

PARHAM AIRFIELD MUSEUM NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY-MARCH 2020



Registered Charity Number 284146

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

The weather has done all it can to hinder progress of the new building. The construction team were grateful for the safety netting whilst the roof was being erected with Storm Dennis raging- luckily it wasn't needed but it certainly provided comfort in being there. Yesterday we saw all four seasons in one day- snow and sleet, rain, a small glimmer of sunshine and plenty of gusty winds. As winter visitors to the airfield will vouch, the winds really do blow very strongly and bitterly up here. We've battled to continue building through Storms Brendan, Ciara and Dennis- and we are very much looking forward to warmer weather.

We had some concrete left over from the footings so have laid the base pad for our Anderson Shelter that we hope to build later this summer- see centre of photo below.

We would like to thank all our supporters who have kindly donated funds to help with the new building. As is the case with these sorts of projects, we have come up against several unforeseen- or larger than we budgeted for- costs so your donations have proved very helpful. Some problems incurred so far include larger than anticipated Building Control fees, having to knock-down and re-build a new wall to remove accumulated floodwater and builders being on site but not being able to work due to weather conditions. We are hoping the weather will turn soon and progression will be easier.



*This photo shows 4 eras of museum buildings.
We continue to improve and expand!*

RECENT VISITORS

Ken & Susan Wenzel visited the museum earlier this month.



The Hand of Fate...

The Wenzels called on us by chance whilst I was working on the new build- the museum was shut so ordinarily there would have been no one there to meet them. Ken told me his father John was a co-pilot here from August 1943 through to January 1944 and that he completed his 25 missions, mainly on "*Blood, Guts and Rust*". Ken mentioned that on the Regensburg mission, following a long time circling into formation and returning home, they suffered flack damage, ran out of fuel and ditched in the Mediterranean 60 miles off the N. African coast. They were saved by a British patrol boat and were issued with white sailors jumpers to help them evade capture.



Ken enjoyed looking at our MACR reports in the library. By amazing coincidence, when Ken picked up the September 1943 file, it fell open on the page of his father's mission, which reported on the safe return of all of the crew.

Ken then went on to tell us that his father enjoyed a drink or two to relax. Lt Wenzel had an accident returning from the pub in Framlingham one night and wounded his head. His crew were due to fly the Munster mission the next morning, but Lt. Wenzel's bandage meant that his oxygen mask would not fit properly and thus he could not fly that morning.

The Munster mission on 10th October 1943 achieved a record 62 enemy planes destroyed- the highest recorded by any bomb group. But it was not without cost. Eight 390th B-17s were lost, including the one which Lt. Wenzel should have been co-piloting.

Ken told us that his father rarely discussed his war experiences on his return to the USA.

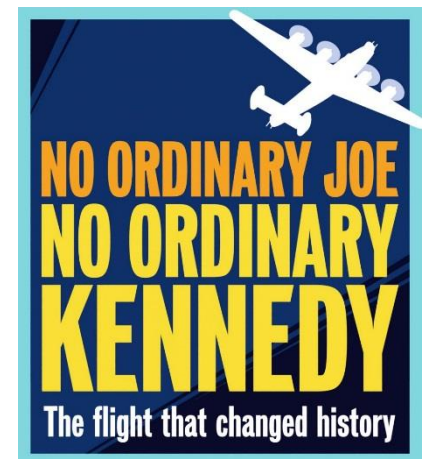
Peter Kindred

ADVANCE NOTICE

A new play commissioned to honour the bravery of Joe Kennedy Jnr and commemorate VE Day will be showing at Parham Airfield Museum on Saturday 9th May at 4pm and 7pm.

Tickets can be purchased from our tea shop when we are open again, or from the website below:-

<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/ink-festival/ink-on-tour-no-ordinary-joe-no-ordinary-kennedy/e-jmgqpk>



We anticipate that there will be high demand for the play, so please get your tickets early to avoid disappointment.

The museum will be open on Friday 8th May for the 75th VE Day Bank Holiday. Why not come along and have a look at our Joe Kennedy exhibition to set the scene for the play?

VISITOR COMMENTS

Each month we will be sharing some comments our visitors have provided verbally, in our guest books and on Trip Advisor. Please keep the reviews coming- you might see your own comments one month!

“A visit to Parham Airfield will never cease to please. Walk around and marvel at the exhibits and set-pieces. Examine the collection of many rare photographs with their relevant carefully prepared captions. Thumb through the excellent and illustrated guidebook.

Almost to the detriment of the volunteers, their work has been so good and detailed that scarcely a visitor will pause and dwell on the sheer physical efforts required to create this loving- and living- museum. They have made it all look too easy.”

Thanks to everyone who contributed Trip Advisor reviews, our 2019 certificate has now arrived and you can see it on display in our tea room.

We have already received some reviews in 2020, despite not yet being open for the season. Please keep them coming- it would be great to get another 'Certificate of Excellence' in 2020.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our A.G.M will be held on Sunday 22nd March at 10am in the tearoom. A new committee will be elected, as well as reviewing the end-of-year accounts and receiving officers' reports.

All are welcome and hot drinks will be provided.



Why We Must Remember

Try and cast your minds back 75 years. It is March 1945. The war still had two more months to run before the German forces finally surrendered on 8th May 1945 and the 390th Bomb Group was still flying missions deep into Germany. There were still losses, but not as great as the losses during the early 390th BG history in the second half of 1943.

It is with this in mind that we must not forget what happened over 75 years ago. That's why the 390th Memorial Air Museum was started- to remember the men of the 390th Bomb Group and all the Allied Air Forces of the War.

Mick Tipple

NEW BUILDING

Since our last newsletter, the new building has made good progression, but not as much as we would have hoped- with all the wet and windy weather we have had, we are behind schedule. The underfloor heating pipes have just been installed. We can't plaster the external walls when they are wet, and now have to wait for the floor to be concreted and then to dry before we can do anything else internally.

We have less than 2 months until our season opening so know that it will be tight but are doing all we can to get the building finished in time.

Watch this space!

From this....



To this...



.... To a building with walls



and a roof frame

Look forward to seeing more progress in our next edition!

Volunteer at the Museum

If you could spare a few days a year to go on our duty roster, please get in touch. Parham Airfield Museum is run solely by volunteers. We have no members of staff, and rely on individual's giving their time and enthusiasm to welcome visitors and show people around the museum during its opening months.

Volunteering has become a "must-have" for younger people going into higher education and is an attractive option for retirees looking to give something back whilst also keeping themselves active and their brains engaged!

Make new friends, increase your skills and learn more about your local history.

For more information please email parhamairfield@yahoo.co.uk

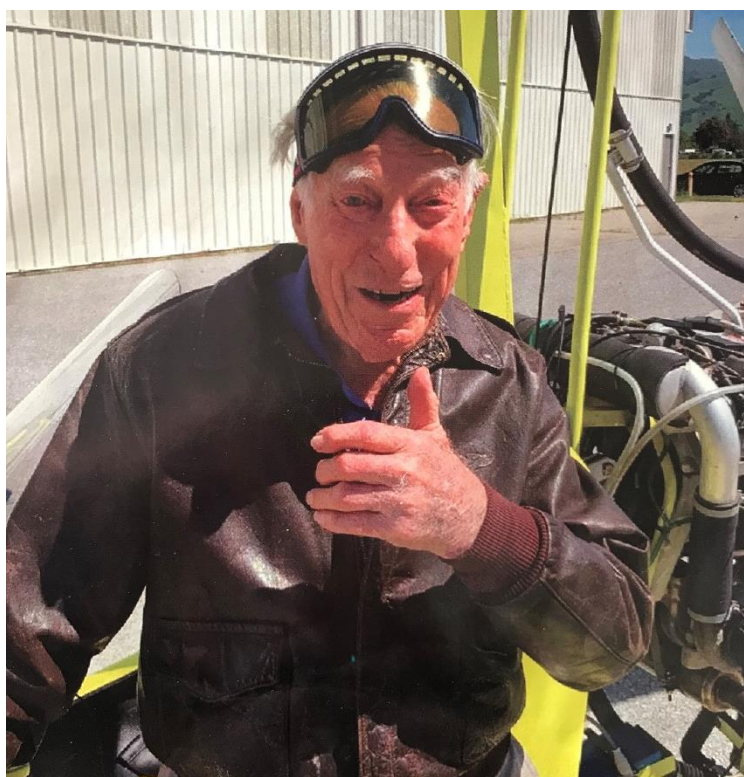


Sky Dive for 390th Birthday Boy

To celebrate his 100th birthday last year, 390th Veteran Charles “Chuck” Baker went on a skydiving adventure. Chuck was a pilot with the 390th, and wore his WWII flight jacket for the dive. His headgear was the pneumatic intercom that he used for his initial training!

Chuck remarked “From the first day in the Air Force, every time I sat in the cockpit of the plane I would fly, I buckled on a parachute. We were given instructions of use but I never had to abandon an airplane”. Having never had to deploy his parachute during the war, Chuck was glad to take the opportunity of using a parachute for pleasure.

Somewhat unsurprisingly, Chuck was the first 100-year-old jumper that the Sky diving company had ever had.



Chuck comes in for a soft landing.

Thumbs up: Chuck looking very happy after his dive.

101
HAPPY
BIRTHDAY

Chuck has now vowed to make this an annual event! His only regret about the dive was that he had forgotten to take any champagne with him for after the jump- something he plans on rectifying this year. Chuck celebrates his 101st birthday this month- we look forward to hearing if he manages another dive.

On behalf of everyone at Parham- we wish you many happy returns Chuck. You truly are a legend and an inspiration to us all.

Kath Kindred

ORAL HISTORY

Each month, we share some stories that we have been told by visitors to the museum. We hope you enjoy reading these memories and keeping the oral history alive.

I was an apprentice electrician aged 16 when I helped do the wiring on the new Framlingham base. I worked for a sub-contractor who did work for one of the two big building firms that had the contract, Haymill's I think. We did a 12 hour day, 7am to 7pm and I had to cycle 10 miles to and from work!

Cigarettes were plentiful in those days and the airmen often gave me some. One day I acquired an almost full packet and smoked the lot on the ride home. I was sick as a dog. My Dad got very angry with me and I have never smoked since.

All the wiring was very primitive by modern standards. Just single insulation wires and china insulators. No health and safety stuff then! The Nissen huts were easy because we just put the lights onto the timber that ran along the ceiling. I helped wire the tower too. That was much more difficult. The bricks were very hard and we had no power drills. In those days we used a Rawlplug tool, which you bashed in with a hammer, twisting as it entered. The steel shards used to break off and I reckon I still have some in my wrists. It was very slow. We held the wires in place on internal corners with metal that we had to bend to shape on our knee. That hurt too if you were doing it all day!

I was employed at the base for over a year, including for quite a long time after the Americans had moved in. I did a lot of wiring work on the Link Trainer. I had a go and it was in fact quite simple once you got the idea of blind flying on a few basic instruments. The pilots were supposed to re qualify on it regularly, but many didn't need to because they did not last long. The worst raid I remember was, I think, to Schweinfurt. I had got to know the lads in a group of six planes and only one came home.

They very often fired red flares as they came back in because they needed the ambulance. One day I remember a badly damaged plane made a belly landing on the perimeter track. He was badly shot up and could not make it to the proper runway. There was blood everywhere. That was awful, but as a young lad I watched fascinated at those frequent landings without wheels. The propellers used to bend inwards on impact but always seemed to keep turning.

Peter Senior

+ + +

NEWSLETTER SIGN UP

If you have been forwarded this newsletter by a friend and would like to receive the newsletter directly, please click on the link below to sign up and ensure you don't miss any editions:

<http://eepurl.com/dM24L6>

Newsletter Mailing List

We aim to send out monthly newsletters with news from Parham Airfield Museum.

Email Address

First Name

Last Name

FROM OUR ARCHIVIST

AIRMAN OF THE MONTH FEBRUARY



WALTER MICHAEL MAYER

2nd October 1914 – 14th February 1945

Walter was born in Saint Augusta, Stearns County, Minnesota. He enlisted into the USAAF on 10 January 1944. He was a Radio Operator and was killed on his second mission from Station 153.

A/C265 left formation at 11:45hrs with #2 burning due to a sudden explosion. The 'prepare to bailout' signal was given and bail out bell rung at 11,000 feet. The Pilot told the crew to hold their jump until over land. The plane went in to a dive to about 7,000 feet which put the fire out. Five crew members (including Walter) bailed out before and during the dive. The aircraft with five crew members left on board returned safely back to base.

Walter is listed on the Tablets of the Missing at the American War Cemetery Margraten, and on a memorial stone at St Joseph Cemetery in his home County. He was 30.

✓	SERIAL NUMBER <i>9257</i>	1. NAME (Print) WALTER MICHAEL MAYER	ORDER NUMBER <i>1675</i>
2. ADDRESS (Print) <i>RFD #3 ST. CLOUD, STEARNS, MINN.</i>			
3. TELEPHONE <i>?</i>	4. AGE IN YEARS <i>24</i>	5. PLACE OF BIRTH <i>ST. AUGUSTA</i>	6. COUNTRY OF ORIGIN <i>U.S.</i>
7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS <i>M. J. JONATHAN - MAYER</i>			
8. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON <i>RFD #3 St. Cloud Stearns Minn</i>			
9. EMPLOYER'S NAME FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION, CENTRAL MONITORING STATION, GRAND ISLAND, NEBRASKA.			
11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS <i>Grand Island, Nebraska</i>			
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.			
REGISTRATION CARD 13-58, U. S. FORM 1 (Rev. 10-17-43)			



GENERAL SUMMARY FEBRUARY 1944

Twelve combat missions were flown in February, a new month's high for the group. While many of them were briefed for visual bombing, weather permitted only three visual bombing attacks. Strike attack photos prove that excellent bombing was done on these three, and later PRU photos show that the pathfinder technique also resulted in putting the bombs in the target area with outstanding accuracy in two of the attacks.

At the beginning of the month this Group had 61 B-17s assigned, of which 44 were operational. 11 additional Flying Fortresses were assigned during the month.

February was a cold month with excessive moisture, which affected aircraft maintenance in several ways. The moisture caused increased ignition and magneto trouble. The cold weather inevitably affected the engineering personnel working on the line. Most of the work had to be done without gloves and the parts of the aircraft and engines were so cold that they could be handled for only a short time before it became necessary for the airplane mechanic to stop work temporarily and warm his hands.

MARCH 1944

The 390th Bomb Group flew fifteen missions during March. Several of which were to Berlin. The Group lost 8 aircraft over the month.

Results of visual bombing were generally good. Rising columns of smoke through the clouds indicate that many of the Pathfinder attacks were highly successful, although the precise facts will not be available until PRU reports and photographs are received. Due in part to the record number of 15 combat operations for the month, records in maintenance were established.

Fifty-five (55) engine changes were made in March. Over 988,000 gallons of 100-octane gasoline were consumed. Because more missions were flown the periodic aircraft inspections occurred more frequently.

Both maintenance and supply were acutely affected by a fire on 26 March which quickly gutted the propeller and welding shop. Supplies, tool, instruments and equipment were destroyed by the fire. While the buildings were being reconstructed and equipped, the essential work was carried on in the open.

The unexpected landing at the base of 19 Halifax bombers on 18 March created a problem of billeting and feeding. Despite the housing shortage that exists the men were well cared for.

AIRMAN OF THE MONTH

MARCH



NORMAN BRUCE DAHLIN

9th December 1925 – 18th March 1945

Norman was born in Los Angeles, California. He enlisted into the USAAF on 21 January 1944. He was a Tail Gunner and was killed on his eighth mission from Station 153.

A/C600 was hit by flak after bombs away at the target. #3 engine was knocked out and the aircraft dropped out of formation under control. The aircraft continued to follow the formation for a time but thirty miles east of Berlin, the plane exploded in mid-air. Six crew members managed to bail out. Norman is believed to have been killed or wounded by flak over the target and therefore did not get a chance to bail out.

Norman is listed on the Tablets of the Missing at the American War Cemetery Ardennes. He was 19.

HEADSTONE INSCRIPTION AND INTERMENT RECORD											
INSCRIPTION (Print) (Name, Rank, Organization, State, Date of Death, Grave No.)											
NORMAN B. DAHLIN SGT 568 BOMB SQ 390 BOMB GP (H) CALIFORNIA MAR 18 1945 24											
INSCRIPTION (Stall) (Service Number)											
19215228											
REMARKS (OPTIONAL) NEUVILLE 1202											
GRAVE NO. 1202 ROW 5 GRAVE 24 <input type="checkbox"/> 1st D <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER											
CODE 1 BACK 1 SEX RELIGION AM PH											
TEMPORARY GRAVE NO. 1260 A.C.N. EE ROW 11 GRAVE 265 A.I. NUMBER 9838 ROW 1											
NAME AND ADDRESS OF NEAREST OF KIND (FATHER) MR. WALTER DAHLIN (FATHER) R. F. D. #3, BOX 1944 LAFAYETTE, CAL.											
REMARKS											
EMZ											

Jennie Smith

BRITISH RESISTANCE ORGANISATION MUSEUM

OBITUARY FOR SHEILA TREVASKIS – SDS RADIO OPERATOR

Sheila Trevaskis (Lady Trevaskis) died on 15th December 2019, aged 99. After the war she married Kennedy Trevaskis, a colonial administrator, and travelled with him on his many postings including to Eritrea, Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Aden. In 1963, at RAF Khormaksar Aden, she was extremely lucky to avoid death, when a grenade attack on her husband, the High Commissioner, killed another woman standing between her and the blast. Sir Kennedy survived the blast, but his deputy, George Henderson, died from his injuries a few days later. Sir Kennedy remained High Commissioner in Aden until 1965 and died in 1990.

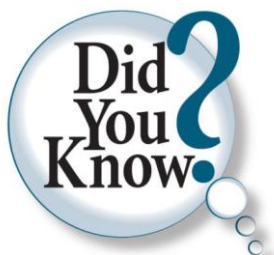
In December 1942, the then Sheila Harrington joined the ATS, aged 22 and, after training, was selected for a role in the Auxiliary Units. The Telegraph obituary states that on 21st July 1943 she was interviewed by Beatrice Temple and accepted for SDS. After signals training with MI6 and at Coleshill, she was sent to Alnwick in Northumberland. Her post was in the Heiferlaw Zero Station next to the A1, north of Alnwick, from where she would have taken part in exercises and relaying of dummy radio reports.

With the 'Stand Down' of the Auxiliary Units at the end of 1944, Sheila left the ATS and returned to civilian life.

Taken from Daily Telegraph obituary 21st January 2020 with further information from coleshillhouse.com

Chris Pratt

+ + +



The 390th completed 301 daylight missions, and lost 186 B-17s in total.

742 aircrew were Killed in Action or Missing in Action, and 731 were taken prisoner of war.



Newsletter Editor Lydia Kirk
parhamairfield@yahoo.co.uk