



NOT

FORGOTTEN...



**The Story Of A USAAF B-24 Crew.
Their Missions, The Aircraft, The Tragedies.
Fifty Years Later,
They Are Remembered.**

By: Doug F Willies.

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Not Forgotten

The Story Of The B-24 Crew Who Were
The First To Fly "Ginger", The Last
To Fly "Alfred" And How They Were
Remembered Fifty Years Later

Doug F Willies

Jim

with best wishes to you
& all members of the 392nd BGMA.
Thanks for all your help with our
Memorial project.

Doug Willies

17 February 1996.

This Book, entitled "Not Forgotten", is intended for **private circulation** and has been produced as a purely **non-commercial** project. It has been created specifically for the benefit of the sole living survivor of B-24 "Alfred", Henry Wilk and his Family **plus** all the relatives of the other crew members aboard that aircraft when it crashed on 4 January 1944. It is produced expressly for their benefit, information and as a lasting tribute to their loved ones who fought for our mutual Freedom.

Distribution is also extended to a small number of other friends and interested parties who have been directly involved in the Memorial project or have taken particular interest in it.

Additionally, copies are to be deposited at the 8th Air Force Heritage Museum in Savannah, Georgia, USA and with the Second Air Division Memorial Library, Norwich, England. In both cases, for the benefit of other interested Veterans, their families, friends and researchers, both present and future.

In appreciation of their help and interest, copies will be donated to Jim Goar for and on behalf of the 392nd BG Memorial Association and to Oak Mackey, Vice President of the 392nd BG Second Air Division Association.

Finally, a copy will be made available to the Sheringham Museum, as a record of this event in our local history.

In the event of requests from similar organisations or individuals, additional copies may be made available at the discretion of the Author.

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A copy of this Book has been deposited with the British Library.

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*This Book is dedicated to Henry Wilk
and all who flew in B-24 "Alfred"
on the Mission to Kiel on 4 January 1944
and to their Families.
In gratitude for the Freedom
that we enjoy today.*

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Front cover: Henry Wilk at the Memorial. 7 May 1994.

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Photo Credits.

I am indebted to Eastern Counties Newspapers Ltd for permission to use their photographs on Page 194 and on the Front Cover.

I am also most grateful to the following people for access and use of photographs provided by them: Mike Bailey, Mrs Mary Barton, Manley Fox (via Jim Goar), Mrs Velma Berryhill, Mrs Genevieve Gergen, Ian Hawkins, Mrs Barbara Kent, Mrs Doris Reichle, Ron Spendloff, Mrs Mary Wagner and Henry Wilk.

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INTRODUCTION

When in early 1992 I began researching this local wartime aircraft incident, I little realised the extent and depth of the story that would unfold. I did not realise that three years later there would be seven large files crammed with correspondence, photographs, information and Press cuttings on the subject. I am certain too that we had no idea how much interest and appreciation we were going to uncover on "the other side of the Atlantic". We certainly never dreamt that our actions and enquiries were going to prompt the arrival of nineteen Americans, embracing three generations, to a Memorial Dedication Service conducted in our local Church of All Saints during May 1994. Further, little did we expect that nearly two years later the interest would remain as high as ever and that the story would still be unfolding. To be realistic, it seems probable that it will never be *totally* complete! However, a cut-off point *has* to be fixed and I feel that we have now reached that point. The latest item to be included, in fact, arrived this morning and was totally unexpected ! (The photograph included on page 74 and hence the compromise numbering).

Unravelling the facts has been time consuming and, in some areas, complicated by the understandable omissions and inaccuracies that occurred at the time of recording and which resulted from the 'heat of battle'. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy but after 50 years, no guarantees can be given. Memories fade and just occasionally dates have not always totally agreed. Certainly it has been an exercise that has required some patience and was one that could not be rushed. However, the personal rewards have been enormous.

The basic story is truly wonderful and uncomplicated. It is one of very brave young men who went to War and who were prepared to lay down their lives for their Country, for Freedom and for a cause that they knew was Just. There are no higher ideals and there is no greater sacrifice that can be made. That they were typical of so many others of their time in no way detracts from what they did. It simply heightens their stature and standing.

It is thanks to these young men and all the others like them, that we have enjoyed fifty years of freedom. That this freedom was hard fought and achieved with great sacrifice, must never be forgotten. It must be remembered by present *and* future generations. The Memorial to these men and which is located in the quiet and peaceful Churchyard of All Saints, Upper Sheringham, has been erected with just this in mind. The sacrifices and efforts of those young Americans *will never* be forgotten.

As a wartime schoolboy living in Norfolk and taking a particular interest in the aerial activities overhead (and what schoolboy didn't ?!), I well remember observing the contribution made by the US 8th Air Force and specifically by the Second Air Division and their hordes of Liberators. But not just the aircraft. The ever friendly GI's - I still have an autograph book with dozens of names in it - and recall hours of conversation with home-sick young Americans. They seemed to enjoy talking to us youngsters and certainly the feelings were reciprocated.

We had already been involved in a fearsome and weary struggle for several years and the sudden appearance of a fresh and eager Ally brought hope and

promise for the future. So my memories remain strong and positive. Perhaps, in some way, this is a belated gesture of appreciation.

I have always felt that there is a special affinity between our two peoples. No doubt attributable to that very special bond, forged by a common cause in two World Wars, that brought together so many Americans and Britons during those years of turmoil. This is especially applicable to East Anglians, those who live in this part of eastern England, the Second World War home of the US 8th Air Force.

I have been asked by a number of the relatives of the crew to 'put-together' the results of my researches. This is a new 'field' for me. However, having spent many hours in the pursuit of this one small piece of wartime history, how could I refuse the opportunity? In particular, after having had the pleasure of meeting the sole survivor and those other wonderful people who represented crew members and having corresponded with others, it is a privilege to at least give it a try. I only hope that I have, in some small way, done justice to the task.

In addition to the wartime aspects, I felt that it would be appropriate to include the story of the Memorial project and to record the associated events that have taken place half a century after that fateful crash in 1944.

I have assembled these pages in order to make available to you all the information that I have been able to ascertain about your loved ones during their fight for our mutual freedom. I know that in some cases, because of wartime restrictions, the amount of information available to you at the time was very limited. I know too that to be reminded of these sad circumstances can be very painful but, at the same time, I also know that it can bring comfort and re-assurance. Above all, always remember that they fell amongst friends and that *they will never be forgotten.*

It is my intention and wish that this story is written solely for the benefit of Henry Wilk and all the relatives of the crew plus a small number of other special friends and interested parties. It is, therefore, a very limited edition and for private circulation.

I must express my thanks to my wife Celia for her patience whilst I have spent many hours in front of this word processor, producing these pages over the last twelve months. Additionally her practical assistance and encouragement have been key factors and I am grateful.

For my part, to have written-up this story and to have been involved with the Memorial project, along with Celia and May, has been an honour and has given great pleasure and satisfaction. It is but a very small gesture in honour of that gallant crew.

Doug Willies.
Sheringham, Norfolk, England.
17 January 1996.

BOOK 1

1943 -1944

PART 1

Prelude to Combat

CHAPTER 1

The Colby Waugh Crew

This is the story of a Liberator crew. One crew amongst thousands that were formed during WWII. However, to all of us reading this account, they were a SPECIAL crew. To you in the US, they are special because they were and are your kin, to some your nearest and dearest. If not that, then they were colleagues, fellow crewmen or at least, fellow countrymen carrying out their duty to the full. To us over here in England there is also a special affinity. Some of us reading this will recall the day when these young men landed, unceremoniously, close to where we live. Some will have actually witnessed the incident and a very small number will have rendered practical assistance to those who were in a position to be aided. Many, at least, have vivid memories of the American involvement during those hectic war years. Some will have met relatives of the crew and the sole living survivor in more recent times. But *all* will be aware of the Memorial erected locally to remind us of *their* sacrifice. They were true Allies, comrades-in-arms who shared the burdens of war in the cause of Freedom, flying and fighting a common foe from these eastern shores of England. So, to us also, yes they are *special* and I hope that nobody will be offended if I refer to them collectively from time to time as "*our crew*".

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We will start our story by having a brief look at the time when they came together in the US and formed into a crew. Individually they had learned their respective skills as aircrew members and it appears almost certain that they arrived collectively at Scottsbluff in Nebraska during June/July 1943. It was here, or at their next 'port of call', that they formed into a crew and then went on to Mountain Home, Idaho on 23 August. We have a *crew* photograph of them at the Railroad Station here and which must have been taken on either their arrival or at the time of their departure just four days later on 27 August. See Photo 1. They were then assigned to Casper, Wyoming from 30 August to 26 September for an intensive spell of pre-combat training. A further journey by train took them to Herington in Kansas in order to collect their aircraft and **make** the final preparations for their flight overseas, as recounted in the next chapter.

We do know that they trained hard and with great enthusiasm and that they became an efficient and effective B-24 crew. So much so that they were classified as a 'model crew' and very nearly became destined to continue their service in the US as Instructors. They had other ideas and wanted action

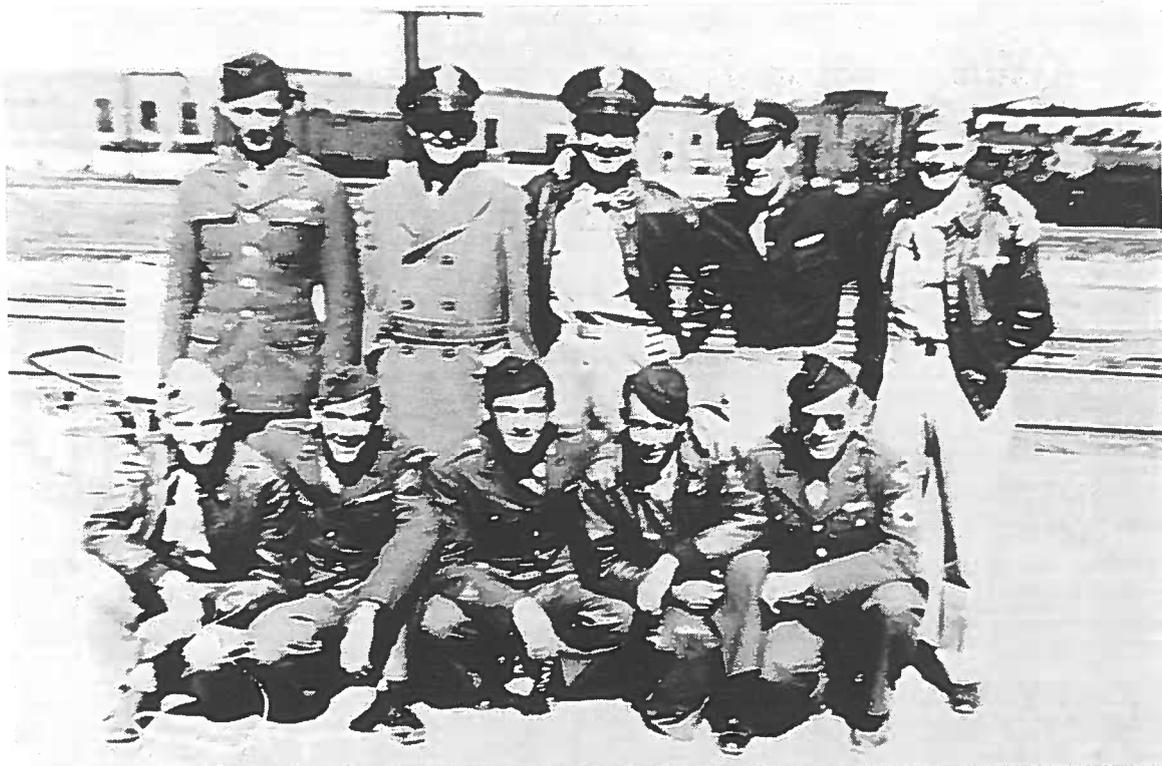
During this intensive training they built up that truly unique 'team spirit' and understanding of each others capabilities that is only found and understood by those who have served in one of the fighting Services. Then, as now, it was this wonderful sense of comradeship and reliance, one upon the other, that sustained all fighting men and which would serve them well in their times of greatest need. Amongst those who did not survive, it must have provided solace to the end and for those that did survive their ordeals, I suspect that this unique attribute remains forever with them, unforgotten and cherished.

It was on 19 June 1943 that Parke Kent, the Radio Operator, married Barbara whilst he was serving at Scottsbluff. Parke had undergone his Radio training at Sioux Falls Air Base in South Dakota between 25 July and 12 December 1942. Parke was transferred to Scottsbluff during the following summer and Barbara and he were together until the end of September when they all left as a crew for Herington. It was at this point that the wives who had been together with their husbands for a brief period, had to make a sad and lonely return home.

The Crew

2/Lt Colby A Waugh. Pilot. From Solon, Maine.
2/Lt James W Barton. Co-pilot. From Missouri.
2/Lt Arthur L Cound. Navigator. Home town El Paso, Texas.
2/Lt Virgil E Thomson. Bombardier. From Birmingham, Alabama.
T/Sgt Parke V Kent. Radio Operator. From Vermont.
T/Sgt Lester L Wagner. Engineer. Home State Pennsylvania.
S/Sgt Don C Belden. Upper Gunner. Home State Nebraska.
S/Sgt Earl J Johnson. Gunner. From Ohio.
S/Sgt Edward R Murphy. Ball turret Gunner. From Pennsylvania.
S/Sgt Henry Wilk. Armourer/tail turret Gunner. Home State Ohio.

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Photograph 1. The Crew. Mountain Home, Idaho. August 1943.
Back row, left to right: S/Sgt Don Belden, Lt Virgil Thomson, Lt Jim Barton,
Lt Colby Waugh and Lt Arthur Cound.

Front, left to right: T/Sgt Parke Kent, T/Sgt Lester Wagner,
S/Sgt Edward Murphy, S/Sgt Earl Johnson and S/Sgt Henry Wilk.

CHAPTER 2

The Flight - US To The UK

B-24H Liberator, serial number 41-29177 was handed over to the USAAF on 8 September 1943. The aircraft subsequently arrived at Herington in Kansas on 29 September where Lt Colby Waugh and his crew met up with it for the first time, two days after their own arrival at the Base. They learned that it was the aircraft in which they were to fly overseas - and to War. Based on the recorded experiences of other crews, they were probably not aware at this point that they were bound for the European Theatre of Operations (ETO). However, back with the Waugh crew. Reflecting the mood of the times and the calibre of the young men involved, we do know for certain that they were keen and enthusiastic to get involved as soon as possible in order 'to do their bit' in the cause of Freedom. Earlier fears that they might have been held back in the US as Instructors because of their high ratings as a crew during recent training sessions had been alleviated - if only by somewhat devious means!

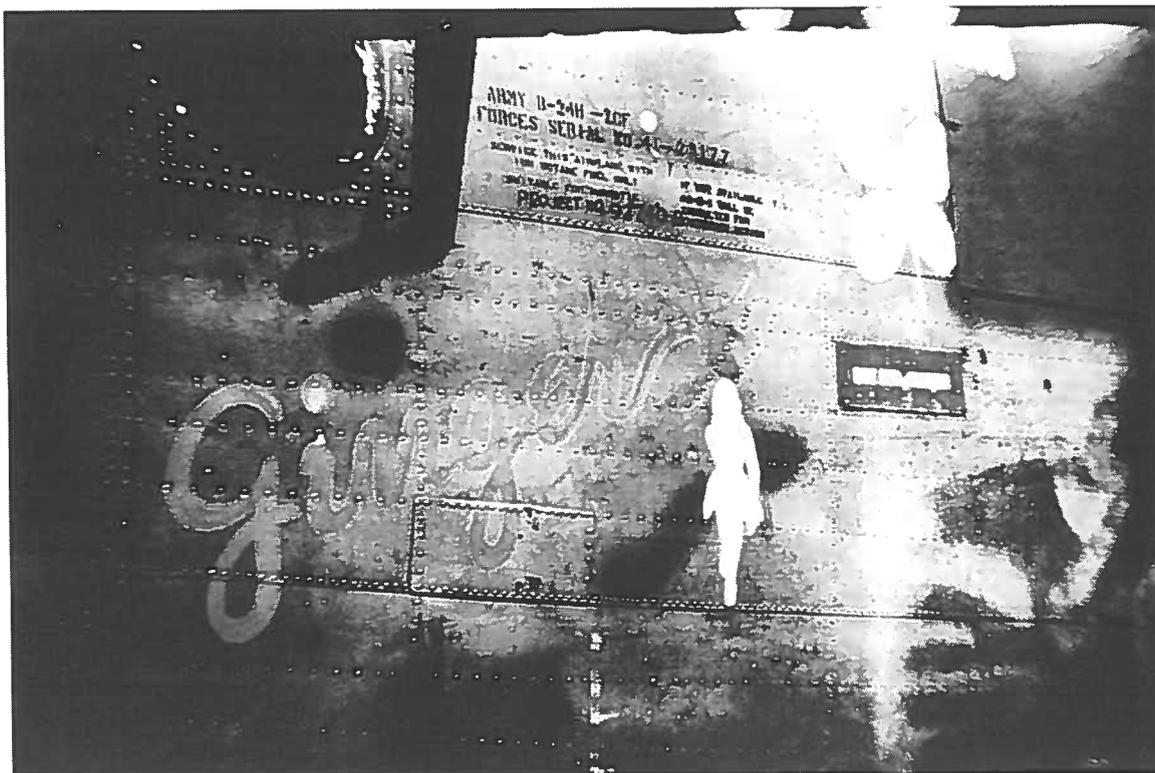
It was probably here at Herington, or at their next and final destination in the US, that the crew persuaded someone at the Base to add some personalised decoration on *their* aircraft - nose art, as it is known today. This was common practice and must have been a morale booster for the individuals concerned. Pilot Lt Colby Waugh's wife Doris had given birth to a baby daughter a few weeks earlier, whom they named Ginger. What better name for *their* B-24?! So "Ginger" was painted on the nose and that must have been a wonderful thrill for this young 'family man', Colby Waugh. We know too that below the tail turret in Henry Wilk's territory, the name "Donna" was inscribed. That name too was very pertinent as fifty plus years later, Henry Wilk and his charming wife Donna have brought up a fine family and are now enjoying retirement together in Florida. It is believed that "Ginger" and "Donna" were painted on the aircraft by the same person - but it was not done by Henry. However, as a very personal touch, Henry did inscribe the name "Tiny" on the left-hand 50 calibre (0.5 ins) gun in the rear turret, the nickname given to Donna. On the right-hand weapon, he painted the name "Hank" - the name by which he was known to the crew. See Photos 2 and 3 overleaf. It could be that additional names or decorations were added elsewhere on the aircraft at this time but none can now be recalled or identified.

Note: The photograph taken of the nose of the aircraft during the summer of 1944 does show some additional artwork but it is suspected that this was added later in the aircraft's life - see Part 8, Chapter 16.

At Herington they were kitted out for overseas - new parachutes, Very pistols, First Aid Kits, binoculars and other pertinent items, including 0.45 automatic revolvers. Personal items were made available for the crew. These included toothpaste, hair oil, shaving cream, etc.

From Herington, in the early hours of 4 October 1943, Colby Waugh and crew flew their B-24 southwards towards Morrison Field, West Palm Beach, Florida.

Mrs Mary Barton, the young wife of the Co-pilot, had been able to join her husband Jimmy for the few weeks before their departure from Herington. To



Photograph 2. B-24H, 41-29177. "Ginger", painted on the port (Pilots) side of the nose.



Photograph 3. B-24H "Ginger", 41-29177. Tail turret. Note: "Donna", "Tiny" and "H" of "Hank" just visible.

this day she recalls "that very, very early morning flight, of the horrible quietness when he was gone and the lonely trip home".

Of Morrison Field, other crews have commented - 'not much to say about it except that it had a fence around it and we couldn't get out....'. This was their last stop-over before leaving the shores of the US.

"Ginger" and crew left Morrison field on 5 October 1943 and assuming that the same procedures were adopted that applied to other crews, they opened sealed orders whilst airborne and only then discovered their final destination. In any case, we know that they were flying alone and that their next stop-over was to be at Borinquen Field in Puerto Rico. They found green grass, trees and rolling countryside on arrival. We know too that they were allocated 21 days in which to reach their destination in the UK. They were to arrive in just 13 !

From Puerto Rico, "Ginger" and its crew flew the 1,000 miles hop to Atkinson Field in British Guiana, South America. (As from 1966, known as Guyana). Parke Kent later reported that by this time 'the crew were settling down and working well together'.

Then another 800 miles flight to Val de Gaens Field (Valley of the Dogs), Belem in Brazil, beyond the mouth of the mighty Amazon River, which alone took almost an hour to cross ! This airfield was built upon sand alongside the Para River, close to the ancient city of Para-Belem. Maybe Henry remembers the notice on the door of the Flight Office and which brought many a wry smile to the face of aircrew passing through. It read: "Aviso. E'terminantemente Prohibido Estacionar N'Este Lugar". Translated: "It is strictly prohibited to park here". Crew members shared guard duties, sitting under the wings of their aircraft in order to avoid the heat of the sun.

Note: In July of this year (1995), military investigators recovered wreckage and human remains from a B-24 that had crashed in the Amazon jungle fifty one years earlier. The Liberator went down in remote jungle on 11 April 1944 after encountering a storm whilst flying from Trinidad to Belem. There were no survivors.

"Ginger" continued her journey. Still within Brazil, almost 1,000 miles to Natal on the very eastern tip of the Continent of South America and the point nearest the west coast of Africa, nearly 3,000 miles distant. Here they landed at Parnemirim Field, an airfield set amongst the sandy scrub close to Natal. It was here that the picture of Henry's tail turret was taken - Photograph 3. Only a few hundred miles south of the Equator, the hot tropical sun was notorious for its intensity at this busy airfield with its constant arrivals and departures of B-24's, B-17's, C-46's and 47's. There were swimming facilities for the crew to enjoy whilst their aircraft was checked and readied before they left on the next stage of their flight - the arduous sea crossing of the South Atlantic. No doubt they took advantage of the locally grown fruits, particularly the bananas and oranges which abounded. We do know that they succumbed to the sales pleas from the hordes of local vendors offering just about 'everything under the sun', including leather boots and similar items ! Henry bought a *monkey* !!

Refuelled, they set course eastwards across the South Atlantic for Ascension Island, 1,400 miles distant. This tiny British governed outpost in mid-Atlantic, no more than nine miles in length and six in width, was a convenient stop-over en route to the West African mainland. Navigator, Arthur Cound, meticulous and professional, was proving his expertise. A radio beacon

had been installed to assist with the navigational needs of those crossing the Atlantic at this point but there was no room for error.

A few years earlier, this sparsely populated island was known for its booster station for the submarine cable between Europe and South America and as a radio relay station and little else. Both enterprises were operated by 'Cable and Wireless'. The overwhelming need to transport aircraft and war materials from the US to the UK saw the establishment of the Northern route of what became known as the "Atlantic Bridge". The Southern route was created initially in order to provide a link from the US to the Middle East war zone via South America and West Africa. This route was later extended northwards from Africa to the UK, thereby providing an additional and alternative link to Britain. With the provisioning of the Southern route, the importance of Ascension suddenly escalated. It was decided that a landing strip had to be produced and produced quickly, that would be capable of accepting the largest aircraft of the day. It was agreed that the Americans take on this formidable engineering task. An American reconnaissance party arrived on the near deserted island in late 1941. In March 1942 the main Task Force arrived and by June of that year they had, literally, blasted out a single runway from the solid, jagged rock. A very considerable feat of engineering, even by today's standards. By chance, the very first aircraft to land on this newly constructed runway in mid-Atlantic and hundreds of miles from the nearest land mass, was not a big heavy bomber or transport but a single engined Fairy Swordfish biplane of the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm ! Despatched from a RN aircraft carrier operating in the vicinity with instructions to drop a message to the Islanders, Lt E Dixon Child discovered the magnificent new runway, hastily exchanged messages with those on the ground and had the privilege of being the very first to land an aircraft on the Ascension Island ! Now known as Wideawake Airfield - and may well have been known by that name in the 1940's - it was so called because of the thousands of birds of that name which live and breed upon that rocky island. The birds, also known as the Sooty Tern are somewhat larger than gulls, fly throughout the night and return to their rocky home in the early hours of the morning. When disturbed they fly up in such dense hordes that they present an extreme hazard to aircraft in flight. For safety's sake, aircraft had to be scheduled to arrive and take-off at times that minimised the risk of bird strikes.

Before our crew left Ascension, Henry's South American monkey was given away ! Because of its obnoxious smell, it was decided that it was not such a good pet after all !!

Onwards across the South Atlantic for almost another 1,400 miles, Colby Waugh and his Co-pilot Jimmie Barton, flew them into Roberts Field, Liberia on 13 October. Safely down in Africa, just north of the Equator and nestled between Sierra Leone and the Ivory Coast, the tropical heat must have been intense. However, this was the point at which Henry Wilk and the other gunners removed the grease from their guns. Liberally coated to protect them from the elements, particularly the corrosive air of the South Atlantic, they were progressively approaching the War Zone and the initial preparations were put in hand. However, they did have time too for brief relaxation. Parke Kent reported later that he and Virgil Thomson watched a movie.

Then north west along the coast of Africa to Eckens Field, Dakar on the most westerly tip of the continent and capital of French Senegal. They landed on a runway composed of steel matting and were probably initially alarmed by the roughness of the surface and their landing ! As they taxied "Ginger" to its

dispersal point, the clouds of dust blown up by the props from the dry sandy surface were in complete contrast to the conditions experienced in the tropical areas that they had just left behind. French Bengalise soldiers guarded their aircraft at the dispersals. The crew quickly became aware that mosquitoes and the risk of malaria were high on the list of hazards. At night they slept under a mosquito net and if they ventured outside, complete coverage of exposed areas of the body was essential.

Now onwards and north east to Marrakesh in French Morocco. Accounts by crews taking the same route a few months later speak of having to skirt around unfriendly Spanish Morocco by crossing the Sahara Desert (almost equally unfriendly ?) and taking the 'back door' route into Marrakesh. It seems highly probable that this too was the routing taken by "Ginger" and her crew. In any case, it must have been an arduous and tedious flight of over 1,500 miles, crossing the seemingly endless sands of the Desert, then over the 13,600 ft Grand Atlas Mountains before letting down into Marrakesh. Similarly, we are not certain if the crew had the time, or the inclination, to visit the famous Casbah within the Walled City. Maybe wartime restrictions prohibited such visits? Many crews seem to remember the Italian POW's who worked in the Messes and generally performed many of the routine tasks around the airfield.

Then the final leg of the long and hazardous journey and one which posed a new and very real danger to "Ginger" and all those who flew in her. For the first time they would be entering hostile air space. From Marrakesh to England was a distance of some 1,300 miles and flying northwards they would skirt the infamous Bay of Biscay before their final run-in to a UK airfield. They needed no reminding that they were entering the active war zone and they were slightly taken aback when they were allocated just 50 rounds of ammunition for each of their 50 calibre (0.5 ins) machine guns - a surprisingly small amount. However, and much more significantly, they were recalled to Marrakesh on two separate occasions after setting out for the UK because enemy air activity had been reported along their intended route. When finally on their way, the whole crew must have been at their most alert. Pilots Colby Waugh and Jimmie Barton knew that they had almost 'made it' to the UK without mishap after what must have been their most gruelling flight thus far. Navigator Arthur Cound surely must have felt real and justified satisfaction in providing courses and headings that got them where they needed to be. The role of the Radio Operator, Parke Kent, was also essential in providing communications and radio navigational facilities for the Navigator, Pilot and Co-pilot. The Engineer, Lester Wagner, undoubtedly had some harrowing thoughts and concerns about the fuel states and engine performances during those long hops between landing grounds. Bombardier Virgil Thomson and the Gunners Henry Wilk, Don Belden, Earl Johnson and Edward Murphy no doubt had a myriad of tasks to perform but you can bet your bottom dollar that during those last few hundred miles before reaching Britain that they were the most alert and keenest-eyed crew in the 8th Air Force ! The JU88's still roamed the Bay of Biscay and many an Allied aircraft came to grief in that area. If they were unfortunate enough to come down in those seas, the chances of survival were very slim indeed. Additionally, it was not unheard of for a crew to find themselves over Occupied Europe and lost to AA fire or to enemy fighters. A small error of navigation or succumbing to the German radio signals designed to lure unsuspecting aircraft off course, accounted for many a crew that 'didn't make it' and who joined the Missing In Action (MIA) roster. As if this was not enough, as a final hazard on their final leg to England, they encountered a violent storm, probably over the Bay of Biscay. Maybe it was a blessing in disguise and helped to keep the area clear

of enemy aircraft ? In any case, Navigator Arthur Cound gave them a new course to steer in order to bring them into an alternative airfield and clear of the worst of the adverse weather.

Then suddenly, out of the murk and the drabness, there it was ! The Atlantic rollers breaking on the shores of England. The green fields and reassuringly, the very wonderful sight of a long and most welcome runway stretching inland from the very edge of the Cornish cliff tops. Royal Air Force Station St Mawgan, on the south western tip of England. After all those monotonous miles over the ocean, they were there, in the ETO. Tired but jubilant and 'rearing to go'. They had 'made it'.

It was 18 October 1943, just 13 days after leaving the US. "Ginger" had brought them all safe and sound a distance of over 9,000 hazardous miles ! One more short journey and then the crew were to separate from "Ginger" and crew and aircraft were to go their different ways to War.

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CHAPTER 3

The UK Bases

The following information is based on a list of Units attended by S/Sgt Henry Wilk during the months of October and November 1943. As a Replacement Crew from the US, they had to progress through the arrival and assignment procedures. Additionally, they were required to attend courses to familiarise them with the latest ETO combat procedures. We are not certain in all cases, which members attended which establishments. Certainly most, if not all of the Enlisted Men spent a period of time at the Gunnery School at Snettisham. Probably Parke Kent, the Radio Operator for example, was detailed for a course covering his particular sphere of activity and that this similarly applied to other crew members, including the Officers. If these courses were conducted at Cheddington or elsewhere, is not known. It would seem pretty certain, however, that they were together again as a crew at Attlebridge for their final pre-combat training course.

Note: Map 1 on Page 23 shows the locations of the UK pre-combat Bases.

1. RAF St Mawgan.

Located 3 miles north east of Newquay, Cornwall.
Longest runway (1944): 3,000 yards, 100 yards wide.

After landing safely at RAF St Mawgan, *our* crew rested and refreshed themselves before taking off on their last journey in "Ginger". Heading north, they set course for RAF Burtonwood in Lancashire, the final delivery destination.

Notes:

- i. Bomber aircraft flown across the Atlantic from the US by way of the Southern Ferry Route normally touched down in the UK at RAF St Mawgan or at RAF St Eval. RAF Valley in north Wales was also used extensively by cross-Atlantic aircraft.
- ii. Both St Mawgan and St Eval are in Cornwall, on the south west tip of England and are only three miles apart. Both occupy sites immediately adjacent to the coast.
- iii. Aircraft taking the Northern Ferry Route from the US normally landed at RAF Prestwick on the west coast of Scotland.
- iv. As the Colby Waugh crew in "Ginger" encountered the violent storm on their last leg of their flight to England and had to divert to another airfield, it is possible (and it is *only* a possibility) that their original planned destination may have been RAF Valley. Henry Wilk has expressed a belief that they landed in Ireland before arriving in England. However, his list of 'Bases visited' does not confirm this. It could well be, therefore, that if their original routing had been adhered to and the storm not encountered, they may well have intended landing in Northern Ireland prior to their final arrival on mainland Britain. This could perhaps account for the confusion in Henry's mind reference this aspect. It is unlikely that RAF St Eval would have been the original UK destination as it is so close to St Mawgan and the weather conditions would not have been significantly different at either airfield.

2. RAF Burtonwood. USAAF Station 590.

Located 3 miles north west of Warrington in Lancashire. Close to the port of Liverpool.

Longest runway (1944): 1,750 yards by 50 yards wide.

After landing at Burtonwood, "Ginger" was handed over to the Base Air Depot organisation. After special work was carried out on her over the following weeks, she went on to play an almost unique role in the development of bombing techniques as used by the US 8th Air Force. Her story is told later in this account.

In the meantime. *our* crew were required to part company with 'their special aircraft' and proceeded along a slightly different path to War. They next experienced British wartime rail travel as they headed southwards for the County of Staffordshire in mid-England.

Burtonwood aspects:

The Station was built during 1939/1940 and was transferred from the RAF to the USAAF during July 1942. Extensive storage and workshop facilities were provided for the overhaul, repair, modification and parts supply for the USAAF in the ETO. Designated No 1 Base Air Depot (1 BAD) from late 1943, Burtonwood became the largest of the three BAD's in the UK. The other two were at nearby Warton and at Langford Lodge in Northern Ireland.

By 1944, 1 BAD Burtonwood had no fewer than 44 hangars, 513,695 square feet of storage space and 1,074,291 square feet of workshop facilities.

Notes:

- i. On arrival in the UK, USAAF aircraft were normally ferried to one of the BAD's for inspection, overhaul and/or modification, as required. If the BAD facilities were overloaded, the aircraft were sent to storage airfields at either Greencastle, Mullaghmore, Toome or Langford Lodge, all four located in Northern Ireland. They would then be ferried from the storage airfield to the BAD, as required. After the necessary work had been carried out at the BAD, the aircraft would be ferried to the combat base. These ferrying services were carried out by the 27th Air Transport Group.
- ii. In the case of *radar* equipped aircraft, they would be taken to Alconbury in Huntingdonshire (Station 102).

3. Stone, Staffordshire.

It is believed that the entire crew assembled at Stone after departing Burtonwood.

The 12th Replacement and Control Depot (R & CD) was established at Stone in September 1942. The purpose of the Depot was to receive, process and assign airmen who were not already allocated to a Unit.

The Depot was located two miles from Stone in the village of Yarnfield. Detachments were also established at Chorley and Bamber Bridge. The latter is four miles north west of Lichfield, also in Staffordshire and the former is a short distance south of Preston in nearby Lancashire. (See Note ii).

The 14th R & CD arrived in April 1943 and the 16th R & CD arrived four months later in August 1943. The 12th at Stone acted as the senior Unit.

Notes:

i. In March 1943 the Depot was given responsibility for the reception of **replacement combat crews**. Less than 4,000 personnel had passed through the Unit prior to June 1943. An unprecedented influx was received in **October** with the arrival of 20,000 un-assigned personnel. These numbers completely swamped the available facilities, in spite of every effort being made to increase accommodation and staffing levels in order to meet the new requirements. Large numbers of airmen had to be housed temporarily at other bases where accommodation was available. By December 1943, handling capacity had increased to 32,000 and by adopting improved methods and practices, the Replacement and Control Depots coped from then onwards with the continued influx of large numbers of replacement airmen arriving from the US.

We have no indications of how these difficulties affected *our* crew. It would appear that they arrived at a critical period but as there is no indication on Henry's list to suggest 'temporary accommodation' elsewhere, we must assume that Stone managed to cope adequately with their passage through the Depot !

ii. Under the heading of 'Stone', the following additional references are made:

a. Jefferson Hall, station 594, activated August 1942.

b. Beaffy Hall, station 518, activated September 1942.

c. Duncan Hall, Station 509, also activated in September 1942.

It is not clear if these refer to three locations all of which are in the vicinity of Stone or if it refers to the Stone (Yarnfield) site plus the Detachments at Chorley and Bamber Bridge.

It is thought that the entire crew will have again proceeded to the next Unit on Henry's list and that they all headed south, probably by train, to Cheddington in the County of Buckinghamshire, north west of London.

4. Cheddington. Station 113.

Located 7 miles north east of Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire.

No 12 Combat Crew Replacement Centre (CCRC) was activated at Cheddington on 27 August 1942.

The function of the CCRC was to assess the state of training of an airman with reference to his assigned duties in the ETO. Once assessed, the CCRC was to give him instruction in equipment and procedures pertinent to operations from this country. For example, gunners received intensive training courses in aircraft recognition and further practice in the use of their weapons.

CCRC Cheddington opened for training on 8 June 1943 but it was almost another two months before the Centre was considered to be functioning satisfactorily. It was re-organised and on 16 August 1943 it was re-named the 2901st CCRC Group (B) (P). By 15 November 1943 it was again re-named and given the title of No 2 CCRC. This designation was retained throughout the remainder of this Unit's operation.

Notes:

i. A Detachment of the 2901st CCRC, Cheddington, was established at Snettisham, Norfolk during the summer of 1943. This was designated as the 1st Combat Crew Gunnery School.

ii. During March 1943, the 2nd Bomb Wing (later designated as the 2nd Air Division) set-up the Provisional Training Centre at Hethel in Norfolk (see Note iv). This step was taken because it was felt that B-24 crews were not receiving adequate training to meet their specified needs. This Provisional Training Centre later moved to Hethel, again in Norfolk (see Note v). By July 1943, with the improved facilities in position at Cheddington, most of the Instructors moved to

that location and the facility at Hardwick closed down during August 1943. However, see Paragraph 6. RAF Attlebridge.

iii. It is known that from July/August 1943 most of the B-24 replacement crews passed through the Cheddington CCRC.

iv. Hethel, Station 114, located 3 miles east of Wymondham, Norfolk, was used by the B-24 equipped 389th BG (H) during the period 11 June 1943 to 30 May 1945.

v. Hardwick, Norfolk, Station 104, was the base for the 93rd BG (H), located 5 miles west of Bungay in south Norfolk. This Group was equipped with B-24's and operated from Hardwick from 27 November 1942 through to 12 June 1945. During that period they were involved in deployments to North Africa and as the oldest B-24 Group in the 8th. Air Force, they flew more missions than any other Group.

vi. Cheddington also had an operational role. It was the home of the 44th BG, involved in night leaflet dropping operations.

5. Snettisham, Norfolk. Station 172.

Located on the coast 9 miles north of Kings Lynn and bordering the Norfolk side of the area known as the Wash. The Unit was established approximately one mile west of the village of Snettisham, adjacent to the sea and was opened during the summer of 1943 as a Detachment of the CCRC at Cheddington. At least five of *our* crew attended training at this School - see Note ii.

Notes:

i. The records state that Snettisham was activated as the Air Division Gunnery School on 12 November 1943 for the purpose of serving *B-17 gunners of the 1st Air Division* and to provide them with facilities at local firing ranges. The records also state that facilities *specifically for the B-24 gunners of the 2nd Air Division were established in Northern Ireland.*

ii. However, it is clear that the Snettisham training facilities were, in fact, extended to the *B-24 gunners of the 2nd Bomb Wing/2nd Air Division* for at least a period of time in late 1943. We have photographic evidence that at least five of *our* crew were there, almost certainly during November 1943. They were S/Sgt Henry Wilk, T/Sgt Lester Wagner, S/Sgt Edward Murphy, S/Sgt Don Belden and S/Sgt Earl Johnson. See Photograph 4, page 17.

iii. It is interesting to note that the records show that the 4th Gunnery and Tow Target Flight (4 G & TT Flt) was formed at Greencastle in Northern Ireland on *3 December 1943*. The purpose of the Flight was to provide sleeve towing facilities for the local CCRC Units of the 8th Air Force Composite Command and were mainly used for the training of *B-24 gunners* at the Derryogue Ranges (N.Ireland). The Flight operated from 3 December to 30 September 1945 and was based at Greencastle.

iv. It should be noted therefore, that the 4th G & TT Flt was not formed until *3 December 1943*. We know that *our* crew was assigned to the 392nd BG (H) at Wendling as from *4 December 1943* (SO of that date issued by HQ 2 CCRC confirms this). It follows that the facilities in Northern Ireland specifically for *B-24 gunners of the 2nd Bomb Wing/2nd Air Division* would **not** have been available for *our* crew during the period of time that they were in the UK prior to their assignment to a combat Group. It would appear, therefore, that there was a period during late 1943 when the Gunnery School at Snettisham dealt with **both** B-17 and B-24 Gunners.

It was a period of great expansion and flux and many *ad hoc* arrangements had

to be adopted in order to meet rapidly changing needs and situations. The administrative and training facilities must have been as hard pressed as all the other organisational and operational services involved in building up and running such a massive enterprise as the 8th Air Force. It is small wonder that some of the records relating to these activities are sometimes not as accurate or complete as we would like ! Especially for those of us who look back, at our leisure, 50 years or so after the event and well clear of the 'heat of battle' !!

It seems certain that all the crew were together when they attended the next course. It is not known if they proceeded from Cheddington and/or Snettisham as a group or if they assembled individually at Attlebridge.



Photograph 4. Snettisham, Norfolk. November 1943.

Back row, left to right: S/Sgt Don Belden, S/Sgt Edward Murphy and S/Sgt Earl Johnson.

Front, left to right: T/Sgt Lester Wagner and S/Sgt Henry Wilk.

6. RAF Attlebridge, Norfolk. USAAF Station 120.

This airfield was located 8 miles west of Norwich and just 14 miles east of Wendling.

Longest runway: 2,000 yards and 50 yards wide.

The airfield was opened in June 1941 as a satellite of nearby RAF Swanton Morley. Flying Bristol Blenheims and later Bostons, 105 and 88 Squadrons of the RAF were involved in the dogged air war of the early War period. For just one month in late 1942, Attlebridge experienced its first American involvement when the B-26 Marauder equipped 319th BG of the USAAF moved in to carry out secret preparations and training for the forthcoming Allied landings in North West Africa. Their short stay was followed by a five month involvement with the now legendary Dutch 320 Squadron, from March to August 1943.

They were equipped with B-25 North American Mitchells. The airfield was also used by 247 Squadron RAF flying Hawker Typhoons for a short period during August 1943. However, major work services had started in preparation for the next occupants - the B-24's of the 466th BG (H). They arrived on 7 March 1944 and left on 6 July 1945. During that period they flew 232 Missions, lost 47 B-24's in action and another 24 through other causes.

However, there was another role for Attlebridge during the period immediately before *our* crew flew in combat from Wendling. Whilst most of the B-24 replacement crews were passing through the CCRC at Cheddington by July/August 1943, *the 2nd Bomb Wing/2nd Air Division still felt that additional training, particularly in ETO flight procedures, would be of benefit to their Liberator crews.* Consequently, on 23 October 1943, the 2nd Wing's Provisional Training Centre was yet again re-activated (See Para.4, Note ii on Page 15) and Attlebridge was selected. Utilising a dozen B-24D's and some personnel from the 19th Anti-Submarine Squadron which was about to be disbanded, the extra training for the replacement B-24 crews was conducted from this airfield until Christmas 1943.

This Training Centre was, in fact, disbanded on 26 December 1943. By this time, the facilities at Cheddington plus those at the newly established CCRC at Langford Lodge in Northern Ireland, were providing an expanded programme of pre-combat training for the Liberator crews.

Our crew passed through this UK based training facility during late November and very early December - and during its limited period of operations from this airfield. It was their final training course and their next assignment took them to their operational combat unit, the 392nd BG (H), just a very few miles distant at Wendling.

7. Wendling, Norfolk. USAAF Station 118.

So from Attlebridge, *our* crew travelled the short distance to Wendling airfield - officially assigned on 4 December 1943. Home of the recently installed 392nd BG (H), an active and involved B-24 equipped combat Group that had already suffered considerable losses and, in as few short months, were truly battled hardened.

Aspects reference Wendling Airfield:

It is located 4 miles west of the mid-Norfolk market town of East Dereham. It was built in 1942 and the main Contractor was Taylor Woodrow Ltd.

Runways: 010 degrees 2,000 yards long.

260 " 1,400 " "

130 " 1,400 " "

All runways 50 yards wide.

Aircraft dispersals: 25 pans with 26 loops added late in construction.

Hangars: Two dispersed Type T2's.

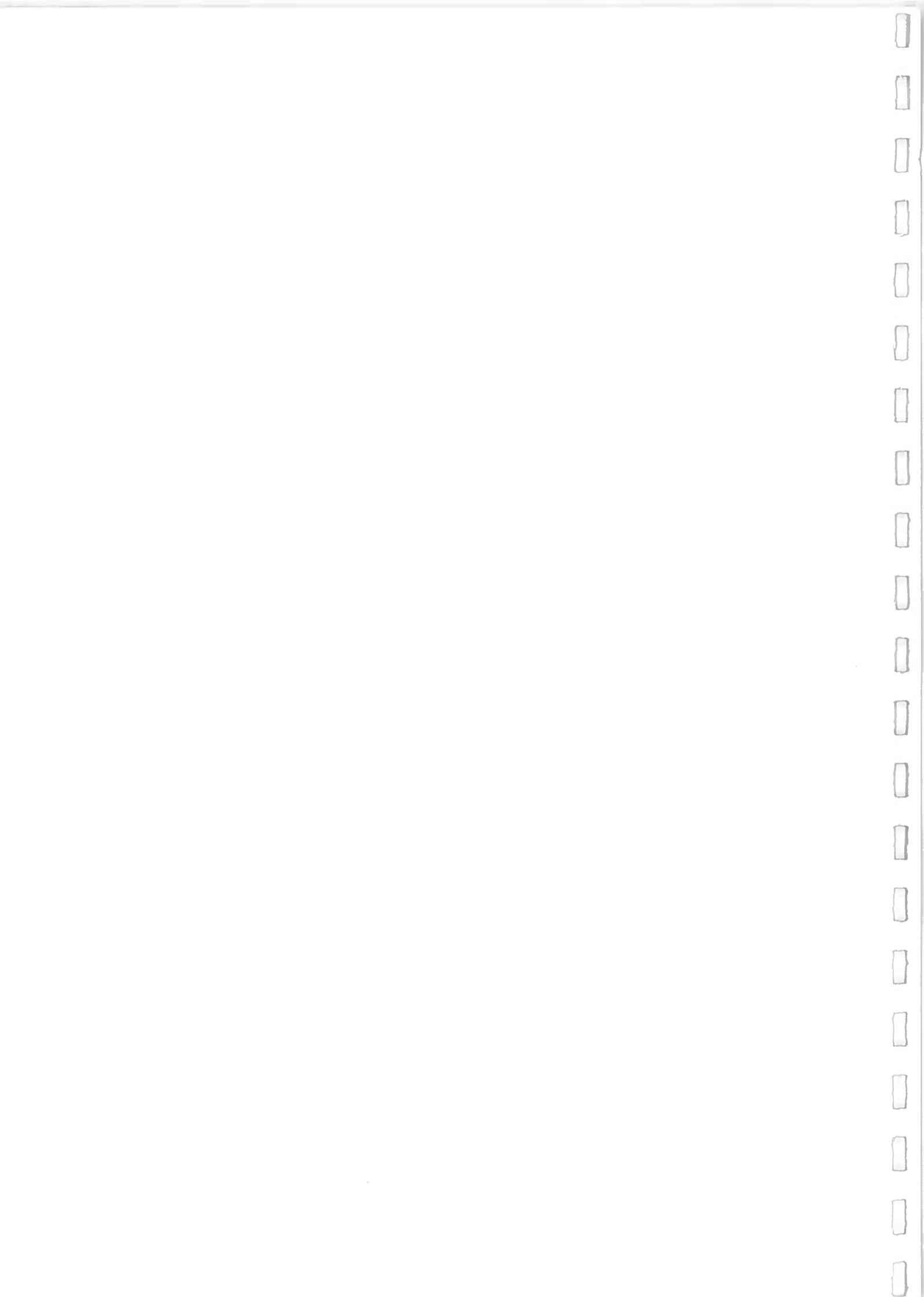
Utility buildings for 2,894 personnel. In late 1944 the staff numbered 421 Officers and 2,473 Enlisted Men.

Wendling was officially allocated to the US 8th Air Force on 16 September 1943 but the Advance Party of the 392nd BG actually arrived in late July and the bulk of the Ground Echelon on 1 August. The airfield was designated Station 118 and the address: APO 634, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY.

At the cessation of the European War, the airfield was transferred back to the RAF on 25 June 1945 and finally closed during 1961.

PART 2

The Background History



CHAPTER 4

The Formation & Early History Of The 392nd BG (H)

Before proceeding further with the story of *our* crew and the aircraft that they flew, it will be useful to have a brief look at the formation and early operational history of the 392nd Bombardment Group (Heavy), which they had just joined. It will also be helpful to take a quick look at the relevant organisational and operational structure of the 2nd Bombardment Division (later to become the more familiar 2nd Air Division), all forming part of the famous United States Eighth Air Force.

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The 392nd Bombardment Group (Heavy) was formed in accordance with Special Order Number 14, Headquarters Second Air Force, Fort George Wright, Washington and dated 26 January 1943.

The ensuing training programme was in three phases. The first with emphasis on individual skills, the second concentrating on team training and the third dealing with advanced training and simulation of combat operations. The initial phase began at Davis-Monthan Army Air Force Base, Arizona in early February 1943. Squadrons were designated as the 576th - 579th Bomb Squadrons inclusive.

During March, a small number of key personnel attended an intensive one month long course at the Army Air Force School of Applied Tactics (AAFSAT) at Orlando, Florida. Included on this course was a lead crew from each of the four Squadrons.

On 1 March 1943, the Ground Echelon reported to Biggs Field, El Paso, Texas and training proceeded. By mid-April, after the initial stages had been completed, personnel were transferred to Alamogordo Air Base in New Mexico. By mid-July, the Flying Echelon moved to Topeko Air Base in Kansas to complete their training and await deployment overseas.

On 16 July 1943 a small Advance Party left Topeko for the ETO. Included in this Party were the CO Lt Col Rendle, the Group Intelligence Officer Capt Caley, the Group Operations Officer Capt Lawrence Gilbert and the Group Communications Officer 1/Lt Elder. They flew by the Northern Ferry Route via Goose Bay and Iceland.

In the meantime, the Ground Echelon left Alamogordo on 18 July for Camp Shanks, located about 15 miles from New York City, in preparation for embarkation overseas. They arrived by train between the 20th and 22nd. They then boarded the Queen Mary at New York and departed on 25 July 1943, landing at Greenock in Scotland five days later after an uneventful crossing of the Atlantic.

The Advance Party in the meantime had arrived in the UK and by 22 July had reported to the 8th Air Force Headquarters located at High Wycombe, near London. They then visited the 2nd Bombardment Wing Headquarters at Old

Catton Hall, Norwich and then went on to visit numerous of the already active combat Groups.

When the Ground personnel arrived at their designated UK destination, Station 118 at Wendling in Norfolk on 1 August, they were greeted by members of the Advance Party. Hectic work then followed in order to prepare for the arrival of the flying crew and their aircraft from the US.

Back in the US, the Flying Echelon continued to train hard under the command of Major Lorin L Johnson, the Group Air Executive Officer. The Group was the first to be equipped with the new model B-24H and these slowly became available off the factory assembly lines. The 579th BS was the first Squadron to receive their quota of nine aircraft and they were the first to leave for the ETO. The first B-24 arrived on 15 August, via Gander, Iceland and Scotland (Prestwick). The remaining Squadrons - the 576th, 577th and 578th - arrived a few at a time, as and when the aircraft became available. The 576th mainly followed the same route used by the 579th BS but many of the 577th and 578th took the more direct route from Gander to Scotland. All but Lt Reade's crew of the 578th BS's crews had arrived by 22 August and they turned up a few days later. By 21 September 1943, all aircraft and crews of the four Squadrons had arrived safely at Wendling. These then were the original 35 crews and aircraft. *Included amongst the latter was B-24H "Alfred", serial number 42-7485.*

As soon as the aircraft arrived, intensive training began in readiness for their first 'baptism of fire'. As early as 6 September, the Group's crews participated in a Diversion Mission over the North Sea and which provided valuable navigational and operational experience. It is noted that "no enemy was sighted". The 392nd BG contributed no fewer than 18 aircraft and crews in this operation which involved 69 B-24's from the 2nd Bombardment Division. They provided a diversion for the B-17's of the 1st and 3rd Bombardment Divisions who were engaged in operations against Stuttgart and various other targets of opportunity. Sadly, losses were heavy with 45 of the B-17's becoming lost in action. Included amongst these were 20 from the 1st Bombardment Division which ran out of fuel and had to ditch or crash-land. Amazingly, of the 12 that ditched, all 118 crew members were saved by the RAF's Air Sea Rescue services. (See Note on next page).

The following day, 7 September 1943, the 392nd BG were scheduled to take part in their first bombing mission, in company with the 44th and the 389th BG's. The crews were briefed at 0215 hrs, engines were started at 0520 hrs and as the Wendling B-24's taxied out the other aircraft in the strike force circled overhead. Imagine the feelings of anti-climax when suddenly the mission was cancelled owing to 'several failures at bomb loading'. The History of the 578th speaks of "the great disappointment felt by the crews".

However, two days later on 9 September 1943, the 392nd BG did participate in their Mission Number 1. In an attack on the airfield at Abbeville, France, all but two of the twenty B-24's despatched on the raid accomplished their mission, two having to abort. All aircraft and crews returned safely, only weak flak was encountered and fighter opposition was non-existent, thanks to the strong support provided by Thunderbolts and Spitfires. Bombing results were reported as good. An excellent start for the Group.

Between this first mission by the Group on 9 September 1943 and the

next operation that we will look at in some detail and which took place on 20 December 1943, after the arrival of *our* crew, the Group participated in a further 15 Missions. These included attacks on airfields, port installations, industrial areas, U-Boat yards, marshalling yards and another diversion operation. Whilst not reported as such at the time, one of these attacks was a highly successful one on Germany's highly secret Heavy-water plant in Norway which produced this essential substance used in the manufacture of atomic weapons ! During these 15 operations, the 392nd BG lost 17 aircraft and suffered a total of 185 casualties. Their gunners claimed 55 enemy aircraft destroyed.

Note:

By the end of the War, Air Sea Rescue operations conducted by RAF Coastal Command (there were other agencies involved in these activities, British and American) accounted for 5,721 Allied aircrew saved, 277 enemy aircrew and 4,665 non-aircrew personnel. A total of 10,663 lives saved by this Branch of Coastal Command alone.

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Map 1. Some of the UK Pre-combat Bases.

CHAPTER 5

The Second Air Division & Its Structure

At the time of the arrival of the 392nd BG (H) at their designated airfield at Wendling, Norfolk, they became a part of the Second Bombardment Wing of the USAAF VIII Bomber Command. As from 13 September 1943, the 2nd BW was re-designated as the Second Bombardment Division. That title was retained until 1 January 1945 when the 2nd BD became the Second Air Division (2nd AD).

The 2nd. Bombardment Division/2nd Air Division was exclusively equipped with the Consolidated B-24 Liberator aircraft. The other two Divisions, the 1st and the 3rd flew the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress.

All three Air Divisions came under the control of the US VIII Bomber Command (later the Eighth Air Force) Headquarters at High Wycombe in the County of Buckinghamshire, north west of London. (High Wycombe was also the HQ of RAF Bomber Command).

The Second Bombardment Wing established its Headquarters at Old Catton Hall, Norwich on 7 September 1942. This HQ was commanded by Major General James P Hodges. The HQ later moved to the adjacent airfield at Horsham St Faiths, just a 'stones throw' from its original site. Horsham St Faiths became the home of the 458th BG (H) equipped with B-24's and was one of the few permanent pre-War constructed RAF airfields used by the USAAF. Post-War it is better known as Norwich Airport. Finally, this 2nd BW HQ moved to nearby Ketteringham Hall, to the south west of Norwich and close to Hethel airfield, occupied by the Liberators of the 389th BG (H). Major General William E Kepner took over as Commanding General of the Second Bombardment Division on 1 August 1944 and finally Brigadier General Walter R Peck assumed command on 13 May 1945.

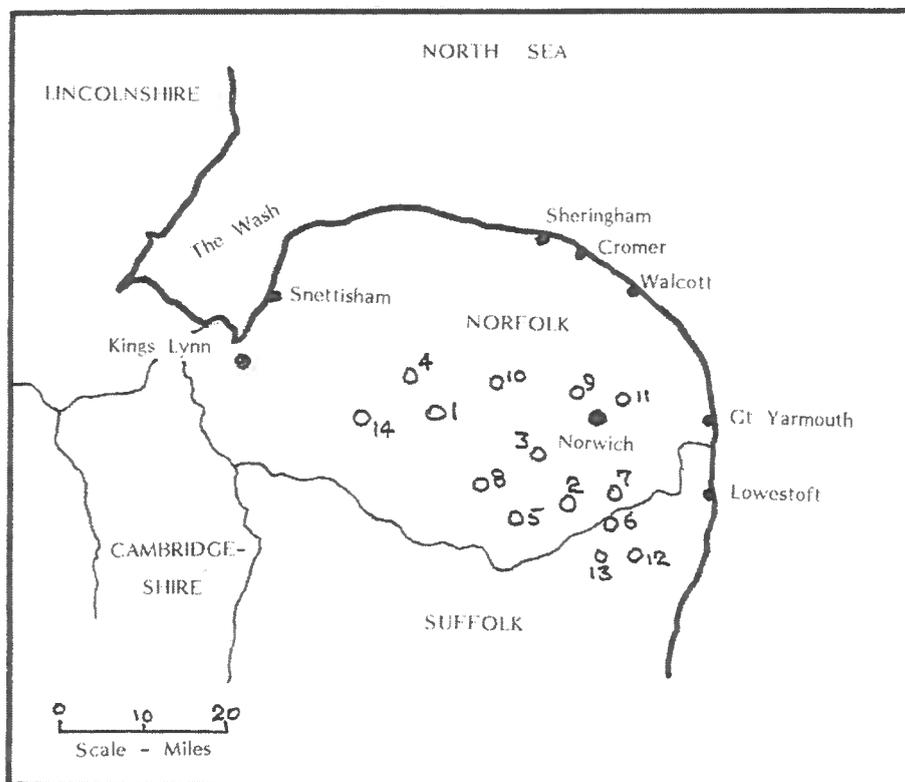
The 2nd Air Division was divided into five Combat Wings, embracing a total of 14 Bombardment Groups. Each Bombardment Group was made up of four Bombardment Squadrons. Normally a Bombardment Group, with its four Squadrons, occupied one specific airfield. In the case of the 2nd Air Division, these were all located in the Counties of Norfolk and Suffolk.

The 392nd BG (H) based at Wendling was one of three Bombardment Groups forming the 14th Combat Wing. This Wing had its HQ at nearby Shipdham, which housed the 44th BG (H). The third Group in the 14th CBW was the 492nd BG (H), based a few miles away at North Pickenham.

There were four other Combat Wings within the 2nd Air Division. They were the 2nd CBW, embracing the 389th, the 453rd and the 445th Bombardment Groups. The 20th Combat Wing included the 93rd, the 446th and the 448th Bombardment Groups. The 95th Combat Wing contained just two Groups, the 489th and the 491st. Finally, the 96th Combat Wing involved the 458th, the 466th and the 467th Bombardment Groups.

The Bombardment Groups (Heavy) which comprised the Second Air Division (2nd AD), were located at the following airfields:

1. 44th BG(H). Station 115. Shipdham, Norfolk.
2. 93rd BG(H). Station 104. Hardwick, Norfolk.
3. 389th BG(H). Station 114. Hethel, Norfolk.
4. 392nd BG(H). Station 118. Wendling, Norfolk.
5. 445th BG(H). Station 124. Tibenham, Norfolk.
6. 446th BG(H). Station 125. Flixton (Bungay), Suffolk.
7. 448th BG(H). Station 146. Seething, Norfolk.
8. 453rd BG(H). Station 144. Old Buckenham, Norfolk.
9. 458th BG(H). Station 123. Horsham St Faiths, Norfolk.
10. 466th BG(H). Station 120. Attlebridge, Norfolk.
11. 467th BG(H). Station 145. Rackheath, Norfolk.
12. 489th BG(H). Station 365. Halesworth, Suffolk.
13. 491st BG(H). Station 366. Metfield, Suffolk.
14. 492nd BG(H). Station 143. North Pickenham, Norfolk.

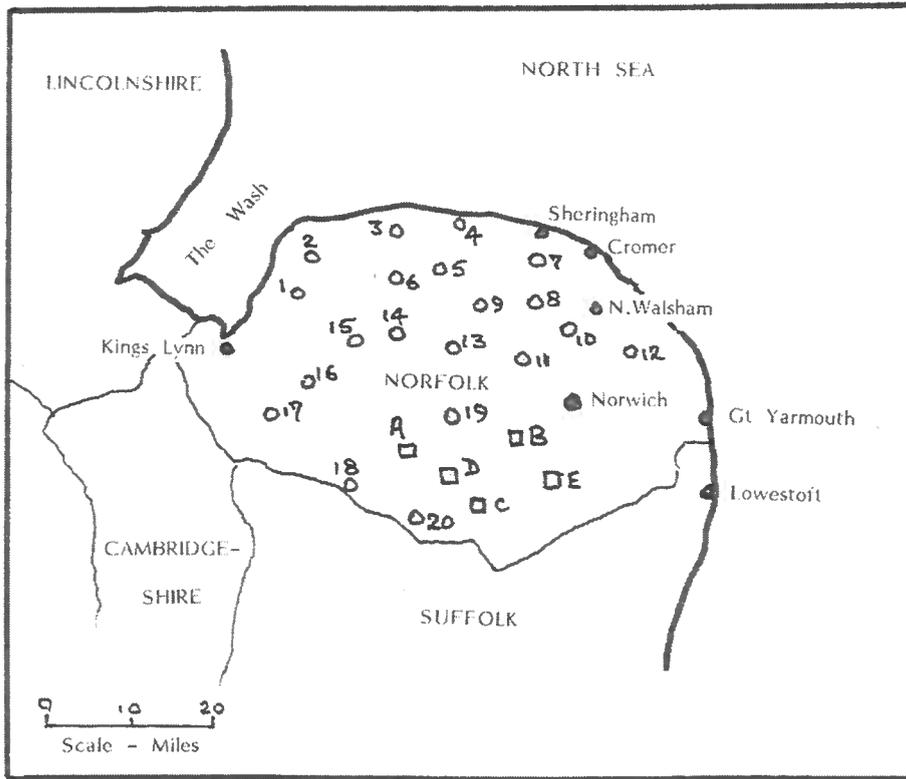


Map 2. USAAF Second Air Division Bases.
(Use in conjunction with the above list).

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At its peak, the Second Air Division totalled 8,870 Officers and 43,884 Enlisted Men. It flew 95,948 individual sorties during 493 operational Missions. They dropped almost 200,000 tons of bombs. A total of 1,458 B-24 Liberators were lost and 6,032 airmen were killed. Six Presidential Unit Citations and five Medals of Honor were awarded.

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Map 3. RAF Airfields in Norfolk 1943/44
Plus Additional USAAF Bases.

RAF

1. Bircham Newton.
2. Docking.
3. North Creake.
4. Langham.
5. Little Snoring.
6. Sculthorpe.
7. Matlaske.
8. Oulton.
9. Foulsham.
10. Coltishall.
11. Swannington.
12. Ludham.
13. Swanton Morley.
14. West Raynham.
15. Great Massingham.
16. Marham.
17. Downham Market.
18. Feltwell.
19. Watton (also USAAF 1943/45).
20. East Wretham.

USAAF

- A. Bodney. 352nd FG.
- B. Deopham Green. 452nd BG.(H).
- C. Fersfield. Aphrodite Unit.
- D. Snetterton Heath. 96BG.(H).
- E. Thorpe Abbotts. 100BG.(H).

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PART 3

Initiation To War



CHAPTER 6

Earlier Missions By Individual Members Of The Crew

It is known that the following individual members of the Colby Waugh crew took part in Missions before embarking, as a crew, on their first operation together on Christmas Eve, 24 December 1943.

2/Lt Arthur Cound. Navigator.

20 December 1943.

The target was the port area of Bremen, in north west Germany. Lt Cound flew in aircraft serial number 42-7480, named "My Diversion" of the 578th BS and piloted by Lt Cliff Peterson. The 392nd BG despatched 22 B-24's and 21 of them attacked the target with good bombing results. The 577th Bomb Squadron led the Group. Heavy AA and fighter opposition was encountered. The 576th BS lost B-24 42-7500, "Sky Queen", over the target and fifteen more were damaged. One crash landed at Base on return. This is thought to have been 41-29135, "Last Frontier", belonging to the 579th. The Group casualties were 1 Killed in Action (KIA), 11 Missing in Action (MIA) and 4 Wounded in Action (WIA). The time duration of this Mission was 6½ hours.

On returning from this Mission and during the de-brief, a remarkable coincidence occurred Arthur Cound had a brother George who was serving in the US Navy. George had a buddy from his pre-Navy days by the name of Jim Byrd, all three were from El Paso, Texas. Jim had joined the USAAF a few weeks after George had joined the Navy. He had known of Arthur via brother George. Jim was now S/Sgt Byrd and he too had just taken part in his very first operational Mission - in the same aircraft as Arthur Cound ! Jim had felt that the Navigator's face looked familiar but could not 'place him'. It was only when the Navigator gave his name at the de-briefing that he realised that it was the brother of his old buddy from El Paso !! They got together and had a great chat about 'old times' and that must have been a particularly enjoyable meeting for both of them. They saw each other once or twice subsequently but never flew together again. Tragically, neither men were destined to survive for many more weeks.

Two of the Group's B-24's were involved in a rare and unfortunate accident during this Mission. One of the Liberators lost a propeller in flight. It then scythed through the right rudder of another B-24, "El Lobo" 42-7510 of the 579th BS. The propeller then went on and severed the rear turret from the remainder of the same aircraft, sadly with its gunner aboard. It is assumed that this was caused by the not uncommon failure of the propeller feathering mechanism. (See Chapter 8, Note i).

On this Mission the 8th Air Force deployed a total of 534 bombers - 127 B-24's and 407 B-17's plus 12 Pathfinders from the 482nd BG, based at Alconbury. A total of 7 B-24's and 20 B-17's were lost through enemy action. 270 aircrew were listed as MIA.

Note:

1/Lt Cliff L Peterson, the pilot with whom Arthur Cound flew on this Mission to Bremen, and his crew including S/Sgt Jim Byrd, were shot down three months later. Taking part in the costliest Mission ever conducted by the 392nd BG, he and his crew were flying in one of the 28 B-24's despatched from Wendling to attack Fredrickshafen on 18 March 1944. Four Liberators aborted with mechanical problems, 2 collided over France on the outward leg, 15 succumbed to intense enemy action and only 7 of those that attacked the target returned to England. All were badly damaged with killed and wounded aboard. A total of 154 casualties were suffered by the 392nd on this one mission. Sadly, Jim Byrd was amongst those who did not survive but happily, Cliff Peterson lived. He bailed out from his stricken aircraft, was taken prisoner, survived the War and is presently living in Florida. It is very pleasing to note, in fact, that Cliff Peterson is the current (1995) President of the 392nd BG Memorial Association !

We know too that Lt Arthur Cound was again involved two days later.

22 December 1943.

This time the target was the communications centre at Munster, Westphalia, Germany. On this occasion, Lt Arthur Cound flew in B-24 serial 42-7485, "Alfred" (*of later fame in connection with the Colby Waugh crew*) and piloted by Lt Cohen. In addition to Lt Cohen and Lt Arthur Cound as Navigator, the other crew members were: Shoenhair, Valker, Hayes, Carr, Buckley, McGee, Thrower and Dillinger. (Ranks unknown but *not* the original crew of "Alfred"). The 392nd despatched 20 aircraft and 16 of these bombed the target with good results. Three B-24's aborted with mechanical problems, including 42-7485, "Alfred". No fighter opposition was encountered and happily no losses or casualties were suffered. Mission duration was 6 hours. It is not known at what point into the Mission that "Alfred" had to abort and return to Base.

The 8th Air Force commitment on this Mission involved 43 B-24's out of a total of 220 bombers. Five aircraft were lost - 2 B-24's and 3 B-17's.

Note: Lt Cohen safely completed his operational tour during March 1944.

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Two of the Gunners from the Waugh crew also got themselves involved before their first operational Mission as a complete crew.

S/Sgt Earl Johnson and S/Sgt Henry Wilk.

22 December 1943.

Earl Johnson and Henry Wilk flew together, coincidentally on the same Mission to Munster as Arthur Cound. The two Gunners flew aboard Liberator 42-7605 piloted by 1/Lt Thomas R McKee. The rest of the crew were: 2/Lt Thomas G Walker Co-pilot, 2/Lt Lee Simons Bombardier, Lt Delmar C Johnson Navigator, T/Sgt Ward Sackal Engineer, T/Sgt Thomas Morrison Radio Operator, S/Sgt Horace Murphy Gunner and S/Sgt Richard Painter Gunner.

Earl Johnson was standing in for regular crew member Sgt Marion E Nuzum and Henry Wilk for S/Sgt Anthony F Malavasic.

Other details appertaining to this Mission are given above.

Note:

Just nine days later, on 31 December, whilst taking part in an attack on the airfield at St Jean D'Angely, just north of Bordeaux, France, this same aircraft flown by Lt McKee and crew was hit by AA fire and exploded over the target area. The crew were complete except for their regular Navigator Lt Delmar C Johnson, who was grounded that day with a minor injury. His place had been taken by 2/Lt Robert Dinsmore. A French eye-witness later reported several parachutes being seen to leave the aircraft but that they were then subjected to further fire from the enemy on the ground. Sadly, there was but one survivor, tail gunner Anthony Malavasic, who became a POW.

ooOoo

We know too that Radio Operator T/Sgt Parke Kent flew **two** Missions prior to his involvement with the rest of the crew on 24 December 1943. Unfortunately, the dates of these operations are currently unknown to the writer.

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CHAPTER 7

The First Crew Mission

24 December 1943.

The first Mission involving the entire Colby Waugh crew took place on Christmas Eve 1943. The target was a NoBall (V-Weapon) site in the Pas De Calais region of France and it was to be the first occasion that the 392nd had attacked this type of installation. Crews had been on 'stand-down' after a hectic spell of operational flying. However, at 1000 hrs on the 23rd, Squadron Commanders and Officers from eight lead crews were ordered to report to the Group Briefing Room.

Allied Intelligence was deeply concerned about frantic German activity in coastal areas of Occupied Europe, particularly in the Pas De Calais area. Coupled with aerial photographs, reports from agents and other sources, some form of attack on Britain by unmanned missiles or rockets appeared to be imminent. The precise nature of these fears was not of course general knowledge but Hitler's vague but endless threats of "secret weapons" and "vengeance weapons" were well known !! At last, it looked as if the threats were about to materialise. Allied Commanders were only too aware that the planned Invasion of Occupied Europe was not too far distant. An onslaught by these new type weapons on southern England could jeopardise their plans and seriously delay the final outcome of the War.

When Field Order No 171 was received for this Mission on the night of 23 December, it called for a "Maximum effort". Whilst the majority of the aircrew were not fully aware of the nature and purpose of the strange constructions that they were about to attack, it was appreciated that they were something 'different' and obviously 'important and special'. Reports of the time speak of a "more than usual air of excitement and a heightened sense of urgency". It says much too for the Wendling ground crews that 28 out of the 30 available B-24's were serviceable and ready for operations the next morning.

The Liberators took off from Wendling at 1100 hrs in excellent weather conditions. Assembly was completed speedily and the 392nd joined the Wing and Division bomber stream on schedule. The good weather conditions continued right through to the target area. All 28 B-24's from Wendling attacked the target from 12,000 ft, bombing visually. 84% of the 336 500lb General Purpose (GP) bombs fell within 2,000 ft of the designated aiming points. The excellent results were later confirmed by photographic reconnaissance. All aircraft returned safely to Wendling and no casualties were suffered. The flight duration for this Mission was 5¼ hours.

In all, 722 B-24's and B-17's took part in operations against the V-Weapon sites in the Pas De Calais on this day. They were supported by 541 P-38's, P-47's and P-51's. A total of 87 aircraft received damage during these operations but casualties were limited to four crewmen wounded.

This, to the best of our knowledge, was the first operational involvement by Lt Colby Waugh and his close-knit crew. As with the following two further

missions flown by the crew. Henry Wilk recalled and described this one, fifty years later, as "hairy" !! In spite of this succinct summing up of their first Mission together as a crew (and no doubt a very truthful and accurate assessment), they must have felt relief that they had returned safely and satisfaction that things had gone so well for the Group. At the time of writing, the aircraft in which they flew on this Mission has not been identified.

Note:

The onslaught conducted by the USAAF 8th Air Force, RAF's Bomber Command and Tactical Air Force against the original V-Weapon launch sites, known as 'ski sites', was extremely effective. By May 1944, 103 sites out of 140 had been destroyed. The ever-resilient Germans were forced to drastically modify their programme of assault and the effectiveness originally expected was now beyond their capabilities. In particular and of vital significance, the operational deployment of these new weapons had to be very considerably delayed. With dogged Germanic determination and utilising slave labour, they produced new and simpler prefabricated launchers, ones that could be erected quickly and that could be more easily camouflaged against air attack. However, it was 12 June 1944 before the first 'flying bomb' (V-1 or 'Doodlebug') was launched against England - six days **after** the commencement of the great Allied Invasion of Occupied Europe. Whilst the totally indiscriminate V-Weapon attacks, later including the V-2 rockets, brought great death and destruction, the German prediction that these weapons would bring them victory, even at this late stage in the War, fortunately did not materialise. It is worth considering that if they had been nuclear armed, the outcome could have been very different

CHAPTER 8

The Second Mission By The Crew

30 December 1943.

Mission Number 20 for the 392nd. Field Order 172 identified the target as the port area and oil refineries at Ludwigshafen, across the River Rhine from the city of Mannheim. A frequent target for RAF Bomber Command since the early days of the War. The whole area was highly industrialised and consequently very heavily defended.

"Chaff", an effective anti-radar measure, was used for the first time by the US 8th Air Force during this Mission. Strips of metal foil, dispersed in bundles from aircraft in the bomber formations and broken up in the slip-streams, gave misleading and confusing echoes on the German air defence radar systems.

The 392nd contributed 25 Liberators and the 576th Squadron led the Group. Two B-24's were forced to abort because of mechanical problems before reaching the target. The weather conditions were not good in the target area and PFF (Pathfinder) techniques had to be adopted. These were provided by the Alconbury based 482nd BG aircraft. Bombing results were rated as 'good'. As expected the opposition from the enemy was ferocious. The Wendling group lost one B-24, probably as a result of flak damage and eight others were damaged. Ten aircrew were listed as Missing in Action. The crew that were lost were those of Lt Silbey of the 578th BS in B-24 serial 42-7588. Some of this crew may have escaped by parachute.

Fifty years later and Henry Wilk remembers little about this Mission but believes that they "lost an engine" at some point during their flight !

The total 8th Air Force involvement on this day was all directed on Ludwigshafen. It involved the despatch of 710 heavy bombers, 164 B-24's of the 2nd Air Division and 546 B-17's from the 1st and 3rd Divisions. Additionally, 583 fighters, P-38's, P-47's (463 of that one type) and P-51's provided escort. The bombers lost 23 aircraft in action and the fighters lost 13.

Notes:

i. It is interesting to note that the loss of no fewer than seven of those twenty three bombers was subsequently attributed to mechanical failure. This fact did not emerge until much later. De-briefed repatriated aircrew and those who had evaded after being lost over enemy territory were the first to report the facts. During the months of November and December 1943 twenty losses of B-17's and B-24's were due directly, or indirectly, to the malfunction of propellor feathering systems. The failure rate on the B-17's was particularly bad, twice that of the B-24. It was late Autumn (Fall) of 1944 before the causes of these problems were recognised and modifications introduced to overcome them.

ii It is also of interest to note that six of the crew of a 445th BG B-24 returning from this Mission were saved after they ditched in the sea off Beachy Head, one of the first successful ditchings by a Liberator aircraft.

iii. The use of "Window" or "Chaff" (British and American terminology respectively) was first used by the RAF on the night of 24/25 July 1943 during their attack on Hamburg. It caused great confusion amongst the German air defence systems, including that used by the enemy night fighters and initially its use drastically reduced bomber losses. It was particularly effective at night and under cloudy conditions when visual tracking was not normally possible. The detrimental effects of the tinfoil bundles had been mooted by the British almost from the birth of radar in the mid-1930's. It fell to the *only lady* scientist at the Telecommunications Research Establishment, Mrs Joan Curran, to carry out the initial research and development. The operational trials, tested against our own radar systems, were conducted in early 1942 from RAF Coltishall in Norfolk. The results were terrifyingly effective. Its use against the enemy was banned, at least for the time being. It was feared that the Germans would respond and use it against our own radar defences with the same devastating results ! Post-War it was learned that the Germans had also developed the same system at about the same time and had been reluctant to use it for the same reasons ! When the Germans did use it (their code-name was "Düppel") on the night of 7 October 1943 during a raid on Norwich, we had developed some fairly effective counter-measures. Nevertheless, two of the local radar stations, those at RAF Neatishead and RAF Happisburgh, reported 200 hostile targets when, in fact, there were no more than 30 ! The Germans developed new systems and tactics in order to reduce the effects of Window/Chaff. However, its use by the Allies was continued, indeed stepped up and coupled with other measures, continued to cause confusion and disruption to the German defences. Countless Allied aircrew lives were saved as a result.

iv. The effectiveness of the first use of "Chaff" by the 8th Air Force on this raid is not known. In view of the overcast conditions, the German AA batteries would have had to rely on radar guidance and therefore the disruption was probably very considerable. Additionally, it is probable that the "chaff" was used in an effort to confuse the enemy of the target intentions of the bombing force.

v. It is sobering to note that by 31 December 1943, the 392nd BG had completed 21 Missions and lost 20 aircraft. Only 18 of the original 35 crews remained. On 1 July 1943 there were 85 pilots and co-pilots. By 31 December, just 35. Of these, 29 were Missing in Action, 19 had been transferred and 2 lost their lives in crashes before they left the US for the ETO. *56 new crews had been added to the Group, bringing the total of crews to 66, as of 31 December 1943.*

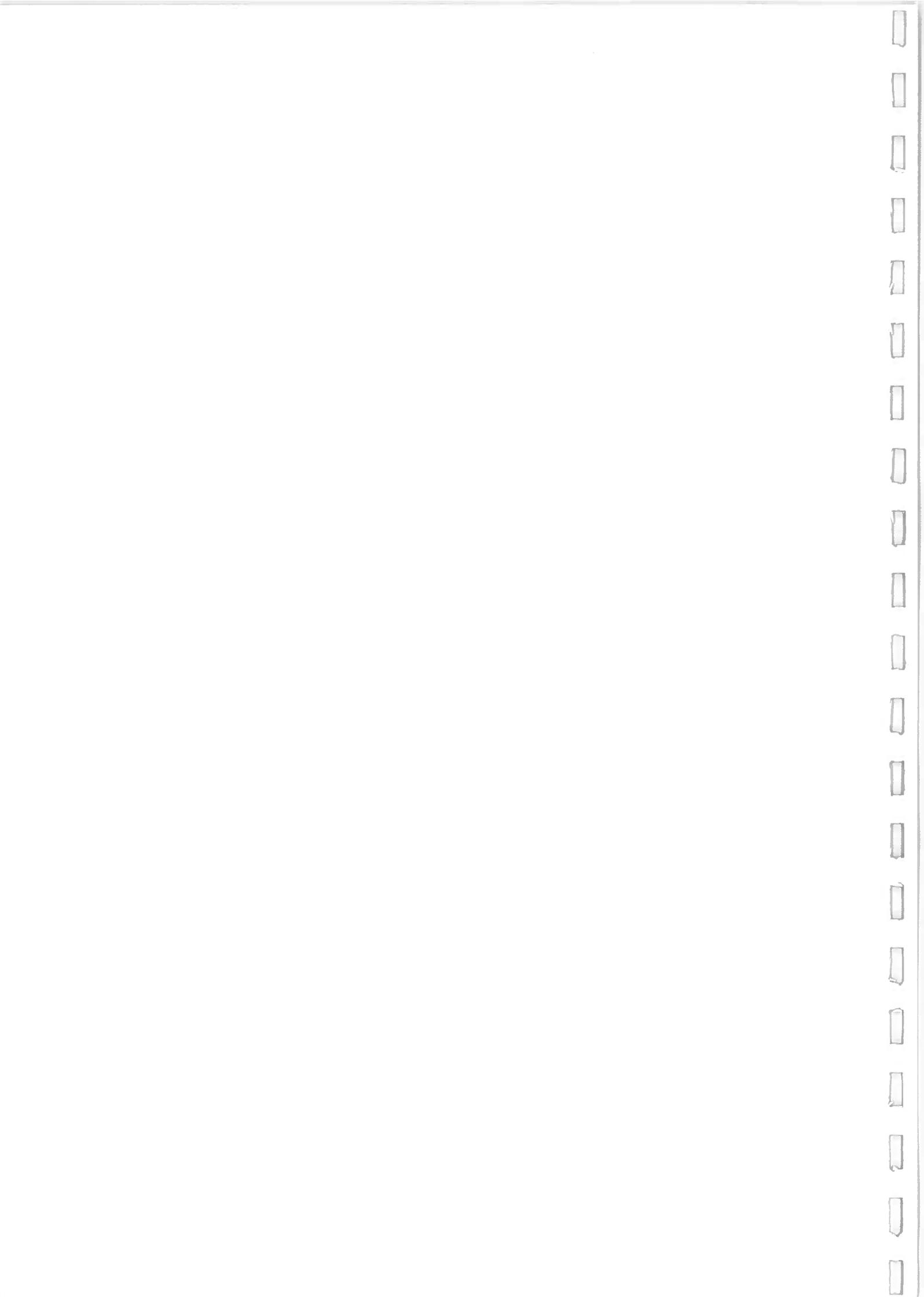
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Map 4. Western Europe. Some of the Places mentioned in the text.

PART 4

Tuesday 4 January 1944



CHAPTER 9

The Kiel Mission

Prelude.

The Official History compiled by the 392nd BG (H) HQ states that on the evening of New Years Day, Saturday 1 January 1944, the Group was alerted and that a target was specified. However, by 2300 hrs the proposed Mission was scrubbed.

Similarly, on the following evening, 2 January, they were put on alert yet again. This time the target was to be Solingen, some 15 miles north east of Cologne in Germany and one that they had attacked previously on 1 December. Pre-briefing was conducted at 1930 hrs but before general briefing was carried out, this Mission too was scrubbed.

During the evening of Monday 3 January, the Group was again put on alert. The port area of Kiel, in north west Germany, was to be the target. The pre-briefing went ahead early in the evening. The general briefings took place at 0330 hrs and at 0400 hrs during the cold and dreary pre-dawn hours of Tuesday 4 January. *This* time the Mission was *not* scrubbed and the Mission *was* to go ahead.

The Mission. 4 January 1944.

It seems certain that the crew were not allocated an aircraft 'of their own' but they were going to fly again as 'a crew', for the third time in action. As a replacement crew and at this stage in the operations of the Group, it appears that they were simply allocated an aircraft that was serviceable and available, as and when operational requirements dictated. Ground crews must have been hard pressed to keep sufficient B-24's available to meet those needs. Much maintenance work was conducted outside in the open with none or, at best, the very minimum of shelter from the elements. An English airfield, especially one in East Anglia during early January, is not the ideal workplace ! It had to be a case of flying in whatever was available.

Lt Colby Waugh and his crew were allocated B-24H, serial 42-7485 "Alfred", for this Mission. As noted earlier, it was one of the 392nds 'original' B-24's and one that had participated in 15 operational Missions so far. The same aircraft that Lt Arthur Cound had flown in on 22 December and which had to abort before reaching the target at Munster.

After an early morning breakfast, *our crew* were taken out to the aircraft dispersal point by truck at about 0700 hrs. Here they found their aircraft already loaded with bombs and 2,800 US gallons of 100 octane fuel by the hard working ground crew. On that cold and bleak January morning, Henry Wilk and the other Gunners checked, re-cleaned and installed their 50 calibre (0.5 ins) Browning M2 machine guns. Other members of the crew checked their equipment and areas of responsibility. Pilot Lt Colby Waugh discussed the mechanical state of the aircraft with the ground Crew Chief. The Crew Loading List was completed and the Form 1A signed, 'accepting' the aircraft from the

ground crew. Together, the Crew Chief and Colby walked around the plane, carrying out a final visual check on the tyres, undercarriage legs, movable flying surfaces, fuel vents and so forth. When satisfied that all was well, the aircraft was boarded and at about 0735 hrs each of the powerful 1200 hp Pratt and Whitney Twin Wasp R-1830-43 radial engines was started. In conjunction with the Pilot and Co-pilot, the Engineer Lester Wagner carefully watched the dials and indications to ensure that all four engines were running satisfactorily. At 0750 hrs they began taxiing out, in preparation for the 0800 hrs departure.

On schedule, the Wendling Group began take-off, with just 30 seconds between aircraft becoming airborne. Lts Waugh and Barton held "Alfred" at the end of the runway until their turn arrived to begin the take-off procedure. Soon after 0800 hrs the 'green' was flashed to them by Flying Control and they began their bone-jarring and noisy departure. The heavily laden B-24 rumbled down the 6,000 ft runway, Colby intentionally keeping the wheels on the ground as long as possible and only getting airborne shortly before the end was reached. They needed maximum sustained airspeed of around 110 to 120 mph to climb away safely. The pilots maintained a straight course for several minutes in a shallow climb during this most critical period of their take-off.

Lt Arthur Cound, Navigator, gave a course to steer of 337 degrees magnetic which will take them out over the Lincolnshire coast, bordering the mouth of the Wash and in accordance with the pre-determined Flight Plan and Assembly pattern. Climbing at 300 ft per minute at 150 mph IAS (Indicated Air Speed), "Alfred" struggles upwards. They soon encounter the murk that abounds and have to fly on instruments, with visibility down to zero.

The twenty five Liberators from the 392nd that had been allocated for this Mission were all safely off the ground, led by the 579 BS - but by now all the others were totally unseen. Strict flight discipline and skilled flying abilities were essential. The risk of collision was very real and many had succumbed to this hazard under these conditions. After some minutes, Arthur Cound gave a new course to steer. This time the MF (Medium Frequency) radio beacon Buncher 5 located close to Shipdham airfield, provided a valuable and reassuring navigational aid via the onboard Radio Compass receiver. This facility was provided in conjunction with the Radio Operator, T/Sgt Parke Kent. The cancellation of operations over the last few days had been on account of the atrocious weather conditions. As they climbed through the murk on that cold, grey and dreary Tuesday morning, any improvement could not have been too apparent. Upwards, flying on instruments alone, Colby Waugh and Co-pilot Jimmie Barton took them through the overcast and at the same time keeping them within the pre-designated Assembly corridor for the 392nd. This 'corridor' was about 5 miles wide and was located over the mouth of the Wash and extended from just inland on the Norfolk side to the coast of Lincolnshire on the other.

Clear conditions with a minimum visibility of 1,500 ft were essential for the next phase of the Mission. A close knit formation was vital. Not only did it assist in the concentration of the bombing pattern but, most importantly, it also provided the best possible mutual defence fire-power against enemy fighter attack.

Backwards and forwards, climbing all the time, they finally broke through the overcast. Into the clear blue sky and sunshine but where the temperature was many degrees below zero. Now the Group could assemble and take up

their designated positions in the formation. This again was a difficult period for the pilots. The fully laden Liberator was not easy to handle but the object was to close-up and form a tight-knit entity. Prop wash from other nearby B-24's became a very real problem and the pilots had to exert great skill to achieve the mutually beneficial pattern.

Probably at something in the region of 10,000 ft and during the later stages of Group assembly, either Jimmie Barton or Arthur Cound called for the crew to 'go to oxygen'. From then on there would be checks every fifteen minutes with all the crew in order to ensure that all was well. A loss of oxygen would render a person unconscious within a few minutes and death would follow shortly afterwards. When Group assembly was completed (normally taking between 30 and 60 minutes) and at a pre-determined time, all 25 Wendling based B-24's headed for the Combat Wing Assembly Point

Meanwhile and before reaching 10,000 ft, the Bombardier Lt Virgil Thomson, or somebody designated by him, will have gone to the bomb bay and removed the safety pins from the bombs. This was necessary before they became iced up and this task was probably carried out quite early into the Mission on this day. About this time too, Engineer Lester Wagner will have transferred fuel between the auxiliary and the main tanks.

Some 20 minutes after joining up with the 44th BG, they proceeded to the Division Assembly Point. Here they circled over another MF radio beacon, Splasher 5 located at Mundesley, near Cromer in North Norfolk. Again, an extremely difficult and hazardous operation. On this particular morning, there were no fewer than 568 other 'heavies', all milling around and trying to do the same thing and all, of course, experiencing the same difficulties. Nevertheless, it must have been an awe-inspiring sensation for the crew when they first sighted and joined this enormous aerial armada as it circled high above the Norfolk coast.

The 1st Bombardment Division had a total of 263 of their B-17's airborne for this Mission. They had been involved in a pre-dawn take-off and one that was described as 'very confusing and difficult'. The 3rd BD despatched another 176 B-17's and in all, with the seven Groups from the 2nd BD providing 130 of their B-24's, there was a total of 569 heavy bombers in this airborne assault. 486 were to reach and bomb the target, the important port and naval dockyards at Kiel. In addition to the bombers, the 20th, 55th and 354th Fighter Groups scrambled 70 of their P-38 Lightnings and 42 P-51 Mustangs in order to provide fighter escort for the bombers.

Once assembled, the bombers set out for their target. Now flying at a height of between 15,000 and 20,000 ft, well above the complete overcast below them and in the intense cold of the upper atmosphere, each aircraft left a very conspicuous 'contrail' behind it. Whilst making them feel very naked and exposed, the enemy would not have needed visual signs of the approaching formations. Their radar systems would have been watching their progress for sometime and all the enemy defence systems would be alerted and waiting.

Ten miles outbound, Navigator Arthur Cound advises Radio Operator Parke Kent to switch off the IFF equipment (Identification Friend or Foe - a radio device that identifies the aircraft as 'friendly' when picked up by the British Air Defence radar). Twenty five miles out and the Bombardier asks the Gunners to check all weapons. They fire a short burst from each gun either down into the

sea or into a clear section of sky.

Parke Kent, sitting in front of his HF (High Frequency) radio equipments, listens out on the 2nd Air Division's HQ frequency on the hour and on the half hour for any coded W/T (Morse) messages that might order a recall or diversion. The Pilot Colby Waugh and/or his Co-pilot Jim Barton, monitor the VHF voice channels allocated for this Mission. Strict radio silence is observed at this stage, unless its use is absolutely essential.

Before entering enemy air space, S/Sgt Edward Murphy, the ball turret Gunner, enters his confined quarters. The turret is lowered and takes up position below the fuselage. All Gunners take up their posts and all members are on full alert. Waist Gunners prepare to release 'chaff' at specified times as they approach the target and will continue to do so whilst over the target area.

Somebody up front says: *'The temperature is almost 60 degrees below zero'*. The contrails are *very dark* in colour.

The Navigator continues to regularly call-out times and headings over the intercom for the benefit of the pilots. This procedure is carried out throughout the entire mission.

Then the dreaded flak and the enemy fighters as they enter Hostile air space. As expected, the enemy reaction is ferocious. The 392nd BG records state that their Group alone encountered up to 50 twin and single engined German fighters. The flak too was intense. Because of the overcast conditions which had extended all the way to the target area, bombing had to be carried out using PFF (radar) techniques.

Over, close to or whilst departing the target, the 392nd BG lost **four** of their B-24's, all finding their final resting place in the unforgiving North Sea. Additionally, one other subsequently landed in Sweden where its crew were interned. Those lost were: 1/Lt D A Miller and crew of the 576th BS in B-24 "Million Dollar Baby" serial 42-7487. 1/Lt R Lambert in 42-7482 named "Shack Rat" and 2/Lt C W Rigby in "War Horse" serial 42-7479 and their respective crews and all from the 577th BS. 1/Lt Hall and his crew in 42-52083 and named "Out House Mouse" from the 579th BS. It was 1/Lt Page also of the 577th who managed to land his damaged Liberator "Queen of Peace", 42-7637 at Smedstorp in neutral Sweden. These were the *immediate losses*. **At least SIX other B-24's from the Wendling Group had suffered serious damage, three from fighter attacks and three from the effects of the intense anti-aircraft barrage. Included amongst the latter was "Alfred", with our crew aboard.**

All the indications are that they received a hit from AA fire just before 'bombs away' and one of the four engines was knocked out. It appears that they released their bombs before starting their desperate fight to bring the aircraft and crew back to safety. They were at least 360 miles from Base, with much of that journey over the inhospitable North Sea. Once clear of the intense flak around Kiel, lightened by the release of their bombs and having used up half of their fuel, they 'made it' to the pre-designated 'Rally point'. A rapid and anxious damage assessment was carried out. In addition to the loss of one engine, considerable structural damage had been sustained, including severe damage to the wings and loss of the radio facilities. it was a miracle that they were still flying.

They must have been relieved to learn that there were no serious casualties amongst the crew, although some wounds had almost certainly been sustained. Even to this day, it is not clear whether or not the Pilot had been injured. At least one member of the crew suspected that he had but if that was the case, he certainly did not let them know. To have done so would certainly have heightened the apprehension that must have been felt by all of those amongst the crew of "Alfred".

Over the period of training and during their previous Missions, the crew had become a closely knit team. This discipline and team spirit was needed now, more than at any other time during their service together or indeed, during their lives.

The first and foremost objective at this point was to keep up with the formation. They needed the benefit of the combined fire-power provided by those massed 50 calibres from the other B-24's around them. Collectively, there was a chance that the fighters could be kept at bay. However, if "Alfred" had to drop behind, then the enemy would spot their plight and the chances of survival would be very slim indeed. The speed of the formation outbound from the target would now be increased and in the order of 160 - 180 mph IAS.

Within ten or fifteen minutes of being hit just before 'bombs away', this dreaded situation became a reality. However hard they tried, they just could *not* keep up with the formation. They had no choice but to lag behind, to become a straggler, a 'sitting duck' waiting to be 'picked off' by the enemy fighters. Losing height gradually, they set course for home.

Sure enough, they *were* savagely attacked and sustained further damage. Just how they survived this stage of the return flight is not known - but survive they did. They were *alone* now and it must have been the efforts of the Gunners aboard "Alfred" that accounted for their continued existence and the beating off of the enemy at this stage.

During that flight across the North Sea, all *three* remaining engines *twice* stopped completely. On both occasions, they managed to get them restarted by putting the nose down and going into a dive - and losing more precious height in so doing. On that second occasion, the situation appeared so critical and desperate that Pilot Colby Waugh gave the order "Prepare to ditch". He would know, as no doubt the rest of the crew knew, their chances of survival in the treacherous waters below, and which were getting increasingly closer, would be very limited indeed. This was assuming that they could get out of the aircraft before it broke up and sank to the bottom of the ocean like a stone. The reputation of the B-24 was not a good one in this respect.

Just before the final ditching decision was implemented and after those three engines had been restarted, the coast of England was spotted on the distant horizon. Renewed hope must have surged through the minds and hearts of those desperate young airmen. Maybe, just maybe, they would 'make it' even yet. However, they were losing fuel from the ruptured wing tanks at an alarming rate. Even with the coast in sight, would there be sufficient to get them back 'home' to England ?

Everything that could be unfastened and moved was jettisoned overboard. Those involved in these activities had to disconnect themselves from the B-24's intercom system, the aircraft's internal communications system. Only by doing

this could they achieve the freedom of movement to carry out these desperate but vital activities. It did mean however, that those involved could not be made aware of instructions from the Pilot or Co-pilot. Nor could they be made aware of the fast changing situation that was developing as the aircraft approached the coast. Losing height, losing fuel and no doubt, with worsening handling characteristics, it was a miracle that they had got this far. That they did, reflects the high resolve and tenacity of **all** the crew, not least the skills and determination of the Pilot, Co-pilot and Navigator.

They reached the coast with less than 200 ft to spare, slightly to the west of Sheringham and right over the cliff top Golf Course. At this point, the remaining three engines spluttered and cut for the third and final time. The fuel supplies were exhausted. The time - a few moments before 1434 hrs on that dreary, cold Tuesday 4 January 1944.

With rising ground ahead, there were *very few options* left for the crew of "Alfred" and *very few split-seconds* in which to make a decision Ahead, a wooded area and rising ground. To starboard, more trees and no open spaces. To port - well, just *maybe*. A fairly lengthy stretch of what looks like open ground, quite narrow and bordered by woods to starboard and rising ground at the far end. *BUT it is the only possibility*. A sharp turn to port before it is too late, no power and knowing that what little height left would be lost - *but no alternatives*. Descending rapidly, they turn and straighten up but marginally too close to the trees. The starboard wing clips the tops and then scythes through the pine trees bordering the open ground. They rapidly decelerate and the nose of the aircraft comes to earth in the soft rising ground in the corner of that field and suddenly *silence*. "Alfred" has brought them back - but the price is terrible. Four of that gallant crew were dead, another survived for a few days only and the remainder were wounded and shocked.

Had it not been for the skills, team work and airmanship displayed by **all** of those crew members, there would have been no survivors.

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Those who died were:

2/Lt Colby A Waugh, Pilot.
2/Lt Arthur L Cound, Navigator.
2/Lt Virgil E Thomson, Bombardier.
S/Sgt Don C Belden, Gunner.

Injured and taken to Cromer Hospital:

S/Sgt Edward R Murphy, Gunner. Died four days later from his injuries.
2/Lt James W Barton, Co-pilot.
T/Sgt Lester L Wagner, Engineer.
T/Sgt Parke V Kent, Radio Operator.
S/Sgt Earl J Johnson, Gunner.
S/Sgt Henry Wilk, Gunner/Armourer.

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CHAPTER 10

The Crash. Eye-Witnesses On The Ground.

Stanley Wright, a farmer who lived at Malthouse Farm, West Beckham, happened to be in his fields on the high ground just inland from Sheringham early that Tuesday afternoon. Not unusually, there was plenty of aerial activity and the Americans were returning from their raids on the Continent. The weather he recalls was cold, cloudy but dry. He spotted one particular Liberator flying low over the water and approaching the coast directly in front of him. It was noticeable that it was losing height and he immediately knew that it was in serious trouble. The B-24 crossed the coast by the Golf Course at no more than 200 feet and he thought, flying on just two engines. Almost immediately after making landfall, the Liberator turned sharply to port. He watched transfixed as it was lost to his view as it stalled into the rising ground just behind the trees that were located between him and the town of Sheringham.

Mr Wright, now close to 80 years old, vividly recalls the scene. He remembers that the aircraft was visibly badly damaged, in particular the starboard wing. Additionally, the port wing and the tail unit had also suffered damage. He recalls: "as the aircraft turned to port and broadside on to where I was standing, you could plainly see daylight through the wings. It was obvious that everything was being done that could be done but sadly they could not maintain flying speed and she sank rapidly to the ground".

Much nearer to the point of impact, the father of May Ayers, Henry West, was collecting broken branches from the trees in the wooded area just behind Sheringham Town. With the shortage of coal and the bitterly cold winter, additional fuel was useful in order to keep the home warm. He normally took his first grandson with him on these expeditions but in view of the bitterly cold weather, young Christopher was left behind with his Mother and Granny. It was just as well. Whilst gathering up broken branches close to the edge of the wood and without warning, an **enormous** and deafening crashing noise. Suddenly branches flying over his head and in every direction. "One of those American bombers" crashed through the trees very close to where he stood. Then, just as suddenly - *silence*. Totally amazed at what had happened, Mr West cautiously approached the plane, not knowing what to expect next. Fire, explosion, who knows..... ? Furthermore, what looked like bombs scattered everywhere ! Stopping close to the wrecked aircraft, he was reassured to find a crew member who had got clear and who told him that it was "alright" to get closer. Mr West approached the nose of the stricken aircraft and found crew members trapped in that area. Some sadly beyond help but some that could be saved. He tried desperately to get one out but could not do so without additional help. After what seemed like an eternity, Mr West spotted "a young chap" running across the fields from the direction of Upper Sheringham.

The "young chap", (although not identified at the time by Mr West) was 28 years old farm worker Charlie Gant. Fifty years on he recalled: "I will never forget it. I was working in a field about three quarters of a mile from the cliff top opposite Sheringham Golf Course and it would be around 2.30 in the afternoon. I saw the B-24 approaching from the sea, very low and in obvious difficulty. I think at least two of its engines were out of action. Once over land,

the plane veered to the left. In so doing, the Liberator lost height and its starboard wing tip struck trees on rising ground at the edge of the wood on the seaward side of the area known as Pretty Corner". Watching in horror, Mr Gant saw and heard the crash which had occurred only several hundred yards from where he stood. He ran as fast as he could to the stricken aircraft, recalling that he shed his overcoat on the way and that he did not recover it until the following day !

On reaching the crash site, Charlie found a scene of total devastation. Smashed trees along the edge of the wood where the wing had scythed its path, broken and twisted metal, death and destruction. The badly damaged nose section was lying in the corner of the field with trees ahead and to the starboard, the tail section less badly damaged and lying in the field. Mr Gant recalls: "to my surprise, there were two apparently unhurt crew members running around outside the plane but in an obvious state of shock. They were shouting 'Get help, get help'. Charlie climbed into the nose section. To his horror, he found four airmen who were obviously beyond help and who he considered would have been killed instantly when the aircraft impacted. But he did make another discovery. Mr Gant continues: "My second surprise and one which I will never forget, was to find another member of the crew sitting on one of those 'toadstool' type seats positioned just behind the pilot's and co-pilot's position. He appeared to be entirely unharmed and intact. I offered to help this chap out of the wreckage but he replied 'see to the others'".

Back to Mr West's account. "When this chap got to me (undoubtedly Charlie Gant), we got three out but one was dead. The other two we carried out of the wood to a safer place and I then lit them a cigarette and covered them with my overcoat to try and keep them warm. One of their buddies came over and said that we should move them further from the wreckage as they were smoking. This we did. The Fire Brigade and Doctor arrived and I stopped with these two and held their arm whilst the Doctor gave them an injection to lessen the pain. They were then taken away by ambulance and I returned home".

Meanwhile, another eye-witness had a grandstand view as the Liberator approached that last resting place. Ten years old Brian Cooper was with a number of other youngsters playing on the little hill into which the aircraft crashed. That hill is now tree covered but fifty years ago it was an area of gorse, bracken and brambles. The children had heard the aircraft approaching, coming directly towards them and *very* low. The engines were spluttering and misfiring and it appeared that the pilot was trying to land in the long field ahead of them. However, it seemed to them as if the plane side-slipped into the trees, possibly caught by the strong north easterly wind blowing off the sea. The starboard wing struck the trees, the Liberator seemed to slightly increase height momentarily - and then 'nosed in'. It came to an abrupt halt in the corner of the field at the foot of the hill on which they were standing and, in actual fact, perilously close to them ! That drab green 110 ft wing spanned monster must have been an awe-inspiring sight as it headed directly towards the group of youngsters, one wing thundering and splintering its way through the trees. Initially slightly above them but losing height as it approached and crashing to earth not many yards in front of them. Brian says that " he does not recall being frightened" !!

Two of the lads went running off to summon assistance and Brian later learned that they stopped a car on nearby Holway Road for this purpose.

The remaining boys, including Brian Cooper, approached the front of the aircraft and saw that the nose section was shattered right up to the windshield. The youngsters continued around the largely undamaged port wing and then approached the fuselage with the trailing edge of the wing on their left. At the wing root they found two crew members, both standing. One was holding his left side where apparently, a metal fragment had penetrated. He was leaning against the wing root which was about waist height above the ground. The other crewman, who had his arm around the first, spoke to the boys. He said that he had injured his ankle jumping from the wrecked plane but appeared otherwise uninjured. This airman asked to borrow the axe that Brian had in his hand in order to try and help his fellow crewmen who were trapped in the nose section of the aircraft.

Brian remembers the shattered starboard wing and the mangled trees but cannot now recall if the tail section had broken from the fuselage or if it was still attached.

Within twenty minutes of the crash, a large number of helpers had arrived at the scene. Brian remembers seeing an ambulance cross the field from the Holway Road end of Butts Lane. He also recalls that a British Army guard took up duty around the site and that some of the larger pieces of wreckage were there for almost a week.

A young schoolgirl eye-witness, now Mrs Jean Garrad, was in Upper Sheringham village at the time of the incident and recalls seeing the B-24 pass low overhead. She quickly realised that the plane was in serious trouble and was about to crash. With a friend, she cycled at all speed to where it had landed. Jean remembers seeing two of the airmen, one lying on the bank bordering the wood with his head in his hands. The other one 'staggering around', obviously dazed and shocked. She remembers too seeing the local GP, Dr Lawson, arriving on the scene and administering assistance to the crew. Soon after this, she and her young school friend were ushered away from the immediate area of the crash. Her friend recalls seeing metal foil strips, "Chaff", scattered around the field.

Another schoolboy, young Bob Dorey, was also quickly on the scene after seeing the B-24 pass close over the tower of All Saints Church in the village. Bob remembers the arrival of the local Fire Brigade and also recalls seeing the crewmen recovering on the bank between the field and the woods. Several local people were on the scene and rendering assistance including, amongst others, a Mrs Harmer, wife of a Policeman.

Finally, the recollections of that day as recalled almost fifty years later by Mrs May Ayers, daughter of Mr Henry West. May told me:

"My recollections of this day are still quite vivid, although many years have passed. As my Father has recorded in his Notes, it was a very cold January day, grey and overcast with a north easterly wind and squalls of snow at times. My Mother and I were busy with some early Spring cleaning and had planned to do out the pantry and this was often a whole day's task. Therefore, we were a bit 'put out' when Father announced that it was far too cold to take my little son with him that day and would leave him behind with us. Whenever Father had gone with his little barrow, Christopher had always pleaded to go with him into the woods.

My Father must have set off about 2 o'clock, after we had our dinner and we carried on with our work. It must have been about 3.30 pm when he returned, looking quite a bit upset and also smelling very strongly of petrol. His first words to us were - "I'm something glad I didn't take that little boy with me today, there's been a terrible crash in the woods with one of them American bombers. It was awful". He went on to say that when he first saw it, he did not know where to run. He had been gathering wood in the area near Butts Lane, which leads into Upper Sheringham. When he realised that the plane was crashing, he ran into the woods expecting it to explode. He said that the noise as it crashed into the trees was terrific, then all was silence. Gradually he heard men shouting for help. He went back to the plane and one of the survivors called out to him saying that it would not explode as they were out of fuel.

My Father then got into the front of the plane to try and get the men out. He said that he knew that several of them were dead or dying as they were all flung on top of each other and were very badly injured. He could not get them out by himself. He told us that he had sent some boys to get help. Who they were, I never knew. (Note: see Brian Cooper's comments earlier).

Father said that he had lain them (ie: some crew members) on a bank with the help of someone who had arrived by now. (Note: Charlie Gant). He had lit them a cigarette and covered them with his overcoat. When the ambulance arrived, he returned home".

May continues: "Mother and I set off towards the crash site. The field was to the east of the lane adjoining the wood, the latter consisting mostly of fir and pine trees. The severely damaged plane had I think, been attempting a landing but the strong wind must have blown it into the wood where it hit all the trees, clipping them off as it plunged to the corner of the field. For many years afterwards you could see the descent of the plane by these broken trees. On reaching the field, along with other people, we saw debris everywhere. Bits of plane, remnants of flying jackets, Maps of Kiel, helmets, electrical wiring, gloves, papers and all sorts of items

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CHAPTER 11

Other Reports & Aspects

In this Chapter, we look at the other accounts and reports which have come to light reference the happenings on that fateful January day in 1944. The tragic crash as related by members of the crew. A first-hand account of a similar but less unhappy ordeal that occurred on the very same Mission to a crewman from another Squadron of the 392nd. Other activities conducted by the Allies and by the enemy, reports and communiques relating to or taking place on or around 4 January 1944.

We start with some Official reports from the wartime records. Brief and impersonal. These are followed by others that are more descriptive and which clearly portray the intensity of the tragedy.

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There are two relevant entries for 4 January 1944 in the Civil Defence War Diary that was maintained at the CD County Control Room in Norwich.

The first one timed at 1552 hrs reads:

"From Northern (ie: North Norfolk CD Area). Police report aircraft crashed at Pretty Corner, Sheringham. No details".

The second, timed at 1759 hrs reads:

"From Northern at 1755 hrs. Liberator completely smashed at 1434 hrs at (grid reference). Crew of ten. Six injured in Cromer Hospital. Four dead in Sheringham Mortuary. Police informed".

Notes:

i. An earlier entry at 1430 hrs refers to another crash, this one at Cawston, 10 miles inland from Sheringham. This was B-17 serial 42-29923, of the 381st BG (H) based at Ridgewell in Suffolk. This aircraft ran out of fuel whilst returning from the same raid on Kiel. Two crew members were killed in the crash.

ii. The CD Diary records the weather in Norfolk on that day as: "Fine. Cold. Wind fresh north westerly".

Details of their experience are revealed in a letter sent to Mrs Waugh by Henry Wilk. Written soon after the War and dated 20 January 1946, the letter is written when he was back home and unrestricted by censorship requirements. He writes:

"It (4 January 1944) was a very bad day and the weather was terrible for flying. We were throwing contrails all the way because of the weather. We were very late reaching our target and missed our fighter escort. At the target and most of the way back, we encountered enemy fighters and we certainly took a beating. About ten or fifteen minutes after 'bombs away', we had to leave our formation because we were badly shot up and could not keep up. That meant a trip home alone and with one engine gone - the others running but we didn't know for how long. The radio was shot up and well, to be honest, the ship should not have been in the air".

"As far as I know, no one was injured, though we were not sure about Lt

Waugh and he would not say if he was or not. He sure was a great pilot and I still do not know how he and Lt Barton brought the ship back as far as they did. Twice on the trip home the remaining three engines quit on us and each time they got them running again after a short dive. After they cut out the second time, Lt Waugh gave the order to prepare for ditching, that is a water landing. We were coming down gradually and at a few thousand feet above water we sighted the coast of England, so we were going to try and make it back to Base. Just as we got to the coast, the engines cut out for the third time and we never did pull out of the dive. Lt Waugh did do his best to make a belly landing but our wing caught in a grove of trees and spun us into a hill, nose first. I managed to crawl out of the plane after a time but could do nothing (to help)".

"Sgt Murphy was pinned inside the plane and we couldn't get him out until later. Sgt Belden was beyond the stage of being helped and as for Lts Waugh, Cound and Thomson, I never did see them as they carried us away to Hospital".

Henry concluded by saying: "Wish we could have flown our ship "Ginger" in combat, she would have brought us all back ".

Almost fifty years later, in a letter to the author dated 28 February 1994 and the first from Henry after he had been 're-discovered' alive and well and living in Florida, he again recalled the incident. He pointed out that now, not surprisingly, there were blanks in his memory. But he did remember that - "I 'came to' out of the aircraft and on top of the wing. I don't know if I was thrown out or if I crawled out. I do recall seeing someone running towards us and then stopping. Some of our oxygen bottles were scattered about and they would look like bombs from a distance".

Henry continued: "The next thing I remember is being carried through a field and woods (or the woods were nearby). I don't remember another thing until I woke up in the whitest Hospital room I ever saw. I've heard that we spent three or four days there but it could possibly have been longer because I learned later from my Mother that she received a telegram from the War Department stating that I was 'Missing in Action'".

Cromer Hospital records confirm that six United States Army Air Force personnel were admitted on 4 January 1944 but unfortunately no other details have been accessed. It is perhaps of interest to note too that this quite small Hospital also admitted five British Servicemen on the same day but the reasons for their admission are unknown.

The "whitest Hospital room" ever seen by Henry has been identified as the "Side Ward" by an ex-member of the Hospital's domestic staff. However, in spite of strenuous efforts, it has not been possible to locate any of the wartime nursing staff who were present at the time that members of the crew were being cared for at Cromer. Sadly, the resident Doctor during the War years and indeed for a period before and for very many years after the War, only died a few years ago at the grand old age of 90 plus ! Dr Donald Vaughan, a Veteran of the First World War and the Royal Flying Corps, was widely renowned and acknowledged for his immense medical skills. Nobody requiring medical attention could have been in better hands. We can be absolutely assured that everything that could be done for them, was done.

Mrs Mary Barton, widow of Co-pilot Jimmy Barton, in a letter written to the author during February 1994 relates that her late husband frequently recalled the incident. He used to say that "they knew they were going to crash but there was no panic, just silence". After the crash "he could hear people talking and a man asked him if he could do anything for him". (Almost certainly either Mr West or Mr Gant.) He also recalled hearing children's voices. Lt Barton suffered a broken leg and vision damage to one eye and was to spend long periods in Hospital.

Further correspondence from Mrs Barton recalls that her husband had told her that they had taken an enormous amount of ground flak and that their fuel tanks were ruptured and nearly empty when they crashed. They had hoped to get the plane down on open ground but they struck trees and the top turret was torn off and sadly caused the fatalities. Jimmy was thrown clear of much of the wreckage and was still strapped to his seat.

S/Sgt Lester Wagner, Engineer aboard "Alfred", wrote in later years: "On 4 January 1944, I was on an Operational Combat Mission aboard a B-24 aircraft to Kiel, Germany. We were hit heavy by anti-aircraft fire and enemy aircraft attacks. We were shot up badly and proceeded back to England and crash landed short of an emergency field just inside England. I received injuries and was taken by ambulance to a civilian Hospital at Cromer, England. I was in that Hospital for about a week before our Flight Surgeon had me taken to a Field Hospital by ambulance

In a letter dated 17 January 1944 (less than a fortnight after the crash), Jim Byrd wrote to Lt Arthur Cound's brother George. Jim was then serving as a S/Sgt member of Lt Cliff Peterson's crew (see Chapter 6, page 29) at Wendling, and like *our* crew also in the 578th Squadron. Jim wrote of Arthur: "I'm sorry that I didn't get to know him better. He was certainly a prince of a fellow and a fine officer".

Jim Byrd went on to say that he had spoken to one of the surviving crew members from the Colby Waugh crew and quoted that (unidentified) person's comments reference the incident. Jim reported:

"On 4 January we bombed a target in north west Germany, which I cannot name because of censorship. The raid, as I remember, was a tough one and our Group was hit pretty hard. His ship (Arthur Cound's) was hit by fighters after bombing the target and was pretty well shot up".

"In spite of the damage, they made it back to the English coast but the ship was so badly shot up that the gas leaked out of the wing tanks and they were forced to crash land the crippled ship here in England. He (Arthur Cound) was evidently killed in the crash".

Jim continued: "All that can be said is that he died doing his duty for his Country. I know this seems small consolation in place of his loss but to us who knew him, he will never be forgotten. We'll continue to do our job here and finish the work he started, with the hope that some day in the future we will not have to pay such a price for our liberty".

Truly remarkably moving and uplifting words written to the brother of a dead Buddy by a young Texan serving overseas. Words composed whilst he was himself participating in regular and bloody battles with the enemy. Sadly, Jim

Byrd was shortly to join Arthur and so many others on the list of those Killed in Action

And now an account with a happier ending. S/Sgt Marvin Graham was a ball turret Gunner on B-24 "Jive Bomber", serial 42-109814 of the 579th BS of the 392nd BG. Fifty years after that 4 January 1944 Mission he wrote:

"I was not acquainted with them (the Colby Waugh crew) as they were in another Squadron, though the plane itself ("Alfred") was a familiar name to me. What I can tell you about though, is that the Kiel Mission of 4 January was our crew's second and *it was as tough as they come*. The hardest part for me was that my electric heated suit did not work because I suspect the flak destroyed the power to my turret. The only thing that kept me sort of warm was that I was so frightened and so busy that the blood pounding through my body kept me from freezing !".

"Over the target we lost two engines and were so shot up that we thought of trying to go to Sweden. However, the pilot decided to try and get back home because the Germans were attacking every plane that had to leave formation to try to get to Sweden and were shooting them down. What our pilot did was to go down to about 200 to 300 feet above the North Sea, so that we could not be picked up too easily and we were lucky enough, and he was skilful enough, for us to get back. We threw everything overboard that we could to lighten the plane, including the guns towards the end. We got back to our Base so late that we had been given up for lost as we did not have any radio contact either as it got all shot up".

Marvin continued: "We had a practice at our Base to divide up any items that were not to be sent back to the families as personal enough items. I had a wonderful pair of boots that had been made in South America and I had to go around and collect them back, as they really were a prize !".

Happily Marvin survived the War, still greatly enjoys life and lives in Denver, Colorado with his British born wife Pat.

There were other lucky escapes during this Mission to Kiel. T/Sgt Fred Wagner (could he be any relation of T/Sgt Lester Wagner of *our* crew?), a crew member in a B-17 of the 384th BG actually *fell* from the open bomb bay of his aircraft as it was leaving the target area. He was in the bomb bay attempting to release some bombs that had stuck when his oxygen failed. He rapidly 'passed out' and slipped through the open bomb bay doors ! Tumbling through the sky, he fortunately revived as he reached a lower altitude and safely deployed his parachute.

Of the 569 heavy bombers despatched on this Mission to Kiel, 130 were B-24's of the 2nd Bombardment (Air) Division and the rest made up of B-17's from the 1st and 3rd BD's. Of these, 486 attacked the target. A total of 1,069 tons of bombs were dropped. Six B-24's and 11 B-17's were listed as Missing in Action. A further 127 aircraft were damaged, including 16 of the Liberators. Twenty two aircrew were Killed in Action, 53 were wounded and 170 personnel were listed as Missing in Action.

The 392nd BG's loss of five of their aircraft accounted for the **highest individual Bombardment Group loss on this Mission**. Additionally, a further three B-24's from the 392nd were listed as 'landed at other bases or crashed'.

Included under this heading was the Colby Waugh crew in "Alfred" and another that was damaged and diverted to Sweden and the crew interned. A 379th BG B-17 also sought refuge in neutral Sweden. Another B-17 crashed on take-off, two more ditched in the North Sea and fortunately both crews were rescued. A B-24 of the 44th BG crash landed on returning to its Base at Shipdham when both landing gears collapsed. A Tibenham based B-24 crash landed at Birch. There was also the 381st BG B-17 that came down at Cawston, Norfolk and which has already been mentioned earlier in this Chapter.

The 392nd Mission Report for 4 January confirms that 26 B-24 aircraft were despatched. Three aborted and returned to Base early. Twenty three attacked the target, 5 were lost to enemy action over the target area. 923 bombs were dropped on the target, 364 were jettisoned. 20,850 rounds of 0.5 ins ammunition were expended by aircraft reaching the target and another 30,000 rounds were expended or lost by aircraft that were missing or lost. Three other aircraft landed at other bases or crashed, including "Alfred", as already recorded. Six of the 392nd B-24's that returned to Base were damaged, three by fighters and another three by flak.

Of the 112 fighters deployed on this Mission, P-38's and P-51's, two were lost, both of the pilots being listed as Missing in Action. Another pilot was wounded.

The bomber gunners claimed 4 enemy aircraft destroyed, 12 probable and another 4 damaged. The fighters claimed 1 enemy destroyed, 1 probable and 4 damaged.

Because of the adverse weather conditions, PFF bombing techniques had to be adopted and bombs were dropped on the flares of the leading pathfinders.

It is interesting to note the contemporary Newspaper reports on the Raid, quoting from various sources. Those for Wednesday 5 January 1944 state:

"US Military HQ announced last night that 8th Air Force heavy bombers, escorted by USAAF and RAF fighters, attacked objectives in north west Germany yesterday. Few enemy fighters were encountered but flak was intense for some Groups. Eighteen heavy bombers and two fighters were missing".
Note: The Official post-War assessment put the Missing in Action figures as 17 bombers and 2 fighters.

The Newspapers further report: "Danish radio said that four US heavy bombers had been shot down by German AA guns".

Further: "Swedish radio reports that one B-17 crashed at Svendborg. Another crash landed near Kalundborg in north west Zealand, eight crew members were unhurt. A B-24 crashed near Simrishamm in the south west corner of Sweden. Nine members of this crew were unhurt and one slightly wounded".

Note: It is assumed that the latter refers to the B-24 from the 392nd BG.

These reports are followed by a typical German News Agency quote of the time. It reads:

"The German News Agency states that Kiel was raided by US heavy bombers yesterday and described it as a "terror attack". A great number of

incendiary and phosphorous bombs were dropped and caused great damage, especially to the residential and university quarter. Incendiaries caused very serious damage to the historic castle".

The following day, 6 January, the Newspaper reported a joint communique that was issued on the previous day by the (British) Air Ministry and the US Military HQ. It reads:

"A large force of 8th Air Force heavy bombers escorted and supported by USAAF 8th AF and RAF fighters attacked the shipyards at Kiel and the marshalling yards at Munster on Tuesday (4 January). Good results were reported despite heavy cloud over the targets. At Kiel, large fires and much smoke were observed in the attack. The light fighter opposition was driven off by the escorts which destroyed eight enemy fighters. The bombers destroyed four enemy aircraft. In supporting sweeps, the RAF destroyed five enemy aircraft. Eighteen heavy bombers and three fighters are missing".

The article goes on to say: "The Kiel raid was directed against the submarine and shipbuilding areas of Kiel. Clouds obscured the targets but occasional breaks enabled crews to report good results. They saw fires and a heavy pall of smoke over the city. There was intense flak over Kiel. The heavies flew in strong winds and extreme cold and some crews declared that the weather was their greatest obstacle. They reported temperatures of 50 to 55 degrees below zero".

The other raid carried out by the 8th AF and referred to above was conducted by 75 B-17's of the 3rd. Bombardment Division against Munster City. Two aircraft collided near the target and another crash landed on return. In the latter case, the crew were safe. The B-17's were supported by no less than 430 P-47's. The fighters claimed 7 enemy aircraft destroyed and two damaged for no losses to themselves.

RAF 2 Group provided Diversionary Raids, known as *Ramrods*, in support of the 8th Air Force activities. Coinciding with the raid on Munster, RAF Mitchells, Bostons and Mosquitoes attacked targets in the St Quenton and Abbeville areas of France. Closely supported by Spitfires, these operations were designed to attract the interest of the defending enemy fighters.

Additionally, it may be of interest to briefly look at RAF Bomber Command's involvements during the same period. On the night of 2/3 January, 383 bombers attacked Berlin for the loss of 27 Lancasters. There were some 'Minor Operations' carried out during the same night. These included a raid by a small number of Mosquitoes on Duisburg and Bristillerie, 'Intruder' patrols by Beaufighters, 26 aircraft minelaying off the Frisian Islands and off French ports plus 25 Operational Training Unit (OTU) sorties. There were no losses from these latter activities.

The atrocious weather that limited the activities of the American 8th Air Force, similarly curtailed RAF bomber activities during the night of 3/4 January. Just six Mosquitoes were sent to Solingen and two to Essen. Fortunately, there were no losses from these 'nuisance raids'.

On the night following the daylight raid on Kiel on 4 January, RAF Bomber Command despatched 80 aircraft against two V-1 Flying Bomb sites. One in the Pas De Calais and another near Cherbourg. Both attacks were effective and no

aircraft were lost. Additionally, 25 aircraft were involved on 'Special Operations' in connection with the Resistance groups operating on the Continent. Again, fortunately, no losses. Under the heading of 'Minor Operations', the records for the same night list 'nuisance factor raids' by 13 Mosquitoes on Berlin, 3 against Krefeld and 2 sent to Cologne. There were 4 Radio Counter Measure (RCM) sorties to mislead enemy defence systems, 40 aircraft were out again minelaying off Lorient and Brest and OTU's conducted a further 8 operational sorties. Bomber Command's luck held and, again, there were no losses. Finally, the same evening, four B-17's of the 1st BD of the 8th AF dropped 800,000 leaflets over the Orleans, Lorient, Rouen and Tours areas of Occupied France. Again, happily, no losses.

Enemy aircraft activity over this country was very limited during January 1944. There were 611 night sorties directed against Southern England and East Anglia. 36 of these enemy aircraft were destroyed. During the period of direct interest, there were raids by a small force of enemy bombers and fighter-bombers over Southern England on the night of 2/3 January. One person was killed as a result. A similar attack took place during the night of 4/5 January. No casualties are recorded but one JU-88 was shot down in the English Channel, 3 miles south of Hastings, by an RAF Mosquito aircraft. There were no survivors.

And so the War went on

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But on a lighter note, those lucky enough to have a few hours off for relaxation would have found the following films and shows available in Norwich:

At the Theatre Royal - "Goody Two Shoes".
The Hippodrome also had a Christmas Pantomime - "Cinderella".

At the Cinemas:

The Carlton - "True To Life".
The Haymarket - "Holy Matrimony".
Regent - "The Yellow Canary".
The Odeon - "The Miracle of Morgan's Creek".
Theatre de Luxe - "Jungle Book".

ooOoo



PART 5

The Aftermath



CHAPTER 12

Post - 4 January 1944

In this Chapter we will try and record some of the less immediate aspects of the crash. Many very personal and moving, some more detached but collectively they help build up the impact of the events that took place on that January day in 1944.

As already mentioned, the six injured crew members were taken to Cromer Hospital by ambulance after receiving initial treatment at the scene of the crash from the local medical practitioner Dr Lawson. The four dead airmen were taken to Sheringham Mortuary.

We know that ball turret Gunner S/Sgt Edward Murphy had been severely injured and his spinal cord severed. Tragically, Edward died in Hospital on Saturday 8 January 1944.

Lt Jimmy Barton had received a broken leg and damage to an eye. He was in Cromer Hospital for at least a week and later transferred to a Field Hospital. Here he was detained for at least two months and because of the persistent eye problem, was unable to resume flying duties and was eventually returned to the United States.

T/Sgt Lester Wagner spent sometime in Hospital with Lt Barton. Lester had received frostbite to his face, hands and feet. Whilst over the target area he received lacerations from shrapnel and ruptured eardrums. He spent a week at Cromer Hospital and was then taken by ambulance to a Field Hospital where he was detained for another two weeks. Lester was subsequently certified unfit for further flying duties but remained in the ETO on ground-based tasks..

S/Sgt Henry Wilk, tail gunner/armourer aboard "Alfred", received injuries to his head and leg as a result of the crash landing. He spent several days in Cromer Hospital but we are uncertain precisely how long he had to receive treatment for his injuries. We do know that he recovered from this ordeal after a short period of recuperation in Scotland and as recorded later, continued his flying duties.

T/Sgt Parke Kent, Radio Operator, suffered a sprained back and a broken ankle as a result of the crash. With the others he was taken to Cromer and then transferred to the Base Hospital at Wendling. When he had recovered, Parke was put in charge of a training programme for Radio Operators at the Base - and would only be required to fly again when an extra Operator was needed. It was not too long before that requirement materialised, as we will see in the next Chapter.

S/Sgt Earl Johnson, Gunner, was taken to Cromer Hospital but we have no other details except that he did not fly again and that, happily, he survived the War.

Note:

The 231st American Army Air Force Station Hospital operated from

Redgrave Park, Suffolk (close to the border with Norfolk) from late 1943. It transferred to and operated from Morley Hall, Wymondham, Norfolk as from 3 March 1944. It is not known if this was the "Field Hospital" referred to above but it does seem likely.

A commonly expressed remark from relatives of the crew has been their great regret that letters from home were, at best, very seldom received by their loved ones in the ETO. This must have been very disconcerting for all of those involved. Mail from home is always one of the highlights of any Serviceman's life. It must have been particularly distressing for relatives to have returned to them large numbers of undelivered letters, addressed to a loved one and after he had lost his life overseas. In one case where a son died in this crash, as many as seventy five undelivered letters and a number of parcels were returned unopened to his parents. Mail delivery must have been complicated by the fact that the crew spent much of their time moving around between Bases during their first six or seven weeks in this country.

One of Colby Waugh's brothers, Norman, served as an Infantryman in the US Army. He arrived in England shortly after the crash in which his brother died. Norman tried desperately to learn as much as possible about the tragedy. This must have been a difficult and painful task for him in wartime Britain, coupled with the constrictions placed upon him as a serving soldier. Norman survived the War after fighting across Europe with the US Third Army but has sadly died in post-War years. His sister Carolyn and brother Stanley have kindly passed on letters written by Norman to their Mother at that sad time for the family. In a letter dated 6 March 1944, Norman wrote:

"Dearest Mother, I have learned a lot this weekend about Colby's last trip. I went to Sheringham on the 4th. I got there about midnight and stayed with some British soldiers. They told me that night how the plane came in. The next morning they took me out to where the crash occurred. From there I went to the Hospital (Note: this will be Cromer Hospital). They said only the survivors were brought there. Six in all. It seems that, or rather they told me that, he was shipped from there to his Base. I did not have time to go out there. I may get another leave later on but will check further first".

Norman goes on to describe the crash as told to him by the British soldiers: "The plane, a Liberator, was returning from a raid. It came in on one motor at very low altitude. As a matter of fact, it just made land. They tried for a clearing but missed. The plane itself was quite badly shot up and from what I gathered, the boys did a swell job to get back to English soil..... . Now you know the telegram said he died at Sheringham. Of the crew and officers of ten, three were killed outright. Colby was still conscious when removed from the plane and it's possible he lived half an hour. I could tell you more of the whereabouts of his Base but for their protection I will not give you the name of the town."

It says much for Norman's determination that he was able to ascertain so much information about the circumstances of the incident during what must have been a very short stay in the Sheringham area.

On 29 April 1944 Norman again wrote to his Mother:

"Here is the letter you have been waiting for, for so long. Yesterday I visited Colby's grave. It is in a beautiful American Cemetery and I am sorry but

I cannot tell you where it is located. However I have two snapshots of the place and I am sending one in this letter and one in the next one. They said I could tell you that it is only a few miles out of London. It is also more than a hundred miles from where he crashed".

"After I got to it and saw how everything was, I went back to a nearby town and got some flowers. I wanted a wreath but they said they would have to have a day to make one. They did make me a spray. We call it a bouquet. It consisted of tulips, both red and yellow and narcissus, double and single. It was the best they had. I then took it and gently placed it on his grave".

"The Captain in charge of the Cemetery told me that they had a full Military Funeral with a Protestant Chaplain. I noticed also, Mother, that two of his buddies lay on one side and one on the other". (Note: these will be Lt Arthur Cound, Lt Virgil Thomson and S/Sgt Don Belden).

Norman finished the letter with the comment that he feels much better since he visited the grave and the wish that "the Good Lord be with him always".

Note:

The Cemetery referred to is at Brookwood in the county of Surrey, near Woking and a few miles south west of London. It was originally a WWI Cemetery and was re-opened during WWII as a temporary burial ground for US personnel.

Lt Virgil Thomson was later transferred from Brookwood to Cambridge and remains there to this day (Block D, Row 4, Grave 19).



Photograph 5. Lt Virgil E Thomson's Grave, Cambridge American Military Cemetery, England. 1994.

After the crash, S/Sgt Edward Murphy was buried at the Cambridge American Military Cemetery. The bodies of Colby Waugh, Arthur Cound, Don Belden and Edward Murphy were subsequently returned to the United States. Lt Colby Waugh was finally put to rest in Arlington National Cemetery and Lt Arthur Cound is buried in the family plot in Mission Burial Park, San Antonio, Texas.

It was in early March 1944 that two of the surviving crew responded to a letter received from Mr and Mrs Cound, parents of Navigator Arthur Cound. S/Sgt Earl Johnson wrote to say how glad they were to receive the letter, as none of them had an address to which they could write. He also explained that they had all spent time in Hospital. He goes on to say:

"I'm afraid I can't give you the exact details of that Mission as the Censor won't let it through but it was all due to enemy action". Earl explains that those who died are buried in England but that he is not permitted to give the name of the Cemetery. He reports that they were given a Military Funeral. Earl continues: "Maybe it would help for you to know that your son was responsible for all of us getting back and we were proud to have known him and flown with him". Earl concluded the letter by expressing the wish that they all hoped to get the opportunity of visiting the Cemetery.

A few days later, T/Sgt Lester Wagner responded to the same letter from Mr and Mrs Cound. He said that they would be seeing the Chaplain about flowers for Arthur's grave and that they would all be glad to do anything they could to help. The letter continued:

"Speaking for the crew and myself, we thought Lt Cound was a fine fellow and he was a good friend of ours. He did his job well and with his best efforts. I am sorry for what happened and I send my deepest sympathy. War is a terrible thing and it causes a lot of distress and heart breaking. We had a good crew and I think the best but we hit hard luck. We did our job as good as we could".

We know too that Henry Wilk wrote to Mrs Waugh on his return to the US. (See page 49). He also took the first opportunity to visit the distraught Mother, Father and Family of Edward Murphy. In 1995, that visit is still vividly remembered with appreciation by Edward's 81 years old sister Agnes.

Mrs Barbara Kent still retains letters from Henry that told her that her husband Parke was posted as Missing in Action on another Mission only a few weeks after the crash involving "Alfred". Then, later, that there was hope for his safety. She still recalls the hopeful and sympathetic manner in which the letters were written and says that she will always be grateful. These personal contacts, by letter and in person, obviously brought great comfort to those concerned and reflects the tremendous spirit that existed between all members of the crew.

After the crash, the wreckage was guarded by the Army until a US Recovery Team was despatched to the site to clear away the wreckage. The organisation that dealt with these duties for the 2nd AD was the 3rd Strategic Air Depot (3D SAD) based at Watton in Norfolk, not too many miles from Wendling. A brief account of this highly important engineering Unit which performed some extremely arduous tasks in most difficult conditions, is included in Appendix 3.

Whenever a 2nd Air Division B-24 made a crash landing, 3D SAD despatched an Aircraft Inspector to the scene of the incident for the purpose of 'categorising' the aircraft. This was done in order to ascertain if it was:

- i. Repairable.
- ii. Salvageable with repairable parts and designated 'E-1', or
- iii. Salvageable with no repairable parts and classified 'E-2'.

Once categorised, 3D SAD allocated one of their Mobile Teams to deal with the incident, as required. Not too surprisingly, "Alfred" fell into the latter category. The Aircraft Inspector sent to investigate was a Lt Blanchard.

For an eye-witness account of the recovery of the wreckage, we can return to May Ayers' account. May recalled for me in February 1993:

"A large crane was pulling out the remains of the bomber from the corner of the field. I shall never forget the wreckage as it was being hoisted on to the loaders, the mass of crumpled metal which had been so embedded in the ground, the noise it all made as it was being extricated and taken away. It was a very sad day. We never knew the fate of the survivors or where they were taken. I think we assumed that they were taken to an American Base".

May also recalled: "that for many years afterwards, a wreath was hung there in the trees on the anniversary of the crash. We did not know who put it there

Notes:

- i. We now believe that the wreaths were put there by the Sheringham Branch members of the Royal British Legion.
- ii. Brian Cooper thinks that this practice was continued for ten or fifteen years after the War.

When talking to Charlie Gant in December 1992 about the incident, he mentioned that he recalled being approached by an American Officer in a Jeep a day or two after the crash. Charlie was on the Holt Road between Sheringham and Upper Sheringham village when the Jeep pulled up and the American asked him "Where had the Liberator come down?". Charlie was, of course, able to point out exactly where it was across the fields. He recalled that this Officer was "a big chap and he actually wore *cowboy boots !!*".

In a letter dated 26 December 1994 from James Agerton, one of the veterans of the 3D SAD team of engineers, Jim recalls that Lt Blanchard was one of their Officers and goes on:

"Lt Blanchard, as I remember him, was a large and affable person well over six feet tall and who trained as a fighter pilot in the USAAF. How or why he was assigned to the 3D SAD as an engineering officer is unknown to me. He was one of those American Officers who had a penchant for wearing *COWBOY BOOTS*' !!

It is strange how things fall into place but, again and sadly, another tragic ending. Lt Blanchard was determined to get back to flying as a fighter pilot and his wishes were granted soon after that chance meeting with Charlie Gant. During the summer of 1944 whilst flying on a B-24 Liberator escort mission in a Republic P-47 Thunderbolt over Germany, Lt Blanchard and his aircraft were lost to enemy action. The tragedy of War continued

We will end this Chapter with, what is still, something of a mystery. It will be recalled that Norman Waugh was told that his brother Colby may have survived for a short time after the crash landing. In the absence of any detailed records and the fact that so many of those directly involved at the time are no longer with us, it has (so far) proved impossible to ascertain any additional information. We can but assume that the ambulance(s) that attended the crash were either British civilian or Military vehicles and crews - probably the former. We have had one report that an Ambulance at the scene was from North Walsham. In that case, it would almost certainly have been one jointly run by the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society. In view of the fact that there were no American Bases in the immediate vicinity, it seems extremely unlikely that a US ambulance would have been in attendance, certainly not within, say, the first hour after the crash.

In view of the above, it is interesting to recount a rather strange, almost uncanny, story from Colby's daughter Ginger. In a letter dated 23 May 1994, Ginger wrote:

"About 27 years ago, when Roxie (her daughter) was two years old, we lived in Hollywood. I developed an itchy skin, so I sought out a dermatologist. He, of course, asked for my family and medical history. When I said my Dad had died during the War, he wanted to know how. I told him that all I knew was that he was 'shot down' over Germany and tried to get his ship back to Base but didn't make it. He asked my maiden name and when I told him, he asked if my Father was *Colby Arthur*. I still get a chill thinking about it. He said that he had been an ambulance attendant and had been with my Father when he died. I don't remember the man's name and his prescription was so effective I never went back to him again I was young and it didn't mean much to me at that time beyond an odd coincidence. And now I do so wish I had gone back and followed it up".

That puzzle remains unresolved at the time of writing but it is a particularly intriguing story. Maybe the Dermatologist was a local British person who served as an ambulance attendant and emigrated to the US after the War ?? But persistent enquiries have, so far, proved fruitless ! (See Chapter 26).

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PART 6

The Supreme Sacrifice



CHAPTER 13

Those Who Died

Lt Colby Arthur Waugh.

Colby Arthur Waugh was born on 23 June 1920 and raised on a farm in Solon, Maine. He was one of twelve children, eight boys and four girls. Amazingly, eight of those twelve children served in the Armed Services of the United States. Two served in the US Navy, two in the Army (including Colby's younger brother Norman who fought across Europe with General Patton's Third Army), one in the WAAC's, another as a Nurse and two others in the US Army Air Force - Colby and brother Coburn. Seven of the eight were destined to survive the conflict.

Colby enlisted in the US Army on 24 March 1940, three months before his twentieth birthday and one year nine months before the US entered the Second World War.

Initially sent to Staten Island, New York, it was not long before Colby was transferred to Hawaii. Here he served with Battery B of the 11th Field Artillery based at Schofield Barracks on the Island of Oahu. He was there when the Japanese made their infamous attack on Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941. This unprovoked attack plunged the US into a state of War with Japan and this was quickly followed by War with the Axis Powers in Europe.

Colby was promoted to Corporal in January 1942 and by April or May of that year he transferred to the Army Air Corps and returned to the US. He was posted to the Air Force Training Centre at Santa Ana, California. By July Colby was undergoing pilot training at Ryan Field, Hemet, California as a Cadet in Class 43A. The Cadets continued their basic training at Gardner, California and then in early November on to Roswell Air Force Base in New Mexico for the final phase of pilot training. On **4 January 1943** Colby Waugh received the eagerly awaited and coveted award of his Pilot's 'Wings'. Then followed a short spell at Wendover Field, Salt Lake City in Utah with the 18th Repair Wing of the 2nd Air Force.

Colby was promoted to Flight Officer and was sent to the 29th BG at Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho. During March he was transferred again, this time to the 547th Squadron at Sioux City, Iowa.

Promoted to Second Lieutenant in June 1943, Colby was back at Gowen Field and this time with the 52nd Squadron. In July he was attached to the 462nd Squadron at Scottsbluff, Nebraska and it was here that we think that he joined up with the rest of the crew. On 23 August he, and they, were transferred to Mountain Home Army Air Base in Idaho and were attached to the 801st Squadron. By September, Colby's address (and this would apply to the rest of the crew) was "c/o Base Post Office, Herington, Kansas". Here began his journey to the European Theatre of Operations, as recounted earlier.

For the record we should also state that, as with the rest of his crew, Colby was assigned to the 392nd BG (H), based at Station 118, Wendling,

England as from 4 December 1943 (Special Order of that date, issued by HQ 2nd CCRC refers) and to the 578th Bombardment Squadron of the 392nd BG from 8 December 1943, as per SO #86, HQ 392nd BG.

We know that Colby loved his flying, that he was a competent, enthusiastic and highly rated pilot and that he intended to make the Air Force his career.

We cannot proceed further without recording another very important aspect of Colby's young life. Very soon after arriving at Ryan Field, Hemet for his pilot's training during that Summer of 1942, he met a pretty young Californian girl named Doris. She had just graduated from High School when she met the dashing young Pilot Cadet from Maine at a Methodist Church Social - an "Open House for Youth". The Church provided all sorts of table games along with refreshments at these Socials which took place on Wednesday evenings between 7 and 9 pm. - and which were designed to encourage the "Flyboys" to come to Church!

Their very first encounter was when Doris walked into the games area and found her girl-friend having a game of ping-pong with Colby. They stopped playing when Doris arrived on the scene and started to leave. Doris said: "Well, I sure like that ! I stop to watch and you leave". Colby turned around and said "Oh, so you want to play ping-pong?", to which Doris replied "No, no, I just wanted to watch!". To her friend's dismay, Colby insisted that they play and that was it !!

They fell in love, a whirlwind romance followed and they became engaged in August and were married on 29 October 1942 at the Methodist Church in Yuma, Arizona. Doris was eighteen and Colby twenty two years old. The very next day they travelled by train and bus to Colby's new Base at Roswell in New Mexico and together they set up home there. When Colby graduated after successfully completing his pilot's training, Doris still remembers the pride that she felt when she and the other wives were allowed to pin the 'Wings' onto their husband's uniform.

Doris recalls her first trip to the farm in Maine during February 1943, soon after Colby had obtained his Pilot's qualifications - and for the first time in her life seeing *snow* !

In August 1943, Doris and Colby had a baby daughter whom they named Ginger. It was nine days before the proud father was able to get to see his baby child. Training was by then intensive in preparation for overseas duty and combat.

Colby died on **4 January 1944**, exactly one year *to the day* after he had gained his 'Wings'. The telegram from the War Department arrived on 12 January.

Doris was only nineteen years old. Little Ginger, a baby of just four and a half months. Their lives would never be the same again. The family in Maine and the brothers and sisters who were serving their Country elsewhere, were equally devastated. The tragedy of War had struck another cruel and terrible blow.

Colby's body was returned to the US and is buried in the Arlington National Cemetery, Virginia.

Fifty years on and Colby's widow Doris and their daughter Ginger live in California. Colby's brother Stanley and sister Carolyn still live on the farm in Maine. Brother Robert lives in Oklahoma, Malcolm in California, Coburn and Merrill in Maine and sister Pauline in Alaska. Sadly Norman (who visited Sheringham during the War in an effort to ascertain details of his brother's death) died some years ago and sister Lillian passed away in 1994.

ooOoo



Photograph 6. Lt Colby A Waugh. 1943.

Lt Arthur Cound.

Arthur Cound attended public schools in El Paso, Texas and after graduating from El Paso High, worked for the FBI in Washington DC.

In 1940 Arthur enlisted in the US Army Air Force. He went on to attend Class 43-8 at the USAAF Navigation School at Hondo, Texas and graduated as a qualified Navigator on Thursday 3 June 1943.

2/Lt Arthur Cound was assigned to the 392nd BG (H), based at Wendling, England on 4 December 1943 and to the 578th BS on the 8th of the same month, along with the rest of the Colby Waugh crew.

Henry Wilk recalls Arthur as "a meticulous Navigator". Other survivors from the crash of "Alfred" refer to "being proud to have known and flown with him". Another said "he was a fine fellow and a good friend of the crew". Yet others refer to him as "a fine Officer" and "a prince of a fellow". Fifty years on and Arthur's cousin George recalls him "as an outstanding young man". Such comments from those who knew him, worked and flew with him, speak for themselves.

Arthur Cound was not married but his tragic loss left behind grieving parents Mr and Mrs George H Cound, two sisters and a brother and, no doubt, other relations and many friends.

The Purple Heart was presented to Arthur's parents in February 1944. His body was brought back to the US from England and he is buried in the family plot in the Mission Burial Park, San Antonio.

Fifty years on, Arthur's sister Velma lives in California and cousin George and his wife reside in El Paso, Texas.



Photograph 7. Lt Arthur L. Cound. 1943.

Lt Virgil E Thomson.

In spite of numerous and prolonged efforts, we know very little about the Bombardier aboard "Alfred", Lt Virgil Thomson. We do know that he was from Birmingham, Alabama and that he was unmarried. Sadly, and this is the only case amongst the entire crew, no contact has been established with relatives or friends. However, efforts will continue.

Unlike the other members of the crew who were killed in the crash, Virgil Thomson's body has not been returned to the US. He is buried in the impressive and beautifully maintained American Cemetery at Cambridge, England and occupies Grave 19, Row 4 of Block D.

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As Virgil is the sole remaining crew member still on British soil, it may be appropriate to quote the Inscription on the ceiling of the Chapel at the American Cemetery and Memorial at Cambridge:

*In proud and grateful Memory of those Men
of the United States Army Air Force
who from these friendly Isles flew their
Final Flight and met their God.
They knew not the hour,
nor the manner of their passing.
When far from home, they were called to join
that Heroic band of Airmen who had gone before.
May they rest in Peace.*

ooOoo

S/Sgt Edward R Murphy.

Edward Murphy was 21 years old when he died in Hospital four days after receiving severe spinal injuries in the 4 January crash of "Alfred".

Edward was the youngest son in a family of six children and came from Swissvale, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He joined the US Army Air Force on 23 November 1942.

Initially buried at the American Military Cemetery at Cambridge, England, his body was later returned to the United States.

Edward's name is recorded amongst those listed as having lost their life on one of the two War Memorials placed outside the Carnegie Free Library of Swissvale. These two Memorials are dedicated to the men and women from Swissvale who have lost their lives in all the Wars since WWI. It is sobering to note that Swissvale has more casualties per capita in the Second World War than any other community in the United States.

ooOoo

Henry Wilk was a particular Buddy of Ed and when Henry returned to the US in September 1944 after completing his 30 Missions, one of his first tasks was to visit the grieving parents as soon as possible. Over 50 years later, that visit is remembered with great appreciation by Edward's sister Agnes. Now 81 years old and living close to her only son Ronald in Pennsylvania, Agnes still has vivid memories of that visit and fond memories of her young brother and how he used to speak highly of all the crew. Edward's loss brought very great sadness to all the family and to his many friends.



Photograph 8. S/Sgt Edward R Murphy. England. 1943.

S/Sgt Don C Belden.

Don Belden was 34 years old at the time of his death on 4 January 1944. Don was the top turret Gunner aboard "Alfred" and as the oldest member of the crew, he was affectionately known as the "Old Man" (!).

From Dawson, Nebraska, Don was married and had a baby daughter, Martha. She was just fifteen months old when her Father tragically lost his life.

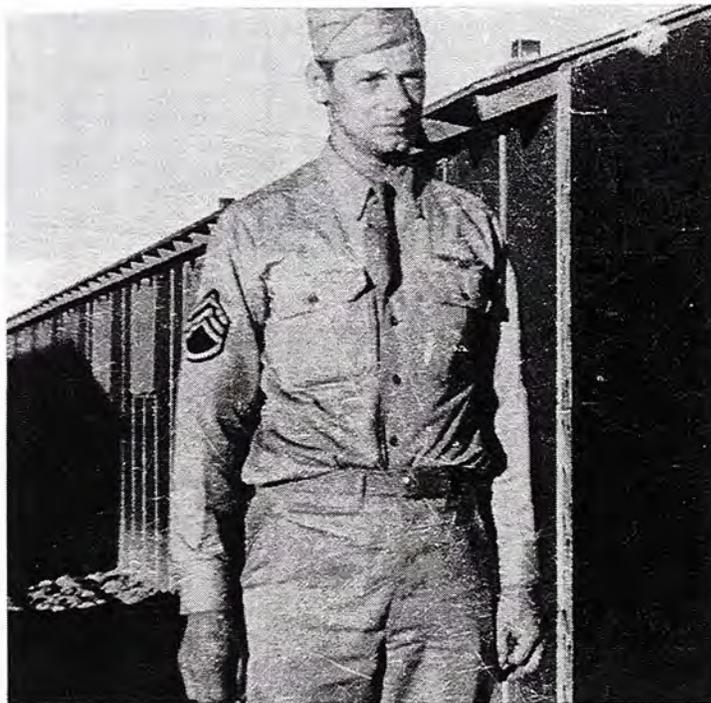
Don Belden's body was returned to the US.

Another tragedy and more grief for so many.....

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Half a century later, Don is survived by his brother Bud and by his daughter Martha.

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Photograph 9. S/Sgt Don C Belden. 1943.

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Photograph 9a. Don Belden's Gravestone.
Heim Cemetery, Dawson, Nebraska. 1995.

PART 7

Those Who Survived - The Fight Continues

CHAPTER 14

Further Active Service

Lt James W Barton

As will be recalled, Co-pilot Jimmy Barton suffered a broken leg and an eye injury in the crash of "Alfred". He was taken to nearby Cromer Hospital and with the other survivors he would have been under the care of Dr Donald Vaughan. We know that he was at Cromer for about one week and then Lt Barton was transferred to USAAF medical facilities.

We know too that by mid-March his leg injury was much better but that his vision had not improved, in fact it had worsened. There was speculation that he might have to be returned to the US.

Lt Barton did return to the United States where he was enforced to undergo a long confinement in Hospital for the injury to his eye. Further flying duties were ruled out.

When he was sufficiently recovered, Jim Barton was re-assigned to active duty. He was given the task of Communications Officer at Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Along with his wife Mary June, he remained there until the end of the War.

Lt Jim Barton was discharged from the USAAF at Bosier City Air Base, Louisiana in the Fall of 1945.

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After completing his War Service in the USAAF, Jim Barton was the City Electrical Inspector of Springfield, Missouri for a period of 34 years until retirement. Sadly, he died 9 June 1990, less than two years before our enquiries started.....

He is survived by his wife Mary June and three daughters.

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Photograph 10. Lt James W Barton.

Further Active Service.

T/Sgt Parke V Kent.

Resulting from the crash landing on 4 January 1944, Radio Operator T/Sgt Parke Kent sustained a broken ankle and strained back. After a week in Cromer Hospital, Parke was transferred to the Base Hospital at Wendling. He made good progress and had returned to active duty by 2 February.

Parke was asked if he would fly again and agreed to do so. In March he was put in charge of Radio Operator training at the Base and was told that he would only be asked to fly operationally again *if* an extra Operator was required. Needless to say, that need soon arose and Parke was recalled for flying duties on 27 April 1944.

He was required to participate in the *second* of *two* Missions executed by the 392nd on that day. This was the first occasion when the Liberators were involved in two operations in a single day and the Group's resources must have been at full stretch in order to meet these operational requirements.

27 April 1944.

The first Mission involving the Group on this day was against a NoBall target (V-Weapon site) at Moenneville, south west of Abbeville in the Pas De Calais area of France. Eighteen aircraft took off and had mixed success owing to poor visibility in the target area. No fighters were encountered but the AA fire was intense and six of the Wendling aircraft received damage from this cause but all returned to Base around midday.

Of the 203 B-24's despatched by the 2nd BD, one failed to return and a total of 25 were damaged. 393 B-17's were also involved in this operation against 25 different V-Weapon sites and 3 of the Fortress aircraft were lost to enemy action.

Just two hours after the Wendling Liberators had landed from their first mission of the day, the briefings for the second took place at 1400 hrs. This time, twenty six crews were briefed reference the next target, Chalon-Sur-Marne. Departures began at about 1525 hrs. The target was very successfully attacked with pin-point accuracy and fighter opposition was non-existent. However, whilst outbound the Group strayed south of its intended course and encountered very heavy AA fire. Sadly, the aircraft in which T/Sgt Parke Kent was flying, serial 41-29509 and piloted by 2/Lt J Weinheimer of the 578th BS, was severely damaged by flak. With dead and wounded aboard, the Co-pilot, 2/Lt G C Marshall, took over control of the crippled aircraft from the wounded Pilot and miraculously managed to regain the English coast. Here they crashed into the cliffs at Westgate-on-Sea, Kent with a further loss of five crew members. Lt Marshall was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions. Amongst those who died in this aircraft were 2/Lt J A Ross, Sgt B Fink, S/Sgt C L Aughinbaugh, Sgt N P Rich and Sgt B Munford. Fortunately, T/Sgt Parke Kent bailed out over St Omer, France. He was taken Prisoner by the Germans. The aircraft was on its 9th sortie.

The remaining B-24's from the 392nd BG all returned to Base around 2100 hrs. No fewer than seventeen of them suffered damage from the intense AA fire.

A total of 198 B-24's from the 2nd BD took part in this second operation

of the day. Two were lost in crashes on return (including the one in which Parke had been flying), 22 suffered damage (Note: 17 of these were from the 392nd), 24 crew members were killed, 6 were wounded and one posted as Missing in Action (Parke Kent).

ooOoo

After successfully bailing out of the doomed aircraft, Parke was captured by the Germans at St Omer. He was then taken to Stalag Luft XVII-B, near Krems in Austria.

In the meantime, Parke's wife Barbara and the folks back home waited for news. It was Henry Wilk who had the sad and difficult task of writing and telling them that Parke was "Missing in Action". Then, in a second letter dated 5 June 1944, Henry wrote to inform Barbara that Parke had been seen to leave the stricken aircraft and that his parachute had opened. The relief felt by Barbara and the family must have been profound but apprehension and uncertainty must have lingered still In the same letter Henry reported that he had completed his 30 Missions and added that "he hopes he will never have to go through the same ordeal again". It was 1 July before Barbara received the telegram officially confirming that Parke was a POW. Henry wrote again on 12 July and, to this day, Barbara recalls with great appreciation those three kind and sympathetic letters that she received at that very sad and stressful time.

In the meantime, Parke found himself in Stalag Luft XVII-B at Krems, on the River Danube, some 30 miles to the west of Vienna and a similar distance from the border with Czechoslovakia. The actual location of the Camp was very close to the village of Gneixendorf.

In due course, Barbara was able to exchange letters with Parke, no doubt heavily censored and not too informative as a result! She was also able to send a number of parcels containing necessities and these must have been very eagerly received. However, in this context, it is interesting to note that it was decreed that "Prisoners were not allowed to have extra food, or no more than other prisoners, under any circumstances or for any reasons". So what happened to the food sent from home ?!

Whilst the dreary waiting continued back home, Mrs Barbara Kent, her elder sister and her Mother continued with their sewing and knitting for the "Bundles for Britain" project. Barbara recalls that this did provide them with some comfort and made the waiting a little easier to bear. Over here, those "Bundles" were greatly appreciated and provided great comfort for those lucky enough to receive them. For Barbara's Mother, this was 'the second time round'. Her husband, Barbara's Father, had served in World War I, seeing service in Europe and had many 'close calls'. The waiting and the trauma were not new experiences for the family but that did not lessen the burden.

In the Prison Camp, Parke was not badly treated as such but, along with the other Prisoners, he had to endure limited food, poor sanitation, severe overcrowding, cold and generally very poor conditions. Also, as was so often the case for POW's, boredom too was another great enemy.

The winter comes early in the Austrian Alps and the snow and frost made things difficult for the POW's. The water froze and the wooden outer cladding of the barrack blocks was ripped off by the Prisoners in order to provide

fuel for heating. Trading and bartering of goods was carried out with stealth and the Red Cross Parcels played a major part in everyday life.

Parke, with his Radio Operator's knowledge and expertise even managed to construct a crystal radio receiver under the noses of the German guards !! To obtain the necessary components, to successfully construct and to operate it under these conditions was no mean achievement. It must have provided the source of anxiously awaited news bulletins from the War Front and must have been a great morale booster for the POW's. Amazingly, this little radio receiver survived the War and is one of Barbara's proud possessions to this day. (See Photograph 12, page 84).

During his period at Krems, Parke received three days 'Solitary Confinement' for failing to salute a German Officer. His food was restricted to two bowls of sour turnip soup on each of those three days. Fifty years later, Barbara comments "Bet he didn't regret it either" !!

Conditions in the Camp deteriorated during that last Winter of the War. The Red Cross "Christmas Food Parcels" were not received by the Prisoners until 2 January 1945. Ten inches of snow fell on 15 January. The cold was intense and by the end of the month *all* fuel supplies ceased. There was *no coal and no wood* left to burn in the stoves in the barrack blocks. By the time February arrived, what little food that had been getting through had practically ceased. The bread ration - black with a high sawdust content, with the occasional splinter to prove it - was reduced to one loaf per seven POW's. By early March, this was down to one loaf for eight men. The meagre 'menu' also included a miserly ration of barley soup. "Once the weeds were cleared out, there was little left", reported one POW. Additionally, a few potatoes, over-watered and full of dirt. They relied heavily on the Red Cross parcels, one per week and shared between two.

On 16 March, their morale was boosted when some American P-38 fighters buzzed the Camp. On the 19th the sky was filled with contrails, formed by the high-flying bombers of the US 8th or 15th Air Forces. (Note: The 15th AF operated from Italy and was particularly active in this area of Europe). The prisoner's concealed radios gave news on 30 March that Russian forces had crossed the border into Austria from nearby Czechoslovakia. On the second day of April, American bombers attacked nearby targets including the town of Krems and P-38's again flew low over the Camp. This time the POW's waved to them as they passed overhead.

The Germans were extremely fearful of capture by the Russians. On 6 April it was announced that all 21,000 Allied Prisoners held at Stalag Luft XVII-B were to leave the Camp and march into Germany. It was at this time that reports were getting through that Hitler had ordered that ALL Prisoners of War were to be *shot*, in order to release the guards for more active duties ! At Krems, and no doubt elsewhere, surreptitious plans were drawn up by the Prisoners in case any attempt was made to carry out these orders. Fortunately they were not. With the end of the War in sight, the guards probably realised the consequences to themselves had they attempted to obey these orders from their Fuhrer.

It was on Sunday 8 April that the Prisoners were told that they were moving out immediately - "to save them from the Russians". The sound of gunfire could be heard from the direction of Vienna, thirty miles distant.

Initially the POW's were reluctant to move. However, they concluded that things might have been difficult in the hands of the Russians. Furthermore, their German guards were getting agitated by their stalling tactics and the POW's were forced to concede to their orders and the prospect of a forced march had to be accepted. On leaving the Camp, the Prisoners could see the fires burning in Vienna and were confronted by a stream of civilians and soldiers heading west and fleeing from the advancing Russians.

For eleven hours on the first day, the 4,000 American POW's in groups of 500, along with the 17,000 other Allied Prisoners, covered about ten miles. They rested for the night in hills near Ostra. The cold was intense and the men found it difficult to sleep, their only protection from the elements was from their frost encrusted blankets.

The forced march continued the next morning and continued throughout that day. They were allowed to rest on the 10th but continued their march on the following day. As they proceeded along the route, Austrian civilians were letting it be known to the POW's that they would throw themselves in the Danube and drown, rather than be caught by the Russian forces.

For the Prisoners, food supplies were getting very low. They had to resort to eating raw potatoes from the fields. A loaf of bread had to be shared between *nine* or *ten* men. Dysentery and pneumonia was rife. Even some of the German guards collapsed from exhaustion - and, in some cases, deserted.

By 13 April they had reached Grein. More P-38's flew low over the columns of POW's and white handkerchiefs were waved in the hope that they would not attack in the mistaken belief that they were enemy troops.

By 25 April they had reached Braunau, Hitler's birthplace. The POW's established 'camp' near the Inn River, in a forested area some eight miles south of the town. They were aware that the Americans were advancing towards them and were not too far distant. In all, there were something like 21,000 Allied Prisoners in the area, just over 4,000 of them being American aircrew. By now the weather was very wet, the rain was continuous and relentless. More and more men collapsed from sheer exhaustion, foot troubles, pneumonia and dysentery. Fortunately, some relief was being administered by American Medical Officers who were making good use of 'salvaged' drugs and other medical supplies.

On 2 May 1945, the 80th Division of General Patton's Third Army reached the Inn River and started crossing it at a point close to Braunau. The fact that Hitler was born there in 1889 was of some significance to those American troops and they expected a tough fight from the Germans. However, the defenders of the town meekly surrendered to a combat group of the 13th Armoured Division. Some miles south of the town where the POW's were encamped, an American Army vehicle from General Patton's Third Army suddenly appeared in their midst. The Captain aboard spoke with the POW leaders and with the few remaining German guards. *This* was the long awaited moment - they were no longer Prisoners !! Their ordeal was nearing an end but was not quite over. There were to be a few more days before their immediate predicament was to improve.

On 6 May, the American ex-POW's found and occupied a deserted factory close to Braunau and spent the night there. The next day, the 7th, the US Army

finally arrived with trucks, gave them food, transported them through Braunau, across the river and took them to an airfield in Bavaria. At last, they were beginning to feel 'free' ! Some were then transported by C-47 transport aircraft whilst others continued by truck to 'Camp Lucky Strike' at Fecamp in France. From there they were taken to Le Havre. On 1 June they boarded ship, headed for the United States and home, arriving on 11 June 1945.

Parke had successfully escaped and survived from two stricken aircraft, endured over one years imprisonment in the hands of the enemy, survived a 25 days forced march covering an estimated distance of between 180 and 250 miles - and thankfully lived through it all. At last, his wartime ordeals were over.

Notes:

- i. The above account of conditions at Stalag Luft XVII-B and the subsequent forced march is largely based on information kindly supplied by Mrs Barbara Kent. Additionally, various other reports made by ex-POW's from Krems were consulted. Where these Prisoners suffered the same or similar experiences and ordeals as Parke and during the same period of time, extracts have been added from these sources in order to provide further detail.
- ii. The estimated distance of the forced march across Austria from Krems to Braunau differs in the various accounts that are available covering the event. The route taken was not a direct one and included many deviations caused by the war situation and the whims of the German guards. It is because of this uncertain routing that the estimates vary by sixty or seventy miles.
- iii. It is interesting to note that all American Servicemen who were POW's in Germany and Japan received a one dollar payment for every day that they spent in a Prisoner of War Camp. This ruling was made by the War Claims Commission, who decreed that all War Camps in these two countries were sub-standard.

ooOoo

T/Sgt Parke Kent was awarded the Good Conduct Medal, the Purple Heart and Air Medal EAME Theater Campaign with one Battle Star.

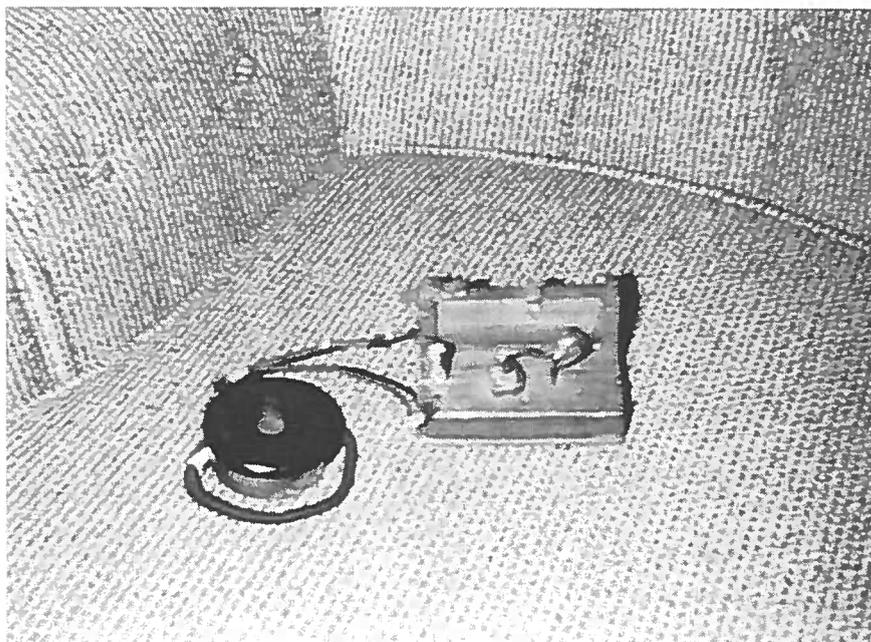
ooOoo

Sadly, Parke died some years ago. He is survived by his widow Barbara, three sons Christopher, Jonathon and Nicholas and two daughters Leslie and Valerie.

ooOoo



Photograph 11. T/Sgt Parke V Kent.



Photograph 12. The Crystal Radio Receiver built and operated by Parke Kent in Stalag Luft XVII-B, 1944/45.

Further Active Service.

S/Sgt Henry Wilk.

S/Sgt Henry Wilk recovered from the wounds that he received during the crash landing on 4 January 1944. After being taken for another flight, he was asked if he would continue with his flying duties. This he agreed to do. Henry went on and participated in a further 26 Missions, flying with various pilots and crews and without further serious mishap. He thereby completed the required total of 30 Missions before returning to the US.

At the time of writing, one of Henry's Missions has eluded the researchers of such information ! That he flew his full 30 Missions is without doubt. With the four already referred to and recorded, here are listed an additional 25, along with a few notes and comments which, I hope, will be of interest. We will be interested (Henry particularly) to learn of/be reminded of the elusive 30th !

That Henry Wilk and Parke Kent volunteered to fly again in combat after their earlier experiences, speaks much of the individuals concerned.

S/Sgt Henry Wilk's further Combat Missions took place as follows:

Monday 6 March 1944.

Target: Primary. The Daimler-Benz Motor Works at Genshagen, on the southern outskirts of Berlin.

Pilot: Lt Muldoon.

Briefings for this Mission were completed by 0530 hrs and involved 25 crews. Take-off at Wendling began around 0800 hrs with the 576th BS in the lead.

Unfortunately, one of the B-24's belonging to the 578th BS crashed soon after take-off at Church Farm, Great Dunham. Sadly, pilot Lt P Shea and all his crew died in this tragedy. The aircraft, serial 42-7473, ran into a patch of mist immediately after leaving the ground, failed to gain height, struck a tree and burst into flames. This accident was the only mishap suffered by any of the bomber Groups during the take-off phase of this Mission.

In Henry's aircraft, Liberator named "Jaw-Ja Girl" (possibly "Jaw-Ja Boy"?), Pilot Lt Muldoon later reported: "We were in line, two behind the crashed aircraft. We saw the flash and orange glow suddenly appear in front of us. Then a green light signal from the Control Tower and the B-24 in front began its take-off run. Then our turn. Visibility was poor, we could only see the glow of the fire. Nothing was said over the radio but everyone knew what had happened. The big worry was that the bombs might explode as we passed over the crashed aircraft. There were no options but to take-off and try and fly around the burning B-24". They took off in their heavily laden Liberator, eased to one side of the orange glow then levelled out and began their climb - and safely clear of that initial hazard.

When Assembled and in combat formation, the aerial armada was almost 100 miles in length ! The attacking force was led by the B-17's of the 1st Bomb Division, comprising five Combat Wings, involving 301 aircraft. They were escorted by 350 fighters, P-38's, P-47's and P-51's. These escorts were arranged in three phases, penetration support, target and withdrawal support. Then came the 3rd BD with another 264 B-17's and with a further

fighter escort of 205 P-38's, 47's and 51's.

Following the 3rd BD came the 2nd BD and their B-24's. Leading them was the 2nd Combat Wing. Ahead were the two PFF aircraft from the Alconbury based 482nd BG. They were followed by the 445th from Tibenham, then the 453rd from Old Buckenham and Hethel's 389th BG. Two minutes behind them came the Composite 14th/96th Combat Wing, led by a single 482nd Pathfinder. **Then came the Wendling Liberators, the 392nd BG.** They were followed by the 44th from Shipdham and the 458th from Horsham St Faiths. They in turn were followed by the 20th Combat Wing, led by another 482nd PFF Liberator. Then the Flixton (Bungay) based 446th BG, the 93rd from Hardwick and the 448th from Seething. A total of 249 B-24's, including the PFF aircraft of the 482nd BG based at Alconbury. Escort for the Liberators and again in a three phase operation, consisted of another 221 fighters. A further 167 P-47's and P-51's provided 'general withdrawal support'. Included amongst these were three RAF Squadrons of Mustangs who met the bombers north of Hamburg.

Note:

Numbers of aircraft quoted are those that took off from their bases on this Mission. The number that penetrated enemy air space was, of course, somewhat fewer. The total strength of the attacking force that was despatched amounted to 1,758 aircraft, 1,535 of which entered enemy territory. Of these, 814 bombers were despatched, 702 reached enemy air space.

The German Air Force lost 66 aircraft destroyed or beyond repair. More importantly, the loss of 46 fighter pilots killed or wounded and including some very experienced airmen, was a severe blow to the Luftwaffe.

During the course of this Mission the USAAF lost 69 bombers and 11 fighters. The 2nd BD lost 16 Liberators missing in action, including one from the 576th BS of the 392nd BG. This was Lt Hestad and crew in B-24H "Flak Ducker", serial 42-7598. They had to leave the formation when outbound and north of Hanover and the aircraft finally crashed at Amerongen in Holland. Fortunately all the crew bailed out successfully and were subsequently taken prisoner.

Two B-24's from the 453rd BG based at Old Buckenham and one from the 446th from Flixton had to ditch in the sea on the return from this Mission. Illustrating the extreme dangers of having to alight in the treacherously cold and hostile North Sea in a B-24, it is sad to note that just eight from the combined crew of thirty were saved by the Air Sea Rescue Services. This was in spite of the ditched crews being sighted almost immediately, their positions being reported accurately and rescue boats arriving on the scene quickly.

This raid was of considerable significance as it was the **first time that Liberators had crossed Germany to attack the capital of the Third Reich, Berlin.** Indeed, it was the **first full-scale** daylight raid by the 8th Air Force on that target.

With the loss of 69 heavy bombers and 11 of the escorting fighters, the 8th Air Force suffered its greatest loss rate in any one day's operations - either before or after this Mission on 6 March 1944. And **this** was Henry's re-introduction to combat flying !!

Fifty plus years later and Henry retains two vivid and everlasting memories

of this particular Mission. The first, is attending the early morning briefing. Of the curtain concealing the target map being drawn back and seeing the red ribbon stretching right across Europe from Wendling to BERLIN and the **gasps of astonishment and amazement from everybody in the room.** And secondly, Henry remembers seeing many enemy fighters on this day but that they generally seemed to pass them by - as if they were hunting *easier prey*. At the time, it was thought that the enemy was looking for the 44th BG. They had recently suffered a lot of damage and casualties and had many new replacement crews flying with them.....

15 March 1944.

Target: Secondary attacked. Industrial areas at Brunswick.
Pilot: Lt Goodwin.

The 2nd and 3rd Bombardment Divisions despatched a total of 344 bombers to Brunswick, including 157 B-24's. One B-17 and two B-24's were lost in action. Wendling contributed 26 Liberators on this Mission. One of the two that were lost was that flown by Lt Miller and crew from the 576th BS of the 392nd. Their aircraft, serial 42-99976 and named "Pocatello Chief", came down near Seesen in Germany. Ten other Wendling based aircraft received flak damage.

23 March 1944.

Primary Target: Achmer airfield on the outskirts of Osnabruck.
Pilot: Lt Morefield.

The 392nd despatched 24 B-24's but two had to abort with mechanical difficulties before reaching the target. Because of cloud cover at the Primary, an alternative target was selected for attack. This was the railroad facilities seven miles south west of Osnabruck and these were hit with good results. A total of six B-24's from the 2nd BD were lost in action but happily all Wendling aircraft returned to Base. However, ten had received damage from the intense flak that they had encountered and one airman was wounded.

24 March 1944.

Target: Secondary attacked. St Dizier Airfield, France.
Pilot: Lt Spears.

Because of bad weather over the designated Primary target, an airfield near Metz in France, the Secondary at St Dizier was attacked. Bombing results were described as "excellent". No enemy fighters were encountered and flak was 'light'. Happily and for the second day in succession, all of the 26 Wendling aircraft returned safely. Two received some damage from the flak.

Indeed, all of the 206 B-24's deployed by the 2nd BD returned to their Bases, although 24 were damaged and 3 of the aircrew were wounded in action.

27 March 1944.

Target: Mont-De-Marsan Airfield in Southern France.
Pilot: Lt Morefield.

With the 578th BS in the lead, 16 Wendling Liberators took off in very bad local conditions, with visibility down to 100 yards. No enemy opposition was encountered on the long flight to and from the target located close to the Pyrenees Mountains. The Liberators bombed in good visibility and results were excellent. However, on return to East Anglia they again encountered the fog and poor visibility. All Wendling aircraft were forced to divert to other bases. Fourteen of the 392nd aircraft landed at an RAF base (quoted as "Barcombe" in the records - Boscombe Down perhaps?), 80 miles west of London. The report on this Mission by Col Bob Vickers in his Group History "The Liberators from Wendling" states that "their British counterparts entertained them in grand fashion". All crews had returned safely to Wendling by 1520 hrs the next day.

Not all Groups had been so lucky. Two B-24's from nearby Attlebridge collided over the Dereham area during assembly for this Mission. Another battle damaged 466th BG B-24 crash landed at Base on return. Yet another Liberator, this one from the 44th BG based at Shipdham, crash landed with a collapsed right landing gear at RAF Tangmere on the South Coast of England.

1 April 1944.

Target attacked: Schaffhausen, Switzerland.
Pilot: 1/Lt R E Fletcher.

It is said that the briefed target was the chemical works at Ludwigshafen and that the PFF lead aircraft took them off course by some 100 miles south of that intended. They then strayed into neutral Swiss territory where their bombs were dropped in a wooded area near Schaffhausen. Whatever the reason, some 38 B-24's bombed Swiss territory, including 23 from Wendling. All aircraft safely returned to Base, although some did suffer damage from AA fire.

After considerable diplomatic activity, a sum of \$1,000,000 was paid to Switzerland as a formal apology. It is of interest to note, however, that it has been suggested by at least one person who was directly involved, that a factory producing vital components for the Germans was, in fact, the target and that the Mission was entirely successful Sometimes drastic measures have to be taken in times of drastic necessity.

8 April 1944.

Target: Primary. Brunswick.
Pilot: 1/Lt Fletcher.

Another arduous Mission for the Group. The 2nd Bombardment Division had a total of 350 B-24's involved on this day. The 30 Liberators from the 392nd followed those of the 44th BG to the target. Just before reaching the IP (Initial Point), both the 44th and the 392nd were heavily attacked by an estimated 75 enemy fighters. The Wendling based Gunners claimed 12 enemy destroyed but sadly, the Group lost two B-24's and crews.

Those lost were 2/Lt T E Eloranto and crew from the 577th BS in B-24 serial 42-110061 on their first Mission and 1/Lt J W Dickson and his crew from the 579th BS. They were lost in B-24 serial 42-7599, "Mack's Sack III".

On their return, another 577th BS battle damaged aircraft was lost when it crash landed at Sidestrand, near Cromer. Sadly, five crew members were killed and the other five were injured. This Liberator, serial 42-73505 and named "Fairy Belle", was piloted by 2/Lt T L Anderson. Like "Alfred", this aircraft and crew were forced to crash land only a few hundred yards inland after reaching the coast of Norfolk. Sadly, with remarkably similar tragic consequences.

Additionally, the 579th BS also had the misfortune to damage B-24 42-7469, "Rose of Juarez" when it made a belly landing back at Base. The aircraft suffered damage to the wing and landing gear. Categorized 'E-1' by the Engineers from the 3D SAD at Watton, the aircraft was subsequently repaired. Six other Liberators from the Group received battle damage.

A total of 30 B-24's were lost by the 2nd BD on this Mission. Nearby 44th BG at Shipdham lost no fewer than 11 of their aircraft.

9 April 1944.

Target: Primary. Tutow. Aviation Industry.
Pilot: 1/Lt Fletcher.

Another difficult Mission, The 2nd BD despatched a total of 246 B-24's but because of very bad weather conditions, several units abandoned the Mission at various points along the route to the target. A total of 106 Liberators attacked the Primary for the loss of 14 aircraft and crews.

The 577th BS of the 392nd lost 2/Lt R H Griggs and crew in "Lonesome Polecat", serial 42-52097, when they disappeared after being heavily attacked by fighters. Another battle damaged B-24, serial 42-52593 of the 576th BS, crash landed at Beccles on their return and suffered damage to the landing gear but, happily, the crew were safe.

During the Assembly for this Mission there was a particularly unfortunate accident. At about 0900 hrs there was another of those tragic collisions. This time it took place over the Central Norfolk village of Foulsham and the adjacent RAF airfield of that name. The aircraft involved were B-24H, serial 41-29485, of the 578th BS of the 392nd flown by 1/Lt H F Morefield and B-24J, serial 42-99982, from the 389th BG based at Hethel. This tragedy resulted in the loss of 17 aircrew members from the two aircraft. Lt Morefield had a miraculous escape along with Lt K S Kaufman, although the latter received broken legs. They were the only survivors from the Wendling aircraft. The Hethel based B-24 had aboard Captain John Driscoll, the Group Gunnery Officer. His task that day was to have photographed the strikes on the target. He was in the waist gun position when the aircraft collided in poor visibility at about 8,000 feet. Five of the 500lb bombs and the entire fuel load exploded. A further three bombs fell near the bomb dump at RAF Foulsham - and which contained a quantity of RDX bombs. Captain Driscoll and two others were trapped in the still more-or-less intact tail section, which fell to earth like a broken leaf. They grabbed their chest parachutes and tried desperately to leave the falling tail

section. Captain Driscoll and one other succeeded in getting clear of the wreckage at about 1,000 feet and made safe landings by parachute. The tail Gunner was not so fortunate and was killed in the crash.

Note:

The writer of this account witnessed this collision and vividly recalls the event. Watching the assembly of the several hundred B-17's and B-24's on this Easter Sunday from my Grandfather's farm at Hindolvestone (a few miles north of Foulsham), our attention was drawn to a brilliant flash and shortly after to a heavy 'rumble'. Sections of aircraft began falling to earth from a point high in the sky and slightly to the south of our position. Some pieces were burning and trailing smoke. Some fell quickly, other pieces including some that were quite large, fell more slowly, turning over and over as they dropped earthwards.

In the meantime, the other bombers continued to mill around as they formed up, appearing and disappearing in the broken cloud. I do not recall seeing any parachutes but we stood and watched, quite mesmerised, for a very long time as pieces dropped all around. Glinting in the intermittent sunlight, the pieces fell like leaves being shed from a tree in a light breeze during the Autumn (Fall).

Even as a youngster of 14 years, the feeling of death and despair was very real and near at hand. We watched in silence and it was probably as much as an hour before all the fragments reached earth, scattered far and wide by the combined effects of the force of the explosion and the light wind.

Later searches over the fields and meadows of the farm revealed maps, various documents including a page from the calibration chart from the BC221 frequency meter that was part of the Radio Operators equipment, some fragments of clothing and many pieces of metal from the aircraft, mostly very small. A sad and tragic start to the fifth wartime Easter Sunday.

12 April 1944.

Target: Zwickau, Germany.
Pilot: 1/Lt Fletcher.

Twenty one Wendling Liberators took off on this Mission. They joined 163 other B-24's from the 2nd Bomb Division along with 271 B-17's from the 1st and 3rd Bomb Divisions. Because of cloud and dense contrails which caused severe difficulties to all participating Groups, the Mission was cancelled. Recall for the 2nd BD did not materialise until they had penetrated the German border. A total of 5 Liberators were lost but all the 392nd BG aircraft returned to Base. However, the Group encountered very heavy AA fire and 10 of the Wendling B-24's received damage from that cause. One 579th BS aircraft, serial 42-109789 and named "Mairzy Doats", flown by 2/Lt C L Ball and crew, was hit so severely by flak that two of the Gunners bailed out whilst in the area of Dunkirk. The 392nd received Mission credit for this operation.

Note:

"Mairzy Doats" survived this ordeal, completed 50 sorties with the 392nd BG before being transferred to the Tibenham based 445th BG in late 1944.

19 April 1944.

Target: Gutersloh. Airfield. Primary.
Pilot: 1/Lt Fletcher.

The 2nd Bomb Division deployed 149 B-24's, attacking a number of airfields and other targets. Sixty two Liberators from this force attacked the airfield at Gutersloh, including 14 from the 392nd and achieved good results. The remaining 9 Liberators from Wendling attacked a 'target of opportunity' at Kall. Results of this attack were not observed. Seven of the Group's aircraft received flak damage but all returned safely. Indeed, all 2nd BD B-24's returned to their bases without loss, although one 466th BG aircraft crash landed at Attlebridge on return. The damage was repairable by the engineers from 3D SAD at Watton.

22 April 1944.

Target: Hamm. Marshalling Yards. Primary.
Pilot: 1/Lt Fletcher.

On this day, the US 8th Air Force involved over 1,600 aircraft in action against the enemy. 803 bombers and 859 fighters. From this formidable force, the 2nd BD attacked Hamm with 179 B-24's along with 459 B-17 Fortresses from the 1st and 3rd Bombardment Divisions. The 392nd BG did not take off until 1530 hrs, one of their first late missions and which, therefore, involved a late (after dark) return.

The Group encountered heavy and accurate flak and were also very heavily attacked by fighters. The Group lost Capt Everhart and crew of the 579th BS over enemy-held territory in B-24 serial 42-52605. Their aircraft was hit over or close to the target but they headed for home but eventually exploded in mid-air over the Dutch coast. It was thought at the time that several crew members had escaped by parachute. In fact, all bailed out successfully and became POW's. Unusually, on this occasion, there were 12 men in the crew, including Major Robert Cox.

Seventeen Wendling Liberators were damaged by flak and fighters and a number of crewmen received injuries in these attacks. In all, a total of 26 casualties were suffered by the Group during this Mission.

It was on this day that enemy aircraft infiltrated the returning bombers. As they approached their Bases after dark, 14 B-24's were either shot down or crash landed as a result of the enemy activity. Fortunately, aircraft from the 392nd managed to avoid the attention of these enemy intruders but considerable havoc and casualties were caused at many of the nearby Bases.

A 389th BG Liberator crash landed at Hethel after being hit by AA fire. The aircraft had to use the shorter runway as the main one was blocked by another B-24 with a collapsed nose wheel. When the damaged Liberator touched down on the secondary runway, its left tyre burst and the plane careered across the airfield, heading for the Control Tower. In the Tower, some of the high ranking officers of the Second Air Division were watching the proceedings - including Major General James P Hodges and General Edward Timberlake. Directly in the path of the oncoming B-24, now slithering across the grass

out of control, was a building used by the Radar and Signals maintenance technicians. This building was hit and the two men inside were killed. The aircraft burst into flames and was completely destroyed. Miraculously, all the crew were saved. It is interesting to note that it was Captain (later Colonel) Driscoll who rescued four crew members from this blazing B-24J after it had struck the Signals building. This was the same Captain Driscoll who just 13 days previously had survived the mid-air collision over Foulsham ! (See entry for the 9 April Mission, Page 89). Captain Driscoll received the immediate award of the Airman's Medal and General Doolittle flew to Hethel the next day in his P-38 from 8th Air Force HQ to personally make the presentation.

However, this was not all. The German intruders were roaming far and wide across East Anglia. At 2207 hrs a B-24 of the 448th BG was shot down in the sea off Hopton, just south of Gt Yarmouth. There were no survivors from the crew of ten. Three minutes later at 2210 hrs, a 458th BG Liberator was shot down close to Horsham St Faiths airfield on the outskirts of Norwich. At 2217 hrs a 389th BG Liberator was shot down by an intruder at Cantley, near Norwich. Eight of its crew perished. Three minutes later another two B-24's were lost. These were "Repulser" of the 448th BG and all ten crew lost their lives at Kessingland, near Lowestoft. The second to go down at 2220 hrs was a B-24 from the 453rd which was attacked by an intruder when 15 miles off the Suffolk coast and crashed near Southwold. Five of the crew were killed. Another severely battle damaged Liberator from the 453rd crash landed at Tibenham and its right landing gear collapsed and was categorised 'E1'. Fortunately there were no crew casualties. Another B-24 from the 458th was attacked and crashed near Horsham St Faiths. The combined casualties from these two aircraft from the 458th (the other crashed at 2210 hrs) amounted to 9 killed and 11 wounded. Yet another Liberator from the 448th was lost when "Peggy Jo" crashed at Worlingham, near Lowestoft. The crew had bailed out and the top turret gunner was the only member of this crew to receive injuries. The traumas for the 448th were not yet over. Another of their Liberators that had been shot up by an intruder, crash landed on the runway at Seething. Two more B-24's following this aircraft in the landing circuit ran into the first one, with the result that all three were wrecked. The 467th BG lost a B-24 which crashed near Barsham in Suffolk with seven killed and 3 wounded. Yet another from the same Group was lost when it was attacked by an intruder and crashed from 500 feet at Mendham in Suffolk. Sadly, all 10 crew were killed.

An RAF Albermarle also succumbed to the intruder activity on this night. Shot down near Lowestoft whilst on a training flight, three crew members were killed and two bailed out safely.

One of the German intruders was shot down by return fire from the returning B-24's. Four Gunners on separate aircraft claimed the 'kill'. The aircraft was Me-410A-1 9K+HP of 6/KG51 and it crashed close to Norwich at Ashby St Mary. Both occupants were killed. Whilst not claimed at the time, the Germans to their dismay, also lost their experienced Gruppenkommandeur in another Me-410 that had taken part in the intruder activities. Damaged by gunners aboard the B-24's, it failed to make the crossing of the North Sea and both crewmen were lost.

Whilst the enemy intruder activity that took place on this night has been recorded in great detail by a number of aviation historians/writers, their accounts do differ with respect to certain detailed aspects - perhaps reflecting the confusion that reigned far and wide during that night? *If there are*

inaccuracies, they will apply to detail only but please take this aspect into account with reference to the consequences of the enemy activity as recounted above.

24 April 1944.

Target: Leipheim. Airfield. Primary.
Pilot: 1/Lt Fletcher.

The 2nd Bombardment Division despatched a total of 230 B-24's on this day and were briefed to attack two German airfields. Ninety eight of this force attacked the Luftwaffe base at Leipheim, including those from the 392nd BG. Bombing was visual and the results were excellent. A total of four Liberators were lost, including two from the Wendling Group.

Lt Griffin and crew from the 578th BS in aircraft serial 41-28688 were forced to leave the formation when they lost two engines. With a friendly fighter escort, they headed for Switzerland but unfortunately did not make it. They were posted as 'Missing in Action' at a point 20 miles south west of Strasbourg. Also unfortunate were 2/Lt Ellinger and crew from the 579th in serial 44-40105. They took a direct hit from flak when en route home and just one parachute was observed before the aircraft crashed near Kortrijk in Belgium.

25 April 1944.

Target: NoBall - Wizernes.
Pilot: 1/Lt Fletcher.

This was a 'last minute' assigned and high priority mission against the rocket weapon (V-2) site at Wizernes. The task was allocated to just two Groups of the 2nd BD - the 93rd and the 392nd. In all 28 B-24's were despatched, 23 of them from Wendling. Twenty seven of the total attacking the target. Cloud cover was total and they bombed through the cloud using a new high precision bombing aid, code named 'GH', in the PFF lead aircraft. Results were of course, unobserved but it was thought that their 1000 lbs bombs impacted in the target area. Forty P-47's provided escort for the bombers. There were no losses and all aircraft returned safely.

26 April 1944.

Target: Gutersloh (Paderborn).
Pilot: 1/Lt H F Morefield.

Heavy overcast was forecast over the target. The 2nd BD deployed 238 B-24's, including 26 from the 392nd. The forecast was accurate but bombing was impossible because there were no radar equipped PFF aircraft allocated to their formations. Fortunately no enemy aircraft were encountered but 18 B-24's were flak damaged, including one from Wendling. All 392nd aircraft returned without casualties. Note that Lt Morefield was back in action ! Just 17 days after his close encounter with death over Foulsham on 9 April (see Page 89).

1 May 1944.

Target: Liege, Belgium. Marshalling Yards. Primary.
Pilot: 1/Lt Fletcher.

Forty B-24's, including 24 from the 392nd, set out to attack this target. However on arrival, the target was obscured and the Wendling B-24's did not release their bombs. Luckily no enemy fighters were encountered but flak was described as 'moderate' and 'fairly accurate'. In spite of this, all Wendling aircraft returned safely, although nine received battle damage and one crew member was injured as a result.

3 May 1944.

Target: NoBall - Wizernes. V-2 Rocket site. Primary.
Pilot: Lt Muldoon.

This target still caused great concern (and was to continue to do so for a further considerable period of time). Fifty one Liberators from the 44th, 93rd and 392nd BG's, 22 of them from Wendling and led by 6 PFF aircraft, carried out an attack on the target. Bombing conditions were described as "fairly good" with between 3/10ths and 5/10ths cloud cover but 'GH' bombing was used. Crews classified the results as only 'poor'. The target was heavily defended by flak batteries and 14 of the Wendling aircraft were damaged and a number of casualties were sustained. All aircraft returned to Base.

As an indication of the strength of the AA defences now established around the V-Weapon sites, 33 of the 47 attacking force reaching the target area received flak damage.

4 May 1944.

Target: Brunswick.
Pilot: Unknown (but see the Note at end of this entry).

The 2nd BD despatched 231 of their B-24's against targets at Berlin, Brunswick and other areas of Central Germany. At Wendling, take-off was at 0700 hrs and 25 aircraft managed to get airborne in atrocious weather. The conditions were so bad that only six aircraft were able to join formation and set course for their designated target of Brunswick. The 392nd aircraft, along with some of the other B-24's, reached enemy air space but because of the dense cirrus cloud between 13,000 and 23,000 feet, the Mission was recalled. No enemy opposition was encountered and all aircraft returned safely after 5 hours flying.

Note:

1/Lt W A Stroble and crew (unnamed) were the only crew from the 578th BS to receive a Mission credit. If Henry was allocated to a 578th crew for this Mission (as would be expected and which was the case with all his other Missions), it would appear that this was the pilot with whom he flew.

7 May 1944.

Target: Munster.

Pilot: Unknown (but see the Note at the end of this entry).

A total of 322 B-24's of the 2nd BD set out to attack Osnabruck. The 392nd despatched 27 aircraft and crews. The weather conditions en route to the target were extremely poor with 10/10ths undercast. The GH equipped PFF aircraft leading the 392nd mistakingly led them to Munster where bombs were dropped. The results were unobserved. Large numbers of fighters were sighted but, fortunately did not attack. Flak was intense on the bomb run and 13 of the Wendling Liberators received damage but all returned safely to Base and without casualties.

The 7 May activities were notable for being the first occasion when over 900 8th Air Force bombers attacked targets and only the second time that over 1000 aircraft were airborne for operations. Almost 600 B-17's attacked Berlin, in addition to the involvement of 322 B-24's, as mentioned above. A further 754 fighters were committed for escort and support duties.

Note:

As with the previous Mission, Henry is now unaware of the pilot with whom he flew this Mission to Munster. Those from the 578th BS who were listed as being credited for the 7 May operation are:
Lt's Stroble, Lang, Young, Fletcher, Sabourin and Zweig.

8 May 1944.

Target: Brunswick. Primary.

Pilot: Lt Fletcher.

Take-off for the 392nd was at 0610 hrs with 27 aircraft safely airborne. Again poor weather conditions and the familiar 10/10ths undercast necessitated PFF bombing procedures. Twenty five of the Wendling B-24's attacked the designated target, yet again encountering heavy flak. Eleven of their aircraft were damaged. Again they sighted quite large numbers of enemy fighters but their interest was elsewhere and they did not interfere with the Wendling Liberators. The 392nd all returned safely at around 1345 hrs.

9 May 1944.

Target: St Trond Airfield, Belgium. Primary.

Pilot: Lt Fletcher.

The 392nd flew 27 B-24's on this Mission to one of several airfields and other strategic targets attacked on this day. It was, in fact, the start of the pre-Invasion heavy bombing offensive by the 8th Air Force. All aircraft bombed the Primary with excellent results. The opposition from the enemy was light and all aircraft returned safely and there were no casualties.

Over 1,400 8th Air Force aircraft were operational on this day and the total losses were 13 planes - 6 bombers and 7 fighters.

13 May 1944.

Target: Tutow Airfield. Primary.
Pilot: Lt McCarthy.

Nineteen Wendling B-24's took-off on this Mission (Number 85 by the 392nd BG) at 1030 hrs. They were part of a force of 261 Liberators airborne from the 2nd BD. Cloud conditions again gave problems but most aircraft dropped their bombs on the Airfield (a FW-190 base) but six had to bomb the city area. Results could not be observed. Flak was light but six of the Wendling aircraft received some damage from this source. Fighters were again observed and some of the Gunners were able to get some bursts fired at one that passed close to the rear of the formation. Damage may have been inflicted. The bombers were not attacked and all returned safely at about 1815 hrs.

The 2nd BD lost one B-24 during the course of these operations. The B-17 losses amounted to 11 aircraft.

15 May 1944.

Target: NoBall (V-Weapon) site at Siracourt. Primary.
Pilot: Lt Fletcher.

An 0630 hrs take-off by 16 aircraft of the 392nd. Bad weather dictated the use of a GH lead aircraft but the equipment failed over the target. As a result the first two Squadrons did not release their bombs. However, the third Squadron did so and believed that they had hit the target with fair results. No fighters were encountered and for the first time in 86 Missions, **no flak was encountered** ! All B-24's were back at Wendling by about 1100 hrs.

It was a good day all round. Of the 166 B-24's and B-17's that were operational, all against V-Weapon sites, there were **no losses and no casualties**. However, the fighters lost one aircraft due to engine failure from amongst the 104 that were involved. The comparatively low level of activity was accountable to the adverse weather prevailing at the time.

Note:

At the time of these attacks on the Siracourt site, it was thought that it was being built in connection with the V-2 (rocket weapon) programme. It was later discovered that Siracourt was a V-1 (flying bomb) storage site. However, its destruction was of no lesser importance than that originally envisaged.

19 May 1944.

Target: Brunswick. Aviation Industry. Primary.
Pilot: 1/Lt Fletcher.

Soon after 0900 hrs 28 aircraft took off from Wendling, part of 300 despatched by the 2nd BD. In all, 888 heavy bombers from the 8th Air Force were involved plus in excess of 700 fighters. Berlin was the other main target for attention. At Brunswick, 23 of the Wendling aircraft, including Henry in the "Flying Crusader", reached the target and dropped their bombs. However, the

enemy was waiting and the bombers encountered a very large number of enemy fighters, estimated at 150. The Group sustained repeated and relentless attacks for a period of over 45 minutes. Additionally, the flak during the bomb run was very intense. Resulting from this vigorous reaction from the enemy, the Group sadly lost three aircraft and crews. They were: Lt D D Prell and crew from the 576th BS., Lt Lang and crew from the 578th and from the 579th, Lt C L Felsenthal and his crew. In some cases parachutes were observed. Seven other Wendling based B-24's received damage.

Total losses for the day amounted to 120 aircrew from the 2nd BD in 12 aircraft. Another 160 crew members were missing from the 16 B-17's that were lost plus a further 17 pilots from the 19 fighters that were missing. Two B-17's that ditched in the North Sea received a 100 per cent success rate from the Air Sea Rescue Services.

Notes:

- i. S/Sgt Henry Wilk was credited with a FW-190 as 'probably destroyed' on this Mission.
- ii. 1/Lt R E Fletcher, one of the "original crews" (Crew 8-7), was flying his 30th Mission. Henry had flown with him on at least 13 of these Missions.
- iii. The Fletcher crew were flying in B-24 serial 42-7478, the famous "Flying Crusader". This was the aircraft's 54th Mission and on completion of this operation it broke the ETO Record for Liberator Missions from the British Isles.
- iv. The "Flying Crusader" was finally lost on 9 October 1944 when she crashed at West Bradenham, near Wendling with the loss of one crewman. The aircraft had one propeller feathered and was returning from a Mission to Koblenz. It was the aircraft's 82nd sortie.

25 May 1944.

Target: Belfort. Marshalling Yards. Primary.
Pilot: Lt McCarthy.

The 392nd BG were designated two separate targets, Belfort and a gun emplacement in the Pas De Calais at Fecamp. Lt McCarthy and crew attacked the Belfort target. Accompanied by 28 of the other Wendling B-24's they were part of a total attacking force of 77 aircraft. The 392nd lead aircraft suffered some autopilot difficulties on the bomb run. This affected synchronisation but results were classed as 'fair'. Flak was encountered in the target area but, in spite of damage to 7 of their Liberators, all the Wendling aircraft returned safely and no casualties were suffered.

27 May 1944.

Target: Saarbrucken. Marshalling Yards.
Pilot: Lt McCarthy.

The 392nd had 24 B-24's airborne for this Mission. They achieved excellent bombing results and did not encounter any enemy fighters on this, Henry's last operational Mission. Flak was moderate and 11 aircraft were damaged but all returned safely after a flight of over 8 hours duration.

It sounds like a comparatively uneventful but very well deserved finale ! But it was, in fact, a very busy and hectic day for the US 8th Air Force. They had over 1,800 aircraft involved attacking marshalling yards and other strategic targets in the build-up to D-Day.

Twenty four heavy bombers were lost, 234 aircrew missing, 6 killed and 13 wounded. 205 of their aircraft suffered damage. The fighter escorts lost 7 pilots and aircraft. Two 458th BG B-24's collided during assembly off Cromer and three B-17's collided over enemy territory.

Note:

Less than a month later, on 23 June 1944, Lt C G McCarthy's aircraft was lost to AA fire over the target area when attacking Laon/Athies Airfield. Three parachutes were observed before the B-24 crashed in flames. It was later revealed that two of the crew were POW's and that four had returned to Wendling (evaded). However, Lt McCarthy is not listed amongst this group.

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Henry thankfully completed his thirty Missions "with the help of God". He spent a few more months at Wendling, occupying his time on 'ground' duties. After a lapse of fifty years it is difficult to recall precisely what these duties were during this period but he thinks that he was attached to the anti-aircraft gunnery unit. Henry does recall that he still received his flying pay. To be eligible, they were required to accumulate 4 hours flying per month. Henry used to go along to the Flight Line when they were going to take up an aircraft for testing and would 'sign on'.

Henry returned to the US on the "Queen Mary", departing the Clyde late evening on 5 September 1944. Joining him aboard ship was the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who was bound for the second of the Quebec Conferences. With him were the Joint Chiefs of Staff and many other VIP's. Mr Churchill was suffering from a bout of pneumonia and there had been fears earlier that he might not have been well enough to set sail for the Conference. However, he was being treated with some of the then very new anti-biotic drugs and his doctors were confident that they had the illness under control.

Early the next morning, the "Queen Mary" was gliding down the Irish Channel, with the coast of Ireland in view. That night they passed close over a German U-Boat - and they intercepted the enemy submarine's signal reporting having seen them !

By 7 September they were level with Cape Finisterre and turned due west, heading straight for Halifax, Nova Scotia. Their destroyer escort left them, leaving just one cruiser - trying hard to keep up with their speed of 28 knots !

The following day, the 8th, was a day spent travelling in the Gulf Stream and feeling as if they were in a Turkish bath. Hot and 'clammy'.

By midday on the 10th, the "Queen Mary" had arrived at Halifax. Immediately after lunch the British party left the ship and at 3 pm were aboard a special train taking them to the important strategic planning Conference to be held in Quebec. Henry and the other returning US personnel remained aboard

ship, subsequently sailing for New York and home.

Now back in the US and after a period of well deserved and long awaited leave, Henry was sent to Lowry Field, Colorado. Here he was involved as an Instructor. He was then transferred to Grenada, Mississippi and was employed moth-balling returned aircraft. With the end of the War in both Europe and the Far East (Pacific), Henry finished his service with the USAAF on 27 September 1945.

Henry returned to his hometown of Newton Falls, Ohio and worked for Thomas Strip Steel in Warren, Ohio for 38 years. He retired in 1984 and along with his wife Donna, went to live in Florida. Here they enjoy the climate, the golf, the fishing - and the Bingo on Thursday evenings !

Henry and Donna have three children, Ellen, Patricia and Larry. They also have four grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

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Photograph 13. S/Sgt Henry Wilk.

Further Active Service.

T/Sgt Lester L Wagner.

Twenty two years old Lester Wagner spent seven days in Cromer Hospital after the crash. It will be recalled that he was suffering from frost bite on his face, feet and hands, ruptured eardrums and lacerations received from shrapnel splinters. After receiving attention from Dr Vaughan and his staff, Lester was transferred by ambulance to a Field Hospital. He was detained for a fortnight before being released and sent to 8th Air Force HQ for medical evaluation. Lester was found not fit for further flying duties and was grounded by the 8th Air Force Flight Surgeon.

T/Sgt Lester Wagner continued to serve in the ETO as a ground based aircraft mechanic and was transferred to the 389th BG, based at Hethel in Norfolk. The 389th was part of the 2nd BD and was equipped with B-24's. The Group conducted 321 Missions (14 from North Africa), lost 116 aircraft in action and suffered another 37 other losses. They received a Distinguished Unit Citation for their performance during the Ploesti Oilfields Mission on 1 August 1943 and one of its Officers received a Medal of Honor.

Lester returned to the US at the end of the European War, sailing aboard the USS "Cristobal" on 30 May 1945 from Bristol. They arrived in New York on 8 June. Initially transferred to Camp Kilmer, they were all then given 30 days well earned leave. Lester and members of the 389th were then based at Charleston, South Carolina. After V-J Day, Lester left full-time Military Service in September 1945.

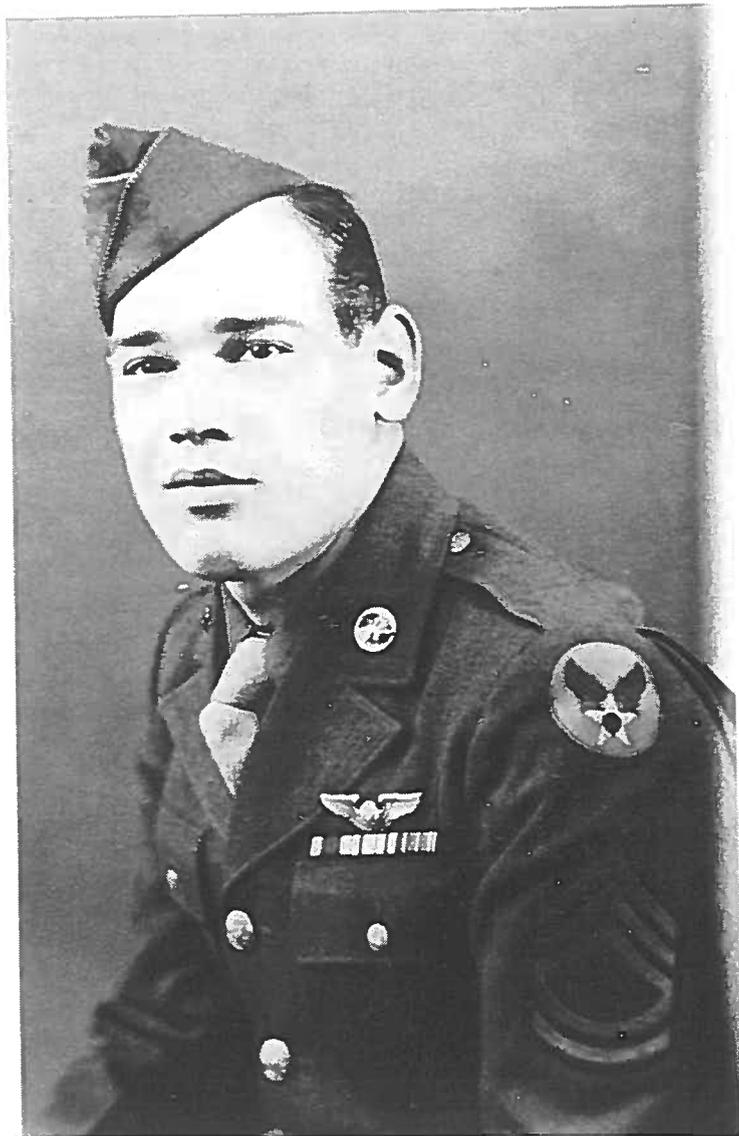
Lester Wagner's Military career was not yet finished. In June 1949 he joined the National Guard of Pennsylvania and became a Platoon Sergeant in the 899th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion of the 28th Infantry Division. During the Korean crisis his Unit was activated and was sent to Camp Atterbury, Indiana. Lester was finally discharged from the National Guard in June 1951.

When Lester returned to civilian life, he attended an Engineering course in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He was subsequently employed by the Martin Aircraft Corporation in Baltimore, Maryland. Five years later, Lester joined the Westinghouse Corporation as an Electronics Engineer and remained with them until retirement in 1984. Two years later, Lester and his wife Mary moved to warmer climes in Florida.

Prior to 1994, Lester was the only surviving member of the Colby Waugh crew who was a member of the 392nd BG Memorial Association. Because of this connection, our contact with that Association, Jim Goar, was able to quickly get in touch with the family as soon as we had established the identity of the crew. Jim rang only to learn from Mrs Wagner the sad news that Lester had died just four months earlier, on 17 June 1992.....

Lester is survived by his wife Mary, son and daughter. There are six grandchildren.

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Photograph 14. T/Sgt Lester L. Wagner.

Further Active Service.

S/Sgt Earl J Johnson.

As with the other survivors, Gunner Earl Johnson was taken to Cromer Hospital after the crash on 4 January 1944. Nothing is known of his injuries except that they were not of a serious nature.

Similarly, little is known of his further service in the Air Force but he did not resume flying duties. Earl had enlisted in the Army of the United States on 15 September 1942 and was honourably discharged on 2 October 1945.

Sadly, Earl died on 13 September 1972. His wife Mary died 20 July 1995, after a long illness. They have two daughters, Dee living in Florida and Kay in Ohio. Earl has a brother Ralph and a sister Joan, both of whom live in Ohio. Mary's sister Dorothy also lives in the same State.

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Photograph 15. S/Sgt Earl J Johnson, Snettisham, England. 1944.

PART 8

The Aircraft



CHAPTER 15

The B-24 Liberator

The Consolidated B-24 Liberator resulted directly from the efforts of three men - Reuben Fleet, Isaac Laddon and David Davis. Their combined endeavours resulted in a four engined bomber that was produced in greater numbers than any other by the US during WWII. It was one that was flown by every branch of the US Armed Forces, by numerous Allied Air Forces and was built by no less than five different manufacturers.

The aircraft incorporated a new and radical wing design, the brainchild of David Davis. With a wingspan of 110 feet, the chord (width) was very narrow, giving the wing a very high 'aspect ratio' and excellent efficiency. Known as the 'Davis Wing', it incorporated Fowler flaps, and resulted in greater speeds and ranges than its rival, the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress.

Another noteworthy aspect of the B-24 was the use of a tricycle undercarriage. This was provided with a steerable nose wheel which enabled better ground handling characteristics and a shorter take-off

An additional novel feature and unlike the B-17, the Liberator utilised bomb bay doors that rolled up and thereby avoided the buffeting effects produced by doors that opened into the slipstream. Later combat experience was to question the wisdom of this design feature.

The prototype used fuel tanks which occupied the entire space within the whole of the wing area, known as the 'wet wing' principle. However, this system was not adopted on production models, on the insistence of the Air Corps. Self-sealing fuel cells replaced the original concept.

The aircraft utilised twin vertical fins and rudders. The payload of 8,000 lbs was identical to that of the B-17.

The prototype first flew on 29 December 1939. Various changes were made to the original design before production commenced. Amongst these were the fitting of the more reliable 1,200 hp Pratt and Whitney R-1830-43 engines.

The first production models were delivered to the RAF. Their long range capability was sorely required by RAF Coastal Command, particularly in connection with the escort of the trans-Atlantic convoys. Twenty Liberators were in RAF service by the summer of 1941 with 120 Squadron. These early aircraft were designated 'Liberator Mark 1's' by the British.

In early 1941 and in order to meet the Army Air Corp's requirements for B-24's, the US Government established the 'Liberator Production Pool Program'. Consolidated created a new production capability at Fort Worth, Texas. This was in addition to their facility at San Diego. The Douglas Aircraft Company opened a plant at Tulsa in Oklahoma. The Ford Motor Company joined the 'Pool' with an enormous facility at Willow Run, Michigan. North American Aviation later joined the 'team' with their production line at Dallas, Texas.

The B24-D was the first variant to go into mass production. delivery to the Army air Corps began in early 1942. Up till that point, most of the active service involving Liberators had been in the escort and anti-submarine role, initially with the RAF and later with the US Air Corps. Much was learned from these early combat involvements and many improvements resulted from them. Foremost amongst these needs, was the requirement for better defensive fire-power.

It was mid-1942 before the Liberators were committed in Europe to the land target bombing role by the USAAF. There were some notable and daunting raids carried out by these early B-24 crews, that on Ploesti being amongst the most famous. Again, much was learned from these early bombing missions carried out in the ETO. As is the usual case, most was learned 'the hard way' ! One lesson that was soon appreciated was that the B-24 was *still* vulnerable to head-on fighter attack. A number of B-24D's were modified post-production with nose turrets. Impressed by the improvement, the Army Air Force pressed hard to have a power operated nose turret installed on *production* aircraft. The urgency was so great for this improved fire-power that the AAF allowed just three and a half months for the modification to be designed, developed, tested and installed.

Designated as the B-24H, the new version incorporated an Emerson electrically powered twin gun nose turret. It came off the production line at Fords at Fort Worth in the Fall of 1943. The large number of structural changes to the airframe forced completion to be slightly delayed. However, as soon as they did become available from the production lines, these B-24H's were promptly flown to Wendling, England, by the waiting crews of the 392nd BG. *The first Group so equipped.*

With the installation of the new nose turret and the other additional modifications incorporated on the 'H' variant, the overall weight increased by 2,500 lbs. This compounded the high altitude stability problems that were being experienced and which made this and later models much more demanding of pilots than the earlier 'D' version. This applied particularly during the winter months in the ETO.

Changes, of course, invariably brought problems, especially when the urgency of the situation necessitated speedy action. Whilst the increased fire-power was greatly welcomed, crews were soon complaining about the discomfort being caused by drafts from around the inadequate sealing between the turret and the airframe. An additional problem with the new Emerson turret but which was soon alleviated by a modification, was that the original gun charging handles could be sheared off when the turret was rotated. Another serious and less easily corrected problem was that the new nose turret severely restricted the forward vision of the Bombardier and Navigator. It also significantly limited the space available to them. An immediate but only partial solution was to fit a blister window either side of the nose in order to improve vision, at least for the Navigator.

Additional changes incorporated in the B-24H model included the fitting of an improved Consolidated A-6B tail turret. This improved the visibility for the tail Gunner. The fitting of a Martin A-3D 'high hat' type top turret afforded better visibility for the Gunner in that position. The waist gun positions were now enclosed and fitted with the new K-6 swivel gun mountings. Later 'H' models had the waist positions staggered so that the Gunners were less likely of

getting in each others way during periods of combat. Additionally, electrically operated turbo-supercharger regulators were fitted.

Concern over the ditching qualities of the Liberator had long been voiced and studied. The 'roller' bomb bay doors were vulnerable to collapse when the aircraft alighted on the sea, resulting in the fuselage filling with water very rapidly. Additionally, the fuselage was also liable to break in two at a point immediately adjacent to the trailing edges of the wing, with equally disastrous consequences. During the winter of 1943/44, further investigations were carried out. It was decided that a special 'ditching deck' be built above the rear bomb bay and that an escape hatch be provided immediately above it. A Liberator with these modification built-in was returned to the US in early 1944 but only a few models were received before the War was concluded. As an interim arrangement, in some cases 'stiffening ribs' were provided, two for each bomb bay door. These were to be wedged or slotted into place by designated crew members in the event of ditching becoming likely.

By March 1941, Ford Willow Run were producing a new B-24H every 100 minutes ! A total of 3,100 of this variant alone were manufactured. At its peak, Willow Run employed 42,000 people and finally rolled out a B-24 every 59 minutes - a total of 8,600 from this one plant alone over a period of 3½ years. In all, a staggering combined total of 18,188 B-24 Liberators were produced, more than any other **bomber** type during WWII. Had cancelled contracts been completed, the total would have been almost 24,000 aircraft. The unit cost in 1939 for the B-24 was \$379,162.00, falling in 1942 to \$304,391.00. This was significantly greater than that for the B-17 at \$187,742.00.

The B-24 was an extremely popular aircraft with most crews, Its great range, load and fire-power, coupled with its enormous inherent strength, enabled it to withstand considerable punishment.

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Some Details of the B-24H Model Liberator

Wing span: 110 feet. **Length:** 67 ft 2 ins. **Empty weight:** 36,500 lbs.
Maximum loaded weight: 67,800 lbs. **Maximum speed:** 290 mph at 25,000 ft.
Tactical operating speed: 205 mph at 25,000 ft.
Climb: 25 minutes to 20,000 ft at 56,000 lbs gross.
Tactical climb rate: 1 hour to 20,000 ft. **Service ceiling:** 28,000 ft.
Normal tactical altitude: 18,000 to 22,000 ft. **Normal range:** 2,100 miles.
Tactical range: 700 miles. **Maximum bomb load:** 12,800 lbs (external).
Normal tactical bomb load: 5,000 lbs. **Crew:** 10.
Armament: Ten 0.5 ins machine guns.
Note that the maximum bomb load increased from 8,800 lbs to 12,800 lbs.

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It may be of interest to note some other WWII aircraft production figures:

Ilyushin Il-2 Sturmovick. Single engine ground attack.	36,163.
Messerschmitt Bf 109. Single engine fighter.	35,000.
Supermarine Spitfire/Seafire. Single engine fighter.	22,884.
Focke-Wulf Fw 190. Single engine fighter.	20,001.
Consolidated B-24. Four engine bomber.	18,188.
Boeing B-17. Four engine bomber.	12,723.

CHAPTER 16

A B-24 Called "Ginger"

B-24H serial 41-29177 was manufactured by Consolidated at their Fort Worth facility in Texas. The aircraft was handed over to the USAAF on 8 September 1943 and its cost is recorded as being \$306,592.00. It was flown to the St Paul's Modification Centre on 11 September. Following the installation of the latest modifications to bring it up to combat readiness, 41-29177 was flown to Herington, Kansas on the 29th of the same month.

It was at Herington that Colby Waugh and crew met up with this aircraft, *their aircraft*, as related in earlier chapters. It will be recalled too that they named this B-24 "Ginger", after Colby's young daughter and "Donna" appeared beneath Henry's tail turret. They left for the ETO on 5 October 1943 and safely arrived on the 18th. They then delivered "Ginger" to the Base Air Depot at Burtonwood in Lancashire. Here 'further modifications were to be carried out'. They parted company with *their* plane - and rather sadly, never (as far as we know) saw it again !

What we do know is that "Ginger" went on and for a period of a few months, served the Air Force of the United States in an almost unique capacity. At Burtonwood she was installed with British H2S equipment, one of just *eight* B-24's so equipped.

The H2S equipment was a 10 cms airborne radar system, utilising a revolving scanner and which provided a form of 'map' of the ground over which the aircraft was flying. This information was displayed on a cathode ray indicator and could be used to enable 'blind' bombing to be carried out under conditions of darkness or cloud cover.

Invented and pioneered by the British, H2S utilised their revolutionary pulsed cavity magnetron - the source of the centimetric power radiated by the equipment. Top priority had been given to the development of the system in an effort to provide the RAF with a precision bombing aid for use at night. The American 8th Air Force took an interest in the system in mid-1943. The overcast weather conditions in Europe had been experienced first-hand and the adverse consequences to their visual bombing techniques had been appreciated. The British were asked to modify and fit H2S to a small number of B-24 Liberators and B-17 Fortresses. The purpose was to allow the 8th AF to assess the system for their needs. In the meantime, it was also hoped that it would allow them to continue the daylight bombing offensive during conditions which would otherwise have prevented operations.

The small team of scientists involved with the project were faced with many problems with the installation of the H2S equipment in the American aircraft. The most major being the need for the equipment to operate satisfactorily at altitudes of up to 30,000 ft. This was very considerably higher than the height flown by the RAF bombers on their nightly missions to Germany. The aerial (antenna) scanner for the H2S equipment on the B-24 was housed in a 'trash bin' under the fuselage of the aircraft and occupied the same position as the ball turret. Because of the greater height requirements, the scientists experienced

sizeable problems achieving an acceptable 'polar diagram' - one that would provide an adequate 'picture' of the ground below. Another formidable difficulty was to overcome the 'arcing' problems encountered with the very high voltages involved in the equipment when operating in the rarified atmosphere around 30,000 ft.

The research team was very small, the pressures upon them were enormous. It was not just the requirements of the 8th Air Force but also from the RAF and others. RAF Bomber Command were pressing very hard for more and better versions of H2S. RAF Coastal Command demanded more and better radar aids needed in the fight against the German U-Boats. The anti-surface vessel radar (known as 'ASV') was a direct derivative of H2S. Even the British Army required a modified version of the device for use on Landing Craft. Two members of the scientific team, Ramsay and Hillman, spent day after day flying at 30,000 ft, taking measurements and conducting trials. One of them collapsed with pneumonia but eventually an installation was devised that gave acceptable results. Sadly, during flight testing of one of these early installations in November 1943, a young RAF airman, LAC Minsen, lost his life through a lack of oxygen and extreme cold at 30,000 ft in a B-17.

On 15 December 1943, "Ginger", complete with H2S installation, was assigned to the 814th Bombardment Squadron of the 482nd Bombardment Group, based at Alconbury. The Group had arrived at the Cambridgeshire airfield on 20 August 1943, tasked with providing 'pathfinding' facilities (PFF) for the 8th Air Force. Three of the Squadrons were equipped with B-17's and one with B-24's. All were provided with various and special navigational and bombing aids. Their first operational mission was on 27 September 1943 against Emden. They continued in these duties until March 1944 when the 482nd drastically reduced their operational role in order to concentrate on providing PFF training for crews. However, they still continued radar mapping of enemy territory, they were involved in the D-Day activities and carried out trials on new radar equipments, as required. In due course, these trials included those on the American manufactured 3 cms H2X equipment, derived from the British H2S and as fitted earlier to "Ginger". H2X, codenamed 'Mickey', became the standard radar bombing aid for the US 8th AF and saw extensive use.

We know that "Ginger" was withdrawn from her PFF duties when the operational role of the 482nd was reduced in March 1944. The H2S equipment was removed and "Ginger" was transferred to the 446th BG(H) based at Flixton, near Bungay (and sometimes referred to by the latter name), on the Norfolk/Suffolk border. Here she was allocated to the 706th BS during the summer of 1944, for use in the conventional bomber role.

The 446th arrived at Flixton on 4/5 November 1943. On 16 December 1943 the Group conducted its first Mission, against Bremen.

Mission number 150 was carried out on 26 August 1944 and was directed against the chemical works at Ludwigshafen. The 446th led the Wing. Nineteen aircraft from the Group hit the primary and another two dropped on 'a target of opportunity'. Three aircraft were lost and another received flak damage. Amongst those three aircraft lost was 41-29177, "Ginger".

Piloted by 1/Lt Ralph V Shaffer, the aircraft was hit by flak whilst over the target area. "Ginger" went into a steep dive but levelled out at approximately 8,000 ft. 1/Lt Joseph J Savage in another of the Group's B-24's was the last

person to have contact. At 1025 hrs this was lost, both visually and by radio (on VHF Channel 'C').

They left the formation near the point of bomb release. The 'bail out' order was given by the Pilot. Survivors later reported that all the crew were uninjured and successfully exited the doomed aircraft. The Pilot, Ralph Shaffer, the Co-pilot 2/Lt George Lesko, Navigator Flight Officer Norman H Phillips, Radio Operator S/Sgt Frank Loichinger and ball turret Gunner Sgt Albert H Lang, were all taken Prisoner.

Sadly, nose turret Gunner Sgt Jack W Staton, top turret Gunner T/Sgt Charles E Wyatt, waist Gunners Sgt Ted Zemonek and Private Jack A Maxwell, along with the tail turret Gunner Sgt Willard R Fetterhof were all listed as 'Killed in Action'. It is the opinion of the survivors that they were all killed by German civilians, after safely reaching the ground.

German records report that "Ginger" was shot down at 1105 hrs on 26 August 1944 by Heavy Flak Detachment 631(0) and that the aircraft had received 90 per cent damage. The place that it came down is described as being south of Schoeneckern b. Forbach Westm., about 6 km south-west of Saarbrücken. They also report that George Lesko, Norman Phillips and Albert Lang were captured at 1120 hrs on the 26th at Gersweiler Wald. Additionally and rather oddly, they recorded that 20 years old Charles Wyatt did not have an identification disc ('dogtags') and was identified "from a slip of paper found on him". He was buried at Saarbrücken-Burbach Cemetery on 28 August 1944.

So ended the story of B-24 Liberator, serial 41-29177 and named "Ginger" by the Colby Waugh crew in recognition of the Pilot's young daughter. As the **ONLY** aircraft of that name in the entire US 8th Air Force, it truly was unique. Her role in the development of radar bombing aids for the 8th Air Force with the installation of the H2S equipment, also put the aircraft into the 'elite' category. "Ginger" had fought her War and made an above average contribution to Victory and Freedom. When the end came, in combat, all the crew escaped successfully. Sadly, some were to unfairly succumb to the wrath of the enemy.

The search for further information on "Ginger" continues. In particular, the author would like to discover whether she ever provided PFF facilities for her old crew in those earlier days whilst flying with the 482nd BG.

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CHAPTER 17

B-24 "Alfred" 42-7485

B24H, serial number 42-7485 was manufactured by Ford at their Willow Run Plant in Michigan. It was handed over to the USAAF on 14 July 1943. The recorded price was \$305,711.00. The aircraft was flown to the St Paul's Modification Centre, Truax Field on 20 July, Romulus on the 29th and to Topeka in Kansas on 15 August 1943.

It was at Topeka that aircrews of the four Bombardment Squadrons of the 392nd Bombardment Group were anxiously awaiting the arrival of their brand new B-24H aircraft. These were the 'original crews' and these were the 'original aircraft' of the 392nd BG. The 579th BS were the first to receive their B-24H's and the first to leave for the ETO. They took the route via Iceland to Wendling and arrived on 15 August. The same route was subsequently taken by the 576th BS. The 577th and 578th Squadrons flew to their UK Base via Gander in Newfoundland and Prestwick in Scotland.

Whilst awaiting departure from Topeka, one of the crews of the 577th BS decided that they should give a name to their allocated aircraft, serial number 42-7485. A custom adopted by many of the crews - but they wanted *something different* and picked on the somewhat novel name of "Alfred". At that time "Alfred" was a very popular cartoon character in Collier's Magazine. Based on a US Navy enlisted man, a 'Swabbie' in US slang, the character was the work of cartoonist Foster Humfreville. At Topeka, the name and outline of the Navy man "Alfred" was boldly emblazoned on the nose of the Army Air Force bomber. A *NAVY* man on an *AIR FORCE* bomber !!!! Not surprisingly, this caused great amusement and interest wherever they landed. The tradition was to extend throughout the European War

That original crew consisted of: 1/Lt Samuel H Layton Jr, Pilot. 2/Lt Aldon H Jensen, Co-pilot. 2/Lt Robert J Beatson, Navigator. 2/Lt Henry C Feagan Jr, Bombardier. S/Sgt Armand Daughy, waist Gunner. T/Sgt Joe C Johnson, Engineer. T/Sgt Robert R Gibbs, Radio Operator. S/Sgt Augustus Boomhower, ball turret Gunner. S/Sgt George W Gottschalk, waist Gunner and S/Sgt Frank Constabile, tail Gunner.

"Alfred" and crew departed Topeka on 19 August 1943 and arrived in the UK on the 22nd, taking the Gander via Prestwick route to Wendling. All 35 crews (one crew was lost in an accident whilst training in the US) were now safely established at Station 118. They immediately embarked upon intensive training in order to familiarise themselves with conditions in the ETO.

Just three weeks later the Group participated in their first operational Mission when, on 9 September 1943, they attacked the airfield at Abbeville, France. Included amongst the twenty aircraft participating on that very first Mission was "Alfred", flown by that original crew. All B-24's returned safely to Wendling.

We know that all of those 'original crew members' completed their tours of 30 Missions, although they did not remain in the same crew.

Of the aircraft, "Alfred" was originally allocated to the 577th BS as recorded above and the tail code letter during that period of operations was 'Q'. However, at some time during the first two weeks of December 1943, 42-7485 was transferred to the 578th BS - Colby Waugh's Squadron. The tail code letter then became 'Q'.

It is recorded that "Alfred" completed 16 sorties. Unfortunately, we cannot list all of these but we do know that 42-7485, with the original crew aboard, took part in Missions to Bremen on 13 November and again on the 26th of that month. Bob Beatson, the original Navigator, recalls in recent correspondence with the author, that Mission on 26 November 1943. In particular, the bitter cold that they experienced on that winters day, is permanently etched in his memory - 66 degrees below zero at 20,000 feet !! Bob went on to complete 30 Missions, in spite of being wounded over Berlin on 29 April 1944 when on his 28th Mission. He recovered after spending a week in the 231st USAAF Station Hospital at Morley Hall, near Wymondham in Norfolk - and then went on to complete his tour.

On 16 December 1943 and now flying with the 578th BS, "Alfred" again headed out from Wendling to attack Bremen. This time the Pilot was Lt Cliff Peterson. Seventeen B-24's took off from Wendling, sixteen reached and bombed the target and all returned to Base.

The next Mission undertaken by the 392nd, the Group's 17th, was yet again directed at Bremen. In fact, it was the fourth occasion that they flew to that German city in the course of nine missions. This one took place on 20 December. "Alfred" was again involved and this time the Pilot was Lt Al Lishka. The other members of the crew were: Feld, Moorehead, Brockway, Carlion (Carhon?), Clark, Dohm, Dedmon, Drylie and Halstead (unfortunately the ranks are unknown). The Group despatched twenty two of its Liberators and twenty one arrived at the target. Bombing was by PFF methods but was described as 'good'. The Group was attacked by fighters and AA fire was intense. One aircraft was lost, cause unknown and fifteen were damaged. One crewman was known to have been killed, eleven were listed as 'missing' and another four were wounded. One aircraft, 41-29135 named "Last Frontier", crashed on return at West Bradenham and was a total loss. That aircraft had completed seven missions.

On 22 December 1943, "Alfred" again took off to take part in the 392nd's next Mission. This time the target was Munster and the Pilot was Lt Cohen of the 578th BS. The other members of the crew on this Mission were: Lt Shoenhair, Lt Arthur Cound (of Colby Waugh's crew - see Chapter 6, pages 29 & 30), Valker, Hayes, Carr, Buckley, McGee, Thrower and Dellinger (some ranks unknown). Twenty aircraft were despatched but three had to abort because of mechanical problems. Included amongst these three was "Alfred". Sixteen of Wendlings B-24's arrived at the target and this time they all returned safely and there were no casualties. No details of "Alfred's" mechanical problems are known.

The next known Mission involving "Alfred" is that of 4 January 1944 when it was flown by Colby Waugh and crew for the attack on Kiel

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CHAPTER 18

"Alfred's Two To Five"

"Alfred II"

The "Alfred" legend lived on. The 577th BS were determined that their Navy cartoon character should adorn another Liberator. Sure enough, B-24H serial 42-7546 became "Alfred II", with a nice rendition of the Navy "Swabbie", including bucket and scrubbing brush, painted on both sides of the nose. The tail code letter was 'P'.

This aircraft also had the names "Al" and "Bob" inscribed on the fuselage adjacent to the Co-pilot's and Navigator's positions. This would tie-up with the names of the crew members in those two roles from the original crew of the original "Alfred" (42-7485) ie: 2/Lt Aldon Jensen and 2/Lt Robert (Bob) Beatson. It could be *assumed* therefore, that the original crew of "Alfred" were responsible for the naming of "Alfred II" when the first B-24 of that name was lost. The individual crew names on the second aircraft seemed to confirm that theory. However, things are seldom that simple ! Bob Beatson has assured me that he is pretty sure that that was *not* the case and that the original crew of "Alfred" - the Samuel Layton crew - never flew in "Alfred II".

What we do know for certain, however, is that "Alfred II" was lost on 29 April 1944. The target that day was Berlin and it was one of those bad days for the 392nd. Their losses amounted to eight aircraft and no fewer than seventy seven aircrew casualties. Eighteen crews took off for the Mission, the 76th flown by the Group, and they encountered very heavy fighter opposition soon after reaching enemy occupied territory. Waves of ME-109's and FW-190's attacked in double line abreast, sweeping through the Group's formations. Escorting fighters were overwhelmed by these attacks and were unable to keep the enemy at bay. Eight B-24's got through to the primary and dropped their bombs with good results. Three more bombed a 'target of opportunity' but the remainder failed to attack because of the strength of the opposition. This was not limited to fighter attacks but also included heavy and accurate flak.

The 576th BS lost two aircraft en route to the target. Lt Ofenstein and crew in 42-110062 were attacked by enemy fighters. As a result of this onslaught, they veered to the right and collided with another 576th aircraft, serial 42-100371, over Enshede in Holland. The latter B-24 was flown by Lt Kamenitsy and crew. Two 'chutes were observed from the first Liberator but none from the second.

The 578th BS lost 2/Lt G E Rogers and his crew after being hit by flak over the Netherlands in serial 42-100100, "Double Trouble". No 'chutes were seen. 2/Lt R R Bishop, also from the 578th, and all his crew in 42-110105 were also lost in that first fighter attack near Enshede. This aircraft was on its tenth mission. The 577th BS lost Lt Sheres and crew in 41-28759 somewhere in the target area. It simply disappeared, unseen by fellow flyers. This B-24 was on its fourth sortie. Another to disappear without trace was Lt B W Wyatt and his crew in "El Lobo", 42-7510, a 'veteran' aircraft which had completed 38 sorties.

"Alfred II", flown by 2/Lt J W Reed and crew, was severely damaged in those ferocious enemy fighter attacks over Holland. They managed to struggle back to England. However, Lt Reed knew that he would be unable to land his aircraft safely because of the severe damage that had been inflicted. Fortunately they had been able to maintain a reasonable altitude and the Captain ordered his crew to bail out as soon as they reached England's eastern shore. All crew members successfully parachuted to safety - except Pilot Lt Reed. It is thought that he struck the side of the aircraft as he bailed out and, sadly, his parachute failed to open.

The final tragedy of the day occurred when another B-24 from the 579th BS arrived safely overhead Base on its return. For no explainable reason, it blew up in mid-air as it circled Wendling prior to landing. Tragically, 2/Lt Fryman and all his crew were killed. Their B-24, serial number 41-29427 was named "Ready, Willing and Able" and ironically was on its thirteenth Mission.

"Alfred II" crashed at Walcott soon after it had gained the friendly shores of Norfolk, less than fourteen miles from where the first "Alfred" had made her final landing. The aircraft had completed 49 sorties, including the famous Mission to Gotha on 24 February 1944. Like her predecessor, "Alfred II" was now a total write-off.

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There appear to be no records of an "Alfred III" and no logical explanation has been suggested to account for this - but no doubt, there is one !!

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"Alfred IV"

Continuing the tradition, the 577th BS named B-24H serial 42-94961, "Alfred IV". Tail code 'Z+'. The sturdy "Swabbie" was again proudly displayed - still grasping that scrubbing brush in his hand ! Sadly, we know little of which missions were completed by this worthy successor of those earlier B-24's that proudly sported the same 'nose art'. We do know that it completed 43 sorties and, again, we do know something of the final mission that was carried out by the penultimate of the "Alfred" series of B-24 Liberators.

2 December 1944 was another of those 'rough' days in the operational history of the 392nd. It could be said, perhaps, that true to character and in line with the preceding aircraft of that name, this "Alfred" was there 'when the going was tough'.

Eighteen crews from the 392nd were briefed to attack the important marshalling yards at Bingen in Germany, the primary target. The Group's aircraft took off at 0930 hrs. Just two Squadrons were involved, the 577th and the 578th. All went well until nearing the target and encountering dense cloud. The bad weather conditions caused some scattering of the aircraft, particularly those of the 577th who were flying in the 'low' position. However, their bombs were dropped but as they approached the rallying turning point, they were attacked by between 40 and 50 FW-190's. The black painted enemy fighters with the red painted noses swept in, mainly from the rear. One tactic was for them to pass from line astern with fighters peeling off alternatively to the left

and to the right, concentrating on one particular bomber at a time. The 577th BS endured these sustained attacks for a period of 15 minutes and lost no fewer than six of their B-24's during that agonising and very confused period..

The 578th were somewhat more fortunate in as much that they had to contend with about 25 fighters for a thankfully shorter period of about 3 minutes. Miraculously they did not sustain any losses. Collectively, the Wendling Gunners claimed two fighters destroyed and one probable.

The carnage inflicted on the crews and aircraft of the 577th BS in just 15 minutes included those of: Capt H D Watkins and crew in serial 42-50785, Lt R J Cieply and all in 42-50323, Lt G R Billingsly and crew members in 42 - 94867, Lt W C Evans and those aboard "Trips Daily" serial 42-95012, Lt E L Comeau and crew in 42-51207. Finally, Lt W F Davis and all in 42-94961, "Alfred IV".

Also from the 577th but rather more fortunate, Lt D L Walker managed to get his B-24 serial 42-51169, "The Chiefton", back to the emergency landing ground at Manston in Kent with four wounded on board.

A sad day for the 392nd and particularly for the 577th Squadron. A day too that saw the demise of yet another proud B-24 named "Alfred".

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"Alfred V"

After the loss of "Alfred IV", personnel of the battered 577th defiantly named yet another Liberator after the Navy character. This time it was, of course, "Alfred V". Again depicted in considerable detail, the "Swabbie" was expertly painted on the nose of B-24H serial number 42-951198. The tail letter was 'Y+'.

We do not know too much about this aircraft *but* it did survive 25 Missions and left Wendling to return to the US on 30 May 1945.

Just two other little snippets about this B-24:

The records state that she (he) was at RAF Woodbridge on 28 February 1945 having an engine repaired/changed. Woodbridge was one of the specially built and equipped **emergency** landing grounds. It can only be assumed that "Alfred V" had made use of these facilities when in difficulties returning from one of its operational missions around that time.

The second aspect refers to the "Alfred" figure on the nose. As can be seen from the accompanying picture, the 'Swabbie' now sports a medal ribbon on his chest and which was not visible earlier !!! *Few would deny that it was very well deserved.*

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The "Alfred" name was applied to B-24 Liberators of the 392nd BG throughout their operational period in the ETO. "Alfred" was there to fly on their very first Mission to Abbeville on 9 September 1943. "Alfred V" was there and 'flying the flag' when the European War was won and proudly flew home to

the States at the end of May 1945.

Of the 285 Missions carried out by the 392nd BG, B-24's named "Alfred" (four of them) were involved in 133 of them. Except for a period in December 1943 and very early 1944, all these aircraft flew with the 577th Bomb Squadron. The period quoted was when the original "Alfred" was transferred to the 578th BS and until the tragic circumstances of 4 January 1944 - and which are the basis of this story:

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Photograph 16. "Alfred" and the Original Crew.

Back row, left to right: 2/Lt Robert Beatson, Navigator;
2/Lt Henry C Feagan Jr, Bombardier; 1/Lt Samuel H Layton Jr, Pilot;
2/Lt Aldon H Jensen, Co-pilot.

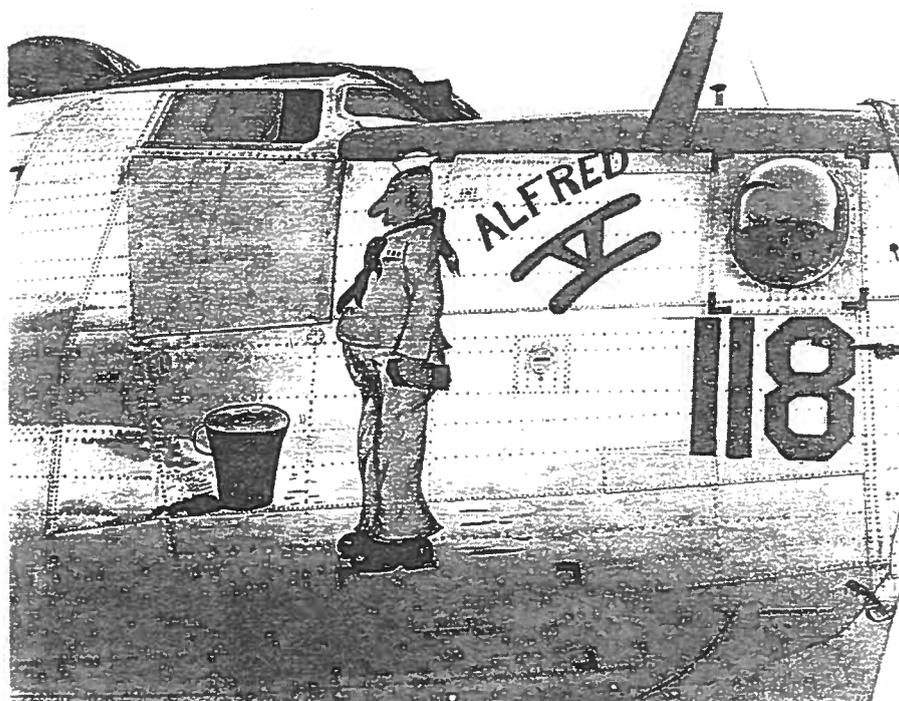
Front row: S/Sgt Armand Daughy, Gunner; T/Sgt Joe C Johnson, Engineer;
S/Sgt Augustus Boomhower, Gunner; T/Sgt Robert R Gibbs, Radio Operator;
S/Sgt George W Gottschalk, Gunner; S/Sgt Frank Constabile, Gunner.

Note: 'Alfred', by cartoonist Foster Humfreville, appeared regularly in the wartime issues of Colliers Magazine.

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Photograph 17. "Alfred II". Wendling.
Left to right: Lt Col Lorin Johnson and 1/Lt Lynn G Peterson.
(Photo courtesy of Manly Fox via Jim Goar)



Photograph 18. "Alfred V".



PART 9

Oh To Be In England



CHAPTER 19

How We Fared. Some Aspects Of Life In East Anglia, 1943 - 1944.

My original intention in this Chapter was to try and provide a comprehensive review of the War situation during the period in question, details of the 'Home Front' - the rationing position, the air raids, etc - and just how we in Britain were coping during the time that *'our crew'* were over here. The idea was that it would perhaps help you understand a little more clearly the situations that *they* encountered and perhaps how *they* felt during their period in the UK.

I pondered on this aspect for some considerable time - and then made a tentative start. However having commenced, I quickly came to the conclusion that it would be impossible to achieve anything other than a very superficial **and** totally inadequate coverage of such a vast 'field' in *one* chapter of this brief write-up ! After all, there are many *books* devoted to the subject.

Nevertheless, I still felt that there was *just something* that could be usefully added under this general heading. I finally decided to attempt to achieve this objective by including some selected comments, albeit somewhat disjointed ones and, indeed, some from outside the quoted period ! They are either of a purely personal nature or of what, I hope, will be of some general interest but maybe not of general knowledge. Some are quite insignificant but nevertheless, collectively, they may just help a little to shed some extra light on a few aspects of life and attitudes at that time. But please forgive me for not attempting a more comprehensive overview of the War situation and the effects on the British people during the period mid-1943 through to mid-1944 or thereabouts! Where an opinion is expressed, it is of course, mine alone.

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Let me commence by saying that to us, and certainly to me as a young lad of fourteen or so, late 1942/early 1943 was a pretty dire period. Very early in 1943 my only brother had joined the RAF. Later he was to be sent to the Far East. I was very conscious that my Mother, like *all* mothers everywhere, was constantly worried about her eldest son's safety in those prevailing conditions.

The War had been dragging on for over three years. Rationing was severe. The great battles in the Western Desert (North Africa) had raged on and on and I had friends at that time who had lost brothers in those vicious tank battles. However, decisive victories in North Africa were becoming a reality at last. We had a new hero, General Montgomery and we learned that yes, the German Army **could** be beaten. They were **not** invincible, after all ! So, at last, there was some 'light at the end of the tunnel' - but it was still but a distant flicker.

The critical and crucial Battle of the Atlantic, one that *had* to be won if we were to survive, had probably reached its climax. Of course, we did not realise that at the time. Almost 30,000 Merchant Seamen lost their lives in ships

torpedoed by German U-Boats in the North Atlantic alone. "Food Costs Lives" the posters proclaimed and it surely did. A wartime fact that still lingers with me and many of my age, to this day.

Diverting for a moment to an earlier period. My first year of War was spent in Cromer, on the North Norfolk coast. The place of my birth. Even during those first twelve months of hostilities and of course, throughout the War, the North Sea was a place of much activity. From the first day of the War, one of the outstanding and memorable sights was to watch the great convoys of merchant ships that sailed 'up' or 'down' the coast. Maybe 50 or so vessels, escorted by a number of 'busy' and sleek grey clad Royal Navy destroyers or other escort vessels and all very clearly visible from the cliff top vantage points close to where we lived. RAF Coastal Command aircraft usually patrolled overhead - initially Avro Ansons, soon followed by Lease Lend Lockheed Hudsons ! In spite of this protection, these were dangerous waters and losses were frequent. Right from the earliest days of the War, mines were laid by German aircraft, including the new and deadly 'magnetic' variety. The busy little Minesweepers were frequent sights - and a washed ashore mine was not unusual. But not just the mines. Attacks on the convoys by enemy aircraft were frequent and later in the War, determined raids by German E-Boats too (high speed motor torpedo craft). The coast off Norfolk and extending southwards to the Channel was known as "E-Boat Alley". Many fierce and costly sea battles were fought in those waters throughout much of the War. Nearby ports of Gt Yarmouth and Lowestoft were extremely busy places and were key installations for our Coastal Defence Forces in connection with these activities.

The civilian manned Lifeboat Service, operated by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution was of course, extremely active throughout the War period. Very many Merchant seamen and sailors of the Royal Navy, as well as downed airmen, owe their lives to the brave lifeboatmen who put to sea whenever called upon to do so, regardless of enemy action and adverse weather conditions.

Note: The RNLi Lifeboat Service was/is a separate Service to that operated by the RAF and RN and which functioned under the heading of 'Air Sea Rescue' (ASR).

Back to the mid-1943 period. It was impossible not to notice that there was a huge build-up of troops in the area. Indeed, it was the same throughout the Eastern Region and elsewhere. However, with the extremely limited travel, we did not realise the full extent of these activities ("Is Your Journey *REALLY* Necessary?" enquired the posters at every rail station and there were many 'restricted' areas and places). British Army convoys of trucks, Bren Gun Carriers (small tracked vehicles), tanks and every type of vehicle were daily sights passing through our town. A 'thumbs up' sign between us youngsters and the Army lads would bring a cheery smile and wave in return.

Cycling through the neighbouring countryside would reveal Army vehicles parked everywhere. Covered in camouflage netting, tucked away along hedgerows, in every wood and coppice. There one day and disappeared the next. And always the ever cheerful British 'Tommies' - brewing tea in the by then traditional manner, employing a cut-down petrol container (of the 'flimsy' variety)!! Activity everywhere. We did not know it but, even at that time, preparations for the Invasion of Europe were in hand. Some of the lessons learned from the recent and costly raid on Dieppe, were being practised.

The blackout was, of course, still strictly enforced and the Luftwaffe raids were still a constant threat and worry. As an example of the degree of enemy air activity in the area, nearby Cromer received 1,539 Air Raid *alerts* during the War. Those for Sheringham are not available but would be substantially similar. The north Suffolk coastal town and port of Lowestoft had 2,047 alerts, a total *unsurpassed anywhere in the UK*. 9,433 of its 11,830 houses were destroyed or damaged. Of those in the latter category, many more than once.

The promises by Hitler of devastating new secret 'Vengeance Weapons' to be used against the British, had long been greeted with scepticism. However, towards the end of the period in question, they became a reality. The V-1 ('Flying Bomb', 'Buzz Bomb' or 'Doodlebug') and later the V-2 rocket attacks against the South Coast and the London area caused considerable chaos and many casualties. These new forms of attack, with no chance of any warning for the recipients in the case of the V-2's, re-introduced the need for this area to 'take in' large numbers of evacuees, yet again ! At the time, my brother was stationed in Central London and was involved in digging out V-1 victims from wrecked buildings on several occasions. In due course, they too were 'bombed out' and were moved out of the Capital to finish their training. These V-Weapon attacks, V-1's and V-2's, later came closer to our homes here in Norfolk and we also became recipients. Manned and unmanned aircraft attacks by the enemy on this area of Britain remained a reality until the very last days of the War.

Note: The total number of deaths in this country from V-1 attacks was 5,837 civilians plus 302 Service personnel. The death role from V-2's was 2,824 civilians and another 31 Service people. The V-1 attacks were delivered during the period 13 June 1944 to 29 March 1945, including air-launched weapons. The V-2's were launched at this country from 8 September 1944 through to 28 March 1945.

To our general satisfaction, the RAF Bomber Command raids against Germany were building up and the enemy 'was getting some of their own back' in ever increasing quantities. The sound of our bombers passing overhead on a nightly basis became the normal situation. We all learned to sleep through the sound of the heavy bombers droning out on their raids and returning hours later. The scores of powerful searchlights which swept the skies to locate enemy aircraft at night, were also used to help guide the RAF lads back to their airfields when the enemy was not around. Many a Wellington, Halifax or Lancaster came to grief when almost 'home'. Inevitably this meant more friends and more brothers of friends at school, were being reported as lost, missing or having become POW's.

Note: Of the 387,416 sorties flown by RAF *Bomber Command alone* during the period September 1939 to May 1945, total **fatal** aircrew losses amounted to 55,500. A further 9,838 were taken POW (many of whom were injured) and another 8,403 were wounded in action. A total of 73,741 aircrew casualties in Bomber Command - ie: excluding Fighter, Coastal, Transport and Training Commands, the Second Tactical Air Force, Overseas Commands (the Desert Air Force, the Balkans Air Force, Middle East and Far East Commands and other smaller groups).

The tyres had long been removed from my Father's petrol-less car in order to help the 'War Effort' (along with everybody else's, of course). The iron railings were removed, surplus pots and pans, etc, were collected, all for the same purpose. *Nothing* was wasted in those days. The year of 1943 saw the

"Wings for Victory Week". Every village, town and city in the land having monetary targets set to raise funds with which to fight the War and to build more 'planes. There would be Parades, displays in shop windows and all manner of fund raising activities. A big display board in the town centre indicated the amount of money that had been collected locally and was up-dated daily. We even had a shot down Me-109 on display, as an incentive ! Invariably, 'targets' were well exceeded. And we felt proud about it too ! Then there was "Salute the Soldier Week" and, of course, the Navy also received similar treatment. The War Savings campaign was relentless and a comprehensive organisation (of volunteers) was set-up nationally to encourage and to collect 'Savings'. This scheme included the schools, with the children being encouraged to save, quite literally, every penny.

We listened to *every* News bulletin on the BBC (radio only, of course) - and woe betide any child that spoke a word or made a sound during those broadcasts ! We were amazed at the audacity of the German who would interrupt the news reader around this period of time, with a contradiction of some news item or the emphatic announcement that the statement just made was "*a lie!*". The technical achievement of this little propaganda feat was, in fact, quite considerable. The effective but simple counter-measure that was adopted by the BBC was to read the news very quickly and to leave **no** pauses !! To us children, this was an exciting sideline and one which we tried to mimic amongst ourselves, much to the annoyance of our parents ! We heard all the inevitable rumours too, many originating from 'Lord Haw-Haw'. Again the target for much (justified) ridicule with his infamous and nasal proclamation of "Germany calling, Germany calling.... ". It has to be admitted nevertheless, that he did instil a sense of foreboding, as was intended of course. The "Careless Talk Costs Lives" posters were rigidly obeyed. The "spy" scare had largely receded (it was very prevalent during the earlier stages of the War) but suspicions were still easily aroused (quite rightly). The need to "Dig for Victory" was conscientiously observed and every piece of land, however large or small, was used to grow some sort of edible foodstuff.

My own personal interest in radio (as a hobby) was already established and I was a keen builder of 'crystal sets'. The powerful broadcasts transmitted by the BBC's Overseas Service were easily received and were eagerly listened to on those little self-powered radios. Very frequently, late at night from under bed clothes and when supposedly sound asleep in bed ! The memory of that haunting sound of Victory 'V's' in the Morse Code, relentlessly beaten out on a drum, followed by the opening announcement of "Ici Londres", still produces a shiver of anticipation. It is humbling to realise that Parke Kent and fellow POW's were also amongst the countless others in Occupied Europe who were also listening - surreptitiously and many using comparable little crystal receivers

Every young lad was a keen aeroplane spotter and could identify all the very many different aircraft seen daily in the skies, Allied or German.

Those civilians who were not in the Armed Forces were all involved in one way or another with the War Effort. They were enrolled in the Home Guard, the various branches of the Civil Defence (CD) organisation (Air Raid Wardens, Rescue, First Aid, etc), the Auxiliary Fire Service, the Observer Corps, the Red Cross, St John Ambulance Brigade, etc, etc, and were obliged to train and practice regularly. My Dad, a Pharmaceutical Chemist, was put in charge of the FAP (First Aid Party) in the South Norfolk market town where we lived during the earlier part of the period concerned. With their team of volunteers, they

practised weekly. Their "ambulance" was a horse-trailer (literally) modified to take three stretchers stacked one above the other and towed behind a 12 HP Austin private car. Their 'for real' activities during that period of the War were almost exclusively involved with attending aircraft crashes in the area - both RAF and USAAF.

Notes:

- i. The wartime records list 933 Allied aircraft crashes in the County of Norfolk alone. 677 of these were RAF aircraft (72 per cent) and the remainder belonged to the USAAF. Included amongst these were 128 involving B-24's. A total of 1,741 airmen were killed in these crashes, 881 from the RAF and 860 belonging to the USAAF. Another 705 were injured, 423 from the RAF and 282 from the USAAF.
- ii. These figures are based on Police records. They do not include the many crashes and casualties that occurred within the boundaries of the numerous bases, both RAF and USAAF, within the County.

The Home Guard was very active, trained regularly and seriously - their activities monitored closely by us youngsters ! A shame that they are recalled today as 'a bunch of old men, largely ineffective and who were little more than a source of general amusement'. Thanks to a long-running TV **comedy** based on the subject. We did not know then about a selected few who were secretly highly trained and who would have formed the British Resistance, had the Germans invaded. However, in our 'explorations' as youngsters, we had accidentally discovered well hidden arms dumps on a couple of occasions But never a word to *anybody* and I doubt if their significance was even understood at the time. We just knew that '*we should NOT know*' and that was that.

There were a number of aspects of life in Britain in those earlier and middle years of the War that provided special hope and confidence in the final outcome. These were even recognisable by me, as a fairly young lad ! The moral support of many in the United States, and exemplified by your President, was recognised and appreciated. The voice of 'FDR' on the radio was becoming familiar and welcome. And, of course, there was that wonderful American Reporter who broadcast regularly on the BBC from bomb-torn London during the height of the Blitz. He provided us all with tremendous pride and inspiration - and to my utter shame and sorrow, his name escapes me !! The material assistance through 'Lend Lease' gave great re-assurance and was, of course, essential for our survival. American Spam and Dried Eggs (in brightly coloured packets) from the States became a welcome addition to our rather limited diet !

Another aspect that gave us real hope for the future was that we were receiving great support, practical and moral, from members of the 'Empire'. From Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and many others. For example, as a family we received the occasional but very welcome food parcel from distant relatives in Australia and South Africa. We were **not** forgotten. Perhaps more importantly, it was not unusual by this time to see airmen, sailors and soldiers (men and women) with shoulder 'flashes' identifying them as from our Colonies abroad. It was good to realise that the "Old Country" still meant a great deal to them and that, in itself, was a terrific morale booster. Their contribution was enormous.

Then there were the Servicemen of the Free French, Dutch, Belgium, Norwegian, Polish and other Forces who had escaped from the Occupied

Countries. Their numbers were not inconsiderable either. We really were not alone any longer but it was obvious that desperate struggles still lay ahead.

I think that we were probably getting a little 'tired' by this period but we were certainly not dispirited. Mr Churchill still provided the leadership and engendered the essential 'fighting spirit' which had got us thus far. We were as determined as ever to 'see it through to the bitter end'.

There were no 'innocent civilians' this time. Hitler had not allowed this to happen. This was 'Total War'. *Everybody* was involved. Servicemen, Servicewomen *and* civilians alike. Every man, woman and child. There was a tremendous communal spirit, we *were* unified by the common cause as probably never before (and *certainly* not since), and yes, we *were* a very proud and determined nation *and* we were very loyal to 'King and Country'.

There are those around today who say that these things were not so - usually asserted with great authority by somebody aged at something less than 50 years. *But we know it is true because we lived through those times and we experienced them.* In any case, without those attitudes, we would not have survived.

Then something happened that we knew was the most sure and certain sign the we **would** win and that the end was, at last, in sight. The mighty resources of the US, men and material, were reported to be pouring into this country. In very early 1943 the Americans arrived! Suddenly, our sleepy little Norfolk Market town was filled with fresh new faces. Friendly, dressed in different but smart uniforms, they spoke the same language (well, more-or-less!). And to the delight of us youngsters, they would happily stop and cheerfully have a chat with us - and that was something rather special at a time when most grown-ups did not have too much to be cheerful about. The talk was usually of home, of Mom and Dad, sisters and brothers and how things were in the States (it seemed so very far away to us in those days). They were interested too in knowing about how we were coping here in Britain. Americans were invited into our homes, we did not have too much to offer but a cup of tea and a biscuit and the chance to have a chat away from the rigours of their Base, seemed to help. As a youngster, I soon established some 'special' friends amongst the GI's. One would bring me stamps for my collection, another used to give me copies of "Popular Mechanics" magazine, probably the most prized items of all !! With some of these friends, I used to cycle for miles around the English countryside. (My protective parents never objected or showed any concern - and there was never any reason for any. But, gosh, how things have changed in our country over the last fifty years!)

Suddenly, the skies became even more crowded and active. American Bases sprang up everywhere. North Pickenham, home of the 492nd BG(H) and part of the 14th Combat Wing along with the 392nd BG, was the last of the 66 airfields in Britain to be handed over to the USAAF on 22 May 1944. In due course, B-24's, B-17's, P-38's, P-47's and P-51's became daily sights and in great quantities. The bombing offensive against the enemy was intensified and it was relentless. The Americans by day, the RAF by night.

Who could not marvel at these brave young men who flew against the foe in broad daylight, day after day. We watched them take off in all weathers and watched them circling as they formed up. We witnessed the occasional but depressing aerial collisions. And from the ground, we saw the endless and

multiple contrails high in the blue skies when conditions were such that they formed to give away their position. The skies were filled with not just hundreds of aircraft but on some days, well over a thousand could be counted at one time. But above all and forever in our memories, the sight of them coming back. Sometimes as they departed, in great aerial armadas of tightly packed formations. However, more frequently, in loose and ragged groups. But as they flew low overhead, the distressingly obvious signs of combat were clearly visible. Holes torn through the wings, whole chunks of tailplanes missing, crumpled nose sections, even pieces falling off (or being jettisoned) as they flew overhead. Very frequently, one or more motionless propellers. And if you were close to one of the many airfields when they returned, you would see the red flares being fired from a B-24 or B-17 as it came into land, indicating dead or wounded on board And you would know that we were all fighting the same War. A just War and that our mutual aims and desires for peace and freedom were identical and that the dreadful cost in lives to achieve those aims was being shared. And surely it was the most natural thing that the peoples of our two nations were so close then and that that bond has survived for fifty years and will, I am certain, continue to do so for very many years to come.

ooOoo

I would like to end this Chapter with one item that I feel should be recorded in this 'story' even though, strictly speaking, it is outside the period that we are covering. Not to mention it, would be unfair to the nameless person concerned.

A convoy of USAAF trucks was travelling along the Kings Lynn to Litcham road in the early hours of 4 March 1945 when it was attacked by a German 'Intruder' aircraft. The last vehicle in the convoy was a Liberty bus and as it passed through the village of East Lexham it was struck by cannon shells fired by the attacking plane. The driver, a Corporal, was killed. It was a strange quirk of War that the *very last fatal casualty of WWII that actually occurred on the ground in the County of Norfolk and which was attributable to enemy action, was a USAAF Corporal from the 392nd BG based at Wendling.*

Notes:

- i. 'Operation Gisela' carried out by the Luftwaffe on the night of 3/4 March 1945 involved Ju 88G-6 aircraft. German records state that 142 were involved, whereas British reports indicated that between 60 and 70 enemy aircraft operated over Britain. What is certain is that they caused considerable chaos, with the RAF being the main victims. The Intruders shot down 15 Halifax bombers, 12 Lancasters, 3 Fortresses (RAF operated and which had been involved on Radio Counter Measure operations), 2 Mosquitoes and one Hudson. Several of these aircraft were blasted out of Norfolk skies and many of them were lost over East Anglia. The enemy lost 22 Ju 88's, either shot down or failed to return to their bases for one reason or another. Many more were damaged.
- ii. The writer recalls this particular night and hearing much aircraft activity, hearing and seeing the machine gun and cannon fire in the night sky. Next day I cycled to one of the nearby crash sites of a Halifax four engined bomber. Bits scattered everywhere, amongst chicken and turkey sheds, a chaotic sight. I had always imagined that nobody could possibly have escaped. It was not until very recent years that I learned, from a book on the subject, that three of that crew of eight did survive, albeit badly injured.



BOOK 2

FIFTY YEARS LATER

PART 10

The Memorial

CHAPTER 20

Pre-Memorial Involvements

Mrs May Ayers, a native of Sheringham, had often wondered about the surviving crew members from the crashed Liberator. Her Father's involvement with the rescue bids of course, made this interest particularly poignant. There were the rumours that enquiries about the crew had been made in town by *Americans* sometime after the crash - but nothing firm. Her Father's graphic account when he arrived home after the incident and her own vivid recollections of the scene were to remain forever in her memory.

Almost fifty years later and certain events re-kindled May's interest. Our local newspapers were reporting on arrangements being made to mark the 50th Anniversary of the US arrival in East Anglia in World War II. Many of the US Veterans were planning to return to the area and re-visit their old Bases. Could it be that some of the survivors from that B-24 would be amongst those returning?! Early in 1992 May wrote to the local newspaper recalling the incident - and hoped that somebody might just respond with more details, particularly with reference to the names of the survivors.

Now to divert slightly in order that you may understand how the more recent aspects fell into place. The author's interest in this particular incident began in the mid-1970's when we lived in nearby North Walsham. My interest in aviation had begun at an early age, as related in a preceding chapter and has remained ever since. Apart for a period of eight years working for the British Army on anti-aircraft fire control radar systems during the 1950's, my entire working life was involved with the Royal Air Force. Initially as a National Serviceman and subsequently as a civilian in a technical capacity. Thus aviation, or more accurately, aviation related matters, have always played a prominent part in my life.

Not surprisingly, aviation history and aviation archaeology have also been important additional side-line interests. I suppose that this interest may just have 'rubbed off' during the early '70's because my son, at that time in his early teens, was also very interested in such matters! At about that time, we had both made our own metal detectors and were anxious to put them to the test. We investigated several crash sites in the area and a friend who lived in Sheringham, Des Barney, happened to tell us about the B-24 crash site just out of town. One about which I had not previously known. Des recalled the occasion when, as a young lad, he had cycled up to this crash site soon after the 'plane had come down. Unfortunately, after almost 50 years, he could remember little else about the incident.

In due course, my son Paul and I investigated this site and found several bits and pieces - bullet cases, scraps of metal and, excitingly, a manufacturers name plate from one of the engines. These finds prompted further enquiries about the incident. We managed to ascertain, through contacts in the Norfolk and Suffolk Aviation Museum Group, the date of the crash, the basic circumstances of what had happened, brief information on casualties and from which Bombardment Group the aircraft had belonged. Our immediate curiosity was satisfied and our enquiries did not extend beyond these aspects.

Back to early 1992. May did not receive any response resulting from her letter in the local newspaper. Undismayed, she persevered. She contacted Phyllis DuBois at the Second Air Division Memorial Library in Norwich. Phyllis found from her records that the aircraft had belonged to the 392nd BG, based at Wendling. Further, she gave May the address of Jim Goar, the 'contact man' for the 392nd BG Veterans in the US and suggested that May wrote to him for further information. This she did.

In the meantime, May happened to see Des Barney in town and he enquired if she had got any further with her enquiries about the crash. May explained the situation and Des suggested to her that she contact a certain Doug Willies, who now lived in Sheringham. Des told her that he had made some earlier investigations about the incident and might know more ! And that is how and why May rang me one day in May 1992 and asked if I knew the names of the crew of the crashed Liberator, in particular those of the survivors - and wouldn't it be great if some of them were to return to mark the 50th Anniversary of the US involvement in East Anglia ! My somewhat naive reply was "No, I'm sorry, I don't have the names of that crew but I'm sure that I can *easily* find out" !!

That telephone conversation marked the start of a happy and successful combined effort between May, Celia my wife and myself. It was to culminate in rather more far reaching consequences than any of us could possibly have envisaged at the time of that initial contact !

My 'easy solution' was to contact my old friend Bob Collis. Bob is an aviation author and historian of some renown. Like myself, he was a member of the previously mentioned Norfolk and Suffolk Aviation Museum Group. Bob, as helpful as ever, responded quickly with some details of the Mission to Kiel, the names of the four who died immediately as a result of the crash and supplied the serial number of the aircraft (this was queried more than once during the subsequent investigations but was proved beyond doubt to be the correct one). He pointed out that there were conflicting reports on whether there were five or six survivors taken to Cromer Hospital - but he could not supply their names. Bob then went on to suggest that I contact Ian Hawkins, who lives in Suffolk. Ian, like Bob, was an aviation author and was at that time in the process of producing a "392nd BG Anthology". Bob felt certain that Ian would be in a position to supply full details of the incident, including all the names. A letter was despatched to Ian immediately.

At this point, May received a telephone call from Jim Goar. Not from the US but from Kings Lynn in west Norfolk ! Jim was over for the Anniversary activities. He had received May's letter immediately before he had left the States for England and promised her that he would look into the matter as soon as possible when he returned home.

The same day, I received a prompt response from Ian Hawkins. Firstly, he pointed out that in the book recounting the history of the 392nd BG, "The Liberators from Wendling" compiled by Col Bob Vickers, the serial number of the aircraft in question is quoted as "214" and not "485", as stated by Bob Collis ! Additionally and unfortunately, Ian was unable to give details of the names of the crew but *he was sending my letter to Jim Goar in the US and he was sure that he could help !!*

A quick telephone chat with May and it was decided that just one of us

should deal with the research aspects, otherwise we would be duplicating our enquiries and getting ourselves into terrible muddles. Bearing in mind my interests and 'contacts', May was perfectly happy for me to continue with the research and investigations. We did, of course, have to acknowledge that we were *not* going to get the required information in time for the return of the Veterans. We did, however, simultaneously express the idea that "a Memorial to ensure that the crew were remembered for all time" would be a nice idea. We all agreed to think about it and Celia and I offered to make some tentative enquiries reference relevant aspects of a Memorial stone, particularly the costs involved.

This then put a new and important aspect on the enquiries reference the crew and the circumstances of the crash. If we should be able to go-ahead with some form of Memorial, all details must be correct. This certainly gave a new impetus to the enquiries already under way.

ooOoo

Note:

At the request of Ian Hawkins, I passed on a brief write-up relating to the "Alfred" incident and the Memorial project for inclusion in his "392nd Anthology". I am not aware that this book has, as yet, been published.

ooOoo

CHAPTER 21

The Research

This Chapter will deal with the research carried out over the period from the inception of the Memorial project up to the time of the Memorial Dedication Service on 7 May 1994. However, that date did not see the conclusion of the research aspects by any means. Coverage of the continued and on-going enquiries are further related in Chapter 26.

It has to be appreciated that the various aspects that collectively have enabled this story to be put together, came about in a disjointed and almost random sequence. It truly was a 'jig-saw'. For examples, the discovery of a living survivor did not materialise until just three months before the Dedication Service. Neither was there any hint of the B-24 named "Ginger" until shortly before that Service. It was not possible to piece together that unusual tale and obtain confirmation of that story until much later.

ooOoo

On 8 July 1992 Jim Goar reported that he was back home after his visit to the UK. He assured us that he would turn his attention as soon as possible to the matter of enquiring into the crew names of those aboard "Alfred" when it crashed.

Jim is a Co-Editor of the 392nd BG Memorial Association 'News' and lives in Frankfort, Indiana. I subsequently learned that he served at Wendling throughout the entire period of the Group's involvement from July 1943 to June 1945. Jim was originally the 578th Squadron Supply Officer and later served as the Transportation (MT) Officer. He is presently in the 'real estate' business and is deeply involved in the affairs of the 392nd BGMA. As soon as Jim was made aware of our enquiries into one of his old wartime Group's aircraft and crew, he immediately went out of his way in order to provide as much help and assistance as possible.

My initial concern was not only to correctly identify *all* crew members and to ascertain their fate but also of prime importance was to ensure that we had the right aircraft! '214' or '485' ??? We needed to ensure the correct identification of 'our aircraft' in order to make absolutely certain that we were looking at the right crew! They needed to 'match up'. Letters were sent to Jim Goar and others in order to try and clarify the situation in these respects.

In the meantime, Bob Collis had been making enquiries on our behalf. On 24 August 1992, I received a note from him stating that "the injured survivors were : 2/Lt J W Barton, T/Sgt P V Kent, T/Sgt L Wagner, S/Sgt E J Johnson, S/Sgt H Wilk and S/Sgt E R Murphy. Good progress - but did they all survive their injuries?? I made a point of immediately passing on this new information to Jim in the US.

Mid-September and another letter from Jim Goar . Also enclosed was a copy of a letter from Col Bob Vickers - the Group's Historian and, as you will recall, author of "Liberators from Wendling". Firstly, Jim reported little

progress but that "they were still working on it". Jim expressed the hope that they could locate a living survivor and, of course, we all shared that dream. Jim reported that there was some confusion about the crew and from which Squadron they had belonged. However, the enclosed letter from Col Vickers resolved the aircraft's identity - and confirmed Bob Collis's original information. It was, he acknowledged, serial number 42-7485 and **NOT** '214', as originally quoted. Col Bob Vickers gave the name of the 'ship' as "Alfred", an H model, on its 16th Mission. This information was subsequently queried several times by a *number* of sources. However, it has stood the test of time and is without doubt absolutely accurate and correct.

Around this time, Celia and I began visiting the Second Air Division Association Memorial Library in Norwich, in our quest for information reference "Alfred" and the crew. We made some initial enquiries and, naturally, one of the very first sources that we investigated for crew information was the Second Air Division Roll of Honour, held in the Memorial Library Room in Norwich (pre-Fire). This then caused us some considerable confusion and consternation - as it had others before us who were much more *closely* involved than ourselves, as related later in this Chapter. The **ONLY** name that it contained from those killed in the crash of "Alfred" was that of S/Sgt Don Belden. Similarly, his name was the only one listed on the separate Roll of Honour apertaining to the 392nd BG and which was held at the same location.

Note: Much later, in early 1994, Virgil Thomson was added from information supplied by the Cambridge American Cemetery staff. Sadly and due to a clerical error somewhere along the line, his rank was quoted as 'T/Sgt' and not '2/Lt'.

Phyllis DuBois suggested that we contact Dennis Duffield, who for many years has been the 'local expert' on Wendling matters. This we did and Dennis's long-term help and that of his wife Hilary, coupled with their great enthusiasm, encouragement and friendliness, have been key factors in our little project.

On 4 October 1992, Jim Goar wrote: "Thanks to the information on the survivors of the Pretty Corner crash furnished by you, we were able to take one step forward but unfortunately two steps backwards". It transpired that Lester Wagner was the only member of the crew who was contained in the 392nd Directory (ie: who was a member of the Association). Luckily Lester had completed a questionnaire at the request the 392nd BGMA, providing details of his Service career and for use in the Association's 'News'. Fortunately, it contained some very useful information reference the crash at Sheringham. Jim Goar rang to speak to Lester on the very day that he had received my crew list. Jim was anxious to tell him of our intentions to erect a Memorial and, hopefully, to ascertain more information reference survivors and so forth. Tragically, when Jim rang, Mrs Wagner informed him that Lester had died on 17 June of that year (1992) - ironically at the time when so many of the Veterans, including Jim, were back in the UK for the 50th Anniversary of their arrival

The biographical details written earlier by Lester were undated but were obviously completed sometime between early 1990 and when he died in mid-1992. Lester had supplied information on his date of entry into Military Service, some vital details reference the crash on 4 January 1944, about survivors and also information about his subsequent service in the Air Force and post-War civilian life. He detailed the fate of all crew members - except S/Sgt

Edward Murphy and it was a little confusing reference the Radio Operator, Parke Kent. However, and of absolute vital importance, it **confirmed** that we were looking at the right crew !!

In the meantime, Jim Goar was working hard in the States trying to locate a survivor. He had ascertained that Lt James Barton, the Co-pilot, was from Springfield and his information indicated that this particular Springfield was in the State of Nebraska. There are many places of that name within the United States. Through the numerous contacts within the 392nd BGMA, Jim had enlisted the help of member Dr George Barger. In a letter dated 20 October 1992, Dr George reported to Jim that he was just back from a trip to Springfield, Nebraska. However, sadly no luck in locating Jim Barton or relatives. He had found an old lady who, with her son, could remember a 'Barton' who ran a drug store but "they had left here a long time ago". In fact, the son remembered that they had left long before WWII ! At the post office in this small rural suburb of Omaha, the postmistress knew nothing of the 'Bartons' and the quoted street name did not tie-up with her knowledge of the locality. It had to be the wrong Springfield !!

But what a marvellous effort and illustrates the depth of assistance that the 392nd Veterans were prepared to go in an effort to locate survivors of "Alfred". This information from Jim was received by me on 28 October 1992.

Over here in England, more visits were being made to the 2nd Air Division Association Memorial Library in Norwich. Phyllis and her helpful assistants Christine and Lesley, had told us about the Group histories being available in the Library on micro-film. By this time they had realised that our enquiries were serious and sincere and they promised to make these records available to us - when we had sufficient time to 'work through them'.

Early in November, Celia and I spent four days at the Library doing our best to view the relevant micro-film. Unfortunately in some cases, the quality of the material made it very difficult indeed to read and on some days the available viewing equipment was not ideal for the purpose. But, at last, here was the authoritative source of information ! Copies of Group and Squadron Orders, Unit Reports and Directives. We searched for a reference to the 4 January raid on Kiel but, in particular, we anxiously hunted for the name, or names, of crew members. Surprising how many 'Johnsons' and 'Murphys' there were in the Second Air Division ! So many false alarms. Had we missed them in the paragraphs - and, indeed, sometimes pages - that were totally unreadable? Or maybe, there just was no references to this particular crew on surviving records There *should be* but it was beginning to feel that way !

Immersed in Official Orders and Reports for several days on end, our curiosity was by now very much aroused. The various crew names of those in the 392nd BG were becoming very familiar - but still not a mention of *our crew*. And then suddenly, on the fourth day of searching and reading through the micro-filmed data, ***there they were !*** In the hushed atmosphere of the Library, our neighbouring researchers looked somewhat startled at our undisguised joy !! "SO (Special Order) #86 from HQ 392nd Bomb Group, dated 8 Dec. 1943" and listing ***ALL*** the crew and officially assigning them to the 578th Bomb Squadron (H). This action was as a result of their earlier assignment to the 392nd Bomb Group by HQ 2nd CCRC in SO dated 4 December 1943. Then we found Order Number 1, dated 1 January 1944 from HQ 392nd BG (H), assigning the NCO's to "Crew 8-17" and placing them "on

duty requiring them to participate in regular and frequent aerial flights". So at last, there it was in writing. Just what we were looking for and as officially recorded almost fifty years previously ! Wonderful. We were elated.

It did look as if the administrative department was operating somewhat behind times as far as the actual operational involvements of the crew were concerned. Probably a not unusual state of affairs at that time and at that hectic stage of development within the Group. This belief is shared by Henry Wilk and, of course, the actual records of the crew's various involvements reinforce this impression.

We also found on the micro-filmed Group records a copy of the original 'Group History' for the period 1 January 1944 through to 1 March 1944. This reported the crash on 4 January of "the 578th BS aircraft near Cromer, killing the pilot 2/Lt C A Waugh, 2/Lt A L Cound, 2/Lt V E Thomson, S/Sgt D C Belden and wounding 2/Lt J W Barton, T/Sgt P V Kent, T/Sgt L L Wagner, S/Sgt E J Johnson, S/Sgt H Wilk and S/Sgt E R Murphy".

Further and vitally important, we found a list of Casualties suffered by the 578th BS for the period 1 January 1944 through to 29 February 1944. It listed Lt James Barton as wounded and Lt's Waugh, Cound and Thomson as killed along with S/Sgt's Don Belden and Edward Murphy. This information introduced a certain amount of confusion as we were now uncertain if Murphy was killed or wounded. Further, why was there no mention of the other crew members who were previously listed as 'wounded' ? But the really wonderful news was that this list of Casualties gave the home addresses of these airmen - and this was to prove of paramount importance, both immediately and at a slightly later stage in our researches.

The very day that Celia and I located that 'Casualty List' in the Norwich Library (9 November 1992), I received a letter from Jim Goar dated 1 November. In it, Jim reported that he had made another contact but, again and sadly, a widow ! Information in Jim's possession had given the wartime address of the Radio Operator, Parke Kent, as Shelburne in the State of Vermont. Jim had rung the telephone operator at Shelburne and asked to be put through to anybody by the name of 'Kent'. By luck, they got it right first time and Jim found himself speaking to Barbara, Parke's widow. She could give little information on the other crew members but thought that Henry Wilk had come from Ohio - a big State ! She was able to clear up a point about whether Parke was in the aircraft when it crashed at Sheringham on 4 January 1944. She confirmed that he was and that it was later in April 1944 when he had to bail out over France on another Mission and became a POW.

In view of the address information that we had located that day in the Library and appreciating Jim's sterling efforts in the US, we decided to ring him that evening (our time). We were anxious to pass on the details of our discoveries and in particular, to clarify the Springfield address for Lt James Barton. The List clearly gave it as 'Mo' - Missouri !! Jim appreciated the call and the information and promised to do what he could. The next day I sent Jim photo-copies of the Casualty List and the other information that we had located.

On 15 November I received a letter from Jim Goar which was dated the 9th (*the day that I had rung him with the information reference the addresses that we had located that same day in the Norwich Library*). The letter stated:

"Thanks to you, we have found not a survivor but the widow of James W Barton. The telephone operator was able to give me the phone number and I spoke to her and have since written to her" .

Progress for sure but bitter disappointment that we were again too late..... Mrs Barton was unable to give any information about the other members of the crew. Jim put in his letter to me that he felt that "we may have come to the end of the trail".

Another great effort by Jim. Between us we were progressing through the list of names but, sadly, it was beginning to look as if we were not going to find a living survivor. Additionally, so far, we were not getting too much information back reference the crew or the aircraft. However, we had got this far and we did not intend giving up until every possibility had been explored !

Enquiries were initiated locally and eye-witnesses of the crash were sought. May provided some good recollections and fortunately her Father had compiled a Diary and these original documents were made available. Resulting from personal enquiries plus requests for information via the local Press, a number of other very useful local accounts became available. Even after fifty years, these proved to be remarkably consistent - with but one exception and this has been excluded from this account.

Around Christmas 1992, May received a letter from Mrs Mary Wagner. Jim Goar had passed on May's original letter to Mrs Wagner and she responded with an informative and appreciative letter. She pointed out how very thrilled Lester would have been to have heard of the continued interest over here in England and to have learned of the wreath hung on the tree by the crash site for so many years. Mary added that he often spoke of that plane crash in which he suffered two broken eardrums and of the kindness of the local people to the American airmen.

During January 1993 we resolved to go ahead with the Memorial for the crew of "Alfred". Details of these and related aspects are detailed in the following Chapter. The target date for completion was set for not later than 4 January 1994 - the 50th Anniversary of the crash. I wrote to Jim at this time telling him of our intentions and expressing the hope that we could, even yet, make contact with a survivor. I also queried the position reference Edward Murphy - 'Killed in Action' or 'Wounded in Action' ? This was one aspect that *had* to be resolved before we could finalise the Memorial. I also mentioned to Jim that only one of those killed in the crash was contained on the Rolls of Honour held in the Second ADA Memorial Library in Norwich.

In March 1993 Celia and I were still scouring the records and data available in the Norwich Memorial Library. Also that which was held in the Records Office, which was also part of the same building. We discovered in the Norfolk Civil Defence War Diary the references to the crash and which are quoted earlier, in Chapter 11. We found too that both S/Sgt's Henry Wilk and Earl Johnson had flown with Delmar C Johnson as replacement crew on the Mission to Munster on 22 December 1943. This is recorded in Chapter 6 and led to correspondence with Delmar in an effort to locate and/or learn more about Henry and Earl ! We also found a reference in the Records Office to the recovery of the crashed B-24 serial 42-7485 - but was this *our* aircraft or not?? At that time, there were those who still doubted the serial number, the quoted location was none too accurate and the date could be interpreted as

January or June ! Still the uncertainties lingered. However, this eventually led to contact with the Engineers of the 3D SAD and their superb co-operative efforts and assistance 'fifty years on' very quickly led to the resolution of this little problem - plus one or two interesting side-lines, as recounted later in this account.

Significantly, we also discovered that the Bombardier on board *our* aircraft, 2/Lt Virgil E Thomson from Birmingham, Alabama, was buried in the American Cemetery at Cambridge, England. Block D, Row 4, Grave 19. The only member of the crew still buried in the country where he died in the cause of Freedom.

At the end of March 1993, I wrote to the Military Personnel Center in St Louis explaining our intentions to erect a Memorial and requesting information reference S/Sgt's Johnson, Murphy and Wilk. I provided as much information as possible, including their Service numbers. I requested any information that they could supply including dates of release from the Service where applicable, home addresses, etc. Three months later I received a reply - but with reference to Earl Johnson *only!* They gave the dates when he joined and when he was discharged from the Service and that was all !! However, this was valuable in itself because we now knew that Earl had survived the War.

We had been informed earlier that many of the WWII records at St Louis had been destroyed by fire in 1973, so maybe that was why there was no reference to the other two, or was it just an oversight?? To ascertain which, it seemed likely that another wait of at least three months or so could be expected!

We were discovering that this kind of research cannot be hurried and that some patience was required ! But the more that you unearthed, the more fascinating the quest became. The snippets of information were beginning to build up about these young men who went to War fifty years earlier and a strange but rewarding relationship seemed to be materialising, even at this stage of the proceedings.

Numerous sources of facts and knowledge were suggested to me and letters were sent off to various people and organisations. Not all proved productive. One that fell into the latter category was to the 'International Liberator Club' in San Diego. No reply was ever received in spite of the considerable amount of information sent to them. You 'can't win them all

Jim Goar reported 'nil progress' in early May but said he would try the Veterans Administration in the hope of finding something on Henry Wilk and Earl Johnson. He warned, however, that it was a complicated process and would take time ... !

During June, Jim reported that he had made enquiries reference Henry Wilk and Earl Johnson at the 392nd Reunion held at Albuquerque in New Mexico and which took place between 20 May and 25 May. However, no luck and he drew a complete blank from those present.

Nevertheless, Jim did come away with a photograph of "Alfred" and promised to send a copy of the original. This was something that we had been seeking since the start of our enquiries. The picture depicted the nose section of a B-24 with two airmen standing in front of it. Visible behind one was the word "Alfred", although this was partly covered by this airman who was standing directly in front of it - but the picture of the US Navy 'Swabbie' was clearly

visible. The picture is reproduced on page 117. The left hand officer is identified as (at that time) the Deputy Group Commander Col Lorin Johnson. The officer on the right was originally assumed to have been Lt Colby Waugh but this was quickly corrected. It later transpired that it was 1/Lt Lynn G Peterson of the 577th BS and who was later Killed in Action on 18 March 1944 on the Mission to Friedrichshafen. Further, it was later ascertained that the aircraft on the photograph was that of "Alfred II" and not the original "Alfred" ! This photograph and a write-up about the proposed Memorial later appeared in Jim's August 1993 edition of the 392nd BGMA 'News'.

But back to June/July 1993. Plans for the Memorial and Fund raising were progressing well and it was hoped to have the Memorial in place by the end of the year. In fact, to play safe, we wanted it in place by early November, just in case the weather turned really nasty in December and early January. The English weather is quite capable of doing just that, of course !

However, we were still confronted with the uncertainty reference Edward Murphy. Should it be "KIA" inscribed on the Memorial, or did he survive his injuries? We still had conflicting information. Phyllis and the staff at the Second ADA Library could not help further from their own resources but a suggestion was made which proved invaluable. Not only reference Edward Murphy but also at a slightly later date, in respect of other members of the crew. "It's not likely that the family still lives at the same address after a period of fifty years, so why not write to the local Library in the area concerned?", suggested Phyllis, adding that "it's worked for others". The micro-filmed data had given the address as "Swissdale" but it was decided that this should have read "Swissvale". Anything was worth trying at this stage and Phyllis supplied the address of the Carnegie Free Library Of Swissvale. I wrote to the Chief Librarian at that address on 25 July 1993.

The following day, I received a letter from Jim with a photo-copy of a letter received from the Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington DC. It stated that they regretted to inform him that Mr Earl Johnson died on 13 September 1972. No other information was supplied. They added that they had no information apertaining to Mr Wilk. As Jim said in a footnote: "Now we are down to one !"

In the meantime, we initiated and/or reactivated enquiries addressed to local aspects eg: which Ambulance(s) took the wounded to Cromer? Were any of the Ambulance crew still alive and able to recall the incident? Could Cromer Hospital records be accessed and provide information? Could any of the wartime Hospital staff be found in order to enquire if they could remember the wounded crew members being admitted? Which American Hospital were they transferred to and were any records still available? Could Cambridge Cemetery provide any information and, hopefully, were those who died recorded by the local Registrar of Deaths?

Much time has been spent on these enquiries but, in practice, they produced little new or useful information ! We are still trying to ascertain which Ambulances were involved but believe that one from nearby North Walsham may have been engaged. In order to maintain an accurate sequence of events, the outcome of recent enquiries reference these particular aspects are recorded in Chapter 26, "The Continued Research".

Cromer Hospital records confirmed that six USAAF personnel were

admitted on 4 January 1944 but provided no other details. Exhaustive enquiries have revealed that no wartime Hospital medical staff appear to have survived. (I had a cousin who served as a wartime nurse at that Hospital and had she been alive today, I am quite certain that she would have remembered them. During the War years, I can clearly recall her talking about American airmen being admitted. Unfortunately I cannot remember the exact period that that occurred). The wonderful Hospital Doctor had died only a short time before our enquiries began. Without doubt, Dr Vaughan would have remembered them in detail. We have located one lady who was on the domestic staff at the Hospital and she was able to identify the Ward into which Henry (and no doubt the others) was admitted. She, in fact, attended the Dedication Service and met Henry. Some facts are related elsewhere reference the American Hospital to which they were probably transferred.

I have had several interesting conversations with the helpful staff at the Cambridge Cemetery but again, little of direct help. There are no records available of Wartime burials which were carried out there and where the body concerned was later transferred to the United States.

The question of the Registration of Deaths of non-British persons who die on mainland Britain in wartime is a guaranteed source of disagreement and confusion ! The local lady Registrar was most helpful and went to a great deal of trouble in an attempt to resolve the queries I put to her. All her (current) information indicated that all deaths had to be registered by her department, regardless of nationality. However, in spite of exhaustive searches through the records, she assured me that there were *no* references to any of those killed in "Alfred". But neither could she locate any other American airmen from amongst the not insignificant number who died in the area during the period in question. Some German and Italian POW's, yes, but *no* Americans ! She was baffled. However, the staff at the Cambridge Cemetery confirmed that this was, in fact, usual practice. These deaths were *only* recorded by the American authorities. Fine - until two other researchers of far greater experience than myself declared categorically that *every* death has to be recorded on the British records and that this was based on their own personal findings !! The practical outcome in our own particular case, however, was no further information !

Then early in September, a letter from the Carnegie Free Library of Swissvale. The Community Librarian, Carol Miller, wrote to say that there were two Monuments in front of her Library dedicated to all the men and women of Swissvale who had been killed in every war since World War I. Sadly, she reported that Edward Murphy's name *was* amongst those included. She added that Swissvale had more casualties per capita in WWII than any other community in the United States. Carol had also contacted a local historian who knew about the crash of "Alfred" and stated that he believed that there was a sister and a nephew of Edward still living in the area and that they would try and put us all in touch with each other. He also stated that he believed "that Murphy was in Jimmy Stewart's Squadron" !

That last statement raised yet another doubt !! Jimmy Stewart was at Tibenham with the 445th BG and also with the 453rd BG at Old Buckenham (both Bases located in Norfolk). Did Edward Murphy by any chance, survive the crash and go on to serve at Tibenham and/or Old Buckenham? Unlikely but possible, perhaps? Still the doubts existed and lingered !!

Because of these continuing doubts, I wrote again in October to the National

Personnel Center in St Louis. I again requested information reference S/Sgt's Henry Wilk and Edward Murphy. A date of death for the latter was needed in order to clarify the situation. Anything reference Henry was going to be a bonus !! I also wrote to the Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama. I explained our intentions, gave them details that I had on the crew and the aircraft and requested any additional information that they might have available.

Just eight weeks later I received a most helpful reply from St Louis. They confirmed that S/Sgt Edward Murphy of the 578th Bomb Squadron of the 392nd Bomb Group had sadly died on 8 January 1944 as a result of injuries sustained in an aircraft crash when returning from a Mission on 4 January. Positive and final proof of what really happened. Reference S/Sgt Henry Wilk. St Louis confirmed that he returned to duty on 10 January 1944, after being injured in action on 4 January. And the really great news was that 'he left the Service on 27 September 1945'. Now, at last, we knew for certain that he had successfully survived the War !!

Note: For the record, when Henry was shown these dates sometime later, he did query that which was quoted for his return to duty. He is of the opinion that it was somewhat later than that quoted.

The Memorial was now in place (see next Chapter for details) and all thoughts were focussing on the proposed Dedication Service. We hoped and suggested that if it were held in May or June of the following year (1994), we might just be lucky enough to 'catch' and persuade some visiting Veterans from the 392nd to attend - should any be over here in the UK around about that time. We advised Jim Goar of our intentions and hopes and he promised to do what he could.

We felt strongly that relatives of the crew should be made aware of what was going on and that they should be sent a photograph of the Memorial and told of our plans. I wrote accordingly to the three 'contacts' that had been established at that point ie: Mrs Wagner, Mrs Kent and Mrs Barton. I also asked if they had any information on the other crew members and/or relatives and explained our wish that as many as possible should be 'put in the picture'.

Naturally we had been concentrating our efforts on locating possible survivors. But how about the relatives of those who died in the crash?? It was only right and proper that they too should be made aware of the Memorial erected to remember their loved ones and that they be informed of the proposed Dedication Service. At least we had their wartime addresses and the idea of contact via local Libraries was still very much in the forefront of our minds after the initial success reference Edward Murphy. So, back to Norwich and Phyllis's list of Libraries in the US ! Sure enough, an address was found and noted for the Library in the little town of Solon in Maine, the home-town of Pilot Colby Waugh. Similarly, an address in El Paso, Texas was obtained reference Arthur Cound, the Navigator. One in Birmingham, Alabama in connection with Virgil Thomson, the Bombardier and even one for the Library in the little community in Nebraska from where Don Belden had originated. Letters were despatched forthwith - and fingers crossed ! Would our luck continue??

In a letter dated 25 January 1994, Mrs Barbara Kent wrote: "Words cannot express my feelings when I received your letter and enclosures. The children

and I feel very proud and, at the same time, very humble". Barbara went on to say "My sister has a son in the US Air Force, stationed in England at this time. She will be visiting him through April, May and June and would plan to attend the Dedication Service". Fantastic news and we were totally delighted. Just imagine, one of "Alfred's" crew would actually be represented by relatives from the States - after 50 years !! Unbelievable. This was *very* gratifying and also extremely humbling.

Further, Barbara enclosed a copy of a letter that she had sent to Jim Goar some months earlier. It contained some most useful and interesting details about Parke's wartime experiences. These comments had resulted from a careful search from amongst wartime letters from her husband. They spoke of the crash on 4 January, some news of the injuries to Jim Barton, Parke's subsequent Mission when he had to bail out over France and was made a POW. Also, interestingly, a reference or two about Henry Wilk and that (in 1944) his home was in Ohio. The picture was building up ! Barbara wrote at the same time to May Ayers and on similar lines.

Then a letter in response to one that I had sent to a Library in one of the home-towns of crew members who had died in the crash !! Dated 28 January 1944, I received a super response from Genevieve, the Postmistress and Librarian in that little community in Nebraska from where Don Belden had originated. Not only did she remember Don but she had passed on my letter and information to Don's brother - and she too was thrilled and delighted to hear of what was being done over here in England ! Frankly, I doubt if there was *anybody* in that little township of 187 people who were *not* aware of what we had done for one of their sons!! They had not forgotten either, needless to say. Genevieve reported that Don had been remembered just the week before in their County newspaper's '50 Years Ago' column. So far apart, maybe, but our thoughts were unified.

Things were hotting up ! In another letter, also dated 28 January, news and information from El Paso Library reference Arthur L Cound. They kindly enclosed photo-copies of articles that had appeared in the El Paso Herald Post dated 14 and 19 February 1944. These reported firstly, the death in England of Lt Cound and secondly, the news that the Purple Heart had been presented to Arthur's parents. Additionally, the Library listed the address of the only 'Cound' contained in the current El Paso Telephone Directory. What a fantastic service !! Prompt and efficient. The address was for a Mr George Cound. The copy of the newspaper article reporting Arthur's death had referred to a brother by that name serving in the US Navy and I assumed and hoped that this was he! It is never safe to assume, of course, but a letter was promptly despatched and surely we must be in touch with relatives of the Navigator, if not the brother?!

The other aspect that caused us very considerable concern at this stage was the *lack* of names contained in the Second Air Division Roll of Honour - and that of the 392nd BG. Missing were three of the five crew members who had been Killed in Action. It appeared that S/Sgt Don Belden had, correctly, been included from the start. Recently added (since our enquiries had begun) was Virgil Thomson but due to a clerical hiccup in Norwich, he was (is) listed as a T/Sgt and not as a Lt. The three missing names are those of Lt Colby Waugh, Lt Arthur Cound and S/Sgt Edward Murphy.

We were advised by the Norwich Memorial Library that any changes,

additions or amendments to the Roll of Honour had to be initiated by the proper authority in the US. They requested that I make the necessary approach. Consequently a letter was sent to the appropriate person, Oak Mackey, 2ADA Vice President of the 392nd BG. I explained the situation to Oak, provided as much information as possible including Service numbers, references to the original Special Orders that listed the crew, the original 392nd BG HQ History which recorded the crash, the previously referred to official Casualty List and so on. Whilst, happily, Don Belden's name was included, it was felt that it would be particularly unfortunate and distressing should relatives of those KIA discover by chance the omission of their loved ones from these Rolls of Honour.

Then, a nice letter dated 31 January from Mrs Mary Wagner, widow of Lester. She wrote: "I am eternally grateful for all the effort you, your wife and Mrs Ayers have given to this cause. My husband would have been so proud of it

Henry Wilk was now the one and only hope of a living survivor from the Colby Waugh crew of "Alfred". *We simply had to do everything possible to locate him, or at worst, to establish his fate.* On 8 February 1994, I wrote to the 578th BS Navigator, Delmar C Johnson. As you may recall, we had ascertained from documents held in the Norwich Records Office that both Henry and Earl Johnson had flown in Delmar's crew on the Mission to Munster on 22 December 1943 in aircraft 42-7605. Could he, *by any chance*, recall anything of Henry in particular (we had already ascertained that Earl was no longer living). Just *maybe*, a home-town or some other vital clue ?? This really was a very 'long shot' and hoping for an awful lot but we were *desperate* and every possibility was worth exploring !! We even had a Holiday Travel firm offer to put an enquiry for information reference Henry into their travel literature that was circulated in the US. This had resulted from a local lady who had a son in the travel business working in the London area. The mother had been following the monthly reports and up-dates which I had been supplying one of the local newspapers and was passing on the information to her son ! As it happened, fate was on our side and some very wonderful news was close at hand !

Dated 12 February 1994, Jim Goar wrote: "You will be pleased to know that **we have located Henry Wilk, alive and well in Florida.** Mrs Barbara Kent had found a 1945 address in Newton Falls, Ohio, for him and when I called Information, the only Wilk in the Directory turned out to be his son. Henry was out fishing when I called this afternoon but I spoke to Mrs Wilk and will call again tomorrow to speak to Henry

Jim had made contact the same day that he had heard from Barbara Kent and wrote me immediately after contacting Donna. Jim, of course, provided Henry's address. So thanks to the persistence and perseverance of Barbara Kent and her exhaustive searches through the wartime mail that she had retained from her husband involving hundreds of letters, along with the help of Jim Goar, success at last !! Really the most wonderful news and we were absolutely delighted and thrilled to think that a sole living survivor had, at last, been located.

Suddenly things were developing rapidly and I will try and keep things in sequence. Also dated 12 February, a letter was received from Mr and Mrs George Cound of El Paso, Texas. Not a brother of the Navigator but a cousin ! They wrote: "We offer our thanks to you and the others of Sheringham for this tender and long-remembered honor of Arthur and his fellow crewmen". They went on to describe him as "an outstanding young man" and told us that there

was a sister living in California. They had spoken to her on the telephone and would be passing on to her all the information that I had sent them. They supplied her address. Further wonderful progress and there was even more to come !

Next day another letter from the US on the door mat ! This one written from the State of Maine, dated 14 February and was from Coburn Waugh, one of the brothers of Pilot Colby Waugh ! He had written to say that my correspondence addressed to their local Library had been passed on to him. He said that he felt highly honoured about the Memorial and then went on to tell us something about Colby and his immediate family. As recorded earlier, Colby was one of twelve children, eight of whom served in WWII. Coburn promised that all the family, including widow Doris and daughter Ginger in California, would all get copies of the correspondence and information. Another wonderful breakthrough and our list of 'contacts' was rapidly expanding !

Dated one day later, the 15th, a nice letter arrived from Mrs Mary Barton, widow of the Co-pilot. Mary wrote: "I want you to know how deeply touched I was upon receiving your letter Jimmie would have been so pleased to know of all your caring and would have appreciated the hard work that you have put into the project".

The next relevant communication to arrive was from Oak Mackey, 392nd BG VP and was dated 21 February. Oak described the Memorial as "an act of love and friendship in the highest degree". He said that he would pass on "this story of true devotion to all his friends in the Second ADA, especially those in the 392nd BG" by means of an article in the Second ADA Journal. Oak also promised to display the information, including a photograph of the Memorial, at their forthcoming Convention in Kansas City on 28 - 31 May 1994. Of great importance, Oak added that he would be sending a copy of my letter and the enclosures to Jordan Uttal, Honorary President of the Second ADA. Oak said that he was sure that Mr Uttal would be pleased to add Lt Waugh, Lt Cound and S/Sgt Murphy to the Second ADA Roll of Honour and to the 392nd BG Roll of Honour - and that Virgil Thomson would be promoted back to Lt from T/Sgt ! This was good and important news and we greatly appreciated Oak's concern and prompt actions. The next letter to be received made this aspect all too relevant.

Following closely the letter from Oak Mackey, came one from Alaska and was dated 23 February. It was from Pauline Waugh, a sister of Colby. Pauline had received my information via her family in Maine and wanted to know more. She added that "she and her family had been in England from 1963 to 1966 *and had made several trips to Norfolk and made enquiries about Colby Waugh but did not receive any information about him. His name did not appear in any of the logs in any of the museums we went to and nobody could help us*". (The italics are mine).

Just imagine how they must have felt - and so very, very sad. How frustrated and dispirited they must have been and they really must have wondered if *anybody* cared..... ! There were people who could have helped, of course, but how were they to locate them? The starting point had to be the Rolls of Honour held in the Second ADA Memorial Library in Norwich (and these *must* have been "the logs" that Pauline referred to in her letter). As Colby was not contained on those records, it is understandable that 'a blank' was drawn.

Delmar C Johnson replied on 24 February. Sadly, he could not recall Henry flying with him on 22 December 1943. However, he provided some most helpful suggestions and information on how to access the Department of Veterans Affairs, in the hope that they might be able to help. Delmar even supplied an addressed envelope for that Department, complete with US postage stamp. He wished us well with our endeavours and asked to be informed of any results. Delmar added that he enjoyed his stay in England, apart from the flying hazards, and felt quite at home over here. I, of course, replied straight away with the wonderful news that we had located Henry safe and well and catching fish down in Florida !!

Also dated 24 February, a lovely letter from Henry Wilk's daughter Patricia who lives in Ohio. She wrote to tell us that she had seen the photographs of the Memorial and the information about it and that "it brought tears to her eyes". She told us about the family and gave her parents address in Florida. A lovely gesture by a member of a very fine family.

A couple of days later, a moving letter from California - from Ginger, Colby Waugh's daughter who was just 4½ months old when her Dad left for the ETO and, sadly, was not to return. Her letter began: "I don't have the words to describe to you the surprise, shock and tears that your letter brought me". Ginger explained that my letter to the Library in Solon, Maine, had been passed on to her by the family. She said that she was "overwhelmed" and finished her letter: "I cannot thank you enough or find the words to tell you how thrilled I am at your efforts to find us. I don't believe that I have been so touched by anything. And I look forward to hearing from you again. God Bless you and keep you safe. Happily yours

To receive this and the other similar letters, made us feel very humble indeed. What small efforts we had made were already repayed a thousand times and to receive such appreciation from across the Atlantic for our small gesture of Remembrance and appreciation really made it all so very worthwhile.

Just two days after the letter from Ginger, a super one from Henry - for whom we had been searching for so long !! As Henry said in this letter : "I had no inkling that I was 'lost' and that anyone was trying to find me !". Henry continued "..... despite the fact that I appear to be now the sole surviving member of our crew, I would like to thank you and all the persons involved in erecting the Memorial. To realise fifty years later that one has not been forgotten is, indeed, humbling. On behalf of all those aboard 'Alfred' on that fateful day, I thank you". Henry then went on to report the fabulous news that he and his wife Donna plus their son Larry and daughter-in-law Mary Ann all planned to come to England for the Dedication Service (!!!). Henry then went on to describe his recollections of the crash, comments reference other crew members and similar useful information (and which has been quoted in the earlier text).

What terrific news !!! Quite honestly, we were overwhelmed and truly staggered by this unbelievable response from the States. Never in our wildest dreams had we thought that this amount of interest was even remotely possible. Let's face it, fifty years had elapsed ! To say that we were all delighted, was truly an understatement. To think that we were going to have the sole living survivor present here in Sheringham was hard to comprehend. A few days previously, we hadn't a clue where he was or even if he was still alive ! And

now he and his family would be joining us for the Service !! But there was more fantastic news to follow before the day of the Dedication Service which was due to take place on 7 May 1994.

The next letter to arrive was dated 5 March and was a reply to my enquiry directed to the Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama. They regretted that staff reductions and budget constraints prevented them from fully researching my request (and that sounded very familiar to us in Britain !). However, they did identify relevant micro-filmed records and extended an invitation to visit them at Maxwell AFB in order to research the original documents. Something that I would very much like to do but was not necessarily too easy to achieve in practice ! Nevertheless, this information was of use later and, in any case, it almost certainly referred to those same documents that were held on micro-film in the Norwich Library (pre-Fire).

The mail from the US continued to arrive. Barbara Kent confirmed details of the visit by her sister Carol along with her son serving over here in the USAF and his wife. Another interesting letter from Delmar C Johnson with some fascinating details of his experiences whilst flying out of Wendling - and expressing his delight at the 'discovery' of Henry Wilk !

Pauline Waugh wrote again on 8 March, thanking me for the further information that I had sent. In this letter she added the comment that "we had always believed that he (Colby) was flying the B-17 Flying Fortress *and that the plane was named 'Ginger' after the wee daughter born just before he left the States*". (Again, my italics). An intriguing comment which, in turn, initiated an entirely new branch of (frantic) enquiry !! Comments of that nature from the family of crew just cannot be ignored and even at this stage in the research programme I have to admit that there were still just the very faintest of doubts about the identity of the aircraft in which they were flying. Pauline went on to say that Colby never received their letters as he kept asking where they were. Evidently they never caught up with him. This sad aspect has been mentioned in an earlier chapter.

Ginger regretted that she could not attend the Dedication Service owing to work commitments but expressed the hope that she and her husband would get the opportunity to visit England and the Memorial, at some time in the future. However, she added that her Mother and her daughter were both considering making the trip for the Service

A few days later this was confirmed in a moving letter from Colby's widow, Doris. She wrote: "There is no way that I can express my heartfelt gratitude for what you two and May Ayers and all the other people did for the men on that bomber" "This is truly an emotional experience waiting anxiously to meet all of you soon".

But what of the comment from Pauline expressing the belief that her brother had been flying in an aircraft named "Ginger"? It could well be understood that that could have been the case, for what better name for *their* aircraft? However, we were quite certain that it was a B-24 and definitely not a B-17. But where did "Ginger" fit in? It was not too long before they all arrived for the Dedication Service and it was a hectic time as a result. However, this was both important and intriguing. It had to be resolved, not just to put my mind at rest but also for Pauline's sake and the others. I decided to go-ahead

and see if I could shed any light on this aspect and out came the reference books, once again !

I will recall only the sequence of events that occurred at this point in time and please note that more complete details reference "Ginger" are recorded in Chapter 16. Fortunately amongst the books in my possession, I have a copy of "The History of the 446th BG(H)". In that excellent book, I found a reference to a B-24H named "Ginger" which was lost over Germany on 26 August 1944. It also stated that the aircraft had previously been with the 482nd BG. The serial number of this B-24H was 41-29177. In the "Mighty Eighth War Manual", Roger Freeman lists 41-29177 as being one of eight original H2S equipped B-24's and that it was assigned to the 814th BS of the 482nd BG based at Alconbury. It was looking interesting ! Another source in my possession stated that 41-29177 was assigned to the 482nd on 15 December 1943 from the BAD at Burtonwood, after the installation of the British H2S radar equipment. Could this have been the aircraft that they flew to England from the States?? The date that it was transferred from Burtonwood did make it look perfectly feasible. At this stage, therefore, the circumstantial evidence appeared promising but there was no positive proof. There could well have been several "Gingers" flying around at that time. We needed to know the serial number of the aircraft that they flew from the US before we could be really certain. We will see if Henry can provide the answer and in the meantime I prepared this information for Pauline and the others. Not conclusive but a possible explanation of the confusion?!

In a letter dated 28 March, Pauline reported the wonderful news that she, her three daughters Paula, Betty and Annie plus the latter's 8 years old daughter Alexa and all from Alaska, would all be attending the Service !! Pauline's son John would also be joining us ! This really was fantastic and very, very humbling indeed.

Written on 5 April, a lovely letter from Mary Wagner. She had been desperately hoping that the two children would come over and attend the Service but unfortunately it clashed with a family wedding. Mary said that "Lester would have been so proud and I know that he would have made every effort to attend the Dedication Service. He talked about that crash very often and also of the many people he had met that lived in the vicinity of the Air Base". Mary concluded: "I will be thinking of all of you on 7 May and I know it will be wonderful. The pictures were beautiful with all the names listed on it. You all have done a wonderful job. Thank you again".

On 11 April, Oak Mackey wrote with an up-date on the Roll of Honour situation. Oak was doing his best in order to get it amended in time for the arrival of the relatives and Henry but this was just not going to be possible. Time was going to run out. Verification of death had to be confirmed by US Army records before names could be added - and this, of course, takes time. Oak wrote: "Please try to explain to the Waugh family and to Henry Wilk that we are sincerely working to correct this omission and will get Waugh, Cound and Murphy on the Roll of Honor as soon as possible" (and also correct the rank shown for Lt Thomson). I had photo-copies made of this letter for all concerned. They understood the situation and appreciated the efforts being made.

Mrs Barbara Kent wrote another of her super letters on 12 April with details reference her sister Carol, her nephew and his wife, all three of whom

would be attending the Service. She also gave some extracts from wartime letters written by Henry and received after her husband Parke had had to bail out over France in April 1944. Additionally, Barbara kindly sent a newspaper cutting reference Parke's time in the POW camp and the forced march across Austria before they were liberated by American troops. (This information was particularly useful when writing Chapter 14). She spoke too of the long wartime days as they waited back home and how the family sewed and provided 'Bundles for Britain' - which were so much appreciated over here by those lucky enough to receive them ! Barbara finished her letter - "My family and I will be thinking of you and all those taking part in the Service on 7 May. It means more to us than we could ever express, and once again, thank you so very much".

Two letters arrived on the very morning of the Dedication Service. One dated 2 May and the other the 3rd. The first was from Arthur Cound's sister in California, thanking us "for the beautiful pictures of the Memorial" and wishing us well for the Service. The second was from Bud Belden, Don's brother. A lovely letter. Bud told us that Don had a 15 month old daughter, Martha, when he was killed. He thanked us for the photos and information and said that copies had been sent on to Martha and all other members of the family. Bud regretted that they were unable to attend the Service due to health and age and felt that the journey would have been too much for them. He concluded his letter: "Thank you for everything. You are very special people to bring this all about. we will be with you in our thoughts". We were delighted to hear from both of these families.

In this Chapter, I have tried to relate the sequence of events relating to the research aspects and which take us up to the time of the Dedication Service on 7 May 1994. Some aspects which may not come strictly under the heading of "research" have been mentioned - for example, references to those who would be attending the Service, etc.. It was felt that these aspects should be mentioned here in the interests of continuity and information. The story of the continued research is contained in Chapter 26 but before going into further related details, we will have a look at aspects reference the Memorial itself and the various Services that have been so lovingly conducted by the Reverend Peter Barnes-Clay.

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CHAPTER 22

Memorial Aspects & Fund Raising

As recorded earlier, May, Celia and myself quickly came to the conclusion that it would be very appropriate to erect a Memorial to the crew of the B-24 bomber that had crashed locally all those years ago. We all felt strongly that the sacrifices made by those gallant airmen, for our freedom, must *NEVER* be forgotten and that we should remember not only those who died but also those who survived. Further, Celia and I felt that the efforts of the local people who assisted the survivors should not be overlooked. Collectively, we concluded that if the necessary action was not taken reasonably soon by those who lived through the War years and who could *remember*, it was likely that this kind of project may never be completed. We felt that it was vital that present and future generations must *REMEMBER* those gigantic sacrifices that were made during the War if we were to learn from those experiences and to ensure that the same mistakes were never made again.

Once the decision was made, we had to decide what form the Memorial should take and, critically, where it should - and, indeed, could - be located.

Reference the latter aspect, there were really three choices. Either:

1. at the crash site
2. alongside the roadway nearest that site or
3. in the Churchyard of the local Church.

The crash site would be very fitting but:

- a. it was on private property and
- b. it was not too readily accessible.

The busy roadside some distance from the crash site was also considered as a possible position for the Memorial. The necessary permission *might* have been obtainable but it was felt that:

- a. A busy roadside was hardly befitting the location of the Memorial as envisaged and
- b. the long-term suitability of such a position would be doubtful. Road widening schemes, future development of the area, etc, could well cause all sorts of problems in future years.

This left the third option, the Churchyard. Provided the necessary permission was forthcoming, this appeared to be the best choice of all. "Alfred" had come down within the boundaries of the Parish of Upper Sheringham, just inland from the town of Sheringham. The village of Upper Sheringham (known locally as 'Upper Town') is a beautifully quaint and tranquil North Norfolk village with the lovely 14th Century Church of All Saints at its centre. Where better or more appropriate to erect a Memorial for the crew?! But permission had to be sort and granted !

We contacted the Rector, Peter Barnes-Clay and a meeting was very quickly arranged and took place on Friday 22 January 1993 at our home. It involved the three of us and the Rector. We were delighted to find that the Rev Peter was extremely interested in our proposals and gave us his enthusiastic support. He

was optimistic about placing the Memorial within the Churchyard and promised to make the further necessary enquiries. From the very beginning he was very anxious that the Memorial be positioned in a prominent place and not located in a remote corner where it would not be seen. Peter also promised to contact the PCC (Parochial Church Council) and suggested that we had an 'on-site' meeting at the Church in six days time.

That meeting took place on the morning of 28 January and the Rev Peter, accompanied by the two Church Wardens, Mrs Elsie Kimber and Mr Albert Welch, met May, Celia and myself. The Rev Peter had spoken to the Archdeacon and he was happy about the proposals. Two positions were suggested for the Memorial. One proposal was to build-in a plaque type stone into the flint wall that surrounds the Church, positioning it close to the entry gate. The second suggestion and the one that was adopted, was to have a free standing Memorial stone positioned adjacent to the entrance door to the Church (the one that was normally used by the congregations attending Church). The ideal location and, we all felt, the ideal form of Memorial. All concerned were very enthusiastic and supportive of the project. We could not have asked for more and we were very grateful.

Needless to say, certain criteria had to be met in order to comply with the requirements of the Church but we were happy about these aspects and they were not restrictive of the plans and format that we had envisaged. It was agreed that the Memorial would be in grey granite, approximately 2ft 3ins high, 1ft 9ins wide and 3ins thick. The engraving would include the 8th Air Force insignia and the agreed wording was to be as follows:

Remember before God with Thanksgiving the gallant crew
of B-24H "Alfred" of the 392nd BG USAAF which crashed
near this spot on the 4th January 1944 whilst returning
badly damaged from a mission to Kiel. In gratitude also to
those who aided the survivors in the common cause of
Freedom.

2/Lt Colby A Waugh. Pilot. KIA.
2/Lt Arthur L Cound. Navigator. KIA.
2/Lt Virgil E Thomson. Bombardier. KIA.
S/Sgt Don C Belden. Gunner. KIA.
S/Sgt Edward R Murphy. Gunner. KIA.
2/Lt James W Barton. Co-pilot.
T/Sgt Lester L Wagner. Engineer.
T/Sgt Parke V Kent. Radio Operator.
S/Sgt Earl J Johnson. Gunner.
S/Sgt Henry Wilk. Gunner.

LEST WE FORGET

Upper Sheringham Parish Council had already been approached and their blessing received. Tentative enquiries had also been initiated and an approximate cost of the Memorial had been obtained. The firm concerned, Sheringham Engravings (now trading as 'Country Memorials'), were very keen to assist and in view of the nature of the work, promised to waive labour costs. This was a tremendous boost to our cause.

We set 4 January 1994, the 50th Anniversary of the crash, as the target date for completion of the Memorial, including the actual installation. In practice, we later brought this forward to November 1993 in case we experienced an adverse winter, one which might have given problems with the installation aspects.

A few days after that meeting in the Churchyard, we launched the "Sheringham Liberator Memorial Fund" and opened an account under that name in the local Branch of Barclays Bank. A letter announcing the project in our joint names was sent to about thirty local businesses, organisations and a number of private individuals. At the same time we obtained publicity in our local and weekly newspapers, the Eastern Daily Press and the North Norfolk News. Additionally, the local 'free' paper, Community News, kindly published an appeal on our behalf. Most usefully, they also gave us space *every* month for the next 15 months, in order to allow me to provide regular up-dates on the Memorial project for the benefit of the local readers. This facility, I know, was greatly appreciated by many people. Upper Sheringham also has its own village Newsletter. This is edited by Roger Garrad who, amongst his many other involvements, is the Chairman of the Parish Council. Roger kindly allowed me to make use of his Newsletter on several occasions in order to address directly the good people of that community and who were so supportive of our project.

Money was raised by kind donations from various organisations, including the Muckleburgh Collection (a local privately owned Military Collection and Museum), the Sheringham Shantymen (a singing group), Upper Sheringham Parish Council, Upper Sheringham Womens Institute, Sheringham Town Council and the Sheringham Preservation Society. Many private individuals made donations, including one from the US - who else but our friend Jim Goar !

Note: I am sure that there would have been *many* Americans who would have willingly donated money to our Fund. However, we wanted this to be, basically, a British gesture. Therefore, during the time that we were raising the money, I was very careful *not* to mention this aspect to any of our friends in the States with whom we were in contact. I obviously slipped up towards the end of those money raising activities when I gleefully mentioned to Jim that 'we were almost there' !! I should have known better ! Seriously, his donation, as with *all* of them, was VERY much appreciated.

In addition to these sources of revenue, we received invaluable help from the Flixton based Norfolk and Suffolk Aviation Museum. Huby Fairhead, Secretary of that organisation, came along and gave an Illustrated Talk on Norfolk Airfields and Norfolk Aviation Memorials to a crowded audience in the Village Hall at Upper Sheringham on 8 May. This event provided a wonderful boost to our Funds. On 19 June, well known aviation historian Bob Collis gave us a follow-up Illustrated Talk on Aviation Archaeology. Again, another excellent boost to the Funds ! It will be recalled that Bob had provided earlier assistance with the research and that he is also a member of the Norfolk and Suffolk Aviation Museum at Flixton. Aviation author Ian Hawkins, who had already provided a donation and other help, donated a copy of one of his books, "B-17's over Berlin", as a prize in the raffles that were part of both of these functions. Bob and Huby also made similar gestures. This was typical of the support from all concerned and was most welcome and appreciated.

The local building firm, Norfolk Homes, provided free photo-copying facilities for paperwork associated with the Fund and this was a most helpful gesture.

On 29 October the three of us ran a Coffee Morning and Bring and Buy in the Little Theatre in town. Again, well supported and the target figure was in sight ! We had estimated a required sum needed to cover the cost of the Memorial stone, its installation and the expenses involved with the Dedication Service. This was to include the cost of the Invitations, the Service Sheets and refreshments, etc. Money from the Fund was not, however, used to cover the cost of postage, telephone calls or similar expenses. It was agreed that *if* there was a surplus after all the expenses had been paid, then it would be shared between All Saints Church and the Upper Sheringham Village Hall Funds.

Whilst these activities were proceeding, Celia and I were liaising closely and frequently with the firm who were producing the Memorial stone. They had pioneered a sand blasting method of engraving stone which incorporated computerised techniques. They initially produced a scaled down version of the Memorial which was approximately one quarter the size of the final product. This provided a useful guide and served to show the Rev Peter and the PCC (and other interested parties) exactly how the finished item would appear. We were now in a (financial) position to order the stone and we requested that work start during the third week of October, with completion expected by 14 November. However, problems were encountered during the engraving phase of the work and these delayed completion. These problems were overcome and the Memorial was finally installed on 11 December. The result was very satisfying and the very considerable efforts made by the staff at Sheringham Engravings (now 'Country Memorials') were greatly appreciated. Mr Jim Hardie, Managing Director of the firm, expressed his pride and honour in being associated with the project.

After ascertaining the final cost of the Memorial (somewhat higher than originally estimated owing to the production problems) and re-assessing the expected costs associated with the Dedication Service, we (May, Celia and myself) concluded that we really should have some more pennies in the Fund !! May arranged "An Evening of Nostalgia", talks by a number of local speakers (including May) on local history and associated subjects. The proceeds were shared between our "Liberator Fund" and the Preservation Society, with whom it was jointly organised and run. This gave our Fund a useful further boost and this along with three or four 'last minute' donations from more kind local individuals who were aware of the financial situation, put our minds at rest reference to this aspect.

We thought that it would be nice to have the Invitation Cards for the Dedication Service printed commercially, the date had been set for 7 May 1994. It was our opinion that these would be particularly appreciated by all those directly connected with the crew in the US and would serve as a worthwhile 'keepsake'. About 30 were sent to the States and over 80 to individuals, organisations and interested groups in this country. Similarly, we had the Service Sheets printed by the same firm, the vast majority of which were used on the day of the Service of course, but quite a few were sent to those who could *not* attend from the US. I must record our thanks at this point to Roger Garrad for the help that he gave us with his computer and word processing facilities and which helped to reduce the final cost of the printing of the Service Sheets.

The Dedication Service was planned to take place in All Saints Church at 2.30 pm. We decided that this should be followed by 'tea and sandwiches' in the Village Hall. As the day approached and the response to the Invitations sent out

personally and via the open invitation in the local Press, it became clear that we had under-estimated the interest ! Instead of the originally assessed attendance of 'maybe 100, or so', we realised that the actual figure might well be over *twice* that number !! Soon afterwards, that estimate had to be revised to 'about 275'. The actual final number was, in fact, well over 300 ! Very, very pleasing indeed but the *maximum* numbers allowed in the Hall (by Fire Regulations) was 100 !! Also, it looked as if we could have a major car parking problem ! Nothing is ever straight forward ! So, at the last minute, we hired a marquee (from the Scouts) in order to provide additional 'under cover' accommodation and we managed to persuade a local farmer to allow us to use a nearby meadow as an overflow car park !! The former cost money, the latter did not ! We were relieved that we had raised those additional Funds !!

The ladies of the Village very kindly offered to take over all the catering aspects - leaving us free to take care of the other requirements. For this, we were extremely grateful. Whilst the cost of sandwich fillings, etc, came from the Fund, they made *no* other charges and the wonderful 'spread' awaiting those in the Hall and Marquee after the Service was truly magnificent. Their combined efforts were both very moving and greatly appreciated.

The Rector, the PCC and the organist all waived their fees. What superb gestures ! When the final sums were completed, we had a **surplus** of £10-18 from the total of £679-64 that had been raised. This surplus, as promised, was equally divided between the Church and the Village Hall.

It must also be recorded that we had two offers of further financial assistance, should there have been a shortfall at 'the end of the day'. The Preservation Society kindly offered to make a further donation should it have been necessary and a local individual who had attended the Service and who was so impressed and moved by the proceedings that he offered to make up any financial deficit that might have resulted. Fine offers, much appreciated, but happily not required.

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CHAPTER 23

The Remembrance & Blessing Services

Now we need to go back a few months with our story, back to the second week in November 1993. The Memorial Stone was still being prepared by Sheringham Engravings at this point, although the foundation had been laid in the Churchyard on the 11th.

Our Rector, the Rev Peter Barnes-Clay, had expressed the wish some months earlier that he would like to include the crew of "Alfred" in his annual Remembrance Day Service. This was due to take place on Sunday 14 November. Earlier we had thought that there was just a chance that the Memorial might have been in place and completed by that date - but that was not to be. However, the Rev Peter was undismayed and sure enough, *for the very first time*, the names of the crew members who died in the crash almost fifty years earlier were read out as part of that moving Remembrance Service. This practice has and will continue every year. Church Warden Albert Welch, an ex-Far East Prisoner of War himself, read out the names of the local Village people who had died in the War. Mrs Elsie Kimber, the other Church Warden, read out the names of the Americans. The Royal British Legion laid a Poppy wreath remembering the British Servicemen and women and also laid a separate Poppy Cross on behalf of the Colby Waugh crew. This was, in fact, a continuation of the Remembrance of that crew, *our crew*, by local members of the Royal British Legion. The practice was started soon after the crash took place and they continued to lay a wreath at the crash site for a period of something like fifteen years. Sheringham has not forgotten.

The Memorial was in place and completed by 11 December. Peter was anxious that the Stone be 'Blessed and Hallowed' as soon as possible and in time for the 50th Anniversary of the crash on 4 January 1994. The nearest Sunday to that date, 2 January was chosen for the Service.

Whilst no media publicity had been given prior to this event, many of those involved with the Memorial project attended the Blessing Service. Village people, ex-Service well-wishers and supporters, neighbours, friends, Mr and Mrs Jim Hardie (the Engraver), May, Celia, myself and others were in attendance. The Service was a moving one and the Rector and congregation went outside to the Memorial Stone in the Churchyard for the Blessing. After the Blessing, more Prayers were said, a Poppy Cross was laid and *we Remembered with Thanksgiving* (and just a little pride). The cold winter winds blew under a leaden sky, a typical English winter's day - and so in keeping and reminiscent of that sad day 50 years earlier when "Alfred" and its crew came to grief nearby.

Now they would NEVER be forgotten.

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Photograph 19. The Memorial in the Churchyard
of All Saints Church, Upper Sheringham.

CHAPTER 24

The Dedication Service

The Memorial was in place and Blessed. The next major event would be the Dedication Service. It could take place at any time but the Rev Peter and ourselves (May, Celia and myself) were very anxious that it should take place during the 50th Anniversary year of the crash. We needed to choose a time convenient to as many people as possible and hopefully be able to involve some visiting American Veterans and preferably, some from the 392nd. We were also very anxious that as many relatives of the crew and any survivor, if we could locate one, should be aware of the Memorial and of the planned Dedication Service. We dared not even hope, and certainly did not expect, any of them to attend. However, we felt *very* strongly that as many relatives as possible *MUST* be made aware of our intentions and that we should supply them with as much information as available. Not to do so, would be unforgivable. We knew, even then, that they would be with us in thought, even if not actually present at the Dedication Service of the Memorial remembering their loved ones

Over the preceding months Jim Goar in the States had tried hard to find any Veterans who planned to visit the UK during the late Spring or early Summer of 1994 but was unsuccessful. It was not a year when the Group's Veterans were planning to visit in quantity. Had that been the case, we would have tried to arrange the Service around times convenient to them. However, that was not the case and we had, of course, to take into account the requirements of our local people. In particular, we had to find a date and time suitable for our Rector and also a date and time when the Village Hall was available. We had the months of May or early June in mind and we reached a point when a decision had to be made. Consulting the Rev Peter, the Village Hall Committee and others directly involved, Saturday 7 May was chosen and agreed as the date for the Dedication Service. We could now go ahead with the plans, arrange for the Invitation cards to be printed and distributed, the form of Service to be mutually agreed - and Peter was wonderfully tolerant and accepted all the wishes and suggestions made by the three of us ! Once this was agreed, the Service Sheets were printed and all the other arrangements set in motion.

Early in February, Celia wrote to the Public Affairs Office at RAF Mildenhall, one of the two large USAF Bases close to the Norfolk and Suffolk border. We wanted them to be aware of our activities in connection with the Memorial which remembers some of their earlier colleagues and to enquire if they would like to actively participate in the forthcoming Memorial Dedication Service. The Rev Peter had already stated that he would be very happy to share the Service with an American Padre, if that was feasible. In due course we heard from USAF Mildenhall and we were soon in touch with Chaplain Lt Col Don Taylor. He was most interested in our project and said that he would be delighted to join us and actively participate in the Service.

Ex-Service (British) organisations were contacted and asked if they would like to take part in the Service. Without exception, they were all anxious to do so and this included the Royal British Legion, Royal Air Force Association, the Aircrew Association, Far East Prisoner of War Association and the Royal Navy Association.

Albert Welch, Church Warden, ex-Far East POW and resident of Upper Sheringham, suggested that perhaps the ex-Service groups might like to take part in a small Parade immediately prior to the Service in the Church Again, enthusiastic agreement - especially when we enlisted the assistance of the superb Sheringham Salvation Army Band to lead the Parade, under Bandmaster Brian Pegg ! It was to be the first Parade in Upper Sheringham for *very* many years ! The Band also shared the music for the Service with Church organist Mr David Cooper.

Albert also gave us great assistance by arranging the participation of several of the Standard Bearers, much of the involvement of the ex-Service personnel, arrangements for the Parade and so forth. Ex-RAF Lancaster Navigator Ralph Boyce also enlisted no fewer than ten RAF Association Standard Bearers from all over the County of Norfolk, via his contacts. Before the event took place, a meeting was held at our house with representatives of the various ex-Service organisations in order to finalise and co-ordinate their involvement. Celia and myself were so impressed with their enthusiasm and *esprit de corps* that was still so very evident, even after 50 years ! It was a joy to be involved with these old soldiers, sailors and airmen.

At the other end of the age scale, we were anxious to involve the younger element and we invited the cadets and staff of 1895 (Cromer) Squadron of the Air Training Corps to participate. One of May's grandsons was a member of the Squadron and the invitation was delivered by this means. In due course this resulted in an evening visit by Celia and I to the Squadron. We were quickly assured of their co-operation. The CO, F/Lt Shakespeare, expressed their delight and honour at being asked to take part in the proceedings. On the day of the Service, about a dozen young boy and girl cadets, along with three adult members of staff, joined the Parade including their own Standard Bearer. They also assisted in the Church and participated in the Service.. It was good to see the involvement of these future airmen and airwomen.

Celia and I approached Mr Berry Savory for assistance. He is the owner of the nearby Muckleburgh Military Collection at Weybourne. Mr Savory is an ex-RAF Squadron Leader and flew Hurricanes during the Battle of Britain. He was one of the first to donate to our Fund and is always supportive of such ventures and undertakings. We were anxious to obtain some full-size flags for use inside and outside the Church on Dedication day - both British and American. Mr Savory not only lent us the Flags, he also provided some relevant posters for use within the Village Hall. Additionally, he offered complimentary (free) tickets for any visiting Americans who were able to visit his impressive Military Collection and Museum. Gestures that were greatly appreciated.

During my researches I had made contact with Brian Cooper, as reported earlier in Chapter 10. Brian was the young lad of ten who watched "Alfred" come in for her final landing. He was (and still is) keenly interested in everything connected with the incident. Soon after speaking with Brian for the first time, he told me of another person, like himself, who had done some investigation at the crash site - Phil Marshall. As with Brian and ourselves, Phil also lived in Sheringham. I contacted Phil and found that he too was keenly interested in aviation, both of wartime vintage and through to modern jets. He had recovered several bags of bits and pieces from the crash site of "Alfred". These included the cover from the "co-pilots fuse panel" (and was labelled as such), masses of 0.5 inch bullet cases, perspex, pieces of metal, tubing, etc. Phil very kindly polished a number of these bullet cases and donated them to our

American visitors. Indeed, all the bits and pieces that had been recovered from the crash site by both Phil and Brian were made available and anything required by those concerned were made freely available to them. These gestures, I know, were greatly appreciated by our guests - and I think everybody *eventually* talked their way through Customs and Security on the return journey home !! Additionally and generously, both Phil and Brian offered to assist with transportation when our visitors arrived. Phil's Dad, Colin, also assisted in this respect. These offers were invaluable and much appreciated.

I reported in Chapter 21 that we were delighted and overwhelmed by the wonderful news that the sole survivor, Henry Wilk and his family were going to attend the Dedication Service. This was after learning that Carol, the sister-in-law of Radio Operator Parke Kent and her son and his wife would also be present. Unbelievable ! But further - Pilot Colby Waugh's widow Doris and her granddaughter Roxanne from California were making the trip. Also Colby's sister Pauline, along with her three daughters and granddaughter, all from Alaska. (You will recall that it was Pauline who had searched in vain for information about her brother Colby when over here in the 1960's). Pauline's son from Mississippi was also attending. Subsequently, four additional members of the Waugh family were added to the list - Colby and brother Tim, his wife and young daughter would also be coming over. Colby was a Vietnam Veteran, named after his Uncle, son of Norman who fought across Europe in Patton's Army and who came to Sheringham in 1944 to find out about his brother's death. Tim, his wife Roxanne and their four year old daughter Courtney, all from the State of Maine would all join the group. A total of **NINETEEN** Americans !! Fantastic and truly unbelievable.

And then there were the accommodation aspects Celia and I offered Henry and family accommodation in our house but he graciously declined and we found them a nice little Guest House 'just down the road'. We were delighted when Doris and Roxie (Doris's granddaughter and daughter of Ginger) accepted our offer to stay with us. How about the others? Well, we have some super neighbours and good friends Tony and Vi Newell, who had been following developments with interest for sometime. They immediately volunteered to accommodate two of our visitors. Nephews of pilot Lt Waugh, John and Colby, were comfortably housed and cared for by this generous couple. But that was not all. More friends, Margaret and Wilf Topliss living nearby, also offered to help - and accommodated all five of the girls from Alaska ! Wilf is ex-Royal Navy and as soon as he heard of the need, he and his wife offered to help "in a gesture to repay some of the hospitality that he had received when on shore leave in the US as a serving member of the RN". Wonderful and gestures that were so very much appreciated by all concerned. It should be added that we had a number of additional offers of help in this respect from people living nearby, had it been required. Carol from Vermont was, of course, staying with her son, a serving Officer in the USAF at Mildenhall and they drove up here on the day in question. Tim Waugh and Family were staying in London and also made the journey to and from Sheringham on the Saturday in order to attend the Service.

Needless to say, these arrangements involved a considerable amount of letter writing and telephone calls but went ahead smoothly. For those who needed them, maps of how to get here were prepared, times of coaches, trains, car hire arrangements, etc, etc, were sorted out.

What did occur to us was that there were three separate families involved and they were, in reality, strangers to each other - except by name. Of the twelve representing the pilot's family, five came from Alaska, four from Maine, two from California and one from Mississippi. Three generations were involved and, at best, we discovered that it was many years since some had met up. In some cases they had never met before and new cousins were being discovered for the first time ! The consequences of erecting a Memorial to mark an event that took place fifty years earlier can, indeed, be far-reaching (literally) and *totally* unpredictable ! But very wonderful !!

We decided, therefore, that it might be a nice idea to hold an informal Reception for all our American guests immediately before the Dedication Service took place on Saturday 7 May. This would give everybody an opportunity to meet and get to know each other. In addition to the visitors from the States, we thought that it would be nice to invite along the USAF Chaplain Don Taylor and his wife Gloria (who was Chaplain at USAF Lakenheath), our Rector Peter Barnes Clay, our helpful neighbours Tony and Vi, Margaret and Wilf. Of course, we included those good friends of the 392nd and Wendling experts, Dennis and Hilary Duffield and, needless to say, the third member of our trio, May. Mrs McGill, the lady who ran the Guest House where Henry and Family were staying, agreed to provide a suitable room for the function and provide the necessary food and refreshments.

Just for the record, this Reception was arranged and funded by Celia and myself as a separate and private function. It was not, of course, funded from the Sheringham Liberator Memorial Fund.

Our guests arrived on schedule - and the transportation services worked well ! Pauline and her family from Alaska turned up early in the week preceding the Service and, bravely, had hired a car from Cambridge and had driven themselves to Sheringham. They had all spent several years in England in the 1960's and were on a trip of re-discovery. Pauline's son John from Mississippi drove up from Gatwick Airport in a hired car. I doubt if John has yet recovered from that experience ! The M25 Motorway can be horrific (especially when you have to drive on the 'wrong side of the road'!!) but to his credit, he made it there and back and in one piece ! Colby made use of the good coach service that runs from London and had a hassle-free journey. Brian Cooper, Celia and I (in two cars) met Henry and family off the train in Norwich and they had all survived the journey well. Doris needed a wheel-chair and our St John Ambulance Brigade were ever willing and loaned one for the duration of her visit. Celia and I met Doris and Roxie at Norwich Station and they were both in good shape, bearing in mind the long journey from California, across London and on to Norfolk. No mean achievement in the circumstances. Roxie had been to Britain previously but it was the first time out of the States for Doris.

We had a brief time to get to know each other and then *the day dawned*. Typical English weather, threatening skies and not particularly warm ! We were conscious that this was going to be quite an ordeal for many of our American friends, perhaps particularly for Doris, Henry and Pauline. But they were tough and resilient and ever cheerful. A lady from 'up the road' came and 'did' Doris's hair and they all got themselves ready for the day's proceedings. Proceedings that obviously meant a very great deal to all of them and, indeed, to us also but in a somewhat different way. Henry was subjected to the enquiring questions from one of our better local newspaper reporters, Chris Stokes. This was

recorded on video by Henry's son Larry and will be familiar to many of you. Henry was then taken to the Churchyard to be photographed in front of the Memorial. This is the picture that forms the background to the front cover of this account and which I feel, 'says it all

At 12 noon, we all gathered at the 'Fairlawns' Guest House for the Reception. We met Carol, her son Michael and his wife Karen for the first time. Also Chaplain Taylor and his wife Gloria. Everybody chats and nibbles at sandwiches, use their video cameras and take photographs by the dozen ! The weather threatens but it's possible to get a few group photographs outside in the garden. The Waugh family get together and some of the younger ones meet for the first time whilst the older ones remember earlier meetings and revive old memories. The mood is cheerful and friendly and we feel that the object of this little get-together has been achieved.

Two extraordinary coincidences unfold at this Reception. The first involves John Messer and Michael Boldosser. John is Pauline Waugh's son and nephew of Lt Colby Waugh, the pilot of "Alfred". Michael is the son of Carol and nephew of Parke Kent, the Radio Operator aboard "Alfred". Michael is a serving Major (now Lt Col) and pilot in the USAF. When they met at this function, they looked at each other and said "Havn't I seen you somewhere before?!". They very quickly ascertained that they were both on the same Squadron at Air Force Academy in Colorado in the 1970's !! *It wasn't until they came together at this Reception in Sheringham, England on the day of the Memorial Dedication Service for the crew of "Alfred" that they both realised that they each had an Uncle aboard that very aircraft when it crashed at Sheringham, England fifty years earlier !!*

An uncanny coincidence - but that was not all ! Michael's wife Karen noted an unusual bracelet being worn by Doris's granddaughter Roxie. Karen commented on this to Roxie and as a result of this conversation they realised that they too had met previously !! It transpired that they both shared an identical hobby interest and some years earlier, Karen and Roxie had manned *adjacent* stalls at a Hobby's Fair in California ! It's strange how Fate (or whatever) brings about these circumstances. The chances of this happening must be minute - but not just once but twice and over a space of just a few minutes !! Extraordinary.

The Reception drew to a close at around 2 pm and everybody was transported the mile or so to Upper Sheringham village. The car park was already filling and many people were congregating in the area around All Saints Church. Everywhere was immaculate with tidy roads and grass areas (Roger Garrad and his small team of helpers had been working on it for days !) and the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack flags were flying proudly in the centre of the Village. The Church bells rang out a welcome. Another American flag hung outside the Village Hall, the requested Police presence was there to help with traffic control through the narrow street, there were people looking at the Memorial and a general air of respectful excitement and expectancy.

Tim and Roxanne Waugh had brought along a full size Stars and Stripes and also a flag of the State of Maine, sent on behalf of the Waugh family. These were presented to Celia just before the Service began and the Rev Peter immediately suggested that the Flag of Maine be placed on the Altar for the Service.

Carol and her Family photographed a Flag of Vermont that they placed alongside the Memorial. This was at the request of her sister Barbara, the widow of Radio Operator Parke Kent. Carol told us later that this same Flag was placed on Parke's grave back in the States.

At 2.25 pm the Parade appeared around the corner and heading towards the Church. Led by the Salvation Army Band playing amongst other tunes, 'Old Time Religion', followed by 15 Standard Bearers and then the forty or so old soldiers, sailors and airmen. All proudly marching in step and who had come to pay their respects to their American comrades-in-arms. Bringing up the rear, the cadets and members of the Air Training Corps. Lt Col Don Taylor, USAF, took the salute outside the Church and then the Parade halted, dismissed and everybody entered Church.

The Service conducted by the Rev Peter Barnes-Clay and so ably assisted by Chaplain Don Taylor, was beautiful and moving. Most reading this will have seen the video of the proceedings and will have had a copy of the Order of Service. I will simply add that the Church was full, with over 300 people present. The Dedication of the Memorial, conducted outside, was particularly moving and was followed by the Act of Remembrance. Lt Col Roger Garrad spoke the words of the Exultation, Mr William Shiel of the FEPOW Association read the Burma Epitaph (so appropriate to those lost in a far-off land), followed by the One Minute Silence. The Last Post and Reveille was played by Keith Pegg of the Salvation Army Band. Wreaths were laid by Henry on behalf of all the crew; by all the Family representatives; by Roger Garrad in his capacity of Chairman of the Parish Council of Upper Sheringham; by Arthur Gurney, President of the Sheringham Branch of the Royal British Legion; by the Royal Air Force Association and by the Far East Prisoner of War Association.

Following the Service, the congregation retired to the adjacent Village Hall (and Marquee) and enjoyed the superb sandwiches, cakes, coffee and teas that had been prepared by the wonderful ladies of the Village. It was at this point that the long threatening skies opened up and it rained - in fact, it poured, just to remind us that this *was* England after all !! In the Hall, village resident Malcolm Townsend sang his moving composition entitled "Alfred in the Sky", accompanying himself on the guitar. With Malcolm's permission, this remarkable piece is reproduced in Appendix 1. Celia made a little speech thanking everybody for attending, particularly those from the US. She thanked the Rector and all involved for the beautiful Church Service and the ladies, Jean and Vera in particular, for their efforts in the Hall with the catering. Henry made a moving speech on behalf of all the crew of "Alfred" and expressed great appreciation for all that had been done.

It may be of interest to note some of the local organisations and individuals who were present at the Service. It is not possible to make a complete list (and apologies to those left out) but included amongst those present were representatives of the Upper Sheringham Parish Council including Lt Col Roger and Mrs Jean Garrad; Upper Sheringham Village Hall Committee including Mr John and Mrs Liz Nockells; Mr John Perry-Warnes, North Norfolk District Council; the Upper Sheringham Womens Institute; the Upper Sheringham Parochial Church Council; Sheringham Museum; Mr Tom Eaton, Chairman and Mr David Hastings, Vice Chairman of the Memorial Trust of the Second Air Division; Phyllis DuBois from the Second Air Division Memorial Library in Norwich; Mr Berry Savory owner of the Muckleburgh Collection at Weybourne; members of the Friends of the Second Air Division Association; Pat Everson

and friends from the Seething (448th BG) Tower Association, including Jim Turner who very kindly made a video of the proceedings at our request; the Chairman, Secretary and several members of the Norfolk and Suffolk Aviation Museum; the Hardwick (93rd BG) Museum Group; members of the Civil and Military Aviation Society; the Sheringham Shantymen; Sheringham representatives of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution; Dr Barclay and other Friends of Cromer Hospital; the St John Ambulance Brigade; Dennis and Hilary Duffield and many others. Interestingly, included amongst the congregation was Group Captain (RAF Retired) John Musgrave, a Liberator pilot himself and an Associate member of the 392nd BG Memorial Association ! (John had taken a keen interest in the project for some time and had kindly supported various of our Fund raising events).

All concerned had stood up well to the activities of the day, even though Doris and some of the others had found the weather conditions somewhat on the chilly side ! Roxie diplomatically summed up the climate as being "in keeping with the sombre aspects of the day".

That evening we all went along to one of the local hostelrys, enjoyed a meal and a refreshing drink and relaxed after a hectic but very moving day, one that none of us, I suspect, will forget for a very, very long time.

ooOoo



Photograph 20. The Standard Bearers.
Dedication Service 7 May 1994.



Photograph 21. The Memorial after the Service on Dedication Day.

CHAPTER 25

Other Aspects Of The Service And Visits

Our American guests, from all over the US, arrived on different days, at various times, at different destinations and by different forms of transport. Their time available with us was very limited. Visits to places of interest had to be arranged as required and as and when it was possible for them to 'squeeze them in'. All went smoothly, however, thanks to the transport arrangements that had been arranged beforehand and with the help of our friends.

Pauline (Pilot Colby Waugh's sister) and the girls, all from Alaska, arrived initially on the Monday before the Service to say 'hello'. They then went 'exploring and re-discovering' the area by car for a couple of days (Reminder: they had all lived in East Anglia for several years in the 1960's). They returned on the Wednesday (4 May), staying with Wilf and Margaret.

John (Pauline's son from Mississippi) also arrived by car on Wednesday, his hoped for rendezvous with his cousin Colby did not materialise. Colby arrived by coach in Norwich the next day, Thursday, met by John who was driven up to Norwich by our neighbour Tony, with whom they both stayed. Before meeting Colby at the Coach Station, Tony and John visited the Second Air Division Memorial Library in Norwich. Celia and I met Doris and Roxie at the Railway Station in Norwich later that same day at 4.30 pm.

On the Friday morning (6 May), all the Waugh Family made the journey to Wendling to see the Base Memorial. We travelled in three cars, the two hired by John and Pauline and the girls, plus our own. We called at Scarning on the way to the old Wendling Airfield in order to meet Dennis and Hiliary Duffield. Dennis and the rest of our party then travelled the few more miles to the old Base and spent sometime at the impressive Base Memorial. Placed there soon after the end of WWII, the Memorial is dedicated to the 764 airmen of the 392nd BG (H) who lost their lives whilst flying from Wendling. Dennis then took us to see some of the few remaining wartime airfield buildings, including the Combat Officers Mess with its impressive wall mural, still in remarkable condition. (See Photograph 23, page 170). Much film was devoted to this moving visit.

Friday afternoon, accompanied and transported by our friend and neighbour Tony, John and Colby found time to visit the Muckleburgh Collection at Weybourne and they enjoyed this interesting and, in many ways, quite unique museum.

Henry and Family were due to arrive by train in Norwich that afternoon and Brian in his car and Celia and I in ours, met them on schedule at Thorpe Rail Station. We dropped them off at their Guest House in Sheringham. After they had had time to recover, we picked them up and they came back to our house for a meal. Later that evening, all the Waugh Family came around, we picked up May from her house and we all had a very enjoyable get-together.

It will be recalled that Carol, sister-in-law of Radio Operator Parke Kent, her son and daughter-in-law and Tim Waugh, his wife and daughter, all

travelled up to Sheringham on the Saturday for the Reception and Dedication Service. They returned later the same day.

Pauline and her girls from Alaska all left early Sunday morning, driving themselves to Heathrow Airport. John also left early that morning, driving seperately and bound for Gatwick via Heathrow, ensuring that his Mother and Sisters had arrived safely. Later that day, Tony took Colby up to Norwich by car in order for him to catch a coach to London and then on to Gatwick in order to catch his plane back to the US.

That Sunday morning, a small convoy of cars belonging to Brian Cooper, Phil Marshall's Dad Colin and our own, headed initially for Scarning. Aboard were Doris, Roxie, Henry, Donna, Larry and Mary Ann, along with Brian and his wife Teresa, Colin and Phil, Celia and myself. We again visited Dennis and Hilary at Scarning. On this occasion, with more time available, we all had the opportunity to see Dennis's 'mini-museum' of memorabilia relating to the 392nd and other wartime bits and pieces. Fascinating and of intriguing interest to us all but to Henry and Larry particularly, I suspect. We all then travelled on to Wendling Memorial and more photographs were taken. (See Photograph 24, page 170). Dennis did not have access to the Base buildings this day as it was a Sunday (they are used commercially) but Dennis did take us down the full length of the main runway, between the turkey sheds and around the remaining perimeter track. Even now, the runway seems a massive length - almost a mile long and Henry detected the 'bump' that still exists part of the way down ! A nostalgic return for Henry and what thoughts must have been going through Doris's mind? Then into Beeston 'Ploughshares' for lunch - and to see the photographs on the wall depicting some of the wartime activity that was conducted 'just up the road' and literally 'on their doorstep'. Included amongst these is a fine picture of a 392nd B-24, signed personally by Delmar C Johnson, amongst others. (Reminder: Henry flew with Delmar on the Mission to Munster on 22 December 1943). It really is a small world !

After lunch, we all set out to find the Pub that Henry and a colleague used to visit by bicycle on a regular basis. Henry thought that it was at Little Dunham and that the name of the Pub was 'The Red Lion' - but he was not too sure about the latter. After we had searched the immediate neighbourhood, travelling down the narrow country lanes, three cars in convoy, we eventually found Little Dunham. Henry's eyes lit up when we stopped in the middle of the quaint little village, right outside the 'Black Swan' and he gleefully proclaimed that "This is it !!". Not the 'Red Lion' after all - but close, after 50 years !! Henry recalled that the landlord used to save them a bottle of whiskey from the meagre wartime allocation, way back in 1944. We went inside, not the same landlord and no bottle of whiskey (!) but we had a drink and I'm sure that a lot of memories were re-surfacing for Henry. He recalled that he and his buddy (an American Indian) used to be invited to Sunday lunch by an elderly lady who lived nearby. We found a young lad who reported that that lady had died just a few years earlier. The Dance Hall that they used to visit had been moved 'lock, stock and barrel' to a new site further up the road but was still in existence.

After this nostalgic visit, we all headed for Sandringham House, the Queen's Norfolk home near Kings Lynn. We walked around the quite extensive gardens and House and enjoyed the views and the atmosphere of a Royal Estate. The wheel-chair on loan for Doris was coming in useful too. From Sandringham, back to Sheringham via the coastal route. We passed through the village of

Snettisham. Rather sadly I did not realise at that time that Henry and other members of the crew had completed a gunnery course here in late 1943, before being sent to Wendling. That information did not come to light until later ! That evening, Henry and Family joined Doris, Roxie and ourselves for a meal at our house. It was a great day and one that will be remembered for a long time.

Henry and Family had to leave the next morning (Monday 9 May). Brian and ourselves transported them up to the Coach Station in Norwich. (See Photograph 25, page 171). Doris and Roxie came along also. After our farewells to Henry and Family, we stayed awhile in Norwich. We took Doris and Roxie to the Memorial Library and they met Phyllis DuBois. We spent a little time looking around the shops but they said that they preferred the quieter atmosphere of Sheringham, so we left for home fairly quickly. We stopped for lunch at Aylsham and diverted slightly so that we could pass by Blickling Hall, now owned by the National Trust and an impressive and old building of some renown. We returned to Sheringham, stopped in town for some shopping (Roxie had to stock up with English candy bars before her return !) and then on to May's for tea.

We were up very early the next morning in order to take Doris and Roxie up to Norwich in order to catch the 6.30 am train out of Norwich Thorpe Rail Station. We made it !!

During their stay with us, all our American friends visited the site close to the wood where "Alfred" had crashed. Some went there more than once Whilst they all remained outwardly very composed, these were obviously very traumatic moments for all of them but particularly for Doris, Henry and Pauline - and for Donna and Larry. Henry recognised the area, remembered the field and the trees. He had already recognised the approach route over the cliffs and the Golf Course to where they had crash-landed all those years earlier. It was a surprise to many that there is still a depression in the ground in that quiet corner of the field, under the branches of the trees, where the aircraft had finally come to rest. I am absolutely certain that *that* memory will remain with *all* of them for the rest of their lives

Wonderful people, a wonderful experience and one that we shall *never* forget. We were sad to have to say goodbye to them all but we were relieved when we heard that they had all arrived safely back at their homes.

Before Carol returned to the States, she and her son Michael and his wife Karen came over and we had an enjoyable day together. We visited the crash site and then took them over to Wendling to see the Base Memorial before they returned to Mildenhall. (See Photograph 26, page 171). We know that Carol's sister Barbara appreciated the photographs that were taken.

Before leaving the subject of the Dedication Service, I must add just a few more comments. We received some really wonderful and warm letters and telephone messages of thanks and appreciation from all our American friends - from those who were present and from some who were not. These are treasured and appreciated. We also received letters and telephone calls from local people who had attended the proceedings. Let me quote from just one, as an example. It is from a very good friend of the Second Air Division, one who is well known to many of the Veterans, an ex-RAF Pilot and also Vice-Chairman of the Memorial Trust, David Hastings. David wrote the next day:

"Thank you both for inviting us to that most wonderful Service and Dedication yesterday. This was one of the most moving occasions we have ever been to and none of us can ever thank you enough for all the tremendous amount of work that you must have put in. The survivor and their families were so deeply touched by your kindness and bless you for allowing us both to be with you on this truly wonderful occasion. You certainly brought to life those moving words by Major General Andy Low when he said 'They came as Friends, they stayed as Friends and they have remained Friends'. Again our sincere thanks for an occasion that we will never forget.....".

As mentioned earlier, we were relieved and grateful when the Rector, the PCC and the organist all waived their charges for their individual roles in the Dedication Service. We were in 'the black' but only just ! The small surplus was divided between the Church and the Village Hall. In a letter of thanks for that donation from John Nockels, Chairman of the Village Hall Committee, John wrote: " it was a very worthwhile project (the Memorial) and it adds to the history and dignity of the Village, *to be handed down to succeeding generations*". (Italics are mine). The Rev Peter wrote: "We thoroughly enjoyed being part of the 'great endeavour' and are very glad that it has all been so successful and brought such pleasure to others".

Jim Goar gave the Memorial and Dedication Service good coverage in his 392nd BG Memorial Association News. The full front page, in fact, plus several articles on the subject. Oak Mackey also did us proud on more than one occasion in the Second Air Division Association Journal. Our local Press covered the event and included that moving picture of Henry kneeling in front of the Memorial.

An interesting sideline to all of these activities was with reference to the small size American flags placed alongside the Memorial. At the time of the Dedication Service, we were unaware of this practice being carried out in this country. It was later that we discovered that it was quite usual to display the flags in this manner at suitable places and on appropriate occasions. We were informed, however, that at the Cambridge (England) and Arlington (US) Cemeteries, the flags are removed after a period of 24 hours. Consequently, we placed a Stars and Stripes either side of the Memorial Stone for a limited period only after the Service had taken place. Not wishing to contravene or offend Church procedures or traditions, we removed these after a reasonable period of time had elapsed. This action immediately resulted in a telephone call from one of the lady Church Wardens, asking if the flags had been stolen and, if not, please replace them 'as they are so appropriate' ! This we were very happy to do and the Flags are now to be found in place throughout most of the year. The exception being during the worst of the winter months when the wind and weather would very quickly ruin them.

This did, however, bring about a problem. Suitable flags for the purpose are not easily obtainable in this country. Needless to say, our American friends came to our aid with a supply being sent initially by Michael at Midenhall. These were subsequently reinforced when a large cardboard tube containing twelve flags was received from Vermont, very kindly sent by Carol when she returned home !

After the Service we, of course, wrote to all the contactable relatives who were unable to attend in order to tell them something of the proceedings and to send photographs. Eventually we also sent copies of the videos that were

taken at the time to all of these people, plus copies for those that did attend. We were most grateful for the valuable help provided with this quite formidable undertaking by Michael and a friend at Mildenhall, Ginger and her husband Bill in California, our old friend (since the early 1950's) John Adams and also from California and Henry in Florida. The videos involved were the work of our local friend Jim Turner and Henry's son Larry. To them both, our grateful thanks. Conversions from the UK system to that of the US and vice versa were involved. It got quite complicated at times !! We hope that the quality did not suffer unduly as a result.

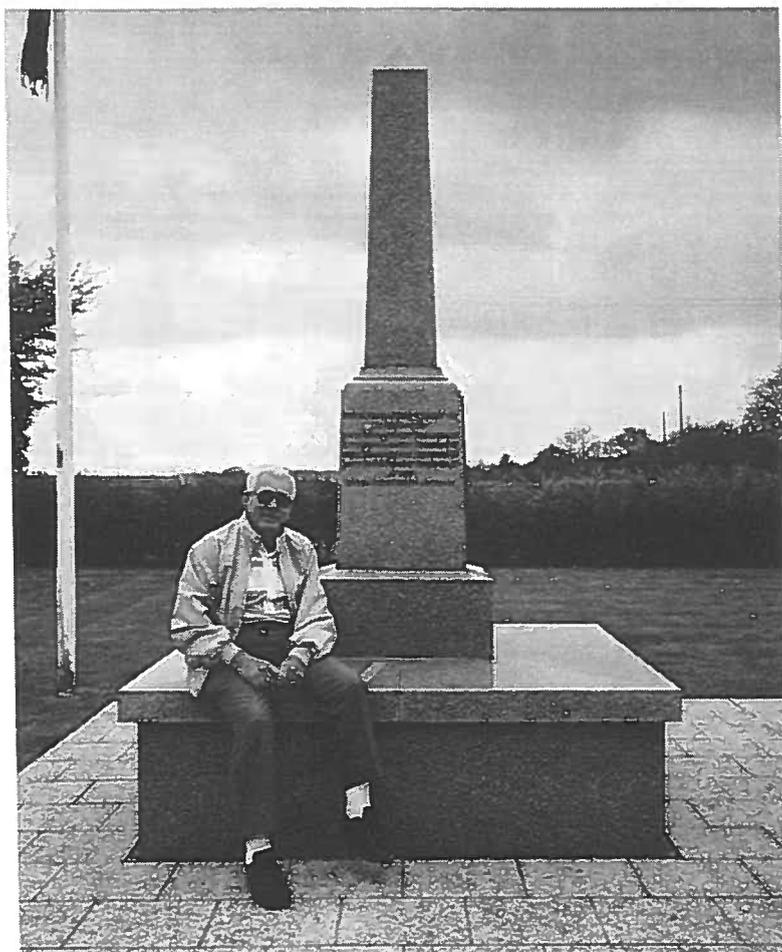
ooOoo



Photograph 22. The Waugh Family, Sheringham, England. 7 May 1994.
Back Row, standing, left to right: Betty, Roxie, Colby, Tim and John.
Centre, sitting: Pauline, Doris and Paula.
Front, kneeling: Annie and Roxanne.
Children: Courtney and Alexa.
(Taken in Tony and Vi's house)



Photograph 23. Wall Mural, Combat Officers Mess, Wendling. 6 May 1994.



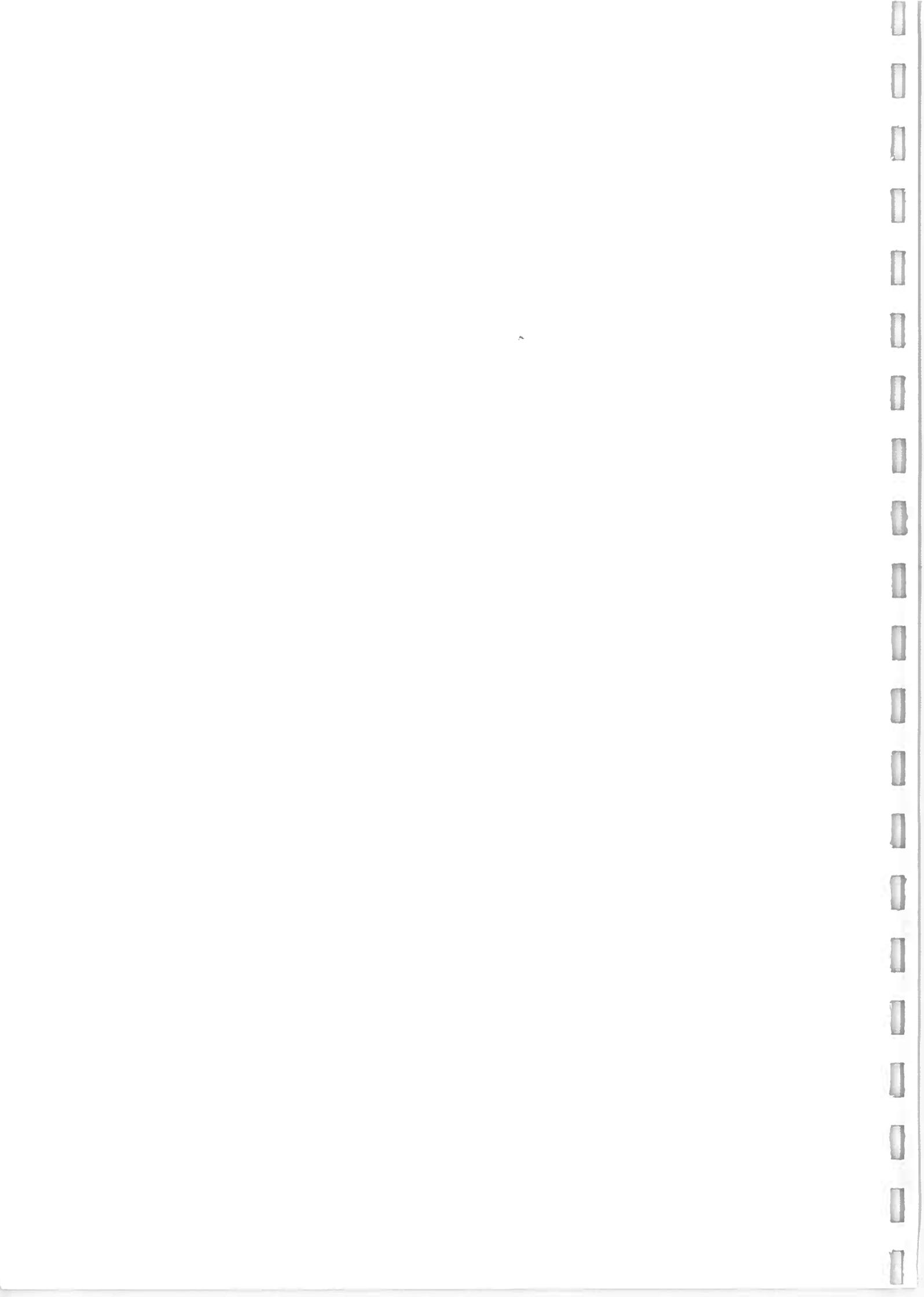
Photograph 24. Henry at the Wendling Base Memorial. 8 May 1994.



Photograph 25. Henry and Family Departing Norwich. 9 May 1994.
Left to right: Doug, Celia, Mary Ann, Larry, Donna and Henry.

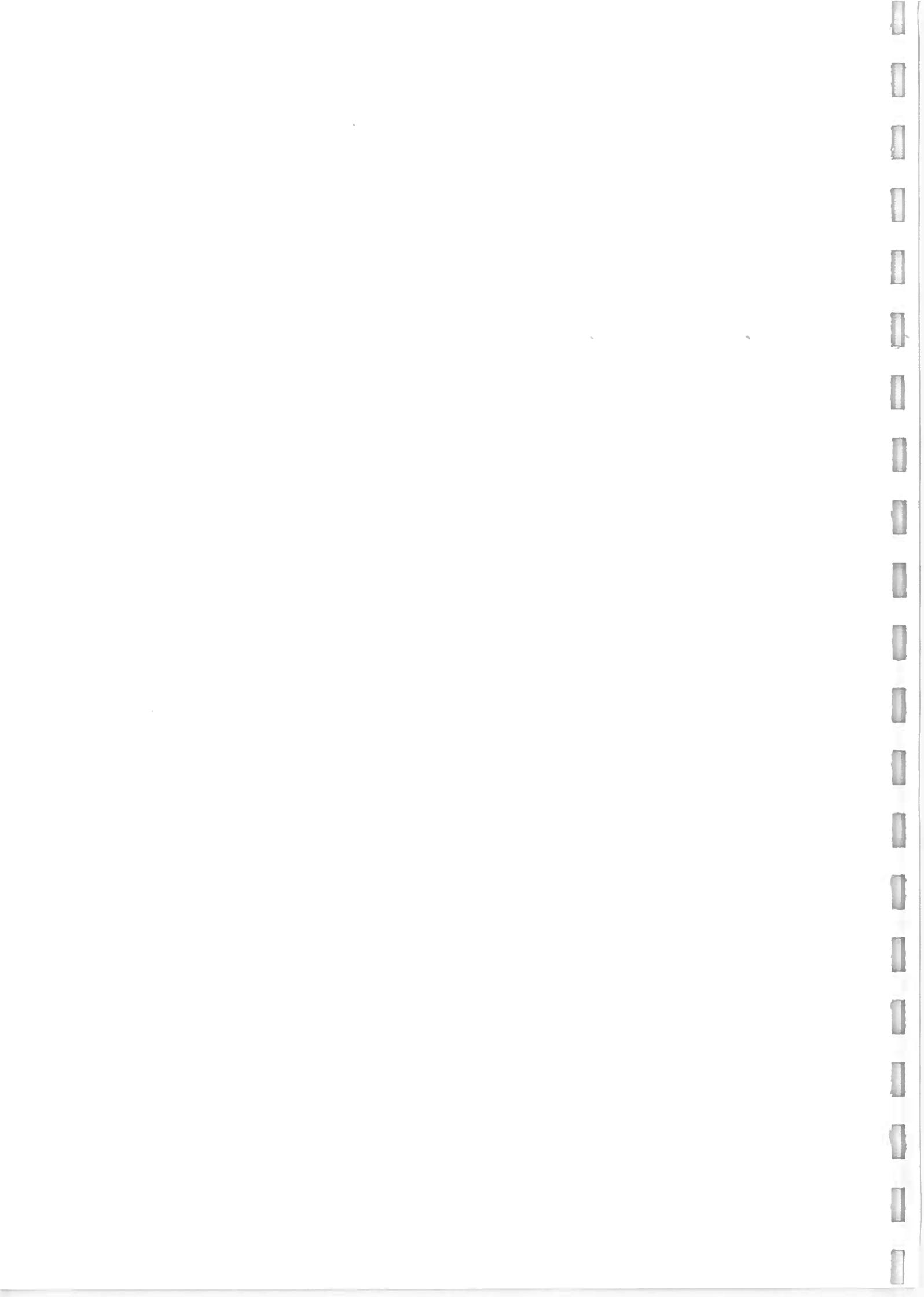


Photograph 26. Carol and Family at the Wendling Memorial. 19 June 1994.
Left to right: Carol, Michael and Karen.



PART 11

Post Dedication Service



CHAPTER 26

The Continued Research

In this Chapter, we look at the research which has been conducted since the Dedication Service took place in May 1994. Inevitably, the story is not *totally* complete but for practical reasons, it has to have a 'cut-off' point and January 1996 has been chosen for that purpose. This Chapter will endeavour to cover the further research and developments up to that point in time.

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John, Pauline's son and nephew of Pilot Colby Waugh, was particularly interested to learn more about his Uncle's wartime activities. I had already sent John the details that had been sent to me by the Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base reference their micro-filmed records (see Chapter 21). As a result of this, John journeyed to Maxwell AFB from his home in Mississippi just a few weeks prior to his visit to England in early May. He went armed with the film references which covered the history of the 392nd BG and the 578th BS. John had these records photo-copied and very kindly sent me copies soon after he had returned home from his visit to the UK. Whilst these included much of the material that Celia and I had seen in the Norwich Library, it was in a much more readable form ! These documents have been (and still are) a valuable source of information.

Through the good offices of our friends the Duffields, Celia and I along with Dennis, attended the D-Day 50th Anniversary Memorial Service at the Cambridge American Cemetery on 4 June 1994. This was an impressive function, with addresses and participation by President Bill Clinton, Prime Minister John Major, HM Lord Lieutenant for Cambridgeshire, the Hon G V Montgomery of the House of Representatives, General McPeak USAF Chief of Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Graydon (RAF) Chief of the Air Staff and many other dignitaries, both military and civilian. Wreaths were laid on behalf of almost every Bomber, Fighter and Troop Carrier Group that operated in the ETO, including the 392nd and many other organisations and individuals, both American and British. We took the opportunity to locate and photograph the grave of Lt Virgil Thomson, the only member of *our* crew who is still buried in England. (See Chapter 13 and Photograph 5, page 61).

On 18 June Henry kindly sent some very interesting photographs that he had copied using a new laser process from very small sized originals. There was a fine one of himself taken in 1944 and also two showing some of the NCO members of the crew, one of which is reproduced on page 17. On the reverse of the original it stated that it was taken at "Snettisham, England". I was aware of a wartime Gunnery Range at that location, which borders the Wash in north west Norfolk. This obviously called for more research ! We were delighted to receive these photographs which depicted Henry, Earl Johnson, Edward Murphy, Don Belden and Lester Wagner. Henry also sent me a copy of Bob Vickers book "Liberators from Wendling" in which he had highlighted the Missions in which he had participated. Actually, one was not recorded, as mentioned earlier. That one still has yet to re-surface ! The book is priceless.

In early July came a copy of a letter via Carolyn Waugh (Colby's sister), John Messer and Henry. The letter dated 1946 had been written by Henry and had been sent to Mrs Waugh. I have referred to it at some length in Chapter 11. The letter contained some most valuable and interesting information, not the least being the closing comment: "that we were *not* flying 'Ginger' in action". Thus confirming that they *had* previously done so ! Most interesting !!

In a letter dated 13 July 1994, Henry recalled that he returned to the US from the UK in 1944 aboard the 'Queen Mary' and that Mr Churchill was also aboard, the latter bound for the (second) 'Quebec Conference'. This enabled me to pin-point the date and supply a little more information on that aspect. Henry, in the same letter, was wondering just how we were going to contact the kin of Earl Johnson. I had ascertained, via Jim Goar, that he had died in 1972 but that was all Without even his home-town, progress looked bleak.

And then a further letter from Henry dated 25 July. He wrote: "Had the strangest thing happen to me a couple of nights ago. I was laying on the floor watching TV and the name 'Barnesville' crossed my mind. I then realised that it was the town that Earl Johnson was from I have sent letters addressed to the Town Council and the Fire Department, hopefully someone there will know the Johnsons and I'll get an address or two". It is truly amazing how these things come about ! Amazing too how Henry was recalling more and more.

The enquiries continued reference "Alfred" and "Alfred II". On Jim Goar's suggestion I wrote during August to Bob Beatson, who was the navigator in the original crew of "Alfred". Bob wrote back with a most informative letter but he could not remember the Colby Waugh crew, nor could he ever recall flying in "Alfred II". However, he did vividly recall bringing the original "Alfred" from the States and gave me some valuable information on how the name "Alfred" was given to their aircraft.

Note: We were all very shocked to learn on the morning of Monday 1 August 1994 that the Norwich Central Library, including the Second Air Division Memorial Library, had been destroyed by fire. There were no casualties but irreplaceable items had been lost appertaining to the records and history of our County as well as to the American Library. A terrible and tragic loss, the shock of which is felt deeply by many on both sides of the Atlantic. A temporary 2ADA Memorial Library was re-established within days but it will be a considerable time before a new building can be built and the impressive facilities restored to their former glory.

The enquiries reference "Ginger" continued and during August I received, on loan, a photograph from Mike Bailey in Norwich. Mike is a researcher, artist and expert on 'nose art'. The photo refers to B-24H serial 41-29177 (as confirmed on the photograph) and it was, he thinks, taken during the summer of 1944 and almost certainly at Flixton (Bungay). I had it copied and this is reproduced on page 8. There is little doubt in my mind that the person who painted "Ginger" on the nose of that aircraft *also* painted "Donna" beneath Henry's tail turret - again, see page 8. Not conclusive proof that they were one and the same aircraft but it really was beginning to look more and more as if that was the case !

On 15 August 1994 Oak Mackey wrote to confirm that there were spare copies of the Roll of Honour and that the one lost in the disastrous fire at

Norwich could, and would, be resurrected. Oak had just received from the Mortuary Affairs and Casualty Support Division, Department of the Army, verification of the deaths of the three from *our* crew who had been omitted from the original Roll of Honour. Oak reported that he had sent this information to Jordan Uttal and asked him to record their names on the new Roll of Honour. To confirm this, Oak had also telephoned Jordan and he was happy to confirm that it will all be taken care of and their names will definitely be included. This was very good news indeed.

I had been doing some research reference the Snettisham Gunnery Range and School. This resulted in me being able to send Henry a map of the wartime layout of the Camp along with a number of up-to-date photographs of some of the remaining relics. Henry does recall the refresher course that he attended there but little of the Camp itself. Some of the results of this research are detailed in Chapter 3.

Henry reported that he had also followed up the search for Edward Murphy's relatives by ringing Carol Miller at the Carnegie Library in Swissvale. Since her initial reply and in spite of further enquiries, I had heard no further and the expected contact with Edward's sister and/or nephew had not materialised. (See Chapter 21, pages 140 and 141). Edward was a particular buddy of Henry's and he too was very anxious to make contact. I was extremely grateful to Henry for his assistance. He had contacted Carol Miller and she was surprised that we had not heard from anybody and said that she would make further enquiries.

Late in August, Henry wrote that he had had no further responses reference his enquiries about either Earl Johnson or Edward Murphy. This he found "rather strange". In the same letter he reported that he had been up to see his son Larry in Ohio. Amongst his old 'bits and pieces', they had found a list of Bases that Henry had visited and it appeared that they were in the order that they had flown to, or had served at, these places. This was a tremendous find and prompted research to be carried out which resulted in Chapters 2 and 3, covering the flight from the US and the UK Bases.

As noted in an earlier Chapter, we do have a manufacturers plate, with serial number, from one of the engines and which my son and I had found at the "Alfred" crash site in the 1970's. For some considerable time since the research has been conducted in earnest, I have been trying to ascertain if records were still available that show which engines were fitted to which particular aircraft. Missing Air Crew Reports (MACR's) contain the serial numbers of not only the engines fitted to the aircraft in question but also those applied to the guns. Therefore this information was recorded reference *all* aircraft but after 50 years, it is expecting rather a lot to assume that these details are still available. Bear in mind, of course, that a MACR was *not* applicable to the loss of "Alfred". (They were not *'missing'*). I enquired from many and varied sources if these engine numbers could still be accessed but to no avail. In late August I heard from Bob Vickers via Jim Goar on the subject. Bob suggested that I try the Yankee Air Force Museum to see if they could help. Jim gave me the necessary address and contact and I wrote asking if they could help reference the engine serial numbers and also if they could shed any light on the subject of "Ginger". In particular, could they identify the aircraft that the Colby Waugh crew flew from the States to the ETO. Any information would, of course, be appreciated.

In a letter dated 19 September, Henry wrote with the wonderful news that

he had heard from Earl Johnson's sister-in-law. She had given news of the family, including the address of a daughter living in Florida. She had expressed her thanks for the Memorial project and said that she would pass on the information to Earl's wife. The letter from Henry to the Police Department in Barnesville had got through after all ! Henry had replied and also sent the daughter all details of the Memorial, including a photograph.

In a further letter dated 27 September 1994, Henry wrote to say that he had had a telephone call from Earl's daughter Delores. She rang to say that she was very interested to learn of all the activity over here in Sheringham in connection with the Memorial. Shortly afterwards we wrote to both Earl's sister-in-law and also to his daughter Delores. We also sent a video of the Dedication Service.

In a letter dated 28 September 1994, I had a very nice letter from Wiley Noble who lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Wiley is the Secretary of the 3D Strategic Air Depot Association. The 3D SAD was located at Watton in Norfolk during WWII and they were responsible for all the maintenance and supply functions for the fourteen B-24 Groups of the Second Air Division. Wiley wrote: "I have read the account of the Memorial Dedication in the current issue of the 2nd Air Division Association Journal. It brought tears to my eyes to learn how much you and your wife and Mrs Ayers cared about the loss of the B-24 Liberator 'Alfred' which crashed in Sheringham". Wiley went on to request more background details, a photo of the Memorial, etc, for inclusion in their 3D SAD Newsletter. He concluded: "Thanks again for your concern for the crewmen killed in the crash and for your efforts in remembering the crew with an appropriate Memorial".

I was impressed with this letter and appreciated his thoughts and response to the article written by Oak. I was, of course, very happy to send Wiley all the details of the background aspects of our little project, as requested, including photos. I also enquired if *he* could provide any help reference *our* project. Specifically, were the details that we had located in the Norwich Reference Library in March 1993 attributable to personnel of 3D SAD?? These referred to the salvage of "B-24 serial 42-7485" from a site "2 miles west of Coltishall" and categorised as "E2" by a "Lt Blanchard". (Chapter 21, page 138 refers to this information which was discovered during our enquiries in the Norwich Library - but the source of these details was not disclosed). The stated location, at least 14 miles astray of the actual "Alfred" crash site *but* quoting the serial number that we associated with *our* B-24, had always caused some minor concern and yet another little 'niggle' of doubt in the back of my mind. I also mentioned in passing that I was an ex-Watton man myself, having spent two years there from 1948 to 1950 whilst serving in the RAF. Also, that whilst there, we occupied the same buildings that Wiley and his colleagues had occupied a few years earlier ! Yet again, another minor coincidence and once more proving what a small world that we all live in !!

A quick response from the Yankee Air Museum Library. The Library Chairman, Mr Harold Sherman, wrote on 5 November to say that he was sorry but they could not help reference engine serial numbers - but he was passing on my letter to the Air Force Historical Research Center at Maxwell AFB and maybe they could help? Reference "Ginger", some vital facts - and most helpfully, sources were quoted. The most significant aspect was that Mr Sherman was able to confirm that serial 41-29177 *was* named "Ginger" when flying with the 482nd BG at Alconbury. This meant that she had this name

prior to its involvement with the 446th BG at Flixton. Was the name "Ginger" *applied* whilst she was at Alconbury or was it so named when it arrived there from Burtonwood? If the latter was the case, it seems unlikely that the BAD personnel at Burtonwood (Engineers and not combat flyers) would have given a name to an aircraft whilst in their charge. Therefore, *if* we had got the right B-24 and it had that name at the BAD, then its previous crew *had to be the Colby Waugh crew and it was their "Ginger"!!!* It really was looking good but still not 100 per cent proof !

Then a letter dated 29 November 1994 from Maxwell AFB. Engine serial numbers were usually only available on Missing Air Crew Reports *and* Accident Reports *but* they had neither reference these two aircraft (!!). However, very helpfully, they sent me photo-copies of the "Aircraft Record Cards" for 42-7485 and 41-29177. Reference the former, "Alfred", the dates of assignment and receipt by the 8th Air Force and the date when it was condemned as 'lost in action' tied-up exactly with all the information previously obtained. This was conclusive and totally authoritative confirmation reference this aircraft. Super. However, *NOT* quite so simple in connection with 41-29177 - "Ginger", or was it??! The dates quoted on the Record Card tied up very nicely with those known for their departure from the States and their arrival in the UK. So far, very good. But now a major complication. The Official Record Card stated that 41-29177 was 'condemned' on 27 December 1943. *THAT DID NOT* tie-up !!! If correct, then we definitely had the wrong aircraft. However, the dates of the flight to the UK were spot-on. Surely, this *MUST* be 'our' "Ginger"? All I could do was to write back to Maxwell AFB, thank them very much for the information and quote my researches reference 41-29177 *post*-December 1943 and all the sources of that data. And then request their further comment, if any. It is not easy to diplomatically even *suggest* that an Official source *may* just have got it wrong ! (Not over here, anyway). After all, they can only quote the records that *they* have available to them - and they had kindly photo-copied this very information and there it was, in black and white and in front of my own eyes - "Condemned (equivalent to our 'written off') 27 Dec 1943". Anyway, there was now much circumstantial evidence in favour of our line of thought, just this one rather major contradiction and complication ! But let's see if they have any further thoughts on the subject My correspondent at Maxwell had identified himself by name. That helped and, of course, I wrote back to him personally.

Early December brought another letter from our new found friend, Wiley Noble of the 3D SAD Association. He had received my letter, he asked for photographs of my stay at Watton but more importantly, he had initiated enquiries on the matters that I had put to him. He had asked one of his members who had been a member of one of their Mobile Repair and Reclamation Teams, to search the records reference "Alfred". Wiley had also instigated a search for photos of 'our' aircraft but, so far, no luck. Obviously the Engineers of 3D SAD were still very much 'on the ball'! This was confirmed just four days later when another letter was received from Wiley. He apologised for the delay in furnishing the information that I had requested (!!) but, yes, Lt Blanchard *WAS* one of the 3D SAD Officers who had been assigned to the investigation team. He was later killed flying a P-47 in combat - "and more details soon". Wiley had spoken to a member of the Salvage Teams and he was able to define Category 'E-2'. (See Page 63). He had also spoken to the widow of one of their members who he thought might have a photograph of "Alfred". Wiley had already told me that he, sadly, had a very sick wife - and he apologised for the delay over my queries (!). In fact, the speed with which he was dealing with my

questions and requests for assistance were **outstanding**. More was to come.

Seven days later, 12 December 1994, another communication from Wiley ! Enclosed was a most helpful letter from Dick Ayers, who had been the Officer-in-charge of Field Engineering at 3D SAD. Dick had added some details reference Lt Blanchard and added to our knowledge of the categorising aspects of their work. The helpfulness and enthusiasm of these Veterans really was most impressive.

A letter dated 12 December from the Birmingham (Alabama) News Library regretted that they could not help us with our search for relatives of "Alfred's" Bombardier, Lt Virgil Thomson

In a very nice letter dated 20 December, Mary Barton wrote: "I simply don't know where to start to tell you how much I have appreciated and enjoyed all the letters, clippings and most recently, the video of the Memorial Service.Jimmy would have been so pleased. I am sure that if it had been at an earlier time, he would have been there. He often talked about the beauty of the countryside and wanted me to see it" Excitingly, Mary sent a photograph of the crew taken by herself and as far as she could remember, at Mountain Home, Idaho, 'on one of the crew moves during their training'. At last, we had a snapshot of the entire crew. Wonderful ! Mary passed on as much useful information as she could recall and added that she was "very interested in the book" that I was compiling.

Another letter, this one dated 3 January 1995, from Wiley Noble. He enclosed a letter from Jim Agerton from Nevada. Jim was a member of Mobile Repair Unit Number 29, part of the 3D SAD organisation. He did not attend the "Alfred" crash site but recalls Lt Blanchard coming down to RAF Manston in Kent, where Jim and his team were repairing another B-24 at that time. This was soon after our local incident and Lt Blanchard told him about "our" crash. He recalls being told that it was a 'total wash-out'. Jim remembers too that that occasion was the very last time that he saw Lt Blanchard. (Reminder: He was lost in combat later that summer of 1944. After returning to flying duties, at his own insistence, he was shot down in his P-47 whilst escorting B-24's over Germany). As with the earlier comments from Dick Ayers, these remarks seemed to tie-up with "Alfred", except (now) in **two** respects. One was the imprecise location - but this sort of discrepancy was not too unusual. But, disturbingly, both Dick Ayers and Jim Agerton were quoting the date of the crash of 42-7485 as **June 1944** and not January !!

However, this was quickly resolved within a day or two when, by chance, I went to visit Dennis Duffield (at his new home at Mattishall, near Dereham). Talking to Dennis on this subject, he produced an official list of 392nd BG aircraft that had been attended by 3D SAD. The dates on this quite lengthy list were quoted as we would write them ie: 6-1-44 to indicate 6 January 1944. To many Americans, of course, this would indicate 1 June 1944 ! To make sure that we had the correct interpretation, dates of numerous known crashed aircraft were checked and, sure enough, the answer was as simple as that! A letter was immediately sent to Jim, Dick and Wiley and everybody was happy. Dick later sent me a copy of the complete list of **all** aircraft attended by 3D SAD and there is no doubt that the reference to 42-7485 is, in fact, 'our' aircraft. Well done Dennis and the rapid response from the 3D SAD Veterans and their friendliness, helpfulness and co-operation was truly remarkable.

In January we were in contact with Oak Mackey reference the possible visit to the Memorial by 392nd Veterans who were planning to return to Norwich, with many others from the Second Air Division, for the VE-Day Commemorations. However, as this is not 'research' in connection with "Alfred"/"Ginger", I will return to this aspect in the next (and final) Chapter.

In a letter dated 21 January 1995, Henry reported the wonderful news that he had heard from Edward Murphy's 81 year old sister ! He kindly enclosed a copy of the letter in which Edward's sister Agnes expressed her joy in hearing about the Memorial and how thrilled she was to be in contact with Henry. She wrote too of how she recalled Henry's visit all those many years ago. It appears that the letters, photos and enquiries via the Library in Swissvale had, eventually, got through. Wonderful. I wrote a letter of thanks to the Librarian.

A few days later, I wrote to Edward's sister and expressed our delight at making contact, sent her some more relevant information including a copy of the crew photograph. At the same time, I also sent copies of the crew picture to Henry and to the relatives plus a copy for Jim Goar.

In a letter dated 23 January, a reply from our contact at Maxwell AFB. Attached to the letter was a copy of the Missing Air Crew Report for B-24H 41-29177, *confirming that it was lost in action, as we had thought, on 26 August 1944*. This really did complete the story and the aircraft's history was confirmed from the time it left the factory in the US to the day it was lost over Germany. This **was** the one and only B-24 named "Ginger", so named after Lt Colby Waugh's young daughter, flown by *our crew* to the ETO. There they parted company, crew and aircraft going off to fight their own separate War. The story of "Ginger" is told in Chapter 16. I was most grateful to Maxwell AFB for their continued assistance and determination to put 'the record straight'. I wrote immediately to our helpful researcher in the Archives Branch at Maxwell and expressed grateful thanks on behalf of the surviving crew, the relatives (and particularly on behalf of Ginger herself), in addition to myself.

Barbara Kent wrote early February, saying how much she enjoyed the video tapes. The interview with Henry was "very special" and "the trip down the Wendling runway". Barbara wrote: "I kept trying to imagine their feelings as they made that ride down and then off into the sky, never knowing if they would ever return again."

Early February and two more books from Henry. Wonderful. He says he thinks Mrs Barton is correct about the location of where the crew picture was taken but they were moving around quite a lot about that time.

Then a wonderful letter from Agnes, Edward Murphy's sister. "I cannot tell you how thrilled I was to hear from you". She reported that she was the only one left in her family and that "I wanted to thank all you wonderful people for that Memorial for all the boys and my brother. He was our baby brother and we all loved him..... . My Mom and Dad would have been so proud. I wish I could have come to England to see the Memorial but I am 81 years old now". Agnes continued: "We often wondered where in England this all happened and now we know. Please thank all the people in your Church".

In a letter dated 14 February, Mrs Mary Wagner very kindly sent some valuable information and photographs that her husband had collected. These

included some fine shots of Lester, some of the other crew members, including the ones of Don Belden and Edward Murphy and which are reproduced on pages 72 and 73. I was very grateful to Mary for her help and for allowing me to see this material, so that copies could be made.

In a letter dated 21 February 1995, another letter containing more interesting material. This one from the Granddaughter of Arthur Cound's sister living in California. Beth wrote on behalf of her Grandmother and enclosed some photographs, copies of letters and other small items "which are the only things that we **have** left to carry on his memory" and "hoped that she had not written too late for them to be included in the 'Memory Book'". Beth said that she never knew her Great-Uncle Arthur but "she had heard wonderful things about him all her life". She also added that they had very much appreciated "the VCR of the beautiful Memorial Service". Again copies were made of this material and the originals returned with very many thanks. The letters included one from S/Sgt Jim Byrd, a friend of Arthur's brother, see page 51 and another two written by crew members of "Alfred" - see page 62.

Carolyn Waugh wrote a lovely letter dated 27 February and provided some useful family history. She also very kindly sent copies of wartime letters addressed to her Mother from brother Norman, telling of his search for information about Colby's death. These letters were particularly useful when compiling Chapter 12.

Dated one day later, the 28th, a letter from Pauline Waugh (Carolyn's sister). She spoke of her earlier times in England during the mid-1960's and that Carolyn had come over and visited her during that period. They both travelled to Norwich to try and uncover information about their brother Colby. They looked "at a book of Americans who had lost their lives whilst flying from England. We asked about Colby and they replied that they had no knowledge of him". This is further to the earlier comments on this aspect - see page 145. It is so important that Rolls of Honour are complete and accurate.

I had recently sent to Henry a draft copy of my write-up covering 'The Flight to the UK' for comment. In a letter dated 1 March, he replied and added some most useful additional information. I was most grateful and added these new comments to the relevant Chapter.

From Barbara Kent, dated 6 March, more interesting information and some wonderful photos of the crystal receiver that Parke had actually constructed and operated whilst he was a POW. (See page 84). Barbara also provided an impressive technical description of this little radio in her letter. The help and response from the relatives was wonderful and impressive !

Henry sent some additional interesting comments about his Mission to Berlin on 6 March 1944 in a letter dated 1 May 1995. I had earlier sent a draft copy for comment reference his further Missions conducted after the crash of "Alfred". The further remarks add considerably to the write-up about that Mission. Thanks Henry.

In August, a very informative letter from Doris, Colby's widow. She provided some very useful background information and details reference their time together and Bases at which Colby was located in the US. Doris also sent a newspaper clipping about a recent discovery of a crashed Liberator in the jungles of the Amazon. Again, all very much appreciated.

In Chapter 12, page 64 and again in Chapter 21, page 140, I referred to our attempts to identify the Ambulance(s) in attendance at the crash site on 4 January 1944. After the extraordinary encounter that Ginger had related (see page 64), we were particularly anxious to try and pinpoint the actual ambulance personnel who were involved at the incident. The enquiries have continued and have been quite extensive. We feel pretty certain that the Ambulance involved would have been one (or more) of those operated jointly by the British Red Cross Society and the St John Ambulance Brigade. Celia and I were directed to the Cromer Museum where a goodly collection of papers, documents and diaries appertaining to the Cromer Branch of the StJAB are held. Whilst these made interesting reading, we found nothing that related directly to the matter we were researching. The wartime documents that were available did not provide the necessary degree of detail - total incidents attended for each year, etc, but no associated breakdown. Our enquiries were then directed to the other most likely source of the ambulance(s), North Walsham. Initial enquiries drew a blank. However an old friend, who in recent years was the person in charge of the Brigade at North Walsham, came up with the name of a lady who was, he thought, the sole surviving wartime ambulance crew member. He rang me the evening that he recalled her name and promised to go the next day to see her in the local Old People's Home, where she resided. The following day he rang me to say that he had called at the Home that morning only to be told that she had died the night before. Maybe we will *never ever* solve that riddle ?

Barbara Kent wrote again on 5 September. Her efforts to provide as much information as possible have been quite overwhelming. Barbara had again searched through (quote) "several hundred wartime letters from Parke", had again written to Jim Goar and to Henry on several occasions in an effort to provide as much detailed information as possible. Her efforts are truly appreciated. In this letter she came up with more data on the crews movements prior to leaving the US, dates of these and later movements, etc. All wonderful stuff which has been incorporated into this write-up.

A letter from Earl Johnson's sister-in-law Dorothy was a very welcome letter received in late September. She passed on the sad news that Earl's wife Mary had died on 20 July 1995, after a long illness. Dorothy told us that Mary was told all about the Memorial before she died and that she and all the Family were appreciative of what had been done.

Henry sent another two wonderfully interesting books in September, including one that lists by name and serial number practically ever B-24 that flew. It also lists dates when they were lost in action. "Ginger" is included and two of the five (four?) "Alfreds". Henry's contribution to my personal library of aviation books has been very much appreciated. Coupled with that so kindly donated by the Waugh family before they returned to the US and that sent me by Paula after her return home, my love of books on that subject is obviously well recognised! Thank you.

Posted on 25 September 1995, a package from Ginger and her husband Bill.. When we opened the package we were, literally, quite staggered to find Colby's boxed Purple Heart. In the covering letter Ginger requested that we pass it on to a Museum where it would receive "the respect that it deserves". Ginger said that they had thought hard before making this decision. I wrote back thanking them and expressed the feelings that we were "greatly honoured that they had passed on this precious item to us but, at the same time,

somewhat overawed by the fact that something so personal should come to us". I went on to suggest that the most appropriate Museum for the medal was probably the new Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum that is currently under construction in Savannah, Georgia. Oak Mackey had already suggested to me that a copy of this book ("Not Forgotten") should be deposited at that Museum (I just hope that it will be worthy of such an honour). I therefore suggested to Ginger that if the Savannah Museum was willing to accept this book which tells the story of the Colby Waugh crew, their aircraft and the Memorial, along with Colby's Purple Heart, it would indeed be a very appropriate haven for them. Ginger readily agreed to this idea and when the time comes, we hope that this proposal will be acceptable to those concerned at the new Museum. See Photograph 27, page 185.

Finally, in a letter postmarked 9 December 1995 and which took an unusually long time to arrive, 10 January 1996, a letter from Barbara Kent. She reported that she had been in touch with Jim Goar again, trying to obtain more details about Parke's initial Missions flown from Wendling - but no luck. Also from those wartime letters from her husband, she had noted that Parke did not fly as a waist Gunner because it was found at Cadet Flight School that he was apt to experience double vision at high and distant altitudes. Barbara tells us too that she has been in touch with Henry and Donna again and offered to swap some snow for sunshine ! However, Henry declined !!

We are so pleased that these families are in touch with each other again after something like 50 years. It is wonderful that the bond forged between crew members and extending to their families all those years ago, still exists and is still very meaningful. Long may it continue.

ooOoo

This brings us up-to-date with the research and enquiries. The story is, I think, substantially complete. There are, of course, one or two 'grey areas' but only one *great* disappointment. That is that we have failed to contact relatives of just one member of *our* crew - that of Lt Virgil Thomson. That quest, however, will continue.

ooOoo



Photograph 27. Lt Colby A Waugh's Purple Heart.

CHAPTER 27

Postscript

I am left with a number of 'loose ends' which I think deserve a mention, simply because I believe that they will be of some interest. However, they have not as yet found a 'slot'. For the sake of convenience, may I refer to them under the above heading ? At the same time, it also gives me the opportunity to include any last minute developments that may be pertinent

ooOoo

Let me start this Chapter by telling you that Celia and I had the great pleasure of meeting Ginger and her husband Bill in September 1994. Also meeting again Doris and Roxie (who had both attended the Dedication Service). Prior to this we had enjoyed two beautiful weeks in the Canadian Rockies, Vancouver and Victoria. We then went on to stay for a few days with our old friend (since the early 1950's) John, known as 'JR', in Orange County in California. This gave us the opportunity to meet and spend some time with Ginger, Doris and Roxie - and they made us *very* welcome. It was a great thrill to meet Ginger for the first time - and to give her an enlarged photograph of her Dad's aircraft, named after her when she was just 4½ months old. (Note: At this time the identity was not totally confirmed and this was pointed out but in my mind there was little doubt). Doris gave me some superb photographs of her late husband. Ginger and Roxie came up with another book on the B-24 for my collection and Bill was very helpful copying videos for onward transmission to relatives. All so very kind. We had a wonderful time in California and what a pleasure to meet them all.

Celia and I then went on to see some more great friends in Arizona (JR's Mom and Dad), who live close to Phoenix. Whilst there, our friends took us along to see Oak and Maxine Mackey, who live in Mesa. We had met this couple in Norwich on 13 June 1993 when we all attended a Service of Remembrance for the 30th Anniversary of the opening of the Second Air Division USAAF Memorial Room. I have been corresponding with Oak amongst other things, as you will recall, reference the addition of the names to the Roll of Honour. What a pleasure it was to meet them in their own home and to enjoy their hospitality.

Oak had written earlier to tell me about the Memorial Services held annually every November in Mesa Cemetery for the twenty three RAF and one American cadet who died whilst training at nearby Falcon Field during WWII. The Ceremonies involve, amongst others, the Mesa Caledonian Pipe Band, American Legion, USAF personnel from nearby Luke AFB, HM Vice Consul, Daughters of the British Empire and RAF Comrades representatives. A fly-past follows the One Minute Silence, then a Twenty One Gun Salute, Taps and the Last Post. Wreaths are laid, Prayers are conducted and Hymns sung. Oak always makes a point of attending these moving ceremonies. *Our boys are certainly not forgotten over there.*

We all travelled out to the Mesa Cemetery and visited the section devoted to the RAF boys. The area was being re-seeded in preparation for the coming

Ceremony in November but the friendly and helpful Cemetery staff promptly produced brushes and willingly cleared all the gravestones so that we could photograph them. Most impressive and very moving in all respects.

The 392nd BGMA does much to foster and maintain the bonds between the local (UK) residents, the Wendling Veterans, their families and succeeding generations. They maintain close links with the local schools at Litcham and Beeston. The Association has introduced a scheme whereby Veterans, or their relatives, can donate a book to these schools and that the book can be inscribed 'In Memory of' either an individual or a crew. Henry has mentioned to us that he has done just that with a book dedicated to the crew of "Alfred". A fine gesture, ensuring that the names of *our* crew are known and remembered by the youngsters attending these schools, close to the Base from where they flew.

As very briefly mentioned in the preceding Chapter (see page 181), Oak Mackey, in his capacity as VP of the 392nd BG for the Second ADA, asked Celia and I if we could arrange a Service to be conducted at Upper Sheringham when the Veterans came over in May 1995. (The Rev Peter had earlier offered to conduct a Service should ever the request be made by visiting Veterans). A large contingent from the 2ADA was expected in connection with the 50th Anniversary commemorations for VE-Day, including representatives from the 392nd BG. Planning commenced in January and as ever, our Rector Peter Barnes-Clay, was extremely co-operative (although still recovering from a lengthy spell of ill-health). At the request of the US Veterans, an invitation was again extended to our ex-Service organisations and, as expected, they responded with enthusiasm. The only free day that could be found for their trip to Upper Sheringham was on Saturday 6 May (precisely one year to the day after the Dedication Service). The schedule over their short visit to the UK was extremely tight. They had only arrived from the US on the previous day. The Service took place at 11.30 am and *all* available 392nd Veterans with their wives, twenty three in all, came over by coach from their Norwich Hotel - escorted on the journey by Dennis and Hilary Duffield (who better?!). The Rev Peter conducted another moving Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving in Memory of the crew of "Alfred" and which was attended by about 200 people in all including many ex-Service representatives. This Service was greatly appreciated and so well received by the American contingent that copies of the Address were requested by several. (See Appendix 3). Many photographs were taken (see Photographs 28, 29 & 30 on pages 192 & 193), especially of and by American and British Veterans. Following the Service, all the American Veterans were transported to a nearby Hotel, where just over fifty of us enjoyed a relaxed lunch. This terminated with another rendition of "Alfred in the Sky" by Malcolm Townsend. Following lunch, a visit to the nearby Muckleburgh Military Collection, the biggest privately owned collection of military vehicles and associated equipment in this country. Here the owner, Berry Savory, personally provided a guided tour of his Museum, including a live tank demonstration solely for the benefit of the 392nd Veterans. Free refreshments were provided and the Museum was kept open almost an hour longer than normal for our benefit ! The weather was superb, the day was memorable and we were thrilled to be associated with such a wonderful bunch of people. We know too that they enjoyed the visit.

Interestingly, one of the Veterans, Joe Lewin who at the time was a ground crew aircraft maintenance man, *could distinctly remember waiting in vain for the return of "Alfred" on 4 January 1944. He could also remember just one of the crew members - Don Belden.* Joe does not remember why he recalls Don - but

he does ! As he says 'fifty years ago is a long time'.

A few more comments about these VE-Day events because they involved a week of really memorable activities and occasions. The day after our Service, there was a Parade through the streets of Norwich, from the City Hall and terminating at the Cathedral. This Parade included almost one thousand British Veterans and **500 members of the Second Air Division**. Bands played and the streets were lined with clapping and cheering crowds, young and old, with British and American flags being waved everywhere. The weather was bright, sunny and warm. As they neared the Cathedral, cherry trees lined the streets and blossom covered the ground. One US Veteran described it as "a Day never to be forgotten" and that "it was one of the most emotional events of my military life!". Another, from the 392nd, wrote to me afterwards: "..... we all enjoyed it (the Parade) and as I heard the repeated calls of 'Got any gum, chum?' as well as the cheers, I got tears in my eyes and a lump in my throat as did most of the other 70+ year olds who were 19 and 20 again, just for a few delicious minutes". The wartime feelings of mutual well-being and comradeship were being re-kindled

And purely by chance, from amongst the hundreds of people milling around outside the Cathedral, we met for the first time our wonderfully helpful friend Wiley Noble, Secretary of the 3D SAD Association. Over here for the VE-Day activities, Wiley sadly reported that he had very recently lost his wife We were to meet him again very shortly - and more than once !

One final aspect of that wonderful Parade through the streets of Norwich. We were accompanied by our daughter and granddaughter, Maryanne and her three years old daughter Juliette. Maryanne was particularly anxious to bring her daughter in the hope that she would remember the occasion in future years. This little one enthusiastically waved her Stars and Stripes as the "American pilots" (sorry navigators, gunners, ground crew, etc !) went by - and we just hope that she was old enough to retain that unique occasion in her memory in years to come. Wouldn't it be wonderful if *she* could tell *her* children: '*I can remember the 50th Anniversary of VE-Day Parade and seeing 500 American WWII Veterans proudly marching through the streets of Norwich. The sun shone and there were thousands there clapping and waving Union Jacks and Stars and Stripesand it was a wonderful occasion*' And, hopefully, *her children* will understand and remember why.

That same evening in the Theatre Royal, Norwich, a 1000 English people and 500 Americans, 8th Air Force Veterans and their wives, attended a most moving performance entitled "We'll Meet Again". The show recalled wartime songs, speeches and events, both sad and happy - and produced a tremendous atmosphere of warmth, appreciation and nostalgia. It was a quite unique experience, extremely moving and one that those who were lucky enough to attend, will never forget. And who was sitting a few rows in front of us? Wiley Noble, accompanied by the English friends with whom he was staying !

The following day, Celia and I attended the Remembrance Service conducted at the Wendling Base Memorial, followed by a Service in the nearby Beeston Church, almost full to overflowing with 392nd Veterans and British people. Another moving occasion and one in which Oak Mackey played an active part.

Over that weekend a VE-Day display had been conducted In the Village Hall at Upper Sheringham. It concentrated on the local aspects of WWII and how it

affected the local community and those involved in the War Effort. As the crash of "Alfred" was very pertinent to the Village, I submitted a display briefly covering the Mission, the crew and aircraft, including photographs, etc. This added interest to a well produced and very interesting exhibition.

On Wednesday we went across to the old RAF Watton Airfield, to the Griston site which was the home of the 3D SAD. Here a most impressive Memorial had recently been installed for those involved with the 3D SAD organisation. The Memorial was Dedicated during a moving Service, at which Wiley Noble, as the representative of all those Engineers who served at that facility during WWII, laid a wreath. A further Service then followed in the nearby Chapel. During this Service, three wall plaques were Dedicated - one for the RAF Squadrons that flew from the nearby Airfield, one for the USAAF 25th BG that also operated from there during the War and the third for the personnel of 3D SAD.

On the Thursday evening, as guests of the 392nd BG, Celia and I were honoured to be invited to the 50th Anniversary of VE-Day Banquet, held at the Norwich Sports Village and Hotel. Here, before most of them left for home the following day, we met again the 392nd Veterans and their wives and enjoyed a wonderful evening. We had the pleasure of meeting Col and Mrs Myron Keilman before bidding farewell to all of these wonderful people.

Following the return of the party representing the 392nd, Oak and Maxine spent four days at our home - unwinding after the previous hectic week, not to mention the months of planning in which Oak had been very much involved. We enjoyed their company.

Soon after Oak and Maxine returned home, Celia and I received a copy of the magnificent new book entitled "Second Air Division". It is a most comprehensive history of the Division, including individual Group histories, related stories, the Roll of Honour (as of June 1993), a Roster of 2ADA members and a comprehensive personal account of many of the 2ADA Veterans. A wonderful book. In a covering letter from Oak and addressed to us both he wrote: "In appreciation for all the generous things that you have done, the 392nd Bomb Group of the Second Air Division Association proudly presents you with this history of the Second Air Division, Eighth Air Force..... ." What a kind gesture and one that we greatly appreciate.

Oak also sent me a most useful list of all the individual B-24 aircraft flown by the 392nd from Wendling. Information covered includes serial numbers, names where applicable, Squadron, tail code, number of sorties flown and so on. This listing enabled me to add considerable detail in Book 1 and has proved most useful.

It will be recalled that when Tim Waugh, nephew of the pilot, came over for the Dedication Service in May 1994, he gave us a full-sized Flag of the State of Maine and that the Rector draped it over the Altar during that Service. Subsequently, Celia and I donated this Flag to the Church of All Saints, feeling that this would further strengthen the bond between the Colby Waugh crew of B-24 "Alfred" and the local community.

At the end of May 1995 and coinciding with Memorial Day in the US, our Church of All Saints at Upper Sheringham held a three day Flower Festival. Celia was asked to produce a floral arrangement and little display centred around

the Flag of Maine. This, of course, she was very happy to do. In addition to the flowers in the appropriate colours, she produced a display picking out the theme from the Flag - small fir trees, a miniature deer, replica fishing boat, compass and so on. Also included was the framed certificate certifying that the Flag had flown over the State Capital, a brief description of how and why the Flag was in the Church and a copy of the crew photograph (as supplied by Mary Barton). Two coiled ropes placed either side of the display and knotted in the centre symbolised the link between Maine (USA) and Sheringham, England. The Flower Festival was very well attended and the amount of interest in the presentation was really quite amazing - and not just from the middle and older age groups but also from the younger ones too. Very rewarding and re-assuring !

It is amazing how word gets around. In the Fall 1995 edition of "Briefing", the journal of The International Liberator Club, there is a piece about the Upper Sheringham Memorial, quoting the inscription in full and as noted by a visiting American on holiday over here. It may be of interest to know that quite a few visitors from the States drop by the Church, some sign the Visitors Book and some are kind enough to remark on the Memorial to their countrymen.

In Chapter 11, on page 52, I referred to a lucky escape by a T/Sgt from one of the B-17 Groups during the raid on Kiel on 4 January 1944. Coincidentally, his name was Wagner, Fred Wagner and I queried if he could possibly have been related to *our* Lester Wagner, T/Sgt aboard "Alfred"? I doubt if he was but there are so many coincidences, who knows?! Mary will recall the reference, I'm sure. I am currently reading a new book on Air Sea Rescue operations conducted in the North Sea by HM Rescue Launches of the Royal Navy during WWII, written by a crew member of one of those little ships. His very first rescue involved the ten man crew of a 384th BG B-17 on 28 July 1943. Badly damaged, they were forced to ditch close to the enemy held coast and whilst still under heavy fighter attack. They successfully took to their dinghy and were later picked up by a Danish fishing boat. They persuaded the Danish crew (a father and son) to head towards England rather than back to Occupied Denmark. At great risk to the Danes, they reached the Dogger Bank, attracted the attention of a RAF Halifax which then circled their boat and guided the RN Rescue Launch to their position. The Navy was greeted by ten cheering American airmen - amongst them Radio Operator T/Sgt Fred Wagner !! The account goes on to report that all the crew survived the War but Fred had one more 'close shave' - when he fell out of his B-17 over Kiel !! Fortunately he survived, spending the rest of the War as a POW.

During December 1995, Barbara Kent's sister Carol, returned to England for a further vacation. Her son Michael, stationed over here with the USAF, had been promoted to Lt Colonel and there was an important ceremony to attend ! We had, of course, met Carol, Michael and his wife Karen on the day of the Dedication Service in May 1994. We again met some weeks later when they all spent a day with us here in Sheringham before Carol returned to the US. Carol was back over here for several more weeks and we were delighted when she asked if she could accept our earlier invitation to come and stay with us, should she return to England. Early in December we met Carol off the train in Norwich and she spent four very enjoyable days with us. We were experiencing the first really cold snap of our winter but Carol is a tough New Englander and was quite unperturbed by the cold, the snow flurries and the gale force winds ! We enjoyed her stay.

A word on the subject of our Remembrance Day Services, held on the

nearest Sunday to 11 November each year. The Rev Peter included the names of those who died in the crash for the very first time during the Service on 14 November 1993 (See Chapter 23, page 155). That practice will now be part of *all future* Remembrance Day Services. We have ensured that a Poppy Cross or wreath has been laid on these occasions and we will continue to do so. We also lay a wreath on the Anniversaries of the crash, 4 January, and Celia and I are, of course, happy to do so. Several relatives have kindly sent donations for these floral tributes and we have ensured that the attached labels have identified the donors. There are, on occasions, other times when flowers, wreaths or crosses have been laid on the Memorial. Carol, for example, kindly funded a Christmas wreath this last December and, at her request, this was labelled: 'From all the Relatives in the US'.

Now, looking ahead. Celia and I hope to visit the US again later this year and have the great pleasure of meeting Carol and Barbara in Vermont, Carolyn, Stanley and all the other members of the Waugh Family living in Maine. We hope to visit the Farm where Colby was brought up. If this wasn't enough, we then hope to fly down to Florida and meet up with Henry and Donna - and maybe get along to that Museum in Savannah, Georgia. Henry has some other visits in mind also, we believe. We might even be lucky enough to meet up with some more of our wonderful friends in the US. What a wonderful prospect. And all brought about by saying to May three years ago: "No, sorry I don't have the names of the crew *but I can easily find out*". Strange how one thing leads to another !!!

Finally, back to the subject which, to my mind, is of the greatest single importance now that we have the Memorial in place and finalised. The Roll of Honour. In a letter received this very morning (quite literally), 12 January 1996 from Oak Mackey, confirmation that Lt Colby Waugh, Lt Arthur Cound and S/Sgt Edward Murphy *are* all included on the new Roll of Honor. Further, Lt Thomson will be listed showing his correct rank. S/Sgt Don Belden is on the original Roll, as you will recall. Oak reports that the new Roll of Honor is complete with 6697 names and that an expert calligrapher will be putting all those names on vellum very shortly.

So after over half a century all those precious names of those killed on that fateful day in January 1944 by a wood in Sheringham, will be added where they belong. They will join those other brave young Americans who gave their lives for our Freedom. Let us Remember Them and let us ensure that similar sacrifices need never be made again.

ooOoo

*When you go home,
Tell them of us and say:
'For your Tomorrow,
We gave our Today'.*

ooOoo



Photograph 28. Bob Wickens. Upper Sheringham. 6 May 1995.
(This takes *me* back fifty years - they never change!)



Photograph 29. 392nd BG Veterans. Upper Sheringham. 6 May 1995.
Left to right: Joe Lewin, Harold Hutchcroft, Bob Wickens, George Michel,
Bill Bowen, Larry Myers, Jack Clarke, Maltby Watkins and
'Rocky' Rothrock.



Photograph 30. 392nd BG Veteran, Joe Lewin. 6 May 1995.



Photograph 31. Maryanne and Juliette. VE-Day Parade, Norwich.
7 May 1995.



Photograph 32. May, Celia and Doug. 2 January 1994.
 (Photo courtesy of Eastern Counties Newspapers Ltd)

APPENDICES



APPENDIX 1

"Alfred In The Sky"

The following was composed and sung by Upper Sheringham resident Malcolm Townsend in the Village Hall after the Dedication Service on 7 May 1994. Malcolm also recited this tribute in the presence of the Veterans of the 392nd BG(H) at the lunch following the Memorial Service at Upper Sheringham on 6 May 1995.

Dedicated To The Crew Of B-24H "Alfred" Of The 392nd BG(H)

The days were dark, the nights were lit
With a thousand beams of light
Illuminating deadly birds
Bringing fire to the night
But the Yanks they fought a different war
They'd found another way
No more the shroud of darkness
Their eagles flew by day.

Taking off from Wendling
Near England's eastern shore
A flight of Liberators
Set out to fight their war
The Three Hundred and Ninety Second
Were to bomb the docks at Kiel
The aircraft flew north eastward
Towards a fiery hell

The crew of "A" for "Alfred"
Were ready for the fray
Ten young men with courage
Would glory come today?
And then the moment happened
That they'd all learned to dread
"Alfred" took a direct hit
What prayers to God were said?

Perhaps it was "Lord, get us home,
Don't let us die today
Don't let our plane become a tomb,
For this Dear Lord we pray".
With an engine gone, the valiant crew
Tried to make it back to Base
But by a wood in Sheringham
Their efforts went to waste.

Five men died, they gave their lives
In a European War
When asked to give their everything
They couldn't give much more.
We owe a lot to all those lads
Who died in that foreign field
Let's pray that it was not in vain
And that all the wounds be healed.

They fly again in Triumph
Liberated now on high
The souls of those who suffered
In "Alfred" in the sky.
To all of those remaining
And the kin of those who died
We say 'Thank you' to the young men
Who flew "Alfred" in the sky.

ooOoo

Copyright: Malcolm Townsend, April 1994.
Reproduced by kind permission of Malcolm and with our thanks.



Photograph 33. Malcolm Townsend. 7 May 1994.

APPENDIX 2

The Wendling Memorial

Just to the south west of the old main runway at Station 118, the USAAF Base at Wendling, stands a fine marble Memorial. Located in the Parish of Beeston, it remembers the 764 airmen who lost their lives flying from there in the defence of our Freedom.

It is a majestic but simple Memorial set in the now serene mid-Norfolk countryside. The well kept surrounding grass area, boxed in by a neat hedge and the convenient adjacent car parking area, all add an air of dignity to this special place. On either side of the Memorial fly the Flags of our two Nations.

This Memorial is completely unique in that it was paid for by the personnel of the 392nd BG *before* they left the UK at the end of WWII. It was erected shortly after their departure and Dedicated, during an impressive and well attended ceremony, on 2 September 1945.

This achievement was brought about by the remarkable foresight of the 392nd's Executive Officer, Col Joseph Bush. He proposed this ambitious project, sought and obtained permission from higher authority at a time when, naturally, most were thinking of 'home'. He obtained the necessary funds, contributed by personnel from all Sections on the Base. The land was donated by the owner, permission was sought from and granted by the Norfolk County Council, Beeston Parish Council agreed to accept the responsibility of maintenance and the project went ahead.

In more recent years the Wendling Memorial has been refurbished. Local land owners, Tom and Jill Scott, donated additional land for the car parking area. The Memorial was re-Dedicated in late 1989 at a Service attended by many Veterans and local people. It continues to serve as a focal point for returning Veterans, a place to visit *and quietly remember. It serves too as a constant reminder to all of those who pass by of the sacrifices made by those young men who flew their Liberators from this very spot in order to preserve our Freedom.*

The Veterans are justifiably proud of their Memorial, the local people also share that pride. May those feelings and sentiments long remain.

ooOoo

The following Prayer, composed by an ex-Pilot of the 576th BS, the Very Reverend Robert C Martin, forms part of the Services conducted at Wendling:

Almighty God. Who has blessed us with the will and courage to do our duty, we praise You for our comrades whose death kept freedom living. We praise You also for giving us the years we have lived since their departure. We pray that You will strengthen and sustain our devotion to truth and justice, so that we may be faithful beneficiaries of their sacrifice. Continue Your mercy to our comrades; keep them in your care; and bring us all at last into Your presence, there to rejoice eternally. Amen.

APPENDIX 3

VE-Day Anniversary Address

The following Address was delivered by the Rev Peter Barnes-Clay during the Service at All Saints Church, Upper Sheringham on Saturday 6 May 1995. Afterwards, at the request of several of the American Veterans in the Congregation, Peter kindly supplied copies of the text. It was felt that it might be appreciated if this Address was again reproduced in full, especially for the benefit of those who were unable to be present on that occasion.

ooOoo

**SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE AND THANKSGIVING FOR VE DAY AND
THE AMERICAN PARTICIPATION, IN THE PRESENCE OF THE
AMERICAN VETERANS AT UPPER SHERINGHAM PARISH CHURCH
ON SATURDAY 6 MAY 1995. IN ESPECIAL MEMORY OF THE
CREW OF 392nd BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
LIBERATOR "ALFRED".**

1.

We have gathered, from far and near, this VE Day weekend, to give honour to all who died in the cause of freedom over fifty years ago. We come, especially, to this ancient House of God, dedicated to All Saints, to thank God for the lives and witness of our American friends and Allies, personified for us in the gallant crew of B-24 Liberator "Alfred", whose Memorial is placed near the North Door of this Parish Church.

When the Memorial was placed here in Upper Town, it was not an act of overt sentimentalism. Although all the English-speaking peoples have something of a reputation for being soft-hearted (and that is not a bad thing!) the placing of this Memorial came from a genuine desire to remember, with thanksgiving, those who made the supreme sacrifice in what was, for them, a foreign land. The Memorial is, for us, a lasting reminder of lives laid down and, indeed, of lives lived on to secure freedom for succeeding generations in the West. The determination not to forget is nothing to do with sentimentality but is born from a real desire to build a lasting peace on lessons learned from the past.

2.

This morning, we honour the fallen. But we must never forget that it sometimes takes more courage to live than to die. To live long years with physical or psychological pain, maybe. To live those years caringly, compassionately and fruitfully is no easy task, especially when memories bring up deep-seated feelings of anger, frustration or revenge. How many thousands, if not millions, have had their lives blighted by constant sadness. And yet, and yet, how many millions have triumphed over all these things and have made the very terrors of the past, the foundation of lives filled with the strength of forgiveness, hope and reconciliation.

200.

The very fact that you are here today bears witness to these things. Many of you have journeyed here today. A journey of many long miles. A journey can be a pilgrimage. Although the point of a pilgrimage is always the destination, there is always much to learn on the way. Life itself is a pilgrimage for Christian folk. The journey makes us what we are when we reach the destination. Never despise the journey.

I hope that what you, our visitors and friends, find here today will have made your pilgrimage-journey worthwhile. With us, you have come to honour your dead in a typical Norfolk Church and village. Their sacrifice has not been forgotten and neither has the debt our younger generations owe to all who fought to bring and keep a more lasting peace. We honour and salute all, both living and departed and pray that, at the last, the Almighty Father will bring us all into His Eternal Peace.

I would add one thing more. This VE Day weekend is of enormous importance to us on our island off the continent of Europe. Victory in Europe. Yes, and we thank God for it. But please, please, do not let us forget those many, many thousands who lived and died for victory and peace in Japan and the Far East. VJ Day is on 15 August. As do you in America, we have many Veterans of the Far East in this country and so many of them in this County of Norfolk. The two theatres of war were of equal importance to the common cause of freedom. Let us not forget that when August comes. Here, in this group of Parishes, we shall be marking it at Bodham All Saints on Sunday 20 August.

May I conclude by wishing God's Blessing on your stay in England and on your pilgrimage through life. Thank you all. And thank you especially to the crew of "Alfred".

ooOoo

*Every blessing and we hope your brief
time with us was a happy one.*

*(Signed) Peter Barnes-Clay.
Rector and Parish Priest.
6th May 1995.*

ooOoo

APPENDIX 4

Thanks

Firstly, our grateful thanks to all who contributed to the Sheringham Liberator Memorial Fund - without you there would be no Memorial.

ooOoo

Many people have been involved in the Memorial project along with May, Celia and myself. Many have also been involved in the research aspects, both here and in the US. To everybody, in whatever capacity you assisted, that help has been very greatly appreciated. My apologies for any inadvertent omissions.

ooOoo

In the US:

Crew/Relatives:

Ms Carol Adams, Mrs Mary Barton, Mr Bud Belden, Mrs Velma Berryhill, Mr & Mrs George Cound, Mrs Dorothy Grubb, Mrs Agnes Hasnauer, Mrs Barbara Kent, Beth Lopez, Mrs Mary Wagner, the Waugh Family including Carolyn, Coburn, Doris, Ginger, John, Pauline and Stanley. Henry Wilk (crew survivor) and Family.

Veterans, Veteran Groups and Organisations:

Jim Agerton, 3D SAD; Dick Ayers, 3D SAD; Dr George Barger, 392nd BG; Bob Beatson, 392nd BG; Jim Goar, 392nd BGMA News Co-Editor, Marvin Graham, 392nd BG; Delmar C Johnson, 392nd BG; Oak Mackey, 392nd BG VP; Wiley Noble, Secretary 3D SAD Association and Col Bob Vickers 392nd BG (including kind permission to quote from his excellent book "Liberators from Wendling").

The staffs at:

Air Force Historical Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.
The National Personnel Records Center, St Louis, Missouri.

Library staffs at:

Birmingham, Alabama.
Dawson, Nebraska.
El Paso, Texas.
Solon, Maine.
Swissvale, Pennsylvania and
The Yankee Air Museum Library in Michigan.

In the UK.

Mrs May Ayers, Mike Bailey, Rev Peter Barnes-Clay (Rector of the Weybourne Group of Parishes), Tom & Jean Beales, Lt Col Michael & Mrs Karen Boldosser (USAF), Miss Nancy Bowker (Church Warden), Mr & Mrs Ralph Boyce, Bob Collis (Norfolk & Suffolk Aviation Museum), Brian & Theresa Cooper, David Cooper (Organist), Dennis & Hilary Duffield, Huby & Josie Fairhead (Norfolk

& Suffolk Aviation Museum), Charlie Gant, Lt Col Roger & Mrs Jean Garrad (Chairman & Secretary Upper Sheringham Parish Council), Ian Hawkins, Ben Jones, Mrs Elsie Kimber (Church Warden), Phil Marshall & Colin, Hedley Mitchell (Snettisham research), Tony & Vi Newell, John Nockels (Chairman Village Hall Committee), Russell Pointer, Mr R Pope, Mrs Maryanne Richardson (my daughter), Sqn Ldr Berry Savory (Muckleburgh Collection), Len Shipman, Ron Spendloff, George Stokoe, Wilf & Margaret Topliss, Malcolm Townsend, Jim Turner (Seething Tower Association), Albert Welch (retired Church Warden), George Wells, Les Willis, Stanley Wright, Mrs Vera Williamson and all the Village people who assisted in the preparations for and on the day of the Dedication Service.

USAF Mildenhall:
Community Relations, Office of Public Affairs.
Chaplain Lt Col Don & Mrs Taylor.

The staffs at:
The American Cemetery, Cambridge.
Cromer Museum.
Muckleburgh Collection, Weybourne.
Norfolk Records Office.
Second Air Division Association Memorial Library, Norwich.

Members of:
Hardwick (93rd BG) Museum Group.
Military & Civil Aviation Group, North Walsham.
Norfolk & Suffolk Aviation Museum, Flixton.
Norwich Airport Aviation Group.
Seething (448th BG) Tower Association.

Ex-Service (Veteran) Groups:
Aircrew Association.
Far East Prisoner of War Association.
Royal Air Force Association.
Royal British Legion.
Royal Naval Association.

Organisations:
1895 (Cromer) Squadron Air Training Corps.
Norfolk County Police.
Registrar of Births & Deaths, North Walsham.
Sheringham Preservation Society.
Sheringham St John Ambulance Brigade
Sheringham Salvation Army.
Sheringham Scouts.
Upper Sheringham Parish Council.
Upper Sheringham Parochial Church Council.
Upper Sheringham Village Hall Committee.

Firms:
Community News.
Eastern Counties Newspapers Ltd.
Norfolk Homes.
Sheringham Engravings (now trading as Country Memorials).

APPENDIX 5

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Note: Not all the above were 'sources' but are included as material of interest.

APPENDIX 6

Abbreviations and Aircraft Types

AA	Anti-Aircraft.
AAFSAT	Army Air Force School of Applied Tactics.
AD	Air Division.
(A)AFB	(Army) Air Force Base.
AF	Air Force.
AFS	Auxiliary Fire Service.
APO	Army Post Office.
ARP	Air Raid Precautions. Later designated Civil Defence (CD).
ASR	Air Sea Rescue.
ASV	Air to Surface Vessel. Airborne radar equipment.
BAD	Base Air Depot.
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation.
BD	Bombardment Division.
BG(H)	Bombardment Group (Heavy).
BS	Bombardment Squadron.
BW	Bombardment Wing.
CCRC	Combat Crew Replacement Centre.
CD	Civil Defence. Formerly ARP.
cms	Centimetres. As in radar terminology ie: wavelength.
CO	Commanding Officer.
EAME	Europe, Africa and Middle East (Campaign Medal).
E-Boat	Enemy high speed torpedo boat.
ETO	European Theatre of Operations.
FAP	First Aid Party.
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation.
FDR	Franklin D Roosevelt. (US President).
FEPOW	Far Eastern Prisoner of War (of the Japanese).
FG	Fighter Group.
ft	Feet. Measurement ie: 12 inches.
GP	General Practitioner (Medical Doctor) <i>or</i> General Purpose, thus 'Jeep'.
G&TT Flt	Gunnery and Tow Target Flight.
H2S	British airborne radar bombing equipment.
H2X	American development of H2S.
HF	High Frequency. As in radio communications.
HM	His <i>or</i> Her Majesty('s) eg: Ship, Vice Consul, etc.
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
HQ	Headquarters.
IAS	Indicated Air Speed.
IFF	Identification, Friend or Foe. Electronic device providing aircraft identification to (friendly) air defence radar systems.
KIA	Killed In Action.
LAC	Leading Aircraftsman. RAF rank.
lbs	Pounds ie: weight. 16 ounces = 1 pound.
LF	Low Frequency. As in radio communications.
Lt	Lieutenant eg: 1/Lt, First Lieutenant.
MACR	Missing Air Crew Report.
NY	New York.

OTU	Operational Training Unit (RAF).
PCC	Parochial Church Council.
PFF	Pathfinder Force. Often applied to a single aircraft operating as a pathfinder for a number of bomber aircraft.
POW	Prisoner of War.
RAF	Royal Air Force.
RAFA	Royal Air Force Association. Veterans organisation.
RBL	Royal British Legion. Veterans organisation.
R & CD	Replacement and Control Depot.
RN	Royal Navy.
RNA	Royal Navy Association. Veterans organisation.
RNLI	Royal National Lifeboat Institution.
R/T	Radio Telephony (speech communications by radio).
SAD	Strategic Air Depot.
SO	Special Order. Personnel Orders originating from a Base HQ.
S/Sgt	Staff Sergeant.
StJAB	St John Ambulance Brigade.
T/Sgt	Technical Sergeant.
U-Boat	German submarine.
UK	United Kingdom.
USAAF	United States Army Air Force.
USS	United States Ship.
V1	German Flying Bomb, nicknamed 'Buzz Bomb' or 'Doodlebug'.
V2	German Rocket weapon.
VE-Day	Victory in Europe Day.
VHF	Very High Frequency. As in radio communications.
VIP	Very Important Person.
VJ-Day	Victory over Japan Day.
WIA	Wounded In Action.
W/T	Wireless Telegraphy. As in radio communication by Morse Code.

Allied Aircraft types mentioned in the text.

A-20	Douglas Boston. Twin engine bomber.
B-17	Boeing Flying Fortress. Four engine bomber.
B-24	Consolidated Liberator. Four engine bomber.
B-25	North American Mitchell. Two engine bomber.
C-47	Douglas. Derivative of the DC-3. Twin engine transport.
P-38	Lockheed Lightning. Twin engine, twin boom fighter.
P-47	Republic Thunderbolt. Single engine fighter.
P-51	North American Mustang. Single engine fighter.
Halifax	Handley Page. Four engine bomber.
Hurricane	Hawker. Single engine fighter.
Lancaster	Avro. Four engine bomber.
Mosquito	De Havilland. Twin engine bomber/fighter.
Spitfire	Supermarine. Single engine fighter.
Wellington	Vickers. Twin engine bomber.

Enemy Aircraft Types mentioned in the text.

FW190	Focke-Wulf. Single engine fighter.
JU88	Junkers. Bomber/fighter.
Me109	Messerschmitt. Single engine fighter.
Me410	Messerschmitt. Twin engine fighter.

ooOoo

