



PARHAM AIRFIELD MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

December 2020 - January 2021



Registered Charity Number 284146

From our Chairman

It is my pleasure to introduce for you the December 2020 edition of our newsletter. I hope this finds you and your families well in these challenging times.

The museum has remained closed to the public owing to the health crisis, but we have been able to welcome some researchers to view our exhibits. In addition, our archivist has responded to various requests for further information that we have received from relatives of veterans.

A recent highlight was our invitation to participate in the annual 390th Bombardment Group Reunion, organised by our friends at the 390th Memorial Museum in Tucson, Arizona. This was a very successful Zoom meeting. Congratulations to the organisers, who had put so much effort into preparing a most enjoyable event. It was a great privilege to be able to see and talk with some of the 390th veterans and their families.

Recent visitors included John Bridges, a local historian with specialist knowledge of the Framlingham area. He has been most helpful in making us aware of some fascinating local archive material. John was accompanied by David Sims, author of "A very Dangerous Locality: The Landscape of the Suffolk Sandlings in the Second World War." David is Honorary Research Fellow at the University of East Anglia. His book is well worth a read: it gives a fascinating, inter-disciplinary insight into how the war affected the local coastline.

As we reported in previous newsletters, the enforced closure has enabled us to work on fitting out the new building. During this project we strive to maintain the wartime atmosphere which so many of you value. Just a few paint colours are used: they match those originally specified by the wartime authorities.

Every Wednesday and Sunday a small, dedicated working party led by Martin Scripps continues the building project. The new building exceeds building regulations and environmental requirements, with effective insulation and an air source heat pump supplying under floor heating.

The display cabinets are now in place, with new collections of exhibits and modern style labelling. New information boards have been produced for the walls. The additional space allows us to feature weapons and uniforms in 360-degree glass display cabinets. Other large exhibits such as automatic weapons, stretchers and flags are also highlighted in their own space. The display hall is lit by modern LEDs, but when we are open the strip lights give way to bulbs in shades that mimic those used during the war. We now have an Anderson Shelter too, manufactured largely from original parts found on the farm.

The same working party also addresses improvements in other parts of the museum. Once one area has been completed, the next seems to need attention, so the work plan does not get shorter! For example, the entrance hall has been refurbished, displays modernised and reorganised in the Moller corridor, and visual presentations improved on the first floor of the tower. We are about to start on the barrack room and have decided to replace the blackout curtains. We don't want a complaint from the air raid warden!

All the above improvements have been carried out with mainly volunteer labour, using our own skills and utilising the resources we have been generously given. The final stage will be the addition of an extra section to house the jeep and provide winter storage for artefacts from the replica Operational Base. We hope to start on this early in the New Year.

Best wishes to you all for Christmas and 2021. We hope that you and your loved ones will have some time together and keep safe. We plan to open in April as normally as is allowed, so very much look forward to welcoming you back to Parham.

Peter Senior

From our President

The team, encouraged by the enthusiasm and dedication of our chairman, have worked so hard painting and kitting out the new building and have stayed upbeat throughout these strange times.

We have managed to keep within budget and really appreciate the funding from the Moller Foundation along with some very generous individual donations and the proceeds from a sponsored walk by the 95th BG re-enactors group together with our online shop sales. We were exempted from business rates for the year, and our local council also gave us a grant to help us cope with the lost income from being closed.

Here's to hoping 2021 will be a better year than 2020 for our visitors. There will be lots of improvements to see. Thanks to the efforts of our volunteer team we have a museum to be really proud of and we look forward to showing our new displays to the public once more.

Peter Kindred

New building Photo Journal

Our volunteer crew has been beavering away to continue internal work in the new building.

We have enjoyed showing you the improvements and progress over the year in this newsletter. We are now looking forward to re-opening and showing the new building off to visitors old and new.



Remembering an English Christmas in the 1940s

Christmas for my sister and I in the 1940s didn't really begin until Christmas Eve. Although for my mother and father it started early. My dad used to raise cockerels which were fattened up to be sold at Christmas. We used to have one for Christmas dinner with all home grown vegetables. We lived on a farm so we had plenty of room to be self-supporting.

Around November my mother would make the Christmas puddings. These consisted of flour, salt, eggs, sultanas, raisins and currants blended together with stout (an English type of beer). The ingredients were turned into basins, covered with a cloth and boiled for 3 to 4 hours each.

On Christmas Eve, when my sister and I went to bed, we would take a pillowcase and a large sock with us. Our presents would be put in the pillowcase and the sock would usually contain an apple, an orange and some nuts- all put in there by Father Christmas. On the morning of Christmas Day when we came downstairs the living room would be decorated with paper chains, coloured lanterns and bells. And in the center stood a Christmas tree decorated with tinsel, sweets and candies (no coloured electric lights back then). As you can imagine, during the War there were no toys as such so our presents mainly consisted of board games and books. Christmas dinner was roasted cockerel and all the vegetables, finishing up with the Christmas pudding. In the pudding my mother would put three silver penny coins, wrapped in ovenproof paper (which we had to give back). Sometimes brandy was poured over the pudding and set on fire. In the afternoon we played with our new games, but at 3 o'clock everything stopped so that we could listen to the King's speech on the wireless (no television then).

Christmas tea would consist of sandwiches and tinned fruit like peaches or apricots if my mother was lucky enough to get any at the grocers, if not it was fruit which she had bottled during the season. After tea, the family played board games or card games.

Christmas was usually the only time we were allowed to stay up late, so we were able to have supper. This consisted of home cooked ham, cold meat and home-grown pickles and sauces. Then it was off to bed.

All in all I think that Christmas was far more special then as it did not start as early as it does now. Children were more content with ordinary toys and games (no computers, iPods or Playstation games). Today's Christmas celebrations are too commercialised and have lost these simple pleasures that brought families together.



Mick Tipple
Retired RAF

Easy Online Fundraising

Amazon Smile

If you are doing any shopping from Amazon, please go through our 'Amazon Smile' page and we will get a donation at no extra cost to you. Please remember us as you do your last-minute Christmas shopping and save our link to your shortcuts for you to use throughout the year.

<https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/284146-0>

Ebay's Big Charity Sell

We have signed up to eBay's Big Charity Sell. Ebay sellers who donate a percentage of their sales to Parham Airfield Museum during this campaign, will have their donations matched by Ebay, up to a total of £350,000.

In addition, eBay for Charity is encouraging its millions of customers to support the causes they care about this Christmas, with eBay matching £5 for every £1 donated to charity through Community Giving, up to a total of £500,000.

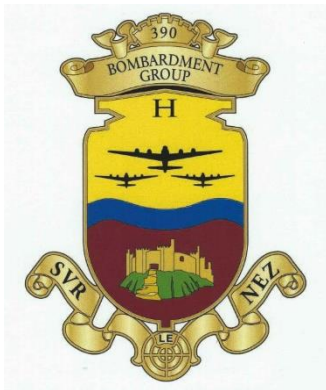
When listing items, please click the "Make a Donation" box, enter 'Parham Airfield Museum' and the percentage of your sale proceeds that you would like to donate.



We Continue to Remember



Covid-19 put a stop to our normal Remembrance Service with Framlingham College but a small, socially-distanced contingent held a 2 minutes silence after laying a wreath at the Tower.



MEET THE VETERANS

Are you a 390th Veteran? We would love to share your stories of the war and hear about your life after the war. Please send us articles and photos for submission in a future newsletter. Also, please let us know when you will be celebrating a birthday so that we can share your special day.

Sunset over the Control Tower 10th November 2020

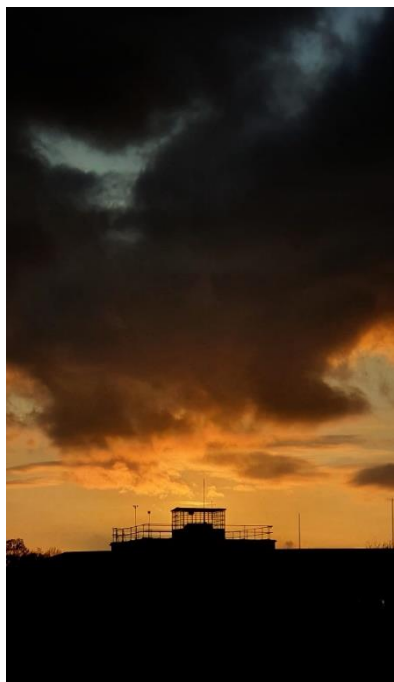


Photo Credit: Simon Parker

FROM OUR ARCHIVIST

Airmen Project and Faces of the 390th

I thought it would be an idea to update you on my search for the faces of 'our boys' who didn't make it home.

Of the 743 names that I am currently researching, I have found faces of 454! Some are official portrait photographs kindly sent to me by relatives, others are clipped from crew photos and newspaper articles.

I am gradually working my way through the list, and not only searching for photographs but also their enlistment record, draft record and interment record.

Some of them are very good at hiding, so if you have any photographs of the following, I would be very grateful for a copy to add to our archive.

William Alford

Edwin C Booth Jr.

John A Cederlind

Lloyd Barnes

Herbert F Burger

Leslie C Chavet

Rodger Beckman

McKinnon Cameron

Robert E Collins

Ralph Beighley

Patrick Caron

Raymond W Conaway

George Betz

Irvin W Casey

William Conrad

Thank you



GENERAL SUMMARY

December 1944

Adverse weather, including rime icing conditions and dense fog during the early days of the German break-through in the Ardennes, held the 390th to six missions up to the 24th December, but with the break in the weather that followed, the Group flew seven missions in eight days to bring its total for the month to thirteen.

Bombing, was performed visually on seven missions, PFF or M-H technique was employed on five and one mission was abandoned. Four missions were considered successful, one partially successful, three unsuccessful and for five, results are unknown. Losses include seven aircraft missing in action, six of them brought down by enemy anti-aircraft fire and one lost and never heard from after take-off. Another aircraft crashed in the village of Parham a few seconds after take-off probably due to icing conditions. The entire crew was killed, but although six of its bombs exploded, no civilian casualties occurred. This loss is classed as an accident, the only one for the month. In addition to the nine men killed in this crash 65 are listed as missing in action and five wounded in action.

Three aircraft made emergency landings on the Continent, the crews later returning to base, and are listed as abandoned.

No claims for destruction of enemy aircraft were reported.

26 new crews were processed and given ground and air training during the month, with 20,645 hours of training time reported, the greatest number yet accomplished. Total crew strength was brought up to 100 on two occasions.



AIRMAN OF THE MONTH DECEMBER



ROBERT JOSEPH DE ORSAY

10th January 1925 – 25th December 1944

Robert was born in Uxbridge Massachusetts and enlisted into the USAAF on 30 June 1943. He trained as an Engineer and Top Turret gunner and was killed on his twenty-third mission from Station 153.

On Mission 230 to Morscheid Bridge Germany, Robert was part of the crew of A/C44-8323 'Blonde Bombshell'. Aircraft 323 received a direct hit from flak in its no.4 engine, which flew off in pieces. The aircraft made a shallow peel off to the right with the wing on fire. It went into a loose then tight spin and exploded at about 20,000 feet.

Robert is buried at the American War Cemetery in Luxembourg and remembered on a memorial in St Mary's Cemetery in his home town. He died on Christmas Day. He was 19.



GENERAL SUMMARY

January 1945

Fourteen Operational missions in January brought the Group's total close to the 250 mark. Five missions were flown in the first seven days of the month, reflecting the effort made to hammer communication centers behind the Belgian bulge. Seven missions are considered strategic, the remainder tactical, with five successful, three partially successful, two unsuccessful and four in which results are unknown.

As an indication of improving weather conditions bombing was accomplished visually on seven missions. H2X was employed on four missions and Micro-H on the other three.

As in previous months the Group suffered the bulk of its losses in one days operations. On the Derben mission of 14 January loose formation setup ideal conditions for an enemy fighter attack and when more than 100 FW190's and ME 109's took advantage of the opportunity; the entire low squadron was wiped out. Nine aircraft failed to return from the mission, but returning aircraft were officially credited with destroying 23 German fighters, probably destroying two others and damaging four. The Group lost three additional bombers during the month and another was destroyed in a crash landing on the Continent, the crew later returning to base.

Personnel losses include 83 men missing in action, seven wounded in action and three killed in action. Seven aircraft made emergency landings on the Continent and had not returned as of the last of the month.

Nineteen replacement combat crews were processed and given ground and air training before becoming operational. A total of 17,431 hours of ground training time was reported to higher headquarters, including new crew, old crew and lead crew training.



AIRMAN OF THE MONTH

JANUARY



JAMES ROBERT KIDD

17th October 1917 – 14th January 1945

James was born in Kentucky and enlisted into the USAAF on 15 March 1943. He was a Waist Gunner and was killed on his twelfth mission from Station 153.

Robert was flying in A/C43-38526 Big Gas Bird. The aircraft was lost during intense fighter attacks on the bombing stream by over 100 FW190's and ME109's at about 12:40. Reports after the war from the survivors of the crew state that James was hit in the chest by a 20mm shell and died in the plane prior to its crashing.

James is buried at the Ardennes American Cemetery. He was 27.



BRITISH RESISTANCE ORGANISATION MUSEUM

Donation of SAS Diary to the BRO Museum

The museum has been privileged to have in its possession the Denison smock used by Stanley 'Buster' Hayes when he jumped into France on Operation Houndsworth. Buster was a former auxilier in the Boston Patrol before joining 1st SAS and the smock was donated by his son Colin Hayes.



Colin and his sister Gwen Manning have now added to their father's display a copy of the SAS Diary. This diary gives details of all SAS operations from its inauguration to disbandment. It includes all personnel involved in each operation, details of the operation and copies of the after-action reports and will be an invaluable research tool.

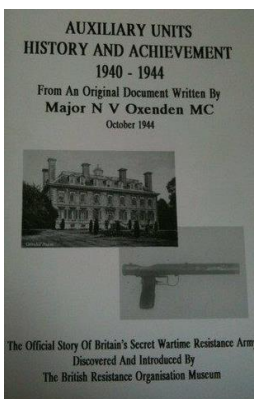
As well as the diary, Colin and Gwen have donated a complete set of books

giving details of all SAS casualties of the Second World War showing their final resting place or where they are commemorated. These will, of course, include former auxiliars known to have served with the SAS.

This is an extremely generous donation and the diary will be taking pride of place in the new exhibition room where we tell the story of the link between the Auxiliary Units and the SAS.



**Chris Pratt
Curator**



Our British Resistance Auxiliary Units Booklets have been selling at an unprecedented rate this year. It's great to see that this subject is gaining recognition and people are interested to find out more about 'Churchill's secret army'.

We only have a few copies left of our re-print of this unique resource.

Hands Face Space



Our Auxilier is Covid-safe

Next Month

We will look back to the origins of the Museum and the original volunteers who began the Control Tower's restoration in 1976.

Photo Credit: Bob Jesko



Wishing all our readers a Happy Christmas and best wishes for the New Year.

We would like to thank you for your continued support.

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www.parhamairfieldmuseum.co.uk

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