



Sentimental Journey

Twenty-eight Americans arrived at the Maids Head Hotel in Norwich, England. We were joined by our English Director John Gilbert and two British members of the 392nd BGMA, David Parnell and Jane Plant. Together, we embarked on a journey of remembrance.

Six were related to men killed in action—392nd BGMA President Bob Books, Dennis Rogers and Vice President Ralph Winter were all sons of pilots; Don Carey, Ron Pierre and *News* editor Annette Tison lost uncles. The fathers of Greg Hatton, Doug Peterson and Jane Plant became POWs. The father of sisters Jana Young and Leslie Gartrell completed his combat tour as did Bill McCutcheon's father.

Five were related to Col Lawrence G. Gilbert, who served with the 392nd BG from inception to its dissolution and was its last Commander—son Larry Gilbert Jr., daughter Anne Brooks, her husband David and grandchildren Taylor Gilbert and Sarah Brooks Snell.

The fathers of Debbie Beigh and Susan Williams served in Group Headquarters and the 465th Sub Depot, respectively. David Parnell has established a memorial in Cheshunt,

Hertfordshire, England to a 392nd BG crew. Spouses Mike Beigh, Carol Books, Audrey Carey, Rich Gartrell, Gloria McCutcheon, Billie Peterson, Barbara Pierre, Don Tison, and Jim Young (with son Charles Young) rounded out the group. We therefore represented a wide range of 392nd BGMA experiences.

After a welcome reception on Wednesday, September 5, we headed out for pubs and restaurants, keen to immerse ourselves in new experiences.

Thursday was our "recover from jet lag" day. We wandered around Norwich and visited the Castle, the Cathedral, and especially the Second Air Division Memorial Library. There, we were welcomed by Memorial Trust Librarian Libby Morgan. 392nd BG books, photo albums, maps, and filmed interviews of 392nd veterans from the Library's collection were available all day.

It was here that the first of many remarkable occurrences began. At the Library, Ron Pierre was looking for information about his uncle, S/Sgt Martin Egler, who was killed on 22

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In front of the Wendling Village Hall mural. L-R: Anne Brooks, Sarah Snell, David Brooks, Jane Plant, Billie Peterson, Doug Peterson, David Parnell, Jim Young, Mike Beigh, Debbie Beigh, Bill McCutcheon, Annette Tison, Jana Young, Ralph Winter, Don Tison, Doreen Gilbert, John Gilbert, Dennis Rogers, Taylor Gilbert, Leslie Gartrell, Larry Gilbert Jr, Sue Williams, Ron Pierre, Barbara Pierre, Audrey Carey, Don Carey, Carol Books, Bob Books, Gloria McCutcheon, Greg Hatton (partly hidden), artist Malcolm Cockell. Not in photo: Hattie Cockell, Charles Young and Rich Gartrell.



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FROM THE EDITOR

Special Edition. This 20-page issue is focused on the reunion in England. I hope it will remind those who were there of all we saw and did plus help others envision the warmth and camaraderie we received from everyone we encountered.

At the October 2017 reunion in New Orleans, attendees overwhelmingly supported having a reunion in England in 2018. I emailed Memorial Trustee Jill Scott, "On Sunday, September 9, we would very much like to have a service at the Wendling Memorial. We envision something along the lines of your annual Remembrance Day service at Beeston Church and the Memorial, followed by a reception. We would like to experience what you folks have been doing for decades to honor and remember our fallen, and so, of course, we hope that the residents of Beeston, Wendling and surrounding communities would attend as well."

Jill embraced the idea and immediately began planning. The results exceeded our wildest dreams. We are indebted to everyone who participated in any capacity. You made us feel welcomed. 392nd BGMA member Dennis Rogers commented on "the honest, warm reception of the community. The sincere caring the people showed us by attending our events and welcoming us into their fold. I didn't know what to expect but was taken aback by that almost reverent reception and their diligent keeping of the knowledge about what our fathers and relatives did for them."

Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, for the way you have remembered and honored the 392nd BG personnel in the decades since they went home in June 1945.

I have a few programs for the church and Memorial services and an information pamphlet about Beeston St. Mary Church. Please contact me if you'd like copies.

Numbers. The plaque on the Memorial honors the "747 airmen who gave their lives" while the wreath laid at Cambridge American Cemetery was "in memory of the 392nd BG's 832 casualties." Why are the numbers different?

Throughout WWII, military deaths were classified based on how they occurred; the number on the Memorial is derived from these WWII designations. Per http://www.withmilitaryhonors.com/wwii/code_index.php: **KIA**—Killed in Action, by the enemy, or if a prisoner of war, whether by air bombardment of a prison camp or by being killed while attempting to escape. **DOW**—Died of Wounds received in action. **DOI**—Died of Injuries; personnel who suffered fatal battle injuries (as opposed to wounds), in

combat, or in combat areas, and died in a line-of-duty status. **DNB** (Died Non-Battle)—personnel who died in the line-of-duty, from sickness, homicide, suicide, or accidents outside combat areas. A term similar to DNB is **KILD** (Killed in the Line of Duty); both would include deaths during training and maneuvers outside combat areas.

For example, S/Sgt Edward B. Coleman was shot down on 29 May 1944 and became a POW. His death on 15 Apr 1945 during the Death March was categorized as DNB. 577th pilot 2/Lt Jack C. Decker and four crewmen were participating in a practice mission on 18 Jan 1945. In snow squalls, strong winds, and poor visibility, they never returned and were presumed to have crashed in the North Sea. Their deaths were also labeled DNB. On 5 July 1944, 11 men from the 576th and 579th Sqdns were killed when their planes collided during a practice mission. All were labeled KILD.

During a recent and extensive review of the 392nd BG's Roll of Honor, Bob Books and I decided that the number of 392nd BG casualties should include ALL deaths in the line of duty while stationed in England, regardless of whether they were initially considered KIA, DOW, DOI, DNB, or KILD. The number 832 therefore best represents Crusader losses.

The Memorial. Trustee Henry Dennett advised that the Trustees had been approached by the Beeston Parish Council who had been asked by the British Merchant Navy if it would be possible to fly one of their flags at the Memorial to commemorate the 36,749 British Merchant Seamen and women who were killed during WWII. Another 5,720 were taken

prisoner and 4,707 wounded in action. This represents a casualty rate of over 25%. These brave men and women worked on the merchant ships in the North Atlantic convoys that ran the gauntlet against the German U boat wolf packs.

The Trustees of course agreed. The Beeston Parish Council provided the flag and it was flown from 31 Aug-4 Sep 2018 "in honour of these men and women who kept the country supplied during those dark years."

Henry also emailed, "Louise and I used to be very keen amateur cyclists and still have several friends in the

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President's Thoughts



Our 392nd BGMA family reunion in England was one of the most meaningful reunions I've been to. Everything went as hoped, thanks to the arrangements and coordination of events by Ralph Winter, Annette Tison, John Gilbert, the Memorial Trustees and Beeston area friends. Many thanks to everyone who made this trip very special to all of us.

One of the many highlights was meeting so many new people who make it a point to honor and remember our loved ones who served in WWII. The memorial services on Sunday with the Lancaster bomber flyover was something I'll never forget.

This reunion was special in another way because September marked the 25th anniversary of learning my father's history at Wendling and the particulars about his last mission and death.

Prior to September 1993, I only knew that my father was a bomber pilot shot down over Germany. The pain of my mother's loss of a husband and my grandparents' loss of a son resulted in not having conversations regarding any details of his service or his death on March 18, 1944.

I never knew what kind of plane my father flew, the missions he flew, what bomb group or squadron he was assigned to, the base name/location or where he crashed. I didn't know any of the crew names or that there was a lone survivor. I'm not sure that my family knew much either as most of these facts were not available in 1944.

Then in September of 1993, I received a phone call from an Eau Claire, Wisconsin, newspaper reporter who had been trying to find me by calling telephone exchanges and asking Information if they had a Robert Books listed. I was living in Menomonee Falls, about 300 miles from Eau Claire. The reporter had been persistent and finally found me listed after several days of searching.

I remember the call as though it was yesterday. Answering the phone I heard, "Is this Robert Books?" I replied, "Yes." He then asked, "Was your father Dallas Books?" I replied, "Yes." He said a researcher from Pennsylvania, whose uncle was the engineer on my father's plane, had been researching his missions, including visiting the crash site in Germany. I was stunned and almost speechless!

He continued, telling me the Eau Claire newspaper was going to do a front page feature story in the Sunday paper on my father. He asked for permission to give my name to the researcher, who wanted to contact me. I couldn't wait for him to call, so on the following Tuesday, I called him and introduced myself.

That was the beginning of discovering my father's war record from the researcher, Jim Marsteller. Carol & I were soon to become great friends with Jim and his wife, Karen. They came to Wisconsin in December 1994 to share his wealth of research information and I became aware of the 392nd BGMA for the first time.

My first reunions with the 392nd BGMA were with the

Second Air Division in Milwaukee in June 1996, then with the 8th AFHS in Orlando that fall. What a profound experience it was to meet the veterans who flew with my father, to hear their stories and to become lifelong friends with so many 2nd generations of the Wendling Crusaders.

Visiting the Wendling base in England on this 25th anniversary of the reporter's phone call and laying a wreath at the memorial with 30 others who had loved ones stationed at Wendling was the perfect research completion of my father's time during WWII.

The complete story of Jim Marsteller's research into the 392nd BG crews lost on March 18, 1944, including the newspaper article, is at <https://www.b24.net/storiesFriedrichshafen.htm>.

Bob

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cycling world. Some of them belong to the Flying Gate Club (because they ride Flying Gate bicycles). Each year they have a tour round a different part of the country. This year, they visited Norfolk in early September as part of a themed ride to old airfields. Around 45 of them visited Beeston and the 392nd BGMA memorial, before coming to our home for tea and cake. They paid for the tea and cake and requested that the £112 raised go to the 392nd BG Memorial Trust funds."

We are pleased that our Memorial was used to honor a sister service from WWII and that these cyclists wanted not only to visit it but to help support its upkeep.

B-24 Stamp. Each 392nd BGMA Wendling reunion attendee and English luncheon guest was given a collector's copy of a US stamp featuring a B-24 Liberator bomber. The stamp was issued in 2005, when it cost just 37 cents to mail a



letter! The donor wishes to remain anonymous, but I want to take this very public opportunity to express our thanks for this very thoughtful surprise. For information about the Liberator on the stamp and its crew, see <https://forums.ubi.com/showthread.php/606477-Postage-Stamp-Honors-B-24-Liberator-Shot-Down-Just-Short-of-WWII-Victory-Forums>.

June 2018 News. When Erik Jordan saw the photo on the cover, he emailed, "I was amazingly surprised. A/C 040, Silver Streak, was a plane my father, 2/Lt E. B. Jordan, was co-pilot on for a few of his missions. I trust you can imagine my delight. Glad it made it home safely, as well as my father."

Ray Poshadlo's father, Sgt Cliff Poshadlo, served with the 465th Sub Depot and sailed home aboard RMS Queen Mary. A few years ago, Ray spoke at a conference on the ship, now a hotel in Long Beach, California. He emailed, "I got to stay on her for two days. They explained that when they took the troops over, the boat was overloaded to the max, with soldiers sleeping in the drained swimming pool!"

"Just about the only thing my Dad said about WWII was

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how amazed everyone on the ground crews were that so many planes managed to land despite being so shot up. I never thought until I was a lot older about how shot up the crews had to be, too."

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Mar 1945 as his crew returned from a mission. After Ron learned that the crash was at Horstead, he googled to see where it was—amazing, just 7.2 miles away!

David Parnell immediately offered to drive Ron and wife Barbara there, in hopes of finding someone who knew something. They were eventually directed to Trevor Hewitt, who runs New Farm Aviation Heritage Museum



Ron Pierre (left) discusses his uncle's crash with Trevor Hewitt, surrounded by Trevor's collection.

(<https://www.facebook.com/newfarmaviation/>). He has an extraordinary collection of artifacts from many plane crashes, including #42-51150, I Walk Alone—the aircraft Ron's uncle was aboard when he was killed! He also took Ron to the crash site. Trevor offered Ron his choice of items from S/Sgt Egler's plane, saying, "I collected them for people like you." Ron was on Cloud 9 for the rest of the reunion!

Business Meeting

The annual meeting of the 392nd BGMA was held that afternoon. After President Bob Books called the meeting to order, Dennis Rogers led the Pledge of Allegiance. Debbie Beigh then read the names of the 17 Crusaders, spouses and Friends who had died since the last reunion, followed by a reading of the 392nd BG Prayer by Doug Peterson.

Bob reminded attendees that the purpose of the meeting is as stated in Article 2 of our By Laws: to perpetuate the legacy and history of the 8AF, 392nd BG and the memory of lost comrades; to reunite 392nd BG veterans and relatives at reunions; and to provide educational, patriotic, historical, social and recreational activities for the members.

After declaring a quorum to be present, Bob reminded members that they were delegates to the official meeting of the 392nd BGMA and that reasonable reunion expenses were tax deductible as allowed by law—but to consult their tax advisors.

Bob thanked Ralph Winter and Annette Tison for all their work to make the reunion a reality.

Secretary Annette Tison noted that we have 222 members and Friends. Among them are 17 air and 6 ground crew veterans and 14 widows of veterans. Our newsletter goes to people in seven countries (the US, England, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Canada, and Germany).

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392nd BGMA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please look at the mailing label where your membership status is shown directly after your name. **"18" or higher means your membership will expire in December 2018. Please renew!!!** LM means Life Member and FRIEND means that you receive the News with compliments of the 392nd BGMA. Send this form and your check (payable to 392nd BGMA) to Annette Tison, 9107 Wood Pointe Way, Fairfax Station, VA 22039. You may also join or renew on-line at <http://www.b24.net/392nd/join.htm>.

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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Excluding reunion fees, total assets are virtually unchanged from last year.

Bob noted that he is still seeking a repository in the US for the 392nd BGMA's physical archives (photos, documents, reports, etc.) as well as an entity that would be able and willing to host our website in the future. He pledged that he will have some alternatives to discuss and vote on at the 2019 reunion.

Where will that reunion be? The 8th Air Force Historical Society will meet in St. Louis, Missouri, for the third time in nine years. A conversation about the pros and cons of meeting with the 8th or having a stand-alone reunion in a different location ensued. A similar discussion was held at the Dayton reunion in early October. The Executive Committee will make the decision.

Bob Books, Ralph Winter and Annette Tison were re-elected as 392nd BGMA Directors. The other Directors then re-elected them to their current officer positions.

Director John Gilbert gave a wooden cross with an attached paper poppy to each Crusader family. The crosses had a pointed end suitable for placing in the ground, with the statement, *In Remembrance*, printed boldly. John told us that there would be an opportunity to place these crosses in the ground next to the Memorial at the end of the Sunday Memorial service. He advised how to personalize the cross with our relatives' names.

First Timers

Jana Young (with husband Jim and 15-year old son Charles) is the sister of Leslie Gartrell (with husband Rich). Their father was copilot 1/Lt John L. Henrickson, 576th. Jim and Jana thought the trip was so important for their son that they let him miss his first days of school to attend!

Sarah Brooks Snell is the daughter of David and Anne Brooks and the granddaughter of Col Gilbert.

It was the first reunion for spouses Gloria McCutcheon, Mike Beigh and Don Tison and for the two English members.

David Parnell lives not far from where the 577's 2/Lt John D. Ellis crew crashed in Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, on 12 Aug 1944 while on their way to France. He has found their crash site, eyewitnesses, and many family members. For several, it was the first time they learned the circumstances of their relative's death.

Jane Plant's father was 579th copilot 2/Lt Jack G. Holmes, who became a POW on 21 Jul 1944. Her parents married when Jack was stationed in England after the war but divorced shortly before she was born. Jane was hoping to learn more about her father, his service with the 392nd BG, and his time as a POW.

Visit to Station 118

On Friday, 7 September, we enjoyed a tour of Wendling, led by Director John Gilbert. John's intimate knowledge of Wendling, coupled with the relationships he has formed with land- and business-owners in the area, guaranteed a memorable and meaningful experience for all of us. As we visited still-intact buildings and landmarks from the WWII era, John's commentary ensured we knew what we were looking at, augmented by humorous (and poignant) human interest stories.

Those stories were a highlight for Charles Young. "I

never knew my grandfather," he said, "but the stories John Gilbert told [as we drove around the base] were an amazing window into the past for me. The tour of the Wendling base was a hard emotional time for my parents (and Aunt), and for me it was a chance to listen to more stories and imagine life in the war. Seeing all the parts to the base was like putting images to the stories."

We stopped first at Wendling Village Hall, with its magnificent mural of B-24s flying over the village. Doreen Gilbert, Chairman of the Hall (and John's sister-in-law) and artist Malcolm Cockell and his wife Hattie met us. Malcolm discussed the artistic challenges of using only shades of blue in the project and the fun that local children had painting their houses at the bottom of the mural. "This tribute," Malcolm says, "incorporates many of today's houses showing the link between the heroes of yesterday with the inhabitants of the current generation."

He added, "To reflect our gratitude and memory of the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice, the villagers of Wendling have decided to retain the Mural on the wall of the village hall in perpetuity so that future generations may remember with deep appreciation the actions of those dark years and our continuing friendship between the friends, comrades and families of Britain and America."

The bus then took us to Honeypot Wood, where the bomb dump was, but the ground was too damp to walk around.



The main runway, made of concrete, was 6,000 feet long. The turkey huts show how wide it was.

John issued us maps and brochures explaining what was there. We then drove to what's left of the main runway. It is now lined with sheds full of turkeys, but the width and length of the runway is still quite obvious.

Appreciation Lunch

We took a break for lunch at the Longham White Horse, where we hosted 31 English friends who have honored the 392nd BG throughout the years: Trustees of the Memorial and its groundskeeper; landowners who let Crusaders walk through their property and businesses so we can be on the same ground as our relatives and see what remains of their presence; others who have created memorials to 392nd BG crews in stone and paint; the ministers who have led Remembrance Day services; and many more who help perpetuate the legacy and memory of the 392nd BG in a variety of ways.

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After a "meet and mingle" session, we adjourned to a large tented area. President Bob Books presented an American flag, neatly folded and in a triangular wooden case, to Trustees Jill Scott, Hugh Scott and Henry Dennett and groundskeeper Peter Cross. The accompanying certificate noted that "This American flag was flown over the



Top photo, L-R: Trustee Hugh Scott, Trustee Jill Scott, groundskeeper Peter Cross, and Trustee Hugh Dennett, after Bob Books presented them an American flag in thanks for their decades of care for the 392nd BG Memorial. Bottom photo: a flag was also presented to Doreen Gilbert in appreciation to the residents of Wendling for welcoming the 392nd BG so warmly during the war and honoring them ever since. L-R: Doreen Gilbert, Annette Tison, Bob Books and Ralph Winter.

Pentagon on August 15, 2018 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the 392nd Bomb Group's arrival in Norfolk. It is presented with heartfelt gratitude for the decades of care you have provided to their Memorial."

An American flag and certificates were also presented to Doreen Gilbert to display at the Wendling Village Hall "with heartfelt gratitude for how the residents of Wendling welcomed our airmen from 1943-1945 and have honored and remembered them ever since."

We went back to the White Horse where the Reverend Canon Heather Butcher gave the invocation. First, though, she spoke of her parents. "My dad was a prisoner of the Japanese for nearly 4 years and weighed 6 stone [84 pounds] when liberation came. They were told to stay in the camp and the Americans first dropped army boots from a plane. There were so many that in the end they had to send a signal to stop. Dad said there was a mountain of them and he used to spend his time trying on one pair, having a little walk and then trying another. I think there was a thrill in bounty when they had so little.

"Dad was eventually taken onto an American hospital ship. ('The nurses all in white, I thought I had gone to heaven,' he used to say laughing.) They were given money, cigarettes and beer and so much food that the medics had to restrict their rations because their stomachs couldn't take it. Dad had a life long affection for the Americans and their generosity. 'They couldn't do enough for us,' he often used to say.

"Mum grew up on a farm in the next village to Wendling and well remembers the dances, the Americans certainly brought a bit of life to the villages. At 92 and with a bit of dementia, she still mentions the Americans every time we pass the Memorial. I asked her what she remembered just before I spoke at the lunch and the first thing she said was, 'they were generous.' They were kind to the children and always had sweets and chocolate to give. 'Got any gum, chum,' she said.

"We remember with gratitude the sacrifice which helped keep our country free but we also remember the kindness and friendship of the American people."

During the delicious meal, 392nd BGMA members gave a



Left: Ralph Winter and White Horse head chef Joan Armstrong were thrilled to get to know each other better, after exchanging many phone calls and emails to organise the luncheon. Right: These patriotic napkins show how superbly the White Horse was decorated for our luncheon.

challenge coin to each guest at their tables, presented with personal thanks for all he/she does to remember and honor the 392nd.

Tractors and Jeeps

Then, back on the bus to continue our trip. We went first to Ben Burgess Beeston Ltd., a John Deere dealership that was literally built over and around the Operations Building. Manager John Rupp provided refreshments and displayed memorabilia from previous 392nd BG visitors. He gave



Gloria McCutcheon listens intently as John Rupp describes what remains of the Operations Building at Ben Burgess Beeston.

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a wonderful tour of the building. "In fact," he said, "some rooms have remained virtually unchanged since WWII." (More on that in the December newsletter!)

It was here that we had a lovely surprise arranged by John Gilbert. We were greeted by members of the Norfolk Military Vehicle Group, with six WWII jeeps and an Army staff car! For some of the reenactors, their journey to Beeston had taken well over an hour.

We hopped aboard and were soon being driven down the road and then along the airfield's perimeter track. We were immediately transported back in time, as we imagined the noise—and anxiety—of young GIs driving on narrow English roads—on the "wrong" side of the road and often in black-out conditions! We are grateful to the Norfolk Military Vehicle Group for helping us experience first-hand



Top photo: Two reenactors from the Norfolk Military Vehicle Group with their immaculate WWII jeeps. Bottom: the convoy heads down the perimeter track.

a different perspective on our relatives' time in Norfolk.

We continued our bus tour, driving through the countryside as John pointed out where the various air squadrons and ground crew personnel worked and lived.

Hidden Treasure

Debbie Beigh's favorite part of the trip occurred during a detour to what looked to be "abandoned and rusted motor

pool buildings" reached only "after hacking our way through the 'jungle' surrounding them. My dad [Capt James V. Goar Jr] was the Group Transportation Officer and was always proud of the way the land-based vehicles contributed to the Group's effort. Being inside those buildings, and especially finding his office and having my picture taken standing in the doorway, was especially poignant to me, now that he is gone."

She adds, "After seeing the base for myself, I finally



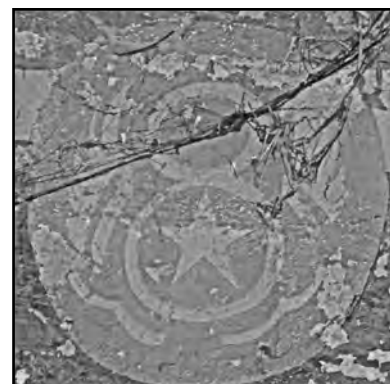
Top photo: the exterior of the Transportation Building. Middle photo: It was enormous. Bottom photo: Debbie Beigh stands in the doorway of her father's office. Capt James V. Goar Jr was Group Transportation Officer.

realized how much land it actually covered."

Combat Officers Mess

The former Combat Officers Mess is the site of the best existing WWII art on the base: an eagle holding a banner

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Time has certainly taken its toll on this artwork in the former Combat Officers Mess, but it's amazing that they still exist at all.



that proudly proclaims "USAAF 392nd Bomb Group" while B-24s fly in every direction. In a November 1989 letter to Jim Goar, Group Adjutant Jack Fritsche explained its history. "My stepfather, Col. H.D. Smith, was CO of Bovington and Chedington (Combat Crew Replacement Centers) and he came up when we first arrived and told [Ground Executive LtCol] Joe Bush and myself he would send a man up to paint the walls, which he did." We thank David Coleman, the building's owner, for letting us see these magnificent paintings!

A Vision from the Past



The Nissen hut and fruit trees that so entranced Dennis Rogers.

We then made our way to Edor Rowland's home. From the front, it looks like a typical English suburban house. The back, however, served as a gateway to the past! A large Nissen hut still stands, as does an underground bomb shelter and a washhouse. The land was covered with fruit trees, ripe and ready for harvest. Who could resist a handful of cherries or a beautiful apple?

It was here that Dennis Rogers had an "aha!" moment. He was born 11 days after his father was killed in action—and has always wondered if his father knew of his birth. He says visiting the Rowlands was "like a surreal step back in time as I wandered around the grounds where my father's nissen hut was. There was an apple tree there and as I walked by it I plucked a ripe apple and thought that perhaps my dad had done this after a mission. As I ate it, I had this dream-like moment he had done the same."

Saturday, 8 September

Our itinerary today took us to the Imperial War Museum at Duxford, Cambridgeshire (<https://www.iwm.org.uk/visits/iwm-duxford>).

The American Air Museum includes a B-24M painted as the 392nd's *Dugan*. An exhibit of all 8th Air Force combat casualties during WWII assumed special importance as we waited to see if our loved one's face would appear—and it did, for several of us. An electronic map showing the targets for each day of the war provided a vivid day-to-day record of how far the 8th AF extended its reach throughout

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the war.

A special treat was seeing a Spitfire and other British planes take off and land throughout the morning.

Cambridge American Cemetery

After lunch, we headed to Cambridge American Cemetery (<https://www.abmc.gov/cemeteries-memorials/europe/cambridge-american-cemetery>). It is the final resting place



for 3,812 American military personnel (including 45 from the 392nd). On the Wall of the Missing are an additional 5,127 names (114 are Crusaders). Most fell during the Battle of the Atlantic or the strategic air bombardment of northwest Europe.

On the way, David Parnell told us about 2/Lt John D.

Ellis and his crew. While flying through dense contrails, they encountered prop wash and their plane suddenly flipped over and spun violently downward.

Cheshunt residents felt that the pilots, in their last few moments, regained control of the a/c and diverted it from the village to a nearby field, thus sparing the town catastrophic casualties. In thanks, they raised funds for a memorial plaque that is on the outside wall of the Cemetery's Visitor Center and an identical plaque in Cheshunt.

David has extensively researched the crash and was instrumental in having a memorial erected near the crash site. (See <https://www.youtube.com/embed/18nRYZK7gkY> for the dedication service, which several relatives of the crew attended.) He ensures that a ceremony is held there every Remembrance Day. The Memorial is just outside a large school so each day hundreds of pupils are reminded of their sacrifice.

At the Cemetery, we first looked around the Visitors Center,

then were welcomed by Superintendent Rich Cobb. He told the history of the American Battle Monuments Commission, which was established in 1923 by Pres. Warren J. Harding to construct monuments honoring the American Expeditionary Forces in WWI. Its role has expanded over time and the organization now administers, operates and maintains 26 permanent American burial grounds and 29 separate memorials, monuments and markers on foreign soil. It also maintains three memorials in the United States.

Rich then took us to the grave of pilot Capt Raymond J.



Cambridge American Cemetery Superintendent Rich Cobb describes Capt Raymond J. Check's last mission.

Check of the 306th BG. During a mission on 26 Jun 1943, he was killed instantly when a 20mm shell struck him in the neck. The copilot, although badly burned, kept the plane going until another pilot aboard was able to take over. As they neared their base, the men in the crew—several wounded or burned—decided to ignore the main runway,

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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

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where they could have made a safer up-wind approach, and to land instead on an alternate runway with the wind at their tail. Why? Simply because Capt Check's fiancée was waiting at the end of the main runway to welcome him home. They didn't want her to see their damaged plane and her loved one's body being removed from it.

"What," Rich asked, "makes a crew risk their own lives to spare someone else pain?"

He then led us to the Chapel and the map showing military operations out of England. Finally, we assembled at the airman statue at the Wall of the Missing for a wreath-laying



The Gilbert family has just laid a wreath in memory of the 392nd BG's 832 casualties during WWII. L-R: David Brooks, Anne Brooks, Sarah Brooks Snell, Larry Gilbert Jr, and Taylor Gilbert.

ceremony in honor of the 832 Crusaders who perished during the war. Col Lawrence Gilbert's family laid the wreath—utterly appropriate since he was assigned to the 392nd from start to finish.

Debbie Beigh recalls, "The most touching moment of the reunion was at the Cemetery after the wreath had been laid. A very elderly British couple were walking very slowly toward us, on their way to the Chapel. They stopped to ask this gaggle of people wearing nametags who we were, and after we explained, the gentleman said, "We were so glad to see the Americans in 1943. If you hadn't come, we wouldn't be here."

Reunion Dinner

That evening, we enjoyed a wonderful meal together at the Maids Head Hotel, joined by John Gilbert, his wife Doris and son Adrian. They are a true team. When Crusaders



John brought some of his memorabilia for us to enjoy. Here, Jana Young holds a doll wearing an infant's gas mask from WWII.

visit Wendling, John shows them the buildings and sites that he showed us yesterday, then brings them to his home to see his photos and memorabilia. Doris serves the guests a full meal or snacks. Adrian provides computer support throughout, by sending emails, scanning documents or photos, and keeping track of logistics.

Doris and Adrian were given 392nd BGMA coins, with genuine and enthusiastic thanks for being part of our Group.

9 September: Sunday Services

We spent the day in services of remembrance. We began at Beeston St. Mary Church, which dates back to the 14th century. Its steeple (first built in the 1300s and replaced in 1873) was a landmark for all 392nd BG combat airmen.

In a brochure about the church's history given to us by



Beeston St. Mary Church in September 2018 (top photo) and 19 Apr 1944.

Trustee Jill Scott, we learned that while congregations are generally small, "the church is well supported by the village. It is also where they look to for times of christenings, marriages and burials, and for solace in times of need. This church has stood for centuries answering all these needs and more. It will continue to do so."

The church has few modern conveniences beyond an outside composting toilet and electricity, which was added in 1990. Jill Scott says, "A rather special concert was to be held in the church

and electricity was needed. It was, I believe, only the second 'Music in Country Churches' program. These began in 1989 for the purpose of arranging a series of musical weekends in churches of outstanding beauty and interest to raise funds to assist those churches with the costs of maintenance and repair.

"On Friday 25th May 1990 in the presence of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa sang; this was televised so lighting was definitely needed! The next evening, Andrei Gavrilov held a piano concert. A grand piano was especially brought in for both concerts. These concerts helped to pay for the installation of electricity."

As the reunion group walked up the path toward the church, we saw the stone cross in memory of bare-knuckle boxer Jem Mace, who was born in Beeston in 1831 and christened in the church. He is now known as "the father of modern boxing" and the stone proudly proclaims him "Champion of the World."

Beeston St. Mary Church

Just before 11am, standard bearers from the Norfolk
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Reverend Canon Heather Butcher

Jesus Christ for the life of the world; who by his Holy Spirit leads us in his way.

Through words and actions, we come to remember those who have lived and died in the service of others; those who have given of themselves for the freedoms we enjoy; and we pray for all those who suffer today through war and conflict.

In this service we also seek God's help and blessing, that we may do his will, so that the whole world may enter into that peace which his Son, Jesus Christ, came to bring.

Robust music by organist Sue Wheeler then led the congregation in *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*. (Audrey Carey was later told the organ dates from the 1400s and originally had a wind chest that someone—usually a boy (and the warmest person in the church in the winter!)—would continually pump so the organ would play. Though the organ now operates on electricity, the air attachment coupler is still visible.)

Canon Butcher's Prayer of Penitence: *Let us confess*



The centuries old organ at Beeston St. Mary Church

branches of the British Legion processed their standards into the church to begin the Memorial service with a full congregation, including US Air Force Maj Jessica Williams from RAF Lakenheath, in attendance.

The Reverend Canon Heather Butcher greeted us: *We are here to worship Almighty God, whose purposes are good; whose power sustains the world he has made; who loves us, though we have failed in his service; who gave*

to God the sins and shortcomings of the world; its pride, its selfishness; its greed; its evil divisions and hatreds. Let us confess our share in what is wrong, and our failure to seek and establish the peace which God wills for his children.

The congregation responded, "Lord our God, in our sin we have avoided your call. Our love for you is like the morning cloud, like the dew that goes away early. Have mercy on us; deliver us from judgment; bind up our wounds and revive us, in the name of Jesus

Christ our Lord. Amen"

Canon Butcher: *May God our Father forgive us our sins and bring us to the eternal joy of his kingdom, where dust and ashes have no dominion.*

After a reading from the Sermon on the Mount by Jill Scott, we all sang, *O God Our Help in Ages Past*. David Norris, from Beeston, then read Micah 4:1-5 about beating swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks.

Taylor Gilbert shared his reflections about the 392nd's last commander.

The Dali Lama once said: "Love and Compassion are necessities. They are not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive."

It's an honor for me to be here today on behalf of my late grandfather, Colonel Lawrence G Gilbert, US Air Force, first Operations Officer, assigned on the first order of the 392nd, the last Commanding Officer, and founding President of our memorial association.

I'm also here today on behalf of our family, many who could not be here today, notably my dear grandmother, Marjorie Gilbert, who is back home in Winter Park, Florida.

We've heard many stories of courage and sacrifice, but what I most profoundly remember about my grandfather was his compassion.

Anthropologist and a pioneer in the field of end-of-life care, Joan Halifax, in describing what compassion means to her, said: "Compassion is comprised of the capacity to



Taylor Gilbert spoke eloquently of his grandfather, Col Lawrence G. Gilbert.

see clearly into the nature of suffering, to stand strong, and to see that I am not separate from this suffering."

My grandfather tried to serve his country and the men of the 392nd honorably. He spoke from time to time about the heavy responsibility he placed upon himself as an officer: "At times I couldn't believe the decisions that were entrusted to me...It was a very sobering experience and it's hard to put into words, what you felt when we lost crews...the weight of the job was, at times inexorable and crushing."

I suppose it's hard looking back now, 75 years to the day of the first combat mission, to imagine these men as boys, boys who were undoubtedly scared but nonetheless brave, hopping into planes for some of the war's most dangerous missions. To see what these men were thrown into at such a young age and to see how they responded, and to think

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of Grandfather standing with them shoulder to shoulder sharing in that suffering, is humbling.

My grandfather focused more on the pleasant, human interest stories during the war as I'm sure many others did, if they spoke about the war at all, and rightly so, but I stop and think about how desperately sad and appalling the situation was for them. They delivered a lot of punishment to Germany, they knocked out numerous industrial cities and disabled the German economy, but they also took staggering losses.

My grandfather once shared a memory with our family—a time when he had to contact the widow of a dear friend since his days at flight school at Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio—to tell her that her husband had been killed in action. I have no doubt that the conditions for compassion were strengthened if not activated by his time in the 392nd, and in particular strengthened by the 832 airmen of the 392nd who died in action.

It's that compassion that led him back here in 1989 with the help of Carol Cheek and many of his fellow veterans and the Beeston-Wendling community, to rededicate the 392nd memorial [see <https://www.youtube.com/embed/Ai9FlqOxRw8> and <https://www.youtube.com/embed/FsYT-SVHQkl>]. And so, I want to recognize that this community was also not separate from this suffering. They were there counting the planes taking off in the morning, and they were there to shed a tear when they counted fewer coming back. We owe them a heavy debt of gratitude for all they did for our men while here.

Churchill deemed it the responsibility of every UK citizen to maintain what he referred to as the "special relationship" between the British and Americans. Nothing speaks more powerfully to that "special relationship" between our two countries than does your hospitality and friendship to the 392nd during the war, and your efforts to lovingly restore

and preserve their memory and these memorials in the years since. It's an extraordinary act of compassion.

It's important we remember what these men fought for and the enormity of the sacrifice these men gave in blood on foreign shores. We are all their debtors.

Few people in this room have direct memory of the war. And the opportunity to interact with anyone who does grows scarcer by the day. At the 50th reunion my grandfather made

a special appeal to all the members of the Association: "You ALL have a story to tell—Large or Small. Get It In Writing. We need it. We need it for posterity. For our children and grandchildren and their children." Now at this 75th reunion, I feel I have an added responsibility to tell the story of what happened to a new generation, to my daughter, Edith Hazel, and my son, Andersen Lawrence, and to make that story relevant to them. And I hope that upon the 100th reunion, I can return to these grounds with them, to remember the compassion of their great grandfather and the extraordinary sacrifices of the great men of the 392nd.

Appropriately, we next sang the hymn *For the Healing of the Nations*.

Canon Butcher led Prayers of Intercession with congregation responses: *Let us pray for all who suffer as a result of conflict, and ask that God may give us peace. For the service men and women who have died in the violence of war, each one remembered by and known to God; May God give peace. God give peace.*

--For those who love them in death as in life, offering the distress of our grief and the sadness of our loss; May God give peace. God give peace.

--For all members of the armed forces who are in danger this day, remembering family, friends and all who pray for their safe return; May God give peace. God give peace

--For civilian women, children, and men whose lives are disfigured by war or terror, calling to mind in penitence the anger and hatreds of humanity; May God give peace. God give peace.

--For peace-makers and peace-keepers, who seek to keep this world secure and free; May God give peace. God give peace.

--For all who bear the burden and privilege of leadership, political, military and religious; asking for gifts of wisdom and resolve in the search for reconciliation and peace. May God give peace. God give peace.

O God of trust and justice, we hold before you those whose memory we cherish, and those whose names we will never know. Help us to lift our eyes above the torment of this broken world, and grant us the grace to pray for those who wish us harm. As we honour the past, may we put our faith in your future; for you are the source of life and hope, now and for ever.

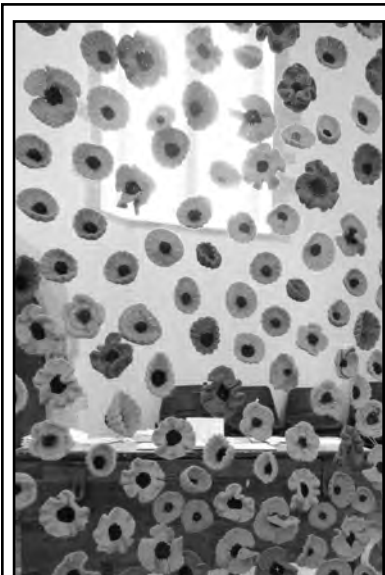
The congregation responded with The Lord's Prayer.

An Act of Hope and Commitment, with congregational responses: *Let us commit ourselves to responsible living and faithful service. Will you strive for all that makes for peace? We Will. Will you seek to heal the wounds of war? We will. Will you work for a just future for all humanity? We will.*

Merciful God, we offer to you the fears in us that have not yet been cast out by love: May we accept the hope you have placed in the hearts of all people, and live lives of justice, courage and mercy; through Jesus Christ our risen Redeemer. Amen

As one, the congregation rose and sang two verses of *God Save the Queen* followed by the first verse of *The*

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Many poppies, all handmade to commemorate the end of WWI, were seen throughout the church.

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Star-Spangled Banner.

The service concluded with Canon Butcher's blessing: *God grant to the living grace; to the departed rest, To the Church, the Queen, the Commonwealth, to our American friends and all mankind, peace and concord; and to us and all his servants, life everlasting and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, come down on us and remain with us always. Amen*

All in the church were deeply moved by the words, the hymns, the prayers, and the presence of those around us.

Memorial Service

We boarded the bus for the short drive to the 392nd BG Memorial. "I was really surprised," Anne Brooks recalls, "when we drove up to the site of the memorial and saw perhaps several hundred British people there for the memorial service. Young and old were there to help us honor those who died so that we all could enjoy freedom."

Trustee Jill Scott and Canon Butcher had worked closely to create a meaningful observance for all present. Iain Colquhoun, Assistant Parade Marshall for the Norfolk branch of the British Legion, organized the ceremonial aspects, arranging for Standard Bearers and a bagpiper, as well as organising the wreath laying part of the program.

The American and British flags were at half-staff as Canon Butcher and Maj Williams approached the Memorial. Then Pipe Major Roger Bayes of the Norwich



Canon Heather Butcher and Maj Williams lead the Standard Bearers to the Memorial.

Pipe Band led members of the British Legion forward—eight standards paraded by branches from across the county—followed by representatives of the local Rainbow and Brownie scouts with their standards. They lined up on either side of the path.

Canon Butcher welcomed everyone gathered for The Act of Remembrance: *Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*

What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

We meet in the presence of God. We commit ourselves to work in penitence and faith for reconciliation between the nations, that all people may, together, live in freedom, justice and peace.

We pray for all who in bereavement, disability and pain continue to suffer the consequences of fighting and terror.

We remember with thanksgiving and sorrow those whose lives, in world wars and conflicts past and present, have been given and taken away."

She then read from John 15:5-17, which includes the familiar words "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" and ends with the command "Love one another."

A Memory

392nd BGMA member Ron Pierre provided memories of his uncle, S/Sgt Martin G. Egler; they have been somewhat edited for space: *How does one even begin to encapsulate a memory of all those who served here, and particularly, a memory of my uncle, Martin George Egler, the youngest son of a loving mother of three boys, all of whom were on active duty overseas during the war years?*

Growing up I knew of him primarily thru the context of my own mother, who lionized her beloved 'little' brother. There were the worn photo albums which held faded family pictures of him growing up and opportunities to quietly eavesdrop on adults as they spoke of him. But perhaps the most vivid to me was staring at the only framed picture on my grandmother's living room wall, which housed (I was told) a very special medal called a 'Purple Heart.'

Now fast forward sixty years plus. At this stage in life, it was now time to seriously make an effort to investigate who this young man was, and when and how he served his family and his country when he was taken from us so suddenly.

All I knew was that he served in the 392nd Bomb Group, flying missions out of England. That was it, nothing more! So, late one evening I sat down at my computer and did an internet search for '392.' The very first thing that came up was www.b24.net. Upon entering the site, I found myself in another world, his world. As I journeyed thru it I was totally overwhelmed with what I observed and what I learned. The world of my uncle, Martin Egler, opened before my very eyes. I was transfixed for hours, reading and researching well into the morning.

I was so thankful for the information I saw that I immediately made a donation to the organization. The very next day I received a phone call from a lady named Annette Tison, asking me the reason for my donation. I quickly responded that I knew that whoever was responsible for constructing, hosting, and maintaining a web site such as this certainly had associated costs. I also knew that this was a 'labor of love' on the part of some folks unknown to me . . . it simply needed to be acknowledged in some small way.

A few years later my wife and I made a trip to England and spent a day with John Gilbert. We pulled into the parking area at the Wendling memorial in Beeston. There,

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I met an elderly man named Ernie Parke. He had been alerted by John to meet us at the memorial. I greeted him, and he asked what brought us there. I responded that we were visiting Americans and then told him the story that I am relating to you now.

I shared with him the only thing I knew for sure was that my uncle was killed in a crash landing somewhere between the east coast of England and the Wendling air base as they were returning from their mission on March 22nd 1945. I showed him an old photo of the crash site with a location typed on the crinkled white boarder . . . 'Whitehouse Farm.' He immediately looked up at me and said, 'That was my uncle's farm.'

I was more than stunned by his immediate response. How could this possibly be? He went on to describe the sequence of events that took place that day in vivid detail. As I listened intently, I saw in his eyes a young lad who was reliving the events of that day.

I stood there transfixed, not wanting to miss one word. The details were so precise and vivid, his narrative complementing the official military report but giving it life through the eyes of a (then) 14-year-old boy. What an amazing gift from the Lord this was! In the providence of God, we were led to this place, to this time and to Ernie; and for this we will be forever grateful.

This entire experience has equipped us to pass on to our six children and twenty-four grandchildren this 'living' account; indeed, a part of their heritage as well as mine.

To each of you here gathered today, we thank you for



Flanked by Maj Williams and Canon Butcher, Ron Pierre describes his search for information about his Uncle Martin.

your 'labor of love' in maintaining these grounds and this monument. And for your work and dedication in remembering these young American men who once lived with you as neighbors on these beautiful farms, bonded together in a common cause.

I am reminded of a passage from Deuteronomy, Chapter 32, verse 7, which says, 'Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.'

As we proceed through this very special day, we honor

the forefathers of our two nations, especially those who gave their all, their very lives, to preserve our freedom. Just to be able to stand here, at this place, commemorating the memories of these fallen heroes is a blessing and privilege beyond measure.

It was Benjamin Disraeli who once said, 'The legacy of heroes is the memory of a great name and the inheritance of a great example.' Since that very first contact with Annette three years ago, our world has opened to a modern-day group of heroes; those of you who are part of the 392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association and those of you who live right here in Beeston, many, I am sure, who became surrogate families to our loved ones.

I state with thanksgiving that those who remember play an equally important role in the pursuit and maintenance of freedom with those who fought and died to maintain and preserve it.

Thank you for the privilege of sharing all of this with you this morning.

Acts of Remembrance and Commitment

We said the 392nd BGMA Prayer in unison, followed by The Act of Remembrance by Canon Butcher:

Let us remember before God, and commend to his sure keeping, all those who have died for their country in war, those whom we knew, and whose memory we treasure; and all who have lived and died in the service of mankind. They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old; Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning We will remember them.

As bugler John Moulton played *The Last Post*, the flags and standards were lowered. This air is similar to our *Taps* in that it is played at military funerals and memorial services, where it symbolizes that the duty of the deceased is over and he or she can rest in peace. With heads bowed, all observed two minutes of silence and reflected on the sacrifices made by 832 Crusaders while stationed at Wendling.



During The Silence, Maj Williams salutes and the flags and standards are lowered.

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Mr. Moulton then sounded *The Reveille*. At the first note, the flags and standards were raised again. The British version is not the same as the American music, but both symbolize the start of a military person's daily service. When used at a memorial service, it also signifies the person's rebirth into eternal life.

At this point, the 392nd BG members said *The Kohima Epitaph* in unison. Similar words date back to Roman days, but this version commemorates the battles at Kohima, India, between the British and Japanese between April and June 1944. The memorial for the 2nd British Division in the War Cemetery there is now world famous for these words:

When you go home, tell them of us and say,

For your tomorrow, we gave our today

Canon Butcher read The Act of Commitment: *Let us pledge ourselves anew to the service of God and our neighbours: that we may help, encourage and comfort others, and support those working for the relief of the needy, and for the peace and welfare of all people.* To which the attendees responded, "Lord God our Father, we pledge ourselves to serve you and all mankind, in the cause of peace, for the relief of want and suffering, and for the praise of your holy name. Guide us by your Spirit; give us your wisdom; give us your courage; give us hope; and keep us faithful now and always. Amen."

The poem "High Flight," printed on page 20, was read by Ralph Winter. He reminded us that its author, John Gillespie Magee Jr., had an American father and a British mother. He joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1940 and, after finishing flight training, was stationed in England. The poem was written soon after he had flown a Spitfire Mk 1 up to 33,000 feet. He was killed a few months later in a mid-air collision at age 19.

With the Memorial at Ralph's back and the former airfield within sight, the poem was a perfect way to acknowledge all 392nd airmen who had "slipped the surly bonds of earth."

Canon Butcher ended the service by saying, *God of truth and justice,*

we hold before you those whose memory we cherish, and those whose names we will never know. Help us to lift our eyes above the torment of this broken world, and grant us the grace to pray for those who wish us harm. As we honour the past, may we put our faith in your future; for you are the source of life and hope, now and forever. Amen

Eight wreaths were laid at the Memorial. The first was in

honor of the 392nd Bomb Group, laid by the six attendees whose Crusader relative had been killed in action: Dennis Rogers, Ralph Winter, Bob Books, Annette Tison, Don Carey and Ron Rogers.

They had just started back down the path when Parade Master Colquhoun motioned for them to stop. As they lifted their eyes, they saw an Avro Lancaster flying straight toward them! This plane, one of two remaining Lancasters in flying condition (the other is in Canada), was flown as



This Lancaster was an amazing sight! David Parnell spoke for all present: "The sound of four Merlin engines roaring overhead left a huge lump in my throat."

part of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight at the request of Beeston Parish Council Clerk Charles Brindley.

The Lancaster made three passes over the Memorial at low level, with additional wreaths laid between passes by Larry Gilbert Jr. for the Memorial Trustees, in memory of Col Gilbert and Carroll Cheek, who did so much to restore and refurbish the Memorial in the late 1980s, have it re-dedicated in October 1989, and set up a process by which the Memorial would be maintained in perpetuity; by Maj Williams; by John Boisson, Chairman of the Norfolk Branch of the British Legion, on their behalf; 392nd BGMA Director John Gilbert on behalf of the Royal Norfolk and Royal Anglian Regiment Association; Fred Squires on behalf of the 389th BG at Hethel; Ray Kennealy, on behalf of the Beeston Parish Council; and by the Rainbows and Brownies.

Once again, the Rainbows and Brownies wreath was hand

made by all the members, not just those who laid it, as their Leaders felt that when everyone helped make the wreath, its meaning and their understanding of it was expanded.



The Rainbows and Brownies wreath

After all the wreaths were laid, Mr. Boisson invited 392nd BGMA President Bob Books to inspect the Standard Bearers with him. Bob said, "It was a great privilege to be part of honoring those who haven't forgotten the sacrifice of the 832 airmen from the 392nd BG who didn't return home."

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Top: John Boisson, Chair of the Norfolk British Legion (left) and 392nd BGMA President Bob Books inspect the standard bearers. Bottom: individual crosses that memorialize American and British loved ones.

Canon Butcher and Maj Williams then processed out, followed by Pipe Major Bayes and the Standard Bearers.

With the formal ceremony ended, Crusaders and locals joined in placing their wooden crosses on either side of the Memorial.

We left the Memorial uplifted by all that had been said and done in memory of those who served with the 392nd Bomb Group. Heading toward the Beeston Village Hall, though, our thoughts turned to the fun, friendship and food awaiting us.

Beeston Village Hall Reception

The Beeston Parish Council had a wonderful BBQ (including beer and wine) for us and others in the community, along with amazing entertainment by The Gressenhall Singers and The Village Green Ukulele Society. Both groups included members of all ages; we were greatly impressed by the many talented people in these musical ensembles!!

Bob Books' attention was caught by a wooden display case in the Hall whose brass plaque announced it had been "Presented by the 392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association." A document said this was done in conjunction with a visit to Litcham High School by 392nd BG veterans in June 1992.

Among artifacts such as a parachute rip cord, a first aid kit and other wreckage excavated from a B-24 crash at Elsing (near Dereham), B-24 models, and a silk map, was a photo of a crew—Bob's father's.

Bob presented an American flag and certificates to Beeston Council Chair Toni Townshend, in thanks for all

that the residents of Beeston did to welcome the airmen from 1943-1945 and all that they've done to remember them ever since.

As an extra treat, two vintage cars, an Austin Six and Austin Seven were also brought to the event, another memory of 1945!

The BBQ and reception at the Beeston Village Hall literally ended with a bang. Rev. Jonathan Boston, who presided over many Remembrance Day services before his retirement from the ministry, is a collector of signal



Top: Ron Pierre (left) and Don Carey (right) admire a vintage car while Chummy Hammond answers questions. Center: After presenting an American flag and certificates to Beeston Parish Council chair Toni Townshend, Bob Books expressed his shock and pleasure at seeing a photo of his father's crew in their display case. Bottom: Reverend Jonathan Boston (left) admires his signal cannon.

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cannon used by the Royal Navy. They were not intended to cause damage to enemy ships; instead, their noise and smoke was meant to draw the attention of the formation to the message flown by the signal flags so all the ships would enact the order as commanded.

As they were fired one at a time, the three cannon did indeed produce much smoke and noise!

Salle Farm

As we boarded the bus, Ralph Winter announced a wonderful surprise for us—a visit to Salle Farm (<http://www.sallefarms.co.uk>). This large estate has been owned by Sir John White's family for over 100 years. Having met him and toured the estate during a previous trip to England, Ralph asked for permission to bring our group for a tour. Sir John not only gave an enthusiastic yes, but offered to provide a meal and tour of the gardens. He is extremely appreciative of the American war effort in Britain and of the hospitality that he has received on his frequent visits to the USA; this is his way of expressing his gratitude.

After a delightful meal, head gardener Thomas Barwick



Head gardener Thomas Barwick takes us through Salle Farm's walled garden.

showed us through the grounds and the walled garden. This was a lovely end to an absolutely perfect day.

Monday, 10 September

We stopped first at Upper Sheringham, to see the memorial to 2/Lt Colby Waugh crew in the churchyard of All Saints Parish Church. On 4 Jan 1944, 2/Lt Waugh nursed his badly damaged plane back to England but crashed as he attempted to land near Upper Sheringham. Five of the crew were killed and the others injured.

Residents Doug and Celia Willies spent years researching the crew's history and fate. Their manuscript is available at <https://www.b24.net/storiesNotForgotten.pdf>.

In 1994, a Memorial to the crew was dedicated in the presence of Henry Wilk, the only living crewman, and many relatives of the crew. 2/Lt Waugh's family presented the Church with a full size flag of Maine (his home state) and an American flag. Both were on display during our visit.



Top photo: the Waugh Crew Memorial at All Saints Parish Church. Bottom photo: churchwarden Lin Wright with the Maine flag presented to the church by 2/Lt Waugh's family.

The memorial, just outside the door of the church, is flanked by American flags. Doug later emailed, "We try and maintain the two US flags at all times and throughout the seasons. It's surprising how many visit the Church, even during the winter months and they help to draw attention and serve as a reminder of the sacrifice made by those boys all those years ago."

We were met by Churchwarden Lin Wright. She first showed us a reservoir and drinking fountain (erected in 1814) where village residents originally got their water. Then, we walked to the Village Hall, which has many photographs on permanent display that were taken during the 1994 dedication.

There was a church at Sheringham as far back as 1086; the current church dates from the middle 14th Century.

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After touring the church, some of us detoured into the churchyard to see the memorial honoring villagers killed in the World Wars. At annual Remembrance Day services, the congregation goes to that memorial where all their names are read. Doug Willies says the names of the Waugh crew casualties as well.

We then drove to the Muckleburgh Military Collection of military vehicles and weapons, the largest privately owned military museum in the United Kingdom (<https://www.muckleburgh.co.uk>). Included was an 88mm German anti-aircraft gun, feared by all WWII Allied airmen.

The last scheduled visit of the reunion was to Sandringham (<https://www.sandringhamestate.co.uk>), the Norfolk retreat of Her Majesty the Queen.



Sandringham

Upon return to the Maids Head Hotel, there was one more surprise. While we were away, Memorial Trustee Jill Scott had delivered extra copies of the Memorial Services program and Beeston St. Mary Church pamphlet. She also left a letter to “all the members of the 2018 group from the 392nd B.G.M.A.” It encapsulates the sites we saw and the warmth and hospitality of those we met:

“I do hope you have all enjoyed your visit to East Anglia as much as people from Beeston—and beyond—have enjoyed having you here.

“I also hope you have enjoyed seeing a little bit of East Anglia, a very diverse area. It includes everything from the coastline to the Fens, and beyond. In between are cities, towns, villages and hamlets. Some modern buildings, some very old. Farmland (most important!), woodland, heathland, marshland, and, a recent innovation, solar-panel land! Hopefully, you will have seen a little something of each in your short stay here. Short, but action packed!

“I hope Sunday, 9th September, will be a memorable memory for you all. My thanks to those of you who spoke so eloquently and movingly. Your words will stay with us.

“On behalf of the various landowners and others, I thank you for the luncheon on Friday. A wonderful opportunity to meet and talk. Your presentations will be treasured.

“A safe and easy journey home, Jill

“Incidentally, Remembrance Sunday annually here is a little different to yesterday. Colder for a start, and often wet! We also go to the Memorial in our churchyard and say the names of our WWI casualties.”

Reflections

That evening, we said goodbye to our reunion companions. The next day, we bid “Cheerio!” to Norwich and departed, with a lifetime of wonderful memories.

“It was amazing,” says Charles Young, “to hear the stories and learn about the very brave men, including my grandfather, who fought in WWII. I plan to do my part to continue to keep their memory alive for my generation

and those who follow.”

Englishwoman Jane Plant says she was “somewhat daunted” as she walked into a hotel lobby full of American strangers. Within moments, though, she “felt I was amongst long lost friends. Being amongst such warm and welcoming people was so uplifting—truly good for the soul. And then on another level, to feel so close to my father’s war time experience, I felt a real connection with him for the first time in my life. I am so excited by it, particularly as my children are now very interested and I also have my brother on board. We are hoping to do our own little Wendling visit when we can get all of our children together.”

Anne Brooks says, “We’re still talking about how much my father would be pleased to know that so many still care to keep the memory of the 392nd BG alive for future generations.”

“The most interesting person for me,” said Dennis Rogers, “was none other than John Gilbert. He mesmerized me with his rich knowledge and his historical experiences. I learned about his involvement with the air base, with the community, and his tireless effort to teach the children of Beeston, and the area, about the American airmen who came to help England during their darkest time.”

David Parnell commented, “The warmth, compassion and sheer camaraderie amongst the group was nothing like I had ever experienced elsewhere before. We were all great friends within minutes of meeting which was quite amazing! Lifelong friendships were formed, heroes remembered and life changing memories were created. How can I ever thank you all for that?”

Bob Books echoed the sentiments of everyone who took this sentimental journey. “The one thing that surprised me was the depth of gratitude and remembrance the people of England have for our loved ones that served during WWII. I had heard about this from others in the past but personally experiencing it was at a level beyond my expectations. It was evident at every event we attended.”

A Letter

Several weeks after we returned home, Doug Willies emailed a letter that had been printed on 4 Oct 2018 in the *Eastern Daily Press*, a regional newspaper covering Norfolk, the northern parts of Suffolk and eastern Cambridgeshire. It was written by Tony Nelson and had the headline *Joy to hear such moving stories*.

“May I say, through your paper, what a privilege it was for me to meet all the American visitors of the 392nd Bomb Group on their visit to Sandringham. Many, now in their mid-70s, had truly moving stories to tell. Some were only a few days old when their fathers were killed flying the B24 Liberators over Norfolk skies from Wendling. The highlight of their visit was the Lancaster display over [the Wendling Memorial] on the Sunday which prompted a rush for handkerchiefs and tissues. But above all, the memories they will take home will be the warmth, the kindness and the hospitality given to them by the people of Norwich and Norfolk. Long may that tradition continue.”

Doug added, “This is a nice representation of how we all felt about meeting you all.”

Photos from the Reunion

<https://www.b24.net/reunions.htm> has more photos



Plaque on the 392nd BG Memorial



Remembrance cross and poppy for Col Lawrence G. Gilbert



An iconic red British phone booth



Left: The beer keg at the Beeston Village Hall reception; below left: the Lancaster banks as it flies over the Memorial.



Inside Beeston St. Mary Church



Lowered standards during The Silence



Above: TigeHare, one of 50 brightly decorated hare statues in Norwich's GoGoHares public art sculpture trail.

∞FOLDED WINGS∞

Otis N. Croy, 578,
May 29, 2018

Harold "Bud" Dohm, 578,
July 9, 2018

Herman S. Canfield, 577,
September 23, 2018

Jesse A. Carpenter, 578,
September 14, 2018

392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association
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USA

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First Class Mail



HIGH FLIGHT

by John Gillespie Magee, Jr.

Killed in a mid-air collision over England 11 Dec 1941

Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth,
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunwards I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds – and done a thousand things
You have not dreamed of - wheeled and soared and
swung

High in the sunlit silence. Hovering there,
I've chased the shouting wind along and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air,
Up, up the long delirious burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace,
Where never lark, or even eagle, flew;
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrodden sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

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.

