



**Friends of the New Forest Airfield member Patty Ashley from Rocklin, California visits the New Forest and Brittany to walk in the footsteps of her Father, Major (later Colonel) William (Bill) Jones, who served as the CO of the 393<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Squadron, part of the 367<sup>st</sup> Fighter Group at Stoney Cross airfield in 1944 and who evaded capture for two months after being shot down on a mission over Brittany.**

It was over two years ago that I began planning a trip to the UK and France to see where my dad had served in the New Forest, and to meet the families of some of the very brave French men and women who helped him evade capture for two months and then return to England under Operation Bonaparte.



Major Bill Jones CO 393 Squadron USAAF



Patty Ashley

Dad was based at Stoney Cross, I found it incredible to be able to see where this was and to wonder at the beauty of the New Forest and the sheer size of the airfields. Until I saw the remains of the runway at Holmsley South I had no real concept of the size of the runways.

Dad was the CO of the 393<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Squadron until he was shot down over Brittany, just before D-Day. He survived bailing out of his burning P-38 Lightning and was helped evade

capture and escape back to England by many very brave French men and women and members of the British Special Forces

I was also delighted to visit what remains of RAF Ibsley. My Dad's Group moved to Ibsley after he was shot down in Brittany, so he never flew from there, but it was lovely to see the lakes and the tranquil setting that now occupies the ground that was once a busy airfield.



*Patty at the RAF Ibsley Memorial*



*Patty at RAF Ibsley*



*Patty with Edward Sault of the BBC and Steve Williams, Treasurer of FONFA*

I was thrilled to be able to visit the Domestic Site of Holmsley South airfield and am very grateful to Martin Baily and his wife Jan for their gracious hospitality and the opportunity to visit some of the remains of the once busy airfield, not to mention their gorgeous home.



*Martin Baily shows Patty around the Domestic Site at Holmsley South*





My visit to the New Forest Airfields Memorial was very moving, thinking about the many young men and women who served in this area during 1943 and 1944. It is wonderful to see that their service is commemorated in such a magnificent way. The FONFA Heritage Centre is amazing, so much information in such a small space. Dave and Edwin looked after me very well and I was able to see exhibits relating to people I had heard of, like Lt Norris who flew with my dad's squadron.



*Patty with the FONFA team at the Heritage Centre*



Thank you to Steve and Margaret for making this visit possible. Thank you all for permitting me to share a bit of your lovely homeland and of course the airfields. Thanks to you and the FONFA volunteers for making this possible and for preserving the memories in the New Forest.

Patty Ashley

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