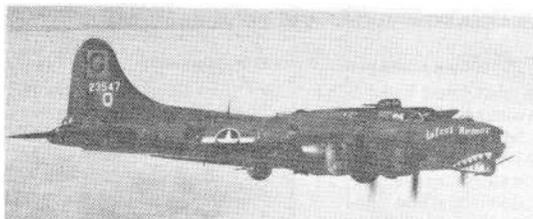


COMBAT UNITS

HQ. SQUADRON
548th BOMB SQ.
549th BOMB SQ.
550th BOMB SQ.
551st BOMB SQ.



SUPPORT UNITS

424th AIR SVS. GP.
877th CHEM. CO. (AO)
DET. 155, 18th AWS

"The Mighty Eighth Reunion Group"

385th BOMBARDMENT GROUP MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

GREAT ASHFIELD — SUFFOLK, ENGLAND

STATION 155

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NEWSLETTER

Volume VIII, No. 3

November 1979

Editor: John C. Ford

FOR \$880 — TOUR WITH YOUR MATEY IN 1980

The itinerary has been finalized and the tour price for the "Tour with a Matey in 1980" has been received. You will be kept up to date on all arrangements, price changes (hopefully God and the Ayatollah willing, there won't be any), or any other factors bearing on the trip. As stated in the last Newsletter, transportation remains the responsibility of the individuals participating in the tour. This is to your advantage, permitting you to select the most reasonable and convenient method and dates of travel. The conversion figure used to convert pounds to dollars was \$2.20.

14 August 1980.

Arrival day in the ol' U.K. Tour participants will arrive throughout the morning at London's Gatwick and Heathrow Airports. Coaches will operate a special shuttle service between the airports and your hotel - conveniently situated for both airports and only a short ride into central London. The afternoon is free to rest-up, thereby fighting off the cursed "jet lag" that often occurs. For those "fly-boys and gals" not affected by such mundane side-effects, there is the chance to sightsee or shop. This evening we have a "Welcome Reception" - a chance to meet up with all your associates, to be introduced to your WADE Courier (if you can get him away from the bar!), to discuss the trip, to enjoy a buffet "spread" and to have a drink....or two.or three.....

15 August 1980.

Morning leisurely drive north-easterly through the Essex and Suffolk countryside stopping at Colchester to "stretch our legs" and to take a look at this ancient town - the oldest recorded town in the U.K. - before continuing on to the Ipswich area and our hotels. The afternoon is free for exploring your new environment and later we will have a coach "pub crawl" of the area allowing members to sample the delights of Tolly-Cobbold, Greene King and Adnams.

16 August 1980.

The morning is free for recovery and/or finding your way back to the hotel if you have been AWOL during the night. Fortunately, the local Constabulary is very friendly. There may also be some time for sightseeing or relaxing. In the early afternoon the coaches will take us to Great Ashfield and to the old airfield where we can enter into the real spirit of a village "shindig" - a garden fete style get-together organized with the villagers and members of FOTE. There'll be "traditional" activities such as "Bowling for a Pig, Tombola, etc., together with food, refreshments, movie and slide shows, transportation around the airfield and plenty of good old-fashioned music. You will be certified ready to sleep when you return to your hotel.

17 August 1979.

This morning we will re-visit Great Ashfield for a Memorial Service and the afternoon is left free for independent activities such as visiting the homes of friends or other villagers who wish to entertain you in their homes. In the evening, an optional dress Dinner-Dance will be held at the Orwell Moat House, Felixstowe, where you will have a chance to entertain guests from Great Ashfield or FOTE and to relax in a sophisticated atmosphere - and great fun guaranteed.

18 August and 19 August 1980.

Two great days and two great tours. Our first "day trip" takes us to Bury St. Edmunds and a stroll in the beautiful Abbey Gardens. Then on to Newmarket where the "orsey set" can look on with envy before continuing on to Cambridge. Time for lunch and sightseeing in the town before visiting the American Memorial Cemetery at Madingly, and the Air Museum at Duxford, which also houses an 8th Air Force Exhibit. There will be a late arrival back at the hotel.

The second "day trip" takes us northward along the coast, through the old fishing port of Lowestoft and on to the resort at Great Yarmouth. There will be time for lunch before we travel on to Norwich, a beautiful town in Norfolk. Here you have the opportunity to visit the Cathedral, tour the Castle, visit the Second Air Division's Living Memorial entry to the Norwich Library and shop in the Market. There are other places that can be explored before we again return to the hotel.

NOTE: Entry fees to the various museums and castles are not included, since many individuals may not wish to visit all or any of them.

20 August 1980.

Morning at leisure before we set off for another drive through old beauty spots of Suffolk and on to the lovely old town of Framlingham and nearby Parham Airfield. Here we'll visit the 390th Bomb Group Control Tower, which has been turned into a Museum by many of the pioneers of FOTE. There will be an evening Bar-B-Que around the Control tower in the late afternoon. (Can you read me Foxtrot Delta? Bear left 15° to runway 09 but keep clear of the broiling beefburgers and low lying charcoal piles.)

21 August 1980.

It's up, up and afloat this morning as we leave Felixstowe for a five hour maritime experience aboard the modern Townsend-Thoresen ferry crossing the English Channel to Belgium. If the sea doesn't get to you, the famed "duty free" will, and we'll arrive into the port of Zeebrugge in the early afternoon. Our leisurely drive takes us due East across Belgium, into Germany and to the beautiful city of Cologne - arriving into our centrally located hotel in the late evening.

22 August 1980.

Morning at leisure. A "must" is a visit to the fabulous Gothic-spired Cathedral. Time for shopping or for a trip on the Rhine. Smaller boat than yesterday's. This afternoon we will drive on through Bremen to Hamburg - a lovely city that grew phoenix-like from the debris and ashes of destruction of the 2nd World War. Our hotel may be the elegant Reischhof Hotel. We will go to the Zillertal Beer Hall in the evening - great fun-fun with an Oompah-Oompah Band.

23 August 1980.

This morning we will have a guided sightseeing tour of Hamburg before driving north to Puttgarten where we join the short ferry over to Rodbyhavn in Denmark. Another short drive takes us into central Copenhagen and our hotel. The evening is at leisure.

24 August 1980.

We start with a morning tour of the lovely city of Copenhagen. We'll see the Royal Palace, the "copper-topped" churches and even the Little Mermaid. We will end the tour (you can say that again!) at the Tuborg Brewery for a tour and a "sample"...or two...or three! The afternoon and evening are free for your own touring, exploring, eating, or what not.

25 August 1980.

A full day free in Copenhagen. Great shopping, or a visit to the Tivoli Gardens, a day just resting, or a small group get-together for a day of fun.

26 August 1980.

A long but very interesting day this will be. We'll visit Hamlet's Castle in Elsinor, then travel across to Sweden visiting the pretty towns of Malmo and Helsingborg before returning to Copenhagen late in the evening.

27 August 1980.

First stop on today's itinerary is a visit to Odense where we'll visit the Hans Christian Andersen Museum and have time for exploring before the short drive to the port of Esjberg, where we will join our overnight ferry for the trip back to England. Cabin accommodations on board plus good food and a hot "disco".

28 August 1980.

We'll arrive into Harwich in the mid-morning, and the coaches will soon have us transported into London and our hotel. The afternoon is free for shopping or strolling.

This evening we have a last night "get together" with a truly novel "Cockney Evening" with music and dancing. We'll start with traditional Cockney songs around the "piana" followed by a Cockney dinner featuring jellied eels or a prawn cocktail, fish n' chips, cockney boiled beef n' carrots, followed by a plum duff puddin' and coffee. A welcome shot of Scotch, or "mothers ruin" gin is included, as well as wine or beer throughout the meal. Everyone is guaranteed to enjoy this novel final "blast" to our holiday.

29 August 1980.

The coaches will transfer you to Gatwick or Heathrow Airport, where, amidst lots of tears, (the WADE Couriers are always like that - very emotional. They reload their tear ducts at Niagra Falls when when they bring English persons over to enjoy the swollen pound) you can wave fond farewells to warm beer and new-found friends - 'til the next time.

The tour price is \$880.00 per person, based on a \$2.20 per pound conversion rate. The price includes all coach travel as per itinerary, fourteen nights First Class hotel accommodations based on sharing twin-bedded rooms with private bathrooms, the Cocktail Buffet on the 14th, drinks and food at the air field on the 16th, the Dinner-Dance on the 17th, the last night Cockney Evening, hotel baggage handling charges, the guided tours of Hamburg and Copenhagen, the visit to Hans Christian Andersen Museum, ferry passage Felixstowe - Zeebrugge, Puttgarten - Rodbyhavn, Copenhagen - Malmo, Helsingborg - Harwich, cabin accommodations in twin-berth cabins on Esjberg-Harwich overnight sailing, Belgian Entry Fees, German and Danish Road Tolls, and the services of experienced Drivers and Couriers who will accompany the tour throughout. The price also includes a \$4.40 administrative fee to cover cost of mailings, printings and services. All cancellation fees will be transferred to the 385th BGRA account.

The tour price is subject to OPEC fluctuations, as noted in the last Newsletter. DAVID WADE LTD. is our Specialist Tour Operator and we know of his integrity from previous operations. He accepts nothing but the best from his providers and makes certain his customer receives the same. You will not receive a better price for the same high quality from any other Tour Operator. David Wade and Keith Harris normally deal in high volume tours (300 to 400), but have always made an exception for the members of the 385th Bombardment Group. Get you reservations in early! A copy of the reservation form is enclosed with this Newsletter. Be sure to read it thoroughly. Each person will be required to send a \$100.00 deposit with a signed reservation form, plus an additional \$340 per person due by 1 April 1980. The balance is due not later than 1 July 1980. See form about cancellations. ■

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL

The Officers of the 385th Bombardment Group Memorial Association wish to send Christmas and New Years Greetings to our members and their families of the Christian faith. A joyous Hanukkah to our members and families of the Jewish faith. May the Feast of the Dedication - this Festival of Lights, enlighten the mind and bring joy to the heart - of yourself and all mankind. To those who believe in God but are aligned with no religious faith, may you all enjoy the holiday season remembering that there is a God in science, a God in history, and a God in conscience, and these three are one. May the agnostic enjoy himself without losing sight of the fact that it is not a waste of time exploring. To him who is without a God, may he enjoy the fruits of the holiday season wondering from where his blessings flow. To everyone - May good health dog your footsteps and happiness result from your trying to heal the rifts that seem to separate us in times of stress. May the season be good to you, and the New Year as well.

MEMORIAL GIFT

John F. Pettenger, our Treasurer, and his wife, Ruth, traveled to England and Germany this year and during their September stay in Great Ashfield, they presented our annual Memorial gift to the All Saints Fabric Fund. The following letter has been received:

Fox Farm
Wetherden, Stowmarket.
10th October 1979

Dear Mr. Ford:

On behalf of the Parrochial Church Council of All Saints Church, Great Ashfield, I wish to thank the Members of the 385th BGMA for their very generous gift of \$500.00 to the Church Fabric Fund. This very generous expression of the continued friendship of the Association with the Church at Great Ashfield gives great encouragement to the church people here.

The Association's gifts in the past have enabled us to carry out many necessary repairs to the church fabric, but, as I told you elsewhere, a recent architect's report reveals much to be done in the near future amounting to some £16,000.00. Although government and other grants are available towards this cost, much will still have to be raised locally and your members' gift, and the knowledge that their prayers are with us in our work, helps us to go forward in our faith.

Sincerely yours,
(Signed) JOHN ELLIS

Churchwarden and Hon. Treasurer of the Parochial Church Council, All Saints, Great Ashfield, Suffolk, England.

The Pettenger's were met with all the warmth and hospitality that greets many of us in Great Ashfield, Wetherden, Norton and Bacton. They stayed a few days with John and Lucy Ellis, attended a fine Sunday dinner at the home of Rowley and Angela Miles at Norton Hall, and visited with Ian and Mary Hawkins and their newly arrived beautiful daughter, Alice Susan. John took Ian and traveled to the Parham 8th Air Force Museum to see the exhibits (many of which have been recovered by the FOTE Diggers). John was quite thrilled when, on arriving at the Tower, some members had raised our "Old Glory" and it was flowing in the wind. Ruth had remained at home with Mary and the baby, and when the men returned from Framlingham, John presented Ian with his scrapbook of his time at Sagen, Germany, when he was a POW after being shot down on the Munster mission of 10 October 1943.

Since Ian is currently engaged in writing a book on that particular mission, you can imagine his delight in receiving this gift. He feels it is the most significant momento he has received from WW II. In looking through the book, he came across the photograph of one of his many correspondents. He was sitting next to Pettenger in the photo, playing in the Sagen POW band. The Pettenger's think of the trip with nostalgia.

As the official foreign correspondent for the village of Great Ashfield and environs, this writer was kept abreast of the Pettenger's movements, as well as other visitors such as Bob and Nancy Valliere, who had tea with the Ellis' one day in August when they visited Great Ashfield with their English friends, Reg and Pauline Wright. ■

BUCK FEVER-1980

The following members have become Life Members:

Earl L. Cole	Don Hale
Warren B. Diederich	Robert A. Knight
Charles Edelstein	Alfred A. Oldfather
John C. Ford	Rayburn G. Pyle
Ira Fuqua	Edward R. Stern
Joseph Gorchak	William M. Tesla
Allen B. Chealander	Robert A. Valliere

This is a good start but we need more members in the LIFE MEMBERSHIP program. You can start with \$10.00 down and \$10.00 in successive months until \$100.00 has been paid, or two \$50.00 monthly payments, or, better yet, pay the \$100.00 in one fell swoop.

As for those not wishing LIFE MEMBERSHIP, think of the holiday season as that period of the year when the colors of red and green are most prominent. You are urged to keep the hearth warm with a RED glow, and our Treasury GREEN with louverly \$5.00 checks. Won't you pay your 1980 dues, RAT NOW? ■

BITZ O' NEWS

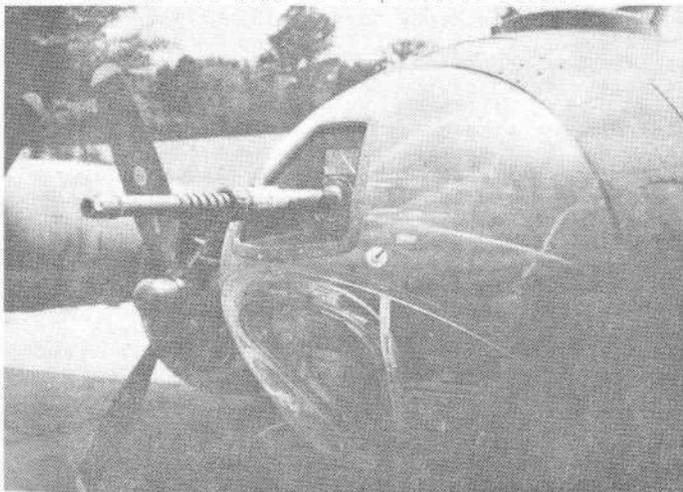
A MINI-REUNION was held in Williamsburg, VA, on 5-7 October, when through the efforts of Marty Girson, fourteen former members of the 548th Maintenance-Engineering Section, and their wives, had a memorable get-together at the Howard Johnson Inn. Hy Siederer writes that after considerable reminiscing and lie-swapping, they all agreed to meet in Gatlinburg, TN, next year about the same time. Other members of the 548 Maintenance Section wishing to attend are urged to write Marty Girson, 151 Gilmore Dr., Pgh, PA, 15235.....AIR FORCE TIMES and many other magazines have contained letters requesting information on the crash of the 385th B-17, S/N 42-3539, piloted by Lt. William B. Whitlow. The aircraft was on the Munster mission of Sunday, 10 October 1943, when it was shot down near Holten in Holland. Ian Hawkins, who has been in touch with Bill Whitlow, has answered a few queries. In fact, it was through him that I learned of the aftermath of the crash. Lt. Whitlow and TSgt John Ashcraft escaped thru Holland, Belgium, France and Spain, returning to Great Ashfield on 6 January 1944. Lt. T. M. Ennis injured a leg while bailing out, evaded capture and made it to the Spanish border, where he tragically drowned crossing the last river to freedom. Lt. Ennis will be honored in Hawkin's book, "Cherish the Pride", on which he is still working.....IAN McLACHLAN WAS FERRETING THROUGH RAF 277 SQUADRON RECORDS WHEN he noted the following details: "25 miles south Folkestone, 3 men of 550 Squadron USAAF hanging on to one K type dinghy, a fourth disappeared. F/Sgt K. Moore and F/Sgt E. Allen airborne on patrol in Spitfire V's were vectored to the scene relieving a section of 501 Squadron Spitfire's already orbiting the three customers. Wing Commander A.D. Grace scrambled in Walrus L2315 and safely picked the customers up. Owing to the rough sea and one wounded passenger, he was unable to take off again and taxied into Dover arriving at 1955 hours." The three lucky customers were 2Lt Chester W. Desormeaux, TSgt Ernest R. Mitchell and SSgt Evon P. Wells. They were members of 2Lt William K. Nesen's crew from the 550th Bomb Squadron who had been badly hit by flak on the mission to Fredrichshafen on 24 February 1944. Later 2 others were found, a TSgt McNeil and Sgt McKenna. ■

Fortress Cannoneer

Who was the only cannoneer to fly a mission in a B-17F? Who was what? For years it has been common knowledge that a 37mm cannon was mounted in the P-39 and a 75mm howitzer had been test fired in a B-25, but when I mentioned to Roger Freeman, the English air historian and author, that a 20mm cannon had been installed, tested and flown on a mission in "Roundtrip Jack", S/N 42-5897, he was surprised and, as I think about it, slightly skeptical. His first question was "Do you have any pictures of it"? I did not and for a very odd reason.

When returning from England in 1945, there were a couple of hundred pictures in my possession that I had acquired from various aerial photographers, plus another hundred or so that I had taken with a borrowed camera on low level sweeps over Europe in May after VE Day. Among those pictures had been the ones concerning the 20mm installation. Following my furlough, it was off to Sioux Falls and the endless breadlines, waiting for reassignment. While I was away from Pittsburgh, PA, during that period, my motherless children were living with their aunt. My possessions were also stored there temporarily. One day the two oldest children were playing and discovered my cache of photos in my suitcase. The idea struck them to play Postman and my photographs were deposited in small batches in many different mail boxes and door mail slots throughout the neighborhood. My sister-in-law was very surprised when a few neighbors returned some of the pictures to her, telling her they had seen the girls putting them in the mail boxes. Perhaps about forty pictures were returned and since Elinor had no idea of how many photos had been dispensed, she had no idea of the total to be recovered. Among those photos were the 20mm installation photographs.

In the last issue of Newsletter, I requested anyone having a picture of that installation to let me copy it. On the 4th of October, two letters arrived at the house, both containing two photographs. One letter was from my former Squadron Commander, William M. Tesla and the second was from my original bombardier on "Roundtrip Jack", Charley F. Hughes. The two photographs in Colonel Tesla's letter were inside the nose section - one over and one under the 20mm cannon. Charley Hughes two photos were one of the exterior and a duplicate of the overhead view in the nose section. In the Tesla letter, he stated he thought he had once had an outside view. He has one now. It is pictured below:



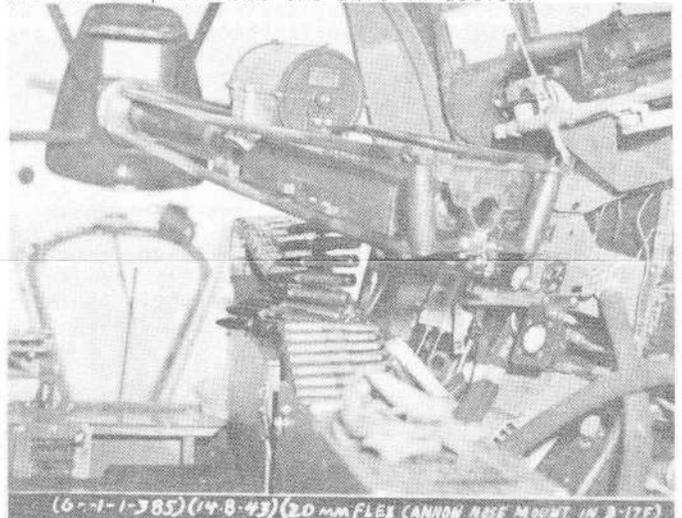
(6-1-1-385) (4-8-43) (20mm FLEET CANNON NOSE MOUNT IN B-17F)

Warrant Officer Nugent "Tommie" Thompson was the 550th Squadron Armament Officer - and an outstanding one at that. In the early days in England, then Captain Tesla conducted many critiques with his pilots and young staff officers. Always high on the subject list was enemy fighter frontal attacks. From these critiques, Tommie Thompson emerged with a dream about combating those frontals. One day he discussed his idea with Captain Tesla. It sounded good to the C.O. but there were many restrictions against modifying an aircraft and it was a time consuming process to gain

approval. Now it so happened that a fortuitous midnight requisition had led to the acquisition of a 20mm cannon from the wing of a wrecked fighter plane. Captain Tesla, weighing the length of time required for modification approval through normal channels, plus the unused capability of an unmounted 20mm cannon, against the welfare of the combat crews facing frontal attacks, decided to go for broke. He gave the "go ahead" to W/O Thompson. Tommie, working against time and a need to keep the project secret, selected T/Sgt Elmer Blank to oversee the proposed modification. Elmer handpicked



the specialists he need to assist him and began to put the plan in action. It was late July 1943. The initial step was to beef up a nose section gun yolk mount. This was accomplished by welding heavier plates to the end of the mounts where they attached to the fuselage. The gun pivot hole was reworked to accept the 20mm cannon. The cannon was modified to accommodate handgrips, and a metal plate was cut out and mounted between the handgrips. The plate was attached to a hinge unit leading to a microswitch that activated the firing solenoid underneath the cannon. Thumb pressure on the plate set the unit in action.

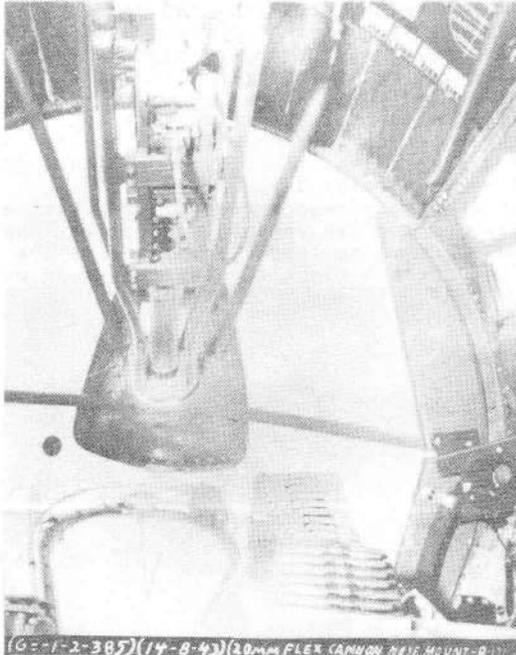


In viewing the above photo you might ask, "How did anyone sight this outfit"? Remembering this was a fighter wing gun, it was a top loader. The cartridge magazine was affixed as in the wing, with the 20mm cartridges being fed into the magazine from the right and the cartridge clips being ejected from the small chute on the left of the magazine. They blew out on to the floor of the B-17, as did the empty shells which were ejected from the bottom of the cannon. In the fighter, the shells and clips had been ejected into the windstream under the wing via a chute.

The installation in "Roundtrip Jack" began in the period of 6 - 8 August 1943, and when completed, the aircraft was towed to the firing butt for testing. On 13 August, the lead crew of the 550th Bomb Squadron, led by 1st Lt. Gerald Binks, took "Roundtrip Jack" on the first airborne cannon firing test. On board were several others, including myself. I think Captain Tesla and Sgt. Blank were among them. After arriving in the test area, Tommie had his chance to fire his "baby". When the cannon was released from its stowed position and moved to the center of the nose section, it extended back quite some distance. Tommie took a stance that had him leaning back near the instrument bulkhead. When he ripped off his first bursts, one could notice the tremendous recoil forces at work. He fired between 30 to 40 shots. Then Lt. Charley Hughes took over for a try. During his firing, the sighting glass cracked as can be noted in first photo. There were several suggestions made to

modify the cannon to dampen the recoil, but all would have taken too long. Several of us had a chance to try the cannon, and all in all, I would guess that perhaps 75 to 100 cartridges were test fired.

On 15 August, "Roundtrip Jack" flew on a mission to Vitry En Artois, and W/O Thompson flew as the cannoneer. He may have been the only cannoneer to fly a mission in a B-17F with a 20mm cannon. But the flight, and its ending, left Tommie with sheer disappointment. No enemy fighters were sighted and upon landing, Lt. Tommy Harrison, a 550th officer assigned to the Group as an Armament Officer, had the sad job of telling Tommie that his idea would never be accepted. The news had just been received at base that a chin turret was being installed on the B-17's with twin 50's. Later, we were to find out the turret had been used on the YB-40 and when that project was abandoned, the turret idea was retained and the B-17G was born. The first one arrived on our air field in mid-September.



(G-1-2-385)(14-B-4)(20mm FLEX CANNON CHIN TURRET)

The above photo was taken beneath the cannon and shows the ejection chamber. The installation would have been rejected had it ever been submitted through channels, but a more thoughtful suggestion was made during the war to provide a gatling style 20mm chin turret on a few test planes. The 20mm gatling did not reach a more perfect stage of utilization until several years after the war.

At the very least, Tommie was pleased that he had a chance to fly the 20mm on a mission. He died several years ago following a long and painful bout with rheumatoid arthritis, which eventually confined him to a wheelchair. His wife and son still reside in Spokane, Washington. Hope someone in that area can locate their address for the Association records, and to let them know they belong to our group. Tommie's contributions to the 385th Bombardment Group, up to now unpublicized, went far beyond the aspects of this try to overcome enemy fighter frontal attacks. He was quite an airman. ■

DECLASSIFIED "IMPACT"

For all you history buffs that think you have everything - hold the phone - and your requests for Christmas presents from the wife or children. Soon to come off the press is a significant historical eight volume series entitled "IMPACT". Everything in these volumes has recently been declassified and you will be witness to the strategies of World War II as they evolved. This is your chance to read articles written by men of great military stature and wisdom. Lt. General Ira C. Eaker and other prominent military leaders from England, Germany and Japan have been contributors to this greatest written and pictorial set of documents yet produced.

You will be receiving a brochure and ordering information through the mail shortly and you will note the proceeds from this set of books is going to two worthy

USAF historical associations. "IMPACT" is being published by the James Parton and Company, Inc., 15 East 48 Street, New York, NY.

The above publisher has been named because, by a strange exchange of correspondence, I became privy to some very important information on the design of the original 8th Air Force shoulder patch which I last wrote about in the February 1979 issue of Newsletter.

Lt. James Parton was a young Intelligence Officer back in April 1942 when he arrived as part of the advance echelon of the 8th Bomber Command. He was assigned to set up the War Room at "Pinetree" which was the Bomber Command Headquarters in High Wycombe, Bucks, England - a few miles northeast of Metropolitan London.

His primary duty was to conduct the daily briefings each morning for General Eaker and his staff, plus later arrivals such as General Dwight D. Eisenhower. This led to his being selected as Aide-de-Camp (ADC) to General Eaker. After the 8th Air Force moved to its new Headquarters in Teddington, Lt. Parton moved up to the role of Secretary to the General Staff and was replaced as aide by Lt. (later Major) Clarence O. Mason.

But while the 8th Bomber Command was at Pinetree, General Eaker asked Lt. (later Colonel and eventually Brigadier General) Harris B. Hull to arrange the design of a shoulder patch to be used as a morale booster when the first Bomber Groups arrived to make the 8th Bomber Command operational.

Lt. Hull had been one of the chosen six officers that had arrived with the General that February. Lieutenants Hull and Parton then corraled Captain Paul Lawler (now deceased) who had been an art director in civilian life, and it was he who designed the first patch.

Following its approval by General Eaker, Lts. Hull and Parton traveled over the area searching for someone, who, in wartime England, could come up with the material and time to manufacture the patch. They found a wonderful English emporium which did up military emblems in elaborate embroidery and the patch was turned out in sufficient quantity to meet the needs of the 8th Bomber Command.

Mr. Parton now recalls that when the redesigned and approved patch came down the line from Washington, General Eaker was too busy with combat priorities to fuss about which design was to be blessed with the official approval. Parton prefers the original - and why not.

But to get back to "IMPACT" - keep your eyes open for the brochure. Its a must! ■

AIR FORCE COLORS - 1926-1944

Dana Bell, a researcher at the 1361st Audio-Visual Squadron, United States Air Force, and an associate member of our Association, has put his hobby into print. Dana has long been interested in the use of colors in military aircraft. His first book, "Air Force Colors - Volume I, 1926-1942", has been published and is available for \$7.95 plus postage, from Squadron/Signal Publications, 1115 Crowley Drive, Carrollton, Texas, 75006. Great paintings and photographs in black and white and color, include some group and squadron insignia. For the air historian and buff, this book deserves a special spot on your bookshelf. Volume II is being prepared and will be in distribution by late next summer. One of our group aircraft will be included, along with group insignia. ■

388th AT WAR

Edward Huntzinger, Secretary of the 388th Bombardment Group Association, has just completed a compilation of the official mission reports of that Group. The 388th flew out of Knettishall, England, and flew with us in the 4th Combat Wing until September 1943 (H in the square). The totals in aircraft and personnel losses, KIA's, POW's, Interees, MIA's and escapees differs greatly with the original history of the group. Pre-publication price offer is \$24.95, postage paid. Send order and check to: "388th AT WAR", c/o E.J. Huntzinger, 1925 SE 37th Street, Cape Coral, FL 33904. The book includes the missions flown, and aircraft lost out of Poltova, Russia. It is a researchers dream. ■

England seems to be a wonderful spot to pick up many stories about old buildings. During your editors visit to England in October 1978, a trip was made to Framlingham (Parham Airfield) where I copied on tape the story told by Colin Durrant, about the Control Tower he was helping to convert into a Museum. That story will be told after considering the story told by Charles Hall. The setting was a cluster of buildings, connected by a long hallway, and a control tower also is prominent in this tale. The place was Tibenham, former home of the 445th Bombardment Group (Liberators) which also happened to be the home of James Stewart, CO of the 703rd Bomb Squadron. This group, on 27 September 1944, suffered the highest single day loss of any 8th Air Force unit, when thirty aircraft failed to return. A bomb load was also accidentally jettisoned over the field one day, killing two airmen and an Englishwoman living in a nearby house. It is a site for many thought provoking incidents.

TIBENHAM WHISTLER

By Charles Hall

A series of old wartime USAAF buildings on the old airfield were being used as our clubhouse. There were in fact, about eight separate rooms, providing space for a kitchen, storeroom, bedrooms, etc., all interconnected by a long corridor, at the far end of which was a large workshop.

One summer evening, a couple of years ago, when everyone else had left the airfield, I spent an hour in the hangar trying to release the wheels of our Oly (Olympia 2b) which had squeezed through the ring of the lifting trolley. The problem seemed impossible to me and I eventually reached that point of solitary despair when I knew I should have to admit defeat. It was then I heard a quiet American voice beside me offering assistance and advice - and almost immediately we levered the tyre free from the trolley.

He stayed for awhile and we talked of B-24's and of Jimmy Stewart, but I neither saw him arrive nor depart, and certainly never heard nor saw a car.

Having removed the crumpled wheel fairing, I took it to the workshop and set to work with a hammer. Minutes later, I heard someone whistling a tune and obviously approaching along the corridor. Hammer poised, I waited to greet the visitor, but the whistling passed the door - though no one appeared. Puzzled, I looked out into the corridor. It was empty so I looked in all the rooms before doing a circuit of the building on the outside. Without a doubt, there was nobody else in or near the building, so I tried to convince myself that I had imagined it all and went back to the bench.

Three times I heard that whistling and three times I searched the buildings to no avail.

Weeks later, I was told how one night a JU-88 followed the Liberators back to the base, shot down three aircraft in the circuit and caused two more to collide. I also heard there was supposed to be a ridiculous tale about the ghost of one of the navigators who was known to haunt the control tower.

Like you, I don't believe in ghosts, but I hope some day that a real, living person will come back to Tibenham and tell me it was he who helped me with the Oly's wheel just a few short years ago. ■

(Courtesy of Ian Hawkins, Bacton, Stowmarket, Eng.)

PARHAM STEP STALKER

By John Ford

The time was about the first week in August 1978. The site was the old Control Tower at the old Framlingham (Parham) Airfield. The owner of the property was Mr. Percy Kindred and he had given permission to a few original members of FOTE to reconstruct the decaying tower and use it as an 8th Air Force Museum. Ron Buxton had recently welded the old steel stairway to the roof of the control tower. The stairway led from the balcony to the roof and the only entry to the balcony was from a door on the opposite side of the building. There are no outside stairs leading to the balcony from the ground level.

Colin Durrant and a fellow volunteer workmate, whose name was indistinct on the tape recording, were painting the largest room on the ground floor and directly

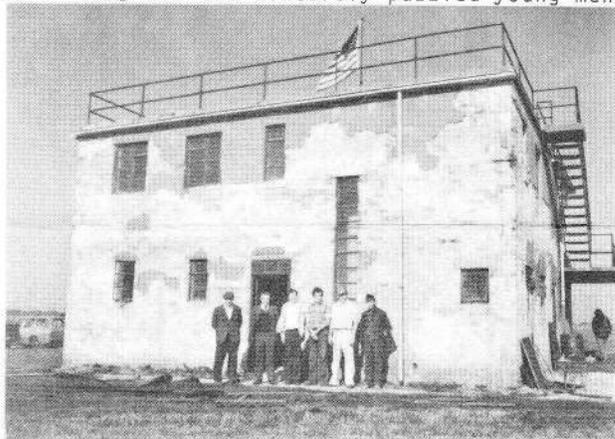
in view of the entry door. It was late afternoon. Suddenly, the sound of footsteps could be heard on the steel stairway leading to the roof. Colin's mate walked outside and around the building, but could see no one. Colin went up the stairs to the first floor, (second floor in this backward country) and through the large room where the door led to the balcony. Walking around the building he shouted towards the roof, "Whose up there?" There was no response so he climb the stairway to the roof - and found no one. The area surrounding the control tower is clear for several hundred feet and there is no place to hide.

The two men returned to the room on the ground floor and resumed painting, meanwhile laughing and joking about hearing things. Just then the footsteps again sounded loud and clear with each step very distinct.

The men quickly put down the paint brushes and each went a different direction, but covering the same ground. Colin's mate admitted to a rather uneasy feeling as he peered over the top of the roof and found no signs of anyone having been there. They searched all the rooms and cranny's, but they were alone in the tower.

When it occurred for the third time and they re-enacted their search pattern without results, it was decided that it was time to tidy-up, and leave the painting to a later day.

Quizzed about any reoccurrences since that evening, the two men smiled when Colin replied, "Not really, but then we no longer work late in the afternoon". They are two sincerely puzzled young men! ■



The tower at Parham during reconstruction - 1978

HELP WANTED

Ian McLachlan, our liaison man with FOTE, has enthusiastically set about collecting photographs of the 385th to assemble into an album that he will present to the Parham Control Tower 8th Air Force Museum. He wants it to be the envy of the collection there, adding to our film of the 1976 trip to England. He is also trying to write to all of our members, asking them to loan him their photographs to copy. Ian is a man of integrity and honor and is most worthy of your trust with those photos.

Meanwhile, lacking any pictures on paper, how about searching your memory for stories of interest? He recommends you grab a drink, a cassette recorder or some paper, sit down and ponder on your days at Station 155. Your stories will add to the historical lore he is gathering about the 385th. Whether you strained the under carriage of a Fort on landing, handled swinging or fixed fifty cals, loaded the armament and ordnance, missed your ETA by dead reckoning, hit the target, or floundered in a sea of mud maintaining shot-up B-17's, nor if you floundered in a sea of paperwork to get everyone clothed, doctored, fed and paid - he wants to hear from you. He wants to hear about your war. Eventually, he will be able to bring the entire story together about the part played by the 385th. Write to Mr. Ian McLachlan, 16 Walpole Road, Old Windsor, Berkshire, S24 2LZ, England. Ian will be reading the names from our Book of Honor on Remembrance Sunday at Great Ashfield. ■

ROSTER

Following is a list of new members, changes of address, and letters returned with the notation "No Forwarding Address". Personnel living in or near the area of those names marked with "No Forwarding Address", are requested to search telephone or city directories for a new address. It is suggested this page be xeroxed so that insert changes and corrections can be added to your Master Roster:

NEW MEMBERS:

Crandell, Lewis W
c/o Vernon Co., Box 74
North Norwich, NY 13814

Leonard, J. O. Jr.
105 Chantilly Dr
Greenville, SC 29607

Hillard, Bruce M.
Rt #2, Box 39
Rockwell, NC 28138

McNichols, Robert J.
5501 Gray Street
Tampa, FL 33609

Mercer, Mrs. Beverly
5709 No 8th Pl
Phoenix, AZ 85014

Metcalfe, Edward I.
89 Birnam Rd
Northfield, MA 01360

Neptune, W. E.
1241 Ridge Dr
So Charlotte, WV 25309

Sullivan, J. Wesley
c/o Statesman/Journal
P O Box 13009
Salem, OR 97309

CHANGES OF ADDRESS:

Atwood, Robert D.
1558 No 300 West
Provo, UT 84607

Adamson, William
2337 Holly St
Denver, CO 80207

Broening, Maj. .E.
1608 39th St
W Palm Beach, FL 33407

Elliott, Henry P.
3227 Spring Hill Ct
Muskegon, MI 49444

Ferguson, V. W.
606 Buffalo Dr
Arlington, TX 76013

CHANGES (Cont'd):

Lamica, Stanley B.
91 Brittany Ct
Charlotte, NC 28211

Matuna, Joseph
West Star Route
John Day, OR 97845

Mullen, John M.
36302 E. Virginia
Wellton, AZ 85356

Rice, James M.
2221 Loch Lane
Walnut Creek, CA 94598

Story, Warren
1403 Norfolk Ave
Norfolk, NE 68701

RETURNED - NO FORWARDING ADDRESS:

Dowling, W. L.
11 Green St
Augusta, ME 04330

Lecours, Roland
3 Chandler St
West Lebanon, NH 03784

Prange, Mrs Harold
319 Spencer St
Bethalto, IL 62010

Price, Charles K. Jr
23253 Westwood Dr
Belleville, MI 48111

Reynolds, Leo
3600 SW 43rd Ave
Lake Forest, FL 33023

Watkins, Felton Jr.
103 Valleyview Dr
Ozark, AL 36360

Wolover, Clement J.
1120 66th Ave NE
Puyallup, WA 98371

31st Station Complement

In all the stories that I have read about the 385th, one questions why more has not been written about the units that supported us at Great Ashfield, and were in fact, one of the greatest assets the Group possessed.

Only recently was I able to acquire a diary of the operations of the 31st Station Complement Squadron, through the courtesy of Robert Cribbs, a former member.

The 31st Station Complement Squadron was one of 12 such squadrons activated at Kellogg Field near Battle Creek, Michigan, on 25 May 1943. The original cadre was one officer, Captain Eben V. Cleaves, and six enlisted men, namely TSgt Combs, SSgts Anthony, Neilson and Walters, and Sgts Strunc and Williams.

The function of the Station Complement Squadron as defined by the War Department, was to take over the housekeeping functions of an air field in the various Theaters of Operation. Those Complements training at Kellogg Field were destined for the ETO. They were to be functionally organized with a Headquarters and the following sections; Flight Control, Civil Engineering, Communications, Chemical Warfare and Transportation. Individuals selected had to have a minimum of one year's experience in their Military Occupational Skill (MOS) and/or be a graduate of an approved Air Force Technical School.

The Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) called for ten officers and one hundred eight enlisted personnel. Intensive training began in earnest on 1 June 1943 with Captain Cleaves in command. Heavy on the drills and hikes, it also included bivouacs, including one of six days duration, while they operated in the field. There was extensive training for qualifying each person on the rifle, carbine and sub-machine gun, as well as courses on infiltration.

Passing through Camp Shanks, New York, enroute to England, the unit was updated on records, shots, etc. On 4 August 1943, the unit was on board the Aquatania and headed out of New York. The landing platform in Elmswell came alive early in the morning of 12 August 1943, when the tired members of the 31st Station Complement Squadron unloaded from the train that had brought them from Greenock, Scotland. They were met by a fleet of 6-bys and a closed pub - "The Fox".

They joined many of us in "Tent City" and enjoyed open air living for some time before their quarters were ready. Captain Cleaves became the Mess Officer for the base and did a great job. He also organized the base defenses. Few persons in the Group will ever realize the number of duties assigned the personnel of this unit.

It actually seemed to function as a minor repledeple, feeding personnel into the various group squadrons - including aerial gunners and aerial photographers. SSgt D. W. Woolfe flew 24 combat missions as an aerial photographer when he was returned to the ZI due to the death of his mother. Captain Charles Seabright became commanding officer in July 1944 at about the same time the 121st U.S. Army Motion Picture unit was attached for duty with 2 officers and 8 enlisted men, to make training films. Much of the construction work for the 200th Mission Party featuring Glen Miller's Band (sans Miller), was accomplished by members of the 31st Station Complement Squadron.

Perimeter gun posts were mounted by the Squadron, and the two Gunnery Sergeants assigned to train these personnel, flew seven missions in the October time frame. Perimeter and interior control were functions of this squadron and in December 1944, when the perimeter guard function was disbanded, many guard gunners volunteered for aerial gunnery training, and when they qualified, they were assigned to the various combat squadrons.

Thirteen (13) members of the squadron left for the Infantry in February 1945, many of them volunteers. Some former members of the Infantry were assigned to fill their positions and did yeoman's work learning new skills.

Sgt James R. Ezell was seated in the tail gunner's position during a routine training flight on 13 March 1945, when a B-24 Liberator flew in very close and tried flying formation with the B-17. A wing of the Lib slashed through the tail section, severing Jim's legs. He died later that night in the 65th General Hospital. The Liberator was destroyed when it crashed after the collision. Jim Ezell was our Link Trainer technician and a more popular man would have been hard to find. He was symbolic of the men who served with the 31st Station Complement.

8th Air Force General Order #52 sounded the death knell of the Squadron, when it was consolidated into the 424th Air Service Group. The 31st Station Complement was inactivated and passed into history on 15 April 1945. The historian for the squadron during its existence was 1st Lt. G. W. Chambers, and it is from his works this brief synopsis was extracted. ■



MERRY CHRISTMAS GREETINGS - STYLE OF 1943

385th Bombardment Group cargo loaded on 22 December 1943. With the passage of time, one still wonders why any nation would start a war of such magnitude to invite such grisly greetings. Many were delivered, but the recipients never had the opportunity to read the message.

385TH B GRA

REGISTERED ADDRESS

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED