

## Croft Air Station Yorkshire, England 1941 - 1945



Croft airfield is located six miles south of the city of Darlington, Yorkshire, Eng.

An area of meadowland was appropriated in late 1940, and construction of the airfield was completed in October, 1941. Croft was originally intended as a satellite airfield for No.4 Group aircraft based at Middleton-St.George.

The main runway 09-27 was 6,000 feet long, and runways 03-21 and 15-33 were both 4,200 feet long. A perimeter track provided for 36 'hard stand' aircraft dispersal pans.

In October 1941, No. 78 Squadron RAF – with Armstrong-Whitworth 'Whitley' aircraft, was based at Croft. That Squadron moved to Middleton St. George in June, 1942 with Handley-Page 'Halifax' Mk.II aircraft. During the summer of 1942 some improvement work was carried out on the air field, and on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1942, No. 419 Squadron RCAF, with 'Wellington' Mk.III aircraft, was moved to Croft, at that time an Operational Station of No.4 Group RAF Bomber Command

On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1942 - No. 419 Squadron was moved to Middleton St. George. Some of the No. 419 Squadron personnel remained at Croft as the nucleus of the new No. 427 Squadron RCAF that was formed at Croft on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1942. No. 427 Squadron then moved to Leeming in May 1943, as part of No. 6 (RCAF) Group – Bomber Command.

*Croft Air Station* was designated as a 'sub-station' of No. 6 (RCAF) Group - Base No.64 with Headquarters at Middleton St. George. Croft Station was commanded by an RCAF Group Captain.

From May 1943 to December 1943 Croft was home to No. 1664 RCAF Heavy Conversion Unit, flying Halifax Mk.II aircraft. In December 1943, Croft again became an Operational Station, with the posting to the airfield of No.431 and No. 434 Squadrons RCAF. Both Squadrons flew Halifax Mk.III aircraft, until converting to Lancaster B.Mk.X aircraft in October 1944. After VE-Day the two RCAF Squadrons participated in Operation 'Exodus', the repatriation of Prisoners of War from camps in Germany and Poland.

### **RCAF Squadrons/Units based at Croft Air Station – 1942 to 1945**

No. 419 'Moose' - No. 4 Group - October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1942 to November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1942

No. 427 'Lion' - No. 4 Group - November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1942 to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1942

No. 427 'Lion' - No. 6 Group - January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1943 to May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1943

No. 431 'Iroquois' – No. 6 Group - December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1943 to June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1945

No. 434 'Bluenose' – No. 6 Group – December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1943 to June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1945

In June of 1944 No. 431 and 434 Squadrons flew their Avro Lancaster Mk.X (Canadian built) aircraft back to Canada.

For a period immediately after the Second World War, Croft airfield was used as a satellite field for an RAF Operational Training Unit, but was finally abandoned in the late 1970's.

The airfield was used for about 20 years for various motor sports events, and in the mid-1990's an International class, auto racing track was constructed at Croft airfield,



**RCAF Memorial – Croft. 1987**



**Air view of Croft Airfield – ca. 2009 -**

**Google Earth**

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***“In Memory of and to Honour those who served at Croft during World War II. Dedicated by the members of 431 ‘Iroquois’ And 434 ‘Bluenose’ RCAF Squadrons, 6 Group, Bomber Command”.***



*Above 431 and 434 Sqns line up awaiting take-off for D-Day raid, 6 Jun 1944*

*Below 431 and 434 Sqns groundcrew gather to watch their aircraft take-off from Croft (DND photos)*



***No. 431 and No. 434 Squadron Operations – Croft. (DND photos)***