

News update mid-January 2019 received from England

The 306th Bomb Group Museum, Thurleigh – Its Future

Present Situation

See “History” below. Time goes by and sadly museum founder Ralph Franklin is no longer able to carry any further responsibility for the Museum and his family, while they remain able to offer advice and help where they can, are not in a position to continue with the direct day-to-day management and organisation of it. Hearing of this situation, which effectively had put the future of the Museum under threat, a number of people came forward from its many “friends” and a volunteer Management Group has been formed with the dual objectives of firstly ensuring the continuing existence of the Museum and secondly seeking arrangements whereby it can continue to be accessible to the visiting public.

The purpose of this “update” is not only to make those who know the Museum aware of the new situation but also to advertise more broadly its existence and generally “spread the word”.

With regard to the immediate future, of first concern is the opening of the Museum to visitors during the summer months of 2019 but the details of this have yet to be worked out. When decided, its advertising will be through the medium of a “Museum Newsletter”, which will be sent to recipients of this newsflash and others and which hopefully, will be a regular feature of future activities.

History

The 306th Bomb Group of the United States Army Air Force was stationed at Thurleigh Airfield from the autumn of 1942 until the autumn of 1945. Its motto “First Over Germany” proclaims the fact that it led the first incursion by the USAAF into the German homeland, which took place with a raid on Wilhelmshaven on the 27 January 1943.

Ralph Franklin was a small boy at the time and like most of his generation, collected any “war souvenirs” he could lay his hands on and living close to Thurleigh, naturally took a great interest in the 306th. With the cessation of hostilities his enthusiasm became a life-long interest and with a particular passion for the 306th · his collection of wartime artefacts continued to grow

In the early post-war years and employed as an electrical engineer by the Royal Aircraft Establishment, whose flight research facility was based on the rebuilt Thurleigh Airfield, Ralph was able to carry this interest through to the eventual acquisition of the use of an ex-wartime “explosives store” building where he could accommodate his collection. Here he created and subsequently opened to the public a Museum which has since prospered to become the excellent World War II Museum which it is today. While much credit for the Museum must lie with Ralph and his family, the continued support of Palmersport in the form of the free provision of the building and its services must be fully recognised and acknowledged.