

Nissen Huts where air force personnel lived.



Castle Archdale Country Park is owned and managed by Northern Ireland Environment Agency, an agency within the Department of the Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whose aim is to protect and conserve the natural and built environment and to promote its appreciation for the benefit of present and future generations.

Further Reading: Castle Archdale and Fermanagh in World War II, Breege McCusker, Necarne Press 2000.
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Fermanagh Flying Boat Association 2014.

RAF Castle Archdale

This heritage trail was devised by Fermanagh Flying Boat Association to give a brief idea of the extent of the park during the second world war (1939-1945).

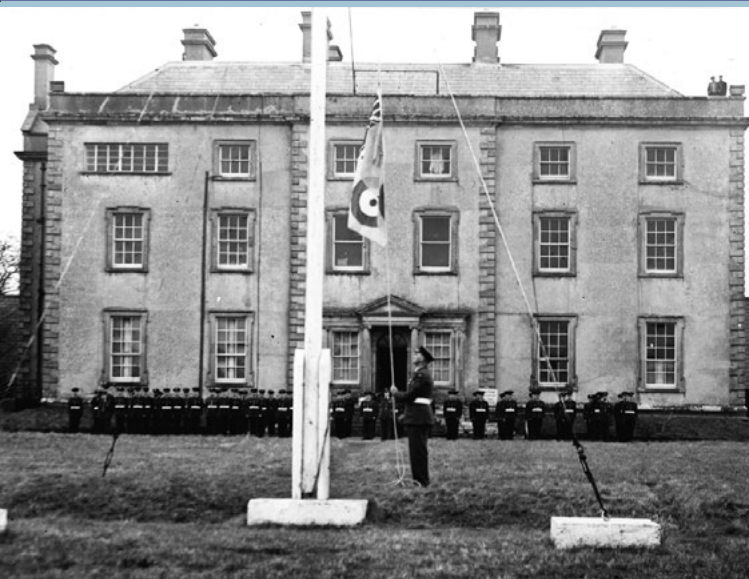
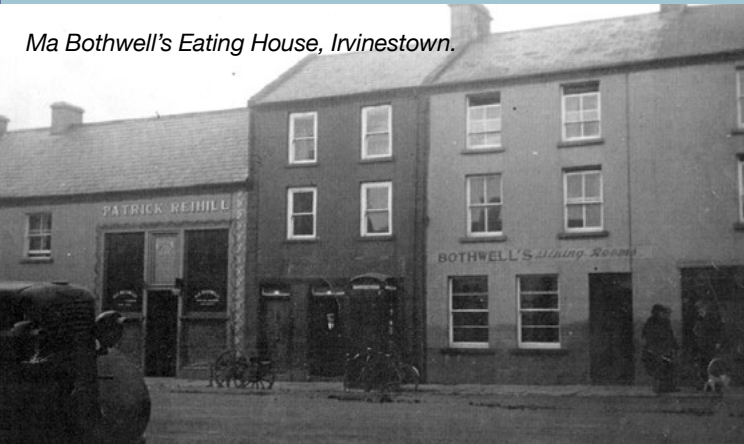


First solo take-off by Larry Giles Royal Canadian Air Force 422 Squadron, February 1944.

As we walk around the peaceful Castle Archdale Country Park today it is hard to imagine that it once was in the front line of the Battle of the Atlantic in the second world war. RAF Castle Archdale was vital in the fight against Nazi Germany and the men and women stationed here played their parts in keeping the Atlantic free of U-boats.

The Nissen huts have long since gone and few artefacts from this era have survived in the park. Memories of Catalinas and Sunderlands recede with advancing years but squadron notes and photographs record an era which is treasured by all who were proud to serve at RAF Castle Archdale.

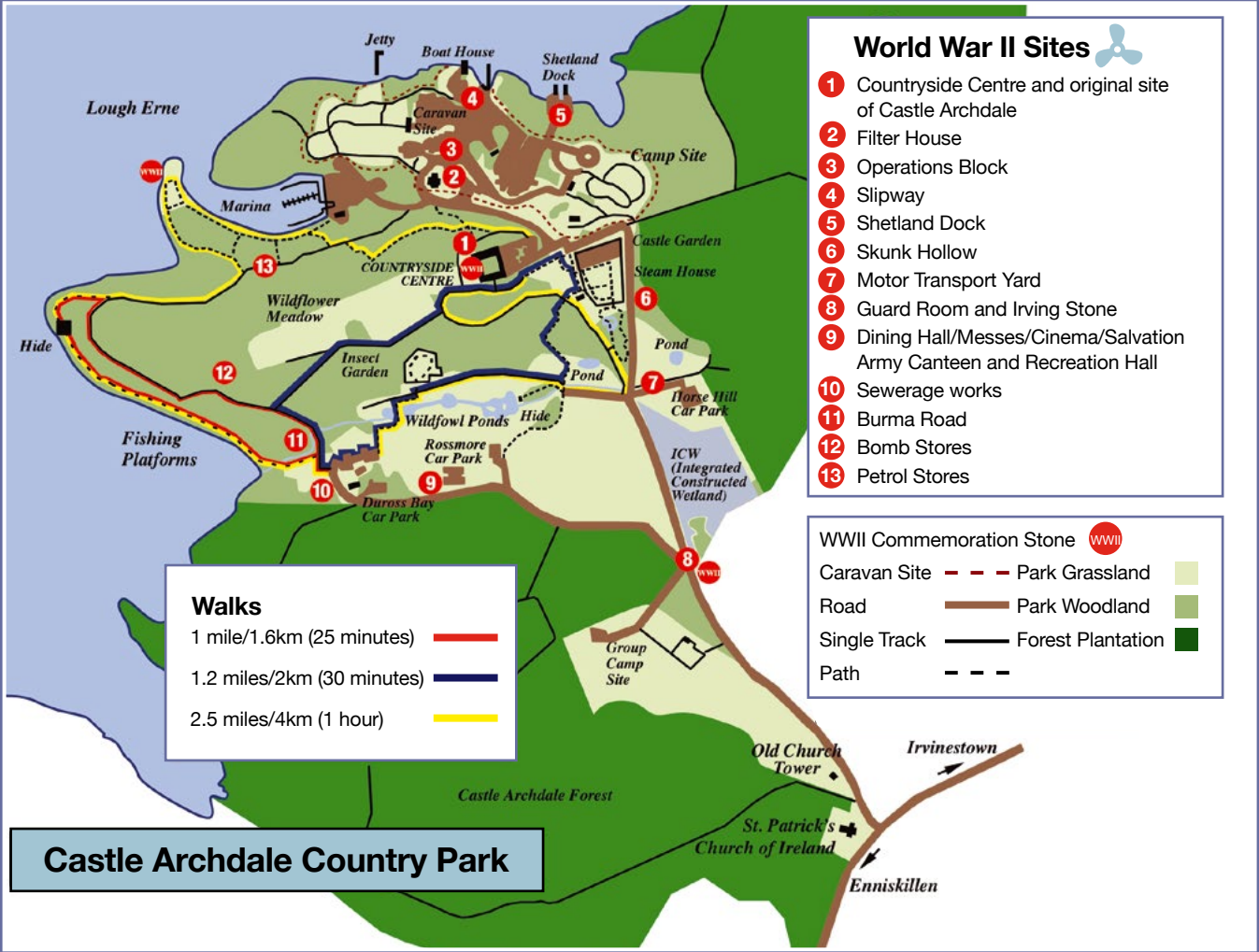
Ma Bothwell's Eating House, Irvinestown.



Welcome to 
RAF Castle Archdale

World War II Flying Boat Base

Heritage Trail



1 Site of Castle Archdale

Castle Archdale, now no more, was the family home for the Archdale family who came from England in 1614 and were granted the lands around Castle Archdale during the Plantation of Ulster. During the second world war (1939 -1945) it was a hive of industry with eight squadrons 240, 209, 119, 201, 228, 202, 422 and 423 based here at various times. The actual castle housed the communication centre, flying control, meteorological office, and administrative centre for RAF Castle Archdale.

The Exhibition Centre is situated in the old stable block, and its upper floor illustrates the estate's history and includes farming displays, documented development of the coastal command station, artefacts reflecting squadron movements and daily life in the camp. The lower floor is devoted to a natural history exhibition.

2. Filter House

One of the few surviving war-time structures in the park and initially used in the provision of drinking water. Water was pumped here from Lough Erne and allowed to settle in the tank beside the building. It was then brought to high level storage tanks in the courtyard and piped throughout the camp.

3. Operations Block

Now the shop and restaurant, this was once the nerve centre of RAF Castle Archdale. Operational briefings took place here before aircrew went out on patrol over the Atlantic to search for U-boats or give protection to convoys. All operational flying was co-ordinated from this building and next door, now the playground, stood a cottage where flying rations were issued for the duration of the flight.

4. Slipway

A timeless and unchanged view from which aircraft emerged for servicing. This expansive cement area, now home to the Caravan Park, once bustled to the sound of Catalinas and Sunderlands being hauled in from the water for urgent maintenance work.

5. Shetland Dock

Originally intended for the servicing of Shetland Flying Boats, this dock built in 1945 is believed to be the only one of its type surviving in the world.

6. Skunk Hollow

This was the sleeping quarters for the Canadian aircrew and named after the cartoon character L'il Abner in the comic strip. A prominent sign stated "No women, no swearing, no spitting, no nothing. Drive like hell!"

7. Motor Transport Yard

Repair yard for all transport including lorries, jeeps, trucks and fuel tankers.

8. Guard Room and Irving Stone

A security checkpoint stood at the entrance to the park which all service people and civilians had to pass through and show identity cards before proceeding. In recent years a lime arch which was woven into shape by young airmen on guard duty in the 1940s has been identified by Syd Irving (422 RCAF). It still thrives today.

9. Dining Hall/Messes/Cinema/Salvation Army Canteen and Recreation Hall

This area now the car park and beyond was the social centre for the camp.

10. Sewerage Works

The sewerage works catered for as many as 2,500 people within the camp.

11. Burma Road

This roadway affectionately named the "Burma Road" was cut through dense forest and gave access to isolated ammunition and pyro stores.

12. Bomb Stores

These surviving stores comprised concrete bases surrounded by blast walls and were built to accommodate depth charges which were loaded onto the flying boats for their patrols in the mid-Atlantic.

13. Petrol Store

This had the capacity to hold 24,000 gallons of aviation fuel.