

## THE STORY BEHIND THE THREE BOOKS: USAAF STATION 526

During the late 1990`s, I would often go for a walk around Bures Hamlet including the area around Bakers Hall and Butlers Farm.

Turning left from the Colne Road into Bakers Hall, there seemed to be the remnants of concrete slabs placed at regular intervals beside the roadway. In some cases, these had been broken up leaving large amounts of hardcore which was being used by the local farmer for road-building.

There was also a concrete road in a perfect straight line across a field, heading in the Mount Bures direction which came to an abrupt halt, before it reached the distant hedge-line. In my book it was called "the road to nowhere" At the rear of Butlers Farm, there was a similar concrete road but this time in a 360deg loop. But why ?

I thought no more about this until 2005 when I was talking to an elderly neighbour Trevor, when I mentioned the subject of these strange roadways.

Trevor`s eyes lit up, he suggested we take a trip in his car and he could point out even more anomalies around the area between Hamlet and Pebmarsh. For the next two hours, we journeyed down country lanes, trudged across fields, clambered over fences into woods as well looking at odd pieces of abandoned concrete.

Trevor would say " *there is a gap in that hedge because it was the entrance to a field which was full of Nissen Huts.* On hearing that thousands of High Explosive bombs had been stored in the area over the period 1943 – 1945, I was more than intrigued.

I subsequently searched the internet about these bombs being stored at Bures, but I came up with nothing.

I then logged into the Imperial War Museum database to find that Bures had been given the designation "USAAF Station 526 and Bures Ordnance Depot 526"

Even with these Station Numbers, the internet still revealed no results. However, I did find mention of them on a "WW2 Forum" but the material was all conjecture, hearsay and totally unreliable.

Bombs were not stored on Airfields, but away in the countryside away from the prying eyes of the Luftwaffe,

My only recourse was to track down local residents, who could recall anything they could remember about the USAAF being in the area during the war.

From 2005 until 2019 I must have interviewed well over eighty people living as far away as Braintree documenting all their memories. I even managed to track down a train driver (Bill Lincoln) in Colchester who delivered the munitions by train passing along the Sudbury to Marks Tey branch line.

The book was finally published with 102 pages during **2019** which was an instant success.

I sent complimentary copies to the Essex and Suffolk County Records Office,

I was very fortunate with the Chelmsford RO, as the book landed on the desk of the County Military Historian, who admitted he knew nothing about the Bures Bomb Depot. So, with a mutual interest we became very good friends.

He offered me free access to the County Graphics Department who could suggest minor improvements to the layout and maps in the book if I were to publish a reprint. This was good news as I desperately needed expert advice

I received several orders from the USA, which resulted in numerous contacts who had family members billeted in Bures. These families also advised me what databases in the States to interrogate, which did reveal a lot new information. Typically, the USAAF Unit numbers deployed in Bures.

In 2004, the Bures History Society published a book " Bures during the Second World War " but with no mention of the Ammunition Depot. The Chairman admitted to me " *they knew very little about it*"

**2020, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition book** was published with 16 pages of additional information and enhanced mapping. Unbelievably, this generated more donations of new material.

**2022, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.** With yet more information surfacing, this increased the number of pages to 144.

By now total sales had passed 500 copies which exceeded all expectations.

**June 2024** – with continued demand for the book, a further reprint of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed was undertaken.

If I were to start this research today, it would be impossible as the entire generation of elderly people who I interviewed back in 2005 and onwards, have most probably passed-away

This book is unique as detailed information of a local Forward Ammunition Depot has never been published or covered in so much depth before.