

# PARHAM AIRFIELD MUSEUM

## NEWSLETTER MARCH 2019



*Registered Charity Number 284146*

This month we are busy working on a reconstruction P-47 Thunderbolt cockpit dashboard using original instruments donated by Charlie Cairns.

Special thanks to Laser Patterns, (a company which is actually located on the site of B-17 hardstand number 10, a very short distance from the museum!) who have kindly cut out and provided the aluminium base plate using a scale drawing. We hope to have the finished product on display in time for the new season opening.

We are lucky to have been donated some surplus cabinets from Aldeburgh Museum (they have been awarded Lottery Funding for refurbishment). The cabinets will be used in our new POW exhibition room, to display medals and badges in the corridor and to re-house the Home Front display in the tea room.



*New exhibitions coming soon- work in progress!*

I hope to see some of you at our Annual General Meeting on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> March. The meeting starts at 10.30am and will be followed by a short volunteer training session afterwards.

**Peter Kindred**

## MALCOLM HOOD

A sunny Wednesday morning in September and I'm the 'Meeter and Greeter' at the entrance to the museum. Three gents approach the door - one of them has a Duxford T-shirt on which is a hint that these guys are probably aviation enthusiasts. I go through the normal introductions when I am politely interrupted by one of the chaps – 'We are actually here on a bit of a mission; we're looking for your Malcolm Hood'. Somewhat thrown by that, I reply 'Oh – is he a new volunteer here? Not sure I know him?' 'No, no – the P51 Mustang Malcolm Hood canopy that you have on display – we've seen it on your website' is the reply. At this point I realise my schoolboy error – we have two P51 'Malcolm Hood' canopies. Gentle laughter all round as I consider hiding under the porch bench in embarrassment!

I make amends by taking them direct to the Malcolm Hood; they are like kids on Christmas Eve – it's exactly what they were looking for. These chaps are part of a team rebuilding a P51 Mustang to flying condition at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford – and their hood had shattered mid-flight.

They had no plans or drawings of the hood and needed to manufacture their own. We lent them ours as a template. The photo shows our 'Malcolm Hood' temporarily fitted to the P51 in a hangar at Duxford.

When the first Mustang P51 B/C fighters were delivered, the RAF was concerned about visibility from the original framed, hinged hood. The goldfish bowl shape of the new design gave the pilot an all-round view, including behind and almost straight down. It was manufactured by R. Malcolm & Co. in the UK and many of the first batches of Eighth Air Force Mustangs received this modification too. Fitted with long range drop tanks, the Mustang was able to escort the USAAF bombers and take on the Luftwaffe over their homeland.



*Our Malcolm Hood on their plane*

The hood is now safely back and on display in our collection. Great to think that we have been able to help one of the nation's premier official collections – and the Mustang team have taken a box of our museum pamphlets to issue to visitors to Duxford!

**Steve Smith**

## A REMINDER OF WHAT IT WAS LIKE

### Robert Penovich's Crew on their First Combat Mission

31<sup>st</sup> December 1944

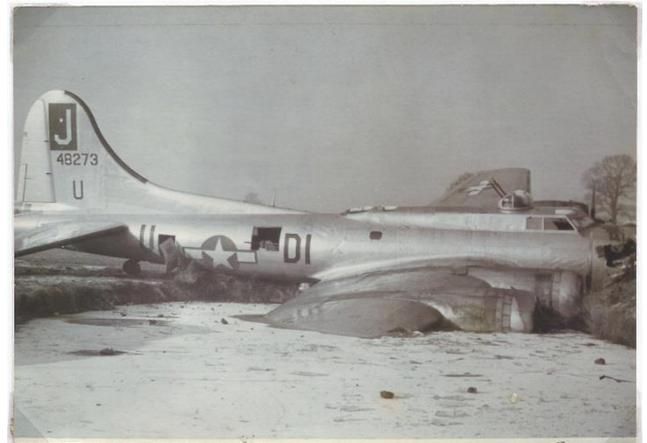
Lt. Robert Penovich and his crew were on their first combat mission in B-17 48273, "Lady Faithful". They were sent to bomb an oil refinery in Hamburg. There was heavy flak over the target and two 390<sup>th</sup> B-17s were hit and crashed.

Penovich's B-17 made it home despite numerous holes, including a large one in the right wing. Landing on the main runway, the brakes failed. The pilots gunned the engines on one side, hoping to veer off the runway, but this only served to increase speed. "Lady Faithful" ran off the end of the runway by about 300 yards and was stopped by an earth bank at the far side of a frozen pond.

Most of the crew scrambled out, wet, cold, shocked and injured. The Navigator and Togglier were trapped in the front section: they could be heard but lots of loose heavy equipment had imprisoned them. Only the station's small fire truck was available because the main one was dealing with another incident. The ambulance arrived too. The pilot and Sgt. Benjamin Holman, Top Turret Gunner, ignored the risk of fire. They grabbed some heavy tools and smashed a hole in the fuselage to gain access to the trapped men. The medics then climbed in and got them out.



Back Row L to R:  
Wilmer B. Rhodes, Waist; Robert D. Taggart, Co-Pilot; Roy H. Golder, Navigator; Bob Penovich, Pilot; Richard E. Myers, Radio  
Front Row L to R:  
Lloyd H. Chapman, Tail Gunner; Ben J. Holman, Engineer; Jack E. McElveen, Ball Turret;  
John M. Gleason, Toggelier



*Lady Faithful in the pond on  
New Year's Eve 1944*

**Peter Senior**

## ORAL HISTORY

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

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*I was a young girl during the war. We lived near the base at Mendlesham. The young Americans were very attractive to the girls. Their uniforms were smart and at weekends the town was a sea of colours, very different to the few British soldiers. The Americans had gum and candy, they used to throw it out to the kids. My sister and five of my cousins all married American boys and went to the US after the war. They are still there: I have just come back from visiting my sister.*

*I remember one Christmas all the young children were invited to a party on the base. Trucks picked them up from the Cornhill, Ipswich. We had lots of fun and games and were each looked after by one of the servicemen. The food was fantastic, heaps of it. I had a huge madeira cake with a great ball of ice cream in the centre. We had presents too. Mine was a board game about bombing raids on Germany. When it was time to go home, they gave us each a parcel with strict instructions to give it to our mothers. It contained lots of things we could not easily obtain during the war, including soap and new towels.*

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*They used the castle as a landmark. They would congregate here and fly round and round and then all move off together. It was an amazing sight but you wondered how many would return.*

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## STAYING IN CONTACT

Please remember to check our website and Facebook pages for more news and information from the Museum. The Facebook page is a great way of connecting with other friends of the Museum- we love it when members share their special stories and photos, helping to keep precious memories alive.



Our archivist, Jennie Smith, also posts daily mission updates on the site, showing what happened 'on this day' in the 390<sup>th</sup>'s history.



[Parham Airfield Museum \(390th Bomb Group & British Resistance Organisation\)](#)

# FROM OUR ARCHIVIST

## AIRMAN OF THE MONTH



**ROBERT F SPICER**

**27 February 1921 – 16 March 1944**

Robert was born in Iowa and enlisted into the USAAF on 12 June 1942. He trained as a Co-Pilot and flew 4 missions from Station 153.

On Mission 72 to Augsburg-Ulm Germany, Robert was flying in 230783 The Stork Club. At 11.50am near Nordlingen, en route to the target, the plane was damaged by enemy aircraft rockets. The plane's wings and fuselage caught fire and as the plane left formation it went into a steep spin and exploded.

He is buried in Evergreen Cemetery, Montgomery County, Iowa. He was 23.

Council Bluffs Nonpareil (Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie, Iowa) · 4 Apr 1944

FORM TYPE REQUIRED (See Explanations attached)		APPLICATION FOR HEADSTONE OR MARKER (Please mark out and return in duplicate)		ORIGINAL
<input type="checkbox"/> UPRIGHT HEADSTONE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FLAT GRANITE MARKER	ENLISTMENT DATE 12 June 1942	SERIAL NO. O-693421	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GRANITE <input type="checkbox"/> MARBLE <input type="checkbox"/> MONUMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> FLAT MARBLE MARKER	<input type="checkbox"/> BRASS MARKER	DISCHARGE DATE March 16, 1944	PENSION NO.	
NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial) SPICER, ROBERT F.		STATUS Killed in Action	PLATE IOWA	COMPANY
DATE OF BIRTH (Month, Day, Year) February 27, 1921	DATE OF DEATH (Month, Day, Year) March 16, 1944	U. S. REGIMENT, STATE ORIGIN AND DIVISION U. S. Army Air Corps 390 Bomb Group 8th Army Air Force	GRADE 2 Lt	
NAME OF CEMETERY Evergreen		LOCATION (City and State) Red Oak, Iowa	NEAREST FREIGHT STATION (City and State) Red Oak, Iowa	
SHIP TO (I CERTIFY THE APPLICANT FOR THIS STONE HAS MADE ARRANGEMENTS WITH ME TO TRANSPORT THE STONE FROM THE FREIGHT STATION TO THE CEMETERY) R. H. Perryman		POST OFFICE ADDRESS OF CONSIGNEE Red Oak, Iowa		
DO NOT WRITE HERE FOR VERIFICATION APR 15 1950 COLUMBUS, MISS. 15 AUG 1950 NO. 3619550		I certify this application is submitted for a stone for the unmarked grave of a veteran. I hereby agree to assume all responsibility for the removal of the stone promptly upon arrival at destination, and properly place it at the dependent's grave at my expense. Vergil A. Spivey APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE 417 First St Red Oak Iowa		

### Red Oak Flier Is Reported Missing

Special to The Nonpareil.

RED OAK—Mr. and Mrs. V. A. Spicer received word from the war department Monday evening that their son, 2nd Lt. Robert F. Spicer, member of a Flying Fortress crew, was missing in action over Germany since March 14.

Spicer had just been sent overseas to England in February following finishing an intensive course in combat flying at the army air base at Alexandria, La.

**Jennie Smith**

## BRITISH RESISTANCE ORGANISATION MUSEUM

This is the second instalment from my conversations with members of the Stratford Auxiliary group.

### Operational Bases

The bases from which groups worked formed an important part of the general secrecy of the movement and were often ingeniously camouflaged. Each of the cells worked independently of each other so that, in the event of an invasion, they would not be able to 'split' on each other.

The bases varied and there were some problems in erecting them without arousing suspicion. Alfie Cable recollected that *'If any civilian asked about it, we said it was a secret food hideaway to keep them quiet'*. Memories of the bases were still very vivid in 1996: *'Our base was about 16ft long by 8ft high and 8ft diameter. We had all our supplies down there... there were beds on hooks that could be lowered down and there were stocks of explosive. Some of us slept on gelignite! There was a little table, a tilley lamp and a calendar so that if anything happened, we'd cross off the days'* (Percy Kindred).

Although some training was done at Coleshill, near Swindon, most was done locally. It seems that exercises ranged from small-scale – like obtaining water from a nearby farm without arousing the dog – to large-scale projects like capturing the Commanding Officer from Parham Hall (at this time the Hall was occupied by the regular army). This was successful, despite the 50 guards who surrounded the building.

*The animation of the men in recollecting this event- despite the passage of over 50 years- made clear their proud involvement in the BRO and makes all the more remarkable the secrecy that was maintained for 50 years.*

### ***The Stratford Patrol, the nearest Auxiliary Unit to our Museum***

*Top Row: Albert Cable, Hector Wade, Alexander Dunnett*

*Middle Row: Herman Kindred, Capt. Scott-Moncrieff, Percy Kindred*

*Bottom Row: Stanley Crane, Arthur Whiting*



**Judy Moore**

## AND FINALLY....



We are in need of extra volunteers to help man both museums, meet and greet visitors, join our maintenance work parties, or serve in our tea room and gift shop. Volunteering in your local museum can be mutually rewarding, providing a chance to share interests and skills, work with the public, make new friends and gain work experience.

We have introduced a new mentor scheme for new volunteers to help you 'learn the ropes' and feel part of the team. If you are have a few hours a month free and are interested in joining our friendly crew please email us on [parhamairfieldmuseum@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:parhamairfieldmuseum@yahoo.co.uk). *Anyone volunteering at Parham Airfield Museum also has access to a free training programme through SHARE Museums East.*

## VISITOR COMMENTS

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

*"So much to see and learn from. Everyone was so friendly and knowledgeable. Too much to see in just one day! Thank you."*

*"Amazing collection & so many stories"*

*"Enjoyed by all, very accessible for my customer who uses a wheelchair. A very well maintained museum"*

