

# PARHAM Airfield Museum

## SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER

### FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF OUR TRUSTEES

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. You will see that we had a busy and interesting year in 2025. Visitor numbers were very encouraging with plenty of positive feedback. A particular pleasure was welcoming so many visitors from the USA, particularly those whose relatives flew from station 153. A special highlight was the visit by the 390th Memorial Museum from Tucson AZ. We also had an increase in the number of children and young people visiting us in organised groups. Explaining to them the sacrifices made in World War 2 is at the core of what we do.

*Continued on page 2.*

### IN THIS EDITION:

- What's new for 2026
- Local Wartime Memories
- Welcoming friends from Tucson
- A 390<sup>th</sup> Veteran Celebrates his 103<sup>rd</sup> Birthday
- Details of a special Military Vehicle Run
- An interview with an Auxilier
- And much more....

## Parham Airfield Museum

4.9 ★★★★★ 301 Google reviews ⓘ

“A real hidden gem.”

“Brilliant for history lovers.”

“Friendly, knowledgeable volunteers.”

“Small museum, big impact.”

### Parham Airfield Museum ◉

4.9 ●●●●● (194 reviews) #1 of 34 things to do in Woodbridge



[WWW.PARHAMAIRFIELDMUSEUM.CO.UK](http://WWW.PARHAMAIRFIELDMUSEUM.CO.UK)

# FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF OUR TRUSTEES

More people are becoming aware of the British Resistance Organisation and an increasing proportion of our visitors come especially to see the only museum in the UK dedicated to it. We continue to help people find out more about the top-secret activities of their relatives.

Unfortunately, we lost technical Sergeant Chuck Richardson, who visited us in 2024. We include pictures of him signing our veterans wall. We also mourned the passing of Barry Walton, a long serving, much loved and respected volunteer at Parham. It is great to see that at the age of 103 Colonel Richard Bushong still enjoys talking with visitors at Tucson. As I write, our volunteers are busy preparing for Sunday 5th April, when we open for the 2026 season. There will be several entirely new exhibits for visitors to see. Meanwhile, we will be building our new Nissen Hut and finalising the design of a major extension to the Moller Building. We hope we have the privilege of welcoming you to the museum. If you can be around on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October, don't miss the 13<sup>th</sup> Combat Wing convoy of WWII military vehicles!

**Peter Senior**



A flashback to when Liberty Belle visited the UK

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## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Museum's Annual General Meeting was held on Sunday 22nd March. Minutes from the 2025 AGM were approved, along with the Trustees' Annual Report and Treasurer's Report and members gave their approval to the final accounts for November 2024 to October 2025.

The election of Trustees saw Paul Calver elected to fill the current vacancy, having been duly nominated and seconded. Members also considered the appointment of a range of key roles supporting the running of the Museum, alongside the formal appointment of accountants for the 2025–26 financial year. Thanks to everyone who attended the meeting, and of course, to the Trustees for their continued hard work and effort behind-the-scenes.

## Visit from 390th Memorial Museum, Tucson, Arizona

A highlight of our 2025 open season was when on 5th October we were visited by a party of 30 of our friends from the 390th Museum in Tucson, Arizona. The group included about a dozen direct relatives of those who served at Station 153 Framlingham, together with volunteers and staff. It was our privilege to provide hospitality and show them around.

Some had visited previously but for most this was their first time. As you will imagine, emotions ran high as they soaked up the atmosphere of the old base, toured the exhibits, and climbed the tower to find that it is still possible to see where much of the base was, or indeed still is. It is hard to put into words how it feels to study photos of a close relative as a young serviceman all those years ago or walk into a Nissen Hut in which he and his fellow crew members may have slept.

This was the first educational tour organised by the Tucson museum. They arrived having looked around Framlingham Castle, an important landmark during the war. Their itinerary included visits to the other 13<sup>th</sup> Combat Wing museums, the 95<sup>th</sup> and the 100<sup>th</sup> Bomb Groups. Based in Cambridge, they were also able to visit other iconic locations such as the Tower of London, The Cabinet War Rooms, Duxford, Madingley and the Battle of Britain Memorial in Folkestone.



Many moving comments were recorded in our Visitors' Book.  
Here are extracts from a few:

“So thrilled to be here again. Thank you for keeping memories of our relatives alive!” B & C Brueggeman.

“Thrilling. Thank you so much for all your hard work!” Charlotte James.

“Words are inadequate to describe the joy and appreciation for your museum. Thank you for keeping alive the memory of the 390<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force. Special thanks to the volunteers each and every one who keep the Museum thriving.” G & S Rosati.

Debbie Tyler is the daughter of Lt. Neil Payden, a Navigator in 571<sup>st</sup> Squadron in mid-1944. She wrote:

“So wonderful to see all you have assembled and care for. Many, many thanks. I hope my children get here to touch this history.”

You may like to visit the museum's website at [www.390th.org](http://www.390th.org)

Rumour has it that another such tour may happen in a couple of years or so. We very much look forward to welcoming them all again!

**Peter Senior**





Left, Dennis Durkin and his wife visited us on 23<sup>rd</sup> September. Dennis is the son of John T. Durkin, who flew 35 missions from Parham with the 570th squadron.

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Below, Mark Copeland brought another group of Americans connected with the Museum of the Mighty Eighth to see us on 13<sup>th</sup> October.

It was great to show them around and hear their positive feedback on our Museum and exhibits.



# VISITS FROM OTHER U.S. DESCENDANTS



In February, we hosted the Metcalf family.

Ralph S Metcalf was a waist gunner with the 571st.

In the photo to the left are 4 generations of his family.

From left to right:  
David (son), Eric (grandson),  
Brian (grandson),  
Jackson (great-great-grandson)  
and Matthew (great-grandson).



*Above, Bob Shurtleff and his wife, Sharon, visited us last year to honour Bob's uncle, S.Sgt John E Di Trapani, who was killed aged 23 in July 1944, over Hoorn.*

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## Have You Visited? We'd Love to Hear from You

We always enjoy featuring our special visitors in the newsletter, especially those with connections to the 390th or the British Restoration Organisation (BRO). The stories of these visitors are an important part of keeping the history alive, and we know how much this feature is appreciated by our readers.

However, we know that we may not have managed to include everyone - and we would hate to have missed you out. If you have visited us and have a connection to the 390th or BRO but have not yet been featured in the newsletter, please get in touch with the editor-lydiakindred@aol.com .

Whether your visit was recent or some time ago, your story still matters.

# AIRMAN OF THE MONTH

## OCTOBER



### HERMAN EDWARD GRUNTMEIR

**13 NOVEMBER 1916 – 20 OCTOBER 1943**

Herman was born in Oklahoma and enlisted into the USAAF on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1941. He trained as a Radio Operator and was killed on his first mission from Station 153.

Herman was on Mission 24 to Duren, Germany aboard A/C 42-30719, 'Shatzi'. After releasing its bombs, the aircraft had difficulty closing the bomb bay doors. It left the formation and dropped into cloud cover at 28,000 ft. At 1440 hrs the plane was seen trailing behind the formation and being attacked by 2 FW190's. The pilot took violent evasive action, which sent the A/C into a spin and broke up in to two parts.

Herman is buried at the Netherlands American Cemetery. He was 26.

REQUESTING INSCRIPTION AND INTERMENT RECORD									
SERIAL NO. 10053231									
HERMAN E. GRUNTMEIR SGT 269 BOMB SQ 390 BOMB GP (H) OKLAHOMA OCT 20 1943 11									
MARRIAGE									
1	1	PH							
1690		NA	12	296	0533			1	
MRS. MARY L. GRUNTMEIR (MOTHER) ROUTE #5 KIMFISHER, OKLA.									



## The 2026 Season

We have had a busy closed season and have some new items to share with you when we open for the new season on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April.

Come and see our:

- Recreation of a 1940s Parlour Room
- Original 390th Aircrew uniform in the P.O.W. Room
- Glass House which was refurbished last year

We will be open every Sunday until the end of October and we will also be open on Wednesdays in June, July and August. We also open on Bank Holiday Mondays and hope to see many of you at some point over the 2026 season.

As ever, admission is free but we rely on donations.



**This photo gives a partial glimpse of our new exhibit for 2026. The volunteers have created a small parlour of the early 1940s, which was originally suggested by former volunteer George Brown.**

**For several years we have been collecting artefacts to put in it, and thanks to gifts from our generous supporters we now have more than sufficient.**

**Do come and see it. You will find that there is more than one person in the room!**

# AIRMAN OF THE MONTH

## NOVEMBER



### JOSEPH F WILLIAMS

**13 NOVEMBER 1916 – 20 OCTOBER 1943**

Joseph was born in Marion, Indiana and enlisted into the USAAF on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1942. He trained as a Radio Operator and was killed on his fourth mission from Station 153.

At about 0720 hrs a/c 42-39813, 'Yankee Rebel', crashed after assembly, in a meadow at King's Lane Farm, Tannington. Two of the 1,000lb bombs it was carrying exploded and Joseph and a crew mate were killed. Three unexploded bombs were located 56 yards from the crash. The A/C just missed the farm house. Part of one wing fell on to a building in the stock yard, the windows and doors were blown in as a result of the explosion. Farm tenant Mr Doggett and his two sons were unhurt. One engine was thought to have been on fire and a witness thought a wing had touched another plane.

Joseph is buried in Mount Gilead Cemetery, Morgan County, Indiana. He was 26.



MARION → 51-097-011			
REGISTRATION CARD—(Not here as of after February 11, 1937 and as of before December 31, 1931)			
SERIAL NUMBER 909	NAME (Print) Joseph F. Williams	ORDER NUMBER 11588	
2. PLACE OF BIRTH (Print) RR 18 Box 434 Indianapolis, Ind			
3. MARITAL STATUS RR 18 Box 434 Indianapolis, Ind			
4. RESIDENCE (Print) RR 18 Box 434 Indianapolis, Ind		5. AGE (Print) 27	
6. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) RR 18 Box 434 Indianapolis, Ind		7. DATE OF BIRTH (Print) 8 19 1920	
8. NAME AND ADDRESS OF NEAREST RELATIVE (Print) Betty Williams RR 18 Box 434			
9. NAME AND ADDRESS OF NEAREST FRIEND (Print) Rendall Stock Farms			
10. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT (Print) RR 18 Box 434 Indianapolis, Ind			
11. SIGNATURE (Print) Joseph F. Williams			

## Happy 103rd Birthday Colonel Bushong!

On 21st March, 390th Veteran Colonel Richard Bushong celebrated his 103rd birthday – what an incredible milestone!

Col. Bushong's life has been one of dedication, courage and continued service. During the Second World War, Col. Bushong flew 28 combat missions with the 390th Bomb Group here at Parham. Over the course of those missions, he piloted seven different B-17 aircraft. None of them survived the war, but thankfully Col. Bushong did.

On one occasion, he managed to bring his B-17 home on a single engine, without brakes, eventually crash-landing in the mud. The aircraft was later repaired, but tragically the next crew to fly it were not as fortunate, with eight losing their lives and two being taken prisoner of war.

Throughout his service, he faced heavy flak and enemy fighters, and never returned from a mission without damage to his aircraft. He also had several narrow escapes. On one occasion, he missed a mission with his original crew while recovering in hospital with jaundice – a mission on which the aircraft was shot down.

His time in the military didn't stop at Parham though; he spent 32 years in uniform, going on to include service in Korea, the Cold War and Vietnam. After retiring to Arizona, he discovered the 390th Memorial Museum in Tucson and began volunteering there in 1992. Amazingly, more than 30 years later, he is still there most Thursdays, sharing his experiences with visitors.

His presence at the museum offers a direct, personal link to the past. Hearing his stories helps bring history to life and gives visitors a real sense of what wartime service meant for those who actually lived through it. As he marks his 103rd year, Colonel Bushong's story is a reminder to us all of how important it is to keep these memories alive. His commitment helps ensure that the experiences of his generation are not forgotten.

**Many happy returns for your special day, Colonel, from all your friends here at Parham. Keep up the great work in Tucson!**



## Military Vehicle Run

Looking ahead, we are pleased to be part of the 13th Combat Wing WWII Military Vehicle Run on Saturday 10th October 2026, which will be travelling from Thorpe Abbots to Parham to Horham. The fleet will spend around 2 hours at each museum.

For more details, or if you wish to participate with your WWII Military vehicle, please contact [enquiries@95thBG-Horham.com](mailto:enquiries@95thBG-Horham.com).

We will open to the public between 11am and 4pm that day and the vehicles should be with us between 12 and 2.30 pm. It should be a great day.

**13<sup>th</sup> COMBAT WING**  
**WWII MILITARY VEHICLE RUN**  
**SATURDAY OCTOBER 10<sup>th</sup> 2026**  
TO COINCIDE WITH THE MUNSTER RAID · THE CULMINATION OF BLACK WEEK 1943

VISITING ALL 3 BASE MUSEUMS  
CONNECTED WITH THE 13<sup>th</sup> COMBAT WING

THORPE ABBOTS  
PARHAM  
HORHAM

100<sup>th</sup> BOMB GROUP FOUNDATION  
100<sup>th</sup> BG THORPE ABBOTS  
390<sup>th</sup> BG PARHAM  
95<sup>th</sup> BOMB GROUP HORHAM

**£10 PER HEAD DONATION**  
(non-refundable)

to be split equally between the 3 Bomb Groups, which includes a breakfast roll and hot drink on arrival at 100<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group.  
Beginning at 100<sup>th</sup> BG at 9am, you will have approximately 2 hours at each museum, with a vehicle run to the 390<sup>th</sup> BG and then onwards to the 95<sup>th</sup> BG.  
Light refreshments will be available at each venue, but please bring your own lunch.  
FOR MORE DETAILS & BOOKING LINK, PLEASE CONTACT [ENQUIRIES@95THBG-HORHAM.COM](mailto:enquiries@95thBG-Horham.com)

# OPERATIONAL DIARY OF LT. EUGENE PETERSON

March 1944

Please see the next instalment of Lt. Peterson's diary  
from his time with the 390<sup>th</sup>

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Mar 19, 1944: #13

Target: No Ball-V-1 site (Mimoyecques)

Altitude: 19,500'

"This was really a milk run. The target was very difficult to see and bombing results were probably not too good. There was little Flak and no e/a."

A/c # 231732- Paper Doll II

Group Mission #74

Mar 26, 1944: #14

Target: No Ball-V-1 Site (La Glacerie) DNB

Altitude: 21,000'

"Another French coast rocket deal. We were leading the group but couldn't pick up the target soon enough for the bomb run. High sqdn. did hit target however. Low sqdn. missed by a mile and we brought our bombs back. Flak was accurate and moderate to intense. No e/a."

A/c # 231744-Little Butch II

Group Mission #77

Mar 27, 1944: #15

Target: Cazaux-Airfield

Altitude: 10,500'

"This was a long job, an airport about 35 miles S W of Bordeaux. We flew all day at a suicide altitude but got no Flak and no fighters. The GAF missed a good chance. The target was completely smashed. Some freighters in the Bay of Biscay shot at us but we did the same to them with no results on either side. We flew high sqdn. lead with no command pilot in with us."

A/c # 231732-Paper Doll II

Group Mission #78

*We were sorry to learn of the passing of one of the few remaining 390th veterans; another of that great generation has gone.*

## **Obituary - Charles "Chuck" Richardson**

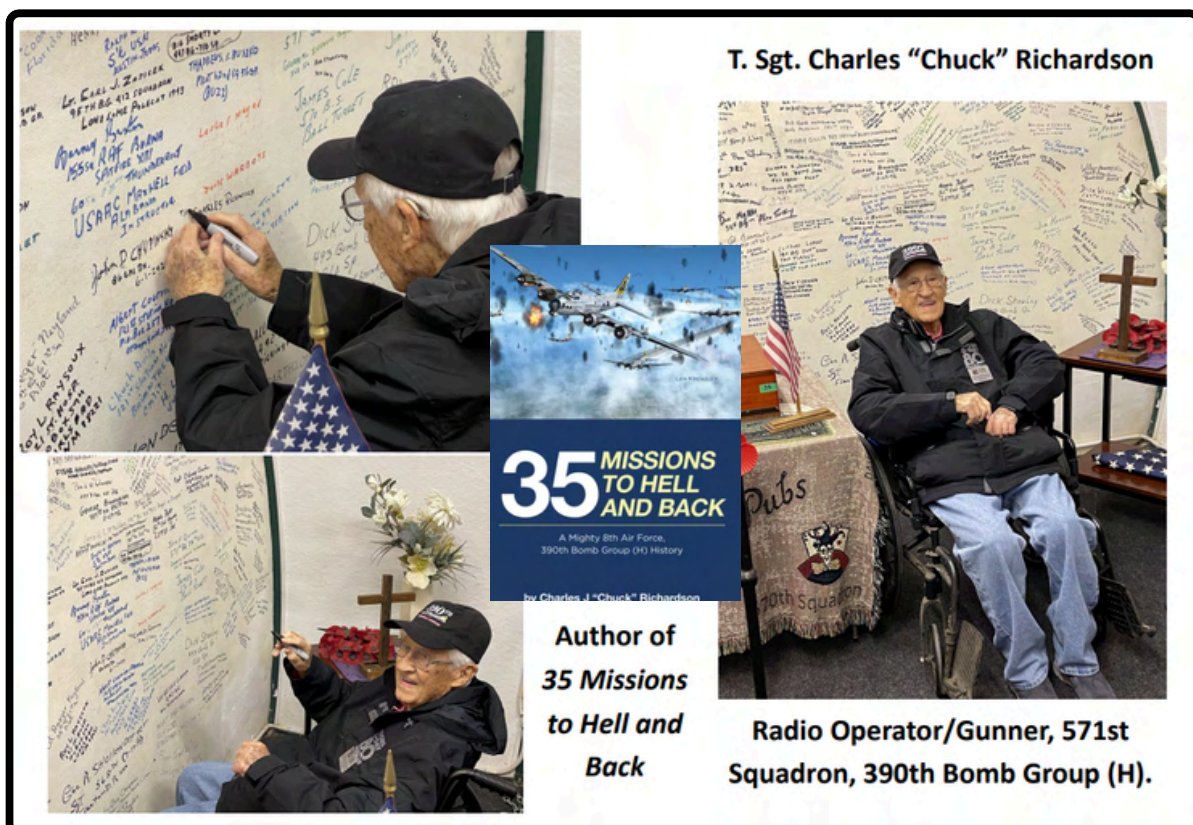
June 7, 1923 - November 3, 2025

571st Squadron, 390<sup>th</sup> B.G

The tribute below by Emily Wilson first appeared in the Winter 2025 Square J Bulletin and is included here as part of our valued close relationship with the 390<sup>th</sup> Memorial Museum, Tucson AZ.

*"It is with both a saddened and a joyful heart that I advise you of the passing of T/Sgt. Charles Joseph Richardson. A joyful heart that I was able to care for and enjoy companionship with this kind, gentle, patient and loving man for 7 or 8 years of his life.*

*He was the love of my life and I of his. We attended so many events together - interviews, book signings, lectures, veteran gatherings - all with his sharing of his experiences during his service in the European theatre in WWII. It was his mission to pass along to future generations his love of country and his desire to give them a first-hand account of life during the War.*



*Our outings included fun events in venues we both enjoyed - concerts, music, plays, dinner theatre.*

*He was a very devout Christian and follower of his Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. We attended church together, singing in the choir, he a tenor, I a contralto (converted to tenor).*

*He will be greatly missed on this earth by a host of family and friends, but I know he is up in heaven telling all his stories to all who will listen.*

*He penned several books including his published book, "35 Missions to Hell and Back", of which he was so proud."*

***Rest in Peace, Chuck.  
Thank you for your service.***



Chuck (right), with Peter Kindred  
at Parham Airfield Museum in June 2024, age 101!



## **Living Memorial**

**“The reconstruction of our Control Tower on the field from which we flew so many missions is a beautiful reminder and a lasting memorial to all the men of the 390th.**

**It is, without doubt, the most sincere, the most gracious and the most thoughtful living “Unit Citation” our English friends could possibly bestow upon us.**

**The time, the effort and the loving dedication of those who conceived and carried through this project to completion, make us, of the 390th, sincerely grateful and humbly thankful to each and everyone of you— our friends.”**

**As composed by:  
Colonel Joseph A. Moller  
Former Commander of the 390th Bomb Group (H)**

**Read by: Richard H. Perry, Lt. Col. USAF (Ret.)  
at the Dedication Ceremony on 13<sup>th</sup> May, 1981, Parham, England**

**Photo credit: Steve Smith**

# Barry Walton

## Parham Airfield Volunteer from 2006 – 2025

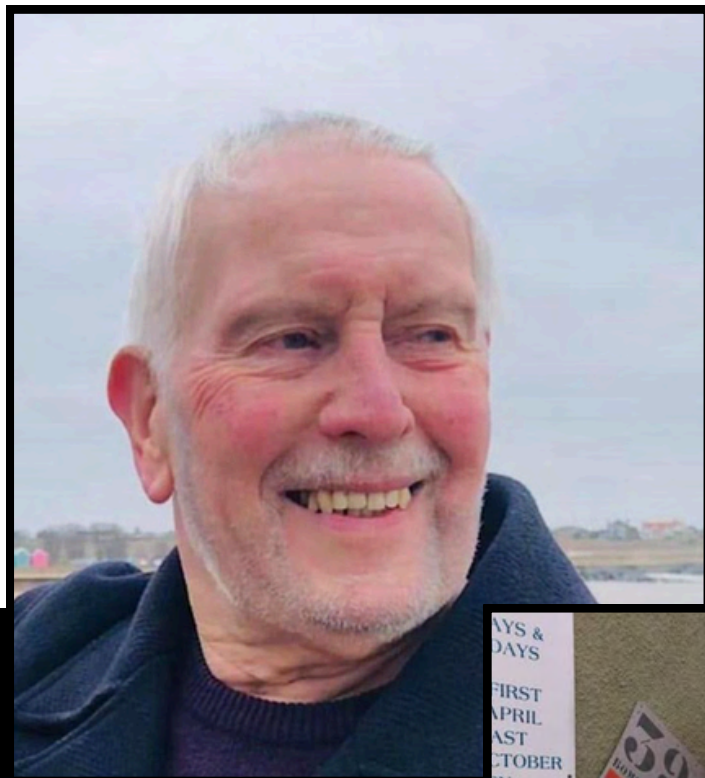
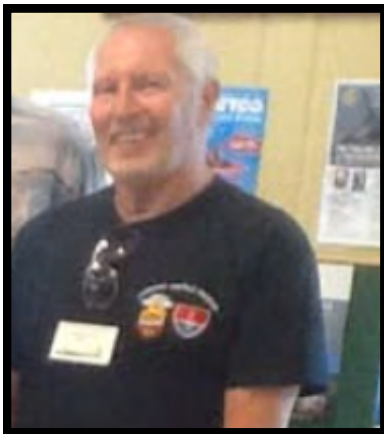
Everyone associated with Parham Airfield Museum was saddened to hear of the passing of Barry Walton in December. Barry was one of our longest serving volunteers, joining the museum in 2006 along with his wife, Lena.

He was devoted to the museum; you could always depend on him. His favourite position was up in the Glass House where he would engage with visitors, sharing his extensive knowledge of stories of Parham Airfield and the Second World War in general.

He was always willing to help the museum in other capacities, enhancing existing displays and helping to create new ones. He was a master at taking artefacts home to restore them, whether they were model aircraft or bigger items. One of his favourite annual tasks was to give all the leather artefacts a good waxing. He was always very welcoming to new volunteers, helping them settle in and sharing his knowledge of the museum.

We will all miss Barry - his endless support for the museum, his friendship and the cheerful whistled tunes that would emanate from wherever he was on volunteer duty.

Our thoughts are with his wife Lena and his family at this very sad and difficult time.



## Special Ops

We were pleased to host an after dark opening for the 1379 RAF Squadron Air Cadets, based at Leiston.

There was much excitement, with the cadets enjoying the chance to explore the museum in a different setting.

Seeing the exhibits at night gave the visit a unique atmosphere and brought the stories behind them to life in a new way.

It was a pleasure to host such an enthusiastic group and we hope to see them back another day (or night!).



# AIRMAN OF THE MONTH

## DECEMBER



### LORAN ARTHUR STEEN

**4 FEBRUARY 1925 – 25 DECEMBER 1944**

Loran was born in Des Moines, Iowa and enlisted into the USAAF on 30 January 1943. He trained as a Navigator and was killed on his twenty third mission from Station 153.

Loran was aboard A/C 44-8323, 'Blonde Bombshell' on mission 230 to Morscheid Bridge in Germany. The plane received a direct hit by flak in No. 4 engine which flew off in pieces. The pilot peeled off to the right with the wing on fire. The aircraft lost about 1500 feet in a shallow dive, then went into a loose, then tight spin. It exploded at about 20,000 feet. Only 2 chutes were reported. The aircraft crashed at Diekirch, Luxembourg.

Loran is buried at Lincoln Memorial Park, Multnomah County, Oregon. He was 19.

*Original*

APPLICATION FOR HEADSTONES OR MARKERS

NAME: **LORAN A. STEEN**  
 GRAVE SITE: **PORTLAND, OREGON**  
 GRAVE NO.: **4507 SE 82ND - PORTLAND 6, ORE.**

DATE OF BIRTH: **25 FEB 1925**  
 DATE OF DEATH: **25 DEC 1944**

PLACE OF BIRTH: **DES MOINES, IOWA**  
 PLACE OF DEATH: **LUXEMBOURG**

REGIMENT: **4487th Central Postal Directory**  
 SERVICE NO.: **350752**

DATE OF APPLICATION: **25 APR 1950**

APPROVED BY: **L. J. [Signature]**



The article below is from Thomas Mills High School's newsletter. It was written by Museum Trustee and our Treasurer Judy Moore, who teaches at the school.

SUMMER 2025

## Parham Airfield Trip



In June, Year 8 pupils took a fascinating journey into the past during their visit to Parham Airfield Museum. The museum, once home to the 390th Bomb Group of the USAAF during World War II, offered a powerful insight into life during wartime and the sacrifices made by those who served. Pupils explored original wartime buildings, including the Control Tower, where they learned about the daily routines and pressures faced by aircrews. They were captivated by personal stories, photographs and memorabilia that brought history to life far beyond the pages of a textbook.

Highlights included trying on wartime uniforms, using a typewriter and standing in the exact spot where young pilots once prepared for their missions. The thought-provoking exhibits on the British Resistance Organisation—an underground force trained to operate in case of a Nazi invasion—sparked plenty of conversation on the coach ride home!

Parham Airfield may be quiet now, but for one day, the echoes of the past rang loud and clear for Year 8.

*Judy Moore, Teacher of History*



# From our Facebook Page

Are you a member of our Facebook page?  
If not, you might like to join to see more posts like these.

**Parham Airfield Museum (390th Bomb Group & British Resistance Organisation)**  
Jennie Smith · 22h · 🌐

### 14 October 1944 Station History.

At 10:15 4 children, ages ranging from 10 to 16 were tried in the Framlingham Police Court for stealing flashlights from American Bicycles. Two elderly civilians were also tried for buying the flashlights from the children. The findings of the court was guilty and each civilian involved was fined 10 shillings each.

👍 🤔 15



**Jennie Smith**  
+ Add topic Admin 5 Mar · 🌐

### 5 March 1945

Station History - Our shoe repair contract has had a vast improvement since the contractor has adhered to the contract and once again stitched the soles of the shoes instead of nailing them. This should cut down the amount of shoe repair considerably.

**Jennie Smith**  
Admin All-star contributor · 20 March at 07:57 · 🌐

### 20 March 1945

Tower Log: 2053 - ARM Red  
Your Damn Well Right! 3rd Division on the ball.  
Simultaneous with 3rd Division call, Oberleutenant Sauerkraut or whoever, came gliding across the field and deposited his load in the vicinity of dispersal 3 whereupon the Officer on duty had to call on all his reserve modesty not to drop his load in his fresh pink trousers!

👍 🤔 🤔 20 1 comment

Like Comment Send

**Bob Collis**  
The incident referred to was the occasion of the very last bombs dropped by a piloted German aircraft in Suffolk in WW 2. 56 SD10 Anti Personnel Bombs dropped on Parham airfield that night but fortunately no damage resulted and nobody was injured.

5d Like Reply Edited 2



**Jennie Smith**  
+ Add topic Admin 1 Feb · 🌐

### 1 February 1945

Target: Wesel GE.  
38 aircraft dispatched, 38 aircraft bombed the target, 38 aircraft landed back at base.  
A good day.

**Clive Bassett** · 8 Feb · 🌐

A previously unresearched Photo Album, brought long before the advent of the internet, that belonged to a Melvin John Hames. A wet and grey afternoon here in the UK was a good opportunity to look into it. After an hour or so, discovered that he was a Tail Gunner in the 390th Bombardment Group-568th Bombardment Squadron. He flew 17 Missions and shot down on the 18th April 1944, Mission 087 to Oranienburg, all Crew survived and became Prisoners of War. The B-17 G was named "Hell's Belles"- "Sure Thing" S/N 42-37902. Hames was a POW at Stalag 17, but it seems may have been at Stalag Luft 3? Most of the photos are taken whilst training at Buckley Field in Colorado, a few pages not included in this post. Possibly further research to be carried out, but a fine way to spend the afternoon 🙌

We would like to thank our archivist Jennie Smith for all her fascinating posts on our Facebook page. This is a time-consuming role, and we really appreciate all the effort she puts into providing content so regularly.

# Out with the Old and in with the New...

The somewhat tatty storage sheds in front of the Control Tower were demolished by our hardworking maintenance crew in autumn.

We look forward to sharing progress on the replacement building in our next newsletter. It will be in the style of a Nissen hut, which will be more in keeping with our other buildings.

Thanks to Derek Davies  
for the photos below.



# The British Resistance Organisation Museum

## Interview with an Auxilier

*As part of an occasional series looking at interviews with members of the Worcestershire Auxiliary Units, this edition focuses on **John Boaz** of the Broadheath (also known as Samson) Operational Patrol.*

*The interview was conducted on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1999.*

The interview started with John explaining to Mick Wilks of the Defence of Britain Project the origins of the patrol. The patrol was started by Geoff Devereux, who became the first Sergeant. He was a member of Broadheath Scout Troop. John remembers Geoff telling him how he was telephoned at his work by a Captain Todd, who wished to meet him outside the factory. Having joined Capt Todd, he was driven to a quiet lane where everything was explained to him. John's brother Robert (who later joined the RAF), Joe King (known as Joe), Val (who became the Sergeant after Geoff left in 1941), and Arch Clines were all recruited.

As John was not yet 18, he was told to join the Home Guard for a couple of weeks and transfer to the Auxiliary Units on his 18th birthday. He mentions that on leaving the Home Guard he blacked out all his brass buckles and buttons, which must have annoyed his former comrades. He also talks of going to the pub after training, where the Home Guard would also be "all spit and polish". Clearly, there would appear to have been some rivalry between the two units, albeit that the Home Guard ".....never did find out much about them, although they apparently tried". The Van Moppes supplied an old Morris 8 for use by the patrol. The Broadheath Scout Hut was originally used for the patrol's meetings, but they had to give it up to the Home Guard. This ongoing rivalry seems to have continued as, on the day the patrol had to hand over the hut, they booby-trapped the door and "when the Home Guard Sergeant opened the door the trap went off with a bang, causing him to drop and damage his rifle". After leaving the Scout Hut, the patrol HQ was moved to Middle Lightwood Farm, where the explosives were stored in the cellar.

*“We were supposed not to surrender. We were told we would be tortured and killed because we weren't protected by the Geneva Convention so we were supposed to save the last bullet to finish ourselves off.  
You just accepted it.”*

John told Mick of an army officer from Coleshill who was responsible for them (possibly Captain Henry Bucknall, Intelligence Officer for Monmouthshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire).

When he was first recruited, John spoke of being taken into Sneyds Coppice and asked if he could see anything - and, of course, he could not. His sergeant showed him how to enter the OB by putting his hand down a rabbit hole under the stump of an old tree and pulling a lever. This moved a further piece of wood, which then allowed the stump to be moved sideways, giving access to the shaft. The patrol was equipped with all the means to create chaos and mayhem, and John suggested that their main role would have been to blow up fuel dumps. In the interview he does not mention the date, but he remembers going down to the Isle of Wight as a voluntary duty (perhaps as one of a number of patrols brought down to the Isle of Wight and south coast as D-Day approached).

John remembered that there were competitions with other patrols but "..... they were again not to tell them of their hideouts or anything like that.....". It would appear that Samson Patrol did very well in these competitions, winning against local patrols and then against patrols from Herefordshire and Monmouthshire. Eventually they reached the finals at Coleshill, coming third against patrols from all over the country. Clearly, secrecy did not extend to these competitions. In the museum we have a cup awarded for the Norfolk Area Auxiliary Units competitions in 1941 and 1942.

*"It doesn't seem like it now but in those days you expected to get up every morning to find the Germans had invaded. They didn't tell us until later but if we had gone into action, they would have given us a lifespan of a fortnight."*

John's interview includes a long description of an exercise in which the Samson OP completely hoodwinked the observing officers. For this and other information, you will need to visit Parham or go onto staybehinds.com, as I have had to heavily precis this transcript.

My thanks to Mick Wilks of the Defence of Britain Project, the Coleshill Auxiliary Research Team (CART), and staybehinds.com.

## Chris Pratt

### Editor's Note

**Mr Boaz was also interviewed for the Worcester News and more of his interesting recollections can be found here:**

<https://www.worcesternews.co.uk/news/8151522.known-for-delivering-milk-no-one-knew-john-was-trained-to-kill-with-his-bare-hands/>

Mr Boaz died in June 2012.





**FRAMLINGHAM LOCAL  
HISTORY FAIR**

**SATURDAY 2<sup>ND</sup> MAY**

**CASTLE COMMUNITY ROOMS, CHURCH STREET**

**10.00 TO 16.00**

The Framlingham History Society is hosting a Local History Fair. There will be many displays of our local history along with other local organisations, including:

- ❖ The Lanman Museum
- ❖ Alde Valley Suffolk Family History
- ❖ Charnwood Genealogy
- ❖ Framlingham College
- ❖ Parham Airfield Museum
- ❖ Saxmundham History Society
- ❖ Thomas Mills High School
- ❖ Wickham Market Area Archive Centre
- ❖ Worlingworth History Group
- ❖ Yoxford History Group
- ❖ Debenham One-Place Study

Admission is free, but donations would be most welcome. Put this date on your calendar.

## For our local readers....

We will have a stand at the local history fair in Framlingham on 2nd May. More details can be found in the poster to the left.

Do come along and say hello!



## Volunteer Vacancies

We are also keen to hear from people who are interested in volunteering with us. We are looking for enthusiastic and friendly people to help meet and greet visitors, as well as assist in the tea room and gift shop. You do not need any prior knowledge of WWII - just a willingness to get involved and be part of the team.

Our volunteers often tell us how rewarding they find their time with us. It's a great way to meet new people, learn something new and play a part in keeping local history alive. We pride ourselves on being a supportive and welcoming group, and many of our volunteers very quickly feel part of the team.

If you can give one or more Sundays or Wednesdays a month, we would love to hear from you. We provide full training and ongoing support, and you will be paired with a mentor to help you settle in and feel confident in your role.

Whether you can help once a month or more regularly, we would love to hear from you. If you would like to volunteer with a friend or partner, we are happy for you to be on duty together.

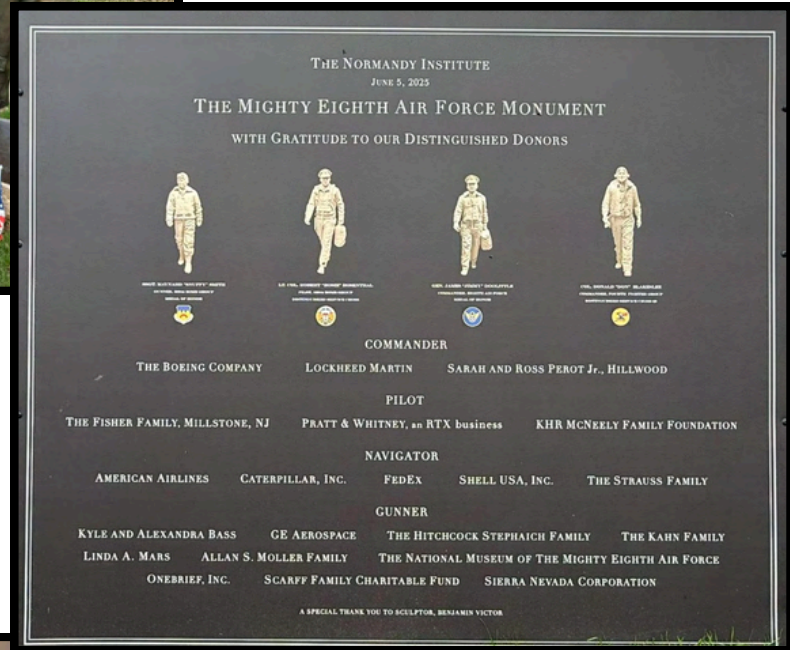
Please contact us on [parhamairfield@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:parhamairfield@yahoo.co.uk) to apply or for an informal chat about the opportunities available.

# Remembrance Day November 2025

Once again, we commemorated Remembrance Day at the Museum with Framlingham College Chaplain and Air Cadets. It was a moving occasion, as we came together to reflect, remember and honour those who gave their lives in service.



**Museum supporter Lisa Sanders visited the Mighty Eighth Bomb Group Memorial in Normandy and shared these photos of the striking tribute erected there last year. We will be sure to visit if we find ourselves in northern France.**



**Above, our Museum Christmas get together was enjoyed by one and all. Good food, good company and good cheer.**



*Follow us on Facebook for regular updates and to connect with other supporters.*



Registered Charity Number 1201587

### *Editor's Note*

We're planning to publish our next newsletter this summer and would love to include your contributions.

If you have any articles, letters, stories, or photos you'd like to share, please send them to us by 30th June.

We would especially like to receive content about the British Resistance side of the museum.

*Lydia Kindred*



**Association of Independent Museums**

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