

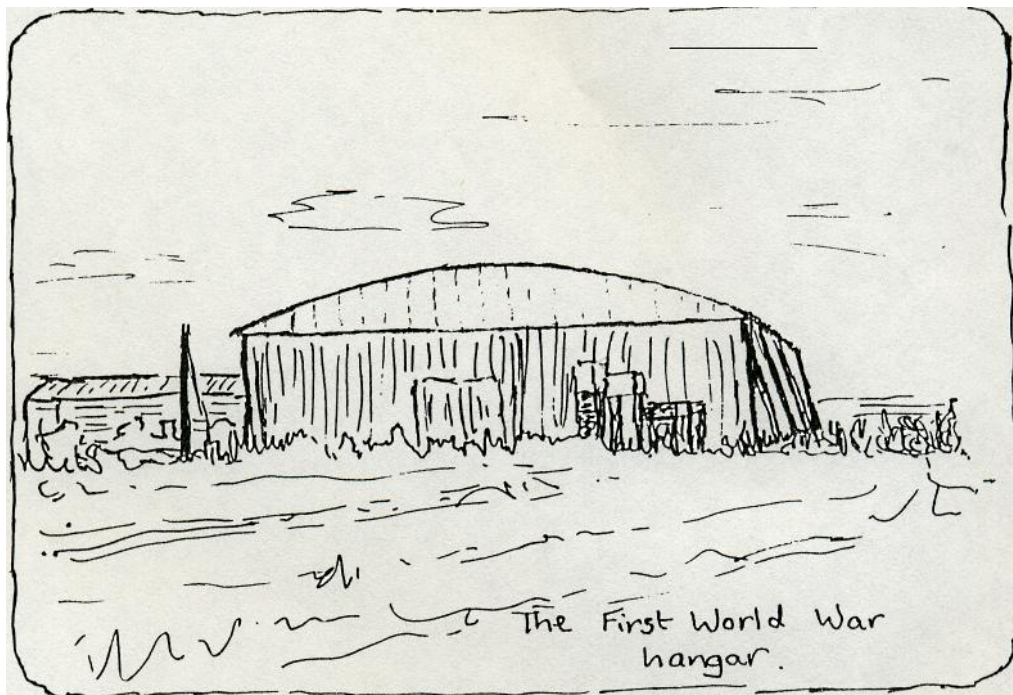
The Headley Bar Aerodrome,

First opened in April 1916, the airfield was situated between the York/Leeds road and the Hall. Some hedges were removed so that it was able to cover an area of 200 acres. At this time it was known as Branham Moor, and 'B' flight of 33 squadron were stationed there. Their main task was to protect Leeds from aerial attack by Zeppelins. Later the 'drome expanded and was called Tadcaster No. 38 Training Depot Station, equipped with thirty six SE5A and Avro 504 aircraft. These were used for the initial training of the fighter pilots who formed the 38th Training Defence Squadron. In 1918, 94 Squadron arrived from France but they were disbanded on 30th June 1919. The Ripon Home Defence Squadron had arrived to fly Bristol fighters in March but they too were disbanded in June.

Today, only one of the three hangars remains, together with a few out-buildings and the specially-constructed road from the A64, appropriately known to all as 'The Hangar Road.' There were no concrete runways: the planes simply used a field which was recalled as being ...rather bumpy, as no attempt had been made to level it." Indeed, learning to avoid such natural hazards was essential. There were a lot of telegraph wires at the end of the runway area, and many pilots caught these on take-off or landing. It was only after several serious accidents had occurred that the wires were finally put underground.

The late Charles Newham was posted to the station on July 4th 1918, and he related several incidents which took place then. There was an old

Maurice Farnham and some DH6 aircraft, as well as a few Sopwith Pups and Camels for advanced training. He found that the six or so flying-instructors had been sent away to learn about a new aircraft. During this time, flying practise almost stopped and all the pupils could do was to attend a dull lecture or two! However, they did fire off thousands of rounds at the gunnery range at the east end of the airfield. The number of rounds was governed only by the number of magazines a man had the energy to load. At this time, every tenth round had to be incendiary or tracer, which often went high above the ten-foot earth bank but no-one worried about damage to life or property.



By the end of July, the men's training had really begun. The new-type Avro was used initially but more advanced work was done on the SE5A, the standard single-seat fighter on the Western Front. Flying

accidents occurred daily, some of them fatal. But with the Officers' Mess being staffed by young ladies, there were other types of accident, Charles Newham recalled:

"I remember one occasion, whilst at the Mess. There was a loud scream from the kitchen quarters, followed by a resounding crash of pottery. It was later learned that a young lady had entered a bathroom which adjoined the kitchen for a jug of water WHILST ONE OF THE OFFICERS WAS HAVING A BATH! She then turned and fled, dropping the jug. It was some time before she dared enter the Mess at the same time as the officer."

Flying between the twin chimneys then at John Smith's Brewery was also a popular venture, and Mr Newham had done this several times himself.

About July 1918 a group of American pilots and ground staff arrived. When America had first entered the war in 1917, pilots had gone straight to France where their lack of training (and superior German planes) had caused heavy losses. It had then been decided that all American pilots should pass through a British aerial training school, hence the arrivals at Headley. At about the same time a 'flu epidemic hit the squadron and almost a third of the men were confined to bed. The others were turned into temporary doctors to help the sick. However, by the end of September several men had qualified, so they were given their wings and posted overseas as fighter pilots.

The disbandments of 1919 seem to have signalled the closure of the airfield, and Headley reverted to a more rural life-style.

During the Second World War dozens of old vehicles, including some traction engines, were bought up by the government and spread out across the fields to prevent any enemy landings.