

## Memories of 609 Squadron by Rik Duprè

609's war wasn't all beer and skittles (Wunstorf) and being sick on your boots as you bent over to fasten the chute straps, oh no. Fun in plenty was to be had even if it was perhaps a bit macabre, as the following little story shows.

A Northern Dutch town (nameless) that had been by-passed by the Wermacht as they fled east had not been officially 'liberated'. HQ 84 Group decided that that honour should fall to the ubiquitous 609. So Flt Lt Mountjoy and myself were detailed by Pinkie Stark to set off forthwith to advise the Mayor that they would be liberated the following day by all our merry men, and Mountjoy and myself would arrive a couple of hours before the troops and bring with us a bucket of moneys to help arrange the festivities. So far so good. The Mayor was overjoyed and the townsfolk said they would put on a superlative show for the English liberators.

The next day bright and early I set off with Mountjoy, feeling a bit knackered, having driven solo all the way there and back the previous day and really not looking forward to doing it all over again.

However, just as we got to the bridge over the Dortmund-Ems canal, up pipes Mountjoy and says "I'll take over the driving if you like". To which I replied, "I thought you said you couldn't drive". "Oh yes", he pipes up; "I can drive this thing but not a 3 tonner".

We changed places; I left the engine running; put the bag with the money on my lap and settled down. Bang went the gear lever into first and we took off like a demented kangaroo. Crash went the wing into the left parapet, then crash into the right parapet. By now with his foot hard down we had run out of parapets and shot to the left off the road; sailed about 20 feet through the air and landed nose down in the canal. I surfaced still clutching the bag with the loot and started laughing my head off - relief, nerves, I don't know, except I thought the whole thing incredibly funny.

After I'd settled down I realised that there was no sign of Monty, not even a bubble. I kicked around and my leg hit something and was instantly grabbed. Up came Monty, blood pouring out of his face and head, but alive. His eyes were wide open with shock.

With the help of some squaddies on the far bank, we both scrambled ashore. The soldiers were Pioneers running a requisitioned forge on the corner of the road and the canal. They took our clothes and the money and laid it all out to dry on a huge stove. They also gave me a German Parachutists poncho and leggings which I put on then stood on the road at the end of the bridge to stop our 609 convoy to get some help. Sure enough, eventually 3 tonners etc. came bouncing up but ignored my frantic shouts and waves, so I bent down picked up a rock to throw at the next vehicle and all hell broke loose. Rifles cracked, pistols barked - all aimed at ME. I didn't hesitate; one look at these mad airmen and I dived straight back into the canal.

Dried out once more I returned to the road and then saw one of our I5cwts coming back. It stopped and my armourer shouted out "I thought you were a German werewolf with a grenade sir, and it wasn't until we got up the road your fitter said "you know that could have been Duprè" so we came back to have a look".

Sequel; the party was a rave but when it came time to go back, Monty was missing. He was eventually found roaming about and when we got back Dr John Edgar reckoned he had a bad dose of concussion - so as I said, it wasn't always beer and skittles.

RAF Retired List

Dupre R.A.C. Born 26/5/1919. Commd 17/9/43. Sqn Ldr 1/10/57. Retd SEC 29/5/67