



THE LITTLE KNOWN AIRFIELD AT VASSINCOURT, FRANCE  
FUTURE HOME OF COMPANY A (LATER D), 97<sup>TH</sup> ENGINEER BATTALION (CONST)



organized by Donald M. Ricks, Webmaster, 97<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion,  
with supportive material assistance from Daniel N. Klinck

EVIDENCE OF AN EARLY COMBAT AVIATION FORCE STATIONED AT  
VASSINCOURT, FRANCE, CIRCA 1939

UNITS THAT SERVED:

## 67 (FIGHTER) WING

Wing Commander C. Walter  
HQ: Bussy-la-Côte,  
**1 SQUADRON Hurricanes (JX)**  
Base: Vassincourt to Berry-au-Bac

Source: [BRITISH AIR FORCES IN FRANCE \(BAAF\) May 10 - June 19, 1940](http://seowhq.net/seowforum/viewtopic.php?t=514&start=15)  
<http://seowhq.net/seowforum/viewtopic.php?t=514&start=15>

## *Battle of France 75 – Pt.8 – No. 1 Squadron Hurricane exploits in France*

**Source: [Battle of France](http://www.globalaviationresource.com/v2/2015/06/09/battle-of-france-75-pt-8-no-1-squadron-hurricane-exploits-in-france/) :**

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### **No. 1 Squadron, RAF**

Leading the squadron at this time was a relative newcomer, Squadron Leader J.H Halahan, an Irishman by the nickname “The Bull”, having taken over in April 1939. Despite this he was well-respected by his pilots for both his flying and leading abilities, and had served in Palestine and Iraq prior to taking over. He shaped the men for combat – reading every situation and knowing when and how to attack, but also when to back out of a fight – helping them to hone their skills. This couldn’t have been more in contrast to No. 1 Sqn’s sister in 67 Wing, No. 73 Sqn, led by ‘Cobber’ Kain, who the No. 1 Sqn boys thought of as a “split-arse pilot”. He would often lead his men 40 miles inside German lines on the prowl for Luftwaffe aircraft. Whilst courageous, these tactics were incredibly risky and as such the No. 1 Sqn men didn’t look upon ‘Cobber’ so favourably.

Bull instilled a rather different train of thought into his men, only to attack if the tactical situation favoured and latterly, not to cross the Maginot Line unless the tactical situation was in their favour, and so on. Due to the superior marksmanship of the pilots whilst on gunnery detachment to Sutton Bridge prior to leaving for France, he had the Hurricanes’ guns synchronised from the ‘Dowding spread’ of 500 yards, designed to allow novice pilots to hit something, to just 250 yards. Utilising their excellent flying skills, this made the pilots and their Hurricanes far more accurate as a fighting force.

### **The Phoney War**

In October the Squadron moved east to **Vassincourt**, which brought them closer to the Maginot Line, which sat about 27 miles away, and closer to potential action. Halahan led 15 of the Hurricanes on the first real offensive sortie on 15 October; after stopping off at Etain-Rouvres they carried out a patrol, pressing 40 miles into the German frontier. It was a relatively uneventful sortie, attracting some flak and sighting four enemy fighters that soon dived into cloud cover, but nonetheless No. 1 Sqn had now entered the fray. They would have a long war ahead.

Further patrols were carried out in the remainder of October but it was on the 30th that they would first draw blood. At **Vassincourt** that day the sound of enemy engines was heard high above and sure enough, spotted right above the airfield at 20,000ft was a Do-17 on a reconnaissance flight. Several Hurricanes scrambled to intercept but soon all but one had lost contact with the Dornier. The pilot of the remaining Hurricane in pursuit, Boy Mould, one of the youngest members of the squadron at that time. He found the German at 18,000ft and carried out an attack from line astern with a single lengthy burst, setting the enemy machine on fire. It crashed and exploded upon impact near Traveren. A jubilant Mould came back to **Vassincourt** for some low-level wing-rocking passes, and his kill marked not only No. 1 Sqn’s first of the war, but the RAF’s first victory over France since 1918.

Air activity further increased into November, as the completion of the Polish campaign saw an influx of Luftwaffe units to the region. Similar contacts with high-altitude reconnaissance flights over the coming months helped ease the squadron into combat, however, it was not a one-sided contest by any means, as Pussy Palmer discovered on 23 November whilst taking part in an attack on a Do-17 seen over **Vassincourt**. The bomber had been mauled, with smoking engines and two of the crew having taken to their parachutes. After attacking, and sure the bomber was done for, Palmer drew up alongside the aircraft and could see the pilot still in his seat, slumped and lifeless, and presumed he had been killed. However, the pilot began

moving again and the Dornier slowed rapidly and moved in behind Palmer's Hurricane before firing at him. The bullets tore through the canvas of Palmer's machine and struck the cockpit hood as well as the reserve petrol tank. Diving rapidly to evade the fire, Palmer began to prepare to bail out, as smoke was now filling the cockpit from the burning tank, but this soon stopped as the engine ceased so he elected for a forced landing instead, which he carried out safely.

In a rather curious turn of fate the Dornier pilot ended up being hosted by the squadron's pilots for dinner several days later. He crash landed his crippled bomber and was taken prisoner by French forces, which Billy Drake learned of and after much debate the French allowed German pilot Uffz Arno Frankenberger to be accompanied by a guard for dinner at **Vassincourt**. For the most part the men got on well. Uffz was uneasy at first and got upset during a misunderstanding at one point, but once the alcohol began to flow they got on famously, raising three cheers as he was driven away later in the evening. The German pilot was later picked up again by his own forces during the Blitzkrieg in June 1940.

One outcome from Pussy's meeting with the Dornier was that Bull went in search for some armour plating to fit in one of the Hurricanes, as Pussy had been lucky when the bullets came through the cockpit. He found the back plating from a Fairey Battle wreck at a nearby airfield and had it installed on one of the Hurricanes. Armour plating had been turned down for Hurricanes because the Air Ministry thought that it would impede performance too much, but as No. 1 Sqn found when they tested theirs, it made no noticeable difference. The machine was flown back to Boscombe Down to be demonstrated for the RAF techies and a typical No. 1 Sqn display of aerobatics, stall turns, loops and rolls convinced them that it did little, if nothing, to impede the Hurricane's flight characteristics, and so armour plating was widely introduced, and not a moment too soon, as the Battle of Britain loomed. Who knows how much longer, if at all, it would have been until the RAF's Hurricanes gained armour had Pussy Palmer not been shot down by that Dornier.

Dangers came not only in the form of the Luftwaffe, but the French anti-aircraft gunners and Armee d'L'air often mistook RAF aircraft for Germans. Paul Richey had already had a lucky escape when he was attacked by Moranes – but came out unscathed – and in November No. 1 Sqn flew numerous recognition flights for the French forces. On the same day that Palmer was shot down, Darky Clowes had half of his tail chewed off by a Hawk 75 during an attack on a He-111, and made a successful crash landing back at **Vassincourt**, an incident which knocked his confidence for some time afterwards as he shook uncontrollably for a short while, despite trying to laugh it off.



Officers of 1 Sqn standing outside their mess at Neuville-sur-Ornain © IWM

IWM

Throughout the winter little was seen of the Germans and little flying took place at all, owing to some of the most atrocious weather seen for 50 years, as heavy snow and freezing temperatures threw up all sorts of problems. Ground crews had tremendous difficulty starting the Merlins, even with 12 outer spark plugs removed and pre-warmed. When it was clear enough to fly, the tail wheels on the Hurricanes would often break on the frozen ground. To make matters worse, the men were put up in tiny billet huts with only a stove for heating, and subsequently colds and flu became rife.

The weather did not ease into January and February, although the continued lack of action allowed the allied forces to re-equip and reorganize. There had been questions over the effectiveness and organization of the French aerial attaches and as a result their command structure was reorganized. Meanwhile the RAF formed the British Air Forces in France (BAFF) under Air Marshall Barratt with the aim of building upon the existing operational organization and improving liaison between the allied air forces.

With winter finally waning operations commenced once again for the opposing air forces. As the kill tally rose, the squadron was hit with its first combat death. Upon encountering three fighters whilst on a patrol, Hilly Brown, Frank Soper and John Mitchell went to investigate but lost sight of them and stumbled across a Do-17 instead. Brown's Hurricane propeller failed at the hub in the attack and he was forced to glide 30 miles to Nancy aerodrome whilst Soper and Mitchell pressed home the attack. After making several passes at the bomber alone, as Soper's ammunition had expired by this point, Mitchell's Hurricane was hit and began belching black smoke. The two re-joined and Soper pointed out a field for his comrade to land in but was alarmed to see the undercarriage on Mitchell's Hurricane lowering, as the ground was unsuitable for a wheels down landing. As Mitchell had his radio set to 'transmit', Soper was unable to call and warn him of his error. During a turn he lost sight of the landing Hurricane and was unable to locate it again, so returned to base where later that evening the squadron learned that Mitchell had been killed when he crashed on landing. Mitchell was credited with a half-share in the Do-17.

Up until the spring, the Hurricanes had been predominantly encountering individual high-altitude bombers on reconnaissance missions, but Luftwaffe tactics changed noticeably, now with the aircraft crossing the lines in mass formation before dispersing to reconnoiter their individual targets. Fighters had only ever been encountered by chance, as they rarely headed across the Maginot Line, and when they did it was in small numbers at high-altitude, but the shift in tactics also saw the fighters coming across in swathes. On one occasion three squadrons' worth performed an offensive sweep as deep into France as Metz and Nancy. The gears of battle were beginning to engage. As such, each of the squadron's Hurricanes was kept on top form, with pilots, riggers and fitters focusing on their aircraft in minute detail.

Encounters with fighters increased and Paul Richey claimed the first fighter kill for the squadron on 29 March when he shot down one of a pair of Bf-109s encountered on a patrol around Metz, the squadron's seventh kill overall. This was somewhat overshadowed, however, when later in the day Walker and Stratton shot down the first Me-110 downed by the RAF. The Me-110 Zersterer, or Destroyer, was deemed potent and had seldom been encountered in combat as yet, so Air Marshall Sir Arthur Barrett, AOC-in-C BAFF, promised dinner to the first RAF pilot to shoot down a 110 and duly, he invited the section, including Clowes, who took part in the attack but failed to destroy an Me-110. They had encountered the 110s on a patrol, again around Metz, and despite being outnumbered three to one, the Hurricanes threw themselves into the attack. Whilst having a similar top speed the 110s, the RAF fighters were more maneuverable than the twin-engine Zersterers. Walker caught one of them up as it stall turned and hit one of the engines, which began trailing smoke, at which point he was joined by Stratton, who was attributed to damaging the other engine, before Walker ran out of ammunition and the two pushed off back to base. It later transpired that the pilot bailed out of this machine, his gunner having been killed. No. 1 Sqn was living up to its motto of 'In omnibus princeps' or 'First in all things'.

A representative was sent from the RAF to find out how they had been so successful in shooting down aircraft in the majority of times they had encountered the Luftwaffe, compared to Fighter Command in the UK only succeeding in chasing aircraft away – their actions had been noticed. It was explained that as they were not under Fighter Command jurisdiction in France they had reduced their gun calibration to 250 yards rather than 400; this was taken back to the UK and implemented in Fighter Command. At that time, the RAF's Hurricanes were marked with black and white undersides for identification purposes but No. 1 Sqn also suggested painting them in camouflage like the Luftwaffe, and this was also rolled out. Together with

the instigation of armour plating, camouflaged undersides and more accurate gun calibration, No. 1 Sqn can easily be attributed with shaping the finer points of Fighter Command's aircraft prior to the Battle of Britain.

The German occupation of Denmark and its invasion of Norway on 9 April stirred a 'call to readiness' alert along the entire Western Front, prompting redistribution of some fighter forces to forward bases. For No. 1 Sqn, a move to Berry-au-Bac, 90 or so miles northwest, took them away from their long-standing base of **Vassincourt** on 11 April, and the men laughed as they remembered they were actually a mobile force. This new airfield was situated among many scars of the Great War, the landscape not yet having recovered. The moves were short-lived, however, as it soon transpired that there was no immediate threat of German invasion and many of the fighter squadrons were recalled to their original bases, including No. 1 Sqn back to **Vassincourt** on 19 April.

On 3 May the opportunity arose to take a close look at a captured Bf-109E-3 at Amiens, so Bull led a party of six Hurricanes to have a look. The machine had force landed in 1939 and since been repaired and extensively tested by the French. After crawling over it on the ground, Hilly Brown took it aloft, and in doing so became the first RAF airman to fly a 109, engaging in mock combat with Prosser Hanks in his Hurricane.

Despite Hanks' Hurricane having a new constant-speed propeller, the 109 still accelerated away in the climb. Due to an issue with the 109's oxygen system, the trial had to be carried out at 15,000ft, which the Hurricane preferred, but nonetheless they found that after a head on attack, the Hurricane easily latched onto the tail of its opponent and only a typical Luftwaffe maneuver brought some space between the two – a half roll followed by a vertical dive. After beginning again with the 109 behind the Hurricane, it was found the RAF machine could reverse the situation within four turns.

**Hawker Hurricane Mark I, N2358 'Z', of 1 Sqn is refueled while undergoing an engine change at Vassincourt. © IWM**



The men's confidence grew with these findings, despite the fact that the 109 was 30-40mph faster and generally better at climbing and diving, but Bull used this information logically, and debriefed the men, summarizing that they would always have the advantage given that they were not surprised and the odds were not more than two to one. The next day Hilly took the 109 back to England, to Boscombe Down where it was to be further tested.

Hurricanes were being abandoned at a rate of knots, whereby one would force land in a field out of fuel or would land at another base slightly damaged, and would have to be abandoned due to the lack of resources to recover them. This meant that the squadrons in France were often pushed to field sufficient aircraft. Even aircraft that were badly damaged could be salvaged in, say, the UK, and parts cannibalized to aid repair of other machines. It was a very different style of fighting when deployed as part of an expeditionary force.

**[Read the rest of this story in the book by Paul Richy]**

Yet another publication link shows Vassincourt was used as a base earlier than 1940:

**L'aérodrome de Vassincourt et Neuville-sur-Ornain  
(1936-1952)  
Pierre Labrude**

Click here for the original article by Professor Labrude, organized with only his article:  
<http://www.catkillers.org/97thEngr/magN49MaiJuin2014-Labrude-article-seulement.pdf>

**English translation by John E. McLeod (Professor of History, University of Louisville):**

**THE AERODROME OF VASSINCOURT AND NEUVILLE-SUR-ORNAIN  
(1936-1952)  
Pierre Labrude (translated by John E. McLeod)**

Vassincourt is a municipality in the Meuse department. It lies between Bar-le-Duc, the capital of the department, and Revigny-sur-Ornain, which used to be an important rail junction. The region was a weak point in the French military plans, and the village was destroyed in what is called the "Battle of Vassincourt" during the first weeks of World War I, between September 6 and 11, 1914.<sup>1</sup> Neuville-sur-Ornain, at the base of the plateau on which Vassincourt is located, is less than three kilometers away.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of World War I, the government launched a plan for organizing flight routes and civil and military airfields (often combined civil and military). This was called the Saconney Plan, and it regulated policy until 1933.<sup>3</sup> In that year, the growing threat from Germany led to the establishment of a government ministry specializing in issues relating to aeronautics, both civil and military (which complicated decision-making). This ministry included six sections that handled questions relating to infrastructure. Matters did not progress very far, because the nature of flight could not yet justify it, and the airfields usually remained rudimentary. In June 1933, a law on expropriation made it easier for chambers of commerce to establish airfields, and in October a decree was issued on the mechanism for approving private aerodromes. The concept gradually emerged of a fully equipped, self-sufficient air base to service air units.

On June 22, 1931, the Air Club of the Barrois (the area around Bar-le-Duc) was formed for the purpose of developing aviation, especially engineless flight. It was set up at Vassincourt.<sup>4</sup> The hub caught the attention of the Army, which beginning in 1935

established airfields; in the Meuse department,<sup>5</sup> these included Etain-Buzy at Buzy-Darmont, Etain-Rouvres at Rouvres-en-Woëvre, and Vassincourt/Neuville-sur-Ornain between those two villages. In August 1936, the Municipal Council of Vassincourt turned down the Army's request to set up an air base on land belonging to the municipality.<sup>4</sup>

In 1937, Jougla specified the features required for aeronautical facilities. Here are a few examples of the features which were more or less found at Vassincourt-Neuville: an area of 50 to 75 hectares for the emergency airfields, often rectangular or diamond-shaped; several runways, with a length of 1200 meters and a width of 200 meters for medium aircraft; buildings set on one side, etc. The number of air bases and airfields grew. There were 220 at the time of the Munich crisis, and 225 in June 1939; of these, only 93 were for the Air Force.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the decision of the Municipal Council, a military airfield was established at Vassincourt. At the beginning of October 1939, a Potez 631 from Training Section 408 arrived from the Marignane base. It was piloted by Adjutant (Warrant Officer) Jouannin, and was sent as a demonstration flight. This plane left the airfield on October 4, shortly before 1600 hours, and returned to base.<sup>7</sup>

On October 9, 1939, Vassincourt welcomed Hurricane Mk 1 planes from 1F Squadron of the Royal Air Force. These aircraft belonged to the 67<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing Servicing Unit, which was commanded by Wing Commander C. Walter and headquartered at Bussy-la-Côte (the village after Neuville on the road to Bar-le-Duc).<sup>8,9</sup> The RAF's first air victory in France, and the first loss of a Luftwaffe aircraft, took place on October 30, about 15 kilometers west of Toul, when Pilot Officer P.W.O. Mould destroyed a Dornier 17P from Aufklärungsgruppe 123.<sup>11</sup> All three of the German crew members were killed (B. von Norman, H. Heisterberg, and F. Pfeiffer). The 43<sup>rd</sup> Squadron returned to Vassincourt in December. The pilots' mess was set up in the town hall of Neuville, as may be seen in numerous photographs that are available on the internet.<sup>8</sup> Other photographs show the airfield, buildings in the distance, and planes. The British stayed at Vassincourt and Neuville until April 11, 1940, when they left for Berry-au-Bac in the Aisne. They returned on the 19<sup>th</sup> and were stationed at Vassincourt until May 10. The British then permanently left Vassincourt and went to Condé-Vraux.<sup>12</sup>

On May 11, 1940, Aerial Reconnaissance Group II/22 (GR II/22) was transferred from Chatel Chéhéry (Ardennes) to Vassincourt. This Group was under the command of Commandant Barruet and attached to the Second Army. It comprised Squadrons CAP 115 and 130, and was equipped with eight Potez 63/11s (of which seven were available). On the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup>, at about 2000 hours, aircraft No. 684 lost speed, crashed, and caught fire. Its crew, Adjutant-Chef (Chief Warrant Officer) Le Bail (the pilot), Sous-Lieutenant (Sub-Lieutenant) Drouet (the observer), and Sergent-Chef (Staff Sergeant) Le Connec (the gunner) were killed in the crash and/or the fire. The next day, during a reconnaissance at Attigny-Stonne, a crew made up of Adjutant-Chef (Chief Warrant Officer) Lemoine (pilot), Sous-Lieutenant (Sub-Lieutenant) Le Cheval (observer), and Sergent-Chef (Staff Sergeant) Steildé (gunner) was shot down and all its members were also killed. Commandant (Squadron Leader) Barruet flew for too long and his plane crashed. Group II/22 relocated to Avord (Cher, near Bourges) on June 14.

On May 14, Aerial Observation Group 2/520 (GAO 2/520) was withdrawn from Challerange (Ardennes), where it had been stationed since the beginning of January, and came to Vassincourt with its remaining aircraft: three Potez 63/11s and three Mureaux

115s. One Potez was shot down on the 24<sup>th</sup>, and the Group left Vassincourt for Le Havre on May 28.<sup>14</sup>

During the German occupation, many French airfields were used to grow food, either directly by the German Army or (especially in the “restricted zone” along the coast) by its agent, the Ostland Company. Local people told me that the land was used by that company, and in fact it seems that Vassincourt was among the Ostland Company’s centers in the Meuse department.<sup>15</sup> Besides increasing agricultural resources, this had the advantage of making the airfields unusable, as otherwise they might have been used for purposes hostile to the occupying army....

On the Liberation of France, the airfield was not included on the list of American or British combat aerodromes, presumably because it needed so much work after having been used as farmland during the occupation.<sup>16</sup> The Bar-le-Duc air club was revived on February 22, 1945, under the name of Meuse Air Club, and a hangar was built on the airfield (assuming that there was not one there before). However, the airfield was requisitioned for use as an American medical warehouse<sup>17</sup> following the establishment of the Communication Zone (Com-Z) under the terms of the secret agreement concluded on February 16, 1948, between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and American Ambassador Caffery. The air club was evicted, although it was not formally dissolved until 1963.

The American army tended to return to places where it had served during the First and Second World Wars. Why, then, did it agree under the framework of Com-Z to set up facilities at Vassincourt? The reasons are not clear, and there were no doubt several of them. The French army, which did not use the site of Vassincourt as an air base after 1945, was able to put it at the disposal of the U.S. Army. The airfield is in a sort of diamond shape, with two of its angles pointing towards Neuville-sur-Ornain and Vassincourt (figure 1).

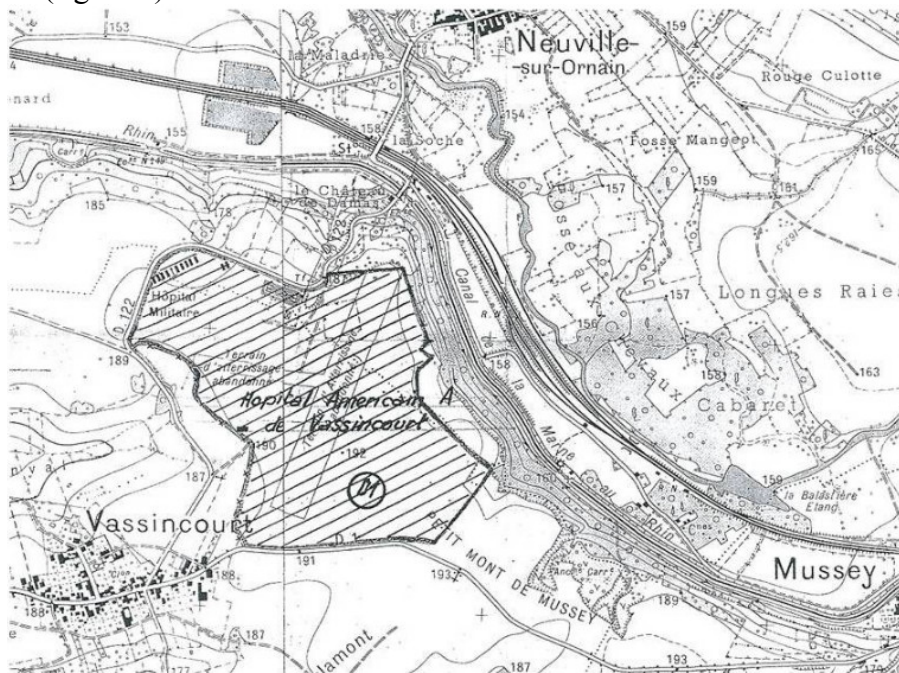


Figure 1 : le terrain sur un plan français des années 1950 (collection particulière).

The airfield is bordered by Department Road 1 from Vassincourt to Mussey, D 122 from Vassincourt to Neuville, and the edge of the plateau that runs to the Marne-Rhine canal and the Paris-Nancy rail line. It would seem difficult to use a hub with such a



small area (less than 90 hectares) and no improvements as a base for modern airplanes. Under the NATO standards that would soon be established, airbases required a surface more than three times greater (at least 300 hectares), whether they were built over older bases or from the ground up. Moreover, the village of Vassincourt adjoins the airfield, and that of Neuville-sur-Ornain is very near. Moving aircraft around would therefore apparently have been difficult and at the same time dangerous.

The fact remains that on September 27, 1951, the “old aerodrome of Bar-le-Duc Vassincourt” was placed at the disposal of the United States Army for the establishment of a medical depot and a hospital.<sup>19</sup> It was described as located on military land, 89 hectares in area (American plans show 84.98 hectares), and lying in the municipalities of Vassincourt and Neuville-sur-Ornain. The U.S. Army took possession on January 21, 1952.<sup>20</sup> The documents do not always give identical descriptions of the depot and the hospital, but, with one exception, none of those in my possession mentions any buildings besides these medical ones. This applies particularly to the *List of Installations Placed at the Disposal of the Allied Armies on December 31, 1952*.<sup>21</sup> Because of the way it was being used, the aerodrome was removed from List 2B in the Decree of February 6, 1947, which set the conditions for opening public and private airfields; it was permanently closed and placed on List 3C by the Decree of May 14, 1952, which was published in the *Official Journal*.<sup>22</sup>

On the French plan that appears as figure 1, dating from the period of Com Z and NATO, the airfield appears with its runway. The runway must have been restored either by the air club or the American army, since it had been under cultivation. It runs diagonally across the field, which it almost fills. Its extension runs up to Neuville. The taxiway is almost perpendicular to the runway, and in the middle it reaches the edge of Vassincourt. This plan allows us to see clearly the barracks of the first American hospital, and, near a curve, a rectangle that represents the medical depot. On another plan, which is American and more recent (figure 2), the runway is shown correctly and the taxiway is in the same place, but oriented in the opposite direction, towards the hospital. From these observations, I conclude that the installations were rebuilt by the U.S. Army, no doubt so that they could be used for connecting planes or flying ambulances.

[Added by DM Ricks]

### **Potez 631**



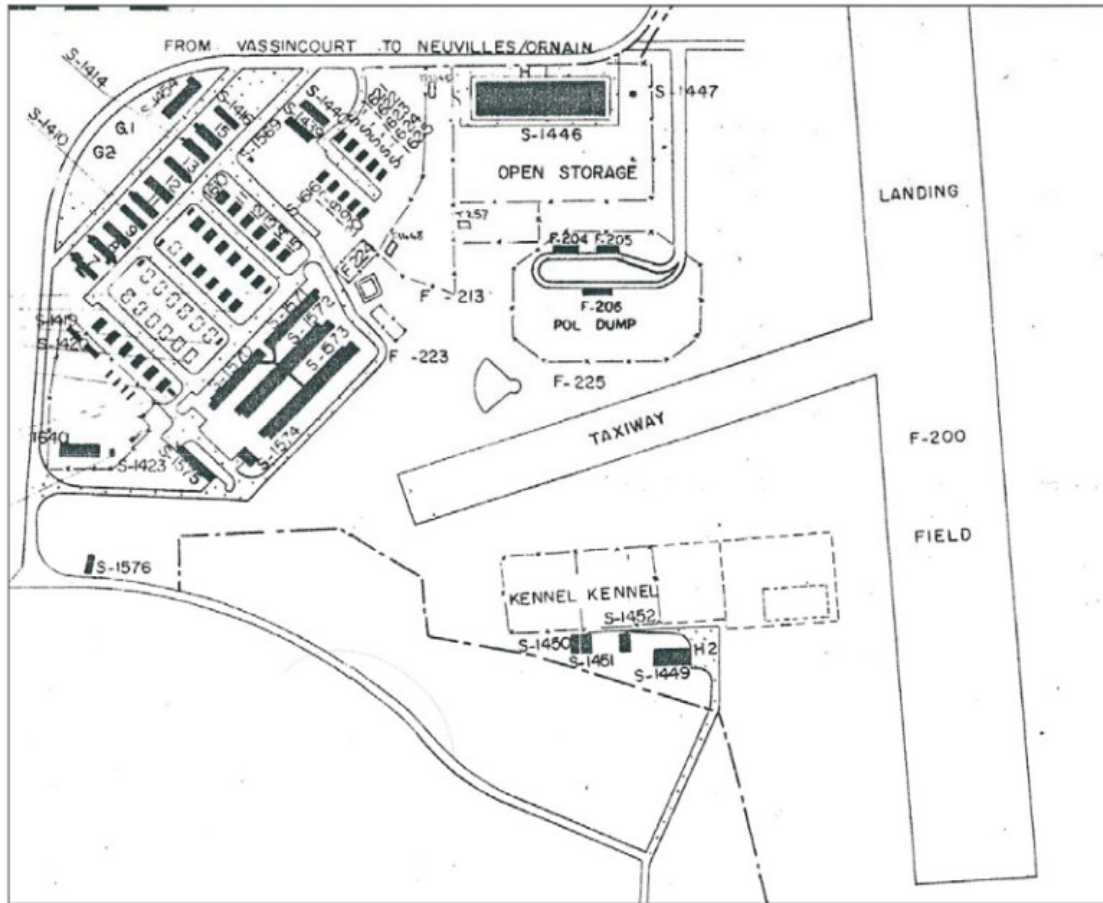


Figure 2 : le terrain à l'époque du dépôt de l'US Army (extrait d'un plan américain donné à l'auteur par la Caisse d'allocations familiales de la Meuse).

This runway and its taxiway were not retained right to the end of the American presence, because there was no trace of them in 1961 as may be seen on an aerial photograph that was published on the site *U.S. Army in Germany*.<sup>23</sup> The aerodrome had completely disappeared and there were no buildings left (figure 3), except possibly a hangar.



*Figure 3 : une vue du terrain à l'époque américaine (97th Engineer Battalion, avec l'autorisation de l'auteur du site Internet, M. Donald M. Ricks<sup>24</sup>).*

When the American Army left France in 1967, the facilities were bought by a partnership that planned to transform them into a center for handicapped children. They are now supervised by the Meuse Family Benefit Office, and are used as accommodation for people who are handicapped or in crisis. Almost all the permanent buildings of the American period are still used and in perfect condition (figure 4), but it is difficult for a layman to recognize this as an old American military camp because the old airfield is completely gone.



*Figure 4 : les bâtiments de l'ancien hôpital actuellement (photographie P. Labrude, 2012).*

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## Comments:

**Thanks for sending info on Vassincourt from Prof. Labrude. Should any of your contacts want to read (in English) about the RAF at Vassincourt during the *Battle of France (1939-40)*, see Paul Richey's book "Fighter Pilot," 1990 edition by Arrow Books, London, UK. Richey includes stories of Madame Jean at the Hotel de Metz in Bar-le-Duc. She was still working when I stayed there for two or three weeks in December 1962. Richey's book should be available on inter-library loan through school or city libraries. David**

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