

PARHAM *Winter 2022/23*

Airfield Museum

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN...

It is my pleasure to introduce the first edition of our newsletter for 2023. I hope that you have been able to enjoy a fun and relaxing Christmas season with friends and family despite these challenging times.

2022 was very busy and successful for the museum. We continue to receive various donations of funds and artefacts, which are all most welcome. The new items will work their way into our various displays once they have been accessioned, although space is becoming an issue despite our recently completed new building!

It was a pleasure to welcome so many visitors this year, a total of 5101 including 957 children. The new mini-series of *Masters of the Air* is expected to generate yet more interest in air museums when it has been released. During the season we had organised parties from the Museum of the Mighty Eighth in Savannah, Georgia, and the National Museum of World War Two in New Orleans. These groups are accompanied by professional staff and an historian. It is great to enjoy a working relationship with such museums and we look forward to further joint projects. A special treat for us is when the relatives of veterans visit.

A recent special opening was for a small group of filmmakers, who wanted to take a good look at the British Resistance area and in particular our replica Operational Base. They are at the detailed preparation stage and wish to make the items used in the film as realistic as possible.

Our volunteer working parties have been busy since the close of the season with routine maintenance and various other improvement tasks. Keeping water out of “temporary” 1940s buildings is an ongoing challenge! Recently we have also been giving special attention to additional safety measures, which are increasingly necessary in our present era. For example, the upper floors of the tower now have an additional guard rail and other precautions to help prevent any accidents.

Next season will soon be upon us, with our first public opening on Sunday 2nd April. We expect to have again visits from museum and school groups. We have recently recruited a few new volunteers, but more would be welcome! Please let us know if you can help or can put us in contact with someone who may be interested in getting involved.

A highlight of the 2023 season will be Sunday 2nd July, when we will again have a gathering for military vehicles and classic cars. Fiona Denny will be performing in the afternoon with the singing group *Station 366*. In the morning, we will welcome Martlesham Ukulele Group to sing and play some wartime favourites.

Please continue to keep in touch with us and do share this newsletter with your friends. If they would like to receive their own copy, it is very easy to enter email details on our secure website.

We send our best wishes to you all for 2023 and hope to see many of you again during the year.

Peter Senior

Hidden History

Following 77 years of farming and draining the aerodrome fields we found it incredible that the construction of a solar park required a very thorough ordnance dig for unexploded bombs before work could begin.

The initial survey comprised a test run with a metal detecting boom on a low ground pressure vehicle which plotted over 2000 positive readings by GPS on the map. Each of these were then excavated using metal detectors to direct the digging operation. It involved two hydraulic diggers and a team of sorters to examine the findings at each site.

It is not surprising that no unexploded bombs were detected but, interestingly, as well as broken bits of farm equipment, on many sites large collections of small aircraft parts



were discovered. They also found live 50 calibre bullets along with flare carcasses, the hinges from the ammunition boxes and many empty shells. The live bullets were taken away for safe detonation but we are looking into selling some of the empty shells (right of photo) later in the year– keep an eye out in our shop and on our eBay store if you would like to own your own piece of 390th history.

Photo above, in top left corner, shows flare carcasses. These were used by aircraft crews with wounded on board to give them priority landing.



Above left, more items that were found including ,shuttering pins, in the foreground.



Middle photo- underground electric cable joiner centre of photo.



Above right, six plastic dummy spark plugs were found. These had internal desiccant to stop cylinder corrosion and the name "PROTEK PLUG" on them. Does anyone know anything else about these?

It seems that pits were dug beside the hardstands where the B17s were parked and repaired, so that small pieces of wreckage and shells could be easily discarded. These pits gave us an interesting glimpse into activities on the base. We found lots of small pieces of aircraft aluminium, broken pipes, small accumulator type batteries and even an engine cylinder valve complete with its coil spring attached. Larger items buried included two old lorry tyres and a tangled section of heavy-duty security fencing. Regrettably, no major parts from a B17 were found. That site, where many large pieces of equipment were buried after the war, is not available for excavation; it sits under a conservation pine tree plantation on our neighbour's part of the airfield and its treasures will remain hidden.



Above, some of the intact bottles that were found besides the hardstandings, possibly for aspirin or aftershave.



Above, front 100s of empty 50 cal. shells. Live ones had to be disposed of officially. To the rear of the photo you can see an old mess tin and mug.



On the casing of each shell there is a code. Most seem to be 5L 43 but there are also M 43 , 5M 43, 5K 43.

Does anyone have any information about what these codes mean?

Peter Kindred

The Highs and Lows of Hardstand 13

This hardstand was part of a dispersal complex on the north side of the airfield located adjacent to the perimeter track between runway 10 (main) and runway 17 (one of the alternate runways). These hardstands were used exclusively by B-17's assigned to the 569th Bomb Squadron 390th Bomb Group.

The life and times of hardstand 13 are typical of other dispersals and its story is outlined below.

Period	Sqdn	Serial No	Code Name	Comments
7/43 – 16/12/43	569 BS	42-30348	CC-N Royal Flush	Group original. MIA 16/12/43
1/44 – 2/6/44	569 BS	42-31512	CC-H Ice Cold Katie	Crashed Grundisburgh 2/6/44
6/44 – 1/8/44	569 BS	44-6099	CC-H No known name	CAT.E 1/8/44 Woodbridge
8/44 – 30/11/44	569 BS	43-38053	CC-W No known name	MIA 30/11/44
1/45 – 06/45	569 BS	43-38663	CC-M The Great McGinty	Returned to US July 45

Airmen were superstitious about the number 13. As a result some crewmen carried mascots, others performed certain rituals before boarding the aircraft or referred to their 13th combat operation as Mission 12A. By looking at the fate of the B-17's operating out of hardstand 13, one can understand why.

History of aircraft assigned to hardstand 13:

B17 F 42-30348 Coded CC-N named Royal Flush

Flown by 1st Lt William Royal and crew. This aircraft was amongst the air echelon that flew to Framlingham from the US in July 1943.

Its first mission was flown on the 12/8/43 with 1st Lt Royal's crew (officially known as Crew #13) on board. Over the target a falling bomb almost severed the tail turret. Luckily the Tail Gunner, Samuel E. Buckalew, was unscathed and # 348 returned to base. A reminder, if it was needed, of the risks facing aircrew.

Crew #13 completed their operational tour (25 missions) on 26/11/43. Flying 42-30348 out of hardstand 13. This was a first for the 390th BG, although this record had to be shared with 1st Lt G W Harmon's 570th BS crew who completed 25 missions on the same day.

The days of 42-30347 were numbered, and on 16/12/43 flak and enemy fighters forced 1st Lt Clarence A Gill and crew to abandon the aircraft before the target (Bremen), all 10 crew men became P.O.W's.

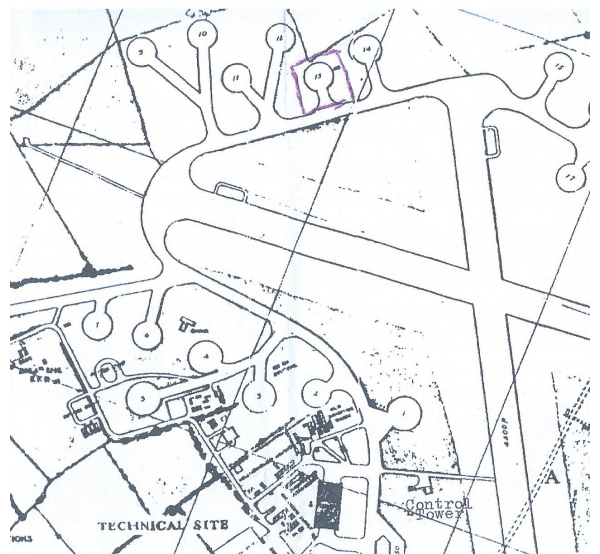
Royal Flush crashed near Augustfehn (WNW of Bad Zwischenahn) having completed 24 missions with only one mechanical abort.

The crew chief of hardstand 13 was M/Sgt James C Burton, seen on the photo to the left. *Photo credit USAAF.*

Right, hardstand 13 is to the top centre of this site plan and has been edged in red.



1/Lt. William A. Royal, right, Fortress pilot, congratulated his ground crew chief, T/Sgt. J.C. Burton, on the excellent job he is doing.



The next B17 to occupy hardstand 13 was B17 G 42-31512 coded CC-H and named Ice Cold Katie.

Arriving in January 1944 this aircraft flew its first mission on 24/1/44 and by June 1944 the aircraft had been credited with 32 sorties, being lovingly looked after by the capable crew chief, M/Sgt Burton.

Sadly, on June 2nd 1944, while on a non-operational flight to slow time a new engine, "Ice Cold Katie" collided with a tree and crashed at 1143 hours at Grundisburgh, Suffolk. Unfortunately the Crew Chief was amongst the ten fatalities. *The full story of this aircraft will be told in a future newsletter.*

The third resident was 44-6099 Coded CC-H 569th BS 390th BG No known name

The aircraft arrived at Station 153 in the early days of June 1944 and may have been allocated to hardstand 13 (based on codes, losses and vacant locations) although no available official records confirm this.

The aircraft made its operational debut on 5/6/44 and rapidly clocked up sorties without any aborts until German flak gunners inflicted severe damage on the 1st August 1944 at Tours, France. Lt Edwin Blevens nursed his B-17 back to the UK landing at the emergency airfield at Woodbridge, Suffolk, where it was classed category E and salvaged on the 6th August 1944. It had flown 23 missions.

Arriving in August 1944, 43-38053 became the penultimate occupant and was coded CC-W 569th BS

The aircraft flew its first mission on 9/9/44 to the Rheinmetall Borsig armament plant at Dusseldorf. On 30/11/44 during a mission to the infamous synthetic oil plants at Merseburg, 43-38053 received flak hits in the nose area just after bombs away. The co pilot was killed and the pilot 1st Lt Robert N Torrance was badly wounded.

After the war the survivors stated that they owed their lives to the pilot 1st Lt. Torrance, who stayed at the controls to make it possible for five crew to escape after refusing his parachute from the top turret gunner. The aircraft crashed at Grosskarna, 10 km of Weissenfels, Germany with four crew KIA and five P.O.W's, the aircraft was on its 23rd mission with no turn backs.

After the loss of 43-38053 on the 30/11/44 the vacant hardstand was occasionally used by 43-28247 Coded CC-S 569th BS during December 1944.

Although its principal dispersal was hardstand 14. Like many assets, hardstands would need maintenance with oil residues being burnt off or concrete surfaces being repaired.

During a mission to oil plants in the Hamburg area on 31/12/44 #247 was hit in the left wing by flak, which resulted in a wing fire and subsequent explosion. The aircraft crashed near Maschen, South East of Harburg, Germany. The pilot of this aircraft was 2nd Lt Walter Monit. Five of the crew were killed in action and four became P.O.W's. The aircraft was on its eighth mission.

On 1/1/45 the final occupant B-17 G 43-38633 Coded CC-M 569th BS, was delivered to Station 153, Framlingham.

It quickly went to war flying its first mission on 3/1/45 to attack the marshalling yards at Fulda. After 43 missions its war was over as Germany surrendered. At some point in its career it was named "The Great McGinty". During the first week of May 1945 #633 flew on six food drops to the starving Dutch people, before returning to the USA in June 1945. On 8th December 1945, The Great McGinty was sent to the desert scrapyard of Kingman, Arizona, where its Duralumin airframe was probably smelted to produce valuable material for peacetime reconstruction.

After the war concrete hardcore was in much demand for road building programmes. As a result many runways, peritracks and hardstands on former wartime airfields were removed. Against the odds, Hardstand 13 survived, unlike its immediate neighbours.

Mervyn Wilson and Mick Tipple

Visitors can still see Hardstand 13 and the perimeter track from
the glass roof of the Control Tower.



Anatomy of a Mission

In October a military historian and a journalist came to the museum to record an episode of the Mighty Eighth Podcast.

Just how do you put hundreds of B17 Flying Fortresses into the sky, send them on a bombing mission over occupied Europe – and then bring them home again? In this episode, we find out during a visit to USAAF Station 153 (Framlingham) – home to the 390th Bomb Group during World War Two

*Archivist **Jennie Smith** explains the museum's Faces of the Fallen project. And we pay our respects in the Chapel Room which houses a Veterans Wall, where returning airmen from the 390th have signed their names.*



We discuss the mission procedure – from the sending out of the initial Field Order to the formation of a protective bomb group – or Combat Box – of aircraft in the sky. We do so with the help of the museum's rare collection of recovered aircraft engines, artefacts and memorabilia.

We visit the museum Nissen Hut, which houses a recreated barrack room, showing how the airmen lived.



Photo & Text Credits

www.mightyeighthpodcast

On the following page you'll find a transcript from the opening minutes of the podcast to whet your appetite...

Opening Transcript of *Anatomy of A Mission*

In this episode we have come to Parham Airfield Museum in Suffolk in the East of England. This Airfield Museum was Station 153 Framlingham and it's dedicated to the 390th Bomb Group, although the 95th Bomb Group was here initially for a couple of months in 1943.

We're standing outside the Control Tower. It's wonderfully preserved, amazing. The volunteers have done a great job on Parham. It's a windy old day in October in rural Suffolk and yet the volunteers are here painting the railings and improving the place, working to preserve the memory of the 390th and all the other aviators who flew from here. It's a really evocative place and in the top three Bomb Group Museums in East Anglia without a doubt.

This airfield in its peak would have been home to four squadrons of B-17 Flying Fortresses. We're going to talk about how you get all of those planes, from the ground into the air, into a fighting force ready to go on the bombing mission. At its absolute strength it would be 72 B-17s, but usually a third is not going to be flying, its going to be under repair, maintenance or, on dark days, shot down, not coming back and needing to be replaced.

We're going to be talking about the anatomy of a mission. Those aircraft don't just all suddenly appear in the sky. That mission has got to be formatted— the target selected, gather intelligence, get a met forecast of the weather, the crewing of the aircraft, the bomb loads, the fuel. All of that has to be choreographed together to get them lined up on the airfield crewed, fuelled, bombed, ready to go into the air, go to the right place at the right time and meet one of the other 100 plus bomb groups scattered across East Anglia going to their targets.

So... we've come into the museum. We're standing inside the entrance hall and on the wall there is an information panel about the 390th Bomb Group. It tells its story, a classic story. It's part of the 3rd Air Division, one of the later Bomb Groups. You can recognise them from all the square symbols on the planes' tails with a letter— the 1st Air Division was a triangle, the 2nd a circle. Framlingham has a Square J. The 390th comprises four squadrons— 568th, 569th, 570th and 571st. For most of the war they would have had 12 aircraft per squadron and if you were involved in flying those aircraft to the targets, you would fly in elements of three, flights of six and squadrons of 12. And then you take your four squadrons and they make a group. Although at the end of the war, there were 75 serviceable aircraft here on the dispersal. The 390th Group would be on one airfield— that's the way the Americans go about it; it makes absolute sense— very different to the way royal Air Force were doing it! Three Groups make up a Combat Wing, and then 3 to 5 Combat Wings make up an Air Division; there are 3 Air Divisions that belong to 8th Air Force Bomber Command.

In the whole time that the 390th are here, which is from July 1943 until the end of the war, 275 B-17s are allocated to this Bomb Group. So here's the maths for you— they fly during that time 301 daylight raids and drop 19,059 tonnes of ordnance. But to do that they lose 145 aircraft Missing in Action and another 17 which crash land in the UK. That generates a horrendous butcher's bill of 742 aircrew killed or Missing in Action, and 731 taken prisoner by the Germans. That's a hell of a record. They are credited with destroying 377 enemy aircraft— we'll take that with a pinch of salt due to the usual confusion about different gunners firing at aircraft.

Two notable Distinguished Unit Citations, one for Frankfurt and one for Redensburg; two of the biggest and costliest raids of the war for the 8th Airforce. They also have a number of memorable highlights. They are credited with destroying the most German aircraft in one mission when they claimed 62 enemy aircraft on the raid on Munster in October 1943. Maybe this guy could tell us more about it if he were still alive— Sgt. Hewitt Dunn, the first and only man in the 8th Airforce to fly 100 missions and survive. That's quite an achievement when you think that the life expectancy of somebody to fly 25 missions was a 1 in 4 chance, and he's done it four times over!

AIRMAN OF THE MONTH

DECEMBER



PAUL CLARENCE ROBERTS

10 JANUARY 1910 – 25 DECEMBER 1944

Paul was born in Mitchell, Indiana and enlisted into the USAAF. He trained as a Ball Turret gunner and flew 23 missions from Station 153.

On Christmas Day 1944 A/C 44-8323 'Blonde Bombshell' took part in mission 230 to Morscheid Bridge, Germany. The plane took a direct hit by flak in No.4 engine which flew off in pieces. The A/C then peeled off to the right with the wing on fire, lost 1500 feet in a shallow dive, then went into a loose then tight spin. It exploded at about 20,000 feet.

Paul is buried in the Mount Hope Cemetery, Chicago, Illinois. He was 34.

SERIAL NUMBER 224	1. NAME (Print) Paul Clarence Roberts		ORDER NUMBER 431
2. ADDRESS (Print) 5628 S. Halsted Street Chicago Cook Illinois			
3. TELEPHONE Chicago Normal 2505	4. AGE IN YEARS 34	5. PLACE OF BIRTH Mitchell Indiana	6. COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP U.S.A.
7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mrs. Charlotte Roberts		8. RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PERSON Wife	
9. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON 5628 S. Halsted Chicago Cook Illinois			
10. EMPLOYER'S NAME W.P.A. Testing Lane			
11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OF BUSINESS 692 Cottage Grove Chicago Cook Illinois			
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.			
REGISTRATION CARD U. S. S. FORM 1		<i>Paul Roberts</i> (Registrant's signature)	

ROBERTS-S/Sgt. Paul C. Roberts, of 5705 S. Halsted street, killed in action over Bitburg, Germany, Dec. 25, 1944, beloved father of Pauline, son of Clyde and Anna, brother of Naomi. Funeral Saturday, 1:30 p.m., at funeral home, 5438 S. Halsted street. Interment Mount Hope. Military honors Chicago Victory post, No. 3940, V.F.W. Boulevard 0662.

All of our Airmen of the Month can be found on our *Faces of the Fallen* montage on display in the Chapel Room at the Museum.

Right, Jennie Smith undertook a huge research project to produce this tribute.



AIRMAN OF THE MONTH

JANUARY



JAMES DAVENPORT HANNAMAN

16 OCTOBER 1917 – 10 JANUARY 1945

James was born in Boise, Idaho and enlisted into the USAAF on 29 September 1942. He trained as a Co-Pilot and flew 23 missions from Station 153.

On mission 241 to bomb Cologne, A/C 43-38668 received a direct flak hit at Dusseldorf between the No. 1 and No. 2 engines. The a/c peeled out of formation and went into a 30° dive in an attempt to extinguish the fire. The a/c levelled off at about 25,000 feet for a short time but then the left wing came off completely and the a/c went into an uncontrolled dive. It was observed to hit the ground in a mass of flames. No chutes were reported.

James is buried in the Netherlands American Cemetery. He was 27.



The Capital Journal (Salem, Oregon) · 10 Aug 1944

Receiving felicitations on the birth of a daughter, Vicki Diane, at the Salem General hospital Monday, are Lt. and Mrs. James D. Hannaman. The little girl, who has an older brother, James, Jr., is the grandson of Mr. and Mrs. J. S. Murray and Mrs. George L. Hannaman. Her father is stationed at Alexandria, La., with the air corps.

* * *

AIRMAN OF THE MONTH

FEBRUARY



MICHAEL CHERNICK

28 AUGUST 1921 – 10 FEBRUARY 1944

Michael was born in Blakely, Pennsylvania and enlisted into the USAAF on 5 August 1942. He became a Ball Turret gunner and flew only 9 missions from Station 153.

On Mission 57 to Brunswick, Germany, at about 1300hrs A/C 337 'Eightball' left formation and began to fall back unable to close the bomb bay doors. It was last observed in the target area flying with 2 other stragglers. Michael's plane was then attacked by fighters. Three of the crew bailed out but the remaining crew went down with the aircraft. One of the surviving crew said he last heard from Michael when he checked in as 'ok' just before the fighter attack.

He is buried in the Ardennes American Cemetery. He was 22.



From Our Facebook Page...

24 December 1943 *Target: Quoeux, France. 36 aircraft dispatched, 36 aircraft returned. In time for dinner.*

25 December 1943 *Watch continued and keeping phones busy wishing everybody a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from Flying Control.*

2 January 1944 Station Bulletin - *Disciplinary and punitive measures or Court Martial proceedings will NOT be directed against military personnel who have acquired venereal disease provided they promptly and properly report for treatment.*

3 January 1944 Station Bulletin: *Another barber is needed at the Post Barber Shop. Qualified Personnel who wish such an assignment should contact Organization Commanders who will advise the S-1 at Ext. no.1*

9 January 1944 Station History: *The Station basketball team is so far undefeated in the 3rd division league. The playoffs will be held in February and the winner will represent the division in the Eighth Airforce League in London.*

10 January 1944 Station Bulletin: *Recommendations for the award of the Good Conduct medal will be submitted to this Headquarters by 1400 16 January 1944.*



Jennie posts regular Station Bulletins from the base and mission details 'from 'this day' back in WW2 on our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) accounts.

Please follow us to see these posts.

**Jennie Smith
Archivist**

Parham Airfield Museum

●●●●● 152
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Temporarily closed
Closed until Apr 1, 2023

Rave Reviews

We continue to get great reviews on and we currently average 5 stars on TripAdvisor and 4.8 stars on our Google business profile.



5.0 ●●●●● 152 reviews

Excellent	<div style="width: 91.4%;"></div>	138
Very good	<div style="width: 9.3%;"></div>	14
Average	<div style="width: 0%;"></div>	0
Poor	<div style="width: 0%;"></div>	0
Terrible	<div style="width: 0%;"></div>	0

***** *An absolute gem of a museum. And it's free! Loved it. The volunteers were helpful, friendly, enthusiastic and knowledgeable. There is plenty to see and lots to learn from, and the museum is well set out.*

***** *We had a great couple of hours here and my kids loved it. There are so many artefacts to see and we loved going into the underground bunker and going up to the control tower. The volunteers are friendly and knowledgeable. There's a lovely cafe too for drinks and light snacks. Highly recommend for any aviation and WW2 enthusiasts.*

***** *We are very lucky to have this museum: a timely reminder of our past.*

***** *A real Tardis...so much to see and learn. My husband loved the plane/engineering and I loved the social history. Suffolk was so different thenbuzzing with planes overhead and the sad loss of so many young American crew. We owe you all so much.*

***** *Fascinating collection of memorabilia, brilliantly curated, and a most welcoming and knowledgeable group of volunteers to show you around and answer questions. A splendid memorial to the more than 700 young men who set out on bombing missions from this airfield during World War 2 and did not survive.*

*Thank you for taking the time to leave your reviews
We love reading them and they help to attract other visitors.*

DID YOU KNOW?



The standard United States .30 Cal Machine Gun and the .50 Cal Machine Gun Ammunition Belt was 27 feet long (9 yards).

Could this be where the saying "the full nine yards" comes from?

Mick Tipple

The British Resistance

Organisation Museum

FROM AUXILIARY UNITS TO THE SPECIAL AIR SERVICE

Towards the end of 1943, with Lt Col 'Paddy' Maynes's call to arms, many members of the Auxiliary Units (AU) volunteered for the Special Air Service (SAS) and served in Occupied Europe, many making the ultimate sacrifice. These men came from both the Scout Sections and the Operational Patrols. One of these men was: -

Captain Laurence Roy Bradford

Devonshire Regiment and SAS

Born 27th July 1916 – Killed In Action 20th July 1944

In April 1939 Roy Bradford joined the Devonshire Regiment of the Territorial Army as a Private and in March 1940 he was commissioned into the regiment as part of the south coast anti-invasion forces.

June 1942 found him seconded to GHQ Home Forces as a Scout Section officer with the Devon Auxiliary Units.

A year later, by June 1943, he had been transferred to Sussex Scout Section and very shortly took over as the Intelligence Officer for Sussex having been appointed Acting Captain.

Following 'Paddy' Maynes's call to arms, on 1st February 1944 he joined 'A' Squadron 1st SAS having dropped a rank in joining. However, on 2nd June he was reappointed as a Temporary Captain.

On 21st June 1944 he and his troop parachuted into the Morvan region of France as part of Operation Houndsworth. Their role, alongside the French Resistance, was to attack German forces and the road and rail infrastructure to slow down the reinforcements heading for the Normandy Beaches.



On 19th July 1944, Captain Bradford with two of his troopers, a REME mechanic, Craftsman 'Andy' Devine, and a young Maquis, and set off to contact another Maquis group. Travelling by night to avoid being attacked by RAF fighters who were strafing anything that moved, they were driving through the hamlet of Lucy-sur-Yonne when they were waved down by two German soldiers. Realising that they were in the middle of a stationary German convoy they blazed away with their machine guns causing considerable casualties amongst the surprised Germans. Having cleared the convoy, a Spandau gunner in the last truck opened fire killing Captain Bradford and Craftsman Devine. The others managed to get away though wounded and re-joined their unit.



Captain Roy Bradford and Craftsman 'Andy' Devine are buried in Crain Communal Cemetery

At the site where their jeep came to rest is a Memorial to the two men and the road has been renamed *Rue de 20th Juillet* in their memory.

My thanks to John Warwicker's 'Churchill's Secret Army' & Coleshill Auxiliary Research Team

Chris Pratt

Did you have a relative in the British Resistance Organisation?

If so we would love to feature them and hear the story of how you found out about their secret wartime work.

Contributions to the newsletter from reader's interested in the BRO are most welcome.

'By the Way.....'

One of the essentials for volunteers at the Museum is to keep a check on the accuracy of the facts relating to their subject. Little annoys a visitor more than when his questioning interest is dealt with by guesswork!

On the day, it can be enough to answer a tricky question, to which the answer is unknown, with a broad, conspiratorial smile and a flow of contrived gobbledegook. This may satisfy the visitor for the time being, but the chances are that he, or she, will discover the subterfuge sooner or later. This, in turn, may discourage them from making a valued return visit.

The British Resistance Organisation is particularly vulnerable. It was one of a bare half dozen or so fully authenticated units of Britain's Secret Services during World War Two. Included in the company of such as the Security Service (MI(5); the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS or MI(6); the Political Warfare Executive (PWE); the boffins of Bletchley and the Special Operations Executive (SOE), the BRO hardly rates as a top player in the premier league. But, MOST SECRET as it was when formed in early pre-war days, **it has never been officially declassified to the public.** Moreover, it does suffer side-effects from some features of Britain's more permanent Secret Services.

Following the precedent that 'a Secret Service should always remain secret', a general embargo on disclosure still applies to most British Intelligence Services. However, for various reasons - leaks, financial gain, personal vanity, and the demands of the Media, for example - there have been many unfortunate national security breaches since 1945. But a general security restriction may still exist in some areas, with certain individuals having knowledge about matters of hitherto exclusive sensitivity.

So, what has all this got to do with Parham Airfield Museum and the British Resistance Organisation in particular? There are several things. Some are directly relevant to the museum and demand precise knowledge of the facts.

One of the more important reasons was that the active participants in what has been sometimes called, '**Churchill's Secret Army**' were civilians, exempt in one way or another from active service conscription, and, as such, were members of an organisation illegal in the rules of warfare. Britain was a signatory of the Geneva Convention, which set out these "rules". **Had we lost the war, then the men and women involved could have been regarded by the Nazis as ineligible for Prisoner of War status and, instead, liable to imprisonment or even execution.**

Fortunately for the five plus thousand fighting men in the Auxiliary Units (which we know as the BRO), the women of the 'Secret Sweeties' and the lesser number of recruits to the BRO Special Duties Section, when the Allies declared themselves victors of WW2, they were no longer the war criminals they would have been had the allies lost- illogical though it may seem.

Another important aspect of the secrecy which surrounded the BRO - and in a sense may still do so - was the obsession of the full-time professional Secret Services to camouflage their very existence. Obfuscation is a familiar technique, to develop a structure of untruths about themselves to divert or confuse any enquirers or foreign agents.

This secrecy and obfuscation were a feature of the origins, existence and stand-down of the British Resistance Organisation. We encountered this as we, the few investigators who originally got ourselves together, began our search for the real story. We had the assistance of two 'stay behind' volunteers, Percy and Herman Kindred. Our quest led to a single source of information which proved, in the event, of critical importance to our enquiries.

We discovered that in addition to essential wartime secrecy, **almost no post-war public disclosure about the BRO could be traced.** The main exception was a book written by an American, David Lampe. called 'The Last Ditch' - the Story of the British Resistance Organisation. At this stage we, the investigators, were forced to mark time for many months as we gradually entered the fringes of a very secret world. Study of his book revealed obstacles of one kind or another at every step, and the eventual discovery that David Lampe himself had WW2 connections with the British Secret Service. He had an outline knowledge of the operations side of the 'stay behinds' and the one hundred or so 'Secret Sweeties', clandestinely recruited to staff the various radio Control Stations. These stations kept the activities, mainly of the Special Duties Section, in contact with Auxiliary Units (that is the BRO) Headquarters.

By the way, we had worked out that the correct and official title of this secret 'Stay Behind' group of spies and saboteurs was 'The GHQ Auxiliary Units' and not, as supposed until then, the British Resistance Organisation. It was in this way that those members of Parham Airfield Museum, already familiar with the history of the USAAF 390th Bombardment Group, were authorised by the Committee to discover as much as possible about the British 'Stay-Behind' men and women, and were committed to a title for the new exhibits, taken from the cover of 'The Last Ditch.' So they 'settled for the 'The British Resistance Organisation' Museum and not, as it should have been, 'The Auxiliary Units of General Headquarters of the War Office.' It was now too late to turn back.

Thus we irrevocably contributed our share of the obfuscation favoured by HM Secret Services. So, if you - the duty volunteer - are asked by a visitor how the Museum came to be named 'The British Resistance Organisation', you can now be assured of the answer.

In a way, some advantage accrued to our investigations as well. Our early enquiry at Cabinet Office in Whitehall produced the official view that, after all these 50 or so years there should be no residual security conflict resulting from our enquiries. However, went the caveat, if in doubt about any secret discoveries, we were to contact a certain individual with a Whitehall telephone number. When contact was established with him, he asserted, with some emphasis, - ***I have one hundred and fifty thousand WW2 organisations to declassify, and I can't even find the British Resistance Organisation!***

Of course, he could not, simply because we had given him the wrong name! So, we successfully had misled all the top Whitehall "spooks" too! Once again, it was too late to turn back.

So, if you are one of the front-line workers at Parham Airfield Museum, you can answer any questions about the origin and background of our BRO with a safe certainty of authenticity. If you, the reader, are not on the active list of Parham Museum volunteers, you may or may not have the stamina to sort it all out from this note. **If you fail to do so, then those Most Secret units of the British Secret Service may even be pleased to confirm the value of creating a muddle about it all!**

John Warwicker

*Find out more about
The GHQ Auxiliary Units
in our Exhibition Hall.*



A member of the Ipswich Patrol's daughter and granddaughter attended a display of wartime artefacts in 1989. They spoke with Taff Gillingham (of Great War Huts BSE) and came back the next day with their father's badges, ration card and his notebook. They gave Taff the badges and a copy of this photo. They kept the ration book and also the notebook as it contained drawings made by the granddaughter when young. It contained notes about the Patrol. It was obviously considered a family heirloom so hopefully a member of the family is keeping it safe. And no - we don't know which Patrol member!

Ipswich I Patrol Chantry Hall, Ipswich

Back row Edward Ransby, Stanley Day, Leslie Read, Harold Sims, Edgar Fenn

Front row 2nd Lt Cecil Procter, Sgt Leonard Hudson, Cpl Leslie Procter

Can you shed any light on the whereabouts of the missing notebook? If anyone knows where they are now, we would be very keen to see and record them. CARTSuffolk@gmail.com

Will Ward- CART



HOW CAN YOU HELP?

We are hard working crew but are always in need of more volunteers to spread the work.

We are in need of friendly volunteers to meet and greet visitors or serve refreshments in our tearoom. Please get in contact if you could spare one or two days a month to join our roster, or if you would like to join our behind-the-scenes work crew to help maintain and preserve the exhibits and work on new displays.

We do not charge admission to our Museum and donations are always gratefully received. Donation boxes are located around the museum or can be made online via Paypal or bank transfer. We also have a card reader so can accept card payments for shop purchases and donations during your visit.

Thank you for your support.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

We welcome contributions to our newsletter.

Please email your questions for us or other readers, articles, letters or photos for inclusion in the next edition by 28th March.

We would love to hear from you.

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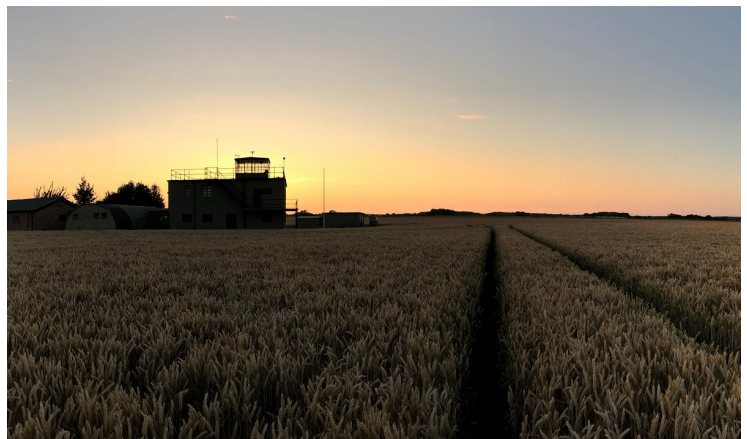


Photo Credit: Kevin Drain



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“We are proud of our Museum and are very grateful to all those who help it not only survive, but thrive.” Peter Kindred