

478th SUB DEPOT

MISSION

LINEAGE

478th Sub Depot

Activated, 4 Jan 1944

Disbanded, 15 Apr 1945

STATIONS

Nuthampstead, Hertfordshire, England

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

Maj Wirt C. Salthouse

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The 478th Sub-depot was activated on January 4 1944 under the authority contained in Paragraph 1, General Orders Number 1, 8th Air Force Service Command. The Unit Commander assigned to the 478th at this time was Major Wirt C. Salthouse, and the unit was assigned to Station 131, Nuthampstead, Hertfordshire. The unit remained inactive until 19th March 1944, although some personnel were assigned as from the 3rd March.

Major Floyd R. Clafford assumed command of the unit on 19th March 1944, relieving Major Salthouse. Major Clafford had previously been assigned to the 440th Sub-depot. On 19th March Major Clafford arrived at Station 131 accompanied by the following officers: - Engineering, Supply, Bomb Sight and Armament, and Adjutant, plus their assistants.

The assignment of further staff to the 478th was under the authority of 8th Air Force Manning Table, dated 21st October 1943.

The month of March was spent in the setting up of administrative procedures for the requisitioning and procurement of all necessary equipment, supplies, and buildings, in order to carry out the work assigned to the Sub-depot. These included two warehouses and various workshops.

The unit was assigned to living site number 6, for both officers and enlisted men, and they shared this area with the Military Police detachment. The first problem encountered were the state of the Ablutions blocks, which lacked both bathing and shower facilities.

April 1944 was primarily spent in organizing the unit, and in ensuring that all workshops were fully equipped. There was much work to be carried out in all the workshops, and also a great deal of building work was undertaken, including the construction of concrete footpaths.

The arrival of the 398th Bombardment Group (Heavy) on April 22nd onwards, equipped with their Boeing B-17G Flying Fortress aircraft, signaled the start of the real job which the 478th was trained for, and the unit received its first damaged aircraft on April 28th.

The 398th commenced flying missions on 6th May, and as a result the Engineering Section received 92 damaged aircraft during the month, of which 90 were returned to flying status by the 31st. The damage sustained by these aircraft was of every type, and degree of severity.

On Sunday May 14th at 0230 a lone enemy raider buzzed the airfield, and strafed enlisted men working on the line, apparently having been attracted by a small light which one of them had been holding. Luckily no one was injured, and only light damage was sustained by the aircraft parked on the ground.

Total number of parts for which requisitions were issued this month was 2671, of which 1434 were not in stock and had to be ordered from supply.

By June 1944 the 478th had 7 officers and 253 enlisted men assigned to it, and the following breakdown of duties is given, along with number of men assigned, in order to show a complete picture of the make-up of the unit:

Engineering Section	
Superintendents	2
Inspectors	3

Office	4
Accessory Shop	6
Carpenter Shop	5
Dope & Fabric Shop	6
Battery Shop	2
Electric Shop	7
Aero Repair Shop	28
Engine Build up Shop	21
Instrument Shop	6
Machine Shop	10
Parachute Shop	10
Propeller Shop	9
Transportation	7
Welding Shop	6
Reclamation Shop	4
Sheet Metal Shop	4

Attached to Group

Armament	5
Hangar Guard	1
Total	181

Supply Section

Office	5
Shipping & Receiving	8
RAF Stores	2
Tech Supply	6
Inventory & Inspection	3
Issue Counter	10
Aqua System	5
Total	39

Administrative Section

Orderly Room	7
Squadron Supply	3
Living Site Details	5
Drivers	2
Total	17

Special Duty Section

Drivers on duty at Base Motor Pool	4
Men detailed for duty with MP Detachment	4
Men detailed for duty with Sta. Defense	8
Total	16

Grand total of all Personnel 253

The Engineering Section worked on 51 aircraft this month, and returned 49 of these back to flying status, with as much as 6 hours overtime per man per day, worked voluntarily. This month also saw the return of a B-17 from a mission suffering serious battle damage, and flown back on two engines. The Ball Turret was missing, plus other parts which had been thrown overboard to lighten the aircraft. This aircraft became the first 'Hangar Queen' and is being salvaged to provide spare parts which are otherwise unobtainable, to be used on other aircraft.

Inspection by Divn. HQ. revealed that the engines of 42-97810, an aircraft which had been idle for seven days, had not been treated for temporary storage. Otherwise inspection was more than satisfactorily completed.

Total number of parts for which requisitions were issued this month was 3509, of which 766 were not in stock and had to be ordered from supply.

The parachute packing section were kept busy this month, with 20 parachute jumps occurring over England alone!

July 1944: Approx. 20 aircraft in for repair this month.

Total number of parts for which requisitions were issued this month was 3489, of which 350 were not in stock and had to be ordered from supply.

August 1944 30 aircraft in at various times for repair.

September 1944, 30,952.25 man hours were expended in repairing damage to 162 aircraft!

Fighter attack damage caused many problems for the Electrical Shop, and also the Accessory Shop. Many hours were spent puzzling over cables damaged by 20mm.shells.

A group photograph of the 478th Sub-depot was taken on 1st September, with everyone assembled outside the hangar, and with a B-17 drawn up behind them for a backdrop.

A Squadron party was held on 9th September, inside one of the Sub-depot hangars.

October 1944 there were 3 aircraft crashes on this Station, one crashed on take-off on 15th, one crashed on landing, and one returned with whole nose blown off. This incident with the aircraft returning with nose blown off, was the worst example of battle damage which anyone had ever seen before.

171 badly battle-damaged aircraft received this month, and the engine shop built up 65 engines.

A Rodeo was held this month, and several of the 478th staff took part in this.

November 1944; Landing accidents kept a crew of Aero Repair & Reclamation Department personnel very busy this month, particularly during the first week of November. Two aircraft became salvage after 'nosing over' on landing.

There were an average of 10 aircraft suffering battle damage, per day, for the first 15 days of the month.

During the last week in November, activities and details cut heavily into the productive man-hours. Coal guard – Utilities detail – Preparation for Inspection by Congressional Party – Awarding of Certificates of Proficiency – Blood donations – Inoculations – Serious illness – Pay Day; all in swift succession, all aided in slowing down production.

December 1944; the 478th Sub-depot was relieved from assignment to 8th Air Force, Service Command, and assigned to 1st Bombardment Division.

Only minimal amount of work received this month, with bad weather keeping the Group grounded a lot of the time.

18 aircraft were received at the start of December, and these were all repaired in 5 days, during the period 7th – 17th there were only 2 aircraft received, and none during the next ten days.

The Sheet Metal and Aero Repair sections have been broken down into 6 crews of 11 men, five sheet metal men – five aero repair – one Crew Chief. Each crew is assigned to an aircraft and they work as a team until all repair work is completed. This scheme enables Sub-depot to release aircraft for operations in the minimum amount of time. 2 crews are on duty at all times, and when there is not enough battle damage on hand, 2 crews are 'alerted' and 2 crews are off duty. Those men not assigned to these crews perform the necessary workshop duties. This crew system prompts the men to work long and hard to get the aircraft back in service as soon as possible, because they are then released from duty, assuming there being no other aircraft to assign them to. In several cases this month, crews have worked 18 hours straight in order to complete repairs.

All aforementioned crews have been issued with their own 'line carts', and these have all the tools needed for repair. At the front is a small generator for power, and at the rear a gasoline driven compressor. This line cart is the idea of M/Sgt. Wallerstedt.

Several rockets have landed near the field this month, and one exploded in the Bomb Dump at 0500 on the 14th December, landing in the South-east corner. This rocket blew out the side of one of the hangars, and blew open all the workshop doors.

On Christmas Eve, Col. Frank P. Hunter was presented with a nickel plated desk stand, which had been made in the workshops. This consisted of a model B-17 mounted on a bomb, and fixed to a pen and ink stand.

Aircraft 42-102487 was received with battle damage in the nose section.

January 1945; 36 B-17's were received for repair this month.

Total number of parts for which requisitions were issued this month was 2884, of which 280 were not in stock and had to be ordered from supply.

February 1945 There were 46 aircraft repaired this month, of which 39 were received and repaired in the last 15 days. After the mission on 25th February number of ships in for repair rose to 15, but there were only 8 in hand by the following day.

43-38730 came in for repair suffering from engine exhaust cowl damage. 43-38627 came in for repairs suffering from damage to landing gear, and this proved very difficult to repair.

Total number of parts for which requisitions were issued this month was 2868, of which 254 were not in stock and had to be ordered from supply.

March 1945 There were 69 aircraft repaired this month, all suffering from major battle damage.

The engine shop built up 61 Wright Cyclones.

43-39180 suffered a crushed nose in landing. This ship was repaired in 15 days, which was half the estimated time. After repair, this aircraft was flown without the Chin Turret.

A Flight Section was organized to maintain operational non-combat aircraft assigned to the Sub-depot. T/Sgt. Norman D. Norris is Flight Chief of 8 men crew. Aircraft are P-47D – A35B – and a DB7 (similar to A-20). These War-Weary aircraft often cause maintenance headaches due to the fact that the ships are old, and parts are difficult to obtain, and also because of the many hours each day that the aircraft are in flight.

Included amongst the damaged aircraft this month was an inboard-wing panel change, and this was the first one changed by the Sub-Depot. This was the first time that permission was given for an Inboard-wing panel change, although the depot was always confident of doing such work.

Petrol consumption this month was 1,886,000 English gallons.

Total number of parts for which requisitions were issued this month was 3779, of which 337 were not in stock and had to be ordered from supply.

April 1945; 17 aircraft were received for repair in the first 15 days of this month.

Total number of parts for which requisitions were issued this month was 1602, of which 148 were not in stock and had to be ordered from supply.

The 478th Sub-depot was disbanded on 15th April 1945. All personnel were transferred to the newly formed 426th HQ and Base Servicing Squadron.

Air Force Order of Battle

Created: 31 Aug 2011

Updated:

Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.