

Celebrating 40 Years

1981- 2021



April–May 2021 Newsletter

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN...

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. We hope you like the new look.

It was a pleasure to see members virtually at the recent Zoom AGM. Hopefully next year we will be able to hold the AGM at the museum and invite supporters to join us.

As I write, the sun is shining and lockdown is easing, so we are all looking forward to when we can open again. We intend to welcome visitors as soon as we are permitted to open and can meet the safety requirements for volunteers and visitors. Please keep an eye on our webpage, Facebook and Twitter feeds, where we will post information about opening as soon as we can.

We intend to ask visitors to enter via the Moller Building, where there is more space to brief them on safety precautions. This will allow us to showcase the new



roadway and Kindred Building exterior.

Our regular working group continues to prepare the Kindred Building to receive visitors. We owe this little band a great debt, since they have continued working with just one short pause since October 2019. Their self-chosen title is the “Old n’ Colds”. Currently, the team is concentrating on disguising the modern wiring in the replica Operational Base and setting out the displays. Once a model plane has been suspended from the ceiling, we will be complete except for some minor repairs to the “new” floor paint.

Meanwhile, we continue to carry out various maintenance and improvement tasks around the established buildings. One of our priorities has been to remind visitors that the original buildings are significant historical artefacts themselves, so we have tried to explain their original functions.

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN CONTINUED...



On the first floor of the Tower, the Signals Office displays have been refurbished. In the Control Room, the “Lady Velma” model is now accompanied by two Browning M2 .50 heavy machine guns.

We are especially pleased with the look of the recreated Barrack Room. Having learned that the Nissen (Quonset) hut was relocated from the 571st Squadron site at nearby Moat Farm, we have tried to portray the authentic looking interior of a 571st living quarter. We hope the lads would have approved of the 1940s pinups we have chosen to adorn the walls!



During the lockdown other aspects of our work have continued too. We respond to various research queries and are moving forward with the cataloguing and digitisation of our photographic archive. By the AGM Jennie, our Archivist, had identified photos for 544 young airmen who never returned, and no doubt has now found more. We intend to create a new

photographic tribute to them in the chapel and have a design and location for it. Meanwhile, there are once more requests for group visits and for us to speak about the museum at meetings, so we look forward to when a more “normal” range of activities can resume.

We continue to receive generous, unsolicited donations, for which we are extremely grateful. We trust that you and your loved ones remain well. Hopefully you will enjoy reading our newsletter. Please pass it on to others who may be interested or suggest they join up to our mailing list via the link on our website.

If you possibly can, do please visit us this summer!

Best wishes

Peter Senior
Chairman



JACKIE BROWN

Many will be saddened to learn of the death on Jackie Brown in February whilst in hospital undergoing treatment.

Jackie began volunteering at the museum along with her husband Reg in 1991. Soon she became Shop Manager and ran the tearoom and took bookings for outside group visits. She made everyone so welcome with her friendly chats and loved talking to the children.

Jackie arranged many of the barbecues and parties held at the Museum. After 22 years of loyal service, she retired from the Museum in 2013 due to ill-health

As John Warwicker said “we will all miss her infectious laughter”. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, a small number of friends, family and representatives from the Museum paid tributes at her funeral remembering her with much love and fondness.



Jackie really enjoyed organising the Open Day activities and refreshments, as seen in the photo above with Joyce Fryer. Jackie entered into the spirit of the event, here dressed in Naffi uniform.



Above, another new photo display.

Below, our home front display has had a revamp. How apt the “Is your journey really necessary?” poster is for our recent times.



John Appleton's Memories

John Appleton is one of our regular readers. He recently wrote to us and has kindly agreed that we can publish some of his recollections.

"I enjoy reading the newsletters, as an 88-year-old recycled teenager I remember those days.

I have many memories regarding Parham Airfield. The air crews liked chatting to us lads, we could get quite close to where the planes stood, the security was a lot different to what it is now. It was something exciting to us lads when we knew an airfield was being built so close to our homes, there was a landing light in the garden of my grandmother's where I spent the war. When the posts for the landing lights were being put in, it was all done by hand, and I used to sit on top of the drill to help it to go down better. Happy days for us youngsters, we did not realise how serious things were, I think it was a good job we did not. If you go down Benhall Low Street, outside 64 there is a large chestnut tree, I planted that when I was 3 years old.

*Four of us lads would go up to Parham Airfield and chat to the crews, and of course get cookies and gum. Do any of you who are old enough remember when early one evening a FW Condor bomber with a ME escort bombed the airfield? I was indoors and my Grandmother said, "Here comes one of the planes back!" I said, "That's not a Fortress, it's a Jerry." I ran outside to see the planes pass over at about 100 feet. As our cottage was on the flight path, the pilot dropped his bombs on Parham airfield, but as he was so low the bombs did not prime, so luckily did not explode. It was the talk of the school amongst us lads at the time. We heard that one of the bombs landed very near a main fuel tank. **

The mention of the crash in Parham. It is sad the crew were killed, but thank goodness no one in the village. When I give talks about those days it is a surprise how little is known about the second world war years. I have been told that at our age we are living history.

When I gave a talk at my old Benhall School, I said that 80 years ago I was sitting in this same classroom. I don't think the children could connect with so many years ago, I know when I was a schoolboy anyone aged 40 or 50 was old. I never thought over 80 years later I would be living in the same area."

**This seems to be a different incident to that remembered by Edward E. Hodgson, Tower Operator, recorded in The 390th Bomb group Anthology, Vol II, 1985. On that occasion it was dark and just as a RAF Lancaster in trouble was being talked down, the phone rang with an intruder warning. The tower crew immediately fired a red flare to alert the AA guns and a Luftwaffe plane homed in on it, diving down to drop two sticks of bombs between the runway and the tower.*



Oral History

Please help us keep this chapter of history alive.

If you have any personal or family memories of the air campaign you would like to share, we would love to hear from you, especially as we aren't hearing recounts from visitors at present.

Reader's Question

"When do you re-open? We can't wait to get back. Visiting your new building and displays is one of the things we're most looking forward to post lock-down."

Rest assured we are working hard behind-the-scenes putting in place new Covid secure-measures and working practices. We can't wait to welcome visitors back when legally and logistically possible.

We will send out updates as soon as an opening date is finalised.

FORTY YEAR FLASHBACK

The History of Our Nissen Hut- Part 2

In 1992, a mural depicting an airfield scene was painted on the back Nissen Hut wall by John Constable, a great, great grandson of the renowned landscape artist, John Constable. The



background of the sky was painted by 15 year old Rachel Holman. The four squadron badges and the 390th insignia were

painted by a student from Framlingham.

The Nissen hosted many film shows and guest speakers and visits from groups of American veterans and descendants. Many a Fish and Chip meal and Christmas party were held in the cafeteria with a sing-song or carols with music on the accordion.

The Annual General Meetings were also held in the warmth of the new building. Sometimes there were up to 40 members present and discussions could get a bit lively; those were the days when we had over 50 roster members. *[Editor's note: local readers, we are looking for more roster members to join our friendly crew!]*

The extension to the new Nissen Hut was completed and held an office and a store room for

archives and donated memorabilia. The end wall is known as the Veterans Wall, where all returning Veterans of the USAAF are asked to sign their names.



Janet Keogh, daughter of Forrester Walker III, and her son Craig can be seen in front of the Veterans Wall in 2011.

The Nissen Hut continued in operation in this manner until the Moller Building was completed and dedicated on 28th June 2014. The main part of the building was then turned into a replica barrack room (see photo below) and the Library into a Chapel. An extension was added to one end of the Barrack Room. The sales area, kitchen and toilets were then taken out to make room for the new Charlie Cairnes collection of uniforms and ground crew equipment which was used to service the aircraft. At the other end of the Barrack Room another extension features a POW exhibition.

Mick Tipple



IN OUR NEXT EDITION, MICK CONTINUES OUR FORTY YEAR FLASHBACK BY EXPANDING ON THE ORIGINS OF THE MUSEUM.

*Left, Colin Durrant and LeRoy Keeping with three visiting Veterans.
Do you recognise any faces?*



TECHNICAL SERGEANT CARL CRISP, 569TH SQUADRON

Carl Crisp was one of the veterans who volunteered for a video interview with Ray MacFalone. We are indebted to Ray and Sally

for their generous decision to allow our museum to make use of the extensive archive they have created. When the recording was made, Carl had recently learned that he was the only surviving member of his crew, all of whom came through the war.

Carl came from rural Kentucky, where his father was a miner and small farmer. Knowing he would be drafted, he signed up and was selected for training as a Radio Operator/Air Gunner. "I enjoyed gunnery school, we could ride around in a truck and shoot skeet". Radio School included the theory and maintenance of the latest radio sets, including early VHF equipment. Morse code had to be mastered at 22 wpm.

Sent to Tampa, Florida, Carl met Joe Obermaier who was to be his pilot. Soon a crew was assembled. Carl describes Obermaier as very capable, respected by his crew without insisting on the formality that some pilots expected. In the air, they used first or nicknames and except for the navigator, who was posted after a few missions, they stayed together. Training included a lot of night flying, interesting given

that the USAAF air campaign was fought largely in daylight.

In mid-winter of 1944, the crew were issued with a shiny new B-17G and flew to Britain via Goose Bay and Iceland, landing at RAF Valley in Wales. To their disappointment, the plane was taken away for modifications and they travelled by train to Station 153, Framlingham. They found they were in "Buzz Bomb Alley," sharing a chilly Nissen Hut with another crew as V1 rockets flew over the base and getting accustomed to blackout regulations.

Carl's first mission was to Koblenz on 10th December 1944 as a substitute with a different crew, after which all his missions were with the Obermaier crew except for his 34th. As Radio Operator, Carl spent most of each flight at his desk, monitoring the various channels and deciphering messages using the flimsies that were issued at the morning briefing. Occasionally he would be asked to help connect the pilot to another plane or ground station.

Since the Radio Operator was closest to the bomb bay, he was always expected to take a portable oxygen bottle and check that all the bombs had gone before the bomb bay doors were closed. On two occasions one had hung up and once it was only persuaded out of the plane as they crossed the English Channel.

"Carl's first mission was to Koblenz ... as a substitute for a different crew"

CARL CRISP CONTINUED

Top Row L – R:
Russell Roder,
“Duffy”. Ball
Turret Gunner.
Leo Sullivan,
Togglier and
Nose Gunner.
Joe Obermaier,
Pilot. Irwin
Teuscher, Co-
Pilot.



Bottom Row L
– R: Marvin L.
White, Tail
Gunner. Fred Bastian, Top Turret Gunner and
Engineer. Henry Weber, Left Waist Gunner.
Carl Crisp, Radio Operator and Right Waist
Gunner.

The Obermaier crew's experiences were typical of that phase of the war. They had little contact with Luftwaffe fighters, who by then had been thinned out by allied planes with their drop tanks. They were fortunate to have not met up with one of the new ME 262 jets. “I don't remember that a gun on our plane was ever fired at a fighter”. The main threat on every mission was flak. Carl recalled that they could hear and often see the explosions, which had a red centre if they were close. Shrapnel rattled on the plane and frequently caused damage: one time a piece came through his window. On another occasion tracer could be seen passing just clear of the Perspex. Fortunately, only one crew member was injured by shrapnel and he recovered to fly more missions.

Flak damage was frequent. Once one engine went out and leaking oil could be seen on the nacelle, as thick as

molasses in the extreme cold. Another time they lost two engines and came back at about 1,000 feet. From Carl's point of view, the pilot's main interest on turning for

home was for Carl to get him the base weather forecast. In poor visibility much depended on what, if anything, the pilots could see. Once after they had landed safely the pilots told their Radio Operator that a P47 had flashed across their nose just a few feet away, presumably without seeing them.

The highlights for a 19-year-old were an occasional 3-day pass to London. Once Carl and another airman took a taxi tour of the sights but otherwise the main attraction was the night clubs, where the clientele were mainly American and they could meet numerous girls. “Flak leave” for the whole crew came after their 24th mission, when Carl played volleyball and explored rural England on one of the bicycles provided.



CARL CRISP CONTINUED



Letters to and from home were important, the only means of staying in touch with loved ones.

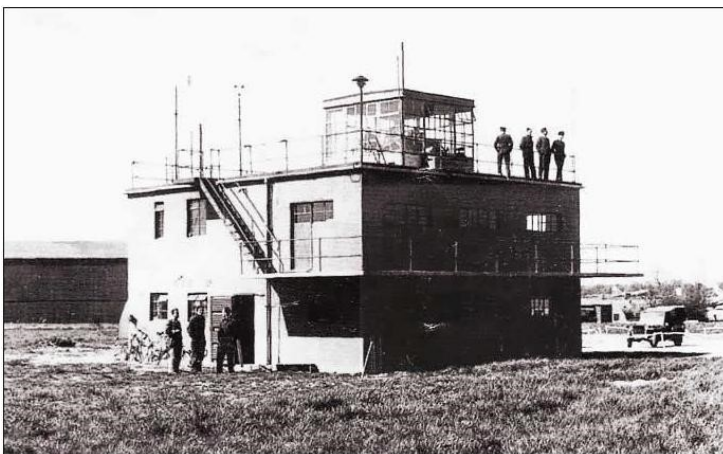
One famous incident for the Obermaier crew was when they forgot to warn the ball turret gunner that someone was about to use the relief tube. He had not turned his turret aft so found his vision somewhat impaired by ice.

Carl found that the 35th mission, although a major landmark and their ticket home, did not have the significance that it must have had for the crews who came before them and had a much smaller chance of surviving. They finished a few weeks before VE day, then waited around before being sent home that summer on the crowded liner Queen Elizabeth. Crews were usually split up once their flying was over. Carl remembered the excitement of the arrival in New York, then taking the train home to Kentucky in time for an unexpected VJ Day celebration. The airmen had expected to be retrained on B-29s and sent out to fight Japan after their three weeks leave, but it turned out that they were no longer needed.

The flight record shows that this modest man had been on many of the most dangerous missions to a range of challenging targets. More than once he was aware that another B-17 they knew well had been flying beside them one minute and then was gone.

The family had no warning that Carl was about to return home. His mother rushed out to meet and hug him. That says it all.

Peter Senior



FROM OUR ARCHIVIST

GENERAL SUMMARY

April 1945

The 390th Group wound up its combat operations in the European Theater of Operations in April with fifteen missions, most of them of a tactical nature. These missions brought the Group's total to 301 and thus put the organisation in the 300 mission category, at which it had been aiming.

Eleven of the April missions were considered successful, one partially successful and for three results were unknown. H2X technique, with some visual assistance, was employed on five missions, and the remaining ten were visual.

Casualties were exceptionally low, reflecting the dwindling powers of resistance of the enemy. One B-17 was shot down by an enemy fighter on the Buchen mission of the 7th. At least eight chutes were seen to emerge from the stricken ship. The crew of nine is listed as missing in action. Three men were hurt, and officially designated as wounded in action, when their Fort had to ditch in the North Sea returning from the Munich mission of the 9th. The ship was destroyed but all of the crew was rescued.

Combat claims for the month were one

*An Operation Chowhound
drop over the Netherlands*

enemy aircraft damaged, one destroyed.

Eighteen new crews were received from the Replacement Center during the month and given ground and air training after processing.

May 1945

The 390th Bomb Group, prior to V-E Day (May 8) flew six 'grocery runs' dropping food to the needy Dutch. [*Editor's Note- these missions were known as Operation Chowhound- and were often highlighted as veterans' favourite missions as they were "missions of hope, not destruction"*]

Since the Air Forces flew under truce conditions with the enemy, the grocery runs were not considered as operational missions. The situation was further relieved by the surrender of all German forces in the Holland area on May 5.

The use of the heavy bomber in Europe ended with the cessation of hostilities.

This is the 390th's final General Summary .

Many thanks to Jennie for sharing these fascinating records with us.



AIRMAN OF THE MONTH– APRIL

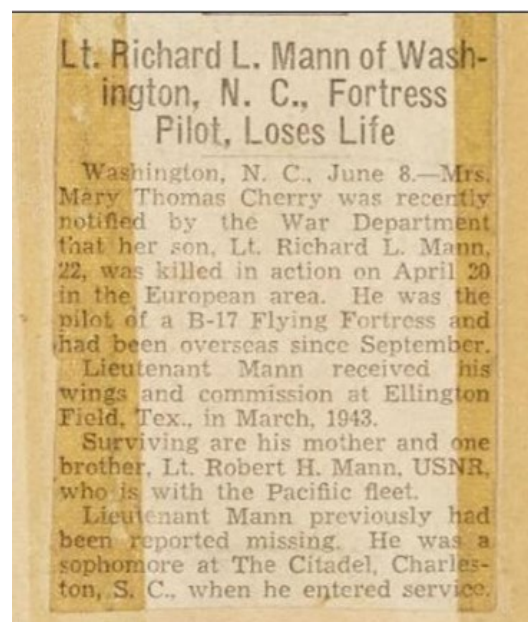


RICHARD LEE MANN

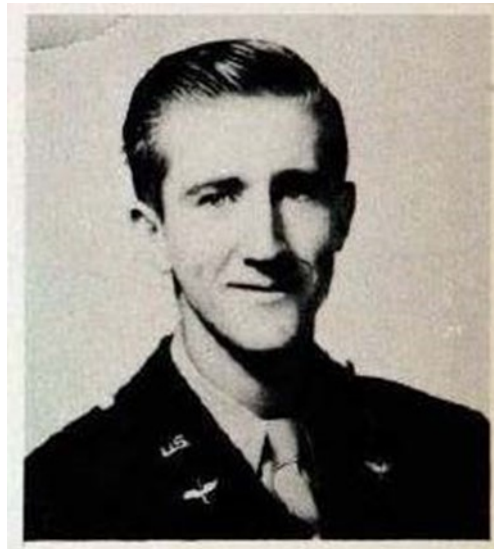
15th December 1921- 20th April 1944

Richard was born in Richmond, Virginia. He enlisted into the USAAF on 6 April 1942 and was trained as a Co-Pilot. He was killed on his seventh mission from Station 153, his first mission as a Pilot.

On 20th April 1944 Richard piloted crew 11 on a mission to La Glacerie, France. A/C 890 was hit by flak near Cherbourg after bombs away at 1857 hours. A/C 890 peeled off to the right, out of formation and down in a spin with at least one engine and wing on fire. Most crews reported that the aircraft then exploded. German records report that Richard was found near the crashed aircraft together with his parachute which had not opened.



AIRMAN OF THE MONTH – MAY



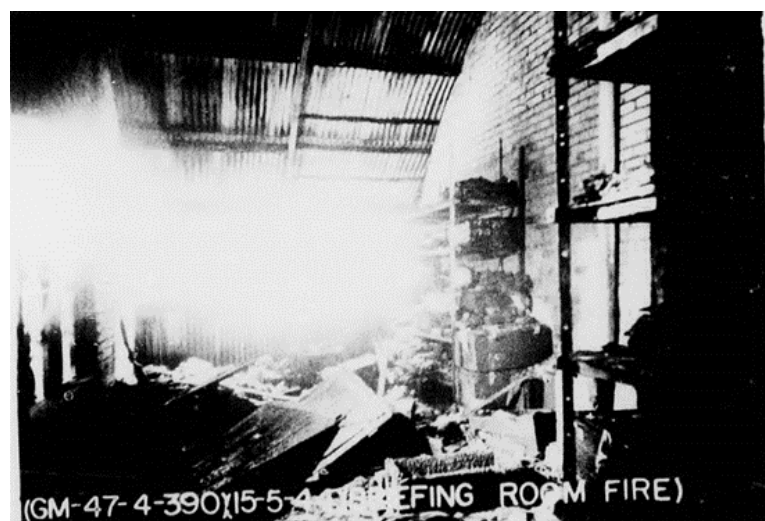
NORMAN TYSON BROWN

23rd June 1920 – 15th May 1944

Norman was born in Grandville, Michigan. He enlisted into the USAAF on 13 July 1942 and was trained as a Co-Pilot. Norman flew 16 missions from Station 153.

Early in the morning of 15th May 1944, a signal flare was accidentally exploded in the PW room, where 2,500 flares were stored. A raging fire quickly swept the room and out into the corridors of the briefing building. 2/Lt Norman Brown was awarded the Soldiers Medal as his fatal injuries and burns were received while he was valiantly fighting the fire single handed.

Norman is buried in the Cambridge American Cemetery. He was 23.



Jennie Smith

THE BRITISH RESISTANCE ORGANISATION MUSEUM

Priscilla Mary Aston (nee Badgerow) **Special Duties Section Radio Operator** **6th June 1917 - 11th April 2005**

Amongst the recently located transcripts I found an interview recorded by John Warwicker and Ron Chisnall with Priscilla Aston. Inevitably with an interview of this kind discussion ebbed and flowed and was not always in chronological order so I have reordered some of the discussion.

Priscilla was 22 when war broke out. She joined the London office of an outfit she called 'Tanks and Transport' whose job was to repair damaged tanks. She lived in London throughout the 1940 Blitz. In 1941 she hoped to join the WRNS but they only wanted cooks so she did not pursue that course.

Meeting an old school friend, Mary Alexander, she explained that she was looking for something to get involved with and Mary told her she was involved in a setup that needed more people and asked if she would like to join. (Priscilla and Mary would serve together for a considerable part of her service) Having said that she would be interested she eventually received a letter telling her to meet a Miss Temple (Senior Commander Beatrice Temple, commander of the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) element of Special Duties Section (SDS) at an address in Hyde Park Corner. (Ladies Carlton Club 5th February 1942) Whilst Priscilla could not remember much about the interview she clearly made the right impression as she received a letter and travel warrant and was told to report to a place called Hundon (Bachelor's Hall), which was commandeered by the SDS where, under Capt Ken Ward, former radio hams were brought together to upgrade an existing radio transmitter for SDS use. The result of this work was the TRD radio transmitter. Having been met by a jeep she was taken to the Rose and Crown pub for lunch and then to a farmhouse. No details were given of her likely role and she was sent home the same day.

Eventually she was enlisted into the ATS as a private and sent to Edinburgh for a 6 weeks OCTU course.

She completed the course and was appointed a Second Subaltern but no mention was made as to which regiment or corps she would be assigned.

B.R.O PODCAST

Chris Pratt has recently featured on Dr James Rogers' History Hit Warfare podcast discussing the GHQ Auxiliary Units. You can listen to the podcast and learn more about Britain's Secret army using the link below:

<https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/britains-secret-army-the-resistance/id1526490428?i=1000516365466>



Dr Rogers also visited Parham Airfield Museum whilst making a documentary on Joe Kennedy Juniors' fatal crash.

He has produced a very interesting 12 minute video featuring the museum which can be viewed here:

<https://access.historyhit.com/videos/joseph-kennedy-jr>

The British Resistance Organisation Museum is dedicated to recording and preserving the full history of Britain's wartime resistance

“Priscilla’s story shows how, almost by accident, she and many others found themselves at the forefront of the secret war against Nazi Germany”

Back home, Priscilla received a letter from the WO telling her to report to Tunbridge Wells where she spent 6 months training on the radio before being sent on her first posting to Taunton in Somerset. (An IN station at Cheddon Fitzpaine, outside Taunton). The IN station had a hut for regular use but also a dugout in the event of invasion. Asked if she ever worked from the dugout she told the interviewers that one operation lasted for a week in which they never left the dugout.



Priscilla remembered having dinner with an officer called Coxwell-Rogers (Capt Cecil Coxwell-Rogers, Intelligence Officer (IO) for the Chirnside Group radio network across Devon and Somerset). She stated that during night time exercises he would sit in the dugout with them whilst they were broadcasting. They were training the operators in the OUT stations and they always worked in code. She remembered that Royal Corps of Signals men would come round to test the radios. When asked about firearms training said that some were sent up to Coleshill but she never was.

She mentions possibly meeting a Douglas Ingrams at the Coxwell-Rogers's dinner and at his home Bewley Down (probably Capt Arthur Douglas Ingrams IO SW Region). Interestingly Priscilla spoke of her time at Taunton helping Land Army girls with baling hay on the Ingrams farm in the 'Dig-For-Victory' campaign as well as her Aux Units duties.

Although not able to remember exactly when, she went back to Edinburgh as a replacement at another IN station where she stayed about 6 to 9 months. (Priscilla spoke of people playing golf all around them so it was probably Edinburgh Golf Course IN Station) The interviewers pointed out that there was concern about possible German raids from Norway so the Aux Units were very active in that area.

In 1944 Priscilla was posted to another IN Station at Dynes Hall, Halstead again working from a dugout, remaining until 3rd December 1944. She told the story of a courting couple who found the dugout which caused great consternation. They were taken up to London and made to sign the Official Secrets Act.

With the end of her Aux Units service she was sent to Windsor OCTU where she was badgered into the regular ATS. After serving at Chilwell cleaning out tanks she was demobilised and returned to 'civvy street'.

Priscilla's story shows how, almost by accident, she and many others found themselves at the forefront of the secret war against Nazi Germany.

Other reading:-

Transcript held at BRO Museum

"With Britain in Mortal Danger" by John Warwicker

"Churchill's Underground Army" by John Warwicker

www.staybehinds.com/network/chirnside-area-17 for more on Coxwell-Rogers and Ingrams

www.staybehinds.com/station/halstead-instation for more on Priscilla

Chris Pratt
Curator



HOW CAN YOU HELP?

We are working hard to re-open and preparations are going well.

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.

Thank you for your support.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

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 May.

We would love to hear from you.

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

