

PARHAM AIRFIELD MUSEUM NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2019- JANUARY 2020



Registered Charity Number 284146

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

It is my pleasure to introduce this newsletter, the last for the year 2019. We have had a very successful opening season and are now “closed” for the winter, although a lot of work is going on.

We are very proud to record that amongst our visitors were about 700 children, some in groups and others with their families. We already have some bookings for children in 2020. This is an aspect of our work that we aim to develop. It is so important that youngsters understand the horror of war and the significance of the sacrifices made on our behalf.

Our last organised event was a modest service of remembrance on 11th November. We flew the flags of the United States and Great Britain at half mast, whilst boys and girls of the Combined Cadet Force, Air Training Section, Framlingham College formed an honour guard, laid a wreath and sounded the Last Post.



As a charity we are extremely grateful to those who have donated funds to help our work. We will maintain our policy of free admission. Revenue from the café and shop is useful but without your gifts we would not be able to continue, so many, many thanks. Thanks also to local people who give us goods, artefacts or their time for free or way below market rates.

Very special thanks to our skilled volunteer team, who are constantly busy running the shop, managing our collections, welcoming visitors, cleaning the restrooms, repairing the fabric and so on, the list is endless. Well done all! We have several new volunteers, but more recruits are always needed. The rewards are great, albeit non-financial, and you don't have to pay income tax on them!

In early December we had a lovely end of season volunteers' Christmas get-together at the Museum. It was attended by about 40 people with lots of nice food and drink. The occasion was also long-serving volunteer Mick Tipple's birthday- we won't tell you which one, but he is looking very good on it!



If you have been able to visit us in 2019, many thanks. We hope to see you again in 2020, along with others who could not make it this year. There will be plenty of new things to look at! We wish you all the very best for Christmas and the New Year.

Peter Senior



Christmas Greetings to all our readers from the merry volunteers.

RECENT VISITORS

Framlingham Cub Scouts came to visit us before their Remembrance Day parade to learn about the impacts of War on the local community and young servicemen.

One of the Cubs called our lead volunteer to one side and said: “Can I just tell you something?
... This place is awesome!”

We love comments like this. To know that younger visitors are impressed and interested in our work shows that we are doing a good thing.



Steve Snyder and his wife Glenda visited the Museum. Steve is the author of “Shot Down”, which is based on his father’s experiences as a Pilot with the 306th Bomb Group at Thurleigh.



Yale historian, James Rogers, has been researching Joseph Kennedy's last fateful mission, 'Operation Anvil', which resulted in his plane exploding over Blythburgh in Suffolk.

Joe had completed his required 25 combat missions and was eligible to return home, where he was expected by many to be the next US President. He instead volunteered for this tragic mission.

The last photograph of Joe, taken on the day of his flight, 12th August 1944

James has produced two documentaries; one on Joe Kennedy's final flight, the other on Butterfly Bombs. Both use findings from his visit to Parham Airfield Museum and we feature in the documentaries. The documentaries can be viewed for free online and these links can also be found on our website:-

<https://tv.historyhit.com/watch/35749050>

<https://tv.historyhit.com/watch/35749058>

Our display on Joe Kennedy is always very popular with US visitors and we hope to expand it in the near future.

Chris Unitt, right, presenting a copy of his book "Searching for Uncle Herb" to the Museum. Jennie Smith helped Chris research missing 390th Airman Herbert Harms, as featured in February's newsletter.



Chris vowed to look in to Herbert's fate after a chance meeting with his nephew in America. After many years research, hard work and perseverance, Chris's findings led to a positive identification of Herbert's remains in the US Military Cemetery at Neuville Belgium and Herbert was re-buried in a plot purchased by his parents many years ago for if he ever came home.

Chris's book has been privately published and is sadly not available to purchase at present.

BUILDING PROJECT

Our big project is to create an exhibition building to replace the 1990s built Nissen Hut that has housed the Museum of the British Resistance Organisation. The aim is to have the building open for April 2020. It will house the Resistance Organisation exhibits but being much larger than the old hut will present opportunities for a range of displays about the war in the air and the home front.



The construction will create a building with a pitched roof that meets modern building regulations. This will better preserve the artefacts via management of the humidity and light. We intend to give it the appearance of a utility building of the 1940s such as existed on Station 153 Framlingham.

The project also gives us the opportunity to deal with the retaining wall of the replica operational base, which has not been coping with the weight of the earth mound behind it. The replacement wall will be in effect the side of the new building, providing internal access and hopefully preventing rain from entering under the door! There will be full disabled access.



Developing new exhibitions will be a second project phase. A key feature will be a timeline showing the start of the war, the crisis of 1940 when Britain had to prepare to counter the expected invasion, how the Resistance Organisation was secretly established and then the building of the airfield and the arrival of the USAAF. Very much a local as well as national and international story, it intertwines world events with the community, including the brothers Percy and Herman Kindred.

Work began the day after our last opening of the season, with a team of volunteers removing all the existing exhibits. Once the services had been cut, a smaller team then removed all the fittings and took down the Nissen. Care was taken to preserve the hoops and many of the other materials: you never know when you might need another Nissen/Quonset hut! We are on track to date, but wet weather has not been helping.

Demolition was followed by the clearing and levelling of the site. Work has now begun on some of the blockwork. The main construction will be done by a specialist contractor, as will the provision of all utilities including our various alarms. Fitting out of the interior will again be down to us volunteers.



The project is being funded from the museum's accumulated funds, which will be somewhat stretched for a while.

If you can assist in any way, please let us know!

FRIENDS & FAMILY GATHERING



Thanks to all who attended our first Friends and Family Regional Gathering in Dayton Ohio! The event was a great success and it was very exciting to meet everyone. We had over 70 people attend and it was amazing to find out that there were several people who had never attended a 390th event/reunion before. The day began at the National Museum of the USAF where we got to see the newly

restored Memphis Belle B-17. In the evening dinner was held at the Urbana Aviation Museum where we got the opportunity to see the restoration of the B-17, Champaign Lady. The special moment for me was getting to sit and talk to the daughter of my grandfather's co-pilot and hear her memories of her father.

Growing our 390th family is such an important part of our mission and these



regional gatherings are a great opportunity to cultivate relationships. Thanks to all who helped plan and execute this event! We hope to plan our 2020 gathering soon and will be posting information on our Facebook page as well as future Bulletins.

Kevin Drain

Dates for your 2020 Diary- more to follow!



Sunday 22nd March 10.30am Annual General Meeting

Friday 8th May Open for Public Holiday, commemorating the VE Day Celebrations in 1945.

Saturday 9th May Play about the Joe Kennedy Jnr. crash at Blythburgh, 4 pm and 7 pm. Tickets will be sold in advance.
Presented by INK of Halesworth, inkfestival.org

Sunday 12th July 2pm visit of Ipswich Vintage Motor Cycle Club as part of their annual "Harvest Run".

ORAL HISTORY

"I have lived in Framlingham all my life. I was a young girl during the war. My four older brothers all served in the forces and came home safely. My younger brother went to the base Christmas Party, since it was for those up to 10 years of age. I was 14 then.

My Dad used to count the planes taking off on a mission and then the number that came back. There were often less on return but as a child I never really understood why.

Lots of the girls formed relationships with the airmen. They looked very smart in their uniforms. Many local boys got a "I have found someone else" letter whilst they were serving abroad. It was very upsetting for them. Some were away for years.

One day as the Americans were leaving, an airman rode up and said I could have his bike for free if I gave him a kiss. I said, "certainly not" and he pedalled away. Maybe I should have taken the offer!

We all came to know Leroy Keeping after the war, who was an airman but became one of your volunteers. He never lost his American accent!"

+ + +

"I was a young schoolgirl in Framlingham during the war. We all used to hear the roar of engines as the bombers started up at first light then took off. Often, they would be circling over the town for over an hour as they formed up into their battle formation before flying off to the target. If I shut my eyes, I can hear them now. Those engines sound like nothing else I have heard since, very distinctive.

I was not so aware of the sound of them coming back. Maybe it was because they came home in smaller groups or individually. You could see that some of the planes had some engines not working. They often fired coloured distress flares. Quite often one of the engines would be on fire.

We all knew about the plane that crashed on Parham village and that no one got out alive. We heard the terrific boom at home in Framlingham and knew something awful had happened.

After the war, when I was a young married girl, the Americans must still have been in the area because I clearly remember being invited to various dances. They used to be held in the town in the building that has gone now but was later the headquarters of Framlingham Farmers. We all had to wear a name badge which also showed whether we were still single or not!"

VISITOR COMMENTS

"Absolutely loved it. Very interesting and authentic a must for everyone to visit. So many brave men and women- it humbles you.

"What a fantastic piece of history tucked away in the middle of nowhere. So well laid out, informative and the artefacts blew our minds! Keep up the good work, you are all a credit to those that went before".

"Excellent and great with children"

So..... What was 'The Bitching Post'?

Those of you who have visited the museum are probably familiar with what we often refer to as 'the glasshouse' – the Flying Control Room at the very top of the control tower which offers a fabulous 360 degree view of the surrounding farmland and what was the 390th Bomb Group airbase during World War II.

The glasshouse is home to a large and very detailed schematic aerial plan of the airfield as it was when fully operational – with locations of specific venues clearly labelled.

A few years ago – as a new volunteer - I was on duty in the glass house when a visitor asked me what the 'Bitching Post' was on the plan. I had to admit to not knowing (not uncommon when I was a new boy on the block, I'm sorry to admit!)- but said I would find out. One of the more seasoned and knowledgeable volunteers saved my bacon and embarrassment and explained that it was the name given to the 'drinking hole' for the regular ranks – a place where the guys could go and relax over a beer and take the opportunity to verbally bemoan the officer ranks – the 'bosses' - for what they perceived as - how shall we say – 'their poor management practice and decision making' – you know where I'm coming from!

There was apparently a competition in late November 1943 on the base for the crews and ground staff to name the new 'beer saloon' - and win £2. There were no rules to this competition – 'merely write the name you suggest on a piece of paper with your name and squadron and hand it to Sergeant Mayo (a member of the base headquarters ground crew) – and the most appropriate name will be adopted, and the winner notified'.

The 'Bitching Post' appears to have won the day at Station 153, Parham!! Unfortunately, we don't have details of who won the £2 – but no doubt he spent all or most of his prize money wisely in his newly named watering hole!

I do now point out 'The Bitching Post' on the plan to visitors - and usually ask what they think it might be. Many do get it right – but a good few also offer an answer which suggests it may have been an entrance, or venue on the base for – steady now - 'Ladies of the Night'!!! Sorry to disappoint you guys – it was just a place for the chaps to let off steam over a beer!!

Those of you reading this who have not yet visited the museum – we often advise to start your visit in 'the glasshouse' – as it gives a great perspective of the size and scale of the base when it was operational from 1943 – 1945.

Hope to see you there in 2020.

Steve Smith

(I'd definitely have frequented The Bitching Post!!)

FROM OUR ARCHIVIST

AIRMAN OF THE MONTH DECEMBER



JACK PRICE FARISS

29th OCTOBER 1923 – 11th DECEMBER 1943

Jack was born in Bedford County, Virginia and enlisted into the USAAF on 9 September 1942. He trained as a Ball Turret gunner and was killed on his seventeenth mission from Station 153.

On Mission 36 to Emden Germany Jack was flying in 42-31122 (Six Nights in Telergma/Arabian Nuts) with his usual crew and a Command Pilot as lead plane. The aircraft was attacked near the IP at 12:15 by a rocket. Other crews reported seeing 6 or 7 chutes some hitting the water North West of Langeoog Island.

Four of the crew were picked up by rescue boat, three becoming POW's, the fourth dying of exposure. Two bodies were washed up on the shore within the next few months. Jack's body and that of four of his crew mates were never found.

Jack is listed on the Tablets of the Missing at the American War Cemetery Margraten, Holland and on a memorial at Pecks Baptist Church Cemetery in his home town. He was 20.

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after January 1, 1922 and on or before June 30, 1924)		
SERIAL NUMBER N. 483	1. NAME (Print) JACK PRICE FARISS	ORDER NUMBER 12101
2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) ROUTE 4 BEDFORD VA		
3. MAILING ADDRESS 258 FLORIDA AVE PORTSMOUTH VA		
4. TELEPHONE	5. AGE IN YEARS 19	6. PLACE OF BIRTH BEDFORD VA
7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS MRS S E FARISS ROUTE 4 BEDFORD COUNTY VA		
8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS HALL SMITH CONSTRUCTION COMPANY CRAWFORD ST PORTSMOUTH VA		
9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS		
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE		
D. S. F. Form 1 (Revised 6-1-42)		Jack Price Fariss



GENERAL SUMMARY

DECEMBER 1943

The Bombing in December was largely pathfinder, only three of the month's missions involved visual bombing.

Accuracy in bombing on Pathfinder Aircraft has obviously increased as additional experience has been gained, as indicated by the PRO reports and also observation reports when bombs were dropped through 8/10ths clouds.

With our first mission in December we started to operate on a 2 Group Basis.

However, despite having adequate well-trained crews, the 390th has not always been able to put two complete Groups in the air. The reason for this is lack of sufficient aircraft. The great need here is for additional B-17s.

Increased fighter support has tended to make the gunners careless. Aircraft have been lost when we have no enemy aircraft destroyed to show for them. Consequently, there is more and more concentration on training gunners.

While the formations are not so good as they were previously, due to our having so many new and relatively inexperienced crews, the crews are all improving in a praiseworthy manner.

+ + +

JANUARY 1944

The 390th Bomb Group (H) completed nine missions in January. Three of these were visual bombing and six were accomplished by the Pathfinder method.

Two of the three visual missions were not considered fully successful, although hits were scored in each. The weather was the major cause of the below-average bombing on these two missions. The third was very successful with very good bombing accomplished.

At the beginning of January this Group had 56 B-17s assigned, 39 operational. 20 additional Flying Fortresses were received during the month.

The new combat crew library building was completed in the month of January and S-2 concentrated all available time and effort in preparing it for use at the earliest possible moment.

All Station efforts are pointed towards the three-fold objective as voiced by Col. Wittan: to get the bombs on the target, to get the aircraft back from the attack, to destroy as many enemy aircraft as possible.

While the problem of excessive mud has not been entirely solved, considerable progress has been made in its solution.

AIRMAN OF THE MONTH

JANUARY



JUNIUS HORACE YOUNT

3rd JUNE 1923 – 21st JANUARY 1945

Junius was born in Catawba County, North Carolina and was training as a teacher before enlisting into the USAAF on 18 January 1943. He was a Navigator and was killed on the way to his second mission from Station 153.

Aircraft 176 left the formation during assembly with #3 engine feathered and trouble with another engine. They called the Control Tower at 09:40 for instructions on dropping bombs and were told to fly 40 miles east of Southwold and then return to base. At 09:52 hrs a call was made but the aircraft could not be contacted. No further radio communication or word was heard from this aircraft.

Junius is listed on the Tablets of the Missing at the American Cemetery Madingly, Cambridge, and on a memorial stone at Eastview Cemetery in his home town. He was 21.

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after January 1, 1922 and on or before June 30, 1924)

SERIAL NUMBER 1. NAME (Print) JUNIUS HORACE YOUNT 2. GRADE NUMBER 41693

3. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) College Ave. Newton, Newton, Catawba, N.C.

4. MARINE ADDRESS SAME

5. AGE IN YEARS 19 DATE OF BIRTH June 3, 1923 PLACE OF BIRTH N.C.

6. PLACE OF BIRTH N.C.

7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WOULD ADVISE YOU OF YOUR ADDRESS J. H. Yount, College Ave. Newton, N.C.

8. SIGNATURE OF PERSON WHO WOULD ADVISE YOU OF YOUR ADDRESS J. H. Yount

9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS Brady Ave. Newton, Catawba N.C.

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

D. S. S. Form 1 (Revised 4-1-42) 616-2149-3 J. H. Yount



Jennie Smith

BRITISH RESISTANCE ORGANISATION MUSEUM

75TH ANNIVERSARY TRIP TO VERRIERES AND ROM PART III

The Forest of Verrieres

As we drove into the forest it was clear that a very large number of people were attending including two coach loads of children from the local school. The flag bearers made a semi-circle in front of the memorial whilst the SAS, RBL and myself stood in front in preparation for the wreath laying. Once we had laid our wreaths in that order there were a number of speeches from the local mayor and members of the various levels of civic society. My limited knowledge of French did, at least, allow me to realise that the story of the attack on the camp featured heavily in the speeches. The commemoration finished with a recording of our National Anthem and the Marseillaise sung by the school children. The children also sang Le Chant de Partisans and I was impressed that Alec was singing along with them.



Alec - SAS veteran of Operation Moses

Following the commemoration we decamped into the woods for a reception of wine and nibbles and the opportunity to speak to some of the SAS and visitors both French and English. We then drove back to Verrieres for lunch in a local restaurant. Will and I sat with Christian, the mayor of Terce, the president of the Terce museum and a couple of English men who lived in France and had driven over for the commemorations. I kept up with some of the conversation! Christian had arranged for the SAS men to visit the museum in Terce and they are if we would like to join them which we did. We spent a good hour or so going round the museum and then Christian invited us to his 'inner sanctum' for a beer which was an excellent way of rounding off the afternoon. Having seen the SAS off to their hotel in Poitiers we headed back to Rom.

Another early start on Thursday morning and a dash to Ouistreham for the ferry, having left behind the 5 euros jacket! After a long drive we joined the ferry for the trip back to Portsmouth arriving around 2100.

Will headed home whilst I stayed in Portsmouth before heading north to Suffolk on Friday morning.

We had an enjoyable and moving few days and I should thank Will for doing all the driving. I have visited a number of CWGC cemeteries in France, Belgium and Holland and am always struck by how beautifully they are kept. What struck me about our time in Rom and Verrieres is how appreciative the French people are of the sacrifices made not only by their fellow countrymen but by those who came to liberate them.

On the memorial to the three SAS men with no known grave is the epitaph:-

'Their bodies grace the soil of France in graves unknown'

Although they have known graves the sentiment can equally apply to all those who made the final sacrifice in Operation Bulbasket.

Chris Pratt

Finally.... We will leave you with this amusing quotation on display upstairs in the Tower, with some advice that might still be useful today!

