

# **BASE AIR DEPOT NO. 1**

## **MISSION**

Base Air Depot No. 1 mission was the assembly and preparation of shipped aircraft; stores distribution; service modifications; engine overhaul and B-17, P-38 and P-47 modification and overhaul. Base Air Depot No. 1 was the name given to the entire complex at Burtonwood.

## **LINEAGE**

Base Air Depot No. 1

## **STATIONS**

Burtonwood, Cheshire, England

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

### **COMMANDERS**

Col John A. Laird, Jr.

Col Tom W. Scott

Brig Gen I. W. Ott

### **HONORS**

**Service Streamers**

**Campaign Streamers**

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

**Decorations**

**EMBLEM**

**MOTTO**

### **OPERATIONS**

At the close of 1943 there were nine sites on the station. The squadrons and sections of Military Administration Section were quartered at the sites which were as near as possible to

the place of work assigned to the men. On instructions from the Eighth Air Force Base Air Depot, Colonel John A. Laird, Jr. was appointed Commanding Officer of Base Air Depot No. 1. Colonel Laird then appointed Colonel Coates as Station Commander of AAF 590 Burtonwood on 23 Dec 1943, the effect of this change was to relieve the Depot Commander of the detail work concerned with the administration of the station and the "housekeeping" problems. This set up made it possible for the Depot Commander to give his full time to meeting the demands of production and supply.

The major tasks were the completion of assembled aircraft received from Speke where the majority of the fighters were taken from Liverpool and Birkenhead docks after crossing the Atlantic as deck cargo. At Base Air Depot No. 1 they were prepared for delivery to squadrons and once ready picketed out on the airfield awaiting delivery. The operational requirement was so heavy that most aircraft were flown out as soon as they were ready. The numbers continued to grow with new records being broken almost on a daily basis once the giant machine started to roll.

Other projects included the preparation of B-17, P-47 and B-24 although later Base Air Depot No. 2 at Warton took over the majority share of B-24 work.

During late November a request was made whether the unit had manufacturing facilities for modifications on UC-78s as neither Base Air Depot Nos 2 or 3 had facilities available. In fact it took considerably longer to get the other two Base Air Depot s into operation than was envisaged and the workload imposed on Burtonwood was all that greater. Base Air Depot No. 1 stated that whilst having qualified staff available there was no hangar space available, especially as Hangar 32 was still being used as a living site and was not handed back to Maintenance Division until February 1944. It was eventually agreed that the wings of the UC-78s would be removed at their own bases and sent in for mods and return.

When Colonel Philip D Coates took command of station activities on 23 Dec 1943, he and his staff were faced with the tremendous task of coordinating administration, messing and billeting for men in ten widely separated living sites, a large number of mess halls and overcrowded billeting facilities. Men were living in poorly heated hangars others were living in partly completed Nissen huts in which lighting had not yet been fitted. The Bradley Plan set up a framework for station administration and organization and the unit took on a more organized appearance. Hangar 32 was handed back to Maintenance Division on the acquisition of Marbury Hall and the first group of 302 civil technicians left to return to the States on New Year's Day with the remaining 197 departing on 14 Jan.

The New Year of 1944 dawned with optimistic light, production was coming up, personnel troubles were being corrected and tremendous changes caused by the Bradley Plant began to rise. One of the most important changes affecting Base Air Depot No. 1 was the assignment of the supply depot at RAF Poynton to the control of Base Air Depot No. 1 effective from 3 Jan. This greatly increased the availability of supplies under direct control of the Depot and made it possible to procure much needed supplies direct.

January 1944 set a short lived record for Aircraft production with a total output of 379 aircraft and February topped this with a total of 465 aircraft, an increase of 86. In the same period 426 aircraft were made ready for delivery and 404 actually delivered. A total of 12,277 modification kits were fabricated and delivered to the Supply Section for disposition, the general groups of these kits were as follows:— B-17, 2602; B-24, 880; B-26, 100; P-47, 2978; miscellaneous 5717.

March saw continuing growth illustrated in the movements on 1 Mar totaling 129 made up of 25 arrivals in transit; 22 for modification; 25 departures in transit and 26 deliveries from the Base together with 31 test flights. March came in like the proverbial "roaring lion" as plans became known of a departmental consolidation of Base Air Depot No. 1 and the Base Air Depot Area Headquarters of the Air Services Command United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe. The Base Air Depot No. 1 was designated as Control Depot for the entire Base Air Depot Area on the same pattern as Control Depots within the US. All other Air Depots in the same Base Air Depot Area were to function as satellites, therefore Burtonwood assumed total control of all supply, maintenance and modification for the USAAF in Europe.

With effect from 1 Mar 1944 the Headquarters of Base Air Depot Area was ordered to move from AAF Station 524 at the Sunnyside Hotel, South-port, Lancashire, to AAF 590 at Burtonwood. Colonel I. W. Ott Commanding Officer of Base Air Depot Area was designated Commanding Officer of Base Air Depot No. 1 in addition to his other duties relieving Colonel Tom W Scott. Colonel Scott was designated Commanding Officer of AAF 590, with Colonel Philip D Coates as vice. On 6 Mar Colonel Ott arrived from Southport with members of his staff and assumed command of Base Air Depot No. 1 receiving word of his promotion to Brigadier General shortly after his arrival.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES

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#### Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.

Aldon P. Ferguson. *Eighth Air Force Base Air Depot Burtonwood*. Airfield Publications. Wargrave, England. 1986.