



384th Bomb Group, Inc. News & Journal



"Keep The Show On The Road..."

March 2022

It's official: 384th Bomb Group Museum fundraising is underway!

For decades, the meaning of "Keep the Show on the Road" has taken many forms for members of the 384th Bomb Group, Inc. and friends who seek to preserve the memory of those who served in WWII at Grafton Underwood. The unattainable dream for many years has been to achieve the ultimate means of honoring all who served at GU: a Museum dedicated to their service and sacrifice.

In England, some folks have decided the time has come. Following the effort of preparing for our September 2019 Reunion there, they have put additional untold time and energy into bringing such a museum into existence. Here are some of these people, in front of the "Ops Block" building at the airfield, on a recent typical work day (below).

Up to now, their most visible efforts have been to clear away the overgrown site of the GU Ops Block building and the associated Norden bombsight storage building (see article on **page 3**). They have also inspected the buildings and determined they are suitable for the projected use (pending engineering review), negotiated the purchase



of the buildings from the Boughton Estate, established The Friends of the 384th to organize and manage the creation of the museum, and a host of other tasks that a project of this kind entails. With the impending purchase of the two buildings, this museum project is gaining momentum!

Now that The Friends of the 384th have officially established their non-profit community bank account, it is time for the 384th Bomb Group, Inc. and its members to join them in raising the necessary funds to bring this Museum into existence. Neill Howarth estimates the immediate costs will amount to about \$55,000 – for purchase of the two buildings from Boughton Estate – the Ops Block and the Norden Bombsight Store – as well as associated legal fees and administrative costs. The total cost of the basic plan (including the rehab of the buildings and providing utilities, adding a Nissen hut, car park, and a few other things) will add approximately another \$350,000. Our donations in the U.S., and the Friends fundraising in the U.K., will begin perhaps the most significant project we have ever undertaken on behalf of our 384th Warriors, a project that will result in a permanent facility to tell the story of these men, their deeds, their service, and their sacrifices in the cause of Freedom.

Recognizing the significance of this opportunity, our Board of Directors has established a fundraising program (details on **page 4**) to support the construction of the 384th Bomb Group Museum in Grafton Underwood. To start off the fundraising, the Board is reviewing project requirements to determine the appropriate contributions from the Group treasury that will demonstrate the importance we, as a Group, attach to the establishment of this Museum. The Board also earnestly urges members (and others) to understand that this endeavor will be the signature achievement we will accomplish in joining with our Friends in the U.K. This opportunity must be seized, we each must dig deep, and provide what help we can to The Friends of the 384th to ensure the success of this joint project.

I am looking forward to the day when I visit our Museum in Grafton Underwood and, walking up to it, I turn to the sky and say: "Dad, we built this Museum for you and your comrades-in-arms. Thank you for everything." — Fred Preller

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2022 Calendar

384th BG 2022 reunion will be held, 19-23 October, Washington, D.C. along with The 8th Air Force Historical Society 2022 Reunion, 19-23 October, Washington, D.C.; check for details at <https://www.8thafhs.org/>

On the Internet

384th BG website

Our internet home, maintained by Fred Preller and team.

384th Facebook page

A great place where many of us share our experiences, photos, etc. from both sides of "the pond."

8th Air Force HS

The home for the 8th Air Force Historical Society online.

8th AFHS Facebook

Information, photos, stories, current events, pertinent information relating to "The Mighty Eighth."

The Arrowhead Club

Cindy Bryan's wonderful and inspiring blog. Her father was a 384th crewman and POW.

Contact Us

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A letter from our president on the future of the 384th

It's been way too long between meeting with all of you and I'd like to discuss a few things that those of us on your Board of Directors feel are important for the health and continuation of our 384th Bomb Group. We dearly want to Keep the Show on the Road, and desperately need your help.

As time goes on, our group of regulars is dwindling, almost as assuredly as our precious



veterans. We all are proud of what our fathers, uncles and grandfathers did for our freedom and I am sure you would want that legacy to be continued with your children and your grandchildren. It is too important to let them fade into history. We must forever honor those brave men who flew those fateful sorties over Europe, and those who supported those missions from Grafton Underwood.

It dawned on me recently that when I first met those great men in 1985 at Grafton Underwood they were younger than I am now. And that is why I am asking every one of you to help grow our membership. We seem to lose members when their veterans pass, but if we are to Keep the Show on the Road, as they did, we really ought to think about continuing on in their

honor... not move on and forget them. After much has been said, my father passed away in 1982, but I became involved with the Group in 1985, and continue to this day.

We would like for you to encourage your sons and daughters, nieces and nephews to be a part of this wonderful history. Please help us honor our veterans, especially when they are gone from us, as most of them have already flown west.

Very sincerely,

—Frank Alfter

TAPS

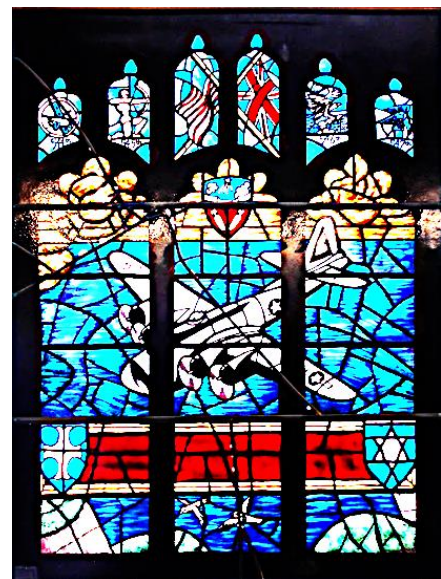
We do our best to keep everyone updated when a 384th veteran flies west. Here are the latest obituaries, as of March 2022.

Sgt. Marlyn R. Bonacker, tail gunner, 544th squadron, 2 missions (25 March-6 April 1945). Died 29 December 2021, aged 95. Sgt. Bonacker was the sole survivor of a mid-air collision at Leipzig when his aircraft, called RUTH, collided with an unnamed 544th B-17 (43-39164), which also crashed with only three survivors. Bonacker went on to serve three decades, retiring from the U.S. Air Force in 1975. He attended reunions, and was interviewed many times about his experiences.

Sgt. Harold Jack Ness, armorer, 545th squadron, joined the 384th at its formation in January 1943 and served with the group throughout its tenure. Died 15 January 2022, aged 99.

If you know of a 384th veteran's passing, please write our editor, Paul Furiga (paul.furiga@wordwritepr.com or 222 Courtney Place, Wexford, PA 15090).

March 2022



The plan for the 384th Bomb Group museum at Grafton Underwood

In the not-too-distant future, a museum dedicated to the 384th Bombardment Group in World War II will rise on the site of the Grafton Underwood Airfield.

The 384th Bombardment Group Museum, incorporating the original WWII Operations Block and Norden Bombsight Store buildings, with a reconstructed Group HQ Nissen Hut serving as the Visitor Centre, will educate visitors with reminders of the struggle to defend freedom in the dark days of WWII.

The prime focus of the museum will be the 384th BG as an exemplar of the war in the air over Europe.

The Friends of the 384th have been working intensively to prepare the area around the proposed museum site for a year (in addition to the cleanups they did in advance of our 2019 Reunion).

Behind the scenes, in cooperation with the Boughton Estate, the Friends have reached an agreement on the purchase of the two buildings and to lease the land the site occupies.

Their development plan includes initial purchase of the buildings (indicated in red boxes in the illustration above right) and leasing the land. Later efforts will focus on installing utilities, stabilizing the purchased buildings and converting them to exhibit space, constructing a new Group HQ Nissen Hut on its wartime foundation, creating a car park, and additional related development (indicated in the yellow box in the illustration above).



The photo at left, from 2015, shows what the proposed Museum site looked like at that time. This is what the Friends started with, imagining a fully operational historical Museum emerging from the overgrowth of time.



The Operations Block building is seen inside the highlighted oval, while the Norden Bombsight Store building is at the top, just to the left of the electricity pylon, completely hidden by over 70-years of vegetation growth.

The Friends' vision of the future is strong, and their commitment is equal to the task.

While much needs to be done, the Friends are working hard toward welcoming us to the Museum in 2023, during our intended reunion in England, for a visit and ceremonial first U.S. flag-raising

at the site by 384th NexGens. The many hands of the Friends of the 384th are at work to bring this Museum into existence for the men of the 384th.

— Fred Preller

The specifics of the 384th museum finances and our fundraising effort

In the decades since the last B-17 left Grafton Underwood, the one missing element for those of us who seek to honor the courage and accomplishments of the 384th Bomb Group has been a museum on the airfield commemorating the service and sacrifice of so many.

The Friends of the 384th formed in 2019 for the express purpose of creating such an institution, to be named the "384th Bombardment Group Museum." They have been hard at work ever since to make that happen. The time has come for the 384th Bomb Group, Inc., to join with the Friends to enable them to achieve their goal. We now have the opportunity, as current custodians of the organization founded by our dads, uncles, grandfathers, etc., to finally bring their dream to life.

While the purchase of the buildings will amount to about \$55,000 in 2022, Neill Howarth of the Friends estimates the full cost of the first phase of Museum development (described on **page 3**) will require up to an additional \$350,000 in the next few years. Between The Friends of the 384th and the 384th Bomb Group, Inc., those funding goals are reachable if members of both organizations commit to the success of this joint project. The Board, recognizing the significance of this project, strongly challenges members and other friends to contribute generously to the Museum Project.



The Operations Block, after much clearing by the Friends, early 2022

A donation – no matter how much or how little – will make clear this project is very important to a large number of people.

With the impending purchase of the wartime buildings – the "Operations Block" and the "Norden Bombsight Store" – at Grafton Underwood by The Friends of the 384th, the 384th Bomb Group, Inc. Board of Directors has established a fundraising effort to support this once-in-a-lifetime undertaking.

The Board plans to initiate support with a pledge from our treasury. For the convenience of members and others in the U.S. to contribute to the building fund, our treasurer, Ray Lustig, will accept, accumulate, and account for funds for the Museum, which will be transferred to the Friends on an as-needed basis. Updates will be posted on the 384thBombGroup.com website.

As The Friends of the 384th ramp up their fundraising efforts in the U.K., here is how to make sure your contributions count:

- Send a check to our Treasurer, address on the back page of this newsletter, and write Museum on the memo line.
- Use PayPal to contribute online to MuseumSupport@384thBombGroup.com. PayPal charges a small fee so you may prefer to send a check, especially for larger donations.

Please remember this is your opportunity to make a difference, to build a lasting reminder that will educate generations to come on what the 384th did in WWII as part of the overall allied effort to defeat tyranny.

Venit Tempus – The Time Has Come

—Fred Preller

Friends museum fundraising campaign earns coverage from Northamptonshire Telegraph

The official kick-off for the 384th Bomb Group Museum effort in the United Kingdom came with a feature news story in the local daily newspaper, The Northamptonshire Telegraph.

Under a headline reading "Grafton Underwood airbase museum dream one step closer," reporter Alison Bagley broke the news about the nonprofit charity status for Friends of the 384th and the museum fundraising campaign.

"It has been an unbelievable last two years with everything that has been going on," Friends chairman Neill Howarth told the newspaper. "Thankfully, Boughton Estate, who owns the land and buildings, allowed pre-development site clearance by a dedicated team of volunteers to take place. This has helped to put us in a position to move forward."

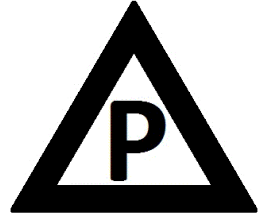
As many 384th vets, families and friends know, Grafton Underwood was the airfield for the first U.S. bombs dropped on Hitler's Fortress Europe and the last to be dropped on Nazi Germany before surrender. At full strength, the airfield had 4,000 U.S. personnel, aircrew and ground crew. Of the many thousands who served in the 384th, 1,579 were lost.

"There is so much interest in the airfield from children and grandchildren of those who were actually there," Neill told the paper, "and they love it when they can walk where their fathers and grandfathers once walked."

—Paul Furiga



384TH BOMB GROUP, INC.
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
AND MUSEUM DONATION FORM



NAME _____ SPOUSE _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP/POSTAL CODE _____
COUNTRY _____
TEL/CELL _____ EMAIL _____

ARE YOU A 384TH VETERAN? YES / NO IF YES: UNIT _____ DUTY _____
IF YOU ARE A RELATIVE OF A 384TH VETERAN, PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING:
VETERAN'S NAME _____ HIS UNIT _____ HIS DUTY _____
FAMILY RELATIONSHIP _____
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION _____

IF NOT A RELATIVE OF A VETERAN, PLEASE INDICATE THE SOURCE OF YOUR INTEREST:
FRIEND _____ RESEARCHER _____ HISTORIAN _____ WWII INTEREST _____ UK FRIENDS OF THE 384TH
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION _____

Annual Dues are \$25.00: membership is renewed EACH YEAR on January 1.

Contribute to the 384th Bomb Group Museum Fund-Raising Drive*: Amount: \$_____ Anonymous? Yes / No

* See information about the Museum Fund-Raising Drive on the website at 384TH AIRFIELD → The Museum
Send via PayPal or make check payable to **384th Bomb Group, Inc.**; indicate the check purpose in the memo.

Send via PayPal to: Payments@384thBombGroup.com

You must indicate the intended purpose of the funds being sent by adding a note to your payment. Use "Dues", "Museum", or "Purchases" to identify the proper crediting of your payments.

Mail checks to: RAY LUSTIG, TREASURER
384TH BG INC.
128 ULSTER AVENUE
WALDEN, NY 12586

Know your 384th Bomb Group, Inc. 2022 Officers and Board of Directors

Chairman of the Board	Peter Bielskis
President	Frank Alfter
Senior Vice President	Bill O'Leary
Senior Vice President	Len Estrin
Secretary	Carol Alfter
Treasurer	Ray Lustig
Member at Large	Chris Wilkinson
Member at Large	Dennis Bielskis
Member at Large	Thomas Swift
Member at Large	Fred Preller
Member/Newsletter Editor	Paul Furiga

The 384th Bomb Group, Inc. is a non-profit veterans organization based in Ohio. Membership includes the quarterly newsletter for \$25, renewed yearly in January.

2022 DUES INFORMATION

Our 2022 treasurer is Ray Lustig.

Please send dues to:

Ray Lustig, Treasurer, 384th Bomb Group, Inc.
128 Ulster Avenue
Walden, NY 12586

Questions? Contact Ray at rlustig@hvc.rr.com

Thank you for your help in ensuring that the group activities are financially supported.

Here's how to contribute to the 384th Bombardment Group Museum at GU

Now that The Friends of the 384th can receive donations for the 384th Bomb Group Museum, the 384th Bomb Group, Inc. is able to receive, accumulate and segregate donations until such time as it is appropriate to disburse funds to build the Museum.

We encourage all who care about the 384th and the service and sacrifice of those who served to donate. All donations – no matter how large or how small – will help bring this museum to life.

You have two options to contribute: PayPal or personal check.

Send via PayPal to **Payments@384thBombGroup.com**.

Or mail your personal check to our treasurer:

Ray Lustig, Treasurer, 384th Bomb Group, Inc.
128 Ulster Avenue
Walden, NY 12586

Be sure to add a note to your PayPal transaction or the **Memo** line on your check, that this is for the **Museum**.

384TH BOMB GROUP, INC.
1306 ADAMS WAY
BEAVERCREEK, OH 45434



"Keep The Show On The Road..."

We're on the Web at: www.384thbombgroup.com