

The Friends of Bushy and Home Parks



Come and find out about the use of Bushy Park
during World War II
at our exhibition and guided walks on

THE SITE OF USAAF CAMP GRIFFISS BUSHY PARK

Saturday 8 and Sunday 9 June 2024

**between 11am and 3pm
to be held at the Eisenhower memorial near
SHAEF Gate, Sandy Lane, Teddington**

An event organised by the Friends of Bushy and Home Parks to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day (the invasion of Europe) on 6 June 1944 by Allied forces, and the use of Camp Griffiss, Bushy Park as the headquarters of the United States Eighth Air Force and Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF).

The Friends of Bushy and Home Parks

Registered charity No.1137203

Event report

June 2024



Introduction

From 1942 to 1945 Bushy Park played a significant role in World War II by being the home of Camp Griffiss, which hosted, at varying times during the war, three of the most influential headquarters in the European theatre of operations. These being the headquarters of the United States Eighth Air Force (the largest deployed combat air force of the war), the United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe (USSAFE) and the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) headed by General Eisenhower. It was SHAEF that finalised the plans for Operation Overlord, the invasion of occupied Europe, and set the date for D-Day as 6 June 1944.

In recognition of Camp Griffiss's role in the war, and as a contribution to the 80th anniversary events being organised nationally, the Friends of Bushy and Home Parks decided, with the permission of the Royal Parks, to hold a commemorative event in Bushy Park. This was arranged for the weekend of 8 and 9 June 2024.

Bushy Park and Camp Griffiss

In June 1942 the British Air Ministry requisitioned an area of Bushy Park adjacent to Sandy Lane that was previously allocated for temporary office buildings for businesses bombed out of central London. This office development was then offered to the United States Eighth Air Force as the site for their new headquarters. This was subsequently named by the Americans as AAF Station 586 with the codename of "Widewing". As the size and scope of the camp grew the site was officially handed over to United States administration on 22 February 1942, when the site was re-named Camp Griffiss after Colonel Townsend Griffiss, the first United States Army Air Force airman to be killed in the European theatre of war.

Camp Griffiss grew at a great pace to meet the demands of war time planning. Camp Griffiss was not one area; by 1944 it had nine sites within the park dealing with administration and accommodation, as well as numerous outstations away from the park, and an airstrip. It eventually covered 60 acres of parkland and had over 3,000 personnel working there.

Following the invasion of occupied Europe, it was important that headquarters staff followed the troops into France. By September 1944 the main body of SHAEF had moved out of Camp Griffiss to Paris, followed closely by the headquarters of USSAFE. At the end of 1944 all but a few remnants of the American forces had left Bushy Park. Their place being taken, until 1950, by the headquarters of the RAF Transport Command.

Today there are several places in the park that remind us of Camp Griffiss:

- A raised plaque, unveiled in 1945, was placed by the British Air Ministry to commemorate the American forces based there. A wood copse, named Eisenhower's Copse, has been planted adjacent to the tablet.
- The Eisenhower Memorial, which consists of a brick paved area with a five-pointed star in its centre, that marks the area of his office.
- SHAEF Gate, is placed in the park's boundary wall and marks the original position of the camp's main entrance. An interpretation board is placed adjacent to the gate.
- 'Open books' are placed in the ground marking the four corners of the main administrative buildings (Blocks A, B, C and D) of Camp Griffiss.



Scope

- To erect a marquee beside SHAEF Gate
- To display artefacts, information boards and photographs within the marquee
- To have a FBHP Information Point for event coordination, activities and park information.
- To provide two guided walks per day.
- To encourage the public to visit the marquee to learn about the history of Camp Griffiss.
- Stewarding by FBHP volunteers, largely to provide guidance and information.
- TRP to arrange for the management of site access for the erection, security, and dismantling of the marquee, using TRP resources.
- To hold the event on 8 and 9 June 2024, between 11am and 3pm

The event

Volunteers

There were 23 FBHP volunteers working over the two days of the event. Each had been briefed on their roles and the provided risk assessments. Roles included:

- Steward - providing information and advice to visitors within the event marquee or the Information Point
- Roving steward - meeting and greeting visitors, providing information about the park and its wildlife, ensuring safety of the site
- Walk leader - leading specific walks

The marquee

The nine metre by nine metre marquee was sited adjacent to SHAEF Gate which is in Sandy Lane, Teddington. In it were information panels, artefacts, a music player and FBHP's information table. The contents included:

- Six A1 information boards showing the history of Camp Griffiss from 1942 until 1944
- Six A3 information sheets giving 'fast-facts' on various subjects connected to the camp
- A 3-D model of Camp Griffiss
- A US military steel helmet found at Upper Lodge
- An 'open book' plaque used to mark the four corners of the camp's main administrative buildings
- Letters and books from the history archive in White Lodge, Bushy Park
- A flag that was used by the SHAEF Association before being donated to the history archive
- Copies of the original set of invasion plans showing the proposed landing points (donated by the Defence Geographic Centre, Feltham)
- Music centre playing Glenn Miller songs with D-Day radio broadcasts inserted
- A FBHP park information table

The guided walk

Two guides dressed in authentic US Air Force uniforms provided two 800 metre walks each day around the sites of Block A, the American commemorative tablet and Eisenhower Memorial. Seven small flags were inserted into the 'open books', that denote the corners of Blocks A and C, to give a visual clue as to the size of the buildings. Each walk and talk took an average of 50 minutes to complete.



Visitors

Numbers

Over the two-day event 1,200 people visited the marquee. The visitors included a 102-year-old D-Day veteran, a GI Bride of the camp who came with her son, and many local people who remembered the American troops in the park. The guided walks attracted a total of 250 people over the four walks.

Comments

A 'comments book' was placed at the exit to the marquee for visitors to express their feelings about the event; all were very positive. Here is a selection of the 46 comments received.



Friends of Bushy and Home Parks D-Day commemorative event - photographs



Friends of Bushy and Home Parks D-Day commemorative event - photographs



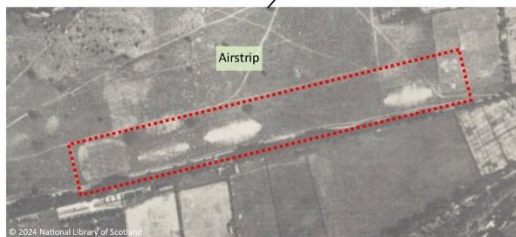
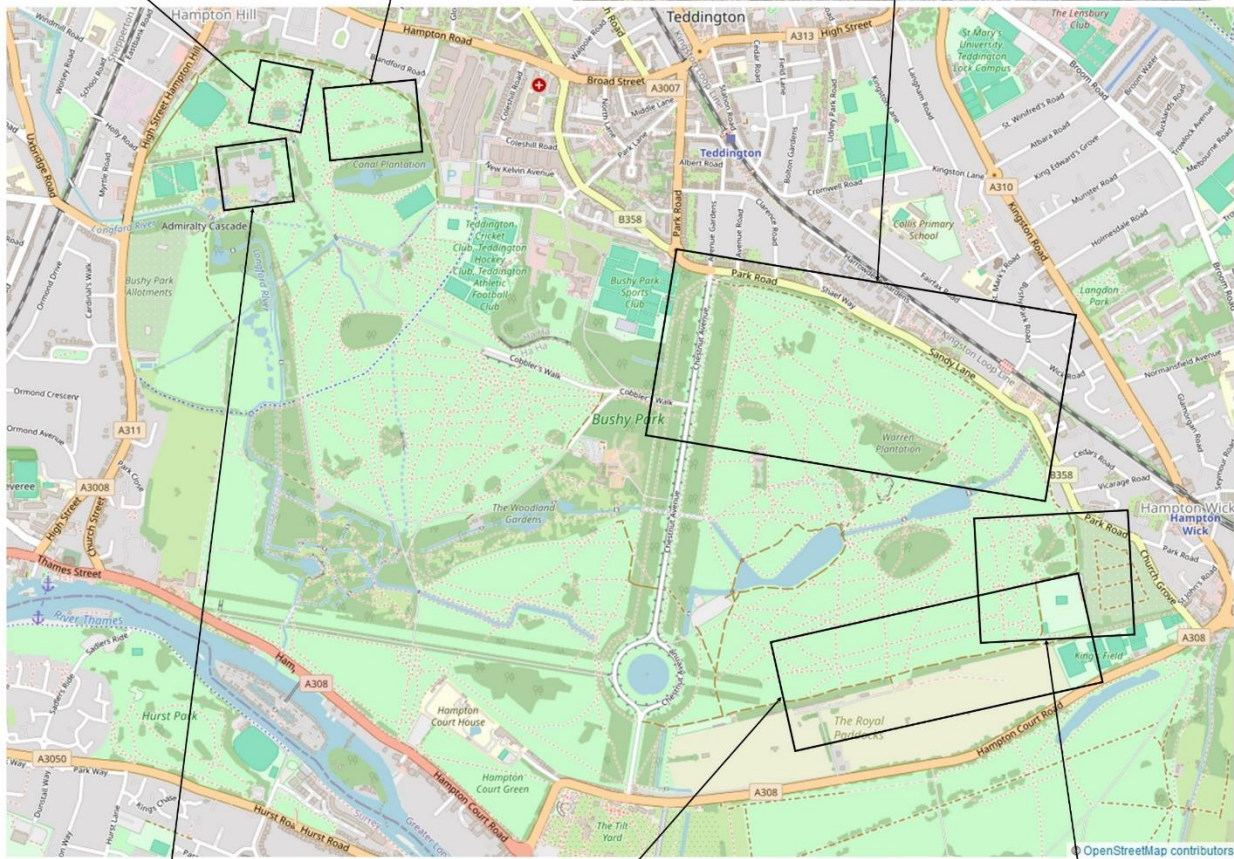
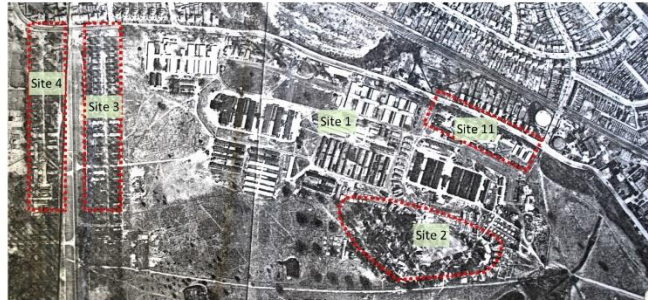
Photographs inserted by permission of Claire Ivison, David Ivison, Bill Swan, Steve Parker and Louise Clare



Camp Griffiss, Bushy Park

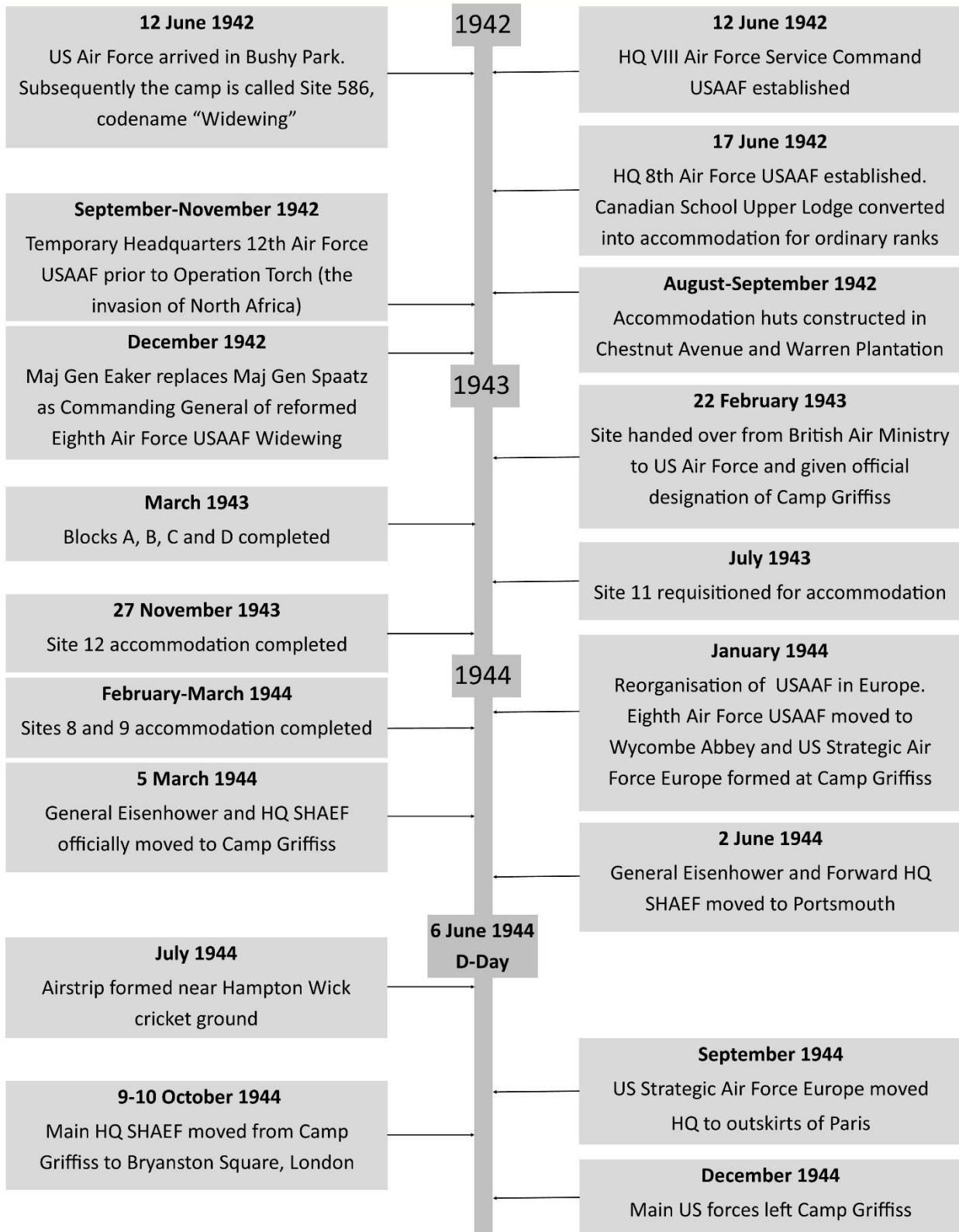
On 12 June 1942 the United States Army Air Force (USAAF) was offered the area adjacent to Sandy Lane and Upper Lodge, Bushy Park, to house the headquarters of their 8th Air Force. USAAF named the complex Site 586 and it was to be known by the code word "Widewing" (after B17 Flying Fortress, their heavy bomber). On officially receiving the site from the British Air Ministry on 22 February 1943, the Americans gave it the name "Camp Griffiss". The camp became the headquarters of the 8th Air Force USAAF where the American bombing campaign within the European theatre of operations was planned and coordinated. Over the following two years Camp Griffiss evolved into a space employing over 3,000 personnel and spreading over many locations, both within and outside the park.

To complete the planning for the D-Day landings in Europe, General Eisenhower moved his headquarters, called Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), into Camp Griffiss on 5 March 1944. This meant erecting more buildings in the camp to accommodate the many planners and equipment, such as secure telecommunications and transport. Ground also had to be cleared for an airstrip at the south of the park. Following the invasion of Europe in June 1944, the American forces gradually left Camp Griffiss and by December 1944 had all moved out of the park. Their place was taken by the headquarters staff of the RAF's Transport Command. In recognition of the American presence in Bushy Park the British Air Ministry arranged to have a memorial tablet placed in the park. This was unveiled on 20 August 1945 and can still be seen near SHAEF Gate.





Camp Griffiss timeline 1942-1944



Camp Griffiss development 1942-1943

The development of the camp

Before official military involvement by the United States in the European theatre of operations, the buildings which were to form the nucleus of Camp Griffiss were originally designed for the purpose of holding evacuated commercial offices driven from central London by the Luftwaffe's bombing raids.

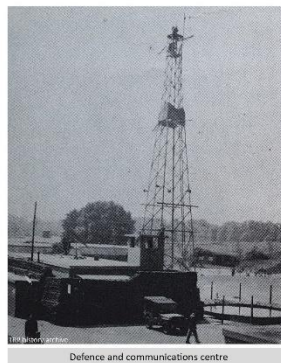
In the original plan the Temporary Office Buildings (TOBs), consisted of four units off Sandy Lane, called Blocks A, B, C and D. Each block was to be provided with three openings cut through Bushy Park's perimeter wall for access, but there existed no connecting road between the units. In addition each block was to have eight spurs or wings on each side of the main construction axis.

These plans were prepared by the Ministry of Works and they were completed in September 1941. Construction followed immediately in October. The TOBs were to be ready for occupation as civilian offices by the spring of 1942. However as the blitz on London decreased, so did the construction work in Bushy Park.

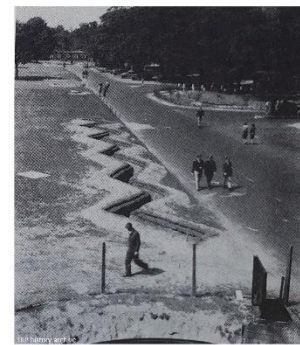
By 8 June 1942 when the site was inspected for possible use by the 8th United States Army Air Force (USAAF), the buildings programme lagged seriously behind the initial target dates, partly due to the severe shortage of skilled craftsmen and labour created by the war conditions, with only one unit (Block A) complete and another (Block B) nearing completion. Despite these problems, the 8th USAAF was granted the use of the property through the British Government's Air Ministry, being requisitioned on 10 June 1942. It was at this point that the camp, called Site 586, became known by the codename "Widewing".



Handover of the camp to USAAF 22 February 1943



Defence and communications centre



Silt trenches near the main entrance

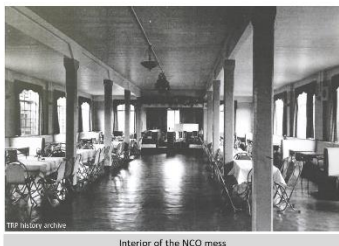
When occupied by USAAF on 17 June 1942, Widewing consisted of two main sections; offices in Blocks A and B situated in the north east of the park, and barracks for enlisted men in the King's Canadian School at Upper Lodge.

The Air Ministry immediately prepared plans for a third unit to be called Block C, a new main entrance to the camp, and a road system connecting Block A and Block B. By August 1942, it became obvious that further construction would have to be undertaken and the Air Ministry authorised the building of a fourth unit (which had been in the original TOB plans), designated as Block D.

It was soon realised that Block A needed several additions such as a War Room and Telephone Wing. The plans for Block C were also altered to include a large mess and lounge for officers which was later changed to an auditorium and officers' club, with facilities for a locker and shower room, and handball and squash courts. Blocks A, B and C were all completed and occupied by 9 February 1943, except for the revised officers' club which was ready for use on 10 July. Block D was finished and ready for occupation on 13 March.

22 February 1943 saw the official handover of Widewing to the military jurisdiction of USAAF. Soon after this the site was named Camp Griffiss after Lieutenant Colonel Townsend Griffiss, the first US airman to be killed in the European theatre of operations.

From July 1942 until January 1944 Camp Griffiss was the headquarters of the Eighth Air Force USAAF, whose mission was to carry out strategic daytime bombing operations from airfields in eastern England as part of the Combined Bomber Offensive in western Europe.



TRP History Archive

Interior of the NCO mess



TRP History Archive

Anglo-American church service 11 October 1942



Lieutenant General Patton being invested as an Honorary Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, by Field Marshal Alan Brooke (with General Eisenhower) on 26 March 1944 in front of Block C



Lieutenant Colonel Townsend Griffiss, the first US airman to be killed in the European theatre of operations

Information taken from *The Development and History of "Camp Griffiss", Bushy Park*, by R A Harris, 1992 held at the TRP History Archive, White Lodge, Bushy Park.



Camp Griffiss troop accommodation

The development of accommodation

The first post commander was Lt Colonel Harold B Willis, who in civilian life was a prominent architect from Boston, Massachusetts. He assumed command on 9 July 1942, when the first contingent of 8th US Army Air Force troops arrived at Camp Griffiss. It was this extremely fortunate combination of both civil and military experience that made it possible for him to plan the work necessary to convert the existing Temporary Office Buildings originally on the site into the headquarters of the 8th US Army Air Force in such a short period of time.

A Ministry of Works architect was instructed to prepare a camp for 750 personnel at Sites 3 and 4, "Chestnut Avenue". This was requisitioned on 1 August 1942 and occupied ten days later. In addition Site 2, called "Warren Plantation", was requisitioned for a further camp site and, although occupied officially on 1 September 1942, it was not finally completed until 1 October.

With the completion of the Warren Plantation site, troops could be moved out of Block B. This meant B Block could then become the logistics headquarters of the 8th Air Force, with their own men to be quartered at the King's Canadian School, which was requisitioned on 10 June 1942. The Ministry of Works architects were instructed to augment the facilities there with a new mess hall and ablutions for 1,000 men. By 15 October 1942, the first large group of huts had been completed and this meant better shelter from the hostile elements than was provided by the tents, and enabled 900 men to be moved from under canvas into Nissen huts.



Site 1 main camp



Site 3 Chestnut Avenue



Site 12 US Women Army Corps accommodation



Upper Lodge King's Canadian School



Site 2 Warren Plantation

As the camp developed 500 personnel of the US Women Army Corps were drafted in to help with its administration. To house them, construction was agreed for Site 11, which was contiguous with the camp and adjacent to Sandy Lane Gate, and was approved on 28 July 1943. Site 12, where Millennium Wood now stands, soon followed and was started on 30 October 1943.

As planning for D-Day continued, more accommodation was required. Site 8, adjacent to Blandford Road Gate, was started on 20 November 1943 to house 500 men. It was completed on 1 February 1944. Immediately the camp expansion plans were revised to accommodate a further 500 men at Site 9 as a result of Camp Griffiss becoming the joint headquarters for the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force and the United States Strategic Air Force Europe. Further huts were built to enlarge Sites 2 and 3, with 20 huts added and six additional huts in Site 5. All of this extra work was done by the US Air Force's 351st Aviation Engineering Battalion, with help from civilian contractors.

A different problem was the provision of accommodation for the 700 officers, each of whom had to be billeted off-site in civilian homes in places such as Hanworth, Hampton Hill, Hampton Wick, Hampton Court, Teddington and Kingston upon Thames.

Information taken from The Development and History of "Camp Griffiss", Bushy Park, by R & Harries, 1992 held at the TRP History Archive, White Lodge, Bushy Park

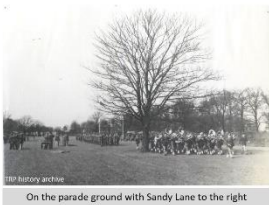


Camp Griffiss 1944

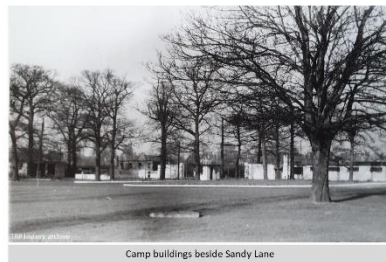
Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF)

At the Casablanca Conference, where President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill met in January 1943, the Combined Chiefs of Staff agreed to establish an organisation to plan for the invasion of north west Europe in 1944. It was envisaged that the Supreme Allied Commander would be British, and the usual practice was for both the commander and the chief of staff to be of the same nationality so, in April 1943, it was decided to appoint a British officer for the role of Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander (COSSAC). COSSAC's role was to report on the feasibility of an invasion which was to start on a date to be known as D-Day. Throughout 1943, much of the planning for this took place at Norfolk House, a large building on St James's Square in central London. As the planning continued and the number of staff increased it became clear that Norfolk House was not large enough, or sufficiently secure, and so a search began for a new site for a headquarters. In December 1943, President Roosevelt decided that the post of Supreme Allied Commander in Europe would go to an American and appointed General Dwight D Eisenhower. He immediately let it be known that the new headquarters would be placed outside of London and into the suburbs away from the distractions of London life. With the Eighth Air Force having vacated Camp Griffiss, and leaving the station with good communications infrastructure, a decision was made in early January 1944 that Bushy Park would be the most appropriate site.

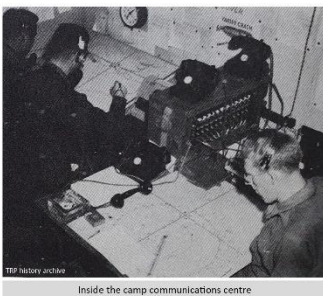
In January 1944, Eisenhower took up his position at Norfolk House and in February his organisation, called Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), replaced and absorbed the planning group called COSSAC. On 5 March 1944 SHAEF officially moved into Block C in Camp Griffiss.



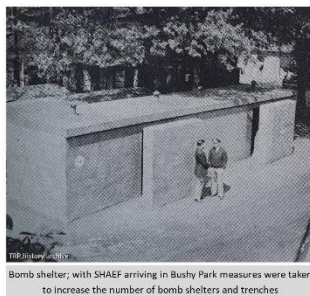
On the parade ground with Sandy Lane to the right



Camp buildings beside Sandy Lane



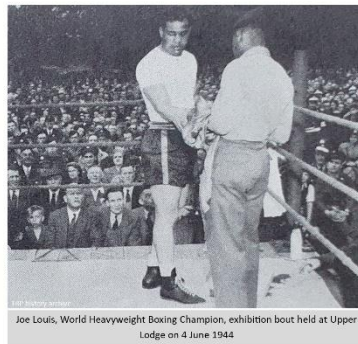
Inside the camp communications centre



Bomb shelter; with SHAEF arriving in Bushy Park measures were taken to increase the number of bomb shelters and trenches

The reorganisation of US air forces

On 23 January 1944 USAAF reorganised their air forces working in the European theatre of operations. The Eighth Air Force moved out of Camp Griffiss, leaving behind their planning and intelligence sections to form the nucleus of a new organisation called United States Strategic Air Forces Europe (USSTAF). Their role was to liaise with SHAEF in the planning and coordination of the strategic bombing campaigns across Europe in the lead up to D-Day. In March 1944 there were 2,737 personnel working at Camp Griffiss.



Joe Louis, World Heavyweight Boxing Champion, exhibition bout held at Upper Lodge on 4 June 1944



The Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band playing at Camp Griffiss 1944



The airstrip adjacent to the Hampton Wick cricket ground

The importance of communication

With these new organisations came the need for a more secure telephone system. An elaborate communication switchboard was installed. SHAEF telephone calls were made through a new switchboard which had 800 internal lines and 300 external lines that connected to other stations and units, including direct lines to HQ 21 Army Group, HQ USA European Theatre of Operations (ETOUSA), Allied Expeditionary Air Force (Stanmore), CHQ (Portsmouth) and the main Allies Signal Centre at Godge Street underground. For information that could not be sent by scrambler telephone or encrypted teleprinter, an Air Dispatch Letter Service was introduced. This flew daily from SHAEF to Northolt, Portsmouth, Plymouth and return (with another flight in the opposite direction). Only those packages with a high degree of importance and urgency were carried.

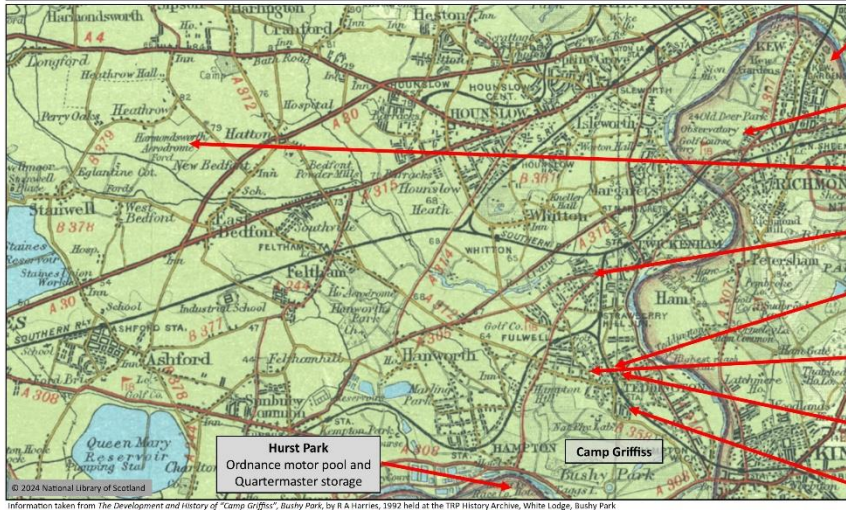
With all this complex web of secure communication, SHAEF was able to act as a 'clearing house' for intelligence reports obtained from other sources, such as from agents, signal intercepts, aircrew debriefings, photography and surveys. One section that was highly secure, and was critical to the success of the D-Day landings, was the weather section. A special encrypted telephone system was established in Camp Griffiss specifically to permit frequent conference calls between the British Meteorological Office, USSTAF weather section and SHAEF. From March 1944 Eisenhower required Wing Commander Stagg RAF, SHAEF's senior meteorological officer, to brief him in his office every Monday morning with a 5-day forecast, and then from May it became a daily briefing.



Camp Griffiss 1945-1962

Camp Griffiss Outstations

By the end of 1944 Camp Griffiss comprised not one area of the park, but several 'sites' within the park as well as outstations.



Information taken from *The Development and History of 'Camp Griffiss', Bushy Park*, by B. & H. Harris, 1992 held at the TRP History Archive, White Lodge, Bushy Park.

Records Office, Ruskin Avenue, Kew Requisitioned: 25 September 1942 Storage facilities
Tower Garage, Kew Requisitioned: 21 September 1942 Creation of a motor pool for those at Ruskin Avenue
Heathrow Aerodrome (part) Requisitioned: 14 September 1942 Temporary landing strip and offices
8 & 11 Hampton Road, Twickenham Requisitioned: 20 July 1942 Quartermaster storage and ration breakdown
Russell's Motors, Waldegrave Road Requisitioned: 10 July 1942 8th US Air Force Transportation Unit
21 & 28 Church Road, Teddington Requisitioned: 9 September 1942 Accommodation and storage for enlisted personnel working at Russell's Motors
P&S Garage, Waldegrave Road Requisitioned: 18 August 1942 Service Command Transportation Unit
69 & 71 Clarence Road, Teddington Requisitioned: 9 September 1942 Laboratory and billet for aerial photography unit

Camp Griffiss 1945-1962

By the end of 1944 most of the American forces had left Camp Griffiss. In March 1945 they formally left and the Royal Parks agreed that the British Air Ministry could continue occupying the site for a period of five years. In that month the headquarters of the RAF's Transport Command was set up in Bushy Park. The Air Ministry wanted to commemorate the time the US forces spent in the park and so commissioned a tablet to be placed at the site. This was unveiled in June 1945 in the presence of Air Chief Marshal Sir Christopher Courtney RAF and General Ira Clarence Eaker USAF, both of whom were present at the original opening ceremony in February 1943.

Between June 1948 and May 1949 the RAF Transport Command used Camp Griffiss to coordinate their air movements during the Berlin Airlift. The RAF vacated the camp at the end of their agreement with the Royal Parks in November 1950. This period was the beginning of the Cold War and the US forces were in desperate need of a site in Britain with an established communications network and, much to the disagreement of the Royal Parks, Camp Griffiss was their preferred location. Following the intervention of a special government committee, the USAF Command Communications Centre moved from Germany and was allowed to occupy the camp while the Cold War continued. In February 1951 they moved into Sites 1, 11 and 12. Gradually the other sites in the park were closed down and removed. During 1949 and 1950 Sites 2, 8 and 9 were demolished. From 1946 squatters occupied Sites 3 and 4 along Chestnut Avenue; these huts were finally removed in the mid-1950s.

At the end of the Cold War the US forces gradually moved out of Camp Griffiss and in October 1962 it was finally closed. The site was cleared and restored to parkland in 1966.



Unveiling of the commemorative tablet to the US Forces on 20 June 1945



The London Central High School was set up in Block B for children of USAF personnel between 1952 and 1962. There was accommodation for 600 children attending school daily and two 250 room dormitories (girls Block C and boys Block D). It was the largest school for children of US service personnel in Britain. This is their school choir in 1957 adjacent to what appears to be Sandy Lane Gate.



The 751st United States Air Force Band, which was based at Camp Griffiss in the mid-1950s, seen rehearsing for their display at the Searchlight Tattoo, White City. Here they are practising on 7 July 1957



Unveiling of the Eisenhower Memorial and SHAEF Gate by the American Ambassador on 30 May 1994



Friends of Bushy and Home Parks

D-Day commemorative event - A3 Information sheets

Short facts about Eighth Air Force USAAF in World War II

When were they formed?

Their story began on 28 January 1942 on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean in Savannah, Georgia. There, the United States Army Air Corps assigned seven men, without a single aircraft, to a newly formed Eighth Air Force.

When did they arrive in Britain?

On 5 May 1942, Major General Carl Spaatz assumed command of HQ Eighth Air Force. On 12 May, the first contingent of USAAF personnel arrived in England to join the Eighth Air Force. On 15 June, Spaatz arrived in England to establish Headquarters, Eighth Air Force at Bushy Park, 15 miles (24 km) south-west of London.

What were the constituents of Eighth Air Force?



Eighth Air Force controlled:

VIII Bomber Command (Established 19 January 1942) based at High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire
Strategic bombardment using heavy, four-engined bombers.

VIII Fighter Command (Established 19 January 1942) based at Bushey Hall, Hertfordshire
Provide fighter escort of heavy bombers.

VIII Air Support Command (Established 24 April 1942) based at RAF Membury, Berkshire
Provide reconnaissance, troop transport, and tactical bombardment using twin-engine medium bombers.

VIII Air Service Command (Established 1942, name changed to VIII Air Force Service Command by 1943) based at Camp Griffiss, Bushy Park
Service and logistical support.

How many personnel were there?

More than 350,000 Americans gathered on air bases across East Anglia. These heroic fighters—just teenagers and young adults—belonged to the Mighty Eighth Air Force. They came to join their English allies and take the fight to the skies.

What was its size?

Over the course of the war, the Eighth Air Force became the largest air armada in the world, capable of sending more than 2,000 heavy bombers and over 1,000 fighter planes on a single mission. In less than three years, the Eighth accomplished its two-fold mission: 1) destroy the German Luftwaffe; and 2) cripple Nazi Germany's war making capabilities. By doing so, the Mighty Eighth gave the allies air supremacy, paved the way for the D-Day invasion, and contributed significantly to the liberation of occupied Europe. By May 1945, the Eighth had flown more than 600,000 sorties and dropped over 670,000 tons of bombs.

How many air bases were there?

The USAAF took over from the RAF, or built from scratch (67 bomber stations), a total of more than 200 airfields across Britain, most in the rural east of England: Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire. The thousands of resident American personnel often dwarfed the population of local villages. In the county of Suffolk, for example, 1 in 7 of the population was American.

What was their casualty rate?

The cost was staggering: 26,000 Eighth airmen were killed in action and another 28,000 became prisoners of war. Their valour was renowned. As the teenagers and young men of the Eighth battled the enemy at 25,000 feet, such bravery earned them 17 Medals of Honor, 220 Distinguished Service Crosses and more than 420,000 Air Medals.

Sources: Heritage Calling Historic England, Wikipedia and National Museum of The Mighty Eighth Air Force.

Short facts about the name, Camp Griffiss



Why is it named Camp Griffiss?

The camp was named after Lieutenant Colonel Townsend Griffiss who was the first American airman to die in the line of duty in Europe in the Second World War after the US entered the conflict. Camp Griffiss was named in his honour.

Who was Lt Col Townsend Griffiss?

Griffiss had been brought up in a wealthy family in Coronado, the exclusive beach suburb of San Diego in California. He graduated from the US Military Academy at West Point in 1922 and became a high-flying officer in the United States Army Air Force (USAAF).

Text source: Stephen Mulvey, BBC News 2012

Where did he serve?

In May 1941 he was sent to London as part of a special observer group. This was a military mission by another name. Its members wore civilian clothes but formed the nucleus of a joint military planning staff, along with a parallel British military mission in Washington. Griffiss was aide to the man in charge in London, Gen James Chaney.

In November Griffiss was detached from Chaney's staff and sent to Moscow, to negotiate with the Soviet government about the opening of a Siberian supply route for American lend-lease aircraft.

The fateful return to the UK

Cold weather delayed Griffiss's departure from Russia. From Kuibyshev he went to Tehran, and from Tehran to Cairo, where he boarded an unarmed B-24 Liberator operated by the British Overseas Airways Company (BOAC) for a direct flight to the UK.

The flight was the first of its kind. The outward journey had been made on 24 January 1942, but strong headwinds repeatedly delayed the return trip. In such conditions, the Liberator would have run out of fuel on the traditional route across the Bay of Biscay, around Brittany and along the English Channel from the west.

The captain, Humphrey Page, therefore suggested a direct route across occupied Europe at night.

The Air Ministry in London signalled approval for the route. But conflicting messages were received from RAF Transport Command, which was against it, and from BOAC which appeared to be in favour. After asking BOAC to confirm its position, and getting no reply, the Liberator took off on the evening of 14 February.

The next morning as it reached the coast of northern France, near St Malo, the aircraft appeared on British radar screens, initially registering as hostile. Two Spitfires from a Polish Air Force squadron in Exeter were sent to investigate. As they closed in on the grey-coloured aircraft, one pilot saw a bright flash coming from a glass turret. At the same time - he told the subsequent inquiry - the aircraft turned and began to dive into cloud.

Both Spitfires opened fire, the Liberator's right engine was hit and started smoking, and it disappeared from view. Shortly afterwards, emerging beneath the cloud, the pilots saw beneath them a large patch of oil and disturbed water.

The dead comprised five crew members and four passengers - Griffiss, a brigadier of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, a Navy lieutenant and a Rolls Royce employee.

In the Air Ministry there was great embarrassment. An approach was made to Air Chief Marshal Charles Portal to write to Gen Chaney, to "ease what may be a difficult and delicate situation to overcome".



Image © Reach PLC. Image created courtesy of THE BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD.

Friends of Bushy and Home Parks

D-Day commemorative event - A3 Information sheets

Designing a shoulder patch for the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force

The design of the SHAEF badge is explained in Captain Harry C Butcher's book about his experiences as an aide to General Eisenhower from 1942 to 1945 (*My Three Years with Eisenhower*). On page 592 and continuing on 593 (diary entry for 23 June, 1944), Butcher relates the story behind the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force patch. Butcher states that it was told to him by the two members of the Historical Office of the Secretary of the General Staff: Captain Douglas F Price and Captain Duncan Enrich. Here's what Butcher described:

"They told me the story of the SHAEF patch that I had heard only inaccurately before. General Morgan, anticipating the arrival of a Supreme Commander, had directed in the autumn of 1943 that a badge be designed, and the committee which was appointed in turn directed the Royal College of Heraldists to produce a sign symbolic of the task ahead. Price said that the design had 'some sort of waves, presumably indicating an amphibious operation,' and was generally not acceptable, although the 'Flaming Sword' was accepted as a base for further development. The final design was produced by Colonel Lack with the artistic help of Corporal D Q Goodall, an ATS girl. Price called my attention particularly to the fact that the 'Flaming Sword' was modelled on that of the 2nd US Division Memorial (1917-18) in Washington. Ike approved the badge when he assumed command, and in March it came into general use as the headquarters shoulder patch and vehicle mark."

The design represents liberation (flaming Crusader sword) from Nazi oppression (black background) and the hope represented by the Allied nations (the rainbow being made up of all the colours in the Allied flags) leading to peace and tranquillity (the blue at the top of the shield). The badge was authorised by General Eisenhower on 25 March 1944. It was worn on the left sleeve only by all ranks of all nationalities on the staff of General Eisenhower's Headquarters in the UK, France (Versailles and Reims) and Germany (Frankfurt). A similar badge with a blue background exists, worn by US troops designated as US Army Europe.



Sources:
Imperial War Museums <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30071382>
Designing a Shoulder Patch for the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, M L Cavanaugh, 2014

Bushy Park or Bushey Heath?

In the autumn of 1943, it became evident that a larger site would be needed to house the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF). Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Morgan, the Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander (COSSAC), was tasked with finding that location. The memo below, taken from The National Archives (WORK 16/1816), refers to a book written by Lt Gen Morgan and published in 1950. It gives an insight into the confusion created by the names of Bushy Park and Bushey Heath.

LOCATION OF SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDERS HEADQUARTERS.

AUGUST 1943. COSSAC (Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander) which was the forerunner of the Supreme Allied Commanders Headquarters, had for some time been functioning in Norfolk House, but by August, 1943 it had become evident that with the setting up of the full Headquarters, Norfolk House was not only inconvenient, but not large enough. The following extract from Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Morgan's book "Overture to Overlord" explains what follows:-

"... Then the Naval Command was exercised from Portsmouth and the Air Command from Stanmore in Middlesex, some dozen miles North-West of London. It seemed of necessity a question of locating the Supreme Commander at one of those places or the other or at some not too inconvenient spot in between. The eye fell immediately on Aldershot. Here it seemed that house-room could be made available. It seemed that the bombardment danger at such range could be ignored while distances to London, to Portsmouth, to Stanmore, by bus plane or by fast car, or even train, were not prohibitive.

There seemed, however, much to be said for the Air Commander-in-Chief's contention that he must be in much closer contact with the Supreme Allied Commander than this arrangement would allow. As he rightly argued, things happen quickly in the air. A matter of seconds or at most of minutes may nowadays decide the fate of companies or even of whole countries. The communications that radiated from Stanmore were of an elaboration undreamt of before 1939. Away from them the Air Commander-in-Chief was powerless. He must remain at his Central Operations Room, air equivalent of the quarterdeck, from which was conducted by day and night the countryside and unceasing subterranean "hedgehog" tournament in all the Operations Rooms of Britain that was the nerve system first of the defence and then of the counter-offensive.

Development of a situation at sea, on the other hand, is a much slower process when time and distance are measured by the hour and the nautical mile. And there is always to be considered the good sailor's reluctance to function above High Water Mark. If the Navy can be persuaded to disembark they have hitherto preferred to stay on the beach or, at most, on some height of land from which the sea is visible without recourse to the telescope.

Accordingly, Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory very strongly advocated that the Supreme Allied Commander's main headquarters be installed here by Stanmore in the group of very suitable buildings at Bushey Heath. Note the name.

To the precise details of what immediately followed I cannot bear personal witness since I was obliged to spend Christmas, 1943, and the following week in hospital. The fact that this particular hospital is normally devoted to the care of those afflicted with mental illness had no direct bearing on the situation. It was simply that to this place had been evacuated from London the in-patients' department of the Military Hospital at Millbank, which had been damaged by the enemy's bombardment. Meanwhile, General Bedell Smith had arrived from Algiers in the part of December to General Eisenhower. He had an immense amount of work to get through in a limited time. Somewhere

down,

down the line had been put forward the suggestion that a very suitable location for General Eisenhower's Headquarters could be provided, with little alteration work, by the United States Army in Corps who, in the course of reshaping their set-up for the battle were about to evacuate most of the big installation near Kingston-on-Thames only ten miles or so west of London at a place called Bushey Park. Get that name too.

One of our British staff, I dare say, immediately appreciated the difference, and no American had probably heard of either. By the time we got around to appreciating the situation a force of some battalions of United States Engineers had descended on Bushey Park and dirt, trucks, bulldozers, bricks and mortar, hats, ammunition, bedding of an eye the fact was seen put to headle, and so forth, were flying in uncontrolled directions. In the twinkling of an eye the matter had assumed military terms: "My god," he said, "I've married the wrong woman!" He said, so Bushey Park it had to be, instead of Bushey Heath. We could not afford the time, labour and material that a change would have involved.

This contrivance seems worthy of record. Success was achieved in spite of all the awkwardness of the layout of the command his attention in the matter. But when the time came for the discussion of events in order to decide principles therefrom for future use, I believe much care will be necessary in weighing the available evidence on this particular point. Had General Eisenhower's main headquarters been set up at Bushey Heath instead of at Bushey Park, the difficulties of Supreme Command of the air forces and so those of the Air Commander-in-Chief would have been so much the less. There would have remained the difficulty for the Air Commander-in-Chief of working closely with the St. Paul's School, Brompton, in West London. This duty was laid upon me, it will be remembered in the first instance, and it is something that was later confirmed by General Eisenhower. And in considering the command set-up for operation "OVERLORD" it must not be forgotten that the question was one of a United States commander commanding a combined United States and British expedition composed of all arms and services of both nations and to be launched from the very heart of Britain.

At the end of 1943 the move to a new headquarters for SHAEF, away from central London, was becoming urgent. As Lt Gen Morgan was in hospital at this crucial time, the decision to move to Bushy Park was taken by General Sir Allen Brook, British Chief of the General Staff, and General Bedell Smith, General Eisenhower's American Chief of Staff on 8 January 1944. This was much to the annoyance of Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, the British Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Expeditionary Air Force who was based at the RAF's headquarters in Stanmore, two miles from HQ VIII Fighter Command USAAF at Bushey Hall (Bushey Heath?).

In February 1951, Eric de Normann, who from 1943 was deputy secretary of the Ministry of Works and whose department was responsible for the Royal Parks, stated that he had "never heard of the Bushey Heath story as told by General Morgan. I am a little sceptical of it; however, you will note the conclusion which General Morgan draws that had the Bushy Park Camp been closer to the American Command, the difficulties would have been less."

Friends of Bushy and Home Parks D-Day commemorative event - A3 Information sheets



Short facts about Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF)

When was it established?

Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force was formally established in London in mid-February 1944, but it had been in the process of development for more than two years.

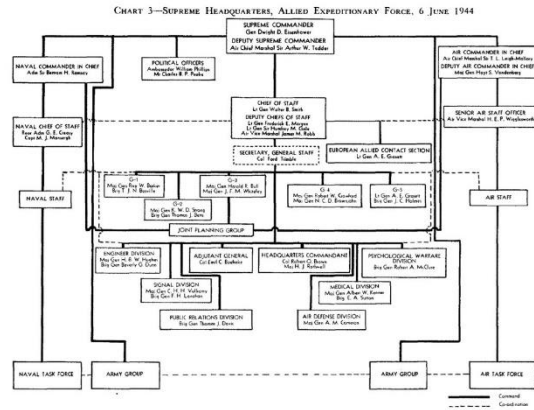
Why was it set up?

It drew its basic principles of organization and many of its key personnel from two headquarters which had been established many months before. One of these, Allied Force Headquarters (AFHQ), had served as General Eisenhower's command post in the Mediterranean theatre. The other, Headquarters Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander (COSSAC), had been established in the spring of 1943 to plan the cross-Channel attack and to serve as the nucleus for the ultimate Supreme Headquarters. SHAEF was engaged primarily in high-level planning.

What were its constituents?

SHAEF was broken down into divisions that were based on the US administrative system.

- G1 Personnel: Allocation of personnel and administrative policy among the Allied forces.
 - G2 Intelligence: Received estimates and information from the armies and the army groups, from resistance groups, either directly or indirectly, and from reports of the Office of Strategic Services and the Political Warfare Executive.
 - G3 Planning and Operations: The nerve centre of SHAEF. They made estimates of the current situation, outlined plans for all future operations, and made detailed plans for the post-hostilities period. Key divisions were Plans and Operations, Training and Experimental, Staff duties, Artillery, Map and Surveys, and Meteorological.
 - G4 Services of Supply: To help determine priorities, allocate supplies, and assign space at railways, ports, airfields and other facilities to the various services.
 - G5 Civil Affairs: In liberated territories, the British and US forces were to exercise military authority until the enemy's defeat, but would agree to the maintenance of law and order by the liberated peoples with necessary aid from the United States and Great Britain. Key divisions were Fiscal Affairs, Economic Affairs, Relief, Supplies, Government Affairs, and Personnel and Training.
- Psychological Division: Consolidation of propaganda operations, reserved specifically to SHAEF, including the collection of psychological warfare information; the operation or control and servicing of local newspapers, radio stations, and motion picture houses; distribution of propaganda literature and displays; and liaison with various headquarters on psychological warfare matters.
- Signals Division: The division examined the requirements of British and US forces for signal personnel and equipment, and helped work out policy and priorities relative to the issuance of equipment. It prepared frequency allotments for radios and co-ordinated radar plans and operations, codes and cipher systems to be used by forces under SHAEF, all operating procedures, and all wire and cable systems in the United Kingdom and the projected areas of operations. Much of this work was done through a Combined Signal Committee of which the SHAEF chief signal officer was chairman.



Source: UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II, The European Theatre of Operations, THE SUPREME COMMAND by Forrest C. Pogue, 1953

