

National Heritage Report – July 2014

It has been suggested that the Heritage Report which was given at the recent National Committee meeting should be seen by all members of the Association should they be interested in reading it – I am therefore sending this to Jenny to append to the current issue of Snippets. The National Heritage Team consists of: Simon Craine (Assistant Heritage Officer), Frank Alexander, Justyn Keeble, Paddy Malone, Jenny Morris, John Shere, Cheryl Stewart.

Regular enquiries to the Heritage website continue, these are many and varied. A member of the Team can usually respond to enquiries but we sometimes need to use the maxim ‘... we know a man who can ...’. Just recently we could give only limited information to an enquirer about a crashed aircraft until I remembered from previous correspondence that the Lincoln Standard Bearer, Bill Warwick, is a marvel at research, an email to him revealed that he had all the documentation about the crash readily available so we have added another ‘consultant’ to Lawrence and Neville.

We have been invited to take the WWII Post to Bentley Priory on 20th September for their Battle of Britain Open Day – this is the mock up we used there several years ago which was well received. The curator has personally collected our Post instrument from the Stafford store for our use. Justyn will come along because he has genuine WWII uniform and artefacts together with a Seaborne flash. It is intended only those wearing authentic uniform will be on duty on the display. Details will be given to Mick to advertise on the Association website and we will look forward to having many visitors on what looks to be an exciting day. *(Since writing this report the Curator has sourced the German Field Binoculars which were in the Dowding Room with our Post Instrument before the refurbishment – I was amazed to see that the original box in which they were kept shows the address of the Observer Corps No 18 Group which was originally Colchester – so they had been sent there before onward transmission to RAF Bentley Priory.)*

I continue to ‘volunteer’ at Bentley Priory, this is mainly catering for groups of people on non-public days when it is more difficult for the usual bank of volunteers to attend. On Thursday I will be attending a lecture on The Dowding System as the plotting system was named. This is to be given by a volunteer for other volunteers.

Following a suggestion by Terry Bottrill of Stoke Golding Post John Shere and I have set up an information day for 19th October for Post restorers and others with collections etc at the War Room in Bury St Edmunds. Because most are not aware of how the information was used within the Ops Room John will use his Post Display Boards and Triangulation Table to explain and engage participants in a mini-exercise. Those participating may not be members of the Association – we are making a charge for the day, 50/50 for the War Room/Heritage. Air Vice Marshal Michael Jackson and his Project Manager are delighted to offer the facilities for the day. *(Since writing this the Museum Designer for the Guild Hall has been in*

touch and during conversation I mentioned Stoke Golding Post where Terry is seeking funding to set up the original WWII Post adjacent to the underground post – the two will now be in touch as their aims are similar.)

What can we say about the great success of the Veterans Day at Stirling? Despite a few early hiccups it was a great success and it can be seen from the website that the display was much larger than we have had in the south in the past. All concerned are to be congratulated, especially Cheryl who put so much effort into the arrangements despite difficult domestic circumstances with family illness. Bob is also to be thanked for spending the day talking to the public, not least on his own whilst others were away attending the Parade.

Paddy's involvement with Heritage in Northern Ireland is breathtaking, he and his Team are working non-stop at the site of the Ulster Aviation Society Heritage Museum. They have recently installed a Long Range Board which shows the route Hess took on his ill-fated journey to Scotland. They are also renovating a Post.

For some months I have been trying to arrange a visit to Churchill's Most Secret Airfield – Tempsford, from where the Special Operations Executive Agents were transported by moonlight in their Lysanders etc. I have finally managed to get through the red tape and we are to go on 21st August. It is under the banner of the Association but several Bentley Priory volunteers are on the list as is the Aviation Historian from Duxford Museum and Royal British Legion members from two branches, so we are bringing the Association to the attention of others outside our circle.

We have heard that 50 Post, Cuckfield, had 139 visitors over two half days with lots of interest from people who were not aware of the Corps existence. Two bookings were taken for group visits and a journalist from Sussex Life wants to make an interactive panoramic photo.

We had an enquiry about deposition trays – I remember these but memories seem to be sparse, they were used by Posts in the early'ish'60s, Neville is getting out the paperwork!

As always I am most grateful to the Team for their continued enthusiasm and support – particularly Simon who manages the website and sorts out the display material, he has a happy domestic situation but this takes nothing away from his commitment to the cause. However, I would not wish any of the Team to let the Heritage of the Corps impinge on their personal life, as we know can so easily happen.

Edwina Holden
National Heritage Officer
17th July 2014.
(amended 5th August)