

Airbase Karup

by Arne Mosgaard. To www.airmen.dk from Arne Mosgaard 2012.

Fliegerhorst Grove – Einsatshafen Grove – Airbase Grove.

In our part of the country we only had one real big German military installation. It was the airbase at Grove. At first, in spring of 1940, the Germans started the construction of an airfield 30 km south of Herning. All of a sudden the work was stopped, and the efforts started out at Grove, where many poor heath-farmers on the moors of Jutland were forced to leave their homes.



Ceremony with an inaugurating parade 1941. The first workshops, facilities and hangars at the new airbase, Fliegerhorst Grove, have been finished. Runways and a lot of buildings were always under construction from now on.



The enormous Fighter Control Centre at Grove shortly after liberation. The outside shell has 3 m thick walls and roof. After the liberation RAF carried out a big exercise testing the German control and radar warning systems in the bunker. When a new Danish Air Force was built up, the bunker became useful as Air Tactical Command Centre. First there was a period with Spitfire and other old warplanes. In the following years there always was a team of eRAF officers, Group Captain, Wing Commanders and some Squadron Leaders, assisting the new Air Force, now as an allied NATO partner under constant developing into the jet age.



Einsatzhafen Grove, November 1943.

Finally the plane arrived. Everybody at the base had been waiting for some time. A smiling field marshal with the marshal cane in his hand stepped out. It probably was the finest visit ever at Karup during the war. While General Rommel's was at the base there was taken good care of everything for him. Even foxhunting west of the base took place. There exist some press photos from those days.

Rommel's main task was to inspect the fortifications on west coast of Jutland. Building and construction of the Atlantic Wall with enormous guns was done to prevent allied invasion. Herr Rommel was not satisfied at all with what he saw. Therefore new efforts were taken to strengthen the fortification – as an ex.: The Hanstholm Fortification was equipped with the enormous 38 cm guns that were able to send an 800 kg heavy grenade half the way up to Norway. At the same time many heavy callipered anti airguns were mounted. It became a bad solution for the RAF. The results can be seen looking at the many RAF planes downed on the Jutland west coast.



This is how they looked like the awe-inspiring leading officers at the German airbase Fliegerhorst Grove – the nest of the hawks. This photo is from 1943, (German press). From left: Lieutenant with adjutant-string, Oberst Böhmer and Oberstleutnant Brogar. At right a young Luftwaffe Oberleutnant.



It happened to be the young second in command, Lieutenant Robert Dalbøl, Herning Resistance District, that was here for the second time. On May 5th he received the German surrender on behalf of the Allied at Air Base Grove. Here Dalbøl no. 2 from left visits the air base, now under British command by RAF Squadron Leader R. A. Robinson. It was on June 24th 1945, the first time the press was allowed to come along and take a look at this famous place. On the very same day two German Arado jet planes were flown away by Squadronleader Eric Brown and another RAF pilot.

Grove Airfield – June 1945.

By Captain Eric Brown, CBE, DSC, AFC, RN. (From English magazine. Name, year ?).

Whatever the advances and innovations introduced by the German turbojet-powered warplanes contemporary with the Arado and however sound may have been their aerodynamic design. Few would have claimed them to be aesthetic standard setters.

The Ar 234B Blitz, on the other hand, was advanced, innovatory and shapely, and when I saw my first Arado at the Danish airfield of Grove, between Herning and Viborg, in Jutland, I was immediately impressed by its aesthetically attractive contours, which were eloquent of aerodynamic efficiency. This aeroplane looked right and in my experience this was always a good omen with regard to flying qualities. With its slender shoulder-mounted wing, slim under slung engine nacelles and smooth fuselage profile, it exemplified careful aerodynamic design.

I arrived at Grove airfield early in May of 1945 with the specific purpose of discovering what sort of prizes had fallen into our hands when Germany had surrendered, and a rich haul of the most modern German aircraft indeed littered this former Luftwaffe base. The Germans had developed Grove - later to be known as Karup Airbase and to become an important NATO base – into a very large complex, and some of the Luftwaffe aircraft that we found there had arrived during the very last days of hostilities in Europe as their pilots fled the crumbling Fatherland.

There was little opportunity to examine the Ar 234B closely on that occasion as what time I had available at Grove was occupied in drawing up an inventory of what was there – and an appetising list it made.

Our first Ar 234B arrived at Farnborough on 6 June 1945, and as Sqdn Ldr Tony Martindale and I had been assigned the task of ferrying two such aircraft back from Germany as soon as possible. I went over that particular Blitz with a fine-toothed comb. My first impressions were decidedly favorable, although I admit that the pilot, seated way out in front in that extensively glazed nose was going to be very close to any accident. The narrow-track undercarriage and

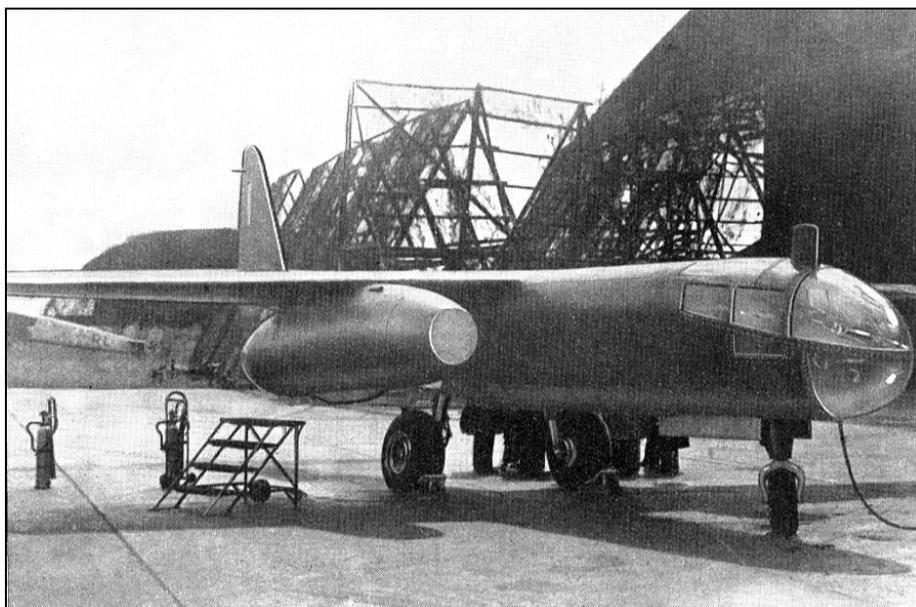
rather high tail did not strike me as a particular auspicious marriage for crosswind operations. With these mental notes, I boarded a Wellington on 23 June to fly to Copenhagen, and the next day reached Grove.

Our two Arados were being prepared for flight by a team of Luftwaffe ground crew, and it was manifestly obvious that some of these POWs did not relish their task. On the afternoon of 24 June I spent an hour sitting in the cockpit of a third Blitz that it was intended that I should later return to pick up. I also chatted with some of the ground crew working on the Arados, but somewhat depressed, they were not very communicative, and as their POW status was still rather fresh to them I suppose that this was understandable enough.

The evening was so fine that Tony Martindale and I decided that we could perform quick handling flights around the airfield area and still leave ourselves with enough fuel for the short stage to Schleswig where the RAE had tees tap its collection center for captured aircraft. My Blitz was first ready so I taxied out to the end of the runway and ran up the engines to full power. All seemed well and I was just about to release the brakes for take-off when the starboard engine almost blew itself out of the airframe, spewing compressor blades out of the back end on to the runway. I shut down the port engine and vacated the cockpit take a scolded cat!

Failure or sabotage? That was the question. Suffice to say that what could have been a lengthy and inconclusive technical investigation was resolved peremptorily by the unorthodox but effective psychology employed by an officer of the RAF Regiment who interrogated the ground crew) that had serviced my aircraft. In no time he had winkled out the saboteur who was promptly removed to the POW cage the others resuming work on the two remaining aircrafts under close supervision.

The next morning I clambered into Ar 234B Werk nr.140 008 which had a history of being flown operationally over the Ardennes, and took-off on an uneventful flight to Schleswig during which I found the Blitz a delightful aeroplane to fly. The ferry flight from Schleswig to Farnborough was made on the afternoon of the same day at an attitude of 25,000 ft (7620 m). This took 1 hr 55 min on a dogleg course south to Gilze-Rijen in Holland and then direct to Farnborough. I flew in company with Tony Martindale whose oxygen failed over the North Sea, forcing us to drop down to 10,000 ft (3,050 m) for the last 100 *or so* miles of trip. I was astonished at the ample fuel reserve that we still had on landing at our destination.



German Arado jet. Airbase Grove, June 24th 1945.

Photo taken by press from Herning. Years later it was discovered, what really was going on: An Ar 234 Blitz being refuelled by Luftwaffe POW's at the Danish airfield of Grove, Jutland, prepared to being ferried to Schleswig en route to the RAF at Farnborough. A number of nine Ar 234Bs were flown to UK for evaluation. It was also very interesting to see and hear Captain Brown on TV, when he in 1998 told about flying the Arado from Grove to England in 1945. It is not very often a story can be covered and verified so well.