

EDITORIAL

September is here and I cannot but have mixed feelings. The summer, (what summer was that?), is drawing to a close. On the other hand we are counting the days before the Reunion of both the Americans and RAF veterans arrive. Our American friends will be arriving on Monday 18th. September and our committee have arranged what I am sure our visitors will agree, is a great programme of visits and sightseeing for them.

The Control Tower Museum is now being prepared for the formal opening on the morning of 23rd. September. The stained glass windows have already been installed in the church of St. Michael's and All Angels and a Dedication Service will be held in the church at 2pm. I hope that others will agree with me that they are beautiful.

The members of our Society have a duty to recognise the contribution made by all those who served at Martlesham. Indeed the plaque which will be placed under the stained glass windows states, *These windows are dedicated to the everlasting memory of those who gave their lives, both in peace and war while serving at Royal Air Force, Martlesham Heath.*

To the pioneer aviators of the Royal Flying Corps in the Great War. To those brave souls of the Royal Air Force and the Dominion and exiled Air Forces who served and flew from here during the Second World War.

In grateful memory to the 356th. Fighter Group of the United States Army Air Force whose pilots flew from here from 1943 to 1945 and contributed so much towards the cause of freedom.

Also to the personnel of the Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment, both military and civil.

We should all be proud that in opening the Control Tower Museum and installing stained glass windows in the church of St. Michael's that we are doing our duty. Not to glorify war, but to ensure that future generations never forget the sacrifices that were made in what is universally acclaimed as a righteous cause.

We continue to have a good attendance at our monthly meetings, so we must be getting something right! Russell Bailey has arranged some successful summer trips which many of our members have enjoyed and we are grateful to him for the work he puts into organising them. His reports are in the Newsletter.

Daphne Taylor has written some memories of wartime in this area when we were invaded! Indeed, this edition of Runway 22 contains much nostalgia relevant to the USAAF presence all those years ago....

Please keep your contributions rolling in.

ED

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS FOR SATURDAY, 23rd SEPTEMBER

- 10am. Assemble at the church of St. Michael's and All Angels.**
- 10.30am. Welcoming address by our President, Gordon Kinsey.**
- 10.45am. Leave for the Control Tower.**
- 11.15am. Formal opening of the Control Tower Museum. Music by Martlesham Brass.**
- 12 noon. Return to the Douglas Bader for a light lunch. Music by Martlesham Brass.**
- 2pm. Dedication Service for the stained glass windows conducted by the Right Reverend Jeremy Walsh.**

Followed by a fly-past salute by a Spitfire and a Mustang.

The Control Tower Museum will be formally opened by Air Marshall Sir Ivor Broome and Major General Donald Strait.

Will members please note that the cost of the light lunch at the Douglas Bader is £3. There are a limited number of tickets available and Martyn Cook on 01473 614442 should be contacted by members requiring the set lunch. The Douglas Bader will, of course, be open as usual.

We hope that many of our members will be present for this historic day. The Mustang and Spitfire will give a fly-past and display at 3pm.

Coach outings have been arranged for the Americans on the 19th, 20, 21st, and 22nd September. There is space available on most days and if members wish to join the party please contact Russell Bailey.

RAF MUSEUM, HENDON

On the 26th. March 29 members enjoyed a visit to the RAF Museum. Although most had been before there is so much to see that another opportunity to view the collection was very welcome.

The Museum is currently divided into three main display areas. The Main Hall, Bomber Command Hall and the Battle of Britain Hall, (including Air, Sea Rescue). There are over 70 aircraft types depicting the history of the RAF from the Great War to the present day. Unfortunately the Battle of Britain aircraft were not available for viewing as the area had been screened off for refurbishment in preparation for a special exhibition to commemorate the 60th. Anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

Among the most impressive exhibits were the Sunderland with its "walk through" facility and the mighty Vulcan with its huge delta wing filling a corner of the Bomber Command hall. Also the incomplete hull of a Southampton flying boat. This exhibit had spent many years languishing in the mud as a house boat at Felixtowe Ferry and it is truly remarkable what has been achieved in the renovation of the hull.

Of course there is more to the museum than just aircraft. Many side galleries and displays focus on all aspects of service life in the RAF over the years. Incidentally, we learned that the Museum is to be expanded with possibly up to another 30 aircraft on display. Perhaps a good excuse to arrange a further visit!

Russel Bailey

WHEN WE WERE INVADED

In 1942 we had an invasion, not from the Germans, no, the Yanks had arrived in East Anglia. What seemed to be a very short time, they took over RAF airfields and built new ones, in all we had forty-three Bombardment Groups and sixteen fighter groups. The GI's seem to get everywhere, dance halls, pubs, cinema's, we girls thought how smart they all looked in their uniforms. We got used to the wolf whistles and 'Hi Honey where are you going tonight'. It wasn't long before transport arrived at the Ipswich Electric House car park for anyone who would go to a base dance.

I worked at a large engineering firm, Ransoms and Rapier and soon on the office entertainment board we found a large number of dances we could attend. My first American Base dance was to the 493rd Bomber Group, Debach. Six girls from the office with others went by bus. The American Air Force dance band played Glen Miller music and we all had a wonderful time. The refreshments were something to behold, there was food on the tables that would have fed many families in our days of rationing. I remember having spam and peanut butter for the first time. I began to think, these GI's are not as bad as we had been led to believe.

On Thursday evenings, my friend and I used to go to the Kesgrave Village Hall dance, and any local lads on leave would always be there, we were always

pleased to see a uniform on the dance floor and they were very popular. Soon it was hard to find a civilian man, the 356th Fighter Group from Martlesham Heath had found our dance hall, sometimes they would bring a band and the small village hall would resound to their music, we would watch in amazement to girls trying out the Jitterbug and Jive.

Our local pub, the 'Kesgrave Bell' was a favourite place for them and the 'Red Lion' Main Road, Martlesham. They got used to our warm beer; it wasn't long before the Bell could only open three or four nights if any beer was left, the Yanks drank many village pubs dry. The local population took most of them to their hearts and many friendships remain to this day. They played darts with them, and I remember one of the older locals wearing his tin hat saying to us, "You never know where those Yanks will throw them darts".

The GI's must have found our quiet way of life rather strange, the East Anglian people were renown for their shyness towards strangers but the Americans soon changed all that. They would bicycle on our country lanes, often on the wrong side of the road for our traffic; call in at farmhouses to buy fresh eggs and sometimes chickens.

Some of the 356th Fighter Group were lucky to find themselves with large houses for their billets, 361st Kesgrave Hall, the 360th at Playford Hall a beautiful house surrounded by a moat, lots of the guys wrote home to say they were living in a castle! The medics were billeted at another lovely house, "Bracken Hall" on the main Kesgrave Road. The moat at Playford hall proved to be a great place for fun, they used drop tanks as boats to race, or perhaps just paddle around and dream of home. I often wonder what the owners found in that moat after the war, apart from bottles that use to get thrown in when a party was in progress. There were sad times when someone didn't make it back from a mission, but I think the GI's enjoyed their stay in England.

The Yanks departed from East Anglia as quickly as they came. I enjoyed their company and found them great fun, very generous people and they always appreciated a welcome into ones home.

When I returned to live in Ipswich in 1992, I found once again we were to be invaded for the 50th Anniversary of the "USAAF East Anglia", this time they bought their wives, children and some their grandchildren. Through a friend of mine, I opened my door to a stranger one Sunday morning, to my delight I discovered it was my first American boyfriend, after great hugs and tears we had a lovely day reminiscing (this time the beer was cold) and looking through his photo album he bought with him.

I was invited to be a member of the Martlesham Heath Aviation Society and with many others I help to keep the memories of the Heath alive for the Royal Air Force and the 356th Fighter Group.

The Americans still enjoy the visits back to England and the billets they lived in, and there is always a welcome for them at Kesgrave and Playford Hall.

I feel it a great honour to be able to attend the 356th reunion in the States, they are still great people, very generous and a pleasure to meet. I myself can say I am glad I did not miss the war years and meeting so many different people who enhanced my life.

Daphne A. Taylor

MEMORIAL SERVICE AT MADINGLEY

My wife, Phyllis and I representing our Society and the 356th. Fighter Group Association were among the 1500 invited to the annual Memorial Service at the United States Military Cemetery and War Memorial at Madingley near Cambridge on May, 29th. As usual this was a most impressive and moving occasion doing full justice to the memory of all the US personnel who perished whilst serving in England during the Second World War. There are 3811 actually interred here and a further 5127 names are commemorated on the “Wall of the Missing”.

Representatives from the US Embassy were present, as was the Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire. Music was provided by the USAF in Europe Band. Over 120 wreathes were laid by individual organisations and groups. The event was arranged by the 48th Fighter Wing from Lakenheath.

The fitting conclusion was a “missing man” formation flown by F-15c Eagles from the 493 FS, Lakenheath. This was followed by a fly-past by the B-17, “Sally B”. A most welcome sight after its long grounding with engine trouble.

Phyllis and I were privileged to represent Martlesham Heath Aviation Society and, in particular, our friends, the 356th Fighter Group Association on this solemn occasion.

Russell Bailey

MUCKLEBURGH COLLECTION

On the 7th May a party of our members left Ipswich by coach for a visit to north Norfolk. Our first stop was at Sheringham. Here several of us enjoyed a trip on the preserved North Norfolk Railway. A Steam locomotive conveyed on the five-mile journey to Holt. It passes through some delightful scenery with wooded landscape on one side and sea views on the other. The intermediate station, Weybourne, is well known as a film venue in the TV comedy, “Dads Army” and in particular for the “Royal Train” episode!

After spending approximately three hours in Sheringham we continued the short distance along the coast to the “Muckleburgh Collection”. This was the site of an anti-aircraft gunnery school during World War Two and the various buildings are now used to house a marvellous collection of military vehicles etc. Most of which are in working order. On certain days some of the sixteen tanks are demonstrated on the 300 acres of rough ground they also own.

There has been a military presence on this site since 1588 and its history is very well displayed, together with an exhibition of memorabilia concerning the Suffolk and Norfolk Yeomanry. Another room houses many artillery weapons and especially anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns. An adjoining room is used solely for an exhibition of model military vehicles and also aircraft. Many of model aircraft are superbly displayed in flying attitude. Perhaps the best models of all were in the Marine Section. All of these were 1/96 scale and depicted many types of vessels both naval and civil. The huge model of a BP tanker really emphasised how big these are compared with other ships.

We returned to Ipswich via Fakenham and Swaffham. Our outward journey had been via Norwich and Cromer, so we were given a tour of central Norfolk! All in all a most enjoyable day out and blessed with glorious weather.

Russell Bailey.

The article below has been taken from a piece written by the late “Holly” Hall and which appeared in the East Anglian Daily Times in 1990. This was at a time when several 356th veterans had returned to Martlesham. **ED**

WHEN BLACK TILES WAS AN EXCLUSIVE “CLUB” FOR AIRMEN.

Before the war this establishment was a high class tea room owned by Miss Jermyn but during the war years pilots of both the RAF and the USAAF were made especially welcome and the place became something of an exclusive club. Hundreds of famous aviators signed the Black Tiles visitors book and such was its fame that Roland Davies in 1942 produced the accompanying cartoon.



... Now for tea at Black Tiles

An American officer wrote the following in the visitors book. *“When I think of England I shall think of tea, and all that it means, and when I think of tea, I’ll think of Black Tiles. Someday I’ll come back to England for tea at Black Tiles.*

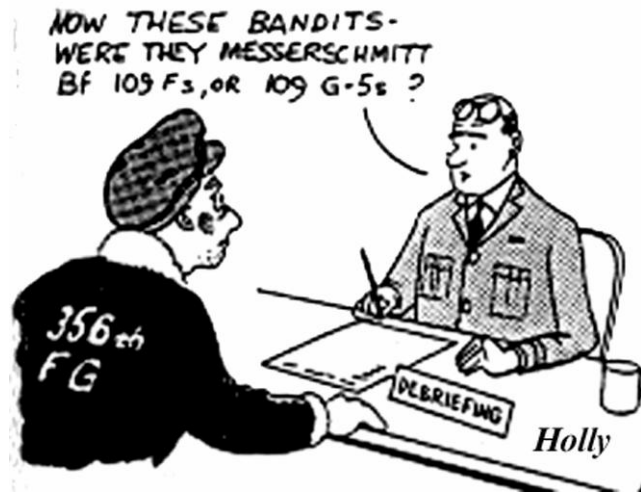
One of the group of 356th veterans recalled the day the action ended, “The P51’s all stood in line but nobody removed the covers – all morning.... That was when we really knew it was all over”.

Following the obvious relief and sense of having survived, might it not have been tinged with some regret; certainly a feeling of anti-climax?

Those young men had each been given charge of what was virtually his “personal” Mustang, supreme in the skies of Europe.

Suddenly they were told that their services were no longer required and they were to be parted from their flying machines.

Imagine a group of skilled horsemen being told that they were to lose their beloved mounts.....



WADDINGTON INTERNATIONAL AIR SHOW

On 24th. June 44 of our members and friends enjoyed a visit to this air display. Waddington is, of course, the base for the E.3D (AEW) Sentry and these aircraft were much in evidence with both RAF and NATO examples on show.

A very comprehensive static line-up of NATO Air Force’s aircraft included the F-4, F-16, F-15, EC-135, C-130, Nimrod, Tornado, Jaguar, Hawk, Dominie, Orion, Atlantique, Mirage 2000 and even an Italian F-104. In addition, most unusually, were two Skyhawks from Singapore. There was the normal abundance of trade stands to cater for every interest and various displays in hangars.

Although the sky was overcast, there was no let up in the seven-hour’s flying display, with many representative NATO aircraft taking part. World War two nostalgia was provided by several warbirds such as the P-47 Thunderbolt and B-25 Mitchell etc. together with the “Battle of Britain Memorial Flight”. Aerobatic team displays were given by the “Red Arrows” in their Hawks. The Spanish Aquila team were flying Aviojets and to end the show, the only appearance in the UK this year of the USAF “Thunderbirds” with their F-16’s.

Russell Bailey.

WATCH OUT-RADAR’S ABOUT

Ed Malo, one of our American “356th” friends sent me this a while ago. It must have appeared in the United States press and it obviously amused Eddie, who emailed to me. He wryly remarked, “thank goodness the Luftwaffe didn’t have weapons like this in WW2”!! **ED**

Dangers of Police Radar Guns Date: 11/19/99 6:00 am ABSOLUTELY TRUE Item in Berwickshire Gazette Scotland

A report has revealed that two traffic patrol officers from North Berwick were involved in an unusual incident whilst checking for speeding motorists on the A1 road between Oldhamstocks and Grantshouse.

Last May they were using a hand-held radar device to trap unwary motorists on the Edinburgh to London trunk road. One of the unnamed officers used the device to check the speed of an approaching vehicle, and was surprised to find that his target had registered a speed in excess of 300 miles per hour. The Aow-5000 machine then seized up and could not be re-set by the bemused PC's.

The radar had in fact latched on to a NATO Tornado aircraft in the North Sea, which was taking part in a simulated low-flying exercise over the Borders and Southern Scotland. Following a complaint by Sir William Sutherland, Chief Constable of the Lothian ACY- Borders Police force to the RAF liaison office, it was revealed that the officers had a lucky escape - the tactical computer on board the aircraft not only detected and jammed the Alg-hostile + ACI- radar equipment, but had automatically armed a Sidewinder air-to-ground missile ready to neutralise the perceived threat. Luckily the Dutch pilot was alerted to the missile status and was able to override the automatic protection system before the missile launched.

The Police have so far declined to comment, although it is understood that officers will be advised to point their radar guns inland in future.

MARTLESHAM MEMORIES.

Although not a member of your Society some early memories of Martlesham may be of interest. I was posted to 15 Squadron as a Fitter Aero Engine AC1 from Halton in January 1932. (Boy Entrant). I had escaped the passing out parade when a minor operation went wrong and I was given 6 weeks leave.

My first mistake on arrival, was to walk into the Pay Officer's office instead of Pay Accounts next door. I left with a flea in my ear! It was a happy station and commanded in those days by Wing Commander Smith. I made rather a nuisance of myself with a noisy Scott motor cycle and was called "Scotty" for the rest of my service! AC Shaw was at Felixtowe at the time and sometimes rode through the station with his Brough Superior motor cycle. Unfortunately I could never get started in time to catch him up. Something I will always regret! I was very friendly with the daughter of the Unit Policeman. The Scott motor cycle was water cooled and Cpl Stricker, (the policeman) was nevertheless ready to arrest me when he thought I was putting petrol in when I was only topping the radiator up!

One night on guard duty on the lonely stretch we called Siberia I was terrified to hear a chain clanking. It was just a goat that had escaped from a local farm.

I always enjoyed the flying trips over to Orfordness. Taxiing at Martlesham in a Vickers Virginia our wing tip caught the hanger and we swung round and stopped just a couple of feet from the door. We had no brakes of course and I was in the nose cockpit! Another memorable occasion took place when a Vickers Virginia became airborne before the poor airman starting the engines had time to climb down. It did a circuit with him clinging to a spar!

A have one claim to fame! As a passenger in a Vickers Vellore with a pilot by the name of Flying Officer HH Leech we looped the loop! He wanted to prove it could be done in a box-tailed kite! He died in the far east before the War.

After 18 happy months at Martlesham I made the mistake of re-mustering to Fitter Torpedo and was posted to Gosport. In 1934 I was sent to Singapore and was once again under the command of Wing Commander Smith. I spent the war years in Malta...not so nice. I left the RAF in 1945 as LAC /Temp.Sgt.

RAF 562992 19th. Entry Halton, January 1929.

MONTHLY MEETINGS ROUNDUP

Our speaker at the May meeting was an old friend of the Society, Howard Cook, who previously spoke about going solo in a Mustang. This time Howard entitled his talk, "No Chance" and it was all about the trials and tribulations involved in gaining permission to become proficient in flying a Spitfire. The talk was accompanied by sophisticated video to large screen projection. This equipment was supplied by our member, Howard King who had borrowed it from BT. As we saw during Howard Cook's previous talk, these video shots are quite impressive. This time they were video sequences from the cockpit of a Spitfire. So we all got the chance to fly a Spit! A vote of thanks was given by Gordon Kinsey.

June, and our speaker was another old friend of the Society. Clive Denny was accompanied by wife, Linda. Between them they run "Vintage Fabrics" on the site of the old 9th Air Force airfield at Earls Colne. The Company, as the name suggests, is principally involved in fabric re-covering of vintage aeroplanes.

Several members of the Society visited Earls Colne two summers ago and saw a Hawker Nimrod being painstakingly restored. The beautiful single-seat biplane, which is in effect, a naval version of the Hawker Fury, has now been completed and will shortly fly off to Duxford to join The Historic Aircraft Collection. Another restoration project has recently been completed. Clive spent some time in Wales during the winter. The "Battle of Britain Flight" Lancaster has been overhauled and it was the job of Vintage Fabrics to re-cover the movable aerofoil surfaces.

Clive will pilot a Mk5 Spitfire and provide a fly-past and display together with a Mustang on 23rd. September.

Mr Nick Berryman gave a talk at our July meeting. He spoke about his lengthy career in the RAF and also his current job as curator of the Tangmere Military Museum. Nick said that as a young bank clerk in London, probably his most frightening experience was being on fire-watch duty on top of a building in London during the Blitz. This, despite the fact that he went on to be a pilot!

After training as a pilot in the USA, he returned to England and flew Hurricanes for a while before transferring to 276 (ASR) Squadron, where he flew the venerable old Walrus. Gordon Kinsey gave a vote of thanks for a most humorous and interesting talk by someone whose post war RAF career had included being an instructor at Cranwell.

As usual in August Russell Bailey had arranged an evening outing. 46 of our members boarded a coach to go to the newly opened Halesworth (Holton), Memorial Museum. The runways of Station 365 were purpose built in 1943 for heavy bombers and for a time it was the home of the 489th Bomb Group, flying Liberators. They soon departed to make way for the 56th Fighter Group USAAF, known as "Zemke's Wolfpack".

The runways are still there and the turkey huts of Bernard Matthews plc now sit on them. Bernard Matthews has provided a building in which to house the museum. The project has taken only three years to develop but the dedicated team that have made this possible are to be congratulated for a most interesting museum.

We afterwards visited the "Triple Plea" pub. in the village for a buffet supper.

ED