

# The Braintree Memorial

## USAF Memorial Unveiling – Braintree



In the late summer of 2014 the ROCA Heritage website received an enquiry about a rumour that two ROC members had been on one of two flights on Flying Fortress' from RAF Kimbolton in 1945, two days after the end of the War, to view the damage in Germany. The report of the flight contains the paragraph: '....  
*Except this time there would be*

*no combat. These were 'trolley flights', 'cook's tours', a victory flight for the ground crew and observers who had helped the flyboys beat and batter the German war machine into surrender just two days before.'*

Unfortunately over Bocking near Braintree in Essex the bombers and as many as 80 to 100 other aircraft, were churning up the air and creating destabilising turbulence known as 'prop wash', causing one of the Flying Fortresses propellers to cut the other bomber in two, just ahead of the tail. The bomber rolled upside down and headed towards the ground, hit a river bank and burst into flames. All 11 American airmen were killed. The other bomber was 'wounded' but managed to limp back to RAF Thurleigh in Bedfordshire. It was this 'plane which reportedly contained two ROC chaps.



When I began asking ROC members about any memory of this everyone said it was impossible that two ROC chaps should be on an USAF 'plane on a jolly to see the damage in Germany.' Always up for a challenge I persevered and after several months our good friend in Truro, Lawrence Holmes, said he had a friend who collected unusual logs of aircraft and he would ask him. We hit the jackpot – there were two named people on the log but no affiliation for them. I then sent the names to Neville at Winchester who looked up the names of Post members and sure enough we had found the Observers.

In this year of the commemoration of VE Day the people of Braintree organised the unveiling of a Memorial to remember the eleven Americans who died, all under 25 years of age.

On Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> May Mike Quincey carried the No 7 Group Standard with John Shere as Escort in the Parade for the unveiling of the Memorial at Bocking. This was in a beautiful woodland setting with the sun shining. Families of the Americans were present, including the brother of one of the aircrew. We sang the National Anthem

as well as the American Anthem. Margaret Quincey and I were spectators at this moving ceremony.

After the ceremony we were invited to the Town Hall, a wonderful old building, for refreshments. There were several historical exhibits, including an Observer Corps shoulder flash but the real icing on the cake was a report of the crash from the Navigator who survived saying that two Royal Observer Corps members had been on the flight, all the confirmation we needed. At the time of the collision the ROC members were said to be in the nose of the aircraft.

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