



# Weston Airfield

Weston airfield was created in 1936. Paid for by the Council, at a cost of £56,000, it was an ambitious gamble to put Weston on the aviation map.

Operated by Railway Air Services, flying DH 84 Dragon biplanes, it was soon handling up to 20,000 passengers a year to destinations such as Cardiff, Birmingham, Croydon, London and even France.

Built on Hutton Moor, the airfield buildings, which were completed in 1938, consisted of a large hangar, passenger lounge and a restaurant.

They were mainly new constructions, but also included salvaged architectural parts from Nithsdale Road School. The old beach taxi office became the control tower.

In 1938, the airfield was purchased by the Straight Corporation, who also operated Exeter and other regional airports under the name of Western Airways Ltd.

The airfield continued to offer flying training and civilian flights from the grass runways. They were now operating with De Havilland Dragon Rapides and a DH Dragonfly.



*De Havilland Dragon Rapides at Weston Airfield © Weston-super-Mare Library*

On the 2 January 1939, the nearby Royal Air Force Technical Training School at Locking was opened.

In 1939, the airfield became No. 39 Elementary and Reserve Flying Training School, flying Miles Magisters, Hawker Hinds and Audax aircraft. This and other pilot and navigator training facilities continued to be operated by the Straight Corporation.

**In 1940, the airfield was requisitioned by the Royal Air Force, becoming RAF Weston-super-Mare. It soon came under the control of RAF Locking. The Royal Air Force constructed a concrete main runway 1,279 metres long. Two shorter grass runways were also used. At this time, the aircraft factories at Oldmixon and Elborough, on the airfield's perimeter were built.**

Building Bristol Beaufighters, the factories used the airfield to despatch the completed aircraft to Allied squadrons or to other sites for modification. More than 3,300 of these aircraft were built here during the Second World War.

During the War, the RAF based No. 286 Squadron at Weston. Flying various types, including Boulton Paul Defiants, Airspeed Oxfords and Hawker Hurricanes, the squadron provided gunnery practise for anti-aircraft radar detachments. Other squadrons came and went. From April 1944, for two years, it became the Polish Officers Staff College.

**In November 1946, a Boston aircraft, on approach, hit the top of a bus taking airmen from RAF Locking, killing seven.**

After the War, Western Airways and Cambrian Airways continued to operate the airfield handling around 1000 passengers a month in 1947.



*A Bristol Beaufighter in flight*

Gradually the passenger numbers declined, until, in 1954, it was sold for £54,000.

However, a maintenance contract for the Royal Canadian Air Force provided a small amount of income.

From 1955, the airfield was used by Bristol Aircraft to develop and trial the new twin rotor Belvedere and also the Sycamore helicopters being built at the Winterstoke site.



*Inside a hangar at Weston Airfield © Weston-super-Mare Library*

The RAF continued to use the airfield for occasional Air Experience Flights using Vickers Varsity aircraft and ATC Gliding operations as well.

In 1999, the main runway was declared unfit for flying, and operations were closed, with only the Helicopter Museum maintaining its tradition as a flying station.

The line of the main runway has been used to construct an access road leading to a major new housing development.



Weston-super-Mare  
Town Council