

The Final Flight of Flying Fortress 'CHOO-Z-SUZY'

The History Society began its winter season with a fascinating account of the end of Choo-Z-Suzy's wartime service. Completed in February 1944 at Long Beach, California, the aircraft arrived at Thurleigh near Bedford on April 1st and was soon involved in bombing missions. Initially many of these were against enemy positions in France but soon concentrated on military sites in Germany. Some of these raids were against V weapon sites and once the rocket site at Peenemunde was attacked. One report revealed that the aircraft consumed fuel at the rate of 264 gallons per hour! Its



80th mission was part of a mass raid of 1275 bombers along with 606 fighter escorts on Koblenz. On the return flight a fire was reported in the nose of the aircraft so they circled over this area, the crew bailed out and the pilot Paul Reiox set the controls and followed them. They mostly landed close to the former Ovaltine factory in Kings Langley; three were uninjured but others had burns and were taken to the American base at Bovingdon, the badly burned pilot was taken to the Peace Memorial hospital in Watford but sadly the bombardier had

jumped without a parachute and his body was recovered from a garden in Tom's Lane.

The blazing aircraft flew on and crashed at 3.30pm in woodland forming part of the Building Research Station in Garston. The area was soon cordoned off and the wreckage was removed within a few days. Photographs show the devastation to the aircraft caused both by the fire and the crash. Over the years various BRS staff walked over the site and picked up small fragments but nothing much happened until 2014 when a chance conversation caused a group, led by the speaker Chris

Scivyer, to carry out a more thorough investigation during which they found many more fragments, some of which carried identification numbers. From these he began an amazing search on the internet which revealed the details of the aircraft and crew. He has made contact with descendants of the crew, indeed one member is still alive in his 90's, and after an exhaustive search found that the one crewman to be killed, Milton Olshewitz, had been buried with his parents back home in Indianapolis.

Philip Buller