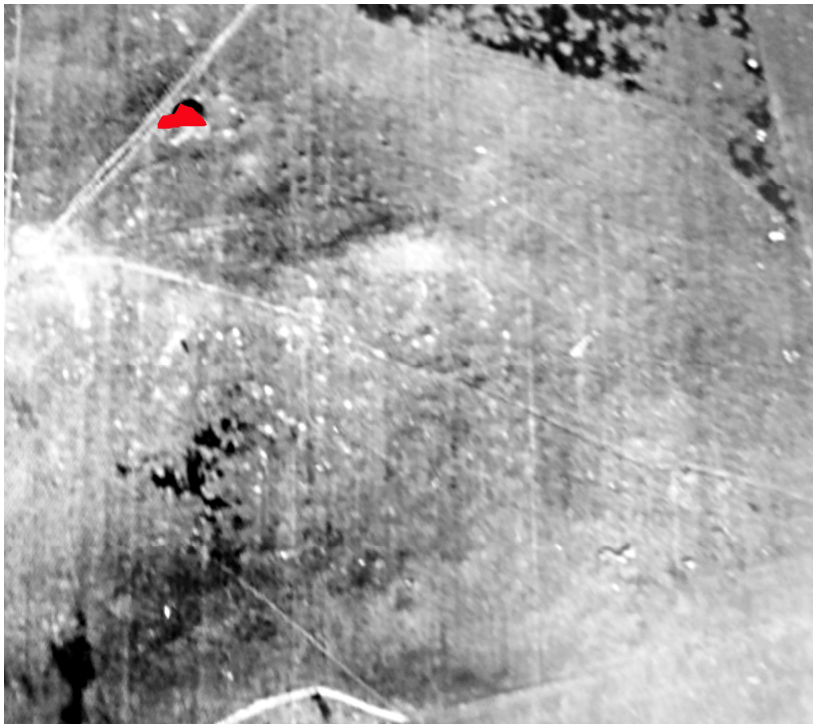
Jim Baldwin has written a number of books on the history of
his home town of Fakenham and also on
RAF Sculthorpe, 50 years of watching and waiting.

A Decoy aerodrome was built on Coxford heath near Tattersett at the beginning of WWII. One might be forgiven for assuming that it was a decoy for West Raynham just 5 miles across the fields or, in fact, Sulthorpe although the opening of Tattersett aerodrome, which eventually became Sculthorpe after objections by the GPO (Post office) was two years away. This decoy was in fact for Bircham Newton some 7 miles distance. Strange as it might seem the decoy for Bircham's satellite Docking was further away at Egmore which became North Creake aerodrome! This was a strange estimate of the German navigational skills.



Coxford Heath Decoy was built as a dual purpose decoy. It was both a 'K' site (daytime) and a 'Q' site (nighttime). Canvas was laid out to simulate a runway even though Bircham did not have one. Dummy aircraft were placed around the site. Although dummy buildings* were specified for such decoys. It is not clear if Coxford had any.

At night aeroplanes from Bircham would fly low over the decoy and then kill their lights to make out they were landing while ground lights would be moved around to simulate ground movements.



Dated 1946 this photo shows the personnel hut in the top left hand corner of the picture. The remains could still be seen in 1990 but nature has taken over now.

It is possible that the decoy also fooled the RAF as well. An unidentified Wellington bomber made a forced landing in a field close by the decoy. A hole was made in the hedge and the aircraft was moved to a situation from where it could resume its journey.



A hole large enough for a Wellington bomber could still be seen in 1990! The decoy was the other side of the road seen in this photograph.

* painted canvas was laid down to give the impression of hangers when viewed from the air.

Sculthorpe was opened in 1943 and it seems that it was considered unwise to have a decoy only a matter of yards from the end of the main runway. The Coxford site was then used by the Mosquito squadrons from Sculthorpe for bombing practice which would fit them up for the pin-point raids they were destined for on the continent. A guide post was erected on a mound on the east of the site to facilitate this. By the end of 1944 the Mosquitos had left and Sculthorpe had no use for the site any longer. By 1946 only the control bunker remained and the rest reverted to heathland and agriculture.



