

## **General information regarding the founder, the property and the museum**

**Founder and Curator:** Ralph Franklin, who was a "lad in knee pants" during WWII. He often visited with the American 306th GI's on the Thurleigh air base in the evenings.

**The property:** The Museum sits on property that was the former WWII US Thurleigh air base. It is now a closed-facility owned by Jonathan Palmer for his "PalmerSport at Bedford Autodrome" car racing facility. Jonathan Palmer has allowed and encouraged Ralph Franklin to operate the 306th Museum at Thurleigh since July 2002.

It has a guarded entrance, with strictly NO admittance to the grounds unless (a) the Museum is open, or (b) the guard knows that Ralph Franklin, by appointment, is to meet you at the guarded entrance at any other time. Because of the expanse of the grounds, visitors to the Museum can still get a great visual impression of the former Base.

**The Museum:** The Museum is a great "little treasure" in one of the original one-story, flat-roofed WWII buildings of the former Thurleigh US Army Air Corps Base property. After WWII, it was a Secret RAF Air Base, until it was closed in the 1980s. It has several rooms and many displays including items donated by 306th veterans and their widows. Some of the displays make use of full-sized manikins garbed in authentic WWII uniforms and bridal attire.

**The Monument:** The 306th Memorial that US 306th WWII veterans and their families paid to erect in 1982, was originally in a secluded plot plagued with vandalism. In 2012, our US 306th Bomb Group Historical Association (BGHA) paid to have that Memorial professionally moved to be outside the Museum. Some years ago, the appreciative local people of the village of Thurleigh, erected a 306th Memorial adjacent to the Village Green.

**Visiting the museum:** We hope the museum will reopen when Ralph's condition allows, or other arrangements are made. There is a concern regarding the long-term sustainability of the museum and the US 306<sup>th</sup> BGHA, while having no ownership or control of the UK museum, hopes to help in sustaining the museum.