

Celebrating 40 Years  
1981- 2021

# PARHAM Airfield Museum

## FROM OUR PRESIDENT...

I am pleased to report that since April, when due to government Covid restrictions we were unable to open the museum to the public, things have rapidly improved. We first opened in July with a booking only system and very stringent safety precautions in place for the protection of our volunteers and visitors. Within a few weeks visitor numbers were building up again and we were still able to maintain a safe working environment, with social distancing and plenty of ventilation throughout the buildings. We have, in fact, had a busy summer season with school visits, military vehicles, and very good visitor numbers. There have been many excellent reviews on Tripadvisor that give credits to our enthusiastic team of friendly volunteers and the displays on show at the museum.

Our finances have remained positive thanks to many generous donations, grants obtained by the chairman to cover our extra Covid precautions, and by our small and friendly team in the shop & tearoom generating some extra revenue. Funds now allow us to progress with

building an additional lean-to workshop/store onto the new exhibition building to house the 390<sup>th</sup>'s Jeep. This will create a wartime looking building, similar in style to the lean-to that still remains on the side of the old cinema building on the communal site.



We have now closed to the public until next April but working parties of our volunteers will continue to carry out maintenance and make improvements to our displays.

We will be holding a Remembrance Day Service on the 11<sup>th</sup> November with the RAF cadets and chaplain from Framlingham College.

*Peter Kindred*

## FROM OUR CHAIRMAN...

Many thanks to our team of volunteers who have worked so hard this season to prepare for opening then look after our visitors. Judging by the comments on Trip Advisor, their efforts are much appreciated!

Thank also to all those individuals and organisations who have given donations. Grant support from East Suffolk Council via their "Bounce Back" and "Re Start" funds has been instrumental in enabling us to meet the additional costs of opening in a COVID secure manner.

Visitor numbers have totalled 2859 this season despite the late start. The figure includes 509 children, who enjoy the museum and our new activity booklets, as you can see from the photos. These numbers need to be set in a context where many local museums have had to place strict limits on admissions, and some been unable to open.

We now look forward to tackling all the maintenance and improvement jobs that cannot easily be done whilst we are open to the public. We also look forward with enthusiasm to opening again in April 2022!

*Peter Senior*

## Food for Thought

*With some moans recently about "food shortages" because the shelves are not quite so full as usual due to the pandemic or lorry problems this memory seems particularly poignant...*

The picture on the right shows a Veteran believed to be Lyle Schafer, returning to Parham in about 1971. Lyle was a pilot with the 569<sup>th</sup> Squadron. He was shot down in 1944 and became a POW.

The visitor found Percy Kindred feeding his cattle with mangolds (cattle beet) and commented that this was often the only food available to him and other P.O.W.s whilst he was imprisoned in Stalag Luft 111.



**SUFFOLK  
ARCHIVES**

Suffolk Archives is currently carrying out a series of lectures on "Suffolk at War" with Dr John Greenacre. The talks can be attended in person at their new archive centre in Ipswich, The Hold, or watched online from the comfort of your own home. You can see a preview from the pilot event here: <https://youtu.be/U6VFZb3WJEc>

Dr Greenacre will be examining Suffolk's impact on and experience of conflict during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. You can find full details of all of the lectures and book tickets here: <https://www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/public-events-programme/online-lecture-series/>. Lecture 3 might be of particular interest to our supporters. We hope the lectures will still be available to view after they have screened.

### Lecture Three- Suffolk At War, Lecture Three- Air Forces and Their Bases in Suffolk

The pattern of rapid development of airpower during the twentieth century can be observed clearly in Suffolk. From the first air stations established in the county during the First World War, through the vast array of air bases in use during the Second World War to the technological paraphernalia of air defence and attack maintained during the Cold War, Suffolk was at the forefront of air warfare from 1914 to 1993. This lecture will examine the development of air power in Suffolk and how changes in strategy, doctrine and technology influenced the size, spread and function of air bases in the county and the consequent impact on the landscape and the local communities.

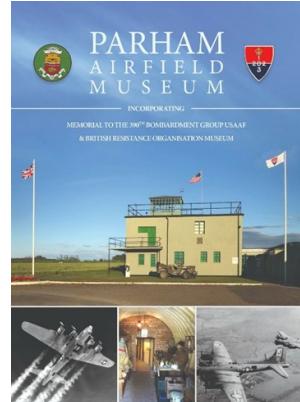
Please note that these events will be live streamed and recorded. Live stream ticket holders will have the opportunity to ask questions in advance.



We are aware of recent problems with our online accounts. We have now sorted our Paypal account and can receive one-off and regular monthly donations again (parhamairfield@yahoo.co.uk).

Ebay has recently rectified the issues with our seller account. If you have tried unsuccessfully to buy anything over the past couple of months do try again.

<https://www.ebay.co.uk/usr/parham-airfield-museum>



We welcomed more school groups again in September and October.

The children were pleased to once again be able to go on a school trip, and enjoyed completing our educational children's quiz trails before having a good run around in our outside space. Some of them are now hoping to return to visit with their families. More photos of them enjoying looking around the museum can be seen on the following page.





## RECENT REVIEWS

**Since we have been re-open we have received some great reviews via Trip Advisor. Here are some of your comments:**

*5\* Simply must do*

*Wow! What a place, and where to start!?*

*We loved this place from the moment we arrived to the moment we left.*

*The volunteers' enthusiasm and knowledge are infectious*

*We were made to feel so welcome here, and it was immediately apparent how much time and care goes into this brilliant museum. For anyone with an interest in WW2 history it's a must do place*

*Big thanks to all the volunteers who looked after us on our visit. You should all be very proud of this gem that you have created and maintain.*

*5\* WW2 American Air Base*

*Excellent museum and well worth a visit while you are in the area, all run by hard working volunteers and donations.*

*5\* Definitely a must for WWII enthusiasts*

*So interesting to see the amount of artefacts that are in the museum and also able to go into the control tower. The volunteers are really friendly and helpful. The museum is a hidden gem and well worth a visit. It's free to go in but relies on grants and donations. I thoroughly enjoyed our visit there.*

*5\* A Great Museum all the way around*

*We had a marvelous visit. This museum is operated by volunteers who are friendly, knowledgeable, and very committed to preserving the legacy of those who served at this base in WWII.*

*My father was based here during the war, until he was shot down on his 13th mission. He was a POW until the end of the war. It was very gratifying and humbling to see that his service was remembered and appreciated.*

*5\* Great place to visit and learn*

*We popped into here on the way to our holiday home as an unplanned stop. But so glad we did. The site doesn't appear very big from the outside, but is a proper Aladdin's cave once within. Our 9 year old son loved it. Completing the quiz as we went around and answering all the questions. The attendants around the site were very welcoming and knowledgeable of the history of the site. Would absolutely recommend this as a place to visit for all ages.*

*5\* Enthusiasm Galore*

*We were totally surprised at how interesting the museum was. All the volunteers were enthusiastic and informative. Everyone we spoke to was completely dedicated to their role and so keen.*

*It was a visit we'll remember for a long time. Highly recommend a visit.*



**Click here to view our Trip Advisor page or add your own review:**

[https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction\\_Review-g186387-d8453897-Reviews-or10-Parham\\_Airfield\\_Museum-Woodbridge\\_Suffolk\\_East\\_Anglia\\_England.html](https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g186387-d8453897-Reviews-or10-Parham_Airfield_Museum-Woodbridge_Suffolk_East_Anglia_England.html)

## THE MISSION (PART 1) BY BOB GILLMORE

### **Tail Gunner Crew 84 571<sup>st</sup> Bomb Squadron 390<sup>th</sup> BG as told to Mick Tipple and Mervyn Wilson.**

I was the (19 year old) Tail Gunner on Lt Fran Mahers Crew.

On June 29<sup>th</sup> 1944 at 0200 hours the door of our hut opened and the C.Q (Charge of Quarters) shouted Downie and Gillmore you are flying today. Replacements on Lt. Moody's crew, Breakfast at 0300 hours. Briefing 0330 hours. We were to fly in B17G 42-97830-FL-E I don't remember much about the briefing, but it was mission 139 and the target was Oil Installations Bohlen, Germany.

The mission was normal through the IP (initial point). Early in the bomb run a flak shell burst underneath the aircraft, everything seemed okay. Shortly after, Lt Moody pulled out of the formation. After returning to the formation Lt Moody informed the crew that they had lost # 4 engine. It appeared that Lt Moody left the formation because the co pilot had "clutched up" (a polite way of saying he had made a mess of things). Lt Moody had left the formation to feather the damaged engine and fly the plane.

We stayed with the formation for a while, then Lt Moody told us that we had lost # 3 engine and could no longer keep up.

We had an escort of P.38 Lightnings from the 479<sup>th</sup> F.G at Wattisham, Suffolk. So we were told to dump all equipment to lighten the plane and stretch our glide. Nearing the Dutch Coast #1 engine failed.

With #2 engine on maximum over boost and overriding the limit stop we cleared the Dutch Coast. No need to worry about an engine that would soon be sitting at the bottom of the North Sea. The sea was calm and Lt Moody made a good job of ditching. The crew made their way out of the plane via the radio room skylight and on to the left wing. The life rafts had inflated and we all got aboard, Lt Moody asked were there any injuries, Don Downie said he had sprained his ankle, I had a damaged elbow and the two other crewmen had minor injuries.

The P.38's orbited us as we watched 830 go down. While waiting for the British Air Sea Rescue Launch, I estimated that we were about 5-6 miles from the Dutch Coast. The Air Sea Rescue Launch came sweeping up like a PT Boat. This was H.S.L. (High Speed Launch) No 2551 of No 24 RAF Air Sea Rescue Unit based at Gorleston On Sea, Norfolk. The crew helped us aboard.

I was hauled aboard by Flt Sgt Harry Stamp, Coxswain of the HSL 2551 (little did I know that we were to meet again 51 years later) together with our life rafts, we removed our Mae Wests. It was then that I noticed that our P.38 escort had left; they were low on fuel.



*PART II – THE RESCUE AND THE AFTERMATH – To be continued in the next Newsletter.*

### **THE CREW OF FRANCIS W. MAHER,**

#### **571<sup>ST</sup> SQUADRON**

##### **Back Row L – R**

Don Downie – Ball Turret Gunner / Bob Gillmore – Tail Gunner / Gene Demuth – Left Waist Gunner

Russ Russell – Navigator / Sam Cohen – Right Waist Gunner / Red (?) Ground Crew Chief

(?) Assistant Ground Crew Chief

##### **Front Row L – R**

Vern Nyhus – Radio Operator/Gunner / Hank Richard - Co-Pilot / George Farrell – Engineer/Gunner

Fran Maher – Pilot / (?) – Ground Crew Member / Fletch Conn – Bombardier/Navigator

Luigi (?) – Ground Crew/Armorer

## FROM OUR ARCHIVIST

### Mission No. 34 SOLINGEN Germany

30 November 1943

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Solingen, an important steel town in Germany, was bombed successfully by the 390<sup>th</sup> and other groups of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Division on 30 November 1943. Bombs were dropped on Pathfinder aircraft through 10/10 cloud.

Due to the undercast at time of bombing and continuing bad weather which prevented PRU photographs, the exact damage done by the bombs has not yet been determined but it is thought to have been extensive.

Solingen is one of three towns in its area which have not been hit by the RAF. The area has two main steel manufacturing plants and steel foundries in addition to its other numerous associated factories. Casualties were 1 A/C and its 10 crew members missing.

#### 2/Lt J. A. Leo's Aircraft Missing

Four minutes after leaving the IP aircraft #557, 2/Lt J. A. Leo pilot, was observed with feathered prop on No. 2 engine, on the bomb run from Julich to Solingen. This aircraft bombed with the Group in formation and then began to lag.

It followed the formation, which was flying at 25,000 feet, at about 20,000 altitude. Two enemy fighters were seen to attack it. The B-17 was last seen, under control, near Diest Schaffen, Holland. No chutes were seen. This was the sixth mission for the pilot and most of the members of the crew.

The crew on A/C #557 was as follows:

|    |       |                   |        |           |                 |
|----|-------|-------------------|--------|-----------|-----------------|
| P  | 2/Lt  | J. A. Leo         | BT     | S/<br>Sgt | P. C. Schierloh |
| CP | 2/Lt  | Frank Dragee      | TT     | S/<br>Sgt | R. A. Grafton   |
| N  | 2/Lt  | L. J. Staebell    | TG     | Sgt       | S. Cohen        |
| B  | 2/Lt  | J. E. Scarborough | R<br>W | Sgt       | E. H. Leonard   |
| RO | S/Sgt | D. G. Cassidy     | LW     | S/<br>Sgt | C. W. Withuhn   |

#### No E/A Attack Group; Flak Inaccurate

No enemy fighter attacks were made on the Group as a formation, although two were seen to attack A/C 557 after a feathered prop and possibly other trouble caused it to lag behind and below the formation.

A total of 17 E/A were seen, most of them being FW 190s. Southwest of Aachen 10 FW190s were observed; they were attacked by the fighter escort and disappeared into clouds within 2 minutes, at 1220 hours. FW 190s seen at Maastricht at 1222 hours were chased out of sight immediately by the escort.

Inaccurate and meagre anti-aircraft fire was seen at Bonn and Aachen; it appeared to be continuous pointed fire. At Keln and Dusseldorf inaccurate, moderate AA fire was seen; most of the bursts were of the black and white variety, but pink bursts were also observed at Dusseldorf. At Duren on the way out from the target, inaccurate and meagre flak was observed. From the point of turning, which was south of the IP, this Group encountered meagre fire to the center of the target; many of the crews reported that in a great many cases the bursts came up one and two at a time, far to the left or right of the formation.

Escort was provided by P-47s, P-38s and RAF Spitfires. The Combat crews of this Group reported the fighter cover was excellent and that the P-47s, and P-38s and spitfire IXs were all observed.

#### Low Group to Target, High on Return

The field order called for this Group flying as low group in the wing and third combat wing in the division. The combat wing flew along with two additional groups that joined the formation. The 390<sup>th</sup> flew low and to the right to target, and on return flew high.

The group took off at 0810 hours, was over target at an altitude of 25,000 feet at 1155 hours, and landed at 1415 hours.

Nineteen A/C were dispatched and all bombed the primary target of Solingen. Three A/C, #498, 223 and 783 were to have filled in the 94B Group but did not effect rendezvous.

#### Personnel

Major R. M. Tuttle was acting Command Pilot. Lt R. W. Waltz was group lead pilot, Lt J. R. Geary high squadron pilot and Lt K. E. Dougherty low squadron pilot.

Lt Foster was lead navigator and Lt Cloud lead bombardier.

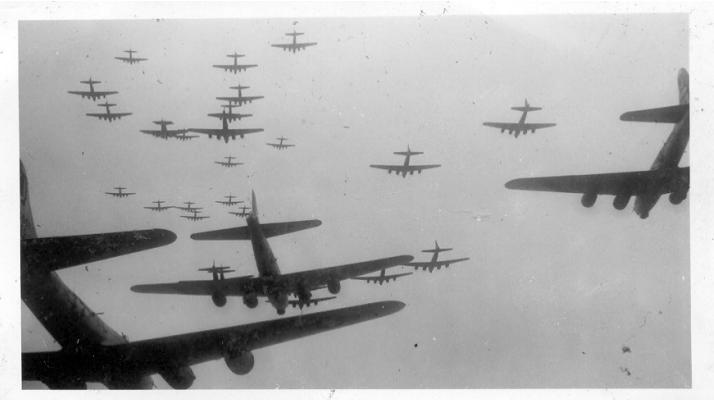
The combat crews which took part in this mission are listed on the pages immediately following. For information regarding awards and citations based on participation in this mission, see the tabulations in the awards and Citations Section.

#### Total Forces Participating in Operations

Nine Combat Wings, 4 from the 1<sup>st</sup> Bomb Division, 2 from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Division and 3 from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Division were assigned to attack Solingen, led by PFF A/C. Clouds made it impossible for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Divisions to maintain formation, and these six combat wings were forced to abandon the mission.

All but one Group of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division reached the target area and bombed. A total of 381 bombers participated in the mission. Three A/C are missing. Personnel casualties are 11 killed, 20 wounded, 23 missing.

Claims are one enemy aircraft destroyed.



# AIRMAN OF THE MONTH

## OCTOBER



Eugene Bivins

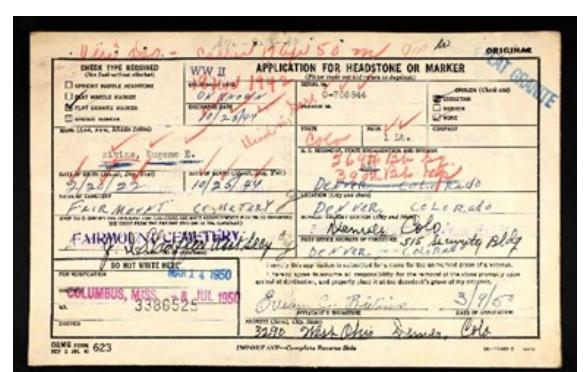
### EUGENE EDWARD BIVINS

**20 FEBRUARY 1922 – 25 OCTOBER 1944**

Eugene, was born in Colorado and enlisted into the USAAF on 18 November 1942. He trained as a pilot and flew 15 missions from Station 153 first 10 as a co-pilot and 5 as pilot.

On 25 October 1944 Eugene was on a mission to bomb Hamburg. One minutes after bombs away crews reported seeing a red flash in the bomb bay of A/C 43-38547. The A/C went into a steep climb and rolled over at the top of the climb completely out of control. Eugene ordered his crew to bail out as fire swept through the plane. Eugene's body was found in the wreckage of his plane together with five other crew members.

Eugene is buried in Fairmount Cemetery, Denver, Colorado. He was 22.



## AIRMAN OF THE MONTH

### NOVEMBER



### LEON ARTHUR KEGRESSE

**26 DECEMBER 1922 – 5 NOVEMBER 1943**

Leon was born in Clarksburg, Massachusetts and enlisted into the USAAF on 3 November 1942. He trained as a tail gunner and flew only 2 missions from Station 153. He had only been in England a month.

Mission 26 was to Gelsenkirchen, Germany. Shortly after take-off, during assembly, A/C 42-31030, 'Shy Ann' was observed in a flat spin over the North Sea at 3,000 feet. The plane crashed into the sea off the coast near Aldeburgh.

Leon is remembered on the Tablets of the Missing at the American Cemetery in Cambridge. He was 21.



### Memorial Service Sunday For Sgt. Leon A. Kegresse

A memorial service for Staff Sgt. Leon A. Kegresse, who was killed in action in Europe in November, will be held Sunday morning at 11 o'clock at the First Baptist church in Stamford, Vt.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Some seemingly innocent Monopoly board games in WWII featured clandestine kits to help allied Prisoners of War escape.

Before departing for missions, airmen were told that, if they happened to be captured, they should look for Monopoly games in the "care packages" sent to them.

The "special edition" Monopoly sets would be designated with a red dot on the Free Parking space - something that would look like a printing error to anyone who didn't know.

Prisoners of war were allowed to receive parcels from their families and from relief organisations such as the Red Cross. The innocent looking Monopoly games did not raise suspicions. But inside the games were compasses and metal files disguised as playing pieces, French, Italian and German bank notes hidden underneath the Monopoly money and silk maps. The maps, using printing technology recently-developed by Waddingtons, were light, durable, could be hidden discreetly and would not tear or dissolve like paper maps.

British historians estimate that these games could have helped thousands of captured soldiers escape from their prison camps and make their way back home or to neutral ground.



Silk "Escape" Map of Northern Germany

The Monopoly UK Wartime Edition  
used to hide Escape Tools and money



## "Sequatchiee"

This photo was taken in 1943.

Lt. James A. Bonner was the pilot of **Sequatchiee** when it was shot down on a raid to Paris on June 22nd 1944.

The airplane (a/c # 23312) and crew were assigned to the 570th Squadron. They were hit by flak just after dropping their bombs.

All the crew bailed out. The radio operator was KIA and the rest were POW.

## FORTY YEAR FLASHBACK

### The Dedication Service



The 390th Memorial Bomb Group Museum Dedication Service was held on 13th May 1981. The memorial plaque was unveiled by Lt. Col. Richard Perry USAAF (retired) and presentations were made by Colonel Moller to Ron Buxton, Colin & Barbara Durrant and Percy Kindred.

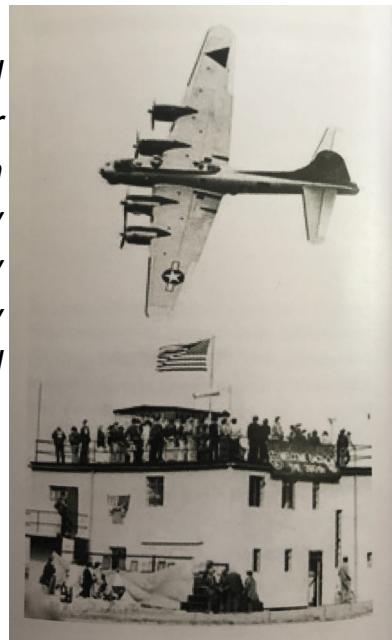


Ninety-two 390th Veterans and their families attended a moving service to dedicate the Tower to the memory of those men of the 390th Bomb Group who served at, and gave their lives from, Station 153 Framlingham.



*Right, an emotional moment for returning 390th Veterans as they watch a B-17 fly over the newly restored Control Tower.*

**40 YEARS  
1981-2021**



*This concludes our series of 40 year Flashback articles. We hope that all those who were based at Station 153 would be pleased to see the Museum; a living and growing tribute to their bravery and sacrifices.*



# THE BRITISH RESISTANCE ORGANISATION MUSEUM



## Donald Arthur Handscombe—Interview Part 2 13th June 1918 – 22nd February 2018 GHQ Auxiliary Units- Thundersley Operational Patrol

One night Don discovered, it was sometimes difficult to prove who you were when challenged. He told of one night when heading for the firing range he was stopped by police and asked who he was. Claiming he was Home Guard did not work as he was in his usual 'denim gear'. Telling them that he was with Thundersey HG did not work either as they checked the Thundersly roll and, of course, he did not feature. He was taken to Rochford Police Station where he told them to contact Captain Ford. Not believing Captain Ford either they were taken to Southend-on-Sea Police Station and put in a cell. Eventually an Intelligence Officer (IO) came down from Whitehall and secured their release. From then on they carried a piece of paper stating "You must ask no questions of the Bearer but phone this number". Although Don could not remember this IO's name he did remember a Captain Waugh of the Welsh Guards and he thought it could have been him. (Captain Harry Horsburgh Waugh, Essex IO).

John asked Don about a list of potential collaborators, come invasion. Don said that there was a local list although he never saw it. He firmly stated that if ordered to kill a collaborator he would have had no compunction in doing so. He also confirmed that there would have been no communication with the army as they did not know of the Aux Units existence. Any communication would have been with Captain Ford and other patrols.

Although aware of its existence they also had no contact with Special Duties Section (SDS). Don did remember having a group radio operator in the Tiptree area called Potts (Lt Ronald Godfrey Potts - Wickham Bishops Patrol Leader and Asst Group Commander of Essex 5 Group Witham - unusually, an Operational Patrol and SDS man).



Don recalled how, when asked if he would be prepared to take over as Patrol Leader he declined, due to his busy farming commitments and others being more senior in service. However his Group Commander pointed out that they would need someone to replace the Patrol Leader should he be killed so he agreed to go on the Patrol Leader's course at Coleshill. As they were travelling on Army Warrants he and his future Patrol Leader, Frederick Harris, had to travel in uniform. As happened so often they were told to report to the Post Office at Highworth from where they were picked up and taken to Coleshill. Don remembered approx. 20-25 other auxiliers from other parts of the country. In discussing the course Don told John that the question of reprisals came up and ".....the staff admitted they were concerned about it too and they would get an official ruling on the question of reprisals". "I remember that some months afterwards my group Group Commander coming to me and saying 'Yes, whatever the reprisals you are to continue and that has come from Churchill himself' ".

Whilst talking about the various aspects of training ie. attacking targets, explosives etc Don mentioned that, as most of the patrol were good marksmen, the 0.22 rifle was shared amongst them and, when asked, he stated that quite clearly it was to be used for the purpose of assassination. A year after this course Don attended another, very similar one to keep up to date.

In November 1944 the Aux. Units Operational Patrols were stood down and Don received the Stand Down thank you letter from Col. Douglas. In 1996 he applied for and received his Defence Medal.

*This is a heavily abridged version of the interview.*

For further reading:-

Transcript of full interview held at BRO Museum

British Resistance Archive [www.staybehinds.com/patrol/thundersley-patrol](http://www.staybehinds.com/patrol/thundersley-patrol)

**Chris Pratt**  
**Curator**



*We have had low levels of engagement with our newsletters recently . Our mailing software shows us which of our subscribers open our emails and who then clicks on the link to read the newsletter.*

*We will be monitoring these figures and may review how frequently we send our newsletter in 2022.*



Another new addition for 2021 is two original runway lights which greet visitors as they approach the museum. These were located every 50 yards down the edges of the runways at Parham. The lights were protected by thick, reinforced glass that could survive the B-17s driving over them.

After the war, the runways were broken up and sold for road-building material and the land was reclaimed. These two lights were mistakenly left behind and were found when doing excavation work at nearby Runway Farm. A nine tonne digger was needed to dig them out. Original spade markings can still be seen on the edges of the concrete where the holes were adjusted to size. Just imagine the effort digging the holes for dozens of these lights by hand in 1942.



## AMAZON SMILE

If you shop at Amazon, you can donate to Parham Airfield Museum without spending an extra penny. Activate Amazon Smile for us and a percentage of the price from all your purchases will be donated directly to the Museum

**Please click here to add us as your chosen charity.**

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



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If you have been forwarded this newsletter and would like to subscribe to receive future editions directly,

please click here:

<http://eepurl.com/dM24L6>

Past editions of our newsletter are available on our website.



#### 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 new card reader so can accept card payments for shop purchases and donations.

**Thank you for your support.**

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

**Parham Airfield Museum  
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[www.parhamairfieldmuseum.co.uk](http://www.parhamairfieldmuseum.co.uk)

Follow us on Facebook for regular updates and to connect with other supporters.

Our Museum is run solely by volunteers – apologies if responses are slow at times.

We welcome contributions for our newsletter.

Please email your questions for us or other readers, articles, letters or photos for inclusion in the next edition by 25th November.

We would love to hear from you.



***"We are proud of our Museum and are very grateful to all those who help it not only survive, but thrive."***

