



THE 448TH BOMB GROUP HISTORY



448th Bomb Group

The origin of what would become the 448th Bomb Group can be traced back to a United States War Department document dated 6th April 1943 which contained a list of Army units that were to be activated. From this list, on 22nd April, Order #58 was issued from Headquarters Second Air Force at Fort George Wright, Washington which outlined how the new Bomb Group would be constructed. This set of orders stated that the core of its Headquarters and constituent 4 Squadrons, to be numbered 712, 713, 714 and 715, would be drafted from the 29th Bombardment Group, then based at Gowen Field, Idaho. The order stated that each squadron shall consist of 11 officers and 58 enlisted men, with the 713th BS having 12 officers. Each squadron would raise one model crew which would be used to train others.

The 29th Bombardment Group, after it was re-equipped with the B24 in 1942 began serving as an Operational Training Group providing aircrew for the war effort. Below right we see an as-yet unnamed crew in training on the B24 at Gowen Field. The B24s that were used for training had large numbers on the fuselage to aid spotters on the ground identifying who was flying, as can be seen behind the crew. The image, below left, is of a postcard and it clearly shows the range of training duties undertaken at the airfield at the time.



Following notification of the impending standing up of the new Group, the immense planning task was begun to make sure the right people were selected to be the initial cadre, and the 29th BG was it. Special Order #151 officially released the 448th cadre from its parent and on the 1st May 1943 at Gowen Field the 448th was activated. Now the hard work was to begin. Following activation, the men headed to the Army Air Forces School of Applied Tactics in the hot and humid skies of Orlando, Florida. The four weeks of training was divided into two phases. The first covered operations, intelligence, and the complexities of command. The second was concerned with flying and operational experience; this 50-hour training limit was undertaken at Pinecastle. Following completion of this phase the 448th was moved to Wendover Field, Utah where it was enlarged further with more air and ground crews and began training for war. This huge training base was in time to be the start of many an air crewman's journey and today it is being preserved to ensure their story is kept alive. Located in the middle of nowhere this was an ideal place as it was devoid of contamination with civilians, as Col. Thompson was heard to remark. Facilities on base were sparse to say the least, but the men were there to train and nothing else.

The image, below left, shows part of the distinctive ramp and tower at Wendover. In this we see a B25 Mitchell bomber, just one of the types that were used here. The huge ramp was often filled with many bomber types; such was the intensity of the training.

The 448th chariot of war would be the B24, and that is what it was introduced to. The model used was the D, which was already in combat overseas. This rugged aircraft was to see many a circuit and bumps by new aircrew and many a complaint was made by locals when they flew too low when they were not to! To aid identification large numbers were painted on the fuselage and we can see this to good effect in the image below.



After a very intense period of initial training a second move saw the Group move to Sioux City, Iowa in mid-September 1943. It was here that the 448th transitioned onto the new B24H, then coming off the production lines. This model introduced a new front turret and many other improvements made necessary by combat experience. These aircraft would be the ones they would go to war with. They were heavier and had more equipment. The training became more intense, more realistic, harder, and more stressful. A final move to combat was not far away.



Whilst the 448th was training to fly, fight and maintain the B24, the necessary steps were being made to ensure the airfield was ready to receive them. To this end the 58th Station Complement Squadron was raised. This vital group, consisting of 200 enlisted men and 6 officers, had representatives of every trade to be found on the airfield. The 448th was made of their aircraft and their own men to keep them flying, but the 58th would be the head of the infrastructure that would keep them all going. William Vickery, of the 58th Station Comp., wrote: "We travelled to the docks at Newport News and were met by the Red Cross who gave us cold tea and a cloth bag with a sewing kit and some cigarettes and a few other odds and ends".

On the 5th September 1943, the 58th Station Complement made up part of the full load of 6,000 troops and civilians as they boarded the General John Pope, pictured left, and sailed unescorted across the Atlantic Ocean. Because of a previous boiler failure, the ship was delayed in leaving



as it awaited repairs, so it missed the convoy. Subsequently it was to endure the trip alone, zigzagging to avoid becoming a victim of the German U-boats that were known to be about. Many men on board were seasick and things didn't get better when the ship encountered a severe storm on the third day. In due course the sea found its way in and some of the holds ended up with about a foot of water. The food on board took a turn for the worse too, according to William Vickery. He described the food as basic; *"a sandwich and oranges as the ship was too unstable to do any cooking"*.

The ship reached the Scottish port of Greenock 8 days later on the 13th September 1943. After disembarking, the unit were to travel down the country by train then truck to Seething. When they arrived, they were greeted by Lt Col V B Cagle and his team of men who had previously been transferred there on 1st September 1943 from Station 114, Hethel, to aid in establishing the Headquarters for the Bomb Group. The sight that greeted the men was of an airfield far from being finished and ready for the still training Bomb Group. That first night there was an air raid over Norwich, and a lone German plane decided to strafe the airfield to welcome the 58th to war.

Even though there was a lot of work to be done, the men stood up to get their own areas in order. In the Tower, they were ably assisted by two RAF men. It was Sgt Reg Dunn, pictured below left, and another colleague who were there



to receive the first USAAF Officers, having themselves been given the keys to the tower at the start of September 1943. Even though the airfield was incomplete, it had already become a sanctuary for several battle-damaged aircraft. It is recorded that three fighters, a Mosquito and a Lancaster quickly found safety. A Wellington is also known to have landed here in the early days, crashing into machinery and a house at the end of the runway. These early arrivals were a foretaste of things to come, the proximity of the airfield to the coast meant there was a steady stream throughout the next 2 years. A most notable damaged visitor was the B17 “Ye Olde Pub” from Kimbolton.

Back stateside, the 448th continued to prepare for war. The start of November saw them leave Sioux City and head to the much colder climate of Herrington Field, Kansas. It was here that they made final preparations for combat overseas. The aircraft received new life rafts, IFF equipment, armour, updated radios and many more items. The aircrew themselves were issued new personal equipment and were subjected to a myriad of paperwork. On the 11th November 1943, as the United Kingdom observed Armistice Day, the first aircraft of the 448th departed Herrington’s runway for the last time to head off along the assigned southern route to England. These heavily overloaded aircraft routed via Morrison Field, Florida to Marrakech, Morocco then up to St Mawgan, Cornwall. The individual tales of everyone’s trips to England would fill many volumes. But they slowly arrived and were soon on the final leg to Seething, a place they would call home.

Meanwhile the ground echelon was on their way, in decidedly less glamorous fashion. These men were moved on a series of military trains via Chicago, Illinois to Camp Shanks in Orangeburg, Buffalo County, New York. On the 23rd November they were finally onboard the famous “Queen Elizabeth”, right, and leaving the Statue Of Liberty behind them. Next stop was Greenock, Scotland, 6 days sail away. Because of the high speed of the “Queen Elizabeth” it sailed the route alone, which must have been very unnerving to all those on board. After they disembarked it was onto more trains and the long tedious trail to Ditchingham station where they transferred onto trucks for the three-mile drive to their new home. It was 1st



December 1943. The Official United States Army Air Forces Record has described the Ground Echelons journey thus:

The Ground Echelon left its home station at Sioux City, Iowa, at 18:00 on 8th November 1943, four days after the Air Echelon left for Herington, Kansas. The Group was alerted at 18:00 and waited all day for a raging blizzard to abate. The storm was so intense that aircraft on the ramp were almost completely covered by the snow drifts. The troop train rode the Illinois Central Railroad as far as Chicago, whereupon the trip was continued on the Grand Trunk & Canadian National Railroad through Port Huron, Michigan, Buffalo and New York. The movement, which lasted two days and two nights was on a special military train and kept secret. No personnel, therefore, were permitted to leave the train at any time enroute.

The Group arrived at Camp Shanks, Orangeburg, New York, at 22:30, 11th November 1943. The trip was very comfortable since the railroad equipment was far above average. Only during the initial half of the journey were the men cold, until the engine produced enough steam to heat the cars. The consensus among the enlisted men was that the food during the trip was very good, thanks going to 1st Lt Mason F Phillips, Adjutant of the 712th Sqn. On detraining, the men marched about 1 mile to their area. Baggage followed up immediately and quarters assigned to all personnel.

The following morning, processing began, lasting for the next four days. During this period, all men were issued proper clothing and equipment not previously furnished. New type gas masks were provided, and all officers and enlisted men were given instructions of the use of the mask and were also taken through the gas chamber. A five-mile hike was accomplished with full field equipment. Other parts of the processing procedure consisted of medical inspection, orientation, security lectures, instructions on censorship; and personnel were given the opportunity to correct or modify their allotment and insurance deductions and to execute other personal and legal papers.

Dry runs were made to ensure that all personnel were familiar with the proper method and order of loading and unloading for both train and transport. The obstacle course was negotiated with a full pack, and a dry run to abandon ship with a full pack was accomplished over a thirty-five-foot tower with rope ladder.

The Group left Camp Shanks, 21st November 1943 and embarked at approximately 10:00 the same day on HMS Queen Elizabeth (Incorrectly named HMS, it was in fact RMS Queen Elizabeth. The real HMS Queen Elizabeth was a Dreadnought Battleship commissioned in 1914 and served until 1948). This vessel was operated by the Royal Canadian Air Force, Capt. A K Aspen, Ships Commandant, in conjunction with the Transportation Corps, U S Army. The ship left New York at 15:30, 23rd November 1943, and six days were spent at sea.

While aboard ship, orderly rooms were established, and ship's internal traffic regulations put into effect. The 712th Sqn and 713th Sqn were assigned K. P. duties for the duration of

the voyage. A schools program was outlined and classes held regularly. Church services were conducted in the Officers Lounge on Sunday. Almost all informative announcements, such as security precautions and alert signals were given to the men by a central public address system.

Morale seemed high. Emergency and action station drills were held each day and executed in a very orderly fashion, considering the numbers of men participating. Aboard ship the Red Cross gave each officer and enlisted man a carton of cigarettes. In addition, the enlisted men were also given a Red Cross kit containing cigarettes, reading material, playing cards, sewing kit and soap.

The HMS Queen Elizabeth dropped anchor in the River Clyde, Scotland, at 05:00, 29th November 1943, and at that time many men had their first view of Scotland. The Group disembarked at 15:15 on 30th November 1943 after having been detailed to police the whole vessel. Upon arrival at Greenock, Scotland, the men were welcomed by the American Red Cross and were given coffee, doughnuts and cigarettes. The highlight of the moment was a "Lassie" of the ARC staff at Toledo, Ohio, who assisted with the refreshments.

The Group left Greenock at 17:30 and the special train arrived at Ditchingham, Norfolk County, England, at 08:00, 1st December 1943. On the train ride to the designated base, the men made use of the day's K rations issued on the transport two days previously. The Group detrained at Ditchingham where Government vehicles were ready to transport the men to Station No. 146 at Seething, Norfolk.

Of the many individuals on the ship wrote about their experiences coming over, Ben Everett's was particularly descriptive:

The boat trip to England in November 1943 was a very memorable trip to me. Not necessarily because of going overseas, but because of the conditions we encountered on the ship. When we came down the Hudson River in New York and I saw the huge grey stern of a ship with the name "Queen Elizabeth" on it I knew we were going to be put on a ship with our destination being England. Boarding was a slow process as we were wearing and carrying all our clothing and gear including weapons etc. We were assigned bunks in an area where there were bunks about four or five high and consisted of a metal frame with a piece of canvas laced to the inside of it. We furnished our own blankets, and our life preserver was our pillow. Of course, you wore your own life preserver wherever you went in the ship.

Shortly after boarding and before we could get settled down, the entire Squadron was called to a meeting in the mess hall. There we were told that the entire Squadron was on K.P. from that moment until we departed the ship. Naturally there was a lot of loud moaning and groaning even though we were told that we were

about the luckiest bunch on the entire ship. It took a few days to realize that we were very lucky indeed. We were lucky to have permanent bunks assigned as most of the troops on the ship had to rotate sleeping quarters.

The greatest part of the deal was that as table waiters in the mess hall, we were allowed to eat ten times a day if we so desired. All the other troops only received two meals a day and that was after standing in line from one to two hours.

Our K.P. buttons allowed us the run of the ship and the extra meals were a godsend. Everyone else was hungry all the time. The food was not what we had been accustomed to. Beans for breakfast may have been fine for the Navy and the British, but it did not sit well with us. After a few days the troops were about ready to eat the paint off the walls!

The fresh water taps were only open for an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon. A person had to stand in line for about half an hour to get a canteen full of water. Coffee was the only beverage served in the mess hall, it came with a little milk and sugar and was made in 50 gallon batches and was terrible stuff.

The only bath facilities on the ship were saltwater showers. There was a special soap to use but after taking one shower everyone said, "no more!". You itched all over and had a most uncomfortable feeling from the saltwater, so we all finally wet a cloth with fresh water and wiped ourselves down in order to get rid of the saltwater residue. By the time we left the ship we were all beginning to smell a little!

The ship crossed the Atlantic without escort and changed course every few minutes, one morning the ship turned very sharply and heeled over at an ungodly angle, we all thought the ship was going to turn over on its side. At first the men eating breakfast grabbed their mess kits, but they soon began to slide down the benches until a person didn't know what to hold onto; either his food or try to stay put on the bench. Trays of food fell on the floor, and it soon became one big mess. Mess hall was truly the proper word, when the fellows started to leave, the floor was covered in slop and there was much slipping and sliding around, I was thankful that morning I was not on the floor swabbing detail.

We were the first ones on and the last ones off. We departed Greenock, Scotland, late one afternoon and after an all-night train ride we arrived somewhere the next morning where we were transported by truck to Seething. We arrived on a beautiful clear day with lots of sunshine, the next morning we awoke to rain and didn't see the sun for about two weeks!



With the arrival of both the aircraft and ground personnel at the same time, Station 146 and the 448th Bombardment Group were complete and here for the duration. Many people would see service here and thousands of stories would be created. The lives of those who lived in and around the airfield would never be the same. Station 146, RAF Seething, is intrinsically linked to a good many locations in South Norfolk.

And then came the peace.....

May the 8th 1945 saw massive celebrations on the base and relief from everyone that they had survived. The remarkable colourised image, left, shows the fireworks and flares being set off. In conclusion, the statistics were both impressive and horrifying. The 448th BG had completed 262 missions, dropped 15,286 tons of munitions, and carried 139 tons of supplies. They had lost a total of 146 aircraft for various reasons and shot down a credible 47 enemy aircraft. The honour roll was listed with 498 names on it, but with the passage of time this number has changed as new research is always being carried out.



The war in Europe had been won. The war was still going on in the Pacific. At Seething, the lack of operations was substituted with discipline. Back in, was Reveille, Retreat, exercise, and drills. Uniform rules were to be maintained and censorship was relaxed. The food, however, became worse. Thoughts were turning to home, made more real when orders were received to make detailed plans for the return trip. The orders stated the aircraft were to carry the crew of ten men and ten passengers and luggage. Those aircraft incapable of the trip home were salvaged.

Finally, on the 5th June 1945 orders were received that laid out the route home for the aircraft. It stated that the aircraft would route out via either RAF Valley, Wales or Prestwick, Scotland, to Bradley Field, Connecticut where the aircraft would be left. The crews were then to proceed onwards to Camp Miles Standish in Boston for processing. And then on the 11th June 1945 it became real. The first aircraft was leaving Seething for home! In a scene repeated at nearly all bases that were leaving, there was great fanfare and goodbyes. The image, right, was taken at Attlebridge but it was typical of what was seen. Once the airmen landed at Bradley Field, they said goodbye to their aircraft and immediately went to the processing centre and then leave. They neither cared for or about the 448th, they were finally back on American soil and home. Meanwhile, back at Seething, once the aircraft were gone, the ground echelon continued their own preparations for home, closing the airfield for the caretakers. Orders were soon received and in short time they left the UK on the liner, 'Queen Mary', leaving 11th July and arriving in New York 6 days later. Like the aircrews, after processing the men were given leave. All were under orders to report to Sioux Falls Airbase, South Dakota for training on the B29 for operations in the Pacific. Whilst the men were on leave, the war in the Pacific was ended with the dropping of the atomic bombs.

Post war service

With the arrival of the 448th Stateside it was reassigned on 5th August 1945 to the Second Air Force for training on the mighty B29 with an aim to move to the Far East. Despite the end of the war, it continued training and stood up its 4 squadrons as a full Bomb Group. The 448th was destined to be one of the original ten Bomb Groups that made up Strategic Air Command when it was formed 21st March 1946. On 4th August 1946 the Bomb Group was inactivated, and the men and aircraft were transferred to the 92nd Bomb Group. This change was brought about by the policy of SAC to use lower numbered Bomb Groups post war. After a very busy 3 years the 448th Bomb Group number plate was finally stood down.



Reactivated in the Reserve 19th April 1947 as a part of Air Defense Command and allocated the B29. At this time, it would seem this was a paper exercise. Reassigned to the Fourth Air Force and redesignated the 448th Bomb Group (Light) 27th June 1949 as a Tactical Air Command (TAC) Unit. As it was under the supervision of the 2347th Air Force Reserve Training Center it was assigned the B26 Invader in addition to other aircraft types available on base, these being



the North American AT6 and Beechcraft AT7 & 11 aircraft. At this time Continental Air Command had control over TAC and all Reserve units. Ordered to active service 17th March 1951 in preparation for Korean War duty. Inactivated 21st March 1951 as the last remaining Reserve personnel were transferred out to other units. With no more personnel the Squadrons and Bomb Group were inactivated.

Redesignated 448th Fighter-Bomber Wing, as part of the Fourteenth Air Force, 12th April 1955 and activated in the Reserve 18th May 1955, replacing the nameplate of the 8708th Pilot Training Wing, where it took over all their aircraft. Under the auspices of the 2683rd Air Reserve Center it utilised the North American T28 Trojan, T33 T-Bird and F80 Shooting Star for training, until 1957 when it transitioned to the F86 Sabre. Shortly afterwards it was inactivated as the Air Force converted its Reserve units to troop carrying duties. The image, right, shows the patch that was made at the time the Wing was converting to the F86 Sabre.



On 31st July 1985 it was redesignated, as part of a paper exercise within Tactical Air Command, the 448th Tactical Fighter Wing but was not activated. On the 31st January 2005 it was reassigned to Air Force Material Command and redesignated the 448th Combat Sustainment Wing and activated 18th February 2005 in this new role at Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center, Tinker AFB, OK. To quote the USAF at the time the mission was to "Plan and Execute the Air Force Supply Chain to Enable Weapon System Employment When and Where Needed". The new designation required a new badge, out was the familiar one from 1944, and in came the one at right. Another change occurred 14th April 2006 when the name was changed to 448th Combat Sustainment Group, better reflecting its multi-location structure. 1st April 2008 the name was changed yet again to its current name of the 448th Supply Chain Management Wing. Assigned to this Wing were 638th Supply Chain Management Group (SCMG), 748th SCMG, 848th SCMG and the 948th SCMG. In this guise the 448th continues today.



To quote the USAF information page about the 448th; "The 448th Supply Chain Management Wing provides the planning and execution of depot-level repairable and consumable spare parts to sustain Air Force Programmed Depot Maintenance operations and more than 5,000 operational aircraft and 16,000 engines across the

globe. The wing also provides spare parts to sustain a credible and responsive Intercontinental Ballistic Missile capability, a wide range of support equipment, and Space and C3I systems. The 448th SCMW is a virtual wing without geographic boundaries, operating within three different time zones, which makes it a “one-of-a-kind” organization. The wing, headquartered at Tinker Air Force Base, consists of three Planning and Execution Groups and one Supply Chain Management Group and employs approximately 3,000 civilian and military personnel dispersed at Tinker AFB, Robins AFB, Georgia and Hill AFB, Utah.”

Assignments

8th Air Force, 1st May 1943 – 5th August 1945
2nd Air Force, 5th August 1945 – 21st March 1946
Strategic Air Command, 21st March 1946 – 4th August 1946
Air Defense Command, 19th April 1947 – 27th June 1949
Forth Air Force, 27th June 1949 – 21st March 1951
Fourteenth Air Force, 12th April 1955 – 16th November 1957
Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center, 18th February 2005 – 1st October 2012
Air Force Sustainment Center, 1st October 2012 - present

Stations

Gowen Field, Idaho, 1st May 1943
Wendover Field, Utah, 4th July 1943
Sioux City AAB, Iowa, 11th September – 7th November 1943
Seething, England, 25th November 1943 – 5th July 1945
Sioux Falls AAFld, South Dakota, 15th July 1945
McCook AAfld, Nebraska, 8th September 1945
Fort Worth AAfld, Texas, 15th December 1945 – 4th August 1946
Long Beach Municipal Airport, California, 27th June 1947 – 21st March 1951
Hensley Field, Texas, 18th May 1955 – 16th November 1957
Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma, 18th February 2005 - Present

Aircraft

Consolidated B24 Liberator, 1943 – 1945
Boeing B29 Superfortress, 1945 – 1946
North American AT6 Texan, 1949 - 1950
Douglas B26 Invader 1949 – 1951
Beechcraft AT7 Navigator, 1949 – 1951
Beechcraft T11 Kansan. 1949 – 1951 (pictured right)
North American T28 Trojan 1950 – 1951 (pictured right)
Lockheed T33 T-Bird, 1955 - 1957
Lockheed F80 Shooting Star, 1955 - 1957
North American F86 Sabre, 1957



Operations

Combat in European Theatre of Operations,
22nd December 1943 to 25th April 1945

Service Streamers

American Theatre

Campaigns

Air Offensive, Europe; Normandy; Northern France; Rhineland;
Ardennes – Alsace; Central Europe

Emblem

The history of the patch is best described by the creator of the design, Colonel James R Patterson, USAF (Retired):

“In late March 1944 all Groups in the 20th Combat Wing (93rd at Hardwick, 446th at Flixton and the 448th at Seething) and other Groups and Organisations within the 2nd Air Division were asked to design and develop Group and Organisational insignia. Such designs were to be the work of individuals within each Organisation and the final selection was to be made by each Commanding Officer. Quite a few designs were submitted for consideration by members of the 448th. Colonel James M Thompson, then Group Commander, launched the contest but never lived to see them, being shot down over Northern France 1st April 1944. Colonel Gerry Mason assumed command of the 448th within a few days thereof and in late May 1944 made the selection of the insignia.

The first use of the insignia was on a Group Meritorious Achievement Certificate signed by the Group Commander and presented to individuals within the Group who had, in the estimation of the Commander and Deputy Commander, earned such recognition.

The nearest printing press capable of multi-colour printing and still capable of producing quality work, and more importantly had not been bombed out, was located at Heston in Middlesex. This press did work for the Allied Services and was contacted in respect to doing this job for the 448th. They agreed, so Colonel Judy and I were dispatched to set up the job, go over the design of the insignia and format the certificate.

No one was more surprised than I to see the design that was selected was the one that I had submitted.”

The image below right shows the winning design in use on a Certificate of Valor as described above. The image below left is the stitched patch, as is used today.



The current insignia was approved on 30 Nov 2005, being updated and approved on 5 Jun 2008. Currently there is no accurate information on its design genesis.

Note: Many and various sources have been used to create this document. It is intended to be as comprehensive as possible and will over time be amended as new information comes to light.