



Dayton Reunion

The 392nd BGMA met with the 8th Air Force Historical Society in Dayton, Ohio, from 10-14 Oct 2018. Over twenty members, relatives and friends attended, including two veterans—576th waist gunner Harvey Naber and 578th co-pilot Joe Cook. Both were celebrating milestones.

Harvey turned 100 in November! He had been recalled to active duty during the Korean War (but was never sent overseas), got out briefly but then returned to the Air Force, eventually retiring after 22 years of service.

In August, Joe went skydiving with his daughter Marian, other relatives and friends. It was the first time he had jumped from a plane since 7 Oct 1944! He and Marian are planning to do more jumps from 14,000, 18,000 and 25,000 feet.

Our hospitality suite was the location for fellowship and fun. We were blessed throughout the reunion by special gifts from Ron and Barbara Pierre. They brought an absolutely gorgeous potted orchid for every 392nd BGMA family present. Their vibrant colors certainly enhanced the ambiance and will do the same in attendees' homes. Many thanks!!

Ron says, "These orchids hold their blooms for an unusually long time and continue to rebloom when tended to. All of this perfectly symbolizes the ongoing work and enduring memories of the sacrificial service of our 392nd men and their families who helped defeat the threat of Hitler's aspirations for a world empire."

There was a fascinating presentation by German researcher and historian Uwe Benkel. In 1989, he founded the Working Group on Missing Research. Since thousands of WWII airmen are still missing in action—because they went down at sea, or in a crash site not yet discovered or excavated—the team works to locate crash sites, recover any remains, turn them over to the authorities so they can be identified, bring them back home to their families, and

memorialize their deaths at the crash sites. Several people in the audience had been recipients of his help and they spoke of how wonderful it was to finally have their WWII relatives' bodies brought home.

We saw the world premiere of *The Cold Blue* by Peter Hankoff. The documentary features recently discovered and newly restored outtakes shot by Oscar-winning director William Wyler for his 1944 documentary *The Memphis Belle: A Story of a Flying Fortress*. That film used footage shot during combat missions on B-17s, expertly interspersed with interviews by 8AF veterans.

The film will air on HBO in June 2019; please watch it!

Special Membership Meeting

Per our by-laws, a Special Membership Meeting was held.

It was called to order by President Bob Books, who reminded attendees that this meeting was in accordance with and to fulfill the purpose

of the association as stated in our by-laws.

He expressed heartfelt thanks to Ron and Barbara for the orchids.

Those who had attended the Wendling reunion spoke of how wonderful it was and the overwhelming hospitality of everyone we met.

A discussion about our 2019 reunion followed. Bob advised that the 8AFHS was meeting in St. Louis for the third time in nine years and he wanted to hear attendees' thoughts about that. Members agreed that while the camaraderie is an important aspect of 8AFHS reunions, for some, the yearly trip to the reunion is also a chance to see new sights and have new experiences. When it comes to St. Louis, the feeling was that we've pretty much exhausted those opportunities and that perhaps the membership would welcome a change. Suggested sites were Charleston, Washington DC, San Antonio, Colorado Springs, Norfolk

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Left: 95-year old Joe Cook shows perfect form as he makes a tandem skydive. Right: 100-year old Harvey Naber celebrates his birthday.



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FROM THE EDITOR

Sentimental Journey. I got many calls and emails about the reunion issue. For some readers, it was a chance to relive recent memories. For others, it brought back thoughts of previous trips to Wendling.

Mike Cheek, son of 578th pilot Carroll Cheek, thinks he first visited the base in 1963. He was 14, just nine years younger than his father was when he flew combat missions. The landscape had changed since the war and they became a bit confused about how to find the base. Carroll stopped their car and asked a woman on a bicycle for directions. She exclaimed, "You're home now, Yank! Just turn right at the corner and you're there."

In the late 1980s, Carroll was the indefatigable leader of the effort to refurbish the Memorial. At its rededication ceremony on 7 Oct 1989, Mike recalls chatting with his father and 579th Sqdn Commander Myron Keilman. A woman walked up to Myron and handed him a photo, saying, "I have a picture of you from when they closed the base in 1945."

At that same event, a farmer said he was a kid who often spoke with the MPs guarding the base. During one visit, the MP told him he wanted to go see his girlfriend and would the lad mind guarding the base for him. He handed over his helmet and off he went. The farmer said he, as a youngster, stood guard duty all night! Another farmer recounted how a crew took him up on a mission once. (Ex-392nd commander Col Lawrence Gilbert was not pleased to learn of these security lapses!)

These anecdotes illustrate what we learned during the September 2018 visit—how closely linked the base and community were, then and now.

Another chance to go to England. If reading the reunion issue made you wish you'd been part of it, there's another opportunity to visit Wendling. The Heritage League (for and about 2nd Air Division Liberator groups) is hosting a trip to England from 9-14 June 2019 and if Crusaders sign up, John Gilbert will conduct a tour of our base. See <https://www.b24.net/reunions.htm> for details.

Our Readers Help. Allen Walker, grandson of 2/Lt Carl Ellinger (KIA 24 Apr 1944), recently became a member. He was impressed with the information on our website and provided this link (<https://archive.org/details/TargetForToday1944VideoAudioUpgrade>)

to an 8AF film called *Target for Today*. It is an official US Army Air Force feature-length training film that was also shown in civilian theaters as part of war bond drives. Made in 1944, it details how the 9 Oct 1943 mission was planned and then implemented. That mission was to Danzig, Poland; 51 Liberators (including 14 from the 392nd BG) participated.

I've written in the *News* about how a mission is planned, crews are briefed and taken to their a/c, and planes are assembled, but this film shows *how* it was done. I highly recommend it! Some scenes are dramatized, but only USAAF and RAF personnel appear in the film. Disclaimer: the 392nd is not specifically mentioned nor any of its planes shown, but Allen is sure he spotted 2/Lt Ellinger in the scene where the crews are being briefed!

Allen also told me that his grandfather's Purple Heart and Air Medal were stolen back in the mid-1990s. They were recently "found" in an evidence box at the Metro Louisville, Missouri, Police Department, where they had sat for years. Allen's mother—2/Lt Ellinger's daughter—was "contacted by *Purple Hearts Reunited* and on August 31, in the mayor's gallery of Metro Hall, with full military honors we were reunited with Carl's military medals. It was very moving."

Dan Collin is the son of M/Sgt Everett E. Collin, senior enlisted man in Group Operations. He shared some WWII photos he found long after his father's death. They were absolutely amazing. You can see two of them on page 11.

Debbie Beigh brought some of her father's photo albums to the Dayton reunion. Capt James V. Goar Jr., Group Transportation Officer, had the foresight to label the pictures. As a result, we now have photos for 23 more enlisted ground support men.

The lessons: there are lots of photos still out there, waiting to be shared; the most seemingly inconsequential photo (a room in a building) can actually be an amazing treasure; and when we share the photos and stories that our relatives brought home, we all benefit.

Director John Gilbert. In June, John gave Hugh Gross, his wife Takako and their daughters, Maeko (age 10) and Hanako (age 7), a tour of Station 118. Hugh is the son of 2/Lt Earl Gross, 576th Sqdn bombardier on 1/Lt Richard O. Steck's crew.

John was with the Wendling reunion group every day and also laid a wreath at the Memorial on behalf of the Royal Norfolk and Royal Anglian Regiment.

We greatly appreciate what John, Doris and Adrian do for the 392nd BGMA!



President's Thoughts



2018 was a very successful year for the 392nd BGMA with the upgrade of our website, reunions in England and Dayton, 29 new members and a positive finance position.

We are now researching a place for our 2019 reunion. The location and date will be announced in the March newsletter.

I recently added past issues of the 392nd BGMA News, the *Second Air Division Association Journals* (2ADAJ) and the *8th Air Force News* to www.b24.net. I came across two articles of significant interest that you might find noteworthy as well.

I have always wondered how the 8th Air Force could assemble 1,000+ bombers and another 600+ fighters to go on a mission—especially when they formed up in their respective groups. An article in the March 1985 2ADAJ titled *I Remember: Those Big Formations* by our own 579th Sqdn leader Myron Keilman explains the process. The article concluded in the June 1985 issue.

And, because my father flew the “Southern route” to England, there is an excellent article, *A Crew Goes to War—The Hard Way!*, in the June 1986 issue of the 2ADAJ that details their experience flying the Southern route.

Christmas gift idea: Signing up a relative to be a member of the 392nd BGMA would be a great tribute, honoring your loved one that served in Wendling and preserving his heritage and legacy. Your 392nd BGMA depends on membership dues and gifts to keep the memories alive with our many activities, internet, memorials, and publications.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy new year. Carol & I will be spending the Holidays in Wisconsin; hope you are warm and cozy wherever you are!

Bob

Real Good Luck

In the December 2017 News, Tom Nicholson wrote that if given a choice, flight crew members would choose luck over skill. In this article from the June 1982 Second Air Division Association Journal, 576th pilot William E. Smith attests to that truth.

We arrived in England in late 1944 and were told many times that “we should have been here when it was really tough.” It was rough enough for me and as a retired lieutenant colonel command type, I later came to realize what the 8th Air Force people did and how fortunate many of the air crews were to survive. “But for the grace of God, etc.”

I suppose I was at least an average pilot; however, when we arrived at Wendling, I had never flown any weather unless an instructor pilot was in the right seat. I quickly concluded that this could be a real problem and spent a lot of volunteer time in the Link Trainer. No amount of Link time would give anyone the skills to fly an often-overloaded B-24 in formation and in the clouds, too.

I aborted only one mission and that was because we were flying in substantial solid clouds and I flat lost the fella I was

flying off of. I was close enough to him to be picking up his wing wash when the visibility went from terrible to zero. At the time we were picking up a lot of ice, pulling excessive power, and I figured the hell with it.

The mission had seemed doomed to failure for me right from the start because before takeoff we had switched aircraft twice. My plane had a bad fuel leak and the first spare had a bad oxygen leak. When we finally got off, several minutes after the last scheduled possible time for takeoff, our navigator, 2/Lt Arthur R. Hazard, did a superlative job and allowed us to pick up the formation shortly before it left the last checkpoint on the English coast.

When I lost the fella I was flying off of and made the decision to get away from the formation, I got on the gauges, turned right about 45 degrees away from the heading the formation was on, and started to let down. A minute or so later after completing a 180 degree turn back towards the field, we broke out below the clouds.

The fellas in the waist said that there were parts of two planes below us on the ground. There were fires and as I circled we could see the bombs exploding just like little firecrackers. As we got still lower, but not too low, someone identified the planes as from our group.

It developed that it was the wreckage of two planes who were flying the high right element. I was flying the #5 position in the slot, and I'll never know how close those two planes came to us, out of control, as they descended in their plunge to death. The date was March 25, 1945, and the men involved were the crews of 1/Lt Clifford O. Markuson [576th, aboard #42-51340] and 2/Lt Phillip W. Kaiser [578th, in #42-50804, *Pleasant Surprise II*].”

Incidentally, no one ever said anything about our turning back.

Editor's note: Only two men in each crew were able to bail out; the other 16 were killed. Responsibility for the collision was later determined to be “100% Weather.”

2/Lt Anthony Marcelli, Cerrato crew navigator, shared a hut with 2/Lt Edward Maceyra, navigator on the Markuson crew. He recalled, “Eddie flew 34 missions successfully and invited me to have breakfast with him on his 35th and last mission. During breakfast, Eddie turned to me and said, ‘This is my last mission, one way or another.’”

Marcelli later visited Maceyra's copilot, 2/Lt Harold W. Hutchcroft, in the infirmary, who said he had told Maceyra to bail out as controlling the plane was impossible. Maceyra refused to jump until he had freed the nose gunner from his turret. According to Hutchcroft, there was only a minute or so to get out before the plane went into a spinning dive, making their escape impossible.

2/Lt Kaiser's plane crashed near Hall Farm, Buxton Lamas; 2/Lt Markuson's came to rest near Skeytan, Norfolk.



After the collision, not much remained of navigator 2/Lt Maceyra's plane, #42-51340.

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and Providence, RI.

The Executive Board will take all comments under consideration when deciding whether to meet with the 8th in St. Louis or do a stand-alone reunion elsewhere.

National Museum of the US Air Force

We then boarded buses to the National Museum of the US Air Force. A highlight was, of course, the newly-restored *Memphis Belle*, a B-17F. It went on public display at the Museum on 17 May 2018, 75 years to the day after its crew completed their 25th combat mission—the first US heavy bomber crew in Europe to reach that milestone.

In the Museum's showcase of bomber jackets was one donated by 576th Sqdn bombardier 1/Lt James G. Mountain. The placard says it is "one of the finest examples of jacket art known" and that it was "painted by the wearer himself."



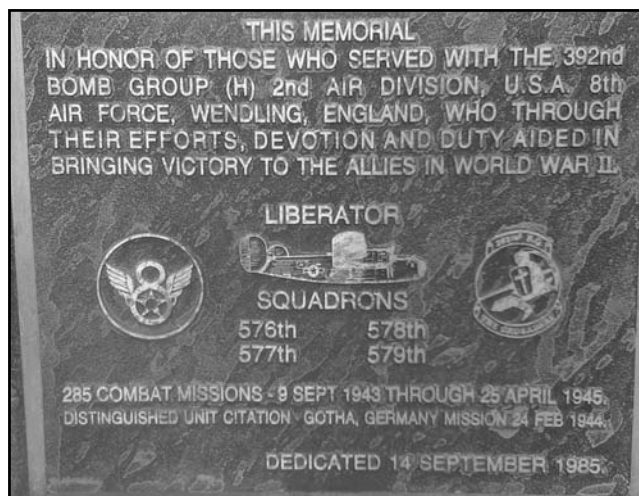
1/Lt James G. Mountain's A-2 jacket

The woman on the jacket is "Mike," whom he married after completing his combat tour on 10 Jan 1945 and returning home.

Just outside the Museum is its Memorial Park, which has more than 500 statues, plaques, trees, and benches honoring US Air Force units and service members for their courageous

service and sacrifice in the cause of freedom. The first memorial was dedicated in October 1972.

Former 578th Sqdn Adjutant Robert E. Lane was our memorial coordinator. In a December 1985 article (at <https://www.b24.net/2ndADA-Newsletters/1985-Dec.pdf>) he wrote about the ceremony on 14 Sep 1985 to dedicate a live oak tree and a plaque for the 392nd BG. A speech



In a 15 Jun 1985 letter to 392nd BGMA members, Lane wrote, "The 'Inscription' for our Plaque came about after picking the thoughts of several Comrades and this was not an easy task. However, believe you will like it once you see it."

was "given by Colonel Joseph B. Whittaker in tribute to our comrades who gave their lives and to all those who served honorably with the 392nd Bomb Group and its support organizations."

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392nd BGMA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Your membership status is shown on the mailing label directly after your name. **"18" means your membership expires at the end of December 2018 and should be renewed NOW!!** Send this form and your check (payable to 392nd BGMA) to Annette Tison, 9107 Wood Pointe Way, Fairfax Station, VA 22039 or join/ renew on-line at <https://www.b24.net/memorialAssociation.htm>. **LM** means Life Member and **FRIEND** means that you receive the *News* with compliments of the 392nd BGMA.

The Board of Directors has ruled that no Crusader will be denied membership because of financial difficulty, so if you're in straitened circumstances, check the Hardship Waiver box. If you feel that you can help the 392nd BGMA treasury with a donation, there is a provision for it below.

Name _____ Ground [] Air [] Sqdn/Unit _____

Mailing address _____

Email address _____ Telephone number _____

If a spouse, friend, or relative served in the 392nd, please give us his name and unit: _____

Dues: [] \$25/year if you want to receive the *News* by postal mail OR [] \$20/year for receipt by email
Please feel free to renew for multiple years! Just let us know what your wishes are.

Hardship Waiver []

DONATION \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

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Editor's note: In that same newsletter, J. Fred Thomas, the 392nd BG's representative to the Second Air Division Association, wrote about a proposal from Gil Bambauer "to form a 392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association." We are certainly grateful for his vision!

Rendezvous Dinner

The 2AD's B-24 Groups and the Heritage League enjoyed the traditional rendezvous dinner together. It began with a candle-lighting ceremony with HL Vice President for Volunteers Brian Mahoney as master of ceremonies. Crusaders Ben Jones, John Gilbert, Laurie Bedus Huntley and Doug Dovey lit several of the candles.

The ceremony ended with the *2ADA Fanfare*, familiar to 392nd reunion attendees with its blend of Liberator engine sounds, the *Air Force Hymn*, and *The Star Spangled Banner*.

First Timers

We welcomed Bill Krueger, Paul McCarty Jr., and Jeff and Tina Spritka to our hospitality suite. They are all members of the Wisconsin Chapter of the 8AFHS but designated the 392nd as their reunion unit because of their deep friendship with 576th radio operator George Michel, who passed away in February 2018. Bill and Paul then became members of the 392nd BGMA—welcome aboard!

8AFHS Information

The next 8AFHS reunion will be from 16-20 Oct 2019 at the Sheraton Westport Chalet Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri. The hotel has ample capacity and should be able to fill all room needs. Possible new tours include the Arch and the Holocaust Museum. Details will be in the March 2019 newsletter.

Donna Lee, who has organized 23 reunions for the 8AFHS, and Eleesa Faulkner, whose father served with the 303rd BG, were elected as Directors. The Directors then re-elected Ben Jones as president.

Remembrance Day 2018

Since 11 Nov 2018 commemorated the 100th anniversary of the end of WWI, many Remembrance Day events had that war as a focus. It is indeed ironic that the 392nd BG's first combat mission was flown just 32 years after the treaty that concluded "the war to end all wars."

More information on the war memorials mentioned in this article can be found at <http://www.roll-of-honour.com>.

Beeston

Memorial Trustee Jill Scott reports, "Because of the date it was an even more moving ceremony than usual, with a larger than usual number of people attending. Although, of course, your Memorial marks the 2nd World War, the fact that it was the 11th November 2018, 100 years to the day of the ending of WWI, brought an added touch to the necessity of Remembrance to the occasion. Two wreaths were laid. One on behalf of the 392nd by Hugh [Scott]. The other on behalf of the Parish Council by the Clerk, Charles Brindley.

"The weather was quite kind! Dry, very windy, but not too cold. The Service was the same as the one on 9th September. You will be pleased to know that Rev. Canon Heather Butcher mentioned your up-dated figure of those killed, not the number on the Memorial.

"The Service was, as always, preceded by the one at Beeston Church. The church itself was even more beautifully and relevantly decorated than when you were all here. It also contained some displays, for instance, marking the number of animals who played their respective part in WW1 and the number killed. The role of the Volunteers in WW1, in Great Britain and at the scenes of conflict, and that many of them were killed. Ernie Parke's family had put together a display regarding the member of their family who was killed in WW1.

"The Saturday evening we had held a concert in the church. Music—the Tittleshall Ladies Male Voice Choir (it started as a ladies only choir then some men joined it, hence the title!) and the Village Green Ukuleles, whom you will recall from when you were here. Wonderful relevant displays by children from the Beeston and the Great Dunham Primary Schools. The latter had made a great number of red poppy

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Above: Memorial Trustee Hugh Scott (left) prepares to place a wreath on behalf of the 392nd BGMA and Parish Council Clerk Charles Brindley is ready to lay a wreath on behalf of the Parish Council. Left: A large group listens intently to Rev. Canon Heather Butcher's words during the service.

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candle holders which were placed round the font. Each had a tea light in it. These were lit that evening and for the Service on Sunday. Poignant readings were also included. We had a full house, not an empty seat.

"Immediately after the two minute Silence on the Sunday (when we are standing by the Memorial in the church yard) Andrew Lawrence tolled the church bell (we only have the one bell) to mark those from Beeston who had died. We hadn't done this before, but I think it may become a regular happening every Remembrance Sunday.

"I do hope this has given you a flavour of the weekend, not just of the Sunday. I will stress that on the Sunday there were more people than usual at the Memorial."

The Beeston war memorial lists eight men killed in WWI as well as an 18-year-old woman. She was working at a Shell Filling Factory in Nottinghamshire on 1 Jul 1918 when several tons of TNT exploded without warning. She was one of 102 unidentified casualties among the 134 fatalities.

Upper Sheringham

Doug Willies wrote that "for the name reading part of the Remembrance Service, we congregated around the village War Memorial and the Council Chairman read out the names of those who lost their lives from the village of Upper Sheringham during the course of both the World Wars and then I followed with the names of those lost from the Lt Colby Waugh crew. Wreaths are laid and after observing the minutes silence at 11 o'clock, we all returned to the Church for the remainder of the Service."

"After the Service," Doug adds, "we all met up in the Village Hall and in connection with the 100th Anniversary of WW1, they served tea, coffee and cakes and showed a short but very interesting projector show of information and pictures reference local aspects of WW1. The recent activities in connection with the 100th Anniversary have been quite moving, both at national and local levels. It's particularly good to see so many youngsters getting involved and taking an interest too!"



L-R: All Saints Parish Church Warden Lin Wright (with the Cross), Alan Boardman (the other Church Warden), the Vicar (the Rev. Philip Blamire), Chairman of the Upper Sheringham Council Jon Dorey, Doug Willies and Council member Josh Horne.

The Upper Sheringham War Memorial lists eight names from WWI and one from WWII.

North Tuddenham

Pat Baldwin, who with husband Geoff organized the memorial to 2/Lt Louis Bass and crew at North Tuddenham,

wrote, "We held an event on Saturday evening attended by 85 people from the village, at which there was a short service and the names of the 16 fallen from the village and the Bass crew were all read out. There was a display of memorabilia including all the photos and information about the Bass crew that I hold. St. Mary's Church and churchyard were illuminated so that it was visible from quite a distance. Roger Howard's wife made a huge cake for all to share which was wonderful as it was decorated with a WW2 aircraft modelled from icing sugar; the detail wasn't quite right for a B-24, but very close!

"There was another service of remembrance on Sunday morning when a wreath was laid and the names read out again."

According to Pat, "The War Memorial in North Tuddenham currently lists 11 names from WWI and 5 from WWII. We are in the process of adding one more name from WWII, and we think that there are another two more names that should be there also. It will take more research to clarify that and then add those names as well."

Editor's note: A month after this service, the North Tuddenham Parish Council received an email from a relative of Bass crew tail gunner S/Sgt Robert E. Norrell:

"I wanted to express appreciation and gratitude for the memorial you dedicated to the eight airmen killed as a result of the plane crash [on 21 Apr 1944]. While doing some genealogy research, I discovered the web page devoted to your efforts to honor the crew members that died in North Tuddenham during WW2 [see <https://www.b24.net/MM042144.htm#cnl>]. I spoke today with the nieces of 'Robbie' Norrell. Robbie was my mother's first cousin. His death left heartbroken family members who we only wished could have known the lasting memorial you all created. Please extend our thanks to the people of [North] Tuddenham from [his] descendents in the United States."



In this black and white rendering of how St. Mary Church in North Tuddenham was illuminated for Remembrance Day 2018, it is difficult to see the words "Lest We Forget" and the bright red poppies, but they confirm that the residents of North Tuddenham still honor their fallen.

Cheshunt

David Parnell advised that over 150 residents of Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, remembered "the 10 young American airmen killed in the very midst of our town of Cheshunt on 12th August 1944. This was a tragedy that shook the town to

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its core with an outpouring of grief; in fact, one 90-year-old resident said it was 'the town's darkest hour.'

From a 1944 newspaper article and his own research, David has learned about the final moments before the crash—how the plane appeared to desperately circle around for a landing site where it would do the least amount of damage. After an unsuccessful attempt to gain some height, it tragically nose-dived and hit the ground. Six civilians were hit by shrapnel or glass, but all survived.

Within a few days of this heartfelt act of bravery a "bomber fund" committee was set up and organized by vicar of Cheshunt the Rev Wilfred B Belcher MC. Funds raised were intended to help the bereaved airmen's families.

Over a period of several weeks a team of 26 community members gathered in donations from across the town and Waltham Cross. The total sum raised was almost \$11,500 in today's terms—a considerable sum.

Some was used for two identical bronze memorial plaques with the crew's names and their brave act. One was placed in the new town hall library (where it remains to this day) while the other was placed close to the graves of the deceased at what became the Cambridge American Cemetery. The remainder was assigned to the American Red Cross.

A few weeks later the Rev Belcher received a letter

from Col Lorin L. Johnson, 392nd BG commander. He warmly acknowledged the kind donation gift and thanked all concerned for such an honourable remembrance. He advised that families of the deceased airmen had been informed of this great act of kindness from the town.

Freckleton Tragedy

Col Johnson said a decision had been made to forward the allocated fund to the town of Freckleton in Lancashire where on 23 Aug 1944 a B-24 Liberator had crashed into a school during a ferocious thunderstorm and burst into flames. The plane, being made ready for delivery to the 2nd Combat Division, had departed USAAF Base Air Depot 2 at Warton Aerodrome on a test flight.

Killed instantly were three men in the B-24, 34 children under the age of 7, one teacher, six American servicemen at the nearby Sad Sack Snack Bar, 7 of its staff members, and one RAF airman. Four more children and 5 adults died shortly afterwards from their injuries, taking the death toll to 61.

David notes that "Cheshunt paid dearly during times of war" with 280 names listed on its war memorial from WWI and 119 more from subsequent wars.

Editor's note: For details about the Freckleton crash, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freckleton_air_disaster and http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/lancashire/hi/people_and_places/history/newsid_8189000/8189386.stm.



Left: Many residents of Cheshunt and an honor guard of Cheshunt and Hoddesdon Sea Cadets gathered to remember 2/Lt John D. Ellis and his crew. Right: 392nd BGMA member David Parnell lays a wreath on behalf of the 392nd BGMA.

Too Good to Be True

This article is from the 465th Sub Depot history.

The boys in the Transportation section of the Sub Depot were always proud of the two-story shack they had built out of scrap lumber. It was a sturdy shack and they used it to keep tools and to lounge around in when they weren't busy.

On 3 Sep 1944, a typically quiet Sunday afternoon, at approximately 1525 hours, Cpl Schrader, Pfc Finkbeiner, Cpl Rowe, Pfc Luna, all of the Transportation section, and S/Sgt Eberhart, assistant inspector, were sitting in this shack "batting the breeze." Cpl Schrader was occupying the second floor reading, ironically enough, a book entitled "TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE", when whom came the sound of a low-flying A-20 and before the boys knew what had happened they found themselves under a pile of lumber.

The A-20 had hit their shack head-on. S/Sgt Eberhart, Pfc Finkbeiner, Cpl Schrader, and Cpl Rowe crawled out from under the rubble of boards, tools, etc. and counted themselves lucky that they weren't hurt. Cpl Rowe manned

his crash crew truck and helped move the parts of the plane that almost took his life. Pfc Luna was the only one who did not come out of the shack, and the boys dug him out. His head was bleeding furiously so he was taken to Station Sick Quarters where a long gash in his skull was given prompt medical attention.

The gremlin of good luck must have been hanging around for the wing of the plane cut right in the middle of the shack and a few more inches up or down would have meant instant death to either Cpl Schrader on the upper story or the rest of the men on the ground floor.

Like a fire stirs up a peaceful town, so did this occurrence stir up considerable conversation, with all types of stories and rumors, on an otherwise sleepy Sunday afternoon.

The A-20 was loaded with 500 pound bombs and they were scattered all over the field in back of the shack and hangar #1. The plane was manned by RAF personnel.

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Since the original shack was eliminated, S/Sgt Butterbaugh and his versatile crew settled down to the arduous task of constructing a new structure and, at present, a bigger and better shack stands in the place where "death had taken a holiday."



Back row L-R: Cpl Robert F. Rowe, Pfc Gilberto R. Luna, Cpl Joshua F. Chase, Cpl Charles H. Jones, Cpl Eldon E. Landon, Cpl Warren C. Roe. Front row L-R: Cpl Carwin A. Thomason, Sgt George E. Schriber, Cpl Otis Schrader, S/Sgt Leslie J. Butterbaugh.

Editor's note: The plane was identified in the 465th's history as a Douglas A-20, known as the Havoc when used by the US and as the Boston when flown by the RAF.

The a/c that crashed at Wendling, though, was actually an A-26 Invader, Douglas Aircraft Co.'s successor to the A-20. #41-39158 had been assigned to Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Station, Boscombe Down, on 11 Jul 1944 for six weeks' testing by the RAF, then to 2 Group for further evaluation.

It was later determined that its upper turret cover had detached from the airframe and struck the vertical tail, causing the crash. All four of its RAF crew were killed.



A team reviews the wreckage of the A-26 Invader that narrowly missed several 465th Sub Depot personnel.

Combat Officers Mess

In his memoir, *From Ploughboy to Pilot*, 576/9th pilot C. Don Scharf wrote, Our combat officers mess "was down the road a few hundred feet and within walking distance of our hut. The flight line, the administrative building, briefing room, and maintenance hangars were probably one-half to three-quarters of a mile from the 576th site. All of these sites were spread among the little farms and a couple of small villages to protect the base from a bombing raid. It would be much harder to wipe out widely dispersed sites than if everything were clustered together like the U.S. air bases were."

It "was a long, low one-story masonry building. On one end, the dining and kitchen area had long tables and benches to sit on. On the far end were a table and chairs where the high-ranking officers sat. The middle section was a lounge area with a fireplace and some easy chairs. The bar was on the opposite end of the dining area. On the wall of the bar room that separated it from the lounge area all of the Group's missions were painted on the wall. When we arrived there the group had just completed its 100th mission.

"There was a slot machine along the wall under the list of missions. There were murals painted on the end wall of the lounge area and on the wall behind the bar. They depicted B-24s in formation with the 8th Air Force logo and the words '392nd Bombardment Group' painted beneath them.

"Near the entrance were numerous bike stands where we could park our bikes while visiting or dining. On the back side of the club building there was a grassy fenced-in yard. Once in a while there would be an old cow in the yard for a day or two and then it would disappear. A couple of days later we would have steak."

The Mess was the setting for many stories. One of Don's took place during the 200th mission party for officers, held on 8 Dec 1944.

"This was a special day for me, as it turned out, in more ways than one. I don't remember if I had had dinner or not when I wandered into the bar and Maj Jim McGregor, the group operations officer, came up to me and said, "Congratulations. You have just made Captain." He then proceeded to pin the coveted railroad tracks on my jacket and bought me a triple Scotch. That was the turning point of my evening as a short time after downing the Scotch, I only vaguely remember being there at all.

"I guess I was making a genuine fool of myself when a couple of my crew members ... came into the bar, saw the sorry condition I was in, and took immediate action. There was a low window in the barroom that could be unlatched and swung outward. They led me to the window, opened it, and somehow dragged me through it. I guess they didn't want to be seen hauling me through the whole crowd to the main entrance.

"I can remember one on each side of me, holding me up, as we walked up the middle of the pitch dark blacktop road to our hut. I also remember that I couldn't feel my legs from the waist down. They got me back to our hut, took off my jacket and shoes, and threw me into bed. I didn't wake up until noon the next day."

Some time after Don left the party, "everybody drank their glasses dry and threw them into the fireplace. The club was so torn up that they had to close it down for the next two or three days to clean it up and repair the damage. There were so many pilots out of commission the next day that the colonel had to stand down the group. [The 392nd BG didn't fly another mission until 11 December.]

"Parties like this were a great stress reliever for guys who never knew if they would still be alive the next evening or the evening after that. And, oh yes, it was 20 years before I was able to once again tolerate the taste and smell of Scotch."

See OFFICERS MESS on page 9

OFFICERS MESS from page 8

Top photo: The south side of the camouflage-painted Combat Officers Mess. The west end held the dining room and kitchen with a smaller lounge and bar room in the east end. The B-24s and eagle mural was on an interior wall which divided the two rooms and faced the lounge room. Middle photo: L-R, the Combat Officers Mess, a water tower that served the entire base as well as the village of Beeston, and an enlisted mess. Bottom photo: The Combat Officers Mess cooks just before Christmas dinner 1944. S/Sgt Thomas Hardin, the Night Mess Sergeant per the printed bulletin for that feast, is seated second from the left.



FOLDED WINGS REPORT

Please report the death of a member or spouse and provide a copy of the newspaper obituary if possible.

Name of deceased _____ Unit/Sqdn _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Date of death _____ Survivors _____

Reported by _____

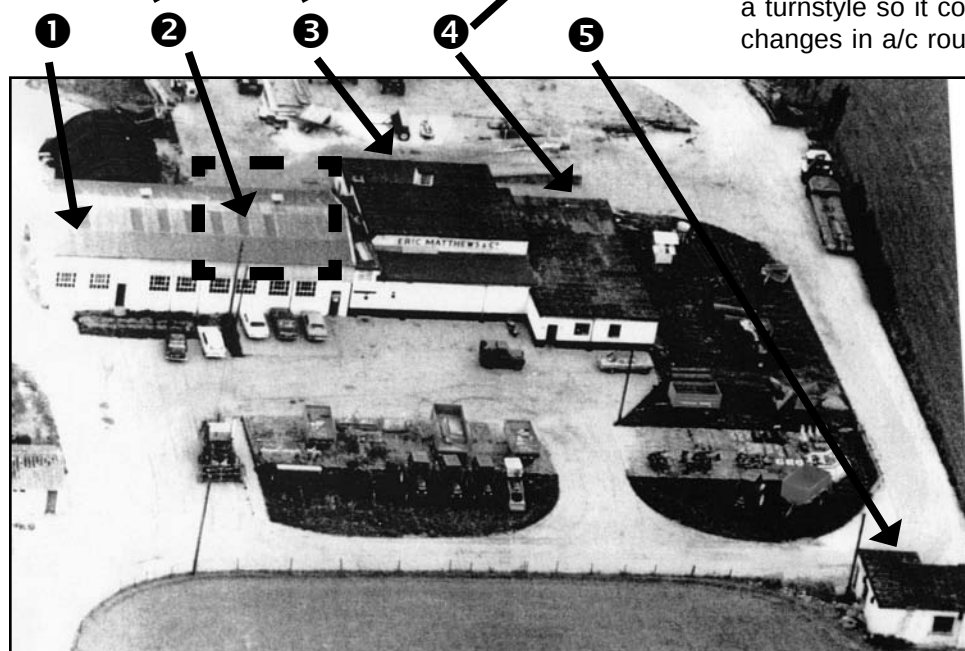
Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

The 392nd BGMA is engaged in a fund-raising effort to financially support our website, www.b24.net. It contains the history of the 392nd Bomb Group. You could make no greater tribute to your loved one than a donation for this living and ongoing memorial to the 392nd. Please send this report, hopefully with your check payable to the 392nd BGMA-Website, but send it with or without it, to: Annette Tison, 9107 Wood Pointe Way, Fairfax Station, VA 22039

Operations Building

The Operations Building at Station 118 was eventually repurposed as a farm implements company. Originally Eric Matthews & Co., it was acquired by Ben Burgess Beeston Ltd in 1975. John Rupp has been its manager since 1985 and has welcomed hundreds of 392nd BG veterans, relatives and friends who want to see this part of the past. We greatly appreciate his kindness!

The first photo below is circa 1962; the second photo, from around 1975.



① This workshop was built by Eric Matthews & Co. about 1962. The smaller Nissen hut on the back left (used after the war as a cinema) still remained, but the larger one (delineated by the dashed lines) was removed.

② The very large Nissen hut originally in this spot was



Left: Crews are briefed before a mission (date unknown) and right, debriefed on 16 Jul 1944. Both took place in the large Nissen hut ②.

connected to the Operations Building ⑤. One area was used to brief and debrief crews while the other was used to review films and photos and to synchronize watches before going to the planes.

③ This tall structure was part of the original Operations Building. It had a very large room (perhaps where Group and Squadron leaders determined how to implement the mission order and where the lead crews were briefed) and a map room. A ladder led to a flat roof, which had a structure with several windows to help light the large room below. (They were soon blacked out.) Another ladder led to the top of this structure and its flat roof. From this top level, planes could easily be viewed departing and landing, as the airfield was less than ¼ mile away.

④ This one-story part of the building had many offices.

⑤ This small building had two rooms. One was where the bombardiers were briefed. It had a Norden bombsight on a turnstile so it could be moved and swiveled to simulate changes in a/c route so the bombardiers could view route maps and photos of the route and the target to help them throughout the mission.

Another room, where bombsight maintenance technicians worked, also stored replacement parts for the bombsights. More information about this building, which is still used for storage, will be in the next issue.

M/Sgt Collin's Photos

The two left photos on page 11 were dated 17 May 1945. After Dan Collin—son of M/Sgt Everett E. Collin, senior enlisted man in Group Operations—found them, he could not identify what they were. He recently shared them with Annette Tison, who sent them to John Gilbert and John Rupp. All agreed they

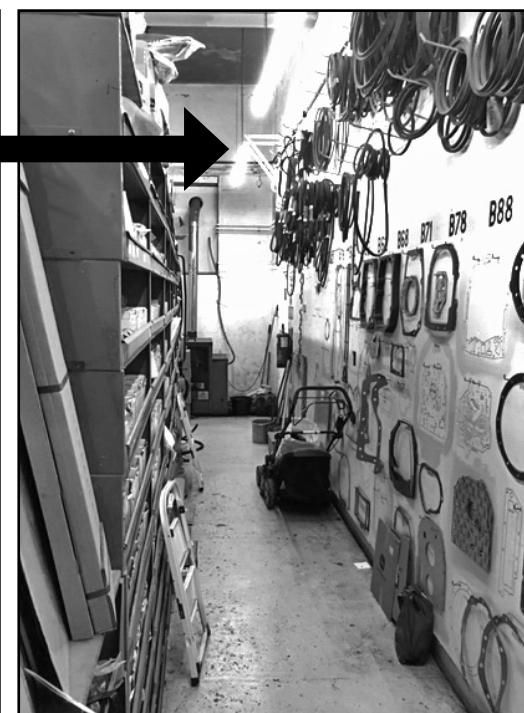
show a room in the Operations Building. John Rupp then took the current photos (on the right) of the same areas.

On the left wall of the top left photo is a large map on which routes could be plotted. The bulletin board on the back wall has a space for "Lead Crews" and "Combat Crew Status."

As shown in the top right photo, the wall on the right is still there, although the windows have been removed. Since it is the largest office in the building, John Rupp

See
BUILDING on
page 11

BUILDING from page 10



thinks it might have originally been used by the 392nd BG Operations Officer.

"When I first arrived at Ben Burgess in 1985," he says, "my office had its own en-suite toilet and the front office was a kitchen and public toilet area. This made us think that my office belonged to someone important!"

The door at the end led to ④ and the original ladder (now the stairs, built in 1994) to the upper level.

Under the small table in the foreground is a footlocker or box with "John B. Thomas, 38 Leitch Ave., Skaneateles, NY" stenciled on it. Thomas was a draftsman before the war; after enlisting on 18 Dec 1942, he was first a 392nd BG weapons mechanic and then an Admin & Tech Clerk.

The bottom left photo shows another wall in the same

room; the blackboard at the back of this photo faces the clock in the first photo. The blackboard has a section for each squadron and would be updated before each mission with pilot names, a/c call signs and designation numbers, actual times of take off and return, and remarks. It was also amended as planes went in and out of maintenance. Someone—perhaps S/Sgt Thomas—is working at a drafting table in the back left corner.

The right photo shows the room as it appears now. The brackets in the left photo that once held a water tank are still there, 73 years later.

Amazing how two photos can reveal so much history!

This article could not have been written without John Gilbert's detailed information and photos. Many thanks!!

IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

by Char Heim

daughter of Charles E. Dye, 1825th Ordnance Co.

In searching the internet recently, I unexpectedly found a photograph of an exclusively veterans cemetery in the USA. Many of the graves were marked "UNKNOWN." It saddened me, as my wish is that all our soldiers should have identity, peace and the presence/love of the families they left behind.

Five things support our country: prayer, untainted wisdom of our leaders, justice from the unbiased, valor of the brave and unprecedented thanks for those who help maintain our freedom.

As we might be diverted by TV news to view scenes of evacuations, mass shootings and unmotivated violence, we should not forget that our sons, daughters, parents, spouses are still putting their lives in jeopardy as they continue to protect our freedom, liberty and way of life by consistently putting their own lives in danger.

Our way of life depends on these warriors—past, present and future. Let us remember them not just at these Holiday times, but daily, as we live so freely due to their patriotism and bravery.

Blessings to all...



**THE 392ND MEMORIAL
AT WENDLING**

**But we...shall be remember'd;
We few, we happy few,
we band of brothers.
For he to-day that sheds
his blood with me
Shall be my brother...**

**William Shakespeare
Henry V**

392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association
9107 Wood Pointe Way
Fairfax Station, VA 22039
USA

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

First Class Mail

Almighty God, Who has blessed us with the will and courage to do our duty, we praise You for our comrades whose death kept freedom living. We praise You also for giving us the years we have lived since their departure. We pray that You will strengthen and sustain our devotion to truth and justice, so that we may be faithful beneficiaries of their sacrifice. Continue Your mercy to our comrades; keep them in Your care; and bring us all at last into Your presence there to rejoice Eternally. Amen. — Composed by 576th pilot the late Very Reverend Robert C. Martin, former Dean of the Cathedral at Erie, Pennsylvania.

∞FOLDED WINGS∞

Jesse A. Carpenter, 578, September 14, 2018
Philip Hultin, Associate, August 15, 2018
Joseph M. McNiel, 578, March 27, 2018