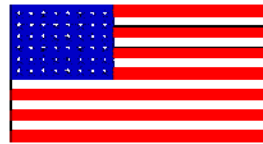


THE DROPZONE

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Carpetbagger Covert

In 1987, farmer John Hunt, of Dropshort Lodge, Orton, near Harrington, gave a piece of his land to the 801st/492nd BG Association on which to plant trees (that John also donated) in lasting memory to all those brave young men, 'The Carpetbaggers' who operated out of Station 179 USAAF, from March 1944 to the end of World War II in 1945.

The accompanying photographs show a group of enthusiastic ex-Carpetbaggers at work during the summer of 1987.



John Hunt demonstrating how to use the machine that takes all the hard work (unless you hit a rock) out of making holes in which to plant the saplings.

The happy planters put their backs into it!

Planting pictures donated by R. Davis, Lansing, Illinois.



Summer 2011. Thick foliage now shows how all that hard work paid off.

A lot can happen in the space of 24 years.



SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

On page two of this issue is published part 1 of a two-part article detailing the problems that faced Gen. Ira Eaker while he was establishing the U.S. Eighth Bomber Command in Great Britain.

There are Obituaries for two war heroes who risked their lives while serving with the OSS and SOE.

Part 1 of the Journal of Events from the 36th/856th Bomb Squadron makes interesting reading and will no doubt bring back memories for some of our readers.

Memories of daily life on the hardstanding in front of the Foxhall Cottages will raise a smile.

The article on British Heritage is a call to action for all our members who live within twenty miles of Harrington.

Schweinfurt - The Battle Within the Battle for the U.S. 8th Air Force

Capt David Reichert, USAF

After the war, Hitler's minister of armaments and economics, Albert Speer, said, "The strategic bombing of Germany was the greatest lost battle of the whole war for Germany." Such was not the consensus thinking early in the war, though. Commander of the Army Air Forces, Gen. Henry "Hap" Arnold, had sent one of his best generals and closest friends, Gen. Ira Eaker, over to Great Britain to start what would come to be known as the U.S. Eighth Bomber Command from the ground up. In a push to prove not only to the British but to the world that strategic daylight bombing was the instrument needed to bring Germany to its knees, Eaker sent out over one-hundred missions during the next year-and-a-half, aimed not at the civilian populations of Germany but instead at targets that were supposed to cripple the German war-machine.

Facing criticism from both home and abroad over his seemingly slow pace of operations and unnecessarily high casualties, Eaker launched the most daring offensive of the war, sending over one thousand bombers into the air during a one-week span in mid-October, 1943. This week culminated with the second attack against the ball bearing factories in Schweinfurt, Germany, in which over sixty B-17s and six hundred men never returned home. Despite the high losses and unspectacular bombing results, the raid on Schweinfurt did help the war cause by making the policy makers finally realize the urgent need for long-range fighters to escort the bombers deep into enemy territory. Without these fighters, particularly the P-51 Mustang, the bomber losses would continue to grow to the point at which the Eighth Air Force would be unable to continue the successful targeting of vital war assets in Nazi Germany.

Things were not looking good for the Allies in early 1942. The Japanese were making steady advances in the Pacific and the Germans were sinking virtually every ship that came close to the European mainland. Great Britain, under siege for a short time by a massive German bombing effort and naval blockade, was short on men and supplies. It was during this time that Commander of the Army Air Forces, Gen. Henry "Hap" Arnold, sent his friend and fellow general Ira Eaker to England to organize the new Eighth Bomber Command. Another close friend, Gen. Carl "Tooey" Spaatz was soon to follow as Commander of the U.S. Eighth Air Force.

Eaker had a large task ahead of him. He arrived in England on February 20, 1942 with only six men to

start what would be the first major American cooperation with Great Britain. From the beginning, Eaker received great support from his British counterpart, Air Chief Marshall Sir Arthur Harris. Anything that Eaker asked for, Harris would supply with as much as he could afford to lose. Harris went so far as to offer Eaker a spare bedroom in his house so that the two could become better acquainted.

Despite the support that Harris was offering Eaker, he was not convinced that the American's plan of strategic daylight bombing was going to work against the formidable German Air Force. Since the war began, Great Britain had been bombing German cities in an effort to blast the German citizens into submission. They did this under the cover of darkness, which made the British bombers harder for the Luftwaffe pilots to engage and nearly invisible to the flak gunners on the ground. Bombing during daylight, Harris argued, would expose the American bombers to the full might of the Luftwaffe and cause unnecessarily high casualties. Harris' suggestion to Eaker was to integrate the B-17s that were arriving from the States with the British heavy bomber squadrons. This would make faster use of the B-17s that were already arriving in theater and, at the same time, increase the number of bombers that the British could send against Germany every night.

Eaker was well aware of the British position but insisted to Harris that daylight operations against specific military targets would enable a ground invasion of the continent faster than the indiscriminate bombing of cities. Eaker was also worried that if he gave the first few bombers to the British to use for night operations, for which the American pilots were not trained, that soon the Eighth Bomber Command would be a subsidiary of British Bomber Command and he would lose any chance he had of implementing daylight bombing.

Another obstacle facing the 8th was the allocation of promised bombers to other countries and commands. At the same time that the 8th was being built, American aircraft were being shipped all over the world. Countries like Australia, Russia, China, and Great Britain were having their air force built on American planes and technology at the expense of the 8th Air Force. Even the U.S. Navy was doing its part in keeping aircraft from reaching the 8th. Besides asking for fighters and bombers to defend the fleet, the Navy was also asking for more cargo planes to be built instead of combat aircraft. As Hap Arnold later wrote:

When asked what solution they might have for getting greater production and making more planes available to the British, or for securing more air transports, the answer of the Navy representatives was,

Please turn to page 3

“Stop manufacturing B-17s at the Long Beach plant and build cargo planes.”...When Freeman asked what the Navy was able to give up or help, if the Army Air Forces stopped manufacturing B-17s, our Naval officers said, “Nothing - there is nothing the Navy could give that would help any.”...The Army Air Forces was expected to give everything to everybody.

Despite all of the early problems, the 8th received its first group of bombers, named the 97th Bomb Group, in July 1942. A month of intensive training followed, in which the pilots learned how to fly under the instrument conditions that were prevalent in England and the gunners practised their accuracy against R.A.F. fighter planes. Just as it seemed everything was falling into place for the 8th, word came from Washington on a new operation that would once again stall the growth of the 8th.

Operation TORCH, the invasion of German-occupied North Africa, diverted two of the three inbound bomb groups to the Mediterranean and stripped Eaker of the one bomb group he had been training for the past month. Before he lost the 97th, however, he was going to use them for what they were brought overseas to do in the first place, drop bombs on Germany. On August 9th, the 97th was alerted for its first mission over German occupied territory.

Eaker was soon to discover an even more unforgiving adversary than the Germans or the policy makers in Washington, the English weather. The morning of August tenth found the airfield closed due to fog and subsequently the mission was canceled. Over the next week, the dense fog stayed in the air keeping the heavy bombers on the ground. Finally, on August 17th, the weather cleared and the 97th launched twelve planes for a mission against the marshalling yards at Rouen, France. The bombers met very little fighter resistance and no flak on the way to the target. Eaker, flying in the lead aircraft, watched as most of the bombs dropped fell within the target area. A little over an hour later, all twelve bombers were safely on the ground in England.

The mission was a success, but no one was under the impression that all missions would be this easy or this successful. British Spitfires escorted the bombers the entire way to the target and back and they met no flak and very little Luftwaffe opposition. Until the number of bombers got larger, however, the Americans would have to be content with small scale attacks against relatively undefended targets. These easy missions would later come to be known as “milk runs”.

The next few months saw many changes for the 8th Air Force. In December of 1942, Tooeey Spaatz was transferred to Africa to be in charge of the aerial portion of Operation TORCH and Eaker was given command of the entire 8th Air Force. Four new bomb groups arrived in England, and the pace of operations increased. Due to the lack of long-range fighter escort and still somewhat small numbers of bombers, however, the missions were aimed at targets on the coast or in the occupied countries. Not one bomb had been dropped on the mainland of Germany.

Because of this, the 8th faced near extinction during the early part of 1943. Churchill had convinced Roosevelt at the Casablanca conference that due to the lack of any major combat operations on the part of the Americans in the European theater, that the 8th should finally be integrated with the British Bomber Command. Upon hearing this, Arnold had Eaker fly to Casablanca to meet with Churchill and plead for him to change his mind. Though still not totally won over on the concept of daylight bombing, Eaker was successful in convincing Churchill to grant the 8th more time.

One result of the Casablanca conference was the authorization for the Combined Bomber Offensive (CBO). The CBO directed the joint effort of Great Britain and the United States to pave the way for the invasion of Europe through using each air force's specific capabilities: the British bombing at night and the Americans during the day. At least on paper, the 8th finally had the support it needed from the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

On his return to England a few days later, Eaker ordered the first mission against the German mainland, targeting the submarine construction yards at Vegesack. When they arrived over the target the bombers found it completely covered by clouds, so they moved to the secondary target, another port city named Wilhelmshaven. Although partially obscured by clouds, the bombers were still able to drop the first American bombs on German soil. The 8th Air Force had its first major victory.

Over the next few months, the 8th was sending more and more bombers on sorties over Germany as reinforcements arrived from the states. And also over the next few months, the Luftwaffe was getting better and better at shooting them down. Despite improvements that had been made both to the B-17 airframe (a gun in the nose to counter the increasing German head-on attacks) and the new “combat box” formation that provided each aircraft with maximum firepower coverage from all of the other aircraft in formation, bombers and crews were falling at an almost irreplaceable rate. The answer to this problem was developing a long-range fighter escort. Please turn to page 4

At this point in the war, British Spitfires and American P-47s and P-38s were escorting the bombers on their missions to Germany, but the combat radius of these planes was such that they had to turn around and go home just after crossing the German border, leaving the bombers unescorted for up to four hundred miles on some of the longer missions. The fact that the German FW-190s and ME-109s were more maneuverable than the Allied fighters and hence better in a dog-fight rarely came in to play. The Germans would remain well out of range of the bomber formations until the Allied fighters had to turn for home, then ferociously attack until the bombers could make it back to the relative safety of fighter cover on the return trip to England.



Supermarine Spitfire

Eaker had been trying for months to get external drop tanks fitted to the fighters that were already in theater, but the tanks that were added either didn't extend the range of the fighter far enough or resulted in poorer aerodynamic handling of the aircraft. All attempts at adding the tanks were eventually scrubbed, but a savior in another form was soon on the way.

Under development at this time in the United States was the P-51 Mustang. The Mustang would have the combat range to escort the bombers all the way to the target and back home. It was also faster and more maneuverable than the German fighters. Eaker had petitioned Arnold repeatedly in 1943 to allocate P-51s to the Eighth to escort his bombers, but, as with the bombers a year ago, Arnold had to fight to get allotments over the Navy and other allies. Until Arnold could deliver some P-51s to the European theater, the B-17s still had to fly and Germany still had to be bombed.

One of the focal points of the Allied bombing campaign was the destruction of ball bearing production facilities. The ball bearing was an integral part of the German war industry. The Ministry of Economic Warfare (M.E.W.), the British Cabinet agency that had been collecting information about potential targets in Germany since the beginning

of the war, had named ball bearings as one of the top priorities due to their use in every German aircraft. This dependence was first learned when the British themselves faced a shortage early in the war after the Germans bombed one of their ball bearing plants causing a delay in aircraft production. Not only did the German fighters and bombers use a large number of bearings per aircraft, but ground equipment such as tanks and motor vehicles did as well. By destroying the ball bearing production plants, the Allies could, in effect, also be destroying the production capability of the factories that made military aircraft and vehicles. Ultimately, this would shorten the length of the war.

On the one-year anniversary of its first mission, the 8th launched its most complex mission of the war. In an effort to destroy the production facilities of the German fighters that were terrorizing the bombers, over 350 bombers (formed into two divisions, the 1st and 3rd Bomb Divisions) took to the skies in a dual effort to bomb both a Messerschmitt production plant in Regensburg and Germany's main ball bearing factory in Schweinfurt. Timing for the mission was critical, as the 3rd was supposed to cross into enemy territory ten minutes ahead of the 1st in order to divide the Luftwaffe and lessen the total amount of fighter opposition each division faced. As was so often the case for the Eighth, the English weather forced a change of plans.



P-51 Mustang

Having already postponed the mission for close to two weeks due to consistent cloud cover over the targets, August 17th found Germany clear but England shrouded in fog. After delaying the mission for an hour, it was decided that the 3rd would have to take-off immediately in order to be able to land at their North African recovery bases before nightfall. While the 3rd was taking off, however, the 1st remained grounded due to the thick fog. Over three hours later, the 1st finally got off of the ground and headed towards Schweinfurt.

This delay was going to cost the 8th . With three hours in between the formations, the German fighters had enough time to (continued on page 6)

EDITORIAL

I am fairly sure that in 2013 there will be great celebrations in the United States of America to commemorate the first controlled flight of a powered aircraft by the Wright brothers.

The second great aviation event of the twentieth century was the first successful flight of a jet propelled aircraft. This took place at RAF Cranwell in Lincolnshire, in the late afternoon of May 15, 1941 watched by a small group of people that included the inventor of the jet engine, a young RAF officer named Frank Whittle.

On May 15, 2011 there was a ceremony at RAF Cranwell to celebrate the 70th anniversary of this great event and as you would imagine, many prominent members of society and the world of aviation were in attendance???. Oh, sorry, you didn't hear about it?

No, that was just a figment of my imagination, for only a handful of local dignitaries were invited to the party, along with a few devoted aviation engineers and two of the people who were there in 1941. There were no Government Ministers, no royalty, not top brass, no representatives of the great air lines or other industries who have made their fortunes from Whittles invention.

Of course, Sir Frank Whittle died a multi-millionaire, having helped his country to make even more millions from his invention—didn't he?

Well, no, he didn't and Britain didn't make any money out of the jet engine either, because the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnham thought that the jet engine was not a viable proposition. When Whittle asked for assistance to raise the money to keep his patents alive, he was turned down and all the plans for the jet engine were then put in the Stationary Office.

The Germans were quick to 'borrow' a copy and build the first jet plane, but there is some saving grace in the fact that it was unsuccessful.

The conquest of space was the third great aviation event of the twentieth century and it is quite proper that we should celebrate the achievement of Yuri Gagarin, the first man into space. A statue of Gagarin is to be erected in London and the Royal Albert Hall will stage a huge Gagarin exhibition in the summer.

Will Sir Frank Whittle ever have a statue erected in London? Probably not, as he doesn't even get much of a mention in the Science Museum. Only the people of Coventry, his home town, have put up a statue. Let us hope that he will be better remembered in 2041.

Fred West

Museum Visitors

We had a good start to the season with visitors who attend in organised groups as the first took place on Saturday 12 February. This was of course before the season opened officially, but we made an exception to entertain members of the Yorkshire Flying Club.

On Thursday 28 April we played host to members of the Cleobury Mortimer Royal British Legion who were on a trip arranged by Ace Tours.

Sunday 15 May saw the first of this seasons Travel Editions 'Secret War' groups, led by Clive Bassett and Harry Verlander.

Wednesday 18 May was a busy day. In the afternoon we played host to a University of the Third Age group from Northampton, and then from 6—9 pm it was Museum Open Night.

During the morning of Thursday 26 May we entertained members of Thrapston PROBUS Club who, unfortunately, like a few other groups, failed to pay attention to our warning to allow plenty of time to see everything on offer. They had to dash off within two hours, but perhaps they will come back again.

A similar thing happened again on Sunday 29 May when Holts Battlefield Tours scheduled only one and a half hours for their visit. That meant no one in the group had time to look around the main hall of the Carpetbagger museum.

A party composed of 23 officials and trustees from Northamptonshire ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) visited the museum on 8 June. Much to our great surprise and pleasure they *HAD* allowed enough time for a proper visit, and some even found time to pose for a photograph.



Chief Executive David Quayle (2nd from L), Northants. ACRE, with some of his team.

attack the 3rd Division, refuel, and then take-off again to attack the 1st Division. All of this was done, once again, out of the range of Allied fighter escort. Sixty aircraft and over six hundred men were lost over Germany that day, and although both of the targets were significantly damaged, neither was destroyed.



B-17's on their bomb run

The attacks on Regensburg and Schweinfurt worried some of the Nazi leaders. The Allied bombers had taken everything the Luftwaffe had to offer and they still proceeded to significantly damage two major factories deep within Germany. Speer warned that if the Americans kept hitting ball bearing factories, of which Schweinfurt was by far the largest (different estimates had the factories in Schweinfurt producing between forty to fifty-five percent of Germany's total output of ball bearings), German armament production would suffer within four months. To counter the increasing and further reaching American attacks against their homeland, the Germans moved virtually every fighter from the Russian front over to protect the western flank. When the Americans returned to Schweinfurt almost two months later, instead of meeting the three hundred reported attacks from the first mission, an estimated eight hundred enemy sorties were flown.



Homeward bound—how many will make it?

For the next month and a half, due to the extent of their losses from the Schweinfurt-Regensburg mission and poor weather over Germany almost the entire month of September, the 8th was relegated to a small number of short missions carried out under cover of fighter escort. Eaker didn't send another mission to Germany until September 27th, when cloud cover coupled with a new but inaccurate British radar system produced poor bombing results. Arnold's impatience was growing as he continued to send reinforcements to the 8th and received little, if any, positive results in return. Despite Arnold's impatience, however, the 8th would have to wait until the weather cleared over Germany in order to launch an effective mission.

With adequate reinforcements and clear weather over Germany, Eaker launched the 8th's largest offensive of the war to date. In a series of missions that came to be known as "Black Week", the 8th launched over a thousand bombers against vital industrial targets in Germany. The first three missions (October 8th-10th) against the cities of Bremen, Gdynia, and Munster resulted in the loss of eighty-eight bombers and nearly nine hundred aviators. Four days later, October 14, 1943, the day known as "Black Thursday", the bombers of the 8th Air Force flew once again towards Schweinfurt.

The morning of October 14th started out in the same manner with which the men of the Eighth Air Force had become accustomed: cold, dreary, and foggy. "When I looked outside at the weather, it was pitch black and very foggy. I thought we can't possibly takeoff in this weather," recounted Wally Hoffman, a member of the 351st Bomb Group stationed at Polebrook and the pilot of Morning Delight.

The pre-mission briefings contained all the information the crews needed to know before putting their lives at risk over Germany: enroute weather, flak concentrations, enemy aircraft opposition expected, and so forth. The tensest part of the briefing, however, came when the briefing officer pulled back the curtain that covered the map of Europe. In his article "Reality... Remembering Schweinfurt", Hoffman recalls this particular mission briefing.

"There is a hushed silence as everyone leans forward looking at the fateful end of the red yarn. "It's Schweinfurt" the Major says with a sardonic smile, and gives us time to think. Abruptly a buzz of voices breaks out, and one voice says 'Sonofabitch! This is my Last Mission.' And it was, as he was one of those who never made it back."

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This story was repeated all throughout England. Over three thousand men left their respective briefing room to go to their aircraft and wait either for the fog to lift so that they could take off or for the call that the mission had been canceled due to weather.

On the way to their airplane, the aircrew would get dressed into the multiple layers of clothing that were necessary for survival in the sub-zero temperatures four miles above the Earth's surface. If not properly protected, the cold temperatures could wound or kill a man just as easily as a German bullet.

With the crews on their way to their planes, the 8th's leaders could only sit back and hope first that the weather improved and then secondly that their plan to destroy Schweinfurt was successful. The plan consisted of sending 378 aircraft from nineteen bomb groups, which were formed into three air divisions, over Schweinfurt.

The First Air Division consisted of nine B-17 bomb groups, the Second Air Division consisted of three B-24 bomb groups, and the Third Air Division consisted of seven B-17 bomb groups. Each division consisted of multiple combat wings, which were in turn comprised of at least three bomb groups.

The combat wings were organized into "combat boxes", designed by then-Colonel Curtis LeMay. The "combat box" placed the lead group of the wing in the center of the wing, both vertically and horizontally. The second group was situated high, behind, and to the right of the lead group and the third group was situated low, behind, and to the left of the lead group.

Less than one thousand feet separated the highest aircraft of the high group from the lowest aircraft of the low group. This arrangement provided the formations with the maximum protective firepower from each aircraft. When a bomber was shot down or had to abort, the remaining bombers in the group would move forward to fill the holes in the formation.

The First Air Division was to lead the train of bombers towards the target, followed by the Third Air Division, which was scheduled to be thirty minutes behind the First and on a parallel course ten miles to the south. The Second Air Division was to fly well to the south of the B-17s and then rendezvous with the other two divisions just prior to the bomb run to provide for a continuous stream of bombers over the target. Almost immediately after take-off, and once again due to the English weather, this plan began to fall apart.

Once it was determined that the weather over the target was clear and that the visibility required for take-off was above minimums, the order was given to proceed with the mission. As the bombers began

to climb away from their fields, they realized that the weather briefers had been incorrect with their predictions. Instead of breaking out of the low clouds at two thousand feet, as briefed, most bombers didn't break out until six thousand feet with some remaining in the clouds until ten thousand feet.

Since the bombers needed clear conditions in order to form up into the "combat boxes" that would afford them the maximum defensive firepower, the excessive cloud cover over England delayed and in some cases prohibited the bombers from joining with their pre-briefed formations.

The most significant casualty of the weather was the loss of the entire Second Air Division from the total combat force. At the pre-briefed rendezvous time, only twenty-nine of the sixty B-24s were in formation. After repeated attempts to contact the missing bombers, the air commander of the Second decided against flying into Germany with such an undersized force and instead flew a diversionary mission against the port city of Emden. Without a single bullet being fired, the weather erased sixty bombers from the mission.

Engine problems along with other technical difficulties would send thirty-three B-17s home early, bringing the total number of bombers that would cross into German territory down to 285 bombers, almost twenty-five percent less than planned. In addition to losing over five hundred thousand pounds of bombs, more importantly to the survival of the crews was the loss of over twelve hundred machine guns that would have been used for protection against the German fighters.

Another casualty of the weather was the loss of nearly half of the fighter escort force. Of the four P-47 fighter groups that were dispatched with the mission, one failed to find any bombers after breaking through the clouds and another joined on the Second Air Division and accompanied them on their diversion.

The other two groups each joined on a division of B-17s and accompanied them to the limit of their endurance. The loss of fighter escort was less pronounced than the loss of the missing bomber's guns, however, because even though the P-47s destroyed thirteen enemy aircraft, the majority of German fighters waited in the distance for the Thunderbolts to turn for home.

This article will be continued in the next edition of The Dropzone.

OBITUARY

Leif Oistad

Just twelve days following an award ceremony in his honor at Silsbee Convalescent Center, in which Rear Admiral Trond Grytting presented a medal from Harald V King of Norway, Leif Oistad died, Thursday, March 17, 2011.

Oistad grew up skiing in Moum, just outside the historic fortified city of Fredrikstad, Norway. Years later, those skills proved useful when Technical Sergeant Leif Oistad, served as squad leader of an elite force of U.S. Special Forces paratroopers skiing and demolishing railroad sections north of Trondheim in German-occupied Norway. Youngest of eight children, Oistad was hired as a deckhand upon graduation from public school in 1936. Oistad worked on various commercial vessels, including the Texaco oil tanker, Brasil.

In 1942, Oistad was recruited for a special group in the U.S. Army. As part of the 99th Mountain Battalion (Separated) at Camp Hale in Colorado, Sergeant Oistad instructed his team in skiing. Oistad was recruited by the Office of Strategic Services to form the Norwegian Special Operations (NORSO) Group. At one point, Technical Sergeant Oistad mentioned to an officer, If I am about to give my life for this country, I would prefer to do it as an American citizen. Within the hour, he was granted U.S. citizenship.

The NORSO Group parachuted behind enemy lines in occupied France, after D-Day, working with the French resistance forces until the liberation of France. In 1945, Oistad parachuted behind enemy lines in Norway and skied to sabotage railroads and bridges choking off German troop transport to Europe. NORSO Group was led by Major William E. Colby, who later served as director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

Sergeant Oistad is cited and pictured in Colby's autobiographical *Honorable Men: My Life in the C.I.A.* published in 1978. Sergeant Oistad was among American and Norwegian troops serving as honor guard to Crown Prince Olav upon his return to Norway in June 1945. Following honorable discharge from the U.S. Army in November 1945, Oistad joined four military buddies diving for sponges off the Florida coast until the advent of synthetic sponges in 1947.

Oistad qualified as a ship's master, married, took a job as captain of a vessel for Texaco, and moved to Corpus Christi, Texas, where his daughter, Lisa was born in 1950. In 1949, Captain Oistad joined Shell Oil Company and later moved his family to

New Orleans, Louisiana, where his son Erik was born in 1953. As captain of Shell's oceangoing seismic research vessels Phaedra, Niobe, and Shell America, he conveyed scientific personnel who searched for oil and gas deposits in the Gulf of Mexico, the Bering Sea, the South China Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean.

Oistad consulted on the design and construction of the Shell America, his last commission. After divorce, Captain Oistad moved to Nederland, Texas. He met and married his wife Delene Foster, a teacher, and they retired to Wildwood in Village Mills, Texas.

Enjoying golf, fishing with his grandson, Chase, gardening, dancing and travel with Delene, Oistad remained a very active member of the Norwegian Seaman's Church, Wildwood Methodist Church, the Sons of Norway, the Office of Strategic Services Society, and various veterans' and Masonic organizations.



Leif Oistad

Oistad was a 32nd degree Mason. Oistad donated his papers and books to History Department archives at Lamar University. Survivors include his wife, Delene of Village Mills; daughter, Charlotte Alicia Lisa Oistad Mowen, Ph.D., of Harvey, Louisiana; son, Leif Erik Oistad of Rockwall; step-son, Shayne Riley of Eagle River, Alaska; step-daughter, Shawna Riley of Houston; grandchildren, Chase and Meagan Riley; nephew, Kay Oistad of Fredrikstad, Norway; and nieces and nephews in Norway and Canada.

Ancestral Tourism

For those who want to take a holiday, and find out where their ancestors came from.

Ancestral Tourism – Roots Project
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What is Ancestral Tourism?

- * Travel and tourism related activity driven (in at least part) by someone's sense of connection to a particular place.'
- * Visiting a location to trace some part of family history
- * Coming Home

How can you get involved?

- * Pass on the message about Ancestral Tourism within your organisation
- * Collect information from website
- * Add content to your website
- * Join our Facebook network

Snippets

Two Engineering Battalions set up camp in the middle of the Northamptonshire countryside and start to build an air base. Did you ever stop to ask where they got the water from to mix the mortar and cement?

Carpetbagger Covert is set on a piece of land that slopes down to a small stream named Slade Brooke. Further along the bank of Slade Brooke, a few yards beyond the north end of the covert three wells were built, each about four feet in diameter.

In 1942, these wells were kept full with water that was pumped from a spring situated further up the slope. Water from the wells was then pumped through pipes to supply the airfield constructors.

In the Editorial I referred to the three great aviation events of the twentieth century: the first controlled power flight, the first successful flight of a jet powered aircraft, and the first man to be launched into space.

Space flight was dependent upon the development of the rocket motor which should actually be ranked as the second major aviation development of the 20th century. The inventor of the rocket motor was Dr. Robert H. Goddard (October 5, 1882 - August 10, 1945) who is the father of modern rocketry. On March 16, 1926; he launched the first liquid-fueled rocket at Auburn, Massachusetts.

More about Dr. Goddard in a future edition.

Journal Of Events 36th/856th Squadron History

The following extracts have been copied verbatim from the journal.

25 October 1943 —Lt. Col. Heflin, Major Fish, Captain Akers and Lt. Sullivan, all of the 22nd Antisubmarine Squadron, attended a meeting at Bovingdon. There they met with Col. Williamson, A-3 of VIII Bomber Command, Col. Kirk, also of VIII Bomber Command, Gp/Capt. Fielden, RAF Special Unit (Tempsford), Col. Oliver of VIII Air Force, Col. Haskell and Maj. Brooks of the Office of Strategic Services. Before attending this meeting, out of which would come the blue print of the 4th Antisubmarine Squadron's future work, the officers of the 22nd Aron had not the remotest idea of what work would be assigned to their squadron.

At the meeting, the 22nd Aron was assigned its duties as a "Sabotage" Squadron, and the officers received, from the OSS men and from the Tempsford representative, a complete description of the work and what it would involve in terms of training crews and modifying the B-24 aircraft. For the most part, the Carpetbaggers would be the air arm of the OSS, which would direct the work, arrange grounds (working closely with British Intelligence), specify the contents of the containers and packages to be delivered.

Period 25 October to 20 December – During this period, selected combat crews, many of whom would eventually be included in the 36th Squadron, engaged in training at Tempsford. Under the direction of Maj. Fish and Captain St. Clair, bombardiers, navigators and pilots are getting checked out in the proper procedure for the new job.

22 November – Lt. Col. Heflin and Maj. Fish attended a meeting in London where it was decided to use the air echelon of the 22nd Antisubmarine Squadron and the ground echelon of the 4th Antisubmarine Squadron, to form the cadres for two new squadrons, the 406th and 36th Bombardment Squadrons respectively. It was decided that for the next operational period (December) we will operate with the British at Tempsford, but using our own B-24 aircraft.

28 November – The 36th Bombardment Squadron is officially organized at Alconbury Airdrome, effective this date, per General Orders #203, Headquarters VIII Bomber Command. Major Robert W. Fish assumes command, as per paragraph #14 Special Order #63, Headquarters, AAF Section 102 (Alconbury).

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29 November – Five enlisted men, well-known “old times” in the 4th Antisubmarine Squadron, leave today for the States. They are radar specialists and apparently their services are required elsewhere. Their names are M/Sgt. Ray Armstrong, T/Sgt. David Moore, T/Sgt. John Piszczek, S/Sgt. Thomas Richardson, S/Sgt. Wayne Sisson. All their friends in the Squadron wish them success at their new address, which will be 1st Sea-Search and Attack Group, Langley Field, Vir. Everyone dwells at length on the thirty-day furloughs these men will have, and unlimited possibilities they will now have to catch up on thick steaks, good Scotch and silk-stockinged women.

5 December – Captain St. Clair returned today to Tempsford with some of the combat crew personnel who have not completed their training flights with the British. Lt. Shapiro, Squadron S-2, also left today for detached service to Tempsford where, it is understood, the bar in the Officers Club is well-stocked and there is a profusion of WAAFS.

9 December – Capt. Ralph V. Everly joined the Squadron today as Squadron Surgeon, from the 406th Bombardment Squadron. Hereafter it will be Captain Everly who explains to the Squadron scientific methods of retaining a high moral character. (Ed. All ex-service personnel will understand the meaning of last sentence, civilians will have to work it out for themselves.)

13 December – Lt. Podgorsky was today transferred from this squadron to the 814th Bombardment Squadron (P). The Lieut. had, for a long time, been Assistant Engineering Officer of the 4th Antisubmarine Squadron, and his separation from us deserves at least a paragraph. Known variously as “Count”, because of the admirable grand manner about him, and “Viking”, because of a certain Scandinavian liaison he had established in London, Lt. Podgorsky was well liked by both his fellow officers and by the enlisted men of the Squadron.

However, he had his ups and downs, being a very human man. No one who was present is apt to quickly forget the “Dunkeswell Incident”. We had just arrived. The enlisted men were marched from living site to drome in a formation commanded by Lt. Podgorsky. But being a trifle rusty in such matters, the men, despite Lt. Podgorsky’s robust cadence-counting, never for a moment managed to keep in step. The Lieutenant was highly irate, and when the gallant but uneven formation arrived at the drome, he began a long, detailed recitation of the men’s shortcomings.

This he did in a manner which demonstrated his noteworthy command of Army locution. The men noticed, but Lt. Podgorsky did not, that a group of WAAFS were hovering about in the rear of the formation, drinking in the Lieutenant’s colourful harangue. After a while, however, when he seemed on

the verge of exhausting his earthy vocabulary, he did notice. And then, report has it, Lt. Podgorsky suddenly became a symphony of color – forest green uniform, blue eyes, and bright red face.

To be continued in the next issue.

OBITUARY

Sir Patrick Leigh Fermor

Sir Patrick Leigh Fermor, DSO, OBE died on June 10, 2011 aged 96. He was a writer and SOE hero whose combination of action and learning marked him as a latter-day Byron.

Leigh Fermor was the architect of one of the most daring feats of the Second World War, the kidnapping of the commander of the German garrison on Crete. As a British army major, Leigh Fermor headed a team of British special operations officers and Greek resistance fighters that captured the German military commander of Crete, Gen. Karl Kreipe.

On the outbreak of war Leigh Fermor first joined the Irish Guards but was then transferred to the Intelligence Corps due to his knowledge of the Balkans. He was initially attached as a liaison officer to the Greek forces fighting the Italians in Albania, then – having survived the fall of Crete in 1941 – was sent back to the island by SOE to command extremely hazardous guerrilla operations against the occupying Nazis.

For a year and a half Leigh Fermor, disguised as a Cretan shepherd (albeit one with a taste for waistcoats embroidered with black arabesques and scarlet silk linings) endured a perilous existence, living in freezing mountain caves while harassing German troops. Other dangers were less foreseeable. While checking his rifle Leigh Fermor accidentally shot a trusted guide who subsequently died of the wound.

His occasional bouts of leave were spent in Cairo, at Tara, the rowdy household presided over by a Polish countess, Sophie Tarnowska. It was on a steamy bathroom window in the house that Leigh Fermor and another of Tara’s residents, Bill Stanley Moss, conceived a remarkable operation that they subsequently executed with great dash on Crete in April 1944.

Dressed as German police corporals, the pair stopped the car belonging to General Karl Kreipe, the island’s commander, while he was returning one evening to his villa near Knossos. The chauffeur disposed of, Leigh Fermor donned the

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general's hat and, with Moss driving the car, they bluffed their way through the centre of Heraklion and a further 22 checkpoints. Kreipe, meanwhile, was hidden under the back seat and sat on by three hefty *andartes*, or Cretan partisans.

For three weeks the group evaded German search parties, finally marching the general over the top of Mount Ida, the mythical birthplace of Zeus

Kreipe was eventually taken off Crete by motorboat to Cairo. The exploit was later filmed (in the Alps) as *Ill Met by Moonlight* (1956), with Dirk Bogarde implausibly cast as Leigh Fermor, who was awarded the DSO for his part in the mission. Such was his standing thereafter on Crete that in local tellings of the deed Kreipe was heard to mutter while being abducted: "I am starting to wonder who is occupying this island – us or the British."

His wife, Joan Leigh Fermor, died in 2003. The couple had no children.

The funeral was held in Dumbleton village, near Cheltenham in England, where he had a house and where his late wife is buried.

This Obituary was compiled with extracts taken from The Daily Telegraph and Google News.

More Snippets

At the beginning of the 2011 season, a visitor to the museum suggested that we should fly the Stars and Stripes along with the Union Flag every day at the Carpetbagger Memorial. The committee debated this and decided to give it a try.

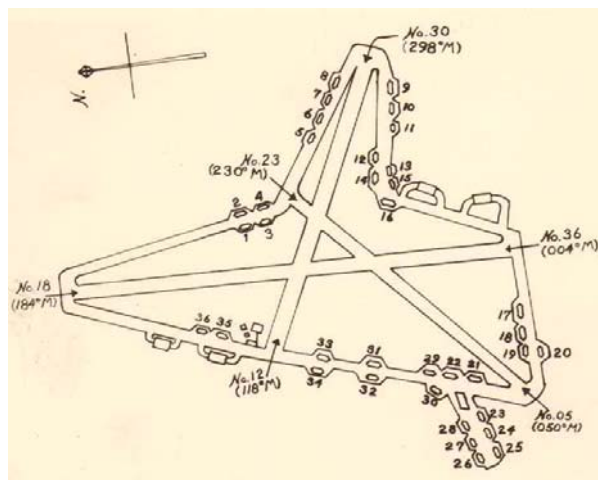
In case the flags were stolen, or deliberately defaced, it was decided to purchase flags measuring 2 feet by 3 feet and fly these for the trial. At a later date we may replace these with the standard 3 foot by 5 foot flags.

Before hoisting the new flags, the flag poles were taken down, scoured and repainted. They were then fitted with new cords for hoisting the flags. They have been up for a month now, and so far, so good.



For those of our new members who have yet to visit the Carpetbagger Memorial, it is built on the site of a former aircraft dispersal point. The perimeter track then passes through fields and has been cut short a few yards from the Broughton road.

In its active days, the perimeter track looped left at this point, continued past the Foxhall Cottages for about half a mile where a turn to the right headed it in a northerly direction for a further half mile, before making another loop to the left and crossing the top of the main runway. Beyond the main runway, a further turn left, took the track alongside the Technical Site.



The Carpetbagger Memorial stands on the south side of dispersal point 16. The perimeter track now ends just beyond DP 9. The Foxhall Cottages are opposite DP's 5 and 6. The road leading to the bomb and container store branches right just before DP 11.



The perimeter track, about 300 yards beyond the Memorial, looking towards the Broughton road. The road to the former bomb and container store is seen on the right. This road now forms part of a bridle path that starts from the Broughton road, near the Foxhall Cottages.

Memories of Foxhall Cottages

Howard Pippin. 858th Bomb Squadron Ground crew, 492nd Bomb Group, recalls the Foxhall cottages from the American side. (This article was first published in 1997 following a letter from David Hall and family who lived at Foxhall)

I read with great interest the letter from David Hall in the June 1997 issue. I was the crew chief of B24 "Spirit of 76" and we were assigned to the hardstand right in front of the terraced Foxhall cottages. These are the cottages that were thoughtfully enshrined on our monument at Harrington. For those that have not been back, the monument is sitting square in the middle of the taxi-way which turned east there and made a long loop through the 858th Bomb Sqn. aircraft parking area and then back west past the cottages towards Harrington.

Back to David, I do believe he was the young lad living in the end cottage right opposite my aircraft. My assistant, Howard Heflin and I became well acquainted with the two ladies living there as they would often do our laundry and pressing. We must have been like "John Wayne" to the lad as we would often see him mimicking our signals as we guided the taxiing pilot in and out of the hardstand, complete with finger across the throat for him to cut the engines. We tried to park the old "76" so the backwash from the props wouldn't throw dirt into their houses. Unfortunately we did lift a young lady and her bike off the road and into the opposite hedgerow one day.



The Foxhall Cottages 1944

We used to rinse our woollens in a bucket of 100 octane aviation fuel, wring them out, put them onto a coat hanger on the aircraft tail and run the engines to get the smell out. On one such occasion, one of the ladies was returning my pressed class "A" blouse over the concertina wire when I noticed a jeep sitting under my wing and the Captain Provost Marshall sitting in it. Now there had been issued an order that no local off-base laundry would be allowed as an air crewman had left some maps and other data in his

flight suit and a patriotic English lady had returned the same to Headquarters. Yes, it hit the fan!

We'd heard this Provost Marshall was an American Indian and liked being tough on those of us who couldn't trace our antecedents. He said "Sergeant don't you know you are not allowed to have locals do your laundry?" I said "Sure do Captain, I was just showing her how I had sewn some emblems on my blouse". There was a long pause, he grinned and said "Don't show her any emblems again" and drove off.

There were a lot of evacuees from the London Blitz who would also take a stroll by the aerodrome on Sundays to see the large black airplanes. These too got a blast from our prop-wash. We kind of resented their having a holiday and they looked so natty in their two-toned shoes, and their summer sailor hats did sail so beautifully into the nearby fields. Yes, a lot of us have fond memories of the Foxhall Cottages.

Howard Pippin. September 1997.



The Foxhall Cottages 2011

It is not possible these days to take a photograph of the cottages from the same position as the one used in 1944. As can be seen in the latest picture, the hedge that was planted after the war is now thick and high. It can also be seen that there has been an extension to the cottages in the intervening years.

Howard isn't the only one with fond memories of the cottages in years gone by.

As a young boy, committee member Graham West used to visit his uncle and aunt who lived at No. 2, Foxhall Cottages. In a previous edition of The Dropzone he recorded his memories of those childhood days, and he has now amended that article with additional information. The updated story of Graham and his cousins, will be published in the next issue of the DZ.

Heritage

Definitions of *heritage* include 'valued things such as historic buildings that have been passed down from previous generations; something of special value and worthy of preservation.'

Earlier in this issue, I gave a brief outline of Ancestral Tourism – a journey to discover ones roots. In recent years, there has been an upsurge of interest in genealogy and there is a wide choice of computer programs that help people to compile a family tree. Some people like to go beyond the mere search for ancestors and learn something about what the ancestors did, the kind of society in which they lived, and so broaden genealogy into an understanding of times past.

Knowing that an ancestor was for example, a carpenter in Northampton during the 1850's, is not going to reveal anything about how he lived, what his living conditions were like and what leisure facilities were available to him. To learn what life was like in 1850's Northampton you will need to visit a museum or a heritage centre.

Museums are our link with the past and remember, the past starts yesterday. During the last five years there has been a nationwide effort to improve the displays in all museums, heritage centres and historic houses. From the British Museum to the smallest local heritage centre there has been a programme for change to make displays more appealing, have better trained staff, wherever possible to provide 'hands on' experiences, and to make museums family-friendly.

Harrington Aviation Museums have been fully involved in this programme and although we can't yet provide a 'hands on' experience, there are plenty of other changes to be made. For example, we are looking into the possibility of installing an electronic guide system. Visitors could be provided with a personal communicator which, at the push of a button, would provide a description of the exhibit being viewed, and when used in the three offices, would relate the history of Operation Carpetbagger.

If funding is found for this project, it will take a considerable time to program the communicators, and will involve not just members of the museum society but also a few Harrington residents, and pupils and teachers from the local schools. We also want to install a touch screen console that could provide information in a way that would be more appealing to children and go some way to satisfying the 'hands on' experience.

Harrington museums provide a good example of a heritage project. Not only are the exhibits themselves items from the past that are being preserved for future generations, but the buildings in which they are housed are also of great heritage value. While historic houses are in a class of their own, only a

small number of museum collections are directly associated with the building in which they are displayed.

BUT, (and there is usually a but) the volunteers who at the moment care for Harrington museums are all older than the exhibits! They are literally a dying breed! In the past seven years we have lost, by either death or retirement on health grounds nine volunteers yet so far, we have found only two permanent replacements. And the replacements fall into the category mentioned in the first sentence of this paragraph.

Harrington Aviation Museums are a very important part of Northamptonshire heritage and therefore, an important part of the heritage of Great Britain. They are unique in so many ways. They are housed in the original buildings on a site that has enough of the old airfield left to proclaim its former identity. Also on the airfield are the three Thor missile sites that have now been awarded Grade II Listed Building status. The museums are dedicated to the memory of 84 OTU RAF, the 801st/492nd BG USAAF, the Special Duty Squadrons of the Royal Air Force, No. 161 Sqn. and No. 138 Sqn., based at RAF Tempsford in Bedfordshire, and 218 (SM) Squadron Royal Air Force.

So I call first upon members of the museum society, then on anyone else who is reading this, to get involved with the **Harrington Heritage Project**. The exhibits belong to the 20th Century, but the museum is, at the moment, thriving in the 21st Century. **Do you want this important facility to continue, or will it be consigned to the dustbin of history for lack of volunteers? It's all up to YOU!**

The first step is to decide if you are prepared to give up a couple of hours of your time, on any Saturday or Sunday, to come to the museum and get involved at a superficial level. You don't have to do much, have a cup of tea, talk to the volunteers, do something exciting – like dusting a shelf! From there you can progress to greeting visitors and switching on the video player, or whatever you feel most comfortable with. Learn how the museum operates so that you can eventually take your place on the committee and help with the future development of Harrington Aviation Museums.

Now that you have read this, please make a special effort to visit the museum this week. Entry is free to members, and also to non-members who are willing to become volunteers.

Visit: <http://www.northamptonshireletyourself-grow.com/museumsandhistorichouses/> to see all Northamptonshire museums, heritage centres and historic houses.

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Wer'e on the Web!
www.
harringtonmuseum.
org.uk



The museum library is now fully refurbished and totally independent of the museum office. Our librarian, Adrian Littlemore has sorted out the books and they are all in their correct groups. He is now engaged in the much harder task of sorting and cataloguing all loose files.

The library is equipped with computer, scanner, printer and two microfilm readers. Everything for the casual browser, or the serious researcher.



And this is Roy's den, the museum office. In addition to a computer and scanner, there is a colour laser printer and another printer with duplexer.

If the library is in use, anyone going on bended knee may get Roy's permission to use this equipment.



Sunset over Station 179, seen from the Carpetbagger Memorial.