

THE DROPZONE

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

APRIL 2003

Welcome to the Dropzone

Welcome to this new issue of our newsletter which is being edited by John Harding, assisted by Roy Tebbutt. It is several years since one was issued and we are all hoping that this can now be rectified with, hopefully, three or four issues per year. To enable us to do this we will need the help of all members with suggestions, articles etc, in fact any information that might be of interest please let us know about it.

HAMS Annual General Meeting

Our first event for 2003 was the Annual General Meeting which was held at the museum on the 24th February. 17 members attended and the Chairman, Ron Clarke, gave his report on the previous year's happenings:

The museum opened early with a coach load of visitors on a 'Secret War' week-end organised by the events section of the Hilton Hotels Group. Easter was also early and the staff very busy over the four days of the holiday. On Wednesday the 2nd April Mary Lou Bennet, the daughter of Colonel Clifford Heflin, the wartime Commanding Officer of the 801st Bomb Group, spent a day at the museum and was deeply affected when



Col Clifford Heflin

shown the wartime film of her father working in the Operations Block. She and her husband Bill also made a generous donation for which we are extremely grateful. We had an increasing number of military enthusiasts and researchers during 2002 including many Americans. One party of thirty from Switzerland expressed surprise at the coverage of wartime Special Duty Operations. We also had visits from youth organisations during which the 'Carpetbagger Quiz' sessions

The Carpetbagger Aviation Museum celebrates its 10th Anniversary in 2003

were popular. The youngsters seemed genuinely interested in the displays and information that the museum is able to offer. Once again the canteen staff have done a marvellous job serving refreshments and selling souvenirs and books.

The Military Vehicle Weekend attracted over 500 visitors. After a rather slow Saturday it was very well attended on the Sunday with over 50 vehicles providing an impressive display. The Classic Car weekend was also well attended on the Sunday, the star of the show being a Stanley Steamer which attracted very favourable comments from the car buffs.

The editor of the magazine 'Wingspan' visited the museum

late in the season and this resulted in a four page article on the Carpetbaggers. He is also preparing an article on the museum which we understand should be appearing shortly.

Once again, and in spite of considerable medical problems Vera and Bernard Tebbutt have played a very important part in the running of the museum and it goes without saying how much their work is appreciated by all. Ron then went on to thank all of those members who had contributed their time and effort to the success of the museum and that we were looking forward to exceeding the record attendances of 2002

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *In this issue John Harding looks at surviving examples of the B24 Liberator*
- *Ben Cohen recalls his memories of the Spitfire crash at Harrington*

Group Visits 2003

Bernard Tebbutt reports that the following group visits are expected during the year:

Hilton Hotel Secret War weekends:

Sunday 27th April 2.00 pm—4.15 pm

Sunday 29th June 2.00 pm—4.15 pm

Sunday 24th August 2.00 pm—4.15 pm

Sunday 5th October 2.00 pm—4.15 pm

Daily Telegraph 'Now it can be Told':

Sunday 30th March 10.00 am—12.15 pm

Sunday 11th May 10.00 am—12.15 pm

Bentley Driver's Club

Saturday 14th June afternoon

American Veteran's Visit to Britain:

Starting Monday the 21st July for 1 week. The veterans and their entourage will be at the museum on Friday the 25th July. John Hunt will be organising and supplying food for the picnic there. They will be staying at the Sywell Aviator Hotel.

Ron Clarke and Clive Bassett will be organising local tours etc for the week.

Holts Tours:

30 persons expected to arrive at 1.00 pm on Saturday 6th September

The **Classic Car picnic** is planned for Sunday 13th July

The **Military Vehicle Weekend** is planned for the 27th/28th September

Some Notes on the B24 Liberator

The B24 Liberator was, of course, the workhorse of the Carpetbaggers at Harrington. Most of you will know that those flown from this base were modified in many ways at the USAAC base at Burton Wood in Lancashire. Front turrets and side gun positions were removed, the planes painted gloss black, a 'Joe Hole' cut in the bottom of the fuselage, modified blisters on the sides of the cockpit etc., etc. It might not be so well known that it was built in greater numbers than any other allied bomber in World War II, a total of 19,276 emerged from 6 US factories and there were 31 variants all told. The variant built in the largest number was the B24J of which 6,678 were turned out by Consolidated, Ford, Douglas, Convair & North American—this version was a modified B24H (3,000+ built) including M-9 bombsight and autopilot. It was the first

*There were 31 variants
of the B24 Liberator
built by 6 factories in
the United States*

bomber to incorporate a tricycle undercarriage and a high aspect ratio (long, thin) wing. Out of that large number built only a few remain and it may be of some interest to know something about those remaining and where they reside today.....

B24 Tech Spec—General reconnaissance anti-submarine or heavy bomber with a crew of 8:

All metal stressed skin construction

Makers designation Model 32

Power plant: Four 1,200 hp Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasp R-1830-43 or 65

Dimensions: Span 110 ft, Length 67 ft 1 ins, Height 17 ft 11 ins, Wing area 1,048 sq ft

Weights: Empty 37,000 lbs, Loaded 62,000 lbs

Performance: Max speed 270 mph at 20,000 ft; Climb 40 mins to 20,000 ft; Range 990 miles with 12,000 lbs of bombs; 2,290 miles with reduced load; Service ceiling 32,000 ft

Surviving Liberators in the world today

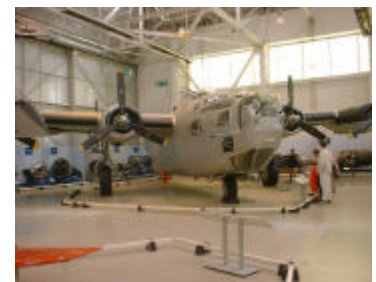
Consolidated LB-30 Serial AM927

20 LB30s—B24As were built for the US Army, diverted to the RAF as Liberator 1. Fitted with self sealing fuel tanks.

Now registered N22905 and named 'Diamond Lil' is operated by the Commemorative Air Force at Midland, Texas and is the oldest Liberator existing in the world today. Damaged while on delivery to Britain, it was returned to the factory and emerged as a C-87. After VJ Day it spent 10 years as an executive transport, later flying as XC-CAY for the Mexican National Oil Co. Diamond Lil has flown for some years in the markings of the Ninth Air Force. It is one of only two still in flying condition.

Consolidated B24D Serial 41-23908

Recovered from the Aleutian Islands in 1995 it is now on display at the Hill Aerospace Museum in Utah USA



B24 at Cosford Aerospace Museum

Consolidated B24M, Serial 44-41916

Actually a PB4Y-1 of the US Navy. The aircraft was recovered from La Paz, Bolivia in the early 1980s to Castle Air Museum in Atwater, California USA where it is painted in the markings of the 329th BS, 93rd BG, 2nd Air Division, 8th Air Force

Consolidated B24M, Serial 44-41956

The last surviving Liberator to have served with the RAAF, it is at Werribee, Victoria, Australia

Consolidated B24J, Serial 44-44052

Belongs to the Collings Foundation in the US and is the second still in flying condition. Served in the Indian Air Force as as KH191. In recent years it has appeared at air shows as 'The Dragon and his tail' representing 44-40973 of 64th BS, 43rd BG



Ford's Willow Run B24 assembly line

Ford B24J, Serial 44-48781

Displayed at the Eighth Air Force Museum, Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, USA

Ford B24L, Serial 44-50154

Property of the National Aviation Museum in Canada. It was delivered to the RAF as KN820 in 1944. It served with the Indian Air Force as HE733/M. This B24 was flown to Canada in 1968

Ford EZB24M, Serial 44-51228

Belonging to the American Air Museum at Duxford, UK. Although only a recent acquisition and has had a major rebuild this B24 has probably been on display longer than any other Liberator as it was at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, USA from 1955 until some 3 years ago. It is currently in the colours of Dugan of the 392nd BG

Ford B24L, Serial 6907L

Built as KN751 for the RAF it was acquired by the Indian Air Force for maritime patrols in 1946 as HE809, retiring in December 1968. It is now at the RAF Museum, Cosford, UK.

Consolidated B24J, Serial 44-44175

Displayed at Pima Air and Space Museum in Tucson, Arizona. It is in the markings of 'Bungay Buckaroo' of the 446th BG. It served in the RAF as KH304 from 1944 to 1946 and later with the Indian Air Force as HE877

Consolidated B24J, Serial 44-44213

Operated with the RAF as KH342 until 1946. Sold to the Indian Air Force and operated as HE924. Now on display at the Indian Air Force Museum at Palam, New Delhi, India

Consolidated B24J, Serial 44-44272

Belongs to Kermit Week's Fantasy of Flight Museum at Polk City, Florida, USA. Originally assigned to 215 Sqn RAF, India and then flew with the Indian Air Force until 1973



Cockpit of B24 J 44-44052 'All American' taken in 1993

In addition to these aircraft there are also a number of incomplete airframes around the world including LB-30 (AL557) stored in Colorado, USA, with basic fuselage and wings intact. There are also the remains of B24D 'Lady be Good' at a police compound in Tobruk, Libya

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THE HARRINGTON AVIATION MUSEUM SOCIETY

The Objects of the Harrington Aviation Museum Society, Registered Charity No 1061997, are to advance the education of the public by exhibitions, presentations and the establishment of a museum for the exhibition and preservation of aeronautical and military equipment and artifacts of historical and technical interest, particularly in relation to the 801st / 492nd Bomb Group of the USAAF and wartime covert operations

President: Col Robert W Fish USAF (Retd)
Chairman: Ronald W. Clarke
Secretary: J. Bernard Tebbutt
Treasurer & Webmaster: Roy T. Tebbutt

Committee members: Barbara Reeves
Clive Bassett
David Mace
Graham West
Barry Cooper
Tom Reeves

Spitfire Crash at Harrington

27th February 1945

The following is reproduced from the 92nd issue (March 2003) of 'The Carpetbagger', the journal of the 801st/492nd Bombardment Group Association and should be of interest to most readers who will be aware that there is an account of the Spitfire crash in the rear passage of the Museum and on the Museum's website:

to 15 feet away from the plane it suddenly started to flare like it might explode. At this point we all stopped and ran back. A few minutes later it fizzled out and we all came towards the plane and when it started to flare again we could see the pilot hunched over on one side and that he was burned on one side.

At this point I suddenly learned a new expression which was that everyone could come to try to help yet when we were put in danger my thought was 'after me, you come first' and I never forgot this.

Spitfire Crash

Written by Ben Cohen, 858th BS

This is my version of the two Polish RAF Spitfires that came to Harrington. It was my pay day and the men were lining up to get paid. I was in my office in S-2 when I heard about the Spitfires, As they were only Sergeants they were not allowed to eat in the Officer's Mess and they were upset.. The word was out that after lunch they were going to buzz the field like it was never done before.

After 1.00 pm you could hear the planes and I suddenly saw one of the Spitfires coming down towards the men waiting to be paid. But he seemed to hit the ground before the men and took off like he bounced. At that time he seemed to me that he might hit the corner of the building. I dropped to the floor and got to the window. I saw the plane hit a large tree and the wing disappeared and was on fire. I actually saw the fuselage flying and it looked like he was out of the cockpit but was going along with the force of the plane. It landed about 250 ft away from the buildings.

The sirens were blasting and it seemed as if the entire camp came running to see if they could do anything to help, including myself. The emergency crew was there as were the flight surgeon and the chaplains. About 10



Grave marker of the Spitfire Pilot
Flt/Sgt Klemens Prusak
at Newark Polish Cemetery