

Celebrating 40 Years
1981- 2021

PARHAM

Airfield Museum

August–
September 2021

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN...

Welcome to the summer edition of our newsletter.

This has been a busy time at the museum, with good visitor numbers every Wednesday and Sunday. Highlights have included a visit by World War Two military vehicles and classic cars, which brought 192 visitors. Another high point was two school parties from an Ipswich Primary School. This was their first field trip since the lockdown began in Spring 2020, so they were very excited and enjoyed their time with us. The new children's trails have been very popular with our younger guests. There is a version for older children, one for primary age, and a treasure hunt for any who just want to look for specific exhibits as they walk around.

As life returns to something near normal, we are also receiving requests to give talks and host group visits. There are also frequent requests for information from our Archivist, most often about 390th veterans.

The Watch Office at the top of the Tower and new Exhibition Hall are proving very popular. Many thanks to Patrick Bowyer, who has put together the introductory film about the British Resistance Organisation.

We are grateful to all those who have donated to the museum. In particular, the funding from Moller Foundation continues to give us the security of knowing that we can meet ongoing costs and invest in improving our exhibitions. Two grants administered by East Suffolk District Council for the Collaborative Communities Board have been of great assistance with the additional cost of COVID precautions.

Once again, we are indebted to the time given by our hard working volunteers. Trip Advisor includes lots of praise for their friendly welcome and knowledge.

If you have not yet been able to visit us, we hope to see you soon!

Peter Senior

Military Vehicles Display



Despite the threatening skies, we had a good turn out to see this impressive display of WWII vehicles.

Thanks to all those who brought their superb vehicles along.





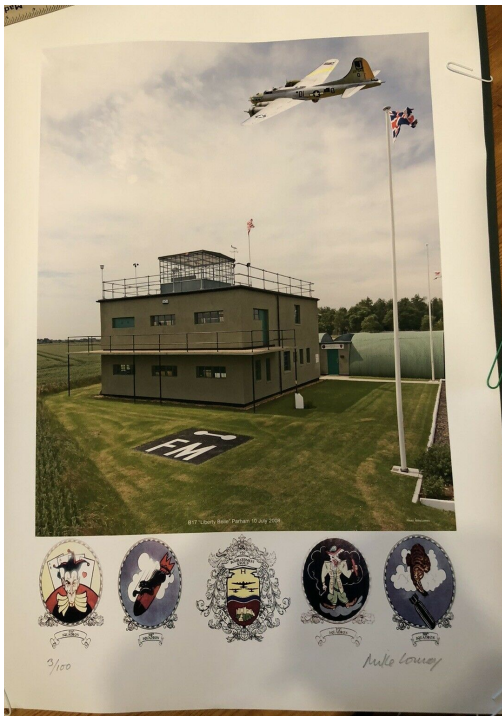
Our thanks to Kevin Drain for reproducing a digital set of high resolution logos for us. We have already used these on 3 new designs of mugs for the museum and have other new merchandise in the pipeline.

Thanks also to Kevin for organising and compèring the recent online 390th Friend and Family get-together. Representatives from Parham very much enjoyed the event.



FROM OUR SHOP

We are pleased to offer these large signed Liberty Belle photo prints for sale in our gift shop and online via Ebay. They are limited editions and each has been signed by the photographer.



FORTY YEAR FLASHBACK

It seems fitting to focus on one of the Museum's longest standing volunteers as part of our 40 Year Commemorations. Mick Tipple has been involved with the museum since the initial Control Tower restoration period and has welcomed hundreds of visitors including many Veterans and descendants over the years.

I was born on the 7th of December 1936 on a farm in Felixstowe, Suffolk, where my Dad worked. From an early age I took an interest in aircraft, as once the 8th USAAF arrived in England, Felixstowe was one of the exit points of the going and coming back from missions.

Like all kids I was forever bringing home souvenirs that had been dropped by aircraft, British, American or German. You could start another war with the souvenirs that my Dad buried in our back yard!

The war didn't seem to bother me much, living on a farm the rationing of food items was bad for some, but we always had plenty to eat.

In 1955 National Service was still in operation, so I enlisted in the RAF Regiment for five years regular service and then five years on a reserve squadron.



After my RAF service I joined the Royal Mail, where I stayed for 35 years.

It was during this time that I got involved in 'Digs' excavating crashed World War II aircraft.

Ron was putting together a team to refurbish the wartime Control Tower on Parham Airfield.

40 YEARS

1981-2021

It wasn't an easy task, as there were no funds available like there are today. I spent a lot of time scraping the flaking paint off the walls and ceilings and then repainting inside and out, but it was worth it.

The father of the 390th, Percy Kindred, was also a great motivator to get things done, as at last someone was recognising 'His Boys'.

During my 45 years with the Museum, a lot of water has flowed under the bridge. The Museum has had



its ups and downs. It has always picked itself up and recovered, proving that no one is greater than the museum, although they think they might be!!

In my time here I have been on the committee serving in several positions and I think the only positions I have not held are Secretary and Treasurer. My eldest daughter is also a volunteer at the Museum, so she is keeping up the family tradition.

With our President, Peter Kindred and his family keeping a watchful eye on the Museum, the future looks good. It is a pity that more of the younger generation do not get involved, then they would appreciate what the USAAF and Allied Air Forces did for them.

"Like all kids, I was forever bringing home souvenirs that had been dropped by aircraft"

RECENT REVIEWS

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

“Amazing museum with very kind, enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff. With lots of very interesting things to see in the museum would definitely recommend visiting.”

“This is a fascinating and unspoilt place, featuring the history of the airfield during the Second World War when home to four US squadrons, plus a history of the British resistance movement (if Britain had been invaded). The volunteers on site know their subject inside out, and are happy to talk to you about anything in the displays or about the airfield (and also will leave you to ponder the wonderful displays by yourself if you prefer). An excellent children's quiz engaged the kids, whilst the memorial was moving and humbling. Even more amazing, the visit was free, although we were very happy to leave a good donation for the preservation of its history. Highly recommend.”

Click here to view our Trip Advisor page: https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g186387-d8453897-Reviews-or10-Parham_Airfield_Museum-Woodbridge_Suffolk_East_Anglia_England.html

Younger Visitors Return



We are very pleased to now be welcoming school visits to the museum again.

Our new children's quiz activity booklets are very popular and its nice to see children dashing around looking for answers.

A painting on the Wall...

Regular readers of the newsletter will be aware that a small group of volunteers (nicknamed 'The Old & Cold' – as we are old, and it always feels cold in the Control Tower!) have continued with maintenance and upgrading work at the museum in compliance with the Government COVID regulations.

Part of that work has included reframing and refurbishing artwork and posters- often repositioning them to more appropriate locations within the museum if appropriate (we've got quite adept at filling redundant screw holes and creating new ones!).



The painting appears to be an oil work on canvas measuring 41 cm by 51 cm (or 16 inches by 20 inches in old money). It was looking a bit sorry for itself – the frame was a little tatty, the artwork dusty - so off it came for some loving care and attention.

If you study the painting, the Fortress could either be approaching you as if preparing to land - the position of the wing flap on the left suggests that; or it could be flying into the distance on to its next mission.

The frame has a small plaque on the bottom which, after some gentle cleaning revealed the clear wording 'In memory of our lost comrades'. The signature of the artist was also quite clear when the artwork was given a sympathetic clean, as seen below.

Form No. 1
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
WORLD WAR II VETERANS COMPENSATION BUREAU
APPLICATION FOR WORLD WAR II COMPENSATION—TO BE USED BY HONORABLY DISCHARGED VETERAN OR PERSON STILL IN SERVICE

IMPORTANT—Before Filing Out This Form Study It Carefully. Read and Follow Instructions—Print Plainly in Ink or Use Typewriter. DO NOT Use Pencil—All Signatures Must Be in Ink.

1-Name of Applicant: ARGENIO PAUL JAMES

2-Address to Which CHECK and MAIL is to be Sent: 40 203 SALEM ST. WEST PITTSBURGH LUZERNE PENNA.

3-Date and Place of Birth: AUGUST 23, 1924 WEST PITTSBURGH LUZERNE PENNA.

4-Name, Child Which Applicant Served in World War II: ARGENIO PAUL JAMES

5-Date of Beginning and Date of Ending of Each Period of Service Between December 7, 1941 and March 3, 1945 (Both Dates Inclusive) During Which Applicant Was in DOMESTIC SERVICE: APRIL 19, 1943 11 17 APRIL 6, 1944 8 SEPTEMBER 26, 1944 7 24 MAY 25, 1945

6-Date of Beginning and Date of Ending of Each Period of Service Between December 7, 1941 and March 3, 1945 (Both Dates Inclusive) During Which Applicant Was in FOREIGN SERVICE: APRIL 6, 1944 4 46 SEPTEMBER 2, 1944

7-Date and Place Applicant Entered Active Service: APRIL 19, 1943 WILKES-BARRE, PENNA.

8-Service or Serial Numbers Assigned to Applicant: 33 603 362

9-Date and Place Where Applicant Was Separated From Active Service: MAY 25, 1945 AAF COMVALESCENT HOSP. FORT LOGAN, COLO.

10-Is Applicant Now Serving in Armed Forces On Active Duty? NO X

11-Mark 'X' Above Name To Indicate Sex and Branch of Service: ARMY AIR FORCE

12-Applicant's Residence At Time of Entry Into Active Service: 4 NASSAU WEST PITTSBURGH, LUZERNE, PENNA.

13-Applicant Was Separated Under Selective Service Act Because: 1 WYOMING, LUZERNE, PENNA.



Once removed from the wall it was found to have a faded ink inscription on the back reading – 'Painted by and presented to 390th B.G. Museum by Paul Argenio veteran of 35 missions with the 390th B.G. 569 Squadron, 1944'. Worthy of a bit of research we thought – so the details were passed to Jennie Smith our archivist to investigate.

Above, draft card issued to all service men

Though we couldn't pin down when the painting was presented to the museum, Jennie established that Paul was 19 years of age when he entered the USAAF in April 1943, completing his active service in May 1945. He served with 569 Squadron of the 390th Bomb Group at Parham as a ball turret gunner having 36 missions recorded to his credit – not 35 as the inscription states.

His first mission from Parham was on 11th May 1944 to Liege Belgium, and his last was on 15th August 1944 to Venlo in Holland. Just four months to complete all of those raids. He flew missions over France, Belgium, Romania, Poland, Holland as well as numerous missions over Germany itself including Berlin, Schweinfurt, Stuttgart, Merseburg and Kiel.

It appears he flew in five B17's – including 42-31512 – 'Ice Cold Katie', which tragically crashed on 2nd June 1944 at Grundisburgh killing all crew on board – clearly, Paul wasn't a crew member that day.

After the war it seems Paul became quite an accomplished artist, as mentioned in the Sunday Dispatch newspaper article (published in Pittston, Pennsylvania on 11th September 1988) below. Some of his art is displayed in the 390th Bomb Group museum in Tucson, Arizona.

Our painting has had its frame repaired and varnished and, given the wording on the attached plaque, it has been decided to relocate it to the more appropriate surroundings of the museum chapel.

Steve Smith

Jennie's research also revealed these documents.

Paintings Displayed At West Side Bank Till Oct. 30

The paintings of Paul J. Argenio are currently on exhibit at the West Side Bank, West Pittston. He is a native of West Pittston and an outstanding product of its schools.

He attended Cooper Union School of Art, Brooklyn, New York; the School of Modern Art, New York City; Wilkes College; University of Syracuse and University of Scranton. He assisted Niccolo Cortiglia, well-known portrait artist in the late 1940's.

His numerous exhibits include the Lackawanna County



Paul J. Argenio

Building, Scranton; Rimrock and Mt. Airy Lodges, Pocono Mountains; several paintings are on display at the 390th Memorial Air Force Museum, Davis Monthan Air Force Base, Tucson, Arizona.

From his excellent portraits to landscapes, seascapes and still life, his versatility as an artist is reflected.

He and his late brother, Lawrence Argenio, owned and operated a photography studio in West Pittston and Wyoming. Prior to his retirement in December, 1986, he served as director of I.M.S., Northeastern Intermediate Unit, 19, Dunmore.

He and his wife Dawn, reside in West Pittston.

The exhibit can be seen at regular banking hours, September 9th to 30th.

Certified Disability Discharge - 5-25-45

FORM APPROVED
Budget Bureau No. 33-2012-42

REGISTRATION CARD (Men born on or after July 1, 1924, and on or before December 31, 1924)
(Also for the registration of men as they reach the 18th anniversary of the date of their birth on or after January 1, 1943.)

SERIAL NUMBER W 39	1. NAME (Print) Paul James Argenio	ORDER NUMBER 12559
2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) 4 Nassau St., West Pittston, Luzerne Penna.		
3. MAILING ADDRESS SAME		
4. TELEPHONE Yes Pittston 1999J	6. AGE IN YEARS 18 DATE OF BIRTH August 23 1924	6. PLACE OF BIRTH West Pittston Penna.
7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mrs. Thelma Argenio, 4 Nassau St., West Pittston, Pa.		
8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS Glen Alden Coal Co., Jefferson Ave. & Linden St., Scranton, Pa.		
9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS Montgomery Ave., West Pittston Luzerne Pa.		
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.		
DSS Form 1 (Rev. 11-15-42)	e16-21600-4 (OVER)	Paul J. Argenio (Signature)

FROM OUR ARCHIVIST

From Station History August 1943

Off-Station Activities

No passes were permitted until the group were operational. Soon the 390th became well acquainted with the countryside and the villages close to the field. Bicycles were issued to many of the personnel and many of those to whom they were not issued bought civilian cycles.

Wickham Market, Framlingham, Saxmundham and other villages were well within half an hour's cycling time. A few minutes' walk in several directions from the edges of the base brought one to a cluster of buildings – including a tavern.

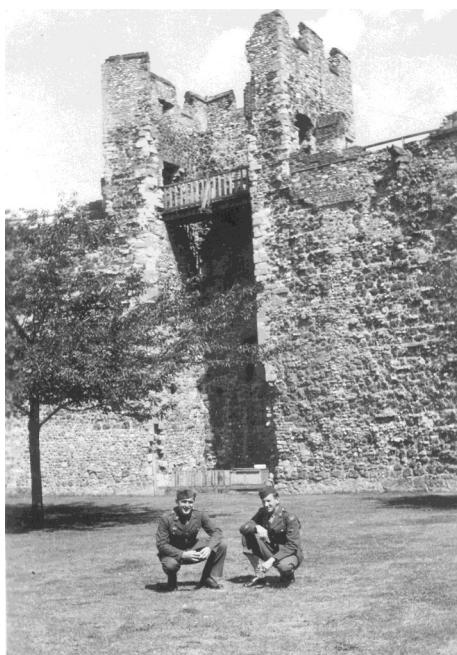
Framlingham, with its ancient castle, was the first great near-by attraction. Ipswich, a city of about 80,000, was only 20 miles away – one could get there in an hour or less by bus, hitch-hike or train

from Wickham Market. London itself was easily available for a 48 hour pass destination.

Although restrictions were necessarily imposed from time to time, passes off the base were usually allowed at night for those not on duty. Two 48 hour passes a month (or if one preferred, four 24's) enabled those who desired to extend the radius of their operations to London and Cambridge to do so.

It was found that the blacksmith in Hacheston cut hair on the side; he soon developed a good barbering business, as it was some time before a barber shop was opened on the station.

Experience also soon taught the days when one was most likely to get light ale, and perhaps some spirits, at the taverns. Deliveries were made weekly, and long before the week was up the taverns were sold out of their more popular beverages.



Saxtead Post Mill

AIRMAN OF THE MONTH

AUGUST



DONALD CLIFTON SIMPSON

3 JANUARY 1924 – 7 AUGUST 1944

Donald was born in New Mexico. He enlisted into the USAAF on 20 January 1943 and was trained as a Ball Turret Gunner. Donald had flown 22 combat missions from Station 153.

Donald was part of the 390th Bomb Group that flew a shuttle mission from England – Russia – Italy – England, leaving on 6th August and returning on 12 August. Unfortunately, on 7th August Donald was hit by flak during the mission to Trzebinia, Poland on A/C 44-6097 ‘Cocaine Bill’. Although Donald was killed, the plane survived and landed in Russia with the Group. Donald’s body had to be left there, being buried in the cemetery at Novi Senzhari, and not being repatriated until 1951.

Donald is now buried in the American Cemetery at Neuville, Belgium . He was 20.

SECTION I	
HEADSTONE INSCRIPTION AND INTERMENT RECORD	
<small>RESCRIPTION (Print Name, Rank, Organization, State, Date of Death, Grave No.)</small> DONALD C. SIMPSON SGT 570 BOMB SQ 390 BOMB GP (H) TEXAS AUG 7 1944 18	
<small>RESCRIPTION (Print Service Number)</small> 32412044	
<small>POST OFFICE ADDRESS</small> NEUVILLE 1202	
<small>ONLY</small> 1	<small>MAL</small> 1
<small>DECADERS</small> AM (2 OLC) PH	<small>BLOCK</small> D
<small>UNIFORM NUMBER</small> 1260	<small>ROW</small> 9
<small>POST OFFICE ADDRESS</small> MRS. ADDIE B. SIMPSON (MOTHER) 250 CLAXTON COURTS ORANGE, TEXAS	<small>POST NUMBER</small> 22313
<small>POSTER RESIDENCE</small>	

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after January 1, 1922 and on or before June 30, 1924)			
<small>SERIAL NUMBER</small>	<small>1. NAME (Print)</small>	<small>ORDER NUMBER</small>	
X 607	DONALD Clifton Simpson	12988	
<small>2. PLACE OF BIRTH (Print)</small>			
3307 Mesquite Beaumont, Jefferson Texas			
<small>(THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 1 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL)</small>			
<small>3. MARRIAGE STATUS</small>			
SAME			
<small>4. TRADES</small>			
None			
<small>5. AGE at BIRTH</small>		<small>6. PLACE OF BIRTH</small>	
19		SAN MARCO, TEXAS	
<small>7. DATE OF BIRTH</small>			
JAN 3 1924 (N.M.)			
<small>8. NAME and ADDRESS of PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS</small>			
MRS. W. E. SIMPSON 3307 Mesquite Beaumont, Texas			
<small>9. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS</small>			
RAYMOND Fletcher 1995 Railroad Ave. Beaumont, Texas			
<small>10. PLACE OF REGISTRATION BUSINESS</small>			
Fletcher Amalgam Works Beaumont, Texas			
<small>11. SIGNATURE</small>			
Donald C. Simpson			
<small>12. I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ADDRESS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE</small>			
<small>D. S. P. FORM 1 (REVISED 5-1-42) (1942) 400-1000-4</small>			

From Station History August 1943

Arrival in the ETO

The advance party, consisting of the group commanding officer, Lt Col Edgar M. Wittan; the operations officer, Capt Ralph V. Hansel; the combat intelligence officer, Maj Ollie A. Davis; and the communications officer, 1/Lt Clyde R. Scott, arrived in the ETO on 4 July 1943.

The combat crews arrived in their B-17s in England on 17 July and reached Station 153 the following day. The ground echelon, which crossed the ocean by ship, reached Liverpool on 27 July and arrived at the Station on 28 July.

The fact that the group flew its first combat operation on 12 August is a tribute to its organisational skill and the excellent training it had received in the United States.

The fact that they were in the war zone was brought home to the ground echelon as the men marched from the dock to the railway station past wrecked buildings and vacant lots where obviously buildings had once been.

As the ground echelon approached the station, they saw isolated B-17s apparently parked in fields. On drawing closer the hardstands and connections to the perimeter and runways were evident. The Nisson huts, clustered here and there over a wide area were far different from the frame barracks to which the men were accustomed in the United States.

The need for dispersal of aircraft and personnel was recognised. This was forcefully emphasised when, on 23 August, a low-flying enemy aircraft dropped three bundles of anti-personnel butterfly bombs on the field. They landed near hardstand No.27 – at 0330 hrs – where the engineering crew was working on an aircraft. Some of the bombs exploded, some did not. The area was vacated and after daybreak ordnance began to search for and dispose of the bombs which had not detonated.

In August the personnel was kept very busy organising the various sections. Many officers and a number of the enlisted men visited other Eighth AAF stations to see how other heavy bombardment groups were operating in this theater.

RAF personnel were at the station, active in many sections, and some of the English air force remained for several months to teach the men of the 390th the established SOP in the ETO.

AIRMAN OF THE MONTH SEPTEMBER



JAMES ROBERT MERGE

28 JULY 1922 – 9 SEPTEMBER 1944

James was born in West Virginia. He enlisted into the USAAF on 1 February 1943 and was trained as a Navigator. James flew 28 combat missions from Station 153.

On 9th September 1944, James was navigator on Mission 186 to Dusseldorf, on A/C 42-31854, 'Baby Buggy'. At bombs away the plane was hit by flak and was seen to fall out of formation on fire. Moments later the plane exploded in mid-air. James last words were to tell the pilot that they were over the target.

James is buried in Mt. Calvary Cemetery, West Virginia. He was 22.



CHECK TYPE REQUIRED		APPLICATION FOR HEADSTONE OR MARKER	
<input type="checkbox"/> SPALLS	<input type="checkbox"/> WHOLE RECONSTRUCTION	REGISTRATION NO.	0-71251
<input type="checkbox"/> FLAT MARBLE MARKER	<input type="checkbox"/> FLAT MARBLE MONUMENT	REGISTRATION DATE	K.L.A. 9/9/44
<input type="checkbox"/> FLAT MARBLE MONUMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> MONUMENT MARKER (SEE INSTRUCTIONS)	REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
NAME OF DECEASED		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
MORGE, James R.		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
DATE OF BIRTH (MONTH, DAY, YEAR)		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
7/28/22		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
DATE OF DEATH (MONTH, DAY, YEAR)		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
9/9/44		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
PLACE OF BURIAL		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
MOUNT CALVARY CEM.		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
CITY AND COUNTY (SEE INSTRUCTIONS)		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
WHEELING, W. VA.		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
NAME OF CONTRACTOR		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
JAMES P. ALTMAYER & SONS		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
ADDRESS		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
1681		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
CITY AND STATE		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
WHEELING, W. VA.		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
DATE OF ORDER		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
AUG 4 1944		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
NAME OF CONTRACTOR		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
JAMES P. ALTMAYER & SONS		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
ADDRESS		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.
309 MAIN ST. WHEELING, W. VA.		REGISTRATION NO.	WEST VA 570th. Bomb. Sq.

Mission No. 11
WATTEN
France
7 September 1943

Once again clouds over the continent prevented the group from bombing. The assigned target for 7 September was the secret "aeronautical facilities" at Watten, France. Three of our aircraft which flew with the 100th group, did bomb, however, and observed hits on the target and in the wooded area around the target. Our other 22 aircraft brought their bombs back.

No enemy aircraft attacked any of the Eighth AAF bombers which went on the mission. Flak at Watten was moderate, inaccurate to accurate. Inaccurate flak was encountered at several other points along the route.

Major Ralph V. Hansel was acting command pilot. 1/Lt R.W.Waltz was group lead squadron pilot; 1/Lt H.C.Skogmo was lead pilot of the high squadron and 1/Lt P.W.Vance of the low squadron.

1/Lt Richard A. Foster was group lead navigator 1/Lt Earl E. Evans group lead bombardier.

Additional details may be found in the S-2 and S-3 reports sent to Division Headquarters on 8 and 9 September respectively.

OPERATIONS NARRATIVE

1. The warning order and bomb loading for this mission was received at 1755 hours September 6, 1943 by Capt. Davis, duty officer, by teletype. In accordance with instructions 2 x 2000 lb. GP fused 1/10 sec nose, and 1/10 sec tail were loaded in 26 available aircraft. Fuel loaded – normal.
2. Final plans were made with briefing and take-off set at 0330 and 0555 hours respectively.
3. The lead aircraft left the ground at 0600 other aircraft following at 30 second interval. Delay in take-off was caused by a hole in perimeter track causing also confusion in take-off order.
4. Group was assembled at 0620 hours over field and proceeded to climb to rendezvous at Splasher 6 with the 95th and 100th Groups. Rendezvous and all control times were made good.
5. Two ships aborted. Formation flown over target is shown.

Jennie Smith

Sam Robertson

We were very sad to hear of the passing of 390th ball turret gunner Veteran Sam Robertson. Sam completed 18 combat missions and 2 Chowhound missions with the 390th.

Sam remained very good friends with fellow crew member John Magill and both were lively and charming VIPs at 390th reunions in Tucson. Sam will indeed be missed.



From left to right: John Magill, Sam Robertson, Gerry Green and Alan Brooks at Parham



From left to right: Sam Robertson, John Magill, Bill Pennebaker, Jim Truitt & Mary Truitt- Pennebaker at a Reunion Dinner at Framlingham College



The Singer Crew in front of Barracks 1221

– **Back row** (left to right): Albert G Barton (Tail Gunner), Donavon J O'Keefe (Waist Gunner), Burt Stevens Jr (Engineer / Top Turret), Samuel E Robertson (Ball Turret) and Theodore W Bessler (Radio Operator).

Front Row (left to right): Arnold Morton Singer (Pilot), Robert W Smith (Co-pilot), Joseph W Hoffman (Navigator) and John Magill Jr (Bombardier/ Toggler).

**THE BRITISH RESISTANCE
ORGANISATION MUSEUM**



**A Poem Dedicated to the Men and Women of
GHQ Auxiliary Units 1940 -1944**

(with apologies to Longfellow and ‘Song of Hiawatha’)

Should you ask me whence these stories?
Whence these Legends and Traditions?
With their nasty sounds of banging and
Their smells of smoke and almonds,
I should answer, I should tell you
Tales they are of Home Defences –
Of a very secret movement.

Frowned upon at first by Big-Wigs,
Looked upon as underhand!
“T’wasn’t done” they said, disgusted
Turned their Army noses upwards
As a sign it was beneath them.

But our persevering leaders
Stood their ground and asked no favours,
Trained their men with scanty weapons,
Gave them strange ideas of fighting!
Till at last the pompous Big-Wigs
“Thought there might be something in it”

Condescended to consider,
Questions that concerned equipment,
Saw results in other quarters and
At last began to praise us!
So our work became quite pleasant
Once we felt we were approved of!

**By WA Joyce
Auxilier 203 Battalion Devon**

Donald Arthur Handscombe—Interview Part I



13th June 1918 – 22nd February 2018 GHQ Auxiliary Units- Thundersley Operational Patrol

On 25th November 1997 Don Handscombe was interviewed by John Warwicker and Ron Chisnall.

Don was 22 when war broke out, in a reserve occupation as his father's farm manager at Hockley in Essex. The Local Defence Volunteers was formed on 14th May 1940 and Don was an early member being posted to Leigh-on-Sea. (On 23rd August 1940 the name was changed to Home Guard)

Towards the end of 1940 Don was approached by an acquaintance from a local pub in Hadleigh who was a member of the Aux Units. He was asked to meet a civilian called Marian Green who lived in Hockley (Kenneth Walter Maryan Green who was a Hockley OUT Station operator along with his wife Elsie). At the meeting he also met a ".....Captain Ford, who was the OC of our Aux Units group in that corner and we had a chat....." (Captain Cecil George 'Jack' Ford, Hockley Patrol leader and later Essex No 8 Group (Southend) Group Commander). "The chap who originally approached me contacted me a few days later and told me I was in". John asked Don if he could remember who this contact was. He was Fred Harris who later became the Thundersley Patrol leader (Sgt Frederick Harris). Before joining the Thundersley Patrol Don had to hand his HG uniform and kit in reverting to civvies. When asked what reaction there was from his former HG colleagues Don said that only the OC queried where he was going and Don said "I'm afraid I can't tell you but it is another branch of the Home Guard and he seemed to think that was alright...."

Interestingly Don told John and Ron that patrols based in really rural areas had no trouble getting suitable recruits whereas, being on the borders of a built up area ".....we found suffered from finding suitable recruits. Three we had in my time we tried but for one reason or another were unsuitable and we were never really up to full strength which was eight". John mentioned that those that had been let go ".....would have had a few secrets by the time you got rid of them and that was bad news for the Aux Units" which Don acknowledged.

In discussing training under Captain Ford, Don mentioned that a disused brick field was used for explosive demonstrations and meetings and that live firearms training took place in a farmer's field which went right down to the River Crouch. Don mention that they regularly met up with other patrols in the group and helped each other with building Operational Bases (OBs). (*This is contrary to other parts of the country where patrols were unaware of the existence of others. John said that this very much depended on the particular Intelligence Officer*). Group training was also carried out at Rivers House in Earls Colne.

Don described the OB as a semi-circular Nissen Hut which had been put in place by the army with an escape tunnel and entrance which were constructed by the patrol members. There was room for seven men inside as one man would always be on lookout outside. He was in a shelter, again, made by the Patrol with a field telephone linked to the OB.

Weapons and explosives were kept at home, often in garages. As well as explosives Don kept his revolver and dagger at home as well as a truncheon, cheese wire, face veil, hand grenades and ammunition. He also had a Tommy Gun initially before it was replaced with the Sten.

John asked about the clothing the patrol wore when training. "We had denim overalls issue which were often in a terrible state as you can imagine. Any sort of a hat or cap, generally a woollen one because it fitted closely and we had an issue of rubber lace-up boots, which were supposed to be waterproof and we either used these or plimsolls".

To be continued next edition.

Oral History from 1940

Recently Peter Kindred and I were invited to a lunchtime meeting of the Ipswich and Suffolk Club, after which we gave a talk about the British Resistance Organisation. There was a great deal of interest in the extent to which we linked the national story with information about local patrols.

Several members had memories of Auxiliary activities from when they were young children during the war. One gentleman explained that he and his brother had grown up in Raleigh, Essex. Their father was the patrol sergeant. The local patrol met outside their house one evening each week before spending the night in their secret Operational Base. The stock of explosives and fuses was kept in their father's shed at home because the OB was very damp. The brothers knew this was all to be kept top secret. Their father's .38 revolver, a Thompson sub-machine gun and a .22 sniper rifle were also stored in the house. If the Nazis invaded and their father could not be found, he had trained them to use the weapons and told them they should defend their mother at home.

These were desperate times.

Peter Senior

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In our last edition, we explained how a matched grant of £1950 from East Suffolk District Council's "Bounce Back" Community Partnership Fund had helped us with the cost of reopening with COVID 19 precautions in place. The project was aimed mainly at access to the museum for older members of the community and children. The notional end date was 31st July, when we had been visited by 842 adults and 156 child visitors, a total of 998 since 2nd June. Our busiest day was Sunday 1st August, when another 192 came to see our displays plus some visiting military vehicles and classic cars.



We have just received notification that a second grant application has also been successful. This is £1,404.53 from East Suffolk's Restart Fund, provided by the Collaborative Communities Board. The money will assist with the ongoing costs that arise from continuing to open with COVID precautions in place. These include the cost of acrylic screens for the shop/café and two gazebos to assist with welcoming visitors. Disposable plates and cups are safer for staff to use but we have been getting through stocks at quite a rate! We will also be able to buy some more lightweight folding tables.

Recent comments on trip Advisor have been very positive, giving mostly five stars. People often praise our children's trail activities and our arrangements for the safety of all.

We are extremely grateful for this additional financial support, administered by hard-working officials at East Suffolk. Our applications have benefited from advice received from Community Action Suffolk and Suffolk County Council.

We have plenty of other ideas for new projects that may well attract funding and hope to develop these over the next few months.

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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.

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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.

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 September.



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