

TIGHAR TRACKS

THE JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL GROUP FOR HISTORIC AIRCRAFT RECOVERY





**REAL
Research
REAL
Science
REAL
Answers**

ABOUT TIGHAR

TIGHAR (pronounced “tiger”) is the acronym for The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery, a non-profit foundation dedicated to promoting responsible aviation archaeology and historic preservation. TIGHAR’s activities include:

- ◆ Compiling and verifying reports of rare and historic aircraft surviving in remote areas.
- ◆ Conducting investigations, recoveries, and educational missions in co-operation with museums and collections worldwide.
- ◆ Serving as a voice for integrity, responsibility, and professionalism in the field of aviation historic preservation.

TIGHAR maintains no collection of its own, nor does it engage in the restoration or buying and selling of artifacts. The foundation devotes its resources to the saving of endangered historic aircraft wherever they may be found, and to the education of the international public in the need to preserve the relics of the history of flight.

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ON THE COVER

Major Glenn Miller, USAAF. Photo courtesy <https://dirkdeklein.net/category/glen-miller>

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Thanks to generous contributions to the Glenn Miller Research Fund, TIGHAR has been able to piece together the known facts relating to the disappearance of iconic band leader Major Glenn Miller. The information was drawn from primary source material uncovered by TIGHAR researchers Arthur Rypinski; Lew Toulmin; LCDR Bob Brandenburg, USN (ret); Lt. Col. Chris Foltz, USAF; Dennis Spragg (author of *Glenn Miller Declassified* [Potomac Books, 2017]); and TIGHAR contacts in the United Kingdom. Many questions remain, but the circumstances that resulted in the fatal flight are well established, as are the events that contributed to the myth that the flight was brought down by friendly fire.

For the present, our ability to say what happened ends at 1:55pm on December 15, 1944 when the C-64 Norseman carrying Miller took off from a small airfield in England and headed for France. What we know for certain is that the weather was terrible, the flight was not properly authorized, the pilot was not

qualified, and Miller should not have been aboard.

Assessing the possibility that the wreck a fisherman briefly pulled from the English Channel circa 1987 was the Miller aircraft is necessarily speculative. An informed assessment of whether the plane could have reasonably gone down where the fisherman encountered the wreck requires not only an accurate understanding of the regulatory and physical environment in which the flight took place, but also an appreciation of the human factors that influence a pilot's decisions under those circumstances. For the latter, I have drawn on my experience as an aviation accident investigator and 5,000-plus hours as pilot-in-command of single engine aircraft, some (too many) of which were spent in similar situations. Any errors in interpretation are solely my own.

Executive Director



No photo of the aircraft in which Glenn Miller was lost is known to exist but this wartime photo shows a C-64A only 30 serial numbers later. This aircraft served with the Eighth Air Force in England at the same time as 44-70285.

TIGHAR Investigative Report, Phase 1: What Really Happened to Glenn Miller?



As England looked forward to its sixth Christmas under the cloud of war, victory seemed to be just around the corner. The Allies had landed in Normandy the previous June and by the end of August had liberated Paris. In September, Operation Market Garden tried to go “a bridge too far,” but by mid-December Belgium had been liberated and Patton’s Third Army was expected to soon be rolling through Germany.

The Allied strategic bombing offensive supported by long-range fighters had so depleted the defensive capabilities of the Luftwaffe that some 8th Air Force missions bombed their targets without encountering a single German fighter, and RAF Bomber Command was now flying in broad daylight.

Combat missions were tracked as far as possible into enemy airspace by radar stations along the English coast, but there was no radar monitoring of administrative traffic over southern England, nor of flights back and forth to liberated destinations on the Continent – usually referred to as the “Far Shore.”

On the ground in England, the threat of invasion was long past, and earlier that month the British Home Guard had been ordered to stand down. The Royal Observer Corps, so crucial during the Blitz, now watched for in-coming V-1 flying bombs and logged sightings and hearings of the dense Allied air traffic generated by the 440 airfields that dotted Britain.

On the day Miller disappeared bad weather kept some combat squadrons grounded, and those that did fly either bombed using radar or aborted and jettisoned their loads in the Channel on the way home. No one saw the massive Reich counter-offensive assembling in the wintry mists of the Ardennes. The next morning, December 16, the Panzers would launch what would become known as the Battle of the Bulge.

Keep ‘em Flying

Miller was one of two passengers aboard a C-64A Norseman flown by Flight Officer J. Stuart Morgan. The central figure on the flight was the other passenger, Lt. Col. Norman Baessell.

Baessell, age 44, although not a pilot, was an important figure in the Eighth Air Force. His civilian background as a construction contractor and civil engineer made him a valuable asset in the building of airfields and the administration of logistical support facilities. In March 1944 Baessell was made commanding officer of Headquarters Squadron, Eighth Air Force Service Command in charge of maintenance and repair for all Eighth Air Force bomber and fighter groups. His job was, quite literally, to “keep ‘em flying.”

Loud, profane, and domineering, Norman Baessell administered his command from Milton Ernest Hall, known colloquially as “the Castle” – a grand 19th century country house in Bedfordshire



Lt. Col. Norman F. Baessell. Photo courtesy Dennis Spragg.

forty miles north of London. Baessell had a taste for high living and, according to Dennis Spragg, author of the meticulously researched *Glenn Miller – Declassified*, ran his headquarters “like a private country club.”

In July 1944, Milton Ernest Hall became home to the newly arrived American Band of the Allied Expeditionary Force led by Major Alton Glenn Miller. Baessell and Miller naturally became acquainted and the band frequently performed concerts for the staff and visiting senior officers.

By August 1944, the Allied presence in parts of Belgium and France was secure enough that Eighth Air Force Service Command decided it was time to establish repair depots on captured airfields where aircraft returning from combat missions too shot-up to make it across the Channel could find refuge. Lt. Col. Baessell was assigned the task of scouting out appropriate airfields, repairing the extensive bomb damage, and setting up the new facilities.

To accomplish his mission, Baessell had to make frequent trips from the Castle to the Far Shore. Air Transport Command (ATC) ran a regular shuttle service across the Channel with C-47s and C-46s from Bovingdon Airdrome twenty miles northwest of London to Orly Aerodrome ten miles south of Paris, but Baessell needed more flexibility.

His 2nd Strategic Air Depot at Alconbury airfield, twenty miles from the Castle, had access to C-64 Norseman aircraft. When Baessell had business on the Far Shore he requisitioned a C-64 and pilot from Alconbury to provide him with personal transportation. He usually had the pilot pick him up at Twinwood Farm, an RAF nightfighter base just a few miles from the Castle.

Between September and December 1944, Baessell traveled across the Channel many times, sometimes alone, sometimes accompanied by others, not always in the same C-64 and not always with the same pilot. By regulation, these trips required an authorization from Baessell’s boss, the commanding officer of Eighth Air Force Service Command, counter-signed by the CO’s Adjutant, but Baessell routinely disregarded that process and signed his own flight authorizations. FO Stuart Morgan was his most frequent choice as pilot.

Pee Wee

John Stuart Morgan’s family emigrated to the U.S. from Scotland in 1926 when he was four years old. When war came, teen-aged Stuart wanted to fly but lacked the education to qualify for pilot training in the U.S. In 1942, at 19, he went to Canada and joined the RCAF. Graduating from Primary and Secondary flight training in Harvards (North American AT-6) as a Sergeant Pilot, he was sent to England where he continued his training in Airspeed Oxford aircraft. Known as “Pee Wee” to his friends, Morgan was



Flight Officer John Stuart Morgan. Photo courtesy Dennis Spragg.

cheerful by nature and considered conscientious, polite, and dedicated. Like most pilots, he longed for a combat assignment.

In May 1943, Morgan transferred to the U.S. Army Air Forces as a Flight Officer. The AAF created the rank of Flight Officer in 1942 to accommodate U.S. Army glider pilots, navigators who did not qualify for pilot training, and non-commissioned pilots transferring from other forces. Sometimes known as “third lieutenants,” FOs were accorded the same privileges as commissioned officers.

RAF and Commonwealth pilots transferring to the AAF had to complete transitional training. Morgan was qualified to fly in IFR (Instrument Flight Rules) conditions, but he was reportedly uncomfortable “on the gauges” and did not have the 1,500 hours required for a full Instrument Rating.

After transition training, Morgan was assigned to various transport squadrons delivering packages, parts and personnel to destinations around England and, after D-Day, to the Far Shore in Noorduy C-64 Norseman aircraft. In 1943 and '44, some 212 C-64s served with the Eighth and Ninth Air Force. The slow but sturdy Norseman – a 1935 Canadian bush-plane design – served as a flying staff car and pick-up truck.

In September 1944, FO Morgan became assistant engineering officer for the Air Depot Group at 2nd Strategic Air Depot, Alconbury, and began serving as Baessell’s primary pilot for trips to the Far Shore. Stuart Morgan, at age 22 with nearly 18 months as an aerial limo driver, was eager to move on to combat flying before the war ended. He would be eligible for promotion to Second Lieutenant in January 1945 and his frequent passenger was an officer with considerable influence.

In early December 1944, Morgan was in Paris with Baessell who was finalizing arrangements for a Strategic Air Depot on the Continent. On December 10, Baessell was summoned back to England by the new commanding officer of the Eighth Air Force Service Command, Col. James Early, to discuss the new facility. Early told the Lt. Col. that it was urgent that agreements with other commands on the Continent be completed before a staff meeting scheduled for December 16. Feeling the pressure from his new boss, Baessell planned to have Morgan fly him back to Paris the next day, December 11, but Alconbury was closed due to low weather and the forecast for the rest of the week was iffy at best. Baessell was determined to head for France at the first break in the weather.

Impatience

Glenn Miller, too, was desperate to get to the Far Shore. The band had travel orders to fly to Paris on December 16 to begin a six-week tour on the Continent, and Miller needed to complete billeting, transportation, and mess arrangements before their arrival. Normally such logistical tasks would be handled by his administrative assistant, Lt. Donald Haynes, but Haynes was in the dog house for womanizing and dereliction of duty during an earlier trip to Paris. The director of Troop Broadcasting Services, British Lt. Col. David Niven (yes, that David Niven) would have nothing to do with him and insisted that Miller come over to handle things himself.

Miller had a seat reserved on a C-47 shuttle flight from Bovingdon on Thursday, December 14, but when he got to the terminal that morning he learned the flight had been cancelled due to weather. Flights would not resume until Sunday, the 17th. Frustrated and dejected, Miller returned to his hotel in London.

Baessell, meanwhile, was watching the weather forecasts and saw a chance for some improvement by the next morning. At lunch on the 14th, he ran into Haynes who told him about his boss’s plight. Baessell told Haynes that he thought the weather would pick up and he would be pleased to give Miller a ride to Paris if conditions permitted. Haynes relayed the invitation to Miller. Travel orders be damned, the band leader eagerly accepted.

The 10:00pm forecast for the next morning’s weather over England was not good, but neither was it necessarily prohibitive. A solid overcast at 2,000 feet or lower with multiple layers above was predicted. The wind would be 5 knots from the South with the possibility of intermittent light freezing rain and localized fog. Conditions over the Channel were expected to be 6/10ths to 10/10ths cloud cover with layers up to 24,000 feet. In other words, the weather might be anything from barely acceptable to absolutely horrible. Baessell called Morgan and told him the trip was on.

Potentially deadly weather; two officers willing to bend the rules to get their jobs done; and a young pilot eager to prove his worth. The stage was set for an avoidable disaster.

December 15, 1944

At 8:00am Alconbury was CFR (Contact Flight Rules, same as today's Visual Flight Rules) but conditions were predicted to deteriorate as the day progressed. FO Morgan ordered the flight line to service C-64A, tail number 44-70285, for the anticipated trip and filed a request with the Alconbury air control officer for a clearance to Villacoublay near Paris with an intermediate stop at Twinwood.

To clear the flight, the air control officer needed to see that the trip was authorized and that the pilot was qualified for the route and weather conditions. If all was in order he would register the flight with the Army Air Communications Service air traffic center at Bovington. When the flight took off, a message would be sent to the destination airfield with the aircraft type, tail number, pilot's name, departure time, and ETA. When the flight landed at its destination, a return message would be sent confirming its arrival.

Baessell had self-authorized the flight as was his custom, but there was a problem with Morgan's clearance request. The Alconbury air control officer could not clear him to the Far Shore because all of the Paris area airfields were reporting IFR conditions. A qualified instrument pilot could cross the Channel in CFR weather, but Morgan did not have the full Instrument Rating needed for an IFR clearance. The air control officer set the clearance request aside and told Morgan he would have to wait for a weather update to see if conditions on the Continent improved.

By lunchtime there was still no further word about the Paris weather, but Alconbury was now predicted to go IFR and close by 1:30pm. Morgan had to make a decision. He must either abandon any hope of getting Baessel to Paris today or get out of Alconbury while it was still CFR. He could leave at his own discretion as long as he stayed within 25 miles. Twinwood was only 17 miles away. Morgan decided to "get out of Dodge" while it was still an option. Around noon he phoned the Castle and left word for Baessell that he would be arriving at Twinwood around 1:30.

The early morning weather at Twinwood had been terrible with a 250 foot ceiling, light freezing drizzle, and less than a quarter-mile of visibility in dense fog. By noon the ceiling had risen to 2,000 to 3,000 feet and the visibility had lifted to a still-crummy mile and a half in light mist. By the time Morgan arrived overhead at 1:45 the cloud



Restored wartime control tower, Twinwood Farm.

base was at 2,000 feet and the visibility had picked up enough for him to make a visual approach to Runway 23.

If You Don't Want the Answer, Don't Ask the Question.

When Morgan taxied in and parked on the apron in front of the small control tower, he brought the engine back to idle and set the brake, but he did not shut down and he did not go inside to get the latest weather. Stopping the engine would officially terminate the flight. Continuing on would then require a clearance, and Morgan knew that if the weather in Paris was still IFR, clearance would be denied and the flight would be over.

In fact, the forecast for weather over the Channel called for an overcast at 1,000 feet or lower, intermittent light freezing rain, and localized fog. The Paris area airports were open but only for IFR flights. Had Morgan made another request for clearance to Villacoublay, it would have been declined. His decision to keep the engine running suggests that he had already decided to "scud-run" to France below the overcast and without clearance.

Baessell and Miller, accompanied by Lt. Haynes, walked up to the idling Norseman, threw their B-4 bags into the cabin and climbed aboard, Baessell taking the co-pilot's seat and Miller buckling in on the bench seat behind Morgan. The only record of what was said as Baessell and Miller boarded the aircraft comes from Haynes' 1952 rewrite of a diary he had kept in 1944-45. The original diary was lost or destroyed. According to Haynes, Miller, who was unaccustomed to small airplanes, asked why there

were no parachutes. Baessell replied, “What’s the matter Glenn? Do you want to live forever?” Haynes reportedly then said, “Happy landing, good luck, and I’ll see you in Paris tomorrow.” To which Miller replied, “Thanks Haynsie. I think we’ll need it.”

Haynes secured the cabin door and waved goodbye. Morgan taxied out and, at 1:55 PM, took off. The Twinwood flying control officer, assuming that the pilot was simply continuing the flight on a previously received clearance, watched 44-70285 fade into the murk as it climbed away to the south.



(l to r) Lt. Donald Haynes, Capt. (later Major) A. Glenn Miller, Lt. Col. Norman Baessell. Photo courtesy Dennis Spragg.

Black Hole

Nobody in an official capacity – not the Alconbury air control officer, not the Twinwood air control officer, not the air traffic center at Bovingdon – knew that 44-70285 was on its way to Paris. Villacoublay was not expecting the flight so they did not report its failure to arrive. The Norseman had flown into an administrative black hole.

Continued bad weather the next day kept the regular shuttle to the Far Shore grounded, so Haynes was not able to get to Paris as planned, nor could he confirm Miller’s arrival because the surprise German offense kept the communications

circuits jammed. It was December 18 before Haynes and the band arrived at Orly airport. To their surprise, Miller was not there to greet them. Puzzled, Haynes began making inquiries. Learning that neither Miller nor Baessel had checked in to the hotels where they usually stayed, he became alarmed and alerted his superiors.

When Eighth Air Force Service Command investigated and discovered that Miller, contrary to his travel orders, had left with Baessell in a C-64 bound for the Far Shore they suspected the worst and ordered a search of the usual route. No trace of the missing plane or a life raft was found. The missing flight was assumed to have gone down in the water due to either mechanical or weather-related causes.

On December 23rd, Miller’s wife was notified that her husband was missing. On Christmas Eve, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF) released a statement to the wire services:

“Major Alton Glenn Miller, director of the famous United States Army Air Forces Band, which has been playing in Paris, is reported missing while on a flight from England to Paris. The plane in which he was a passenger left England on December 15 and no trace of it has been found since takeoff. Major Miller, one of the outstanding orchestra leaders of the United States, lived at Tenafly, New Jersey, where his wife presently resides. No members of Major Miller’s band were with him on the missing airplane.”

The Friendly Fire Myth

In 1984, former RAF navigator Fred Shaw related a forty year old recollection of seeing a light aircraft knocked out of the sky by the explosion of a 4,000 pound bomb jettisoned into the English Channel from his Lancaster returning from an aborted mission on December 15, 1944. Shaw felt certain that the unintended casualty was a C-64 Norseman and speculated that he may have witnessed the demise of Glenn Miller.

The story was investigated by British aviation historian and author Roy Nesbit, who found it to be credible. Media coverage soon made the alleged friendly fire incident the most widely accepted answer to the mystery of Miller’s fate. Nesbit died in 2014. However, in researching *Glenn Miller Declassified*, author Dennis Spragg uncovered numerous errors and discrepancies in Shaw’s account and in the historian’s assessment.

Using squadron logs, Nesbit calculated that the time the bomber jettisoned its load matched the time the C-64 carrying Miller could have mistakenly wandered into an approved bomb disposal area, but he erred in assuming the logs used Greenwich Mean Time. In fact, the RAF was using British Summer Time in December 1944. (During summer months Double British Summer Time was used.) The times do not match by at least an hour. Shaw was back on the ground before the Norseman was over the Channel.



Avro Lancaster.

Also, the Lancaster jettisoned its bomb from an altitude of 5,000 feet above 8/10ths cloud cover. Making positive identification of a light airplane glimpsed through a break in the clouds a mile below is problematical to say the least. At the time, Shaw did not report what he later said he saw, nor did anyone else in the seven-man crew. Contrary to Shaw's memory of seeing an explosion, bombs dropped into non-target areas were jettisoned unfused.

Like many legends, the Miller friendly fire myth may have sprung from an actual incident. Norseman 44-70285 was not the only light aircraft trying to cross the Channel under the weather that day. Guided by an RAF Walrus amphibian, seven American Stinson L-1 Vigilant observation aircraft being ferried to the Far Shore were sneaking along under a 300 foot ceiling when the pilots suddenly found their aircraft drenched in the spray thrown up by bombs hurtling down out of the overcast. As told in a February 1, 1945 *Stars and Stripes* article, "Later the mystery



Stinson L-1 Vigilant.

was explained when a break in the overcast showed a flight of Lancasters from which the bombs had been jettisoned, flying high above the cloudbank." Whether the Stinsons or the Lancasters, or both, were a bit off course is not known, but the time of the incident, a little after 1:00pm, matches the time Shaw's Lancaster jettisoned its bomb.

Shaw's flawed recollection fits a psychological phenomenon well known to TIGHAR as "Saipan Syndrome" after the many eyewitnesses who came forward decades after the fact to describe incidents on Saipan related to Amelia Earhart's supposed "capture" by the Japanese.

An individual has an unusual, emotionally stimulating, but unexplained experience. Years, usually many years, later they become aware of a famous mystery that might explain their strange experience. Their mind fills in the gaps in their memory to match the mystery. The positive attention the individual gets for "solving" the famous mystery reinforces their conviction that their unwittingly embellished memory is accurate.

The Official Verdict

No full investigation into the loss of C-64 44-70285 was conducted, but the known facts were presented and witnesses were questioned at a hearing held on January 19, 1945 presided by Col. J.S. Campbell, Eighth Air Force Judge Advocate General. The findings were summarized in a one page memo, originally classified SECRET, dated January 24, 1945.

The official inquiry found that pilot FO John R.S. Morgan had departed Alconbury at approximately 1:25pm, landed at Twinwood at approximately 1:45pm, and departed there at approximately 1:55pm with authorized passenger Lt. Col. Norman F. Baessell and casual passenger Maj. A. Glenn Miller. The flight operations officer at Alconbury confirmed that Morgan's originally intended destination was Villacoublay. The Royal Observer Corps station at Beachey Head reported seeing a C-64 type aircraft at 2:33 p.m. There was no anti-aircraft activity and no evidence of debris or diversion. The aircraft was missing and presumed lost over the English Channel.

The inquiry found that the flight had been dispatched from Alconbury for local contact [visual] operations only. Instrument operations had been denied because of poor contact weather conditions en route including low ceilings and freezing temperatures.

The Fisherman's Tale

As to the cause of the accident, the inquiry found pilot disorientation probable, engine and surface ice probable, and engine failure possible.

The pilot had not confirmed the flight with Eighth Air Force Service Command, Bassell was judged negligent for authorizing the flight, and Miller had not been authorized casual travel.

Finally, the investigation found "State of mind of pilot and passengers questioned."

The Proximate Cause

TIGHAR largely agrees with the Eighth Air Force findings. The loss of C-64 44-70285 was a classic weather-related aviation accident driven by human factors. The proximate cause of the tragedy was the pilot's decision to attempt an extremely dangerous flight without current weather information, without clearance, and without provision for rescue in the event of trouble. His decision, as is so often the case in such accidents, was undoubtedly influenced by his desire to please a demanding, or even bullying, boss. Miller was complicit in his own death only in his error in judgment in accepting Baessell's invitation.

The experience of the seven Stinson L-1s shows that it was possible for light aircraft to make a CFR crossing of the Channel on the afternoon of December 15, 1944. The conditions they encountered were challenging – a 300 foot ceiling and ice due to freezing drizzle (not to mention being inadvertently bombed) – but they made it across. The pilots had been trained as glider pilots and certainly had less experience than FO Morgan, but they were properly cleared and were guided by an RAF amphibian that could have landed and rescued a pilot forced to ditch.

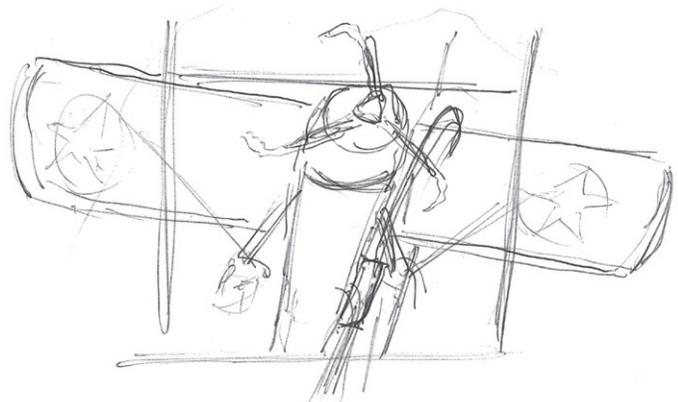
Whatever befell 44-70285 all that can be said with certainty is, "Aircraft missing and presumed lost over English Channel."

The only way to remove the word "presumed" is to find whatever is left of the aircraft. Some clue to exactly why Norseman 44-70285 came to grief may emerge if its wreckage is found, but searching the entire English Channel, or even portions of it that might be considered likely, is not practical. The only course of action that might result in the discovery of Norseman 44-70285 is to try to re-locate the airplane wreck a fisherman briefly pulled up in his net in June of 1986 or '87.

In June of either 1986 or '87, a boat owned and captained by a man we'll call "Mr. Fisher" was trawling for mullet and squid about twenty-three miles off Portland Bill, a sliver of land protruding from the Dorset coast. At a depth of 130 feet on a smooth bottom, the net snagged on something that brought the trawler to a stop. The English Channel is littered with shipwrecks, many of which are charted and carefully avoided, but nothing was recorded in this area. Not wanting to tear up his net, Mr. Fisher judiciously tried to pull free and, after about an hour, the object broke loose. Pulling the net out of the water, he was amazed to see a small, mostly intact aircraft dangling from the A-frame at the stern of the trawler.

Mr. Fisher is an aviation fan and a member of an RC model airplane flying club, so he was fascinated by his unexpected catch. The wreck hung there for upwards of two hours while he tried to decide whether to haul it in for scrap, try to save the nets, or cut it loose. Hauling up wrecks, especially wrecks that may have bodies, is considered bad luck and the deck crew was getting more than a bit antsy, so the lines were cut and the plane returned to the deep, but not before Mr. Fisher made note of the boat's position.

He thought nothing more of the incident until 2014 when the Glenn Miller mystery re-surfaced in the British press. A wartime plane spotter's notebook brought to the popular Antiques Road Show television program was discovered to include a notation of a Norseman aircraft passing overhead on December 15, 1944. The plane carrying Miller is alleged to have been the only Norseman aloft that day and the time of the sighting seemed to match. Mr. Fisher wondered if there was any chance the wreck he pulled up might be the Miller aircraft. A friend in the RC model flying club worked as a volunteer at a



Fisherman's sketch of aircraft hanging from A-frame at trawler's stern. Used by permission.

major UK air museum and he arranged for Mr. Fisher to tell his story to a senior museum official.

The museum official listened with skepticism and queried Mr. Fisher about the details of what he had seen, as best he could remember. The incident pre-dated the era of smart-phones and there was no camera aboard the boat, so there are no photos of the wreck, but the official helped Mr. Fisher make a sketch of the wreck as it appeared hanging off the stern of the trawler, carefully avoiding “leading the witness.”

The sketch depicts a high-wing, strut-braced monoplane with fixed landing gear. The radial engine has a three bladed propeller with bent tips.

All C-64s were powered by a Pratt & Whitney R-1340 Wasp – the same engine that powered Earhart’s Model 10E Electra. Most had two-blade, but some had three-blade, props. Bent prop tips and a largely intact airframe are consistent with a controlled ditching.

Mr. Fisher remembered the color as silver with the remnants of white stars on the underside of the wing. There are no known photos of 44-70285 but, beginning in June of 1944, aircraft arriving from the U.S. were no longer painted in camouflage. The C-64 in which Miller disappeared was delivered to England in late July 1944 and almost certainly remained in its original silver paint scheme.

In the sketch, there is a door on the port side with what Mr. Fisher interpreted as “parachute cords” streaming out. There were several light aircraft types in service in England during WWII but only the C-64 Norseman had a door on the port side. There were no parachutes aboard 44-70285 and, even if there were, they would not be equipped with static lines.

Another Case of Saipan Syndrome?

The sketch the fisherman made of the wreck hanging in the net looks like a C-64, but it was made some thirty years after the event and in the context of his realization that what he saw may have been the Miller aircraft. It is possible, and even likely, that the press accounts that prompted Mr. Fisher to make the connection between his experience and the Miller disappearance included photos of a C-64. If so, those images may have unconsciously colored his recollection. However, without solid contradicting evidence there is no way to be sure his sketch is not an accurate representation of what he saw. We have found no record of any other high-wing, single-engine,

fixed landing gear aircraft with American military markings lost in the Channel during or after WWII.

Location, Location, Location

A key question in whether TIGHAR should consider conducting a search for the fisherman’s wreck is whether the aircraft carrying Miller could reasonably have come to grief at or near the place where the wreck was seen. Answering that question means making an informed assessment of the possibility that Morgan chose a route to the Far Shore that put him in that location.

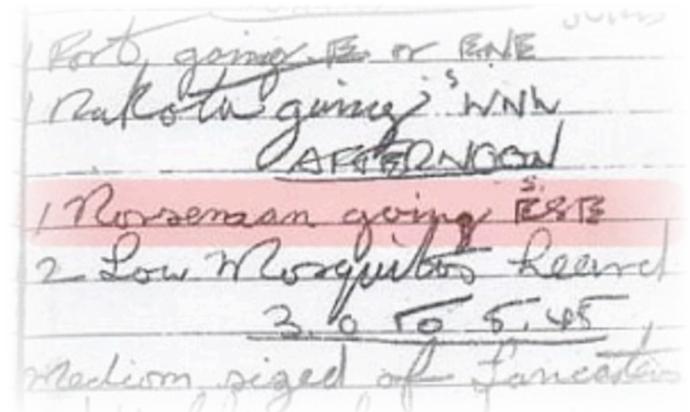
In December 1944 all administrative/transport flights from England to France and vice versa were required to use one of three air corridors – “safe zones” in which aircraft transiting to and from the Far Shore were assumed to be friendly. Aircraft crossing the coast outside those corridors risked being fired on by anti-aircraft batteries (see map next page).

Normally, a flight from Twinwood to Villacoublay would travel via the Amber Corridor, but it is difficult to reconcile that route with the fisherman’s reported wreck location far to the west. If there is firm evidence that Morgan attempted to cross the channel via the Amber Corridor, the fisherman’s wreck can be reasonably discounted as being the plane carrying Glenn Miller and a search for the wreckage is not warranted.

Did Morgan Take the Amber Corridor?

There are good reasons why Morgan may have followed the Amber Corridor. He was familiar with the route, having flown it many times before, and it was safe in that, even without official clearance, he would not be shot at.

In 2014, the logbook of an amateur plane spotter at Woodley, 20 miles west of Bovington Control

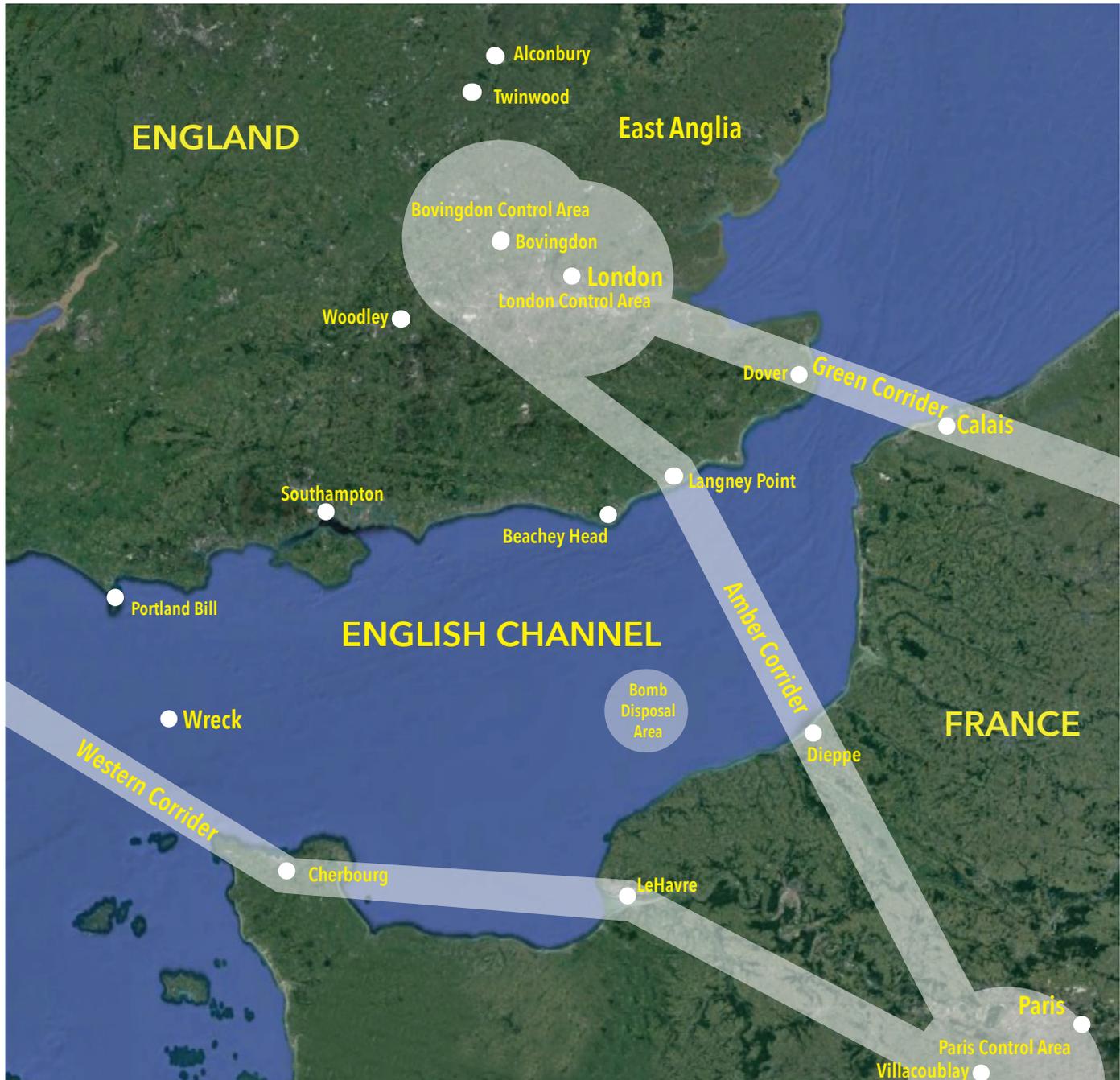


Detail from notebook kept by seventeen year-old amateur plane spotter Richard Anderton.

Area, was discovered to contain a notation that he saw or heard what he believed to be “1 Norseman going ESE” (or possibly SSE) and “2 Low Mosquitos” some time between 12:45pm and 3:00pm on December 15, 1944. If the presumed Norseman was 44-70285 the reported direction suggests Morgan was headed for the Amber Route.

The Eighth Air Force statement of January 24, 1945 mentions a “C-64 type aircraft visual ID 14:33 ROC Beachey Head.” No original Royal Observer Corps record of such a sighting has been found. The ROC station at Beachey Head was 6 miles from Langney Point where the Amber Route crossed the coast.

Approved Safe Flight Corridors, December 1944



Traffic originating in East Anglia bound for Brussels was cleared from the Bovingdon Control Area to the Far Shore via the Green Corridor which crossed the Channel from Dover to Calais. Flights to Paris took the Amber Corridor, crossing the water from Langney Point to Dieppe. Flights to Paris originating in southwestern England crossed the Channel via the Western Corridor from Plymouth to Cherbourg.

Morgan departed Twinwood at 1:55pm. The Beachey Head sighting was reportedly 38 minutes later at 2:33 p.m. The distance from Twinwood to the Beachey Head area via Bovingdon is 108 miles, suggesting an average speed of 170 mph. The published top speed of the C-64 is 162 mph, cruising speed 148 mph. Winds were light out of the south.

If the reported time is accurate, the aircraft seen over Beachey Head cannot be 44-70285. If the identification of the aircraft type seen at or near Beachey Head was correct there was more than one C-64 in the air that afternoon.

The aircraft at Woodley could be the Miller aircraft depending on the time it was seen or heard, but the logbook says only “afternoon” some time after 12:45pm and before 3:00pm.

Morgan may have attempted to cross the Channel via the approved Amber Corridor, but there is no direct evidence that he did so.

Might Morgan Have Crossed at Portland Bill?

For Morgan, the biggest disadvantage to the Amber Corridor was the 67 mile expanse of water between England and France. Water landings in aircraft with fixed landing gear invariably result in the machine flipping inverted. Expected survival time in the 50°F water would be about an hour. A Channel ditching in December meant almost certain death.

Minimizing the portion of the flight spent over water would reduce the risk of a ditching. The shortest crossing was via the Green Corridor with only 20 miles between Dover and Calais but that would mean an uncleared transit of the London area where anti-aircraft batteries were on high alert for incoming V-1 flying bombs. The next-best option was the 58 mile crossing from Portland Bill to Cherbourg and thence to Paris via the Western Corridor. Portland Bill was well west of the defenses against incoming “Buzz Bombs,” the small peninsula presented an easily identifiable landmark in low visibility, and the French coast at Cherbourg was in a safe zone. It would be a longer route to Paris, 402 versus 272 miles (a difference of 54 minutes at 145 mph), but they would still reach Villacoublay before sunset.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Based on the currently available evidence, the wreck the fisherman reportedly hauled up cannot be disqualified as being the Miller aircraft. Is a search justified? Not yet. It may be possible to eliminate the wreck through further research without incurring the expense of a physical search. One question that needs to be answered is whether it is credible that the fabric covering on the C-64’s wings and fuselage could survive as shown in the fisherman’s sketch. The fabric on the control surfaces of submerged American WWII aircraft is typically missing, but the Norseman was built in Canada. What kind of fabric and “dope” were used?

We’ll also need to pin down, as closely as possible, the spot where the wreck was encountered. The fisherman was using a now-antiquated navigation system called “Decca” and an early sat/nav system based on the Decca numbers. With the help of the fisherman and a nautical charts archivist at Her Majesty’s Hydrographic Office it should be possible to determine whether the location matches that of any of the currently known wrecks in the English Channel.

Some 4,700 square nautical miles of bottom in the Western English Channel have been surveyed using magnetometers and side-scan sonar. Surprisingly, not a single airplane wreck, propeller, or engine was encountered, in contrast to numerous virtually intact airplanes found with the same technology in the Straits of Gibraltar and Mediterranean. At this time it is not known whether the surveyed area included the reported wreck location off Portland Bill. If the site has not been surveyed, and if the fisherman’s account of raising an airplane is credible, it would seem to increase the uniqueness of the incident and the possibility that it was the Miller aircraft.

Further research is clearly needed, much of which would be best accomplished by a trip to England. TIGHAR’s ability to continue the investigation will depend upon your contributions to the [Glenn Miller Research Fund](#).



[Donate to the Glenn Miller Research Fund.](#)

Who's In Charge Here?

TIGHAR is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) educational foundation. All of TIGHAR's activities are exercised by or under the direction of a Board of Directors in accordance with established bylaws. To oversee the general affairs of the organization, the Board engages the services of an Executive Committee made up of Executive Director Ric Gillespie and Executive Administrator Pat Thrasher. Ric and Pat are married to each other and are the only full-time employees of the organization. They serve at the Board's pleasure.

The TIGHAR Board of Directors is currently made up of eight men and two women who meet in person at least once a year and electronically as often as necessary. They are, in alphabetical order:

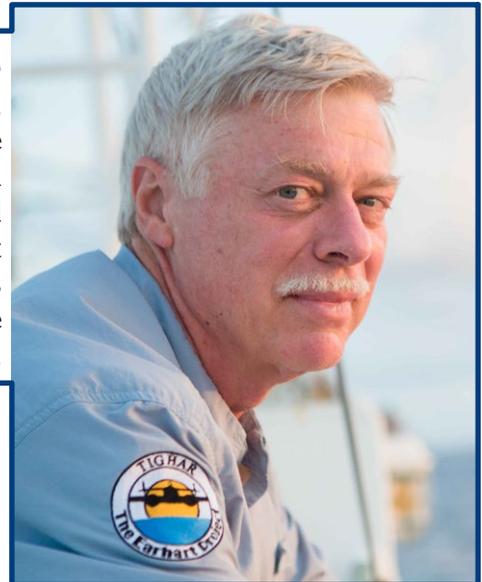


Bill Carter

Bill is a corporate attorney in Boise, Idaho. He has been a TIGHAR member since 1999 and has served on TIGHAR expeditions to Nikumaroro, Tarawa, and Alaska. Bill has been on the TIGHAR Board since 2008 as the organization's legal counsel.

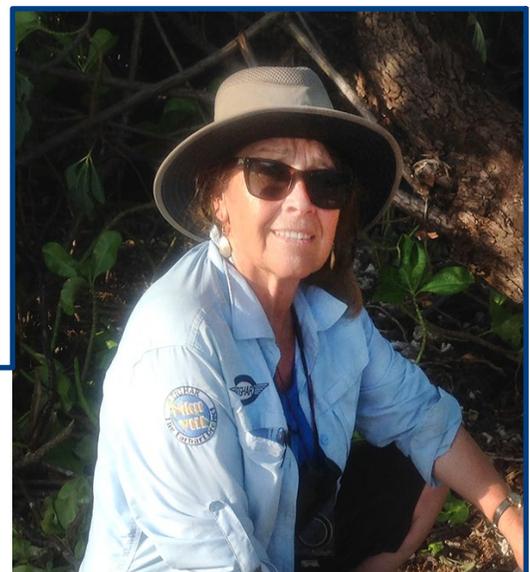
Ric Gillespie

With his wife Pat Thrasher, Ric has led TIGHAR since the organization's founding in 1985. He serves on the Board of Directors but does not vote on issues concerning his remuneration as Executive Director.



Jeff Glickman

Jeff is a forensic imaging specialist in the Seattle, Washington area. He has done photogrammetric analytical work for TIGHAR since 1995 and became a TIGHAR member in 2003. He was elected to the TIGHAR Board this year.



Dawn Johnson

Dawn is an archaeologist in Carmichael, CA. She has been a TIGHAR member since 2009 and has been on two expeditions to Nikumaroro. She was elected to the TIGHAR Board in 2016.



John Masterson

John is an attorney in Casper, Wyoming. From 2013 to 2015, working with Bill Carter, John won complete exoneration for TIGHAR in a groundless lawsuit. He joined TIGHAR in 2014 and was elected to the TIGHAR Board this year.

Andrew McKenna

Andrew is an executive in Boulder, Colorado. He's a pilot, a diver, and has extensive archaeological experience. He joined TIGHAR in 1990 and has served on six expeditions to Nikumaroro. Andrew has been on the TIGHAR Board since 2016.



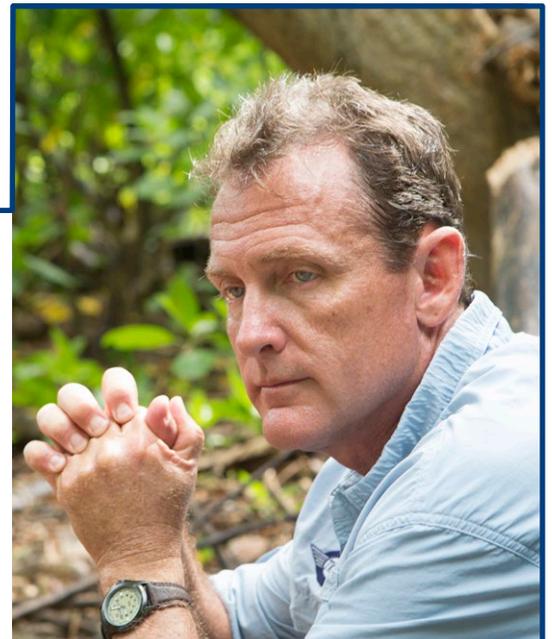
Lee Paynter

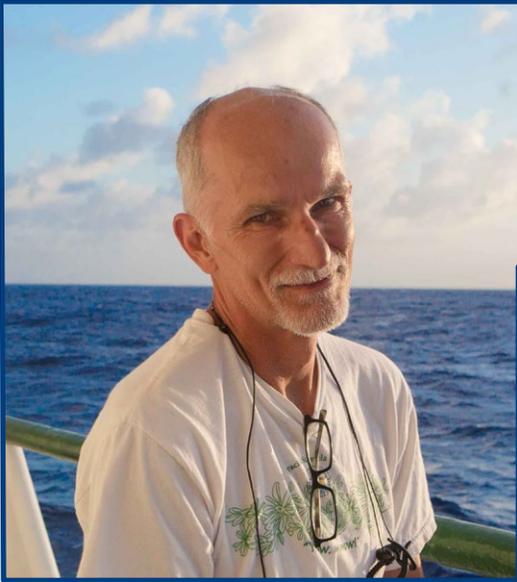
Lee is an executive living in Atglen, Pennsylvania not far from TIGHAR HQ. He's a pilot, diver, and ham radio operator. Lee joined TIGHAR in 2011, and was on the 2015 Nikumaroro team. He was elected to the Board of Directors in 2015 and was elected Chairman the next year.



Gary Quigg

Gary is an archeologist living in Crawfordsville, Indiana. He has been a TIGHAR member since 1990 and has served on TIGHAR expeditions to Maine, Newfoundland, Alaska, Yap, Fiji, the Solomon Islands, and Nikumaroro. Gary is a TIGHAR Field School instructor and the director of TIGHAR's Contract Services Division. He was elected to the TIGHAR Board of Directors this year.





Mark Smith

Mark is a self-employed videographer and producer in Jersey City, New Jersey. He began filming TIGHAR expeditions in 2001 and joined in 2007. Mark produces TIGHAR video content and maintains TIGHAR's extensive video archive. He was elected to the TIGHAR Board of Directors this year.



Pat Thrasher

As Executive Administrator, Pat has managed TIGHAR administration, member services, publications, and website since the organization's founding in 1985. She serves on the Board of Directors but does not vote on issues concerning her remuneration.

TIGHAR Directors serve for a two-year term and may be re-elected. TIGHAR's fiscal year runs from June 30 to July 1. The organization's bylaws and current IRS Form 990 Tax Return are publicly available in the "About TIGHAR" section of the TIGHAR website.



Glenn Miller Research Fund – Phase 2



TIGHAR RESEARCH EXPEDITION TO ENGLAND

MISSION:

ON-THE-GROUND, IN-PERSON RESEARCH TO DETERMINE WHETHER PHASE 3, A PHYSICAL SEARCH FOR THE MILLER AIRCRAFT, IS WARRANTED.

DATE:

DECEMBER 10 TO 17, 2018

OBJECTIVES:

INTERVIEW THE FISHERMAN; RESEARCH AT HM HYDROGRAPHIC OFFICE, TAUNTON, SOMERSET; RESEARCH AT THE GLENN MILLER MUSEUM IN THE RESTORED TWINWOOD AIRFIELD CONTROL TOWER, BEDFORDSHIRE; DETERMINE AVAILABILITY AND COST OF CHARTERED VESSELS AT PORTLAND BILL, DORSET.

CREW:

TIGHAR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIC GILLESPIE, TIGHAR VIDEOGRAPHER MARK SMITH, AND UP TO FIVE SPONSOR TEAM MEMBERS.

To conduct this research expedition we'll need to raise \$25,000 by November 15, 2018. If we're successful, all contributors to the [Glenn Miller Research Fund](#) will receive a video of the expedition.

(Over)



Here's my contribution to the Glenn Miller Research Fund:



Sponsor Team Member:



Contributors of \$5,000 or more have the option of accompanying the expedition on all or any part of the trip.

Name

Address

City State Zip/PC

Country

Card # Exp. Date / CVC

Amount

Daytime Telephone Email



Donate to the
[Glenn Miller Research Fund](http://www.tighar.org)
on line.

You're Invited



The TIGHAR board of directors will be holding its Annual Meeting at TIGHAR Headquarters on Saturday, October 27th. As a TIGHAR member you're invited to attend the meeting from 3:00pm to 5:00pm.

The TIGHAR directors and officers will be eager to hear your comments and answer your questions. If you are unable to come in person we invite you to call in by phone or Skype or, if you prefer, send your comment or question to info@tighar.org to be shared with everyone at the meeting. The public portion of the meeting will be videotaped and made available to all TIGHAR members.

After the meeting, board chairman Lee Paynter will host an informal drinks and dinner TIGHAR Gathering at his farm nearby.

All TIGHAR members in good standing are welcome. There is no fee for attending either the meeting or the dinner but, for planning purposes, we ask that you let us know that you're planning to attend. Please send an email to ric@tighar.org not later than October 15 to say that you're planning to come to the meeting, and whether you will also be coming to the dinner. If you are a vegetarian please let us know. A meat and a vegetarian entrée will be provided.

TIGHAR Headquarters is three miles south of Oxford, PA on PA. Rt. 472, a one hour drive from Philadelphia International Airport (PHL), two hours from Baltimore Washington International (BWI), and half an hour north of Interstate 95. The closest general aviation airport is New Garden Flying Field (N57) 15 minutes away. The Hilton Garden Inn on U.S. Route 1 in Kennett Square, PA is 20 minutes away and a good choice for overnight accommodations. Questions? Call us at [610-467-1937](tel:610-467-1937) during regular business hours, or email us at info@tighar.org.