

PARHAM AIRFIELD MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER- NOVEMBER 2019



Registered Charity Number 284146

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

It's hard to believe we are now in the last opening month of the season.

This month I am busy getting quotations for windows and supplies for the new B.R.O building. We plan to remove all of the artefacts and exhibitions straight after our last opening day, ready for the tight time-scaled new building project. We will be working all winter and hope to have most of the works ready for the new season- weather permitting!

The tea dance, arranged by Kevin and Maureen, was again a success. It was enjoyed by many and £340 was donated for museum funds. Thanks to those who came along and supported the event, bringing cakes and raffle prizes.

We are trialling bi-monthly newsletters over the winter months when we will naturally have less news. Expect to hear from us again in December when hopefully we will be able to bring an update on the building project.



SOME OF OUR RECENT VISITORS

Richard Pierce visited the museum to see where his father and uncle, Alton & Theodore Pierce, flew from during the war. Unusually, the two brothers flew together on the same crew. When he found out they were scheduled to be on different crews, Richard's father went to the Chaplain who then sought their parents' permission for the two young men to be in the same crew.



Left, Adam and Emily Hopson visited to honour Adam's grandfather Charles Hopson, who was a waist gunner with the 390th.

Right, Frank, Karen and Kevin Drain visited us again and presented the museum with a Millie the Mermaid mural which Frank painted. Whilst here they enjoyed metal detecting around the old base and finding "treasures".



Left, Wendy and Dale Sroufe. Wendy's father was 390th Pilot Robert G Schneider. She found her father's plane on our display board.

Right, Gerrie & Wei Zhang enjoyed visiting the museum and Suffolk. Gerrie's father was Marvin L White, a tail gunner on Joseph Obermaier's crew.

Here they are at the entrance to her father's squadron, now a caravan site.

Gerrie and Wei stayed at Sutton Hoo and enjoyed looking at locations from *The Detectorists* whilst in Framlingham!



Gerrie and Wendy both visited on the same day and discovered their fathers were both in the same squadron!



Above, Leslie Sutton Huffstetler and her husband outside the tower. Leslie's father was Joseph Sutton, Co-Pilot of *Rusty Lode*, 568th Squadron.

In our next edition, we will feature Chris Unitt's visit, which relates to the book he wrote about Herbert Harms, as featured in our February edition.

FROM OUR ARCHIVIST

AIRMAN OF THE MONTH- OCTOBER

GEORGE HENRY EMERICH



26th MAY 1923 – 10th OCTOBER 1943

George, known to his friends as ‘Sunny’, was born in Pennsylvania and enlisted into the USAAF on 28 September 1942. He trained as a tail gunner and flew 17 missions from Station 153.

On Mission 22 to Munster Germany there was moderate flak and intense fighter operation in the vicinity of where this aircraft went down. At 15:00 #42-3426 dropped out of formation having been hit by flak in the tail section of the aircraft, this is when George is believed to have been killed. The plane then split in half and the front section went into a spin with only seven of the crew managing to bail out, the Pilot and Co-Pilot also losing their lives.

George is buried in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania. He was 20.

Very Able Aviator Pilot # 2932 (M)

CHECK TYPE REQUIRED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRESENT MARBLE HEADSTONE <input type="checkbox"/> PLAY MARBLE MARKER <input type="checkbox"/> BRONZE MARKER (UNDER RESTRICTIONS)		III II APPLICATION FOR HEADSTONE OR MARKER (Please mark out and return to applicant)		SERIAL NO. 33052919	DISTRICT (Check one) <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT <input type="checkbox"/> HONORARY <input type="checkbox"/> NONE
ENLISTMENT DATE: SEPT. 28, 1942 DISCHARGE DATE: OCT. 10, 1943 KILLED IN ACTION: YES		STATE: PENNA. NAME: EMERICH, GEORGE H.		U.S. REGIMENT, STATE ORGANIZATION AND DIVISION: 8TH AIR FORCE, 890TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON	
NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial): EMERICH, GEORGE H.		U.S. AIR FORCE, 890TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON		LOCATION (City and State): LEBANON, PA.	
DATE OF BIRTH (Month, Day, Year): MAY 26, 1923 DATE OF DEATH (Month, Day, Year): OCT. 10, 1943		U.S. AIR FORCE, 890TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON		POST OFFICE ADDRESS OF COUSIN: 238 CLOISTER ST. LEBANON, PA.	
NAME OF COUSIN: SKIMMERLINGS		SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT: <i>David J. Emerich</i>		DATE OF APPLICATION: June 1, 1949	
FOR VERIFICATION: COLUMBUS, MISS. 26 JUL 1949 NO. 6293085		ADDRESS (Street, City, State): 238 CLOISTER ST. LEBANON, PA.		SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT: <i>David J. Emerich</i>	

DDMG FORM 623 REV. 10 APR 62

LEBANON FLYER
KILLED IN RAID
 Former High School Athlete
 Cited For Bravery Last
 Month Downed
 Staff Sergeant George H. Emerich, a former Lebanon athlete and member of the Army Air Forces who received a medal for meritorious service and gallantry only last month, was reported killed in action in a telegram received from the War Department by his family Saturday.

AIRMAN OF THE MONTH

NOVEMBER



DAVID MORGAN RANDLE

10th MAY 1923 – 5th NOVEMBER 1943

David was born in Weatherford Oklahoma and enlisted into the USAAF on 15th December 1942. He trained as a Ball Turret gunner and was killed on his second mission from Station 153.

On Mission 26 just after take-off, others in the formation observed that 'Shy Ann' 42-31030 seemed to be out of control and went into a spin. The plane crashed into the North Sea about 4 miles off the coast of Aldeburgh. No bodies were ever recovered.

His parents received a letter from him after his death, dated 2nd November which made no mention of him having yet been in combat. His first mission was on 3rd November.

David is listed on the Tablets of the Missing at Madingly Cambridge and on a memorial at Greenwood 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 301	1. NAME (Print) DAVID MORGAN RANDLE	ORDER NUMBER 12,505
2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) 1515 W. Monroe Chicago Cook, Ill.		
3. MAILING ADDRESS Same		
4. TELEPHONE 7800	5. AGE IN YEARS 19	6. PLACE OF BIRTH Weatherford
7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS M. A. M. Randle, 2625 Cashion Pl. Oklahoma City		
8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS Wells Hardmen Radio Corp. 2701 N. Kilbourn		
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.		
D. S. S. FORM 1 (Revised 6-1-42) (over) 616-21629-3 David M. Randle (Signature)		

GENERAL SUMMARY OCTOBER 1943

In October 1943, the 390th group flew seven missions, lost 13 of its Flying Fortresses and their crews, destroyed 117 enemy fighters, probably destroyed 17 and damaged 21.

Bombing results were generally very good. Additional details regarding the bombing for the month are to be found under the heading of "Bombing".

October 1943 will long be remembered as the month when the Luftwaffe did everything possible to stop the Flying Fortresses. Friendly escorts of fighters for the bombers were not providing the protection they were able to later. The escorting aircraft were mostly Spitfires, whose limited radius of action made it impossible for them to do much more than to accompany the bombers to the enemy coast, and then to meet them there again on their way out. P-47s were beginning to use belly tanks, which enabled them to accompany the bombers further.

Two of the seven missions were Pathfinder, the bombs being dropped through dense clouds on pff A/C flares.

In the Munster attack of 10 October the group broke the Eighth AAF record for E/A destroyed by any one Group on one mission, in shooting down 60 which were officially credited as destroyed. But on that mission the 390th lost 8 of its bombers.

The Schweinfurt attack of 14 October will long endure as one of the 390th's outstanding missions. The target was an important one – the largest ball-bearing factories in Europe. And the target was hit squarely. In March 1944, the group was awarded a Presidential citation for its part in this operation.

The Marienburg attack of 9 October was characterised by exceptionally accurate bombing. The mission represented the deepest penetration made at that time in enemy territory.

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GENERAL SUMMARY NOVEMBER 1943

In November the group participated in 10 heavy bombardment attacks on the enemy, more than in any of its three previous months of operations.

Yet, due to several reasons among which are the weather and improved fighter escort, the number of encounters with enemy aircraft was considerably reduced, only two E/A were confirmed as destroyed and two of our aircraft missing.

Nine of the 10 missions involved bombing with Pathfinder aircraft. This meant that a new method of bombing must be learned, learned not in the comparative safety of the Zone of the Interior but in actual combat.

While learning this new method of bombing, results were of course not as good as they had been when visual bombing was done on clear days. Yet the Group (and the Division and the Airforce) flew many of the PFF missions on days when otherwise the aircraft would have been grounded due to 10/10 cloud over the target areas.

With the attack on 26 November the crews of 1/Lt William A Royal and 1/Lt George W Harmon completed their tour of 25 combat missions, the first crews of this group to do so.

During the month 35 new crews arrived at the station and were assigned to the Group and 30 new B17s were received. Certain reorganizations were effected so that in December two Groups, 390th A and 390th B, could operate efficiently from this field.

Jennie Smith

A REMINDER OF WHAT IT WAS LIKE- MEMORIES FROM THE 390th

Ray McFalone kindly shares excerpts from his interviews with 390th Veterans.

A Direct Hit

Sometimes the difference between life and death can be a matter of half a second...or less. That was the case on January 28, 1945 on a mission to Duisberg, Germany. Piloting plane number 338784 was W. Wilson Shira, Richard "Dick" Cowles was the tailgunner and Hewitt "Buck" Dunn (the 104 mission "Iron Man") was the toggler.

According to pilot Shira, as they started on the bomb run *"there were little black bursts of flak ahead of you. You could see it coming. It was right in line with us."* Tailgunner Cowles remembers Buck, who was in the nose, *"calling off the shots. Buck says over the intercom 'hang on, they're gonna get us'. One shell went off the nose. The next one came right through the radio room and exploded."* Shira remembers *"When we were hit, I just figured we got it. I didn't know where. The ball turret gunner was screaming because he couldn't get out. He didn't have any power."* Shira couldn't get a response from the radio operator *"so I called Cowles to go up and check"*.

Cowles recalls that *"I didn't know what was going on. I just smelled all the black smoke. You couldn't see anything. I figured I was going to hear a bail out bell. Because the minute that thing hit and exploded, the aircraft went up and then just dropped like a rock from the explosion. Then the next shell just went off the tail. The pilot told me to go forward. The waist gunner was laying down and I got him hooked up to oxygen. The radio room was a disaster. All of the radio sets were gone, part of the bulkhead was gone, there was a big hole in the top of the aircraft and the control cables were hanging down like spaghetti."* Amazingly, the radio operator was alive. Cowles remembers *"I got him all hooked up and he was kind of stunned. The explosion blew him clear across the room. It was a tremendous explosion that created a vacuum and sucked everything out the top of the aircraft. If the radio operator hadn't turned around in his seat, he would have gone right up*



through the top of the aircraft and would have been long gone.”

Dick Cowles

After reviving the radio operator, Cowles called the pilot and reported in. Pilot Shira recalls that *“after the bombs were dropped, the co-pilot took the wheel and I went back through the plane to check on things. The whole top of the radio room was gone. We missed getting hit in the bomb bay by maybe eight feet.”* Cowles had almost the same thought – *“two tenths of a second earlier and it would have hit the bomb bay and we wouldn’t have had to worry about anything because it would have blown that ship into a thousand pieces.”* An attempt was made to reconnect some of the wires and they were able to extricate a relieved ball turret gunner. Cowles remembers *“When we flew back to England, the crew was nervous – maybe Buck wasn’t – but I’ll tell you the rest of us were.”* Shira recalls that *“I flew back without control of the tail. It was back there just flapping.”* Cowles says that *“trimming the aircraft out was a fantastic job by our pilot Wilson Shira – he did a tremendous job. He could really handle a B-17.”* Shira’s modest and accurate reaction was that *“we were lucky, very lucky.”*

Ray McFalone

ORAL HISTORY

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

I grew up near the Framlingham base. On the day after the last Americans left in summer 1945, before the Polish came, my Dad and I went up there for a look. I was eight years old. The airmen had just gone. Left behind were blankets on beds, food and kitchen utensils, opened half empty .50 calibre ammo boxes, everything you can think of, just left. Windows and doors just banging in the wind. There were even some B17s in the hangers, badly damaged and beyond repair. Dad and I had a very busy day – we brought up a handcart each and carried off all that we could manage in several trips. Lots of other locals did the same. It was amazing yet sad too.

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I am from the Netherlands. My Dad was aged 18 in the last year of war. He was conscripted for compulsory labour by the Nazi Todt organisation, but the neighbours hid him in a local dyke and the occupiers never found him. He remembered the sound of British and American bombers constantly overhead. He was never frightened, he said, because “This was the sound of freedom”. When the war was nearly over, he ran out with many others to collect food dropped on the Chowhound missions. The Germans in Holland were cut off by the advancing allies and had agreed not to fire at the planes, which were dropping food for the Dutch civilians who had been starving since the previous Autumn when the enemy reoccupied Arnhem. It must have been frightening for the allied aircrews. Dad saw them flying very low, tracked by the German flak guns.

BRITISH RESISTANCE ORGANISATION MUSEUM

75TH ANNIVERSARY TRIP TO VERRIERES AND ROM PART II

We then headed off to Luchapt. Will had a photo taken on 14th July 1944 (Bastille Day) of a parade held without the German's knowledge. He was able to take an 'after' picture from exactly the same spot. After lunch we made our way to Terce to meet Christian Richard, the Mayor of Terce, who was going to show us around his Museum of the Second World War. We had an interesting couple of hours at the museum whilst Christian told us of some of the events of the war. Terce was right on the demarcation line between the Occupied Zone and the Non-Occupied Zone. He was very clear that this was not a Free Zone as usually described. Following our museum visit we made our way back to Rom via Verrieres. In the communal cemetery at Verrieres we visited the French family vault in which Lt Twm Stephens is buried. Within the vault is the wooden cross marking his original grave and his SAS shoulder flash given by Capt Tonkin.



Leaving the village we headed into the woods to the memorial to the six Maquis who were shot immediately after the battle and to Lt Stephens.



(side view of Verrieres Memorial)



We then went into the wood to where the SAS/Maquis camp site was situated. In the middle of the camp a tree has been 'adopted' as a memorial.

After orienteering ourselves as to the layout of the camp and where those that managed to escape fled we made our way back to Rom.

Wednesday 3rd July (75th Anniversary of the attack) started with an early alarm as we had to set off for Verrieres at 0830. We arrived at 0915 in time for the church service at 0930. Congregating outside the church were approximately 20 flag bearers from various French Old Comrades Organisations. We also met Paul McCue, author of 'SAS Operation Bulbasket'.

Being entirely in French I was able to follow very little of the service! With the conclusion of the service the flag bearers led the congregation through the town before being dismissed on the road to the cemetery. We then drove to the cemetery for a brief commemoration at Lt Stephen's vault. There were five former SAS members including one of WW2 vintage who had taken part in Operation Moses. Alec laid an SAS wreath at the entrance to the vault. A camera crew from BBC Wales was filming and interviewing a nephew of Lt Stephens. We also met a number of RBL members who had moved to France. In the next edition, the concluding instalment from my trip will feature the final days of our visit and the Forest of Verrieres.

Chris Pratt



Sunday 27th October is our last opening day for 2019. If you haven't made it out to see us yet, time is running out! We will open again on Sunday 5th April 2020.