

# THE DROPZONE

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 1

APRIL 2006

## EDITORIAL By John Harding

Winter is passing by and we welcome you to another issue of "The Dropzone". This is a good time to remind everyone that the museum opened for the 2006 season on Saturday April 8<sup>th</sup>.

Unknown to many, work has been going on during the winter with maintenance being carried out on various parts of the interior of the main building as well as outside. Painting to parts of the inside has been completed and an entrance ramp has been rebuilt. Work is continuing on exterior painting when weather permits and a new path has been laid linking the two museums. The entrance to the car park is also being improved with the laying of hard core, which should improve vehicle access in periods of wet weather. The flat roof and upper brick work on the main building is in serious need of repair and Ron Clarke and Roy Tebbutt have been obtaining quotes from building contractors for this work to be carried out – this may take the form of a

complete or partial re-roofing, in either case it will be an expensive job.

Whilst on the subject of money, it must be mentioned that we have recently had two very generous donations to the museum from our dear friends in the States, namely Mackey Barron, ex U.S.A.A.F and Jenny France, daughter of Lt. Robert France who was a bombardier with the McKee crew during 1944/45. Our sincere thanks go out to Mackey and Jenny for this gesture, which, they can be assured, will be put to good use in helping to ensure the continued existence of our living memorial to the Carpetbaggers in the U.K.

The AGM was held at the museum on the 27<sup>th</sup> February and in addition to the points mentioned above and in the Chairman's report on page 2, some other subjects were covered which can be briefly summarised as follows :

A Classic Car weekend will take place on July 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> ;

Visitor numbers for

2005 were almost identical to the previous year;

There was general agreement that roof repairs must be carried out at the expense of the Society; The Secretary has attended a seminar on museum management and the points raised should benefit our museum; Visitor comments were very favourable with a considerable number paying their second visit.

The Northants Aviation Society is celebrating 20 years of existence on the 30<sup>th</sup> March 2006 and Tom Reeves tells us that he has spent many hours during the winter months cleaning the display cases as well as painting the floor. Tom reminds us that when the NAS was set up they used to meet at the RAFA club in Northampton with their "finds" being distributed around the houses of the then 30 members. It was not until around 12 years ago, when they came

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

HAMS Chairman's Report	2
The Demise of B24D 41-23999	3
A Small Mistake— Large Effects	5
The First Agent Pick-up Operation	8
Classy Chassis II	9
Carpetbagger Reunion San Diego pics	13



One of the Liberty places visited by the US Serviceman from Harrington in WW2. Do you know where it is?

*Answer on back page*

*Continued on page 2*

to Harrington that all of these finds were brought together in one place. Today Tom is something of a "one man band" with quite a workload and he is in sore need of a volunteer or

so to assist. Are there any willing persons out there? If you think you can help then please ring Tom on 01604 637043.

Lastly, may we remind all of our readers that we do need

your views, comments and, if possible, articles of interest in order to produce future issues of "Dropzone". Thanks in anticipation to you all !!

## HARRINGTON AVIATION MUSEUM SOCIETY CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2005

By Ron Clarke

Although visitor numbers were down a little, 2005 proved to be quite a successful year for the museum. The visitor comments book shows that customers were quite impressed with the displays and information, this was confirmed by the number of second visits. Early in the year the disabled toilet block was brought on stream after an early problem with the outflow proved easily surmountable. During the season the required wider paving was laid down, the work being carried out by our main contractor Fred West Holdings Incorporated. Fred has also been busy during the closed season organising working parties, which have carried out some much needed repair and decorating work.

The Canteen staff have again excelled themselves, souvenir sales and catering having brought in £2,400, they are all to be congratulated on their work, especially the canteen manageress Vera Tebbutt, who has also laid on refreshments for various functions during the year. John Harding and Roy have produced some very interesting 'Drop zone newsletters, and our web site has been continually upgraded by Roy, who can usually be found tapping away at the computer on Sunday afternoons,

As you know the roofing felt of the museum is beginning to show signs of decay and

quotes were obtained for the refelting of the whole roof area. We accepted a quote of £14,500, but soon after agreeing to this we were told by the head of the contractors that the sub-contractor he had appointed for the work had been dismissed for sub standard work. He advised us to use another company who would re-quote the work needed. This was done but the bottom line of the quote was for £24,500 pounds, which of course was quite a bit more than we have in the bank. Roy is now in the process of asking for quotes for the smaller sections of the roof which are leaking at present.

We are in the process of upgrading the signage for the coming season, we have also placed adverts in various touring magazines, but signs seem to be the main means of attract-

ing custom during the year we also erected additional signs near the entrance gate, as people were driving away without coming into the car park.

Keith Taylor has produced some very professional model displays which were very well received, some being of Allied aircraft used by the German Special Duty squadrons which featured in the 'Spies in Northamptonshire' exhibition which will be continued this year

Clive Bassett tells us that Hilton Hotels are not so far organising any of their 'Secret War' weekends this year, these visits were quite remunerative and we shall miss their custom. However we are preparing an exhibition on Desborough airfield, and we hope to carry out a publicity drive helped by the Desborough heritage museum.



*Continued on page 3*

Regarding the Harvard aircraft, various people have been to look at the aircraft but so far no one appears to have given Mr King a firm offer.

We had quite a few American visitors last year, one group consisted of a family looking for details of a relative, Robert France, who was based at Har-

rington during WWII. A short while ago Roy received a donation of £200 from them. But the most generous donation was for \$1000 from another American, Mackey Barron, who sent a similar gift last year.

And so we forward to another year, we hope you will all carry on the good work, and make it

just as rewarding as the previous years have been. Sebastian Corriere and the veterans committee in America send their best wishes and thank all of you for your dedication in telling the people of England the wartime operations of the Carpetbaggers.

## THE DEMISE OF B24D 41-23999

Readers of the previous edition of Dropzone may recall a picture of B24D 41-23999 in a distressed condition on the back page of the last edition of the newsletter.

Ed Poole also saw this photo and contacted us via email about the airplane. Ed was really surprised to see this, as he was Crew Chief on it at Harrington during 1944 until it had the unfortunate accident. Ed tells us that he and his crew had done some maintenance on it in the hanger and was ready to take it back to the parking site. As it was late in the day and he had a 24-hour pass he told the Assistant Crew Chief (no names no pack drill) to take it out the following morning. When he came back to the base the following day the results shown in the photos was what he found. He says that it was a real shock to see a good airplane messed up so badly. Apparently what happened was that the man taxiing the airplane was going too fast and ran off the taxi strip into the mud and jerked the landing gear right out from under it. That was one 24-hour leave that he wished he had not taken. Ed has kept hold of these photos since 1944.



B24D 41-23999 taxiing accident 15th June 1944

*Ed Poole*



Sheared off undercarriage leg of B24D 41-23999

*Ed Poole*

*Continued on page 4*

Tom Britain in France, an expert on B24s, whom we often consult and exchange information with, advises us that Lt William D Woodson was the pilot of a 93<sup>rd</sup> BG, 409<sup>th</sup> BS B24 named CHIEF MANTEE from the 18<sup>th</sup> November 1943 onwards and 41-23999 was the aircraft that he flew on 18<sup>th</sup> Nov 1943 and on several subsequent missions. The plane is also reported to have been named TEGGIE ANN II but he has seen no evidence to substantiate this. The airplane is reported to have been sent on the 15<sup>th</sup> Feb 1944 for Carpet-bagger modifications and was later assigned to the 801<sup>st</sup> BG (P) via BAD 1, Burtonwood, Lancashire. It crashed 15<sup>th</sup> June 1944 at Harrington as Ed has indicated above. The airplane's nose wheel also collapsed as well as having the left main landing gear torn out. The airplane was salvaged on the 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> June 1944.

Ed Poole went to the Hatfield Mosquito plant for a few weeks in late 1944 for orientation on the Mosquito as they were getting those shown in the picture below in the 492nd BG for Red Stocking operations.



Ed Poole (on left) and ground crew at Harrington

*Ed Poole*



Aircraft maintenance crew with Mosquito "Patty" at Harrington, Ed Poole third from left in front row, Capt Clifford Fulton, 36th BS Engineering Officer, back row left

*Ed Poole*



Harrington Mosquitoes

*Ed Poole*



B24D 41-23999  
15th June 1944

## A SMALL MISTAKE—LARGE EFFECTS

By Rene Londo

*It was with great sorrow that we heard that Rene Londo, the Belgian Representative of the Carpetbaggers, had passed away on the 30th January 2006. The following tale was told by Rene and is reproduced here with the permission of Virgil R Marco of Dallas, Texas. [http://www.marcolowe.com/vrmsr/small\\_mistake/index.html](http://www.marcolowe.com/vrmsr/small_mistake/index.html)*

During World War II the OSS/SOE in London provided coded messages for the various Resistance Groups in the occupied countries designed to mislead the German listening stations. Our group in the Belgian Secret Army was given the code name "Quarion" and would be used during months containing 31 days. Our messages would be negative, such as "The artichoke has no generous heart" for drop zone A and "The beet does not improve the salad" for drop zone B. During the other months with less than 31 days our code name was "Quebec" and the messages would be positive, such as "The artichoke has a generous heart" for drop zone A and "The beet does improve the salad" for drop zone B.

Indeed it was on the night of May 28/29, 1944 we received a coded, message from the Belgian Information Service on the London BBC at 7:15 p.m. The message was in French. We received the first message, "Messages for Quarion", our organization code name for May. The next two messages received were "Artichoke has no generous heart", representing drop zone A. The second message was "The Beet does not improve the salad" for drop zone B. These secret messages informed us that equip-

ment, arms and explosives would be dropped on field A for "Artichoke" and field B for "Beet".

The two crews to fly this mission were the William G. McKee crew and the Ernest Beaumont Fitzpatrick, Jr. crew.

They were from the 801 Bomb Gp., stationed at Harrington, England. This Bomb Gp. was called the "Carpetbaggers". Instead of dropping bombs, their mission was normally to transport supplies to for the Resistance Organizations. Occasionally they would transport



McKee Crew 36th BS

Back row L—R  
 William G McKee (Pilot)  
 Norman O Stoll (Navigator)  
 Robert R France (Bombardier)  
 Everett E Harwell (Co-pilot)

Front row L—R  
 Charles D Fairbanks (Tail Gunner)  
 Joe D Saylor (Dispatcher)  
 Richard W Fogelsonger (Radio Op)  
 Edd H Cuplin (Engineer)



Fitzpatrick Crew  
 406th BS

Back row L—R  
 Joseph J. Lasicki (Bombardier) - evader  
 Howard W. Lynch (Co-pilot) - did not fly this mission  
 James S. Sherwood (Navigator) - evader  
 Ernest B. Fitzpatrick Jr (Pilot) - evader

Front row L—R  
 William E. Schack (Tail gunner) - POW  
 James E Williams (Dispatcher) - POW  
 Walter W. Swartz (Engineer) - evader  
 Paul P. Kasza (Radio Operator) - evader

Not shown above was Richard V Thiriot who substituted for Lynch on this mission. Thiriot was also an evader, returning to the UK in September 1944

Also along as an observer on the night of the mission was Cornell Degrothy, a Navigator with the 788th BS. He also became a POW and was liberated in early September. The POWs survived the war in Stalag Luft IV

*Continued on page 6*

and drop secret agents to assist the resistance forces. They flew at night in the light of the moon. Their planes consisted of older models of the B-24 without a nose turret. The crew consisted of only eight men where the regular bomber crews consisted of 9 to 10 men. The supplies were in round containers in the bomb bay. Each mission was flown at tree top level. The closer the flak, the lower they flew to overcome the radar and the fighters.

The McKee crew was assigned field A and the Fitzpatrick crew was assigned field B. The McKee crew arrived first on what they thought was signal A. Unfortunately it was signal B flashed by our resistance group. The McKee B-24 dropped their load and returned to their base in England. Then the Fitzpatrick crew arrived a little later and saw signal A flashed by the resistance but could not find signal B. The resistance proceeded to gather the supplies dropped by mistake in field B thinking it was the supplies intended for them and withdrew their signal. The Fitzpatrick crew began circling higher trying to locate the B signal. After flying around for 45 minutes they returned to their base without dropping their load of supplies. In the meantime, the Germans discovered the suspicious activity from German watchtowers at three Luftwaffe aerodromes. They immediately sent out motorcycle patrols to investigate. The resistance team for field B loaded their supplies on their horse-drawn wagon and proceeded on their way to their hiding place. The team leader instructed a man on a bicycle to ride 2 to 3 hundred meters in front and one on a bicycle in the rear at the same distance. Each was also instructed to

sound his bell if danger appeared. The bicyclist in front soon ran into the sound of the German motorcycle patrol as he was following a turn in the road. He rang his bell frantically warning his comrades not far behind. The Secret Army guides then set a trap for the oncoming patrol. They opened fire killing two Germans and wounded another. The rest of the German patrol turned back. The Secret Army added three more weapons to their arsenal from the dead and wounded Germans. They soon arrived at their secret hiding place safely with the new supplies.

The next day the Germans organized a very strong search of the area but could not find anything. However all the German units were put on alert. Fitzpatrick reported to his commander that he was not able to find the B signal and returned with the supplies. This resulted in a reprimand by his commanding officer and he was given instructions to return the next night to drop zone B find the signal and drop the supplies.

London again sent out the "Message for Quarion"; "The

Beet does not improve the salad". The commanding officer of the Secret Army gave instructions to his wireless operator to notify London to cancel the scheduled mission in view of the German alert. He sent three observers to be on the site for the whole night. For some reason the message to cancel the mission was never received or acted on by London.

On May 30, 1944 Fitzpatrick flew with his crew of 8 members plus a training navigator into a German ambush. Arriving at the location and not seeing the signal he again circled high and higher trying to find the signal. The higher he flew the more he was exposed to the danger of enemy night fighters. Three German fighter pilots were waiting for the unsuspecting carpetbagger crew at three different Luftwaffe aerodromes. A German pilot by the name of Charles Kern in his JU-88 saw the B-24. Bill Schack, the tail gunner, saw the German fighter first, but was not allowed to fire his guns until the mission was completed or before the enemy had opened fire. The German fighter Pilot, Charles Kern,



Continued on page 7

opened fire first and hit the right wing of the Liberator causing it to catch fire, stopping two engines. Fitzpatrick went ahead and dropped the supplies at a clearing he thought was the drop zone. Indeed the containers dropped very near the B Field, but due to the altitude they were flying, the containers drifted over a much larger area than expected. Orders were then given to bail out. All the crew parachuted safely. My men located Bill Schack, Walter Swartz, Joseph Lasicki and Ernest Fitzpatrick. They were hidden in separate homes for two to three weeks maximum before being moved again to avoid the danger of being located by the Germans. Our

group preferred this solution rather than the "Marathon Camps" in the Ardennes. For Fitzpatrick and Swartz this proved to be a good solution as they were liberated in September 1944. It was not so favorable a solution for Schack and Lasicki. During a transfer to another hiding place they were captured and were liberated by the advancing Russians in May 1945. Another Secret Army group found Richard Thiriot, Paul Kasza and James Sherwood. They successfully evaded and were liberated in September 1944. Two others Cornell DeGrothy and Williams declined our help and wanted to be on their own. Their efforts to evade were unsuccessful

and they were captured and sent to German POW camps. They were liberated in May 1945.

It is amazing how a small mistake, either on the ground with a bad, flashing signal B or in the plane having misread the signal, lead to an accident that could have been much worse.

A search was made and we found Charles Kern, the German Ju-88 pilot. Fifty years later Charles Kern, Bill Schack and Walter Swartz gathered at my home in Genval, Belgium and spent the day, May 30, 1994 celebrating together. We had a great time talking about our mutual adventures.



Left—right: Bill Schack, Walter Swartz, Charles Kern and Rene Londo

## THE FIRST AGENT PICK-UP OPERATION

By Ron Clarke

On August 21st, 1940, Flight Lieutenant W.J. Farley was summoned to the Air Ministry in London where he was told that he had been chosen to command a secret Special Duty Flight which was to be based at North Weald airfield. He would be equipped with Whitley bombers modified to drop supplies by parachute, and Lysanders which would fly agents into fields in occupied Europe and pick them up when necessary.

His Flight was to be based at a remote corner of the airfield where he was given a small hut. His ground crew were accommodated in bell tents and his aircrews given quarters with the resident Hurricane pilots of No. 50 Squadron.

The first agent to be flown over was a French officer, Philip Schneideau, who was dropped into a field south of Fontainbleau on the night of 9/10 October, 1940. It was arranged that he would be picked up on the 18th but bad weather prevented

Farley from taking off from the staging base at Tangmere. Schneideau had taken three pigeons with him (wrapped in socks) and used one to send a message arranging another date for his departure.

In spite of heavy cloud and rain, Farley took off on the 19th and headed south for Fontainbleau, the sliding roof of the rear cockpit had been removed for easy access and the heavy rain soon put the radio out of action. Nevertheless, he found the field and picked up the relieved Schneideau.

Soon after they took off, a German sentry recognised the plane as British and fired a single shot at it. The bullet came through the floor in between Farley's legs and shattered the compass. He now had neither radio nor compass and had entered heavy cloud and rain. They flew on for several hours, not knowing if they were over Ireland or Denmark but, suddenly, Schneideau saw a cliff top through the gloom.

Farley was relieved as the fuel gauge had been on empty for some time. They made a crash landing but were unhurt. Farley realised that if they had landed in German occupied territory, any civilian in an R.A.F. aircraft would be treated as a spy. He told Schneideau to take all his clothes off. He then went for help and soon returned with two hefty soldiers who spoke a strange language but carried Lee Enfield rifles. They had landed at Oban in Scotland and after explaining that the nude man was a French officer, Schneideau dressed and they were taken to the nearby Coastal Command base at Oban.

The operation had the highest security rating and the C.O. of the station was highly suspicious of their vague answers. He put them in the cells before phoning the number they gave him. They were finally picked up by a truck from North Weald and the first pick-up operation had been a rather stressful success.



Whitley Bomber

Lysanders



## CLASSY CHASSIS II

By Fred West

In the summer of 1944 the Allied armies were making good progress and pushing the Germans back towards their own border, not much troubled by weather conditions. But the vital air support provided by the USAAF and the RAF relied on good weather conditions and during the third week in August the weather was far from good.

From the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 1944 a low pressure weather system covered Britain and Western Europe which prevented any combat missions being flown by the US 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force. There were no Carpet-bagger missions to Europe between these two dates, but the weather system didn't interfere too much with internal flights.

On Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1944 the personnel at Warton Air Base in Lancashire were going about their usual tasks involving aircraft maintenance. The Air Base is built along the southern edge of the village of Warton and extends to the western outskirts of Freckleton, with the main runway laid out east to west. Warton was established by the USAAF in September 1942 as AAF Station 582, and in October 1943 became Base Air Depot 2.

The main tasks at Warton were the preparation for service of new aircraft and the refurbishment of 'battle weary' machines. Many of the B24 Liberator bombers that were used by the Carpetbaggers had been modified at Warton.

BAD 2 was de-activated in September 1945 and it is estimated that during the three years it was in service around 14,000 aircraft passed through the de-

pot, including some 3,000 B24 Liberators.

It was one of these Liberators named Classy Chassis II, that while on a test flight infamously earned her place in aviation history after being involved in the worst aircraft accident in Britain during WW2.

Classy Chassis II, USAAF Serial No. 42-50291, was originally assigned to the 490<sup>th</sup> BG, 849<sup>th</sup> BS but before flying any combat missions, was transferred to 486<sup>th</sup> BG, 832<sup>nd</sup> BS. Between the 4<sup>h</sup> June and the 9<sup>th</sup> July 1944 Classy Chassis II carried out bombing missions on airfields and coastal defences in France before being taken out of service and sent for refurbishment to BAD 2.

At 10.30 on the morning of Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 1944, life in the village of Freckleton was continuing as normal. The 'Sad Sack' café had its usual mix of British and American service personnel taking their mid-morning break along with a few civilians, and at the village school the children were getting on with their lessons.

This was the first week of the autumn term and for many of the children in the infants class, their very first week at school. Also starting her first week at the school was Miss Jenny Hall, a teacher and local girl who had arrived at Holy Trinity School only the day before.

At Warton Air Base two B24 bombers were cleared for take off at 10.30 hrs on a test flight. The first to be airborne was Classy Chassis II flown by 1st Lieutenant John Bloemendal, one of BAD 2's regular test pilots, with T/Sgt Jimmie Parr as

co-pilot and Sgt Gordon Kinney as flight engineer. The take-off was uneventful and the B-24 headed out over the Lancashire countryside, accompanied by the second B-24, flown by 1st Lieutenant Pete Manassero.

At around this time the city of Manchester was just starting to dry out after a very severe summer storm. The sky had turned black before the arrival of a violent electrical storm, accompanied by torrential rain.

The storm moved quickly westward and soon approached BAD 1 at Burtonwood, who immediately alerted Warton. It is not known exactly how great an area the storm covered, but it was at least 40 miles wide, north to south.

At about 10.40 hrs the two B24's were told to return to base, but when they arrived over Warton the storm was already raging. Summer storms are by no means unusual, but this one was different in that it was accompanied by winds gusting to more than 60 miles an hour that caused a lot of structural damage to property.

Lt. Manassero decided that it was unsafe to attempt a landing in such severe conditions and informed Warton control tower that he intended to fly north out of the path of the storm. He then contacted Lt. Bloemendal to say he was setting a course of 330 degrees and Bloemendal acknowledged this.

Visibility was now so poor that

*Continued on page 10*

Lt. Manassero lost sight of Classy Chassis II and even at 500 feet he could not see the ground so had to fly on instruments. He flew over the coast and headed north for about five minutes until breaking out of the storm and again called Lt. Bloemendal, but did not receive a reply.

Bloemendal informed control that he was retracting his undercarriage and 'going round', but nobody knows exactly what he intended to do. Eyewitness accounts say that the B24 came in low over Freckleton and then flipped with its wings almost vertical before hitting a tree and cart-wheeling down the street.

As the 25-ton aircraft disintegrated it partly demolished three houses and the 'Sad Sack' Snack Bar before finally hitting the infant's wing of Holy Trinity School. The spilled fuel from the ruptured tanks ignited engulfing the school and the



The communal grave in Holy Trinity Churchyard at Freckleton

Photo credit : <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/lait/site/B-24%2042-50291.htm>

street in flames. It was 10.47 hrs.

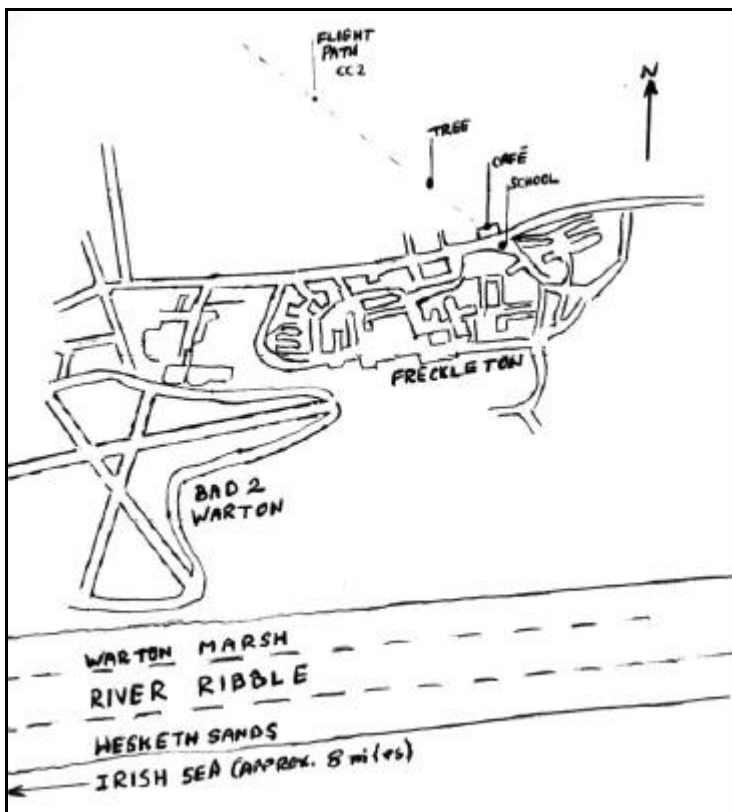
The first to reach the crash site were the fire fighters from BAD 2 who were quickly joined by the National Fire Service and people from Freckleton village. The scene was one of utter

devastation and the intense heat prevented the rescuers from giving any aid to the screaming children in the school.

Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1944 was a happy day for the French; Paris was liberated that day. In Freckleton they were mourning the dead and asking "why us?"

The final death toll was sixty-one. This included 38 children, two teachers, one of whom was Miss Jenny Hall, and the members of crew on board Classy Chassis II. Six US airmen along with four RAF personnel and six civilians died in the 'Sad Sack' Snack Bar.

The subsequent inquiry into the disaster was unable to reach a definite conclusion as to the cause, but it was thought that Lt. Bloemendal had misjudged the severity of the storm. The most likely explanation is that with the aircraft banked and the outer wing naturally tending to



Continued on page 11

rise, a sudden gust of wind pushed the wings vertical and the pilot didn't have sufficient height to recover from this situation.

The majority of the victims of this tragedy are buried in a communal grave in the grounds of Freckleton village's Holy Trinity Church.

Brigadier General Isaac W. Ott, commander of BAD 2 Warton, represented the U.S.A.A.F. at the elaborate funeral ceremony, for which the American authorities bore the cost.

Full details of this Incident can be found at:  
<http://web.ukonline.co.uk/lait/site/B-24%2042-50291.htm>

The Freckleton Disaster was the worst incident of WW II involving a military aircraft and the civilian population of Britain. Not surprisingly, even after almost sixty-two years there are some in Freckleton who still harbour feelings of resentment that this disaster ever happened, but to outsiders it was just another incident of war. The question of what went

wrong that morning will continue to be asked for many years to come. Lt. Manassero claimed that he was flying about 100 yards on the right wing of Classy Chassis II as both planes approached the airfield from the North West and then moved further out before flying over the coats and starting a left turn. At this point he would be over the Irish Sea (which he referred to as the wash) and after completing his turn would be heading for the Western end of the airbase.

The extremely poor visibility made it impossible for Lt. Manassero to see the ground so he decided to fly north out of the storm. He informed Lt. Bloemendal of his intentions and this message was acknowledged which poses the question, where was Lt. Bloemendal at this time?

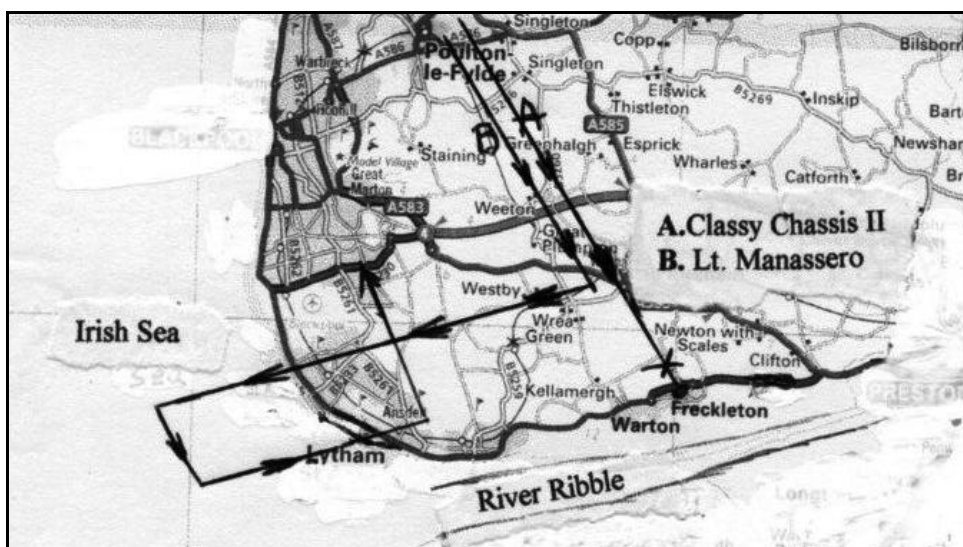
When Lt. Manassero completed his left turn over the Irish Sea he approached Warton over the town of Lytham, but Lytham is at least eight miles West of Freckleton. The accompanying sketch map shows the flight path of Classy Chassis II that is

consistent with an approach from the North West, but if both aircraft were together originally, where did Lt. Bloemendal go while Lt. Manassero was covering a distance of eight to ten miles?

The most likely explanation is that Lt. Manassero banked right a few miles North of the airfield and flew over the coast while Lt. Bloemendal continued to fly South East. Perhaps he intended to fly over Freckleton and then bank right over the Ribble Estuary, fly over the Irish Sea and bank right again to make an approach from the west as both planes had been cleared to land on runway 08 which would have normally required an approach from the west.

But as he appears to have been attempting a right turn when the wing tip hit the tree, he could have decided, too late, to follow a similar course to that taken by Lt. Manassero. No one now will ever know what his intentions were.

Freckleton Holy Trinity School



Routes of Bloemendal's & Manassero's aircraft

was just a small building built in 1839. If Classy Chassis II had been flying just two feet higher, or just a few feet left or right of its actual path, the school might have been spared. What terrible games Fate can play.

Note. We would like to thank the historians of the 490<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group for their assistance with the preparation of this article

The Member of Parliament for the Fylde district of Lancashire that includes Freckleton, was Lt. Col. Claude Granville Lancaster, who in 1944 was the owner of Kelmarsh Hall, three miles from Harrington. Col. Lancaster became friendly with Col. Fish, Second-In-Command at Harrington Air Base and it is believed that Col. Fish spent some of his off duty time at Kelmarsh Hall.

It has been suggested that after news of the Freckleton disaster reached Col. Lancaster he contacted Col. Fish, who arranged to fly him to Warton so he could be amongst his constituents. It has not been possible for the author to confirm this and any further information would be greatly appreciated.

Please either write to Harring-

ton Aviation Museum, or send an email to [cbaggermuseum@aol.com](mailto:cbaggermuseum@aol.com)

While the people of Freckleton were still coming to terms with the terrible events of August, there was a further incident at Warton, witnessed by the author. On November 29<sup>th</sup> 1944 a group of Douglas A26 Invaders took to the air around 11.00 hrs and while circling over the Ribble Estuary gaining height and formation, two of the bombers collided.

The flaming wreckage fell on Warton Marsh from where the bodies of all members of the crew were later recovered. The remains of the two aircraft were left on the marsh and eventually became covered with an estimated two metres of silt. An unsuccessful attempt was made during the 1980's to reach the wreckage.

In 2004 the Channel 4 Time Team, with the assistance of the RAF's 'crash and burn' team and other aviation experts, excavated the site in an attempt to discover the cause of the collision. The programme was shown on TV in January 2005 and full details can be found at:

[http://www.channel4.com/history/timeteam/2005\\_prest\\_t.html](http://www.channel4.com/history/timeteam/2005_prest_t.html)

The A26 Invaders, which had just come into service, were en route to various air bases in Britain. It is quite likely that this group included aircraft bound for Harrington in preparation for Operation Red Stocking, the missions that dropped individual agents into the more inaccessible parts of Europe.

The Ribble Estuary was the scene of other aircraft crashes during WWII. In 1941 a Junkers 88 that was returning from a bombing raid on Liverpool was shot down and crashed in an area known as Crab Hollow on Banks marsh. Early in September 1944 a Mosquito that was engaged in firing practice, using targets placed on Banks marsh failed to pull out of a dive and crashed killing both crew members.

For a short time the world was made a better place by the young men and women of that era who fought for democracy. But how many more will have to give their lives before the majority of people on our planet learn to live in peace and harmony?



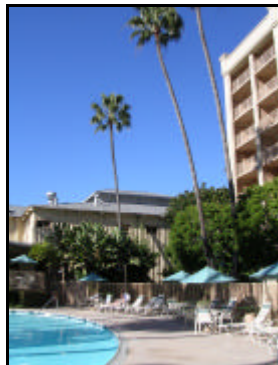
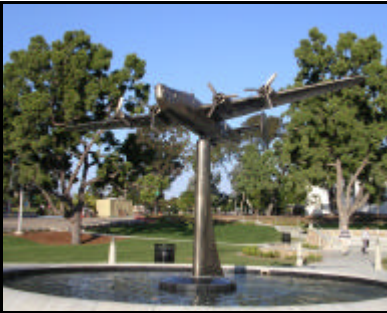
Some confusion exists with the identity of the plane bearing this nose art which was taken by Leo "Red" Monahan during WW2 and was originally believed to have been B24 42-50291

In the book Project Bits & Pieces the B24 42-51291 is named Classy Chassis and it is claimed to have served with the 801st/492nd BG, being salvaged on the 26th August 1944. B24 42-95198 in that book is named as Classy Chassy and is indicated to have served with the 487th, 446th and 492nd BGs



Fred Borman Jr and Crew of the 849th BS with Classy Chassis II

# CARPETBAGGER REUNION SAN DIEGO 2005



HARRINGTON AVIATION MUSEUMS

Off Lamport Road  
Harrington  
Northamptonshire  
NN6 9PF  
UK

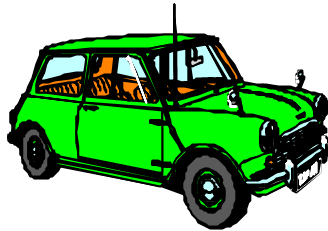
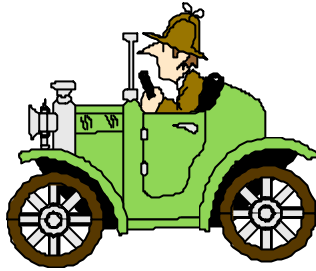
Phone: 01604 686608

Email: [cbaggermuseum@aol.com](mailto:cbaggermuseum@aol.com)

Wer'e on the Web!  
[www.harringtonmuseum.org.uk](http://www.harringtonmuseum.org.uk)



## Classic Car Picnic



At the Museum  
weekend of 22nd & 23rd July  
2006

Join in and bring along your  
classic car or vehicle  
Come and see a variety of  
classic vehicles, some older  
than others



We are still trying to find the location of the Red Lion Hotel. As shown in this 1940's photograph taken by Leo 'Red' Monahan when he was based at Harrington during WW2.

The brewery supplying beverages to these premises was Ind Coope Allsopp, as indicated on the advertising display board on the gable wall of the Hotel, and there is an old style wooden RAC box behind the telegraph pole in the foreground

If you have any ideas where this might be and whether the building is still there, has been demolished or converted to another use then please contact Roy Tebbutt, email [cbaggermuseum@aol.com](mailto:cbaggermuseum@aol.com)

Front page picture:

Photo by  
Leo 'Red'  
Monahan  
is of the East Gate  
at Warwick.  
These pictures were  
taken more recently  
in 1999

