

306th Bomb Group Museum Newsletter Number 1, April 2019



Welcome to the first Newsletter from the Thurleigh Museum, now under its new management organisation. Perhaps it is appropriate that the first item of this first issue should be to report on the funeral of the Museum's founder, Ralph Franklin, which took place in Keysoe Parish Church on 12 April 2019. Born in the Village, Ralph remained there throughout his life and its closeness to Thurleigh Airfield and the 306th Bomb Group was the stimulus for his wartime boyhood interests, which would stay with him throughout his life and culminate in the foundation of the excellent Museum we have today. At his funeral he made his entrance to the Church, which was full to capacity with his many friends, to Glenn Miller's "Moonlight Serenade" and following the Service, to Miller's "American Patrol". Buried in the Churchyard he was laid to rest with his wife Daphne, in a common grave, to the respectful silence of the assembled congregation.

During Ralph's illness there was concern amongst his many friends, for the future of the Museum. This concern quickly matured into the calling of a meeting by Palmersport, the "landlord" of the Museum Building, in November 2018 from which two key features emerged. Firstly, the confirmation by Palmersport of a continuing free use of the Building and its general support for the Museum and secondly, that there were enough enthusiastic volunteers to form an effective management organisation. Since then a group of these volunteers [Committee] has met several times with the primary objectives of securing the future for the Museum and arranging for its continuing availability to the public during the summer season of 2019. Overcoming obstacles such as Health and Safety and legality issues, it is planned to open the Museum on Sundays throughout the summer from 10a.m. to 4p.m. **However it is strongly recommended that visitors check beforehand.** This can be done by emailing Clive at clivebobcarroll@yahoo.co.uk or phoning him on either 07837 395652 or 01234 771984.

The first visitor day will be Sunday 5 May 2019 when staff will be on hand to welcome guests but beyond that there will be no special events during the day. Later, as the Museum and Committee find their feet, special celebration days might be introduced. However In certain circumstances, for example when visitors from the United States are expected, special arrangements can be made to open the Museum "on request". Every effort will be made to fulfil such requests but it must be remembered that the whole enterprise relies on volunteers and their availability.

It is proposed that to keep interested people informed of Museum "happenings", Newsletters will be published from time to time and will be distributed solely via the Internet. The distribution of this first issue is limited to those whose email addresses we have. There are no doubt many others who would like to be kept informed so can we ask recipients to "spread the word" so that the distribution list can be expanded to all those interested? Anyone wishing to receive Newsletters will therefore need to provide an email address to the Editor mike@mddobson.co.uk. Any contributions of

suitable article for publication in the Newsletter will always be welcomed and should be submitted to the same address.

To see what the “back” of the Editor looks like, or did in 1986, the photograph shows him in a former life paying homage on behalf of the then resident Royal Aircraft Establishment at the 306th Memorial in Thurleigh village.



Wishing all our readers well and looking forward to meeting many of them at the Museum on 5 May, this issue of the Newsletter concludes with two photographs of the airfield which might be entitled “During and after the 306th”. On the left is the wartime airfield on which many B17s and P38s are parked, while on the right is the rebuilt flight research airfield of the Royal Aircraft Establishment.

The wartime technical area, just to the left-centre in the left photograph, was approximately where the two main runways of the rebuilt airfield cross. During the re-build, two of the original “T2” hangars were moved to the north side of the airfield and remain in use today as part of the Palmersport complex.

