

TALLY HO!

The newsletter of the 609 (WEST RIDING) squadron association



"I got them Square...!"

Jean de Selys-Longchamps
January 20, 1943

LATE WINTER EDITION 2023





609 (WEST RIDING) SQUADRON ASSOCIATION

Belgian Branch Office - 609 Sqn Association Belgian Branch Office.



Diane Gyselinck – our matron



Kurt "Kukke" Plyson



Conrad K. Roumieux – Vice President 609 Sqn Association and Point of Contact for Belgium and Holland



Omer "Boomer" Vanden Bosch



Philip Verleyen – Our historian who represents 609 Sqn in the commune of Aalter and who is always available for any question

For France:



Jocelyn Leclerq - France Representative and Historian

Honorary members:



General Gerard Van Caelenberge, former Belgian Chief of Defense and Air Comp Commander

Honorary Vice --President 609 Sqn Association

For Holland



Arjan Wemmers

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609 (WR) SQUADRON ASSOCIATION

Belgium, Putte 4^h of April 2023.

Tally Ho – Late Winter Edition 2023

“What a year it has been ...”

Dear members, honorary members, supporting members, comity, all,

We do hope that this newsletter finds you in good health and spirit.

*Word from the President - David Darley**609 (West Riding) Squadron Association and the future*

Whilst the Belgian part of the Association has thrived, expanded, and now leads the activities and communications of the whole Association, the recent activities of the UK side have been conspicuous by their absence! It is time to understand why and see how it can be revived. First, I should outline why we have not organised anything for the last two years. Blaming the Covid outbreak is a slight distraction, for we were experiencing problems before March 2020. Some history now.

On 10th February 1936, 609 (WR) Squadron was formed, at what was then RAF Yeadon. The Royal Auxiliary Air Force was disbanded in March 1957. The Association was formed by two men in their 30's in April 1967, who sought out 150 past Squadron members, and asked them to contribute to a Memorial, unveiled at Leeds Bradford Airport on 29th March 1968.

The dates are important, for about 40 pre-war airmen joined the new Association. In their mid-20's in 1936, by 1967 they were mid to late 50's. 32 years on, when new 609 was formed in 1999, they were in their 80's. So, although I knew 7 pre-war airmen at the time, their days were numbered. In 1994 the 609 Room at Elvington was opened. In 1996 the Spitfire arrived, and a big turnout of wartime and jet age members came along. That was the last big assembly of these gentlemen. You can tell the age by the white hair and bald heads! At least 4 Belgians are in the group.



◀ *George Darley with "Grandad", Flt/Lt Sydney "Darkie" Hanson, Sqn Engineering Officer 1940 -1957*

Last major gathering of war and jet age members. I knew all but two. All are now gone. ▼



By 1996 the bulk of the Association membership was formed from wartime and post war jet age, but, putting the former in perspective, my 89-year-old father died in 1998, and he was 26 in 1940.

By 2020, active members were down to 70 or so, a third old 609, the rest new 609 and related interests. By 2010 none of the older chaps appeared anymore. A stalwart group of jet age members used to meet in September at The Yeadon Stoop, built near the site of the original pre-war pub, frequented illegally by airman "escaping" from the camp a couple of miles away. By 2018 the number coming to these had dwindled away. Age has taken its toll of these, as it had with the Annual Reunions and AGM at Leeming or Elvington. The 2018 gathering at the Yorkshire Air Museum was a good turnout, but some were finding the cost too

much. We even had a Spitfire then, the last time the BBMF have provided one. Looking at this last photo, the only ones willing or able to attend similar events are now confined to new 609 from its formation in 1999. That removes half of the people in that photo. And five years have passed since it was taken.

Covid lockdown stopped all plans for reunions for two years, and only this year is there a chance of unhindered, unlimited numbers, mask free gatherings. Marcia Gadd used to organise the Yeadon Stoop meetings, but is now too infirm to do so again. The YAM Elvington meetings have no organiser in view,

nor does the shrunken Committee in the UK have an obvious candidate to do so there, or at a similar venue.



The future membership of the Association

The obvious conclusion is that the 150 founding members of pre-war and wartime have now all gone. The jet age pre-1957 group have almost all gone, or are not able to attend social gatherings. Most are mid-80 or more. At 77, the author is no spring chicken, but is still mobile and involved. I was privileged to be a pal of Old Number One, 809000 James Rollo Thompson, who joined first on 10th Feb 1936 (not Haslam Wood as many thought: he was 809001!). I also met and chatted with 10 or so pre-war airmen, thus making me a Living Fossil! Younger ones such as Mark Crame in Norfolk, Joss Leclercq in France, and Jeff Metcalfe of recent 609 leadership are also deeply involved in the history, as is Woody with current 609, and for many years, but we are in a minority.

In short, the WW1 recruiting poster is most appropriate. The future of the Association is now firmly within the province of those who joined 609 from 1999 onwards. It is from this age group that the drive, initiatives, direction, enthusiasm, and determination to remember and treasure 609's illustrious history must now come.



And of course, a new UK Committee is required. Recent conversations have elicited that two or three people would be keen to form one. We need a Chairman or Chairwoman. (I can't bring myself to use Chairperson...). Adele is our Secretary, Rosemary Darley would like to stand down as Treasurer, and we then could do with a Newsletter Editor/Scribe/Liaison person work with our excellent Belgian colleagues who now produce Tally Ho! An Events/Social Secretary would be handy, to lead ideas on how the Association members communicate, meet or keep in contact. A Media specialist to develop our Facebook Group. Use Zoom, Instagram, WhatsApp, and things this old bod has never heard of, that can keep friends in touch without the need for costly travel or accommodation. If that is the modern way, let someone who understands it, sort it.



Jeff Metcalfe has spoken to some colleagues from the Squadron's 2000-era membership, who would like to restart the UK activities and Committee. A meeting of like minds by Zoom is in the planning stage. Watch this space....

I do feel that the revived Annual Formal Dinner is a great success, and shows that such an event is popular. But so are noggin and natters, in my old parlance: a casual meeting of friends and like-minded people.

Finances

Belgium and France by chance, hard work, great good fortune, and a huge appreciation for those who liberated them from 5 years of German occupation, have a good financial base. Children are taught the history of WW2 in detail in Belgium, and are actively involved in commemorative events. In the UK, Churchill is regarded as a racist by the loud few, and not a great leader. Our education system ignores the history of WW2, as we were not occupied. The BAF supports us, the RAF cannot.

We do have cash reserves that would have supported social gatherings. Standing orders are not universal, as many subscriptions were given physically at reunions, which don't now happen. Should we cancel them all? Thanks to Conrad Roumieux, we have a newsletter again, so membership does get some value for money. The new Committee should address this issue, but I suggest as an opener that to do the new 609 Room at Elvington full justice, our reserves should be directed in the main to support this. It is the main accessible, fairly central venue that can be a future focus for the history and achievements of 609 (WR) Squadron past and present, with or without aircraft.

609 "Memorial" Locations

There are four in the UK;

- The Yorkshire Air Museum, Elvington. This is being redeveloped, and although still in the planning stage. The Museum would like us to move to the bigger and better building that is the site of the existing shop, with our old room becoming part of the entrance area to the Museum. Heritage Lottery Fund applications are in process for the whole Museum, and Paul McVittie has volunteered to lead the 609 project team, which includes Sqn members. Completion date projected to be 18 -24 months. That will be a major opportunity for the Association to gather.
- 609 HQ at RAF Leeming. Flt/Sgt Woody Wood, aka part time Goat Minder, is, with enthusiastic backing from OC Sq/Ldr Merv Ash, has transformed most of the corridor space, plus at least one room, into a History Wall and Display, including photos, paintings, mannequins etc. The downside of this is that non-serving members are unable to visit without a fair degree of planning and paperwork. It looks excellent In the photos that I have seen.

- The Army Flying Museum, Middle Wallop, Andover, Hampshire. The Battle of Britain base of 609 during 1940. There is a small 609 room and diorama there, revamped three years ago yonder a major refurbishment project with HLF funding. Our presence is welcome, but restricted to a small area of the site. It is too small to stand alone as an exhibit to justify a reunion there, but if you look at the Museum as a whole, it is well worth a visit in its own right.



- The RAuxAF Memorial site at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas, Staffordshire. 609 has a site with a Memorial Bench and a collection of Memorial Stones inscribed with the names of past 609ers, such as Brian Waite, Pip Barran, George Darley etc. Easily worth a visit, but only a small 609 presence.

These four could form the basis of a reunion visit, if cost, facilities and attractiveness of the venue is suitable.

Summary

- 609 (WR) Squadron RAuxAF is a proud active Yorkshire unit, and deserves to maintain a memory of past achievements and fine record.
- Two generations of men and women founded the Association, but have now passed on, or can no longer maintain the Squadrons friendship bonds and memories.
- New 609 is the basis for the UK part of the Association. The Belgians are motivated, active, and supported nationally by the military and public. We need to do our part.
- New generation means new ways of maintaining contacts and memories. The old ways may not be the best, cheapest or most successful. New ideas and new leaders are needed.
- A new Committee structure is required, formed of people from the 1999 reformation onwards.
- This 23 year-old picture on the left is from the 2000 Reformation Parade. On the right, Sqn. Mascot Jeffers (William de Goat Mk 3) befriends Wing Commander Jeff Metcalfe. Squadron Goat mascots started in July 1941 at Biggin Hill.



David Darley
President, 609 (West Riding) Squadron Association

Word from the Vice President - Conrad K. Roumieux

Dear all, association members, Honorary members, supportive members, enthusiast, comity and all those whom we forgot.

2023 took of as we left 2022 behind us. Another year, maybe a very challenging year lays ahead of the many.

Nearly spring after slowly leaving winter behind us we reflect on what last year was about and how things are evolving in the global military, political and economic theatre after Putin invaded Ukraine trying to stir up the alliance, put ourselves up against each other and failing to do so.

It changed our daily lives substantially due to raw material and production prices went up considerably. It is not the way it was a good year ago.

What the war in Ukraine thought us is that we are vulnerable when we are not self-sustained or need to depend on others / third parties and remain one strong Alliance never to give up what our grandparents fought for, what our veteran pilots fought for and the many that were involved in the WW2 conflict. We have to defend the freedom they fought for so hard as many sacrificed the ultimate, their lives never to return home again.

On the other hand we had our World Cup in Qatar ... being questioned by the many why in earth in Qatar. Lot's of mayhem around human rights, the workers who build the stadiums, billions of dollars went into this and for what ... To show their power to the outside world, to entertain football fans for the duration of 30 days as now the stadiums are empty and deserted. Some will be broken down again, others made smaller ... A waste of money that could have been spent on so many other things like the need of the many.

We are in a way at war, many in survival mode trying to make ends meet.

As for our intention we have started 2023 with an abundance of projects, 609 Sqn Digital Road Map, 3 books are currently being written related to 609 Sqn Association or our WW2 history. One is by a lady in Poland, who used to live in the UK, writing a book on her fathers adventures in 609 Sqn as one of the Polish pilots.

Another is about Jean de Selys Longchamps, being written by Marc Audrit, who attacked the Zicherheits Polizei Head Quarters in Brussel. Actually 80 years ago on the 20th of January 1943!!! This unique project is supported by the input of many and amongst them our historians, Mark Crame, Joss Leqlerc, Peter Celis, ... We will be covering this further on in this Tally Ho edition.

Another project is another book regarding our Polish pilots and the Polish presence in many ways that were working together with the allies. General Maczek who was in charge of the well known 1st Tank Division whom liberated Aalst and created a safe opening for B-67 (Ursel base for 609 Sqn and 1-2-3 Wing at the end of the war. His story will be covered in the next edition of the Tally Ho Newsletter as he and 609 Sqn have some joint stories to tell.

We are also adding in a new page within the Tally Ho Newsletter as well as on the website regarding books that relate to the Squadrons history as well as to the Battle of Britain, D-Day, ...

Should you want to read more about our historic facts than these are the one's to read. It will bring you into the life of our veteran pilots, the ground crews, the war as a whole. Some or many of them can't be bought new anymore. The second hand book market will surely fulfil your dreams and if you are lucky you may even find one that carries signatures !!!

And should you have another book in mind that we should add on to the list then please let us know.

We will be producing a "special 609 print" (size 70 cm x 50 cm) as this is a special year. More on that in the coming months as it surely will be a nice surprise for all of you. Some could be numbered, signed to make them authentic and made available to all. In many ways to keep the memory alive. Details on this need to be worked out but we can reveal that it will be something very very special indeed as Jean de Selys Longchamps will be the topic of this project.

Last but not least we can proudly communicate that former Major from the Dutch town of Alblasserdam, Major Jaap Paans, has put together a comity to continue with the plan to excavate the Typhoon flown by Jean Van Daele who crashed and died after being shot down by flak and buried in the town of Alblasserdam. 609 Sqn Association is very much involved in this project as Arjan Wemmers, our 609 Sqn Association Point of Contact is part of the team. We get updates from the monthly meetings and the idea is that all parts salvaged will be digitally scanned and photographed, for possible reproduction and use in the current Typhoon Projects in Canada and the UK. For these teams any detail on know-how is welcome / gold as additional information in their builds of 2 Typhoons that one day should be airworthy. Our full support goes to both teams and we should be able to give you a follow up on both projects in one of the next Tally Ho editions.

And again a big thank you to all for adding value to this edition by sending in articles, pictures, ... At the Sqn's Dinner party last February people came up to me to thank me for the Tally Ho Digital Newsletter ... During my short speech I told all present that I am just the glue ... It is because of you all I can use this glue and try to put together another worthwhile edition. You all make the difference thus keep it coming as there is still so much to write / report about.

Did you know that we have a 609 Sqn Song ... ??? Well ... some of you know but many of you don't. The lads and ladies of 609 Sqn, under the watchful eye of Sqn Ldr Mevr Ashe (with an "e") are practicing on a weekly basis getting themselves familiar with the tune, the melody and text / paragraphs. I am sure we will get them into "Top of the Pops" for sure.

Thank you Mark Crame, Jocelyn Leclercq for fully supporting the 3 book projects that are currently going on as you guys, and others we know, are the true icing on the cake for these writers. The cherry on the pie.

I would also like to mention that our President, young David Darley, was admitted to hospital some months ago but is fine, back on his feet and taking care of his pigeons again. According to his medical file he is better than new again as he had a major overhaul that will allow him to jump any fence and challenge a Ferrari with his yellow Fiat 500 monster car.

Greetings from Belgium on behalf of the 609 Sqn Association family in the UK, Belgium, France, Holland and 609 Sqn lads and ladies in Leeming. Tally Ho !!!

Conrad K. Roumieux
Vice President – 609 Sqn Association

Baron van Zuylen Monument – Berlaar - Belgium

The military quarters / Bn in Berlaar - Belgium bears the name of Sublieutenant Baron van Zuylen van Nyevelt. Sub-Lieutenant Baron van Zuylen van Nyevelt disappeared from occupied Belgium in March 1942 and enlisted in RAF Escadrille 609. On April 6, 1943, he died in command service during a fighter patrol for the liberation of his Fatherland and King. He rests with his fighter plane in the waters of the North Sea.

On 27 September 2004 Colonel Vlieger retired LALLEMAND handed over a flag of the 609 Squadron to Col SBH LAUWERS. On 10 May 2006, a new memorial plaque for Sub-Lieutenant Baron van Zuylen van Nyevelt was inaugurated in the presence of a British delegation from 609 Squadron and the Belgian part of 609 Sqn Association.



Cheval Lallemand handing over the 609 Sqn flag to OC Col. SBH E. Lauwers

With the closing of the quarter, the bond with the 609 Squadron also ends. On October 12, 2022, the tradition pieces of the 609 Squadron were returned to Koen ROUMIEUX, Vice President of the 609 Sqn Association and Point of Contact for Belgium. These pieces will later be given a nice and prominent place in a traditional room of the Belgian Air Force.

In 1914 Van Zuylen was married Mrs. Maria, Josephe, Ghislane, Barbara van de Werve, born in Antwerp on April 30, 1887, daughter of one of the most noble family in the province.

After their marriage, the family lived in Berlaar, at number 26 Legrellestraat, where the rest home has now been built.

They remained there until 7 March 1924 (with an interruption during the 14-18 war when they remained in the Netherlands).



Brian Waite, Georges Jaspis DFC, OC Hilary Vincent-Philpot

In March 1942 he disappeared from occupied Belgium and traveled via France to Spain and Portugal.

On May 21, 1942, he received a travel pass to England from the Belgian consulate in Lisbon.

On 3 August 1942 he was in London where he enlisted in the RAF.

There he was assigned to Escadrille 609, equipped with fighter aircraft that guarded the British coast and carried out missions over the North Sea.

On Christmas Eve 1942, he wrote a farewell letter to his mother and entrusted it to a friend in case something went "wrong".

He died in command service for Belgium during a hunting patrol for the liberation of his homeland on April 6, 1943.

He rests with his Typhoon fighter plane in the waters of the North Sea in front of the coast of Deal. This after he had an engine failure and was too low to bail out by parachute as that would have saved his life for sure. He decided to ditch, set down his his Typhoon on the waves, but inevitably once the open huge radiator cowl of his Tiffy touched the sea it scooped up a volume of seawater that made the plane overturn. His fellow pilots circled the ditched Typhoon but did not see Van Zuylen appear.



609 Sqn Association receiving, represented by Conrad K. Roumieux – Vice President. the Memorial Plate out of the hands of CO Major SBH Jos Baeten

It is believed that his cockpit canopy was smashed upon impact during the overturning that must have killed him instantly.

His body must still be resting in his Typhoon and was never recovered. One may believe it could be found but such objects on the seabed could be the start of a sandbank that eventually would cover the wreck completely.

On September 20, 1989, during the Battalion celebrations, a monument was unveiled in the “De Sleutel” quarter of the former 91 Battalion Logistics by two sisters of the fallen fighter pilot. From this date, the quarter received its current designation.

Baron Jean Felix Albert Leon Ghislain van Zuylen van Nyevelt was born in Namur on June 30, 1890 and was a French-speaking Brussels nobleman, army officer, who was married to a Dutch noblewoman.

His upbringing was, as was appropriate in those circles in that period, in French, which did not prevent him from speaking Dutch and English very fluently and fluently.

At the university he obtained the title of agricultural engineer. He was also very well-read and intelligent.



Front left was the Sqn Adjutant Jeff Metcalfe at the time, Hilary Vincent-Philpot was the OC.

Behind him is Alfie Hall and then Mark Williams. In the next column is Dez Robinson and Alan Hayman behind him.

At the front of the next column is Paul Lurkins, but we can't see who it is behind him, may the mystery person come forward.



1945-1946
Im Zusammenhang mit dem 1. Weltkrieg
wurde die Gegend um das heutige Gelände
von der Wehrmacht besetzt. In
dieser Zeit wurden an dieser Stelle
viele Soldaten getötet.
1945-1946

Portrait of a man in a military uniform, likely a soldier or officer, with text in German.



Olt Baron van Zuylen van Nyevelt

Ursel Tally Ho Weekend 2022

Saturday, October 29th

How did we look forward to this !!!

The yearly Tally Ho Weekend at Ursel – B-67 is “the” event for 609 Sqn Association on this side of the Channel.

A full day event that starts in the morning with a choice of activities.

From 10.00 am onwards a bike ride & walking tour

At 16.00 all participants gather in the Ursel Flying Club

17.45 departure (on foot) to B-67 monument guided by the Kevin the piper and under guidance of the Aalter Police Force

Remembrance speech, poem, B-67 bag pipes hymn and walk back under the darkness with torches back to the flying club

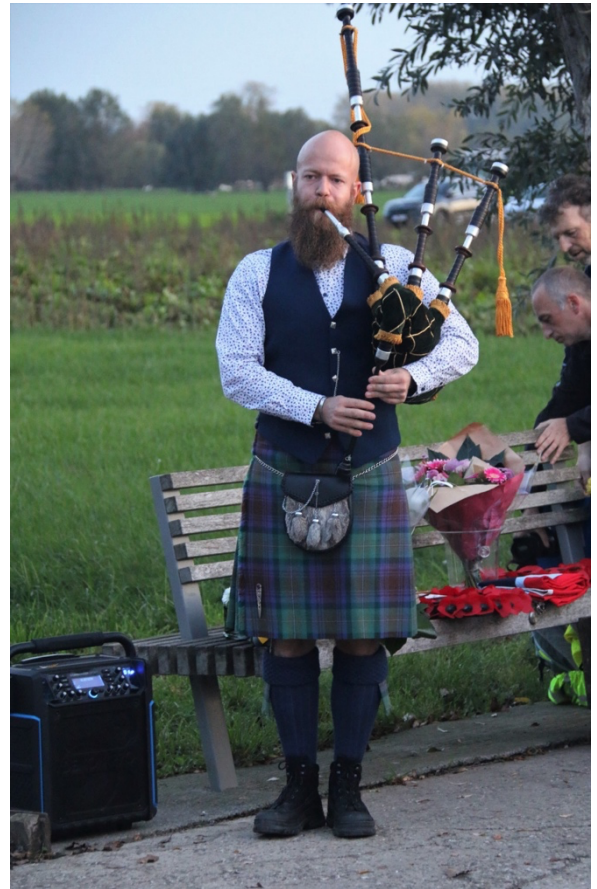
Belgian fries and drinks are waiting us to end the day

But it was more than that, much, much more !!!

Besides a warm day, soft winds, more people attending compared to last year we can state that it is an event that is growing and growing. Good to see the younger generation as well absorbing it all in.

For us, 609 Sqn Association, Ursel & B-67, is like coming home as the Squadron set wheel on ground (on Belgian soil) on the 27th of October 1944. This place is so special, the monument a flag says it all and once you have been there to join the ceremony you want to go back and look forward to next years event.

It is thanks to the many organizing this event that we are taken back into the past to remember them who fought for our freedom today.



Kevin playing his composed B-67 hymn



Under the guidance of Ursel Flying Club and B-67 Work Group, Philippe Verleyen and Kurt Plyson took the lead. We need to thank Kevin De Backer playing his creation "the B-67 Hymn" on the bag pipes, Luc Madou lighting up the evening darkness with his balloon / burner, Wim Bogaert reading out the "Act of Remembrance", the Victors flying by with 5 aircraft this year, our Associations pilots Remco (Boomerang) & Rick (Yak 3) doing a fly by with their war birds producing a sound that all enjoyed, the Last Post played by Hans Wille, Koksijde SAR 40 Sqn fly by, all of the volunteers who made this possible as well as the town of Aalter / police who took care of our safety.



NH-90 SAR BAF crew from the 40 Sqn Koksijde



Fly by of the YAK3 by Rick

The ceremonial part was breath taking, pipe bag music, the poem, the fly by's of the Victors in Missing Man Formation, the roaring engines (music to our ears) of both the Boomerang and Yak 3 warbirds ...

And finally, the walk back to the clubhouse under the light of the torches.

Once back at the club house "Belgian Fries" were waiting for the once that were hungry and that combined with a "Vliegeniereke" the local beer brewed for B-67, was the foundation for a good talk and reflection of the day.

The outside club terrace was filled with attendees and new ideas popped up, reflections on the past, the history of B-67 ... it was a day to remember as we drove home with an incredible vibe, the B-67 vibe.

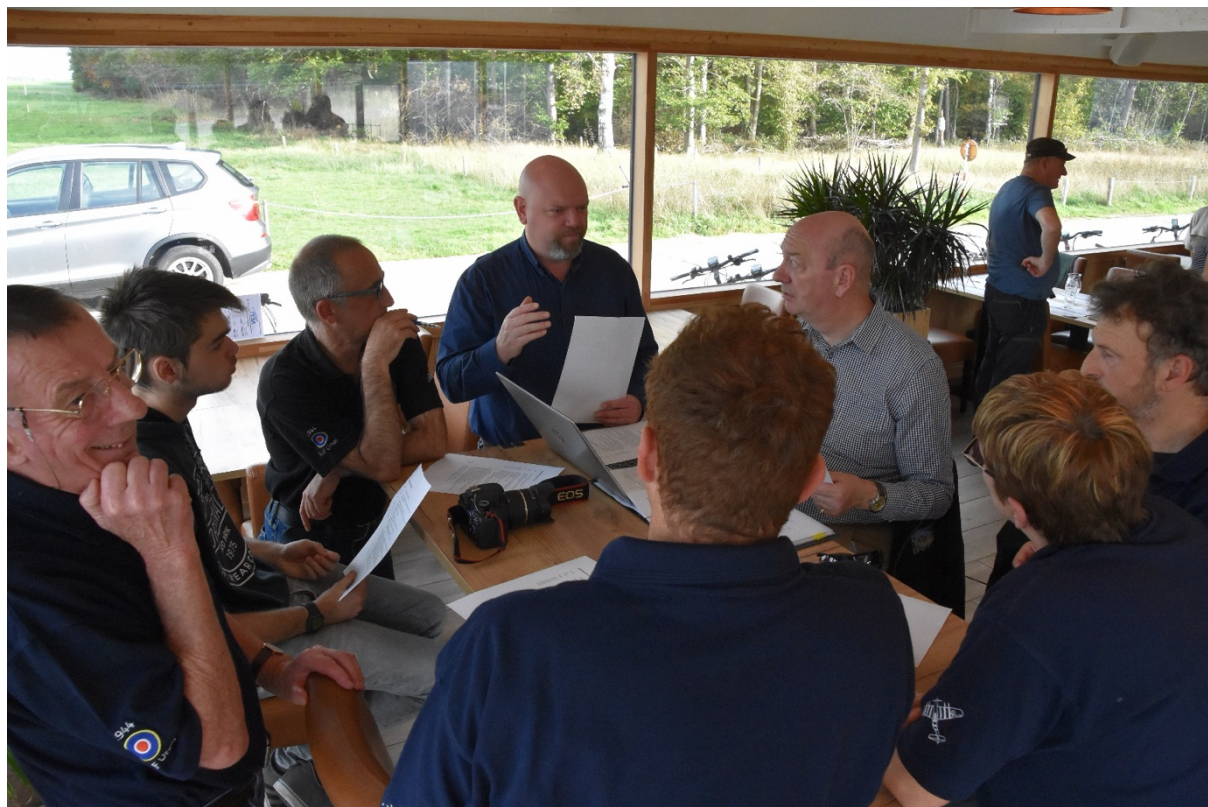


Please find enclosed a few pictures of the event that will surely want many who did not make it, to be there this year on the 28th of October coming. Don't forget to pencil this date into your diary !!!





Extra photo's



Last minute briefing before the start of the event given by Kurt. Timing with fly by's is crucial. But because of this well-organized team it is a walk in the park.







Back at the flying club after an eventful day to remember.

609 Sqn annual dinner Leeds Bradford - Hilton UK

“A weekend to remember”

On the 11th of February a delegation from 609 Sqn Association representing Belgium, France and Holland attended the yearly 609 Sqn Dinner in Bradford – Leeming.

Jocelyn Leclercq (France), Omer “Boomer” Vandenbosche (Belgium), Arjan Wemmers (Holland) and myself Conrad K. Roumieux (Belgium) flew out in the early hours on Saturday morning to join the ladies and lads of the Sqn.

After arrival at Bradford Airport we were picked up by Woody and Sid (609 Sqn) to be brought to our first stop being offered a “full English Breakfast”. A breakfast that would take us through the whole day.

We then headed to the Sqn’s premises and were given a tour and presentation.

A lot of pointers were discussed regarding the memorial room at Elvington, possible joint activities in between the Sqn and the Association on a yearly basis and more interesting topics came up as the presentation went on.

The idea is that we would organize a yearly get together for the Association members as well as with the Sqn members involving family and children.



Many good ideas came out of it and will be proposed soon.

The Memorial Room in Elvington is going to be updated with new information, display, or in other words brought into the 23rd century by sound, light effects, video display, QR codes to inform the visitors on the Sqn's rich history and facts.

A small and dedicated comity is already in place and working on it but will be enforced by others from the Association. Jocelyn, our Associations Representative for France, will be feeding additional historic information. Or in short, wherever there is a need we will try to fill it in.

Due to the many pointers during the presentation our visit to the Sqn took longer than planned as we had to skip visiting William the Goat, the Sqn's mascot. A big boy we were told who is not into eating cigarettes nor drinking beer.

After arriving at our hotel, where the dinner venue took place, we met up with the gang. It was so nice to see Jeff Metcalfe again but also all the others who gave us a warm welcome.

At 18.00 we were expected to be downstairs for the welcome drink or the start of the dinner.



Good company, a fine menu, nice wine and of course the toast sipping from a glass of Port was part of the dinner.

Prices, certificates were handed out by Sqn Ldr Ash and a sad moment to see a long-time veteran of as he retired from the Sqn. Vic Rose, 44 years of loyal service in the RAF, got a standing ovation and applause from all present.

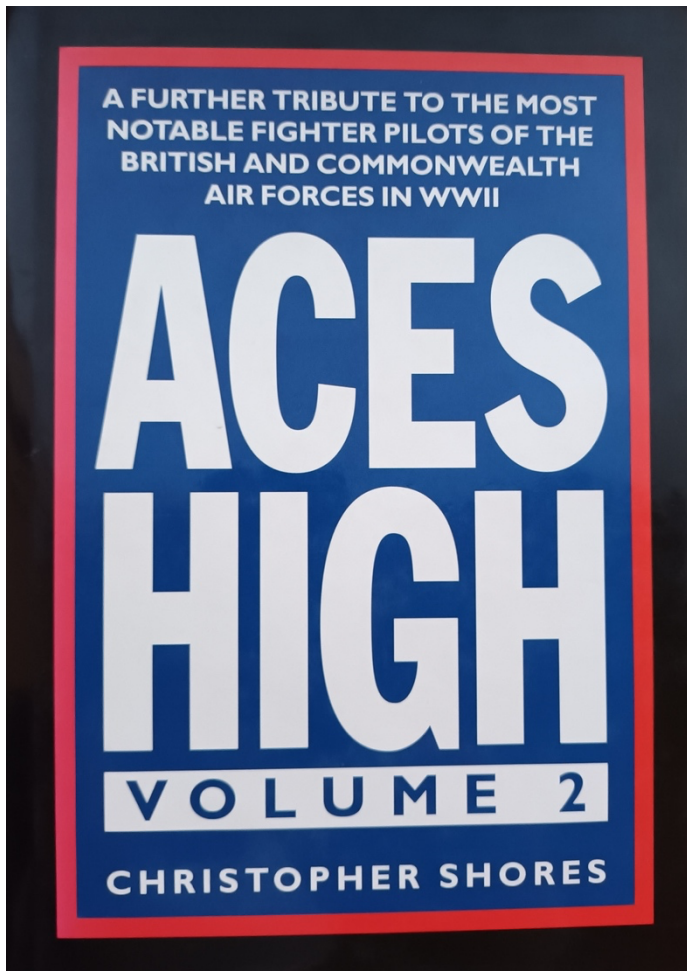
After the dinner we all retreated to the bar for an after-dinner drink. For us the 20th hour being awake and, on our feet, since we started off at Brussels that morning and we did not come empty handed ... no we did not ... Signed certificates were given by the Belgians to some 609ners but most of all a larger framed certificate for the entire Sqn was given to Sqn Ldr Ash who took it into his possession as the ladies and lads deserve this attention.

What Sqn Ldr Ash did not know is that a Belgian – English gang was set up weeks prior to his arrival spying on him, sending through coded messages about him being fond of his pond, Irish whisky, beer, bees that he keeps and some other things that we cannot mention as those are very top secret indeed.



It all resulted into a poster that was framed and carried all our signatures. I would like to thank Boomer for creating these certificates as he too handed a very special present over to Sqn Ldr Ash. An empty 20 mm shell coming from the Typhoon flown by Mony Van Lierde !!!

Then Sqn Ldr Ash came up with some surprises for us ... a beautiful framed embroidered 609 Sqn crest with a copper plate underneath it personalized for the 4 of us. A wonderful present that we did not see coming.



On top of it all some Sqn members shared their own gifts with us going from beers to coins and at the end a big hug that confirmed the strong friendship ties in between them and the Association.

I got a special thank you from Boomer for my dedication but passed that on to all of the one's present in the room and all of you who are related to the Association or Squadron.

It is thanks to you that we are very much alive and kicking looking at a strong future together keeping the memory alive. Our history, our heritage.

Being overwhelmed by the friendship and warm welcome we turned to bed after being awake and on our feet for 23 hours in a row.

On Sunday morning, the day after the dinner, we all met at the breakfast table enjoying once again a full English breakfast and wrapping up our talks, idea's, and bye bye's as Sid brought us back to the airport for most of us to be back home Sunday midnight.

A dinner, weekend not to forget meeting many new faces, meeting a lot of interesting people and certainly a seed that has been planted.

Thank you, thank you, thank you all of you !!!

Alastair for arranging the communication and frames as well as being our intelligence Officer ... 😊 .

Woody, Sid, Merv, Jeff ... or in short you all for welcoming us into the grand 609 Sqn family.

We'll be back and that's a promise !!!

Jocelyn, Boomer, Arjan & Conrad

609 (West Riding) Squadron – Excalibur submission

Being part of No.2 Counter-Uncrewed Aerial System (C-UAS) Wing, 609 Sqn have now begun to have its personnel formally trained to operate the ORCUS kit as part of their pre-deployment training. The squadron has three personnel already trained, one has now deployed overseas, and another has been supporting the C-UAS Training and Standardisation Unit (CTSU) staff delivering subsequent courses. From now until August there will be a steady stream of 609 Sqn personnel being trained prior to the first full Reservist course in September 2023. To further assist in the delivery of these courses, 609 Sqn have had their first two FP RPAS operators formally trained meaning they will be able to fly 'enemy' drones for the ORCUS students to detect.

The Whole Force approach taken by all the Regular components of No.2 C-UAS Wg has given unrivalled opportunity to the 609 Sqn Reservists, boosting morale, and giving them a real sense of operational purpose.

609 Sqn has also teamed up with 607 Sqn and the Area Reserves Employment Engagement Officer, Wg Cdr Buckingham to deliver the first two quarterly Employer Engagement Virtual Coffee Mornings. These are proving to be an effective way to reach out and communicate with our Part Time Volunteer Reserves (PTVRs) civilian employers. They give us the platform to inform them of the worthwhile support their employees give to Defence and to explain our operational tempo and upcoming deployment opportunities, meaning that when our PTVRs do approach them they are aware of the situation. We have also been informing them about the Armed Forces Covenant, Employer Recognition Awards, and the financial support available when their employers are mobilised. All in all, this is proving to be an extremely efficient way to develop a mutually beneficial relationships with a host of civilian companies and organisations.

Counter-Uncrewed Aerial Systems

The RAF's No.2 C-UAS Wg, based at RAF Leeming, has taken on the role of delivering an emerging capability for UK Defence, countering the threat posed Uncrewed Aerial Systems (UAS), more commonly referred to as drones.

The threat from adversarial actors employing UAS is increasing, whether that be directly to air safety or our security, both within the UK and overseas on operations. The extensive use of UAS in Ukraine and the Middle East clearly demonstrates the need for capabilities to counter this rapidly evolving threat.

As part of No.2 C-UAS Wing, 609 Sqn sits alongside 34 Sqn RAF Regt and 63 Sqn RAF Regt and is currently being trained to operate the ORCUS which address this threat. Developed as part of Project SYNERGIA, ORCUS can detect, track, identify and, if necessary, defeat hostile drones, improving the protection of key infrastructure including air bases around the UK and overseas.



Me being chatted up by Sgt Fosters daughter.



The three-week course held at RAF Leeming introduces RAF Regiment Gunners to the ORCUS system and breaks it down into three key areas:

1. Theory based lessons focussing on the systems key components with a general overview of the subject.
2. The deployment of the system, siting considerations and deploying and configuring each component.
3. Operating the system and learning how to detect, track and identify drones.

The course is detailed and prepares personnel well to operate the equipment in any environment they may be tasked to.

After successfully completing the ORCUS operators' course, I have returned to CTSU to support the delivery of further ORCUS courses. The opportunity to further develop my understanding of the ORCUS system, spending more time

with the system whilst assisting colleagues and adding value is benefiting my own understanding of the system. This is being done whilst strengthening the working relationship between 609 Sqn and the Regular aspects of No.2 C-UAS Wg.

The threat posed by uncrewed aerial systems is predicted to continue to grow and one of the keyways to combat the threat is with highly trained, well equipped, and highly motivated personnel. I now look forward to further training courses and to deploying on operations where I put utilise what I have learned about ORCUS and C-UAS.

FP RPAS Course

In February myself and Cpl Scaife, (RAF Police) travelled down to RAF Honington to start our Remote Piloted Air Systems (RPAS) course. We were the first Part Time Volunteer Reserves (PTVRs) from within the Force to be trained to fly these systems, demonstrating that 609 Sqn is re-orientating itself and modernizing in line with the Regular squadrons it is aligned to.

Prior to learning how to fly the RPAS we were taught the fundamentals such as why we need them and who can use



Monocular is ORCAS drone tracking camera

them, along with the restrictions and constraints involved with operating these systems in the UK. We also learnt who we need to liaise with, when we need to talk to them and what kind of permissions to request for the tasks that we will be performing in our role on No.2 C-UAS Wg. The capability of these systems would be alarming if the RAF had not been moving forward at pace and looking to become the spearhead of the RPAS capability within Defence.

A very worthwhile and informative course to attend, this has been another substantial step forward for 609 Sqn, to compliment the ever-growing number of our personnel being trained in C-UAS. I now look forward to flying 'enemy' drones against the ORCUS course students in the coming months prior to attending the course myself.

Cpl Lumsdale



Screen is drone hunting

IRT Mod 1

In line with RAF mandatory training the squadron conducts Mod 1 twice in two consecutive months to keep all the squadron members in date at approximately the same time whilst giving everyone a degree of flexibility with their civilian jobs.

In a change from previous years a large proportion of the theory aspect of training is now online via the Defence Learning Environment, this allows for more time to be spent on practical elements which can only be done onsite with the appropriate instructors. The online training has been optimised for completing at home and can be done on a mobile phone or tablet which is perfect for PTVRs without MODNet access. The subjects covered include CBRN, SERE, Rifle weapon handling, First Aid, Law of Armed Conflict and Unmanned Air System (UAS) awareness training. UAS training is now delivered force wide to make sure everyone understands how to report sightings of unmanned air systems on base.

The onsite training was run over a weekend and started with the RAF fitness test. After a shower break the next thing on the list was rifle practice lessons followed by Weapons Handling Tests which link into the blended learning completed prior to the weekend. CBRN and First Aid are covered with theory and practical training which again worked well with the blended learning previously undertaken. The first day finished with some annual update briefs.



Forced march with 55Kg of kit RAST (Regiment Assessment Test)



Lawnmowers, is a man drag in full kit so around 200Kg

Sunday begins with the RAF Regiment fitness test. Participants need to be in date RAF fitness test which is why that is done the day before. The test involves a loaded march, a weighted run and a series of individual tests relating to movement on the battlefield and casualty extraction.

The remainder of the day is filled with briefs including security, fire safety training and a presentation from Wg Cdr Buckingham, the Employer Engagement officer. This was a very useful brief which in the context of the operational focus the squadron now has, illustrates the requirement for PTVRs to have open conversations with our employers about deploying so they can be well prepared for our absence from work. Overall, the combination of blended learning and face to face training worked well and is likely to continue to be developed further in the future.

Cpl Doughty.

Squadron 87th Anniversary Dinner

As well as developing the role that will carry the squadron forward, being a Battle of Britain Squadron, we also take a great deal of pride in remembering our history and past and the incredible deeds of those who came before us. The squadron's full title is 609 West Riding Sqn and so the annual dinner takes place in different parts of the Riding, this year in at the Majestic Hotel, Harrogate.

A great deal of effort went into the function with 609 Sqn silverware on the tables, fantastic food and wine, and a host of special guests. These included Retd Air Commodore Bostock, Honorary Air Commodore Nigel Corner, and several European members of the 609 Sqn Association. The links to France, Belgium and the Netherlands are from the squadron's expeditionary basing post-D-Day when they moved with the contingent of Allied Forces across France and the Low Countries. Several presentations were also given out to Sqn members, including those who are leaving the RAF such as FS Vic Rose and AS1 Steve Dowell who gave many years of very productive Service to the squadron.

609 Sqn had a Reserve specific Counter-Uncrewed Aerial System (C-UAS) course arranged for their Annual Continuation Training (ACT) over the period 10-24 Sept 22 however, when Op BRIDGES was called this training was naturally cancelled. As 609 Sqn's Reservists were already committed to this period, they were used for Op BALLAM in London, and on their return to RAF Leeming supported the latter serials of Ex COBRA WARRIOR. Besides various other training weekends, and preparations for operational deployments, Cpl Thomson was singled out for his formidable achievements across a long career and was presented with a Lord Lieutenant's Award. Below are accounts from 609 Sqn personnel involved in these events.

OP LONDON BRIDGE

On the 10th September 609 WR Squadron personnel began to arrive at RAF Leeming ready to start their ACT. This expectation was very lived as Orders from FP Force HQ came in directing the Sqn to cancel our planned training and to standby for taskings to support Op LONDON BRIDGE. Although it was a very



sombre time all personnel put on standby were proud to be aligned to this with everyone understanding the significance and magnitude of the event.

The actual aspect of Op LONDON BRIDGE that 609 Sqn personnel were involved with was Op BALLAM which was to assist the civilian police in London marshalling members of the public and assisting with keeping them safe. Our first step was to move to a holding area at RAF Honington where we met up personnel from other squadrons, from here we moved to London. Our accommodation for the duration of the tasking was okay, a roof over our heads and somewhere to keep dry, so not much to complain about! We had cooked meals each day, with supplies for lunch provided too which meant plenty of tracker bars and sandwiches.

609 Sqn personnel were split into different sections and each section had a different taskings however to begin with everyone's shift was 12 hours long regardless of task although as things settled timings were adjusted. Taskings we conducted were:

- Helping staff checkpoints / road closures etc. alongside the Army and Royal Navy, as well as the civilian police
- Crowd control, to help manage the crowds and support staff with coming and going from the funeral
- Acting as a QRF element at Horse Guards Parade, where we could be called upon for any support or taskings needed



There were also some opportunities for Force Development during our downtime. This included visiting the Natural History Museum, various memorials, and the Imperial War Museum, which is home to Spitfire Mk 1a R6915 which is preserved in its original wartime OTU livery. This aircraft served with No. 609 Squadron in the Battle of Britain, so an excellent opportunity to see some of our own squadron's history.

We are all proud to have played a part in the funeral and to have done one last service for Her Majesty the Queen.

AS1 Whitehead and AS1 Taylor.

Exercise COBRA WARRIOR

609 Sqn personnel returning from Op LONDON BRIDGE coincided with a request from the Exercise COBRA WARRIOR staff for us to provide exercising troops for Joint Personnel Recovery (JPR) scenarios. The exercise is a large scale, multi-national exercise which lasts several weeks and involves all aspects of Air Power including the integration of air and land assets. 609 Sqn were attached to 51 Sqn RAF Regt for their role in the exercise. 51 Sqn had been involved with the exercise for the previous two weeks and had well established SOPs. These were briefed to 609 Sqn personnel in a comprehensive set of orders.

The aim of the exercise on the first day was a JPR operation with four downed aircrew requiring extraction. They had been shot down in a single aircraft but had been separated into two groups of two on the ground, Subsequently the operation would be in two parts, a Northern rescue and a Southern rescue, which had been dictated by the geographical location of the downed aircrew. The southern rescue was to be undertaken by 51 Sqn who were flown in by US Pavehawk search and rescue helicopters supported by Royal Navy Wildcat's for Close Air Support.



The Northern rescue would be carried out by a composite Group comprising 609 and 51 Sqn Gunners and a RAF Regt Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) from the Air Land Integration Cell. The plan was to have two Chinooks, one carrying the rescue party along with the JTAC and the other carrying an airborne Quick Reaction Force (QRF) however, a last minute inject meant only one Chinook could be used so the plan was quickly adapted. However, because of the size and flexibility of the Chinook and its crew, a quick reorganization took place, and the plan was modified so the Northern group could fly in the single airframe. The QRF would remain on board when the helicopter landed to drop off the rescue party and then fly to a nearby holding area until needed.

From landing the rescue team would have only 13 minutes to locate the two aircrew, one of which had an ankle injury and was unable to walk and get them back to the helicopter landing site to be safely extracted. Speed was the key aspect of mission success with the limited time on the ground due to an enemy QRF of 100+ not far from the landing site meaning it was essential to get in and out as fast as possible. Close Air Support for this Northern package was provided by two Army Air Corps Apache gunships who worked closely with the JTAC, again providing further realism to the exercise.

Rehearsals complete, the troops boarded the aircraft as planned which, for some of the squadron members this would be their first time in a helicopter. Everybody was focused and up for the challenge ahead, on route to the exercise location the Chinook would rendezvous with the two Apache gunships at a Forward Arming and Refuelling Point (FARP) which had been set up on a small airfield in Northumberland.

Shortly after being airborne again flying low and fast, the 10-minute warning signal was passed around by the loadmaster. Just as final checks were taking place the helicopter tipped rapidly to one side and there was a loud bang. The Chinook had suffered a bird strike the aircrew's reaction was swift and calm, and they land the aircraft nearby to inspect it for any damage. After a short time, it was decided that the Chinook would fly everybody back to the FARP location and then it could be switched off and given a more thorough inspection.

Back at the FARP after a thorough examination the very understandable decision was made to fly the team back to base. Even though the exercise had been cut short there was a lot of positives to take away. It was an excellent experience for the squadron and the events were also a valuable test of SOP's for the Aircrew.

Cpl Doughty



GS MOD 2 LAND ROVER COURSE 8th & 9th October

To ensure continuous development of 609 Sqn's personnel 609's Mechanical Transport Team arranged a two day General Service Land rover Module 2 course. The course is designed to confirm and reinforce skills learned on previous driving courses and also to teach some new aspects of driving and operating off road in a tactical environment.

The first part of the course was theory based. Students were given lessons including convoy driving, route planning, producing route cards and camouflaging vehicles in tactical situations.

A large part of the training was focused on convoy driving and as such the training team gave the students an exercise scenario which would take place on the second day of the course. As there was some newly promoted NCO's on the course they were given the task of producing a brief set of orders based on the scenario which involved moving a packet of vehicles (4 or more) via public roads in convoy to a military driver training area. The training area would then be classed as enemy held territory and vehicle mounted reconnaissance patrols would take place with the intention of finding a suitable area in which to conceal a vehicle and observe enemy movements.

The remainder of the first day was given to the students to prepare for the exercise which proved to be an



excellent opportunity for the NCO's to develop their planning and leadership skills. Each member of the team was given a role within the convoy along with a partner who would then switch roles for the return journey. The troops, under the supervision of the packet commander and the watchful eye of the training team, would be expected to travel in convoy to the training area keeping the correct spacings and speed limits which had been briefed in orders and to navigate only using a route card. The vehicles were given a detailed inspection and thoroughly prepared. After rehearsals the vehicles were parked in Order of March in preparation of a 0800 move off time.

The following day the convoy made its way successfully on time and as a packet to the training area. After a safety brief the students carried out several vehicle patrols switching roles in exercise scenario. The training team also provided instruction in off road driving at this time.

When a suitable observation post had been found one vehicle was put in place and camouflaged applying the 3 phases which had been previously taught.

The last element of the course was a return journey via a different route again, using only route cards. As can happen things didn't quite go according to plan. A wrong turn caused a separation in the convoy. After a few communication problems the team eventually continued with the plan briefed in orders and safely made it back to camp. This mistake made an excellent learning point and brought home the importance of having "Actions-on" built into your plan and making sure everyone understands them.

This course was a fantastic opportunity, and the team came away with new skills, developed confidence, and gained a real sense of achievement.

Cpl Doughty

Lord Lieutenant's Award

On Thursday 29th September, His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of North Yorkshire, Mrs Johanna Ropner presented her annual awards. Along with two members of 607 Sqn, Cpl Thomson was presented with such an award. HM Lord-Lieutenants are appointed by the King to represent him in each county of the United Kingdom and the honours they present are among the highest an individual can receive. These awards are bestowed onto Reservists and Cadets from each of the three Services in recognition of outstanding service.

Cpl Thomson received his award for his consistent professionalism, dedication, and selflessness, and for persistently exemplifying the values, ethos, and standards of the RAF which his citation amply evidenced.



Book project in progress on F/Lt "Jean de Selys Longchamps"

As mentioned, a book is currently written by writer and historian Marc Audrit (see picture below) with the support of many and amongst them our historians with their endless knowledge and corporation.

What we can reveal is that the text alone, without photographs !!!, will be over 400 pages ... !!!

We thank all that are helping and supporting Marc Audrit in his efforts and look forward to the book launch.

First print will be in French, second stage is that the book will be available in English for the broader international reading public.

We will keep you informed about the launch and can't wait to see the result.

Tally Ho and thank you Marc !!!!!

Marc Audrit

F/Lt Baron Jean de Selys Longchamps' Attack on Sipo-SD HQ and a hectic day for No.609 Sqn – 20th January 1943 – the story in brief.

BY AND THANKS TO "HISTORY OF MANSTON AIRFIELD".
PUBLISHED JANUARY 20, 2023 · UPDATED FEBRUARY 1, 2023

Word of Introduction by writer Marc Audrit

I have decided to write Jean de Selys' biography because I've always been fascinated by individuals who possess an extra measure of soul and have contributed more to life than what was expected of them. Jean de Selys is a perfect example of someone who undergoes numerous trials and tribulations and emerges stronger and more resilient through adversity.

I focused on writing this book in early 2022 and since then dedicated almost 100% of my time to it. It will be released in 2023, at the latest in September, in French first and then, hopefully, in Dutch and English.

Those who want to be informed of the release date can send me an email at ma@hawaaaouh.com





F/Lt Baron Jean de Selys Longchamps DFC and 'Spit' – Biggin Hill, October 1941.

Baron Jean Michel P.M.G. de Selys Longchamps was born 31st May 1912 in Brussels as the son of Baron Raymond Charles Michel Ghislain de de Selys Longchamps and Emilie de Theux de Meylandt et Montjardin.

Initially part of the Belgian Cavalry, when Belgium capitulated, he left for England from De Panne. Early June, he went back to France where efforts were being made to rebuild a Belgian Army. The French surrender put an end to all intentions of Belgian units to resume fighting and Jean de Selys found his way to Gibraltar via Sète. He was then sent on a mission to Oujda in Morocco which proved pointless, and then returned to France where he reunited with his older brother, François, who had been in a road accident in the region of Pau and remained in a coma for sixteen days. This was a period of great uncertainty for Jean de Selys, who even considered going to the Belgian Congo. Finally, at the end of November 1940, he returned to Gibraltar to board the HMS Argus for Glasgow. He disembarked there on December 14th and by the 16th, he had already arrived in London where he immediately reported as a volunteer, forging his papers so he could be trained by the RAF as a fighter pilot, as, at 28 years old, he was too old to be admitted.

He served with 609 Sqn of 11 Group from 30th September 1941 onwards. Here he quickly developed into an aggressive and able pilot.

Through his Belgian contacts, Jean de Selys kept up to date with developments in his country and soon he devised a plan to raid the Sipo-SD HQ in his hometown of Brussels. His main motive was to raise Belgian

morale by hitting a strong symbol of Nazi occupation at its heart. Over time, German police became increasingly oppressive in Belgium: between 12th December 1942 and 13th January 1943, sixty eight persons were shot in retaliation.

Since our original posting of this article, we have been made aware by Marc Audrit (a biographer of de Selys) that suggestions that de Selys' motives were because his father had died from having been tortured by the security police (SIPO) are incorrect, and in fact his father died peacefully in 1966, so we are happy to correct with his assistance.

Since 1940, the security police and the secret police (SIPO-SD) was in an apartment building at 453 Avenue Louise that Jean de Selys knew pretty well as one of his friends lived there before the war. After finalizing his plan he repeatedly asked authorities for permission to carry it out but his request always fell on deaf ears. He continued planning his action in secret, however.



F/Lt Baron Jean de Selys Longchamps DFC, date unknown.

By 20th January 1943 he still didn't have an answer so he decided to proceed on his own. That day, together with his wingman and comrade F/S Blanco they took off for Belgium in their Hawker Typhoons, with orders to attack railway junctions in Belgium. de Selys armed his aircraft to the limit and took along a bag full of little Belgian flags that Belgian schoolchildren in London had made for him.

After completing their official mission, Jean de Selys knew he finally had his opportunity and ordered his wingman to return to England alone and set course for Brussels himself. Flying as low as possible, he reached the Belgian capital unscathed, soon found his target and, with guns blazing, launched his attack. He executed his attack so precisely that the target was riddled with bullets but no other building was hit. He then threw an English flag and a Belgian flag over the city. He had also brought with him small Belgian flags made by Belgian children who had taken refuge in England, which he threw in the area around Ghent. During the attack, four German soldiers were killed instantly including the Chief of the SD, SS-Sturmbannführer Alfred Thomas. Numerous others were either lightly or gravely injured.

The news of the raid spread throughout the city and many Brussels residents came to see the damage to the front of the building. Joy was visible throughout the city and soon throughout the country. The objective of boosting the morale of the Belgians was fully achieved. After the raid, the Germans worked hard to repair the building, but they also decided to move the headquarters of the Sipo-SD to another location on Avenue Louise, which was less exposed to air attacks.



Pencil drawing of the attack by the artist Patrick Sadler

On his return to base, de Selys received a warm welcome from his comrades but was demoted to from Flight Lieutenant to Flying Officer. It is now established that the decision to strip him of his rank of Flight Lieutenant had been made BEFORE the raid because Jean de Selys' individualistic temperament was not compatible with the role. On 13th March he was transferred to No. 3 Squadron, which had just started its conversion to Typhoon, and there he was reunited with a Squadron Leader he knew well, the Belgian Léo De Soomer. Despite his degradation to Flying Officer, the British awarded him the DFC later on 31st May 1943 (his birthday) – The citation read:

This Officer is a pilot of exceptional ability and keenness. He shows a great offensive spirit and is eager to engage and destroy the enemy whenever possible. He has shown his great courage and initiative in numerous rail transport and the Sipo-SD HQ headquarters attack in Brussels. He has also destroyed at least one enemy aircraft and damaged another.

On 609 Squadron's last day at Manston for this period on 20th July 1943 (the Squadron would return in December), F/O van Lierde and F/O de Selys were awarded their DFC's on the parade ground at Manston.



Distinguished Flying Cross investiture parade, Baron Jean de Selys Longchamps receiving.

On 16th August 1943, after returning from a mission with No.3 Squadron over Ostend in his beloved Belgium, de Selys was killed when his Typhoon Ib EJ950 QO-X crashed at Manston after returning from a sortie in the morning from Manston to Ostend. It is a possibility that the aircraft was damaged by flak. It suffered structural failure, breaking into two and crashed on approach. You can find his grave, number 3002A, in Minster Cemetery nearby.

Text from No.3 Sqn ORB (Operational Records Book) Form 540 (extract):

The Squadron suffered one of its greatest losses in losing F/O de SELYS who was undoubtedly one of the finest and highly skilled pilots of his day. He had an outstanding personality of great charm and by his initiative and great daring set an example to others that was of incalculable value to the Squadron. His death was deeply mourned by every member of the Squadron as a personal loss. He had been to GHENT on an INTRUDER operation and it can only be presumed that his aircraft had been badly damaged by flak and that just prior to landing, some part of the aircraft snapped causing it to dive out of control.

AIR 27/33/59

Grave of Flt Lt Baron Jean Michel P.M.G de Selys Longchamps DFC in Minster Cemetery.

Number 453 Avenue Louise still stands today, and the Belgian people have erected a statue to their heroic, if disobedient, flying resistance fighter.

To look at the location of the former Sipo-SD HQ building, you can see it on Google Maps (best viewed on Google Chrome) here, although the large tower block opposite is a more recent



addition: <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/@50.8177103,4.3750816,306a,20y,270h,43.58t/data=!3m1!1e3>



Statue in memory of Jean de Selys-Longchamp and his air attack on the siege of the Sipo-SD HQ, Avenue Louise in Brussels. (10-storey building in the background) By Paul Boedts (Own work) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>)], via Wikimedia Commons



Plaque Commemorating F/Lt Baron Jean de Selys Longchamps' attack on the Sipo-SD HQ headquarters

Apart from F/Lt de Selys' Sipo-SD HQ raid and earlier mission accompanied by F/S Blanco, No.609 Squadron had a very busy day but some were in trouble with the law after celebrations later that night, as detailed in the official records below.

Text from No.609 Sqn ORB (Operational Records Book) Form 540:

F/Lt de Selys' special Rhubarb plus the Germans biggest daylight raid since the Battle of Britain combine to make this the Squadron's most successful day since the Battle of the Dinghy on 8th May 1941. It also sees the dawning of a new star in the shape of F/O Baldwin, who emulates the famous Sergeant Rigler DFM in getting 3 Destroyed in one sortie.

Here is the day's score:

Enemy Casualties:	1 Loco Cat B (F/Lt de Selys – Belgian)
	Sipo-SD HQ (Brussels) shot up (F/Lt de Selys – Belgian)
	Flags dropped (Brussels and villages) (F/Lt de Selys – Belgian)
	2 Locos. Cat B (F/Sgt Blanco – Belgian)
	1 Fw.190 Destroyed (F/O Lallemand – Belgian)
	3 Me.109G Destroyed (F/O Baldwin)
	1 Fw.190 Destroyed (F/Lt Atkinson)
	1 Fw.190 Damaged (F/O Raw)
	1 Fw.190 Destroyed (F/O van Lierde – Belgian)
Our Casualties:	1 Typhoon Cat A (F/O Baldwin unhurt)



S/Ldr. RP 'Bee' Beamont and No.609 Squadron pilots in the dispersal doorway, RAF Manston, spring 1943. Coloured image produced by Mark Crame and reproduced with his permission.

Standing L-R: F/O Howard Skett, F/Lt Erik Haabjoern, F/O George 'Moose' Evans, S/Ldr Roland 'Bee' Beamont, F/O Matthew 'Paddy' Cameron, F/O Peter 'Slosher' Raw, F/Sgt Lawrence 'Pinkie' Stark, F/O Antoni 'Tony' Polek.

Front L-R: Sgt Chester 'Ches' West, F/Lt James Humphreys, P/O Geoff Stevens, F/O Remy 'Mony' Van Lierde, Adj. Plt. Andrea 'Le Men' Blanco, F/Lt Johnny Wells, F/O Roy Payne, F/O Raymond 'Cheval' Lallemand. The dogs are Blitz and Spit.

At 08:32 the Rhubarb takes-off for Belgium. De Selys, after shooting up a train SE of Bruges, leaves Blanco to continue the train busting, and deciding the weather is now suitable for his visit to the capital, steers over Ghent at Oft and arrives. After photographing the Palais de Justice (unfortunately his camera was not working) he flies over the Cinquantenaire Memorial and the Cavalry Barracks, then climbs to 2,000 feet and dives on the Sipo-SD HQ in the Avenue Louise, raking it from top to bottom and no doubt breaking many windows. Then he climbs again and drops first the Union Jack, then the flag of Belgium over a populated square (one damages his tail plane slightly). There is no opposition whatsoever, and after some more photography he flies back to the coast, dropping about 1000 miniature Belgian flags at various villages. North of St Omer two German soldiers on a horse-drawn vehicle jump for cover. He is back by 09:44.

Meanwhile F/Sgt Blanco, after making a dummy attack on a passenger train near Aeltre, sees the passengers disembark. He attacks a goods train travelling in the opposite direction, and this stops so near the passenger train that he is able to make 6 attacks on both engines, seeing strikes and steam.

Two minutes after the departure of the Rhubarb F/O's Lallemand and Raw take-off on standing patrol. They are flying West towards Dungeness when 'totter' rockets are seen at Dymchurch, then 2 Fw.190's below, flying East inshore of a convoy. Lallemand had begun to dive when both E/A made a climbing turn towards him. He finds he can out-turn them, and getting behind the leader fires 3 bursts from about 10 degrees. He sees strikes on both wings, then flames from the cockpit. Then he sees blue smoke on both sides of his own cockpit, and thinks erroneously that he has been hit by E/A No. 2. It is known from other sources that the first E/A went into the sea. Meanwhile Raw has pursued E/A No. 2 towards France, but loses sight of it owing to oil on his windscreen. Finally he sees it return towards Dover, and being shot at by the convoy.

At about 12:45 the IO, hearing AA in action, looks out of the window of the Intell Office and sees wreaths of smoke trails overhead such as he has not seen since the Battle of Britain, except that now they are against cloud instead of clear blue sky. He goes out and is nearly run down by the CO driving furiously towards his A/C. A Squadron of Spits flies over, then a Typhoon makes a homing dive on the aerodrome. Immediately a Spit detaches itself and fires (they have been told, it is learnt later, that 30 Fw.190's are attacking Manston). He misses, and other Spits put themselves menacingly on the Typhoons tail, which, to the IO's relief, lowers its undercarriage just in time.

Other observers are watching a parachute going down near Ramsgate, which turns out to be a German. The Typhoon pilot is F/Lt de Selys. He reports having seen smoke trails and 8-12 E/A at 20,000 feet near Deal. Controller however told him of others at 14,000 feet near base. He dived to this height, but failed to see any, and had to land to refuel. There are however 2 other Sections up, one on standing patrol, the other Scrambled. The latter, off at 12:29, also try to intercept the bandits reported at 14,000 feet, but actually find them at 20,000 feet – 8 Me.109's. They attack the formation, which breaks up, and then attack 3 which detach themselves and head for Dover. In firing at one of these F/O Creteur gets into a spin which puts him out of the fight. F/O Baldwin, however, fires in quick succession at the other 2 from about 100 yards astern. The first sheds its cockpit hood and smoke; the second disintegrates completely, and as it explodes the starboard wing of the first drops off. Meanwhile the third is on his tail. He makes it overshoot by skidding and attacks it as it dives for cloud at 10,000 feet, seeing strikes. Below cloud he sees a parachute, which he circles and fixes. His own damage is a tyre, flap and petrol tank damaged.



Typhoon Mark IB, DN604 PR-F 'Mavis', of No. 609 Squadron RAF, on the ground at Manston, Kent. The aircraft displays a score tally of 18 locomotives destroyed in ground attacks on the fuselage side. © IWM (CH 9822)

Meanwhile F/O's Wells and van Lierde have climbed to 14,000 feet on hearing bandits reported at this height, but before reaching it van Lierde sees 12 A/C at this height headed for Dover. He loses them in cloud, however, and is told to patrol below cloud base at 27,000 feet. Two bogeys are then reported at 6,000 feet, and he is just going down when 2 Me.109's pop out of cloud in front of him. He fires a short burst at the second, but they pull up into cloud again, very sharply. Ten minutes later he sees another pair of 190's, dipping in and out of cloud base, headed South. By this time he is thoroughly aroused, so he takes a parallel course S. of Dover at 26,000 feet, and finds them again, quite close. He attacks in a dive from astern at 350 yards and this E/A at once catches fire below the wings. After 4-5 seconds firing, its dive steepens, and it becomes a 'ball of fire'. Not satisfied even yet, van Lierde continues shooting until suddenly his own cockpit fills with smoke, and he jettisons his hood all ready to bale out. The smoke then abates, and he lands, very excited, but without damage. "I really got one Ziegly!" he tells the IO, who by this time is finding it difficult to cope. F/O Wells has only had time for a shot at an Me.109 before this dives into cloud at 10,000 feet (F/O van Lierde's combats are well above the height any Typhoon has yet fought, or even been expected to fight).

The CO, who Scrambles himself at 13:01, loses 2 Fw.190's in cloud before he can get a shot in, and uses a bad word on the R/T. He is then attacked (and fired at) first by clipped-wing Spitfire (which he out-turns) then by another believed Mark VI.

The total strength of the raid staged by the enemy is estimated at about 90. Of these some 30 were the 'business' wing, destined for London (some 12 got there), the rest consisted of 2 diversionary sweeps, and it was probably one of these that 609 Sqn intercepted.

Fighter Command's defensive effort was some 214 sorties, and the total Destroyed was 12 or 13. Of these 609 obtained 4 (one third) for 7 sorties. There were only 7 or 8 serviceable aircraft Baldwin only got his third confirmed about 10 days later, when he helped to interview one of the two prisoners he accounted for (and who was only picked up 2 days after the event). This P.O.W., after previously telling a completely false story, (such as saying he was shot down on Jan. 19th during a practice Flight) eventually described the circumstances of his combat, which agreed in all essentials with Baldwin's third Me.109. Though he expressed surprise that he and his pal had both been shot down by 'a worm like Baldwin' (he evidently expected someone 7ft high) he gave his opponent his handsome clasp knife as a souvenir, Baldwin also getting the Mae West of the other prisoner.

At 1425 F/Lt Atkinson, who has spent the day watching pilots come down with victory after victory, philosophically takes-off on a stooge patrol with F/O Raw. He returns in 23 minutes, having himself shot down a Fw.190, with a Damaged for Raw. And very peculiar 190's they were. They saw them turning in front of them 5 miles E. of Dover, and Swingate said they were friendly. And friendly they looked and behaved: they rocked their wings and their crosses, on a grey background, were enclosed by most misleading yellow roundels. On Atkinson's first attack, however, they turned and headed quickly for France, using the usual jinking and crossing-over tactics. This enabled the Typhoons to gain slightly, and both fired at each alternately, seeing strikes on both. When Raw finished his ammo, he continued shooting with his camera. Atkinson, after several bursts from 300 closing to 250 yards, saw a flash on the wing and the 190 dived into the sea 15 miles SE of Dover. Atkinson's victory was quite the most popular of the day, representing a reversal of his usual luck. NB The German POW's respectively dubbed the Typhoon a 'Vultee Vanguard' and a 'Mustang'!

Evening sees a justified celebration at the Old Charles, attended by all pilots not on leave or sick. Total present: 18. On emerging, the driver of one of the taxis cannot at once be located, so F/Lt de Selys takes-off without him, accompanied by F/O Wells and F/O Nankivell. It is not long before Doone House is invaded by police, and the culprits are marched off to the police station. F/O Evans, who protests against this, somehow gets rounded up too, but only remembers he is not one of the guilty ones half way through the proceedings (then volubly). The attempts of the inspector to come the heavy father fail dismally to extract the slightest filial sorrow from the accused, and in the small hours the police give it up, and after a day or two they are taken by the Station Commander to see the chief constable.

[AIR 27/2103/1](#)

Manston Station ORB for 20th January 1943 (extract):

There was much medium cloud during the day, the base beginning to lower with the evening and weather deteriorating slightly. This day, with the exception of defensive patrols carried out by 137 Squadron, was another day for 609 Squadron. During the day, 609 Squadron, who had only at the best, 8 aircraft operational, managed to carry out standing patrols, rhuarbs and scrambles, damaged 3 engines, shot up the Sipo-SD HQ Headquarters in the Avenue Louise in Brussels, shot down 5 enemy aircraft and damaged 2 others. At 0832 hours, 2 aircraft of 609 Squadron took off with the "paper objective" to patrol railways between Ghent-Courtrai, and the following are the actual results:-

F/Lt. de Selys (Belgian) attacked a goods train near Bruges seeing many strikes on the engine and flew on to Brussels to carry out a special mission. Arriving at Brussels, he photographed the Palais de Justice, flew over the Palais Royal, Cinquantenaire Memorial and Cavalry Barracks, climbed to 2,000 ft. and dived on the Sipo-SD HQ Headquarters in the Avenue Louise, raking it from top to bottom with cannon fire, seeing strikes. He again climber to 2,000 ft. dropped a Union Jack and then a Belgian flag over a populated square, re-photographed the Palais de Justice and flew low over North Brussels. On the way back to the coast, he dropped about 1,000 miniature Belgian flags on various villages and frightened two German soldiers on a horse-drawn vehicle. No flak was met with throughout the trip. On his return, his camera was found to be u/s.

F/Sgt. Blanco (Belgian) made a dummy attack on a passenger train near Aeltre which stopped, the passengers disembarking. He then proceeded to attack a goods train going in the opposite direction, which stopped on attack, and both engines are claimed as "Cat.B." F/Lt. de Selys and F/Sgt. Blanco landed 0944 hours. At 0834 hours, red section took off on a defensive coastal patrol, and when off Dymchurch, sighted 2 FW.190's flying at 200 ft. flying E. inland of a convoy off Dungeness. F/O. Lallemand (Belgian), turned in and attacked No.1 enemy aircraft, diving and turning from 800 ft. seeing several strikes on wing and flames from in front of the cockpit of the enemy aircraft which turned and headed for France. Information from other sources shows that this aircraft went into the sea and is, therefore, claimed as destroyed. The second enemy aircraft was chased by F/O. Raw who did not, however, fire owing to having his windscreen covered with oil. The Section landed at 0930 hours. At 1229 hours, another section was scrambled to intercept raiders approaching base at 14,000 ft. Eight plus ME.109F's were seen East of Manston and were attacked by F/O. Baldwin who destroyed 2 and damaged one. One enemy pilot was observed to bale out but he was seen to sink into the sea. The section landed at 1315 hours. The second section airborne at 1227 hours, on defensive patrol between North Foreland-Dungeness, was told of the bandits at 14,000 ft. over base. After patrolling for 20 minutes and when at 9,000 ft. they saw 3 sections of 4 aircraft in the Manston area. Bandits were then reported at Dover and the section fired at 2 Me.109F's without result.

Climbing to 23,000 ft. F/O. Van Lierde (Belgian) saw 2 FW.190's fly past him from above, one of which turned left and the other levelling off in front. This latter he attacked at 200 yds. But it peeled off into cloud. They were then told that bandits were heading South, and saw 2 FW.190's dipping out of cloud and taking a parallel course at 27,000 ft., emerging just in front in a gentle dive. F/O. Van Lierde fired a long burst and one enemy aircraft was seen to dive into the sea in flames. Neither of our aircraft was damaged. They both landed at 1321 hours. At 1425 hours, a defensive patrol took off to North Foreland-Dungeness, and 5 miles East of Dover, saw 2 aircraft with yellow circles on wings and crosses on grey background. Aircraft were identified as FW.190's and were engaged; as a result of which, F/Lt. Atkinson claims 1 FW.190 destroyed and F/O. Raw claims one FW.190 damaged. The Section landed at 1448 hours.

There was no further activity during the day. The weather deteriorated rapidly and by 2200 hours it was raining. The weather was showery for the rest of the night with bright clear periods and showed a definite improvement by 0500 hours when the rain cleared away.

Two Typhoons of 609 Squadron carried out a dusk patrol.

AIR 28-513

Abbreviations:

AA – Anti-Aircraft

IA – Intelligence Officer

E/A – Enemy Aircraft

R/T – Radio Telephone

Grateful acknowledgements to those who helped with this post:

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Bart Materné

THE ABOVE ARTICLE IS BY AND THANKS TO “HISTORY OF MANSTON AIRFIELD” · PUBLISHED JANUARY 20, 2023 · UPDATED FEBRUARY 1, 2023

Battle of the Dinghies

During a talk with our historians Mark Crame and Jocelyn Leclercq the subject of Battle of the Dinghies came up.

It is a collection of facts, true stories and other information illustrated in this article. A lot of “links” have been added that can take you into an historical journey that could last for hours on end. Supported by facts and links to video recordings / movie reels dating back to WW2.

The battle of the dinghies was a fierce race between the Luftwaffe and the RAF trying to retrieve their downed pilots from the icy channel waters or to capture the enemy pilots.

Being a fighter pilot was not all about going to war with the opponent but could well end up in a struggle for survival and the race to get one back to it's Squadron.

A lot is known about pilots who were shot down, had to bail out or crash landed on land, how they got caught or how they managed to escape back to Britain with the help of well-organized escape lines / organizations.

But where to find someone in the middle of the channel, at sea, after ditching or bailing out when one was hit ending up in the cold North Sea channel water. That is ... if the one survived the ordeal.

Most of the time your fellow patrol pilots would keep an eye on their fellow pilot going down to see if you made it down alive to transmit his position to the rescue services.

But both the RAF and Luftwaffe had the interest to get hold of their own pilots in the first place as well to get hold of the enemy pilots. This to take them out of action as prisoners of war and to retrieve valuable information from them.

The race was on after the rescue services got hold of the coordinates of the downed pilot.

Bailing out of a Typhoon was one thing, bailing out of a bomber another. Many did not make it back and when they did it was the start of an ordeal and adventure to stay alive till they were picked up by the friendlies. If it was the enemy the war ended there and then in a prison camp.

It was the German Luftwaffe who set up the "Seenot Dienst" (sea rescue service) after their first fighters / pilots ended up in the sea.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7gRdcK97G0k> (the development of the WW2 German Seenot Dienst)

The type of boats involved were High Speed Launches (HSL) from both sides supported by rescue aircraft. Various types were used but we will get to these further on in the article.

Soon the RAF set up their own Air Sea Recue (ASR) service and the race was on.

As for the pilots, all they had with them was as little as possible on personal belongings. If caught by the enemy these belongings could give vital information to the enemy or a key to exploit the captured pilot or crew member.

Besides their parachute fighter pilots carried a survival kit with them.



The notion of "survival kit" has changed over the years, and we think it's better to make the difference between the "survival gear", especially when flying over water, and the "escape kit". The former comprises the "Mae-West" life jacket, with a whistle, dye (for dyeing the water and to be seen from a distance), an heliograph (a kind of mirror with a small hole in the middle), a flare gun and colored flares, and there was usually a dinghy (dinghy for one for single-seaters, and dinghies / self-inflatable life rafts for several airmen in bombers). There would be some rations in the dinghy as well.

Imagine them ending up in the cold sea water ... One must remember that these pilots were heavily dressed to keep the cold away flying at high altitudes wearing woolen leather boots, pants, jackets, When these got soaked by water it must have been nearly impossible to swim, or get into the inflated dingy. And if they managed then it was trying to stay upright riding the waves and the elements in open water. Wind, rain, storm, the cold, hypothermia ... hoping to be saved by anyone but preferably one's own troops.

Their kit contained of the following items.

RAF WW2 fighter pilot K Type Dingy kit.

Contents;

- Co2 gas inflation cylinder
- 7 section aluminum mast
- Red glazed triangular sail
- 2 sets of leak stoppers
- Cotton sea drogue
- Pair of small hand paddles
- Compas MK II type
- Halio Graph Mirror / stars navigation
- Sponge
- Air pump – Bellows
- Food ration
- Rounded knife
- Silk map
- Benzadrine pills



https://www.historicflyingclothing.com/en-GB/ww2-raf-survival-equipment/raf-k-type-dinghy-complete/prod_16130#.ZACrLXbMKM8



Luftwaffe WW2 fighter pilot dinghy kit

Contents

- case
- pocket for a gas cylinder
- gas cylinder
- rowlock
- line
- protective cover
- boot straps
- accessory bag
- distress container
- emergency rations container
- filling hosel bellows
- lashing
- flick bag
- toggle
- cylinder valve

Below is a picture of a German dinghy, which was on display last year at St Omer airfield (it belongs to a friend of Jocelyn). It's a genuine one, but I wouldn't dare using it now ! It's small and all they had to survive at sea.



Some of their stories who survived and got picked up

The German pilot at the origin of the battle was Lieutenant Karl / Karl-Heinz PONEC of the 4th Staffel of Jagdgeschader 3, 4./JG 3 in short.

The German losses from that battle are not as high as claimed in the Operations Record Book, as only two Bf109 were actually shot down, Lieutenant Joachim PFEIFFER of 6./JG 3, killed when he crashed in the Channel, and Unteroffizier KAUL of 3./JG 3 who limped back to the French coast and crash-landed near Etaples, who survived.

PONEC was rescued by the German sea rescue service.

8th. Of May 1941. After a night at the Suivi and several convoys patrols the Squadron little thought, as it took off at 16.49 with the usual 'stooge' instructions to patrol Maidstone - 15,000 feet, that it was about to have the most successful combat any fighter Squadron had endured since the Battle of Britain. Nor has any Squadron Leader ever celebrated his birthday quite so heartily. It all started with a little dinghy floating in mid-Channel containing a German aviator. If he was not the very important German aviator that it is suspected he was then (perhaps Ace Moulders), he must have felt very important by the time boats from both sides had competed to rescue him and by the time 609 Squadron finished battling with the Luftwaffe over him. Whether important or not, his joy at being eventually rescued by his own side must have been severely tempered after witnessing 6, and probably 8, of his own fighters splashing into the surrounding sea, and not a single Spitfire.

(This pilot lost his life next day by
force landing on beach at St. Margaret's Bay)

SECRET

PERSONAL
COMBAT REPORT
Sgt. Mearns

FORM "E"
INA 41/28/35
215

Sector Serial No. (A)

Serial No. of Order detailing Flight
or Squadron to patrol. (B)

Date (C) ... 2nd May 1941

Flight, Squadron (D) Flight B ... Squadron 609 (E)

Number of Enemy Aircraft (E) ... Two (Several more about)

Type of Enemy Aircraft (F) ... ME 109 (YELLOW-NOSED)

Time attack was delivered (G) ... Approx 17.15

Place attack was delivered (H) ... About 7 miles East of Dingwall

Height of Enemy (J) ... about 10000 feet

Enemy casualties (K) ... One Probable

Our casualties, Aircraft (L) ... Aircraft U. badly damaged

Personnel (M) ... Nil

Searchlights (N1)

A.A. (N2) ... Nil

Range at which fire was opened and
estimated length of burst (P) ... Two deflection shots at about 200 yds for 2 sec
and one ^{shot} for action for 2 sec

GENERAL REPORT (R)

I was flying Blue 3 and was rejoining the squadron with my section
when I was attacked from the sun by an ME 109. One bullet
entered the fuselage of my machine and burst in the windscreen in
front of me. I immediately banked away and saw two ME 109's
pass me on the port side. I went after one which banked steeply
and gave him a 2 second burst from the beam without apparent
effect from close range. We commenced to dogfight and I got
on another burst from almost head on and very close. I then got
on his tail and closing into very short range gave him a
long burst from astern. His plane began to smoke and dove
vertically towards the sea. I lost sight of him as he went
down and but think it is very unlikely that he pulled out
of his dive. I claim this as probably destroyed. The machine was still
diving vertically at 6000 feet approx when I turned away, + later on it was
found on the wing of my Spitfire.

Signature, H J D Mearns (Sgt)
(Section,
O.C. Flight,
Squadron,

**PERSONAL
COMBAT REPORT**

Sgt. Palmer

IN 41/e8/36

Sector Serial No. _____ (A) _____

Serial No. of Order detailing Flight or Squadron to
Patrol _____ (B) _____

Date _____ (C) *8/5/44*

Flight, Squadron _____ (D) Flight *A* Sqdn. *689*

Number of Enemy Aircraft _____ (E) *2 and approx. 8*

Type of Enemy Aircraft _____ (F) *Me 109*

Time Attack was delivered _____ (G) *Approx 1720 & 1730 hours*

Place Attack was delivered _____ (H) *Straits of Dover*

Height of Enemy _____ (I) *1000 ft.*

Enemy Casualties _____ (J) _____

Our Casualties _____ Aircraft _____ (K) _____

_____ Personnel _____ (L) _____

GENERAL REPORT _____ (M) _____

See Overleaf.

Searchlights _____ (N.1.) _____

A.A. Guns. (Did shell bursts assist _____

Pilot in intercepting the enemy?) _____ (N.2.) _____

Range at which fire was opened in _____

each attack and estimated length _____ *600 yds. 3 x 1 second.*

of burst _____ *2 secs. at 100 yds. and 2secs. at 20 yds.*

Total number of rounds fired _____

Pilot's Name (In block letters) _____

Signature

Al Palmer (Sgt.)

O.O.

Section
Flight
Squadron

Squadron No.

Pilots are not long back at Gravesend before they are ordered off again on Circus 96, Biggin this time acting as Target Support Wing to Hampden's raiding Marquise. 609 flies about in the St Omer area, and though many 109's are seen in formations up to 12, none are contacted except by P/O Atkinson, leading Yellow Section. After diving on some 109's, he is turning to rejoin his Section when 2 aircraft, which he takes to be Spits, are seen behind. One begins firing at him, but as the deflection is not nearly enough, P/O Atkinson merely tightens his turn. Suddenly his A.S.I. blows out, and it seems another A/C has been firing from above. Half-rolling and diving, he crosses Boulogne beach at 2,000 feet, and his engine begins to fail. Flames then appear beneath the engine cowling. Calling 'M'Aidez', he struggles up to 2,000 feet and bales out in the middle of the Channel. After about an hour he is picked up by a naval launch - none too soon, as it is getting late, with visibility reduced by haze. Officers who pick him up at Dover the same evening, find him in excellent form, thanks partly to having consumed a Benzedrine tablet in his dinghy making him happy as a sand boy (high on the drug in other words) and apparently talking gibberish when the naval rescue service picked him up. It could be said that he must have been very happy to see those chaps arriving to bring him back to land.

Enemy Casualties: Nil

Our " 1 Spitfire Cat 3 (P/O Atkinson rescued uninjured).

609 Sqn Pilot Officer Vicki Ortman's remarkable story "You again"



Vicky Ortman (far right), Keith Ogilvie (far left) at dispersal.

Story goes that 609 Sqn Pilot Officer Vicky Ortman enjoyed a swim in the sea ... He ended up in there 5 times after being shot down.

609 Sqn Pilot Officer Vicki Ortman was rescued twice by the same sea rescue crew within a couple of weeks. Second time they picked him up out of the northsea water they went like "You Again ..." as Ortman answered them in French with the words "Oui, oui ..." (meaning, "Yes, yes ...").

Once they got back to the Squadron a special welcome awaited them by means of a special brew / welcome back drink. It was a mixture of beer, whisky, rum and other spirits that would soon get them warmed up again and relieve them from the stress they went through.

The third time, on the 21st of October he was shot down again by a Bf 109 near Boulogne (France). Pilots of 609 Sqn searched in vain for a sight of his dinghy but he had disappeared. Vicki was badly wounded and for 2 days and one night he bobbed about in the Channel before "beaching" near Dieppe and being taken prisoner.



Both brothers Vicki and Christian (who got KIA) Ortman, both pilots.

Later, remembering the rule that to protect their families at home Belgians should give false names and say they were French Canadian. He used the name "Vicki Ogilvie" – only to find the real Ogilvie (Keith) in the camp to which he was initially sent.

That is why the Air Ministry could not trace the name Vicki Ortman through their mainland network.

It was only in January that they received a letter from Vicki, being in a prison camp, telling them he was alive.

He survived the war but prison camp was hard on him not knowing anything about his family and became very moody and depressed.



His voice can be heard in the below link being interviewed by the BBC Radio.

Both the R.A.F. and the Luftwaffe used seaplanes to rescue airmen in "the drink". On the R.A.F. side the Supermarine Walrus was the mainstay of Air Sea Rescue, on the German side, they were mostly using Heinkel He 59, based at Boulogne-sur-Mer, with detachments around. Lysanders and later war weary Spitfires were also used to help, and drop dinghies in emergency, while the seaplane or the HSL (High Speed Launches) rescue boat was on its way.

The rescue services used fast boats and sea planes:

RAF rescue vessels



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High-speed_launch

RAF rescue planes / sea planes



Westlander Lysander



PBY Catalina



Avro Anson



Dumbo (air-sea rescue)

Luftwaffe rescue vessels



E-Boat

Luftwaffe rescue sea planes



Heinkel He 59



Dornier Do 18



Dornier Do J Wal

Luftwaffe Rescue buoys

These buoys were developed by Ernst Udet for flyers of the Luftwaffe brought down while operating over the English Channel, and were constructed under the direction of the German Ministry of Air Navigation in 1940. Director-General of Equipment for the Luftwaffe. Because of this, an alternate name for them was the Udet-Boje.

The initial buoys were a simple design, 2 m (6 ft 7 in) high, and 1 m × 5 m (3 ft 3 in × 16 ft 5 in) in size, offering little in the form of shelter. A flag pole allowed a flag or lamp to be hoisted, supplies included a basic medical kit, iron rations, water, life jackets and ropes.[1]: 91

An improved buoy was designed and 50 were anchored alongside the French coast.

These buoys were checked on a daily basis by a German patrol boat.

As they were painted in yellow the RAF pilots gave them a nick name and called them “Lobster Pods”. About 50 of them formed a network in the North Sea area.

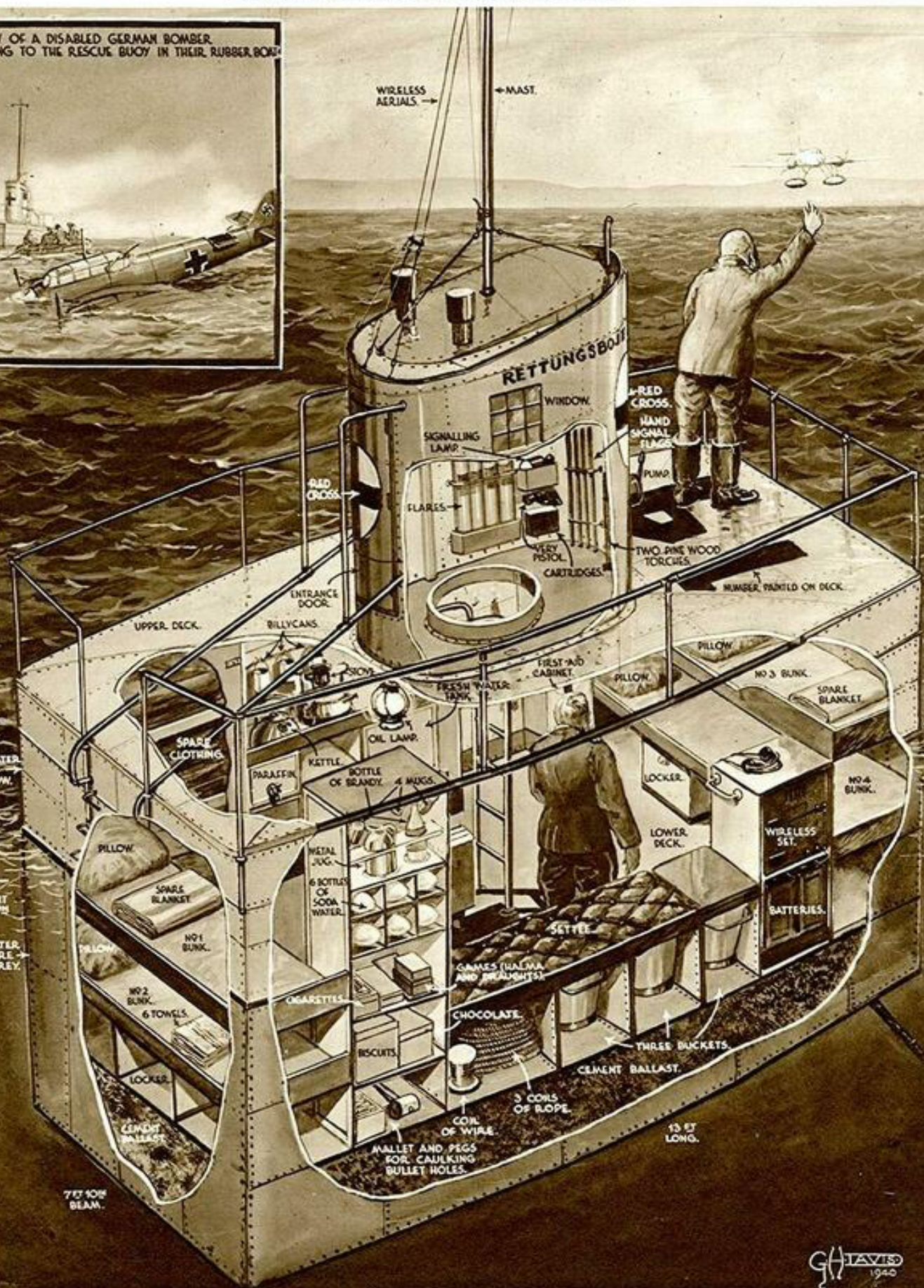
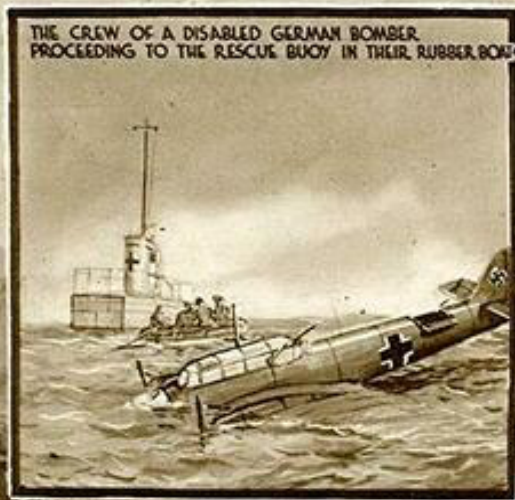
Many of these downed pilots were recovered but many did not make it back alive and were lost at sea forever. Poor communication, poor visibility, weather conditions were the culprit in those cases, and it must have been a horrible ordeal for them who remained at sea never to be rescued, found or heard of again.



"RETTUNGSBOJE"—GERMAN RESCUE BUOYS ANCHORED IN THE CHANNEL.

Drawn by our Special Artist, G. H. DAVIS, WITH OFFICIAL ASSISTANCE.

THE CREW OF A DISABLED GERMAN BOMBER PROCEEDING TO THE RESCUE BUOY IN THEIR RUBBER BOAT.



G. H. DAVIS
1940

KNOWN TO THE R.A.F. AS "LOBSTER-POTS": A DIAGRAMMATIC DRAWING OF ONE OF THE NEW GERMAN RESCUE BUOYS ANCHORED TEN MILES OFF THE FRENCH COAST FOR USE BY NAZI CREWS FORCED DOWN BY R.A.F. ACTION IN THE CHANNEL.

Recent observations have revealed, placed in position at intervals along the French coast from Dunkirk to Cherbourg, a series of large metal buoys for the use of the crews of Nazi aircraft damaged during raids on Britain and so badly hit that they are forced down at sea. It is a known fact, of course, that a very large number of casualties have resulted from the damage done by the R.A.F. over the Channel or the coast to raiding aircraft, including the loss of valuable skilled crews, who, having escaped from their sinking planes in the collapsible rubber boats provided, have nevertheless lost their lives through bad weather or their signals remaining unseen. The buoys, made of steel plating, are some

13 ft. long and about 8 ft. high, with a beam of 7 ft. 10 in. Mounted on the upper deck is a 5-ft. tower carrying a tall mast with wireless aerials and signal halyards, and bearing the words, "Rettungsboje General Luftwaffenmeister," with prominent Red Crosses on a white background on each side. The interior contains four bunks with bedding, a locker with clothing, and another containing emergency rations, besides "Halma" and draught sets. Other items include a mallet and hardwood pegs, apparently for stopping bullet holes. In the event of a forced landing at sea German aircraft come down as near as possible to a buoy to await rescue.

The Udet rescue buoy

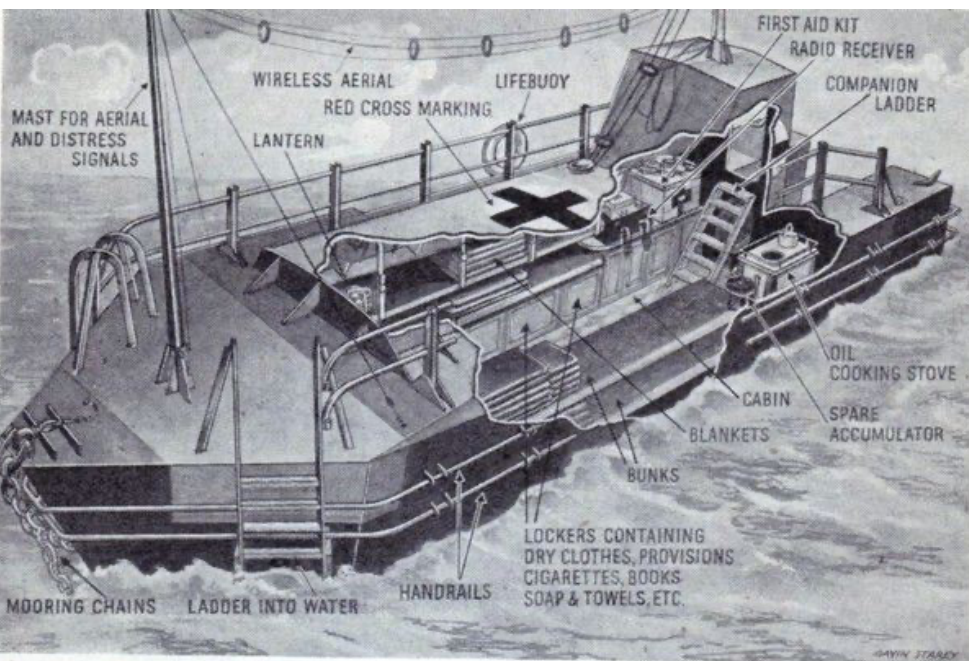
<https://youtu.be/8b44TxTuLB0>



RAF Rescue station

Painted yellow as well and very visible from the air.

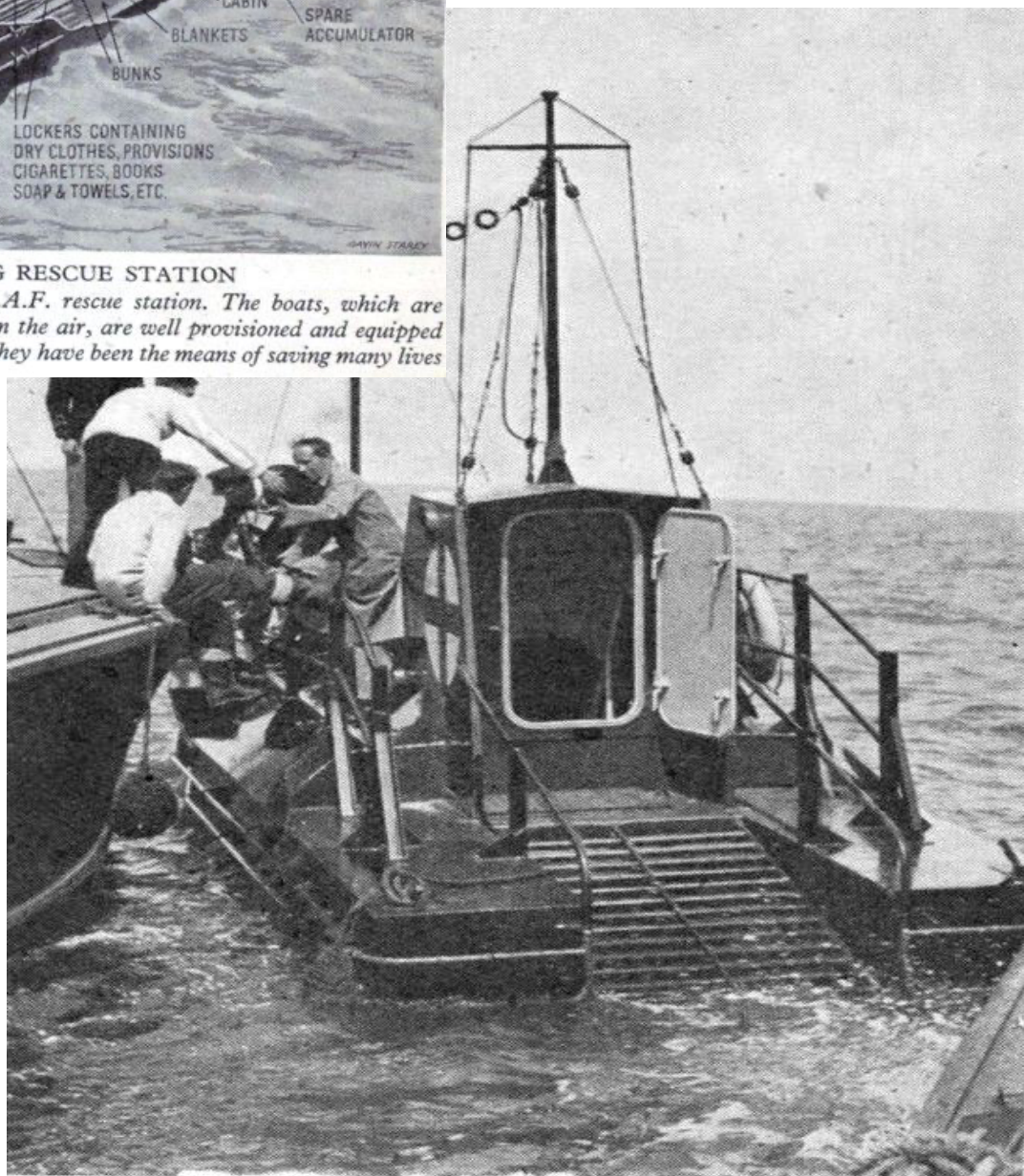
Many aircrews were saved by the buoys on both sides of the Channel. For their parts, aircrew in distress took their chance for survival and used what ever rescue buoy they could reach, only the identity of their rescuers determining whether they would be held as PoWs or returned to their units.



LAYOUT OF FLOATING RESCUE STATION

Fig. 8. Diagram showing general layout of R.A.F. rescue station. The boats, which are painted yellow and red to make them visible from the air, are well provisioned and equipped with food, first aid, wireless and other comforts. They have been the means of saving many lives

<https://youtu.be/m1ydkqbD2Lo>



Many of these downed pilots were recovered but many did not make it back alive and were lost at sea forever. Poor communication, poor visibility, weather conditions were the culprit in those cases, and it must have been a horrible ordeal for them who remained at sea never to be rescued, found or heard of again.

The RAF Gold Fish Club

The Caterpillar Club is an Informal Association of people who have successfully used a Parachute to bail out of a disabled Aircraft. After Authentication by the Parachute maker, Applicants receive a Membership Certificate and a distinctive Lapel Pin. In 1922 Leslie Irvin agreed to give a Gold Caterpillar Pin to every person whose life was saved by one of his Parachutes. At the end of WW2 the number of Members with the Irvin Pins had grown to over 34,000, although the total of people saved by Irvin Parachutes is estimated to be 100,000. Parachutists who landed in Water and were Rescued were also eligible for the Goldfish Club.

Goldfish Club: – Gold for the value of life & Fish for the Sea. A Label & Membership Card were given to Personnel who had used a Rubber Dingy to escape a Ditched Aircraft.

By the 1940s P B Cow & Co was one of the World's Largest Manufacturers of Air-sea Rescue Equipment. In 1942, C A Robertson, Chief Draughtsman of the Company formed The Goldfish Club. After hearing of the experiences of Airmen who had survived a ditching at sea, Robertson decided to form an Exclusive Club for Airmen who owed their lives to their Life Jacket, Dinghy, etc, enabling Members to meet & exchange experiences. Using P B Cow's financial backing, a Badge was designed showing a white-winged Goldfish Flying above 2 symbolic blue waves. Each Member received a heat-sealed Membership Card and an Embroidered Badge. Due to Wartime regulations, production of metallic-embroidered Badges was prohibited and all cloth was severely rationed. These problems were overcome with Silk Embroidery substituted for Wire upon black cloth cut from old Evening Dress suits that were sent by readers of the *London Daily Express* after an appeal by columnist William Hickey. Uniform Dress Regulations prohibited the wearing of the Goldfish Club Badge on British & American Uniforms. The Badge was generally worn by Naval Aircrews upon their Mae Wests. Many RAF & USAAF Aircrewmen placed their Badge under the Flap of their left-hand Uniform Pocket. By the end of the War the Club had over 9000 Members and it had been intended that further Membership should cease. However, Membership Application Forms continued to be submitted to P B Cow and it was obvious that the Spirit of the Club was still very much alive. The main aim of the Club was – [to keep alive the Spirit of Comradeship arising from the mutual experience of Members Surviving, "coming down in the Drink"](#).



An article in the RAFA Journal 'Airmail' in January 1951, renewed interest in the Club, and a Reunion Dinner was held. It was a great success, and the Club was reorganized on a Formal basis in March 1953. Reunions were held Annually ever since at various Venues with many distinguished guests. Robertson – 'Robbie' was responsible for the Ministry of Aircraft Production Air Sea Rescue Equipment Drawing Office. Robbie took it upon himself to form and personally Bankroll the Club. When he left P B Cow & Co in 1947, Robbie took the Club Records with him and continued to Administer the Club at his own personal expense.

Poem To My Winged Son – for P/O Douglas Cropper (22 years old) killed while flying with 609 Sqn over France on the 16th of August 1941. (Written by his father).

<https://aircrewremembered.com/to-my-winged-son.html>

To My Winged Son

Bernard D Cropper

We played together, you and I, my son
From early morn till day was done.
What boundless love was ours, what joy, what fun;
Together, you and I, my son.

It seems but only yesterday, that I bought you
An aeroplane to fly.
You were eleven, I still see your eyes,
so bright as your craft flew through the skies.

You did not flinch when called to do or die,
(so proud was I at your reply);
But took your wings to battle in the sky
I only wish "twere you and I"

I to, must fight and pray to god that we
may be reunited when tis done.
I also humbly pray that he make me,
as great a man as you my son.

Written by Bernard D. Cropper 2nd Lt RA, the father of P/O Douglas Cropper, killed while flying with 609 Sqn over France on the 16th of August 1941

609 Sqn Ldr Merv Ashe "Book Review"

Although not 609 specific there are numerous stories and tales attached to our beloved Sqn and personnel, I must say, no need to be frightened by the title as this is an absolute gem of a book by a famous historian and writer Bob Ogley, richly illustrated with many rare images never seen elsewhere and telling of the men and women who made this famous fighter base famous for its part in the Battle of Britain and later in the sweeps flown by men like Alan Deere, Sailor Malan, Rene Mouchotte, Raymond Doperé and others. As a former Spitfire ace recalls after reading this book: Bob Ogley's book calls to mind many men who he served with and who died in the war and who flew from Biggin Hill: He says " When I return here-I walk with ghosts".

Bob writes extremely well and shows his life long devotion as an historian desperate to save the memories and the images of this fighter station from oblivion. He brings into sharp relief the men and women who died here and who fought here and in doing, helped to save Britain from slavery and occupation, death camps and atrocities meted out to other occupied countries.

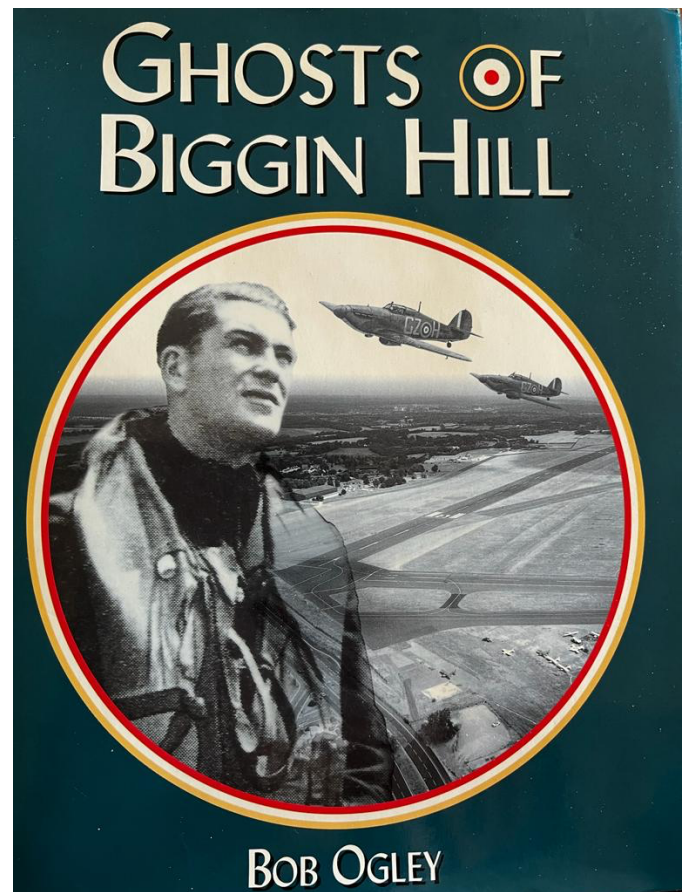
The book shows how important Biggin on the Bump was to London, it is sprinkled with humour, tragedy, fighter aces, Erks, WAAFs and the everyday people who were there helping to keep the station going in the desperate days of WW2.

Bob Ogley also wrote a companion book called Biggin On the Bump which tells the story further.

Both are much sought after and rare now. Once you buy a copy, never let it go, and you will return to look through the many images or read the stories behind the incidents depicted many times. It is all here: Air combat, Heroism from the fire crews, WAAFs under the bombing, the support staff and operations block crews, the ground crews and the fighter pilots own accounts, including local residents.

Bob has possibly written the book that others who wrote of Biggin Hill or its fighter pilots and Squadrons of the Biggin Hill Wing wanted to. Either way, it is a must have for a better appreciation of what these glorious people who served there sacrificed for our freedom today and tells the story of what really happened there. Enjoy the book.

Merv Ashe
OC 609 (WR) Sqn



No 2 SQUADRON
F/O · BERNARD · CYRIL · TASKER
F/LT · WILLIAM · ANDERSON · BLACK · A · F · C

No 133 (EAGLE) SQUADRON



P/O · WILLIAM · ALBERT · ARENDS
P/O · BEN · PERRY · DE · HAVEN
P/O · DICK · D · GUDMUNDSEN
P/O · WILLIAM · KENNETH · FORD
P/O · DAVID · RAY · FLORANCE
P/O · GRANT · EUGENE · EICHAR
P/O · FLETCHER · HANCOCK
P/O · CARTER · WOODRUFF · HARP
F/LT · COBURN · CLARK · KING
P/O · MORAN · SCOTT · MORRIS
P/O · GILBERT · INLAND · OMENS
P/O · ROBERT · LEWIS · PEWITT
P/O · SEYMOUR · MORTON · SCHATZBERG

No 316 (POLISH) SQUADRON

SGT · MARIAN · SZMIT

No 609 (WEST RIDING) SQUADRON



SGT · GUY · ALEXANDER · CHESTNUT
SGT · KENNETH · WALTER · BRAMBLE
F/SGT · GEOFFREY · CHARLES · BENNETT
F/O · JOSEPH · DAWSON
SGT · ALAN · RONALD · NEWNHAM · DAVI
F/LT · JOHN · CURCHIN · D · F · C
P/O · DOUGLAS · LINDSAY · CROPPER
P/O · SYDNEY · JENKYN · HILL
F/O · RAYMOND · DOPERE
P/O · RUDOLPHE · CHRISTIAN · CHARLES · DE · HEMRICOURT · DI

THE VICTIMS: Pilots of 133 Squadron on the Reredos at St George's Chapel, Biggin Hill.

So 133 Squadron lasted for less than a year and experienced hectic but tragic months at Biggin Hill. The Queen's Head was the American Club in Piccadilly, the Eagle Club in Char Palace Hotel where they met — and later married — their RAF tradition of hard drinking and high living but never per with their readiness to fly.

In all the RAF Eagles shot down 73 enemy aircraft but th By the end of the war the lead in the

subsequently ag the majority we

Goodson, alre Squadron, reme Gentile walked officers at Deb glad to see you

“Where are the have come bac

“They were esc Brest. There wa

Forts kept going They were bou

back across the made it back t

only one”.

Don Blakes appointed CC

Group. He nea female officer

before Gene Debden. His

alone deserve

URSEL B-67 Monument Clean Up - Belgium

Spring is in the air, the sun is out as the members of “B-67 Work Group” gather on a nearly monthly basis to keep this special place “former B-67 Airstrip”, special spot in Belgium and home to 609 Sqn Association on Belgian soil in spick and span condition.



This time, besides the normal maintenance and clean up, they had to do repair work on the damaged flagpole and renewed the flag.



Next time, if weather permits, I will join them taking along a crate of Belgians finest and some meat to have a bbq at B-67 in order to thank these volunteers for taking care of our history, our heritage.

Taking down the flagpole for repair and clean up.



On behalf of 609 Sqn Association we would like to thank them for their time and effort put into this.

Amazing team !!!

Tally Ho !!!

Recommended booklist

- 'Arm Me Audacity'. A Novel. Richard Pape.
- 'Matashona'. Richard Pape.
- "21 Squadrons" by Leslie Hunt (it's about the Auxiliary Air Force and Reserve Squadrons), and in the 4 volumes of 2nd TAF by Shores and Thomas.
- 6 Juin 1944 – by Colonel R. Lallemand (available in 3 languages)
- 609 at War – by James Douglas Earnshaw
- 609 at War: An Auxiliary Fighter Squadron's 72 Months of Active Service 1939-1945' James D. Earnshaw & Mark Crame
- A Few Of The Derbyshire Few'. Includes a Biography of Alan Feary. Barry Marsden.
- A soldier in the cockpit by Ron Pottinger
- Against The Sun'. The Story of Wing Commander Roland Beamont (Up to The Mid-1950's). Edward Lanchberry.
- And So Ends The World'. Richard Pape.
- Biography of Zurakowski" by Bill Zuk, published by Crécy in 2007.
- Boldness Be My Friend'. A Prisoner of War's Tale. Richard Pape.
- Brothers in arms by Chris Goss
- Brothers In Arms'. 609 Squadron and 1/.JG53, August-December 1940. Chris Goss.
- Cape Cold to Cape Hot'. Richard Pape.
- Cowardice Before Courage'. Richard Pape.
- Dowdings eagles by Norman Franks
- English Electric Canberra'. Designing, Testing, and Flying the Canberra. Roland Beamont
- English Electric P1 Lightning'. Designing, Testing, and Flying the Lightning. Roland Beamont.
- Fighter Pilot'. The Battle of France From A Pilots Perspective. Paul Richey.
- Fighter Pilot" by Paul Richey
- Fighter Pilots summer by Paul Richie and Norman Franks
- Fighter Pilots Summer'. A Pilots War. Paul Richey and Norman Franks.
- Fighter Test Pilot'. Testing Fighters from The Hurricane to the Tornado. Roland Beamont.
- Fire storm by Graham A Thomas
- Firebirds: Flying the Typhoon in Action'. The Hawker Typhoon From A pilots Perspective. Charles Demoulin.
- Firestorm – Typhoons Over Caen 1944" by Graham A. Thomas
- Flying start by Hugh Dundas
- Flying To The Limit'. Reminiscences of a Career in Aviation. Roland Beamont.
- Fortune Is My Enemy'. Richard Pape.
- Ghosts of Biggin Hill by Bob Ogley

- Gifts of war" (aircraft used in WW2) by Henry Boot & Ray Sturtivant
- Hawker Typhoon – The RAF's Ground-Breaking Fighter-Bomber" by Tony Buttler
- Hitler's Naval War' Translated & Edited by Frank Ziegler. Cajus Bekker
- Les Carnets d'Offenberg by Jean Offenberg (Published in England as 'Lonely Warrior')
- Lonely Warrior'. The Diaries Of Jean Offenberg. Victor Houart.
- Luftwaffe Fighter-bombers Over Britain: The Tip and Run Campaign, 1942-1943' Chris Goss
- Malta Spitfire Pilot: Ten Weeks of Terror April-June, 1942' Denis Barnham
- Men of the Battle of Britain
- Mony Van Lierde DFC & 2 Bars, van volksjongen tot volksheld (609 Sqn pilot) – by Peter Celis
- My Part Of The Sky'. A Fighter Pilots Experiences 1939-1945. Roland Beamont.
- No Time To Die'. Richard Pape.
- One Man's Window'. Denis Barnham
- One more hour by Desmond Scott
- One Who Almost Made it Back: The Remarkable Story of World War Two's Unsung Heroes, Sqn Ldr Edward "Teddy" Blenkinsop, DFC, CDEG (Belge) RCAF
- Phoenix Into Ashes'. A Career Account. Roland Beamont.
- Poles Apart'. Richard Pape.
- Raw Courage: The Extraordinary and Tragic Story of Four RAF Brothers in Arms' Norman L.R. Franks, Simon Muggleton
- Rendez-vous avec la Chance by Raymond Lallemand
- Rendezvous D'un Jour. 6 Juin 44'. A Pilots D-Day. Raymond Lallemand.
- Rendezvous With Fate'. A Pilots War. Raymond Lallemand.
- Runways to Victory – by Peter Celis
- Sequel To Boldness'. An Update To The Above. Richard Pape.
- Spitfire Ace by Gordon Olive
- Spitfire Leader by Denis Newton and Richard Bungey
- Spitfire Pilot. The Battle of Britain From A Pilots View. David Crook.
- Tempest Over Europe'. Flying the Tempest in Combat. Roland Beamont.
- Testing Early Jets'. Compressibility and Supersonic Testing. Roland Beamont.
- Testing Years'. A Test Pilots Story. Roland Beamont.
- The Battle of Britain by James Holland
- The Big Show by Pierre Clostermann
- The Biggin Hill Wing by Peter Caygill
- The Blue Arena by Bob Spurdle
- The day of the Typhoon by John Golley
- The House of the Misty Orchid'. Richard Pape.
- The Luftwaffe War Diaries'. Translated By Frank Ziegler. Cajus Bekker.

- The RAF WWII Logbooks of Wing Commander R.P. Beamont' James D Earnshaw & Mark Crame
- The Story of 609 - Under The White Rose'. A History of 609 Squadron. Frank Ziegler.
- The Territorial Airforce by Dr Louise Wilkinson
- The Typhoon file" which was compiled by Chris Thomas
- The Years Flew Past'. Retrospective of a Life of Flying. Roland Beamont.
- Tiger moths to Typhoons by Peter Watson
- To Live Among Heroes'. A Squadron Medical Officers War. George Bell.
- To Scale the Skies: The Story of Group Captain J.C. 'Johnny' Wells DFC and BAR' Cornwell, Peter
- Twenty-One Squadrons" (the history of the RAF) by Leslie Hunt
- Typhoon and Tempest aces by Chris Thomas
- Typhoon and Tempest At War'. A Pictorial History. Roland Beamont and Arthur Reed.
- Typhoon attack by William Kimber
- Typhoon pilot by Desmond Scott
- Typhoon Wings of 2nd Taf 1943-45" by Chris Thomas
- Typhoon Wings of 2nd TAF by Chris Thomas
- Vleugels Boven het Meetjesland – by Cynrik De Decker
- William de Goat: The Story of Air Commodore William de Goat DSO DFC, the extraordinary Mascot of 609 (West Riding) Squadron during the Second World War' Brian Waite
- You never know your luck", Keith Ogilvie's biography by Keith Ogilvie

Agenda 2023

April	May	June	July
<p>29th: "Erfgoeddag at B-67 Usel". Historic facts, walk and guided tour.</p>	<p>27-28: Open Door "75 Years of 15th Wing Transport Melsbroek" Belgium</p>	<p>4th: "Around The World Airshow" Duxford UK</p> <p>6th: D-Day</p> <p>24th: Armed Forces Day</p> <p>24-25th: "Summertime Airshow" Duxford UK</p> <p>30-2nd July: "Battle of Britain Airshow" Kent UK</p>	<p>21th: "National Day" Belgium</p>
August	September	October	November
<p>19th: "80 years Jean de Selys Longchamps" Minster UK</p> <p>12-13th: "International Old Timer Fly In" Schaffen Belgium</p>	<p>9-10th: "Belgian Airforce Days" Kleine Brogel Belgium</p> <p>15th: "Battle of Britain Commemoration Day" UK</p> <p>16-17th: "Battle of Britain Airshow" Duxford UK</p>	<p>14th: "Remembrance Day Belgian Air Force" – Brussels Belgium</p> <p>29th: " Tally Ho Weekend B67" Ursel Belgium</p>	<p>11th: Armistice Day WW1 – Wapenstilstand</p> <p>13th: Remembrance Day" UK</p>

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Links

RAF 609 Sqn;

<https://www.raf.mod.uk/our-organisation/squadrons/609-squadron/>

609 Sqn: RAF – Belgians of 609 / Belgian Wings;

[http://www.belgian-wings.be/Webpages/Navigator/Belgian Aviation History/ww ii/609_squadron.htm](http://www.belgian-wings.be/Webpages/Navigator/Belgian_Aviation_History/ww_ii/609_squadron.htm)

Belgian Air Force Association:

www.BAFassociation.be

Belgian Air Force:

www.mil.be/nl/luchtcomponent
www.belgianairforcedays.be

Les Vieilles Tiges:

www.vieillestiges.be

Comet Escape Line:

www.cometline.org ,

E-mail; comete.remembrance@gmail.be

Ursel Flying Club / Ursel Avia:

www.EBUL.be
www.B67Ursel.be

Belgian Air Force 349 Sqn:

www.kleinebrogelairbase.be

Belgian Airforce 350 Squadron (RAF)

www.350sqn.be

Royal Air Force Association;

www.rafa.org.uk

Wings of Memory Monuments:

www.wingsofmemory.be

Monument Jean Van Daele:

www.alblasserdam.nl www.facebook.com/MN954

British Legion / Poppy Shop:

www.britishlegion.org.uk

Royal Air Force:

www.RAF.mod.uk

Typhoon Project, UK

<https://hawkertyphoon.com/>

Typhoon Project, Canada

<https://www.typhoonlegacy.com/>

Vielles Tiges de Belgique

<https://www.vieillestiges.be/>

Dakota 15th Wing

<http://dakota15wing.be/>

Traces Of War

<https://www.tracesofwar.nl>

Florennes Air Base museum

<https://www.museespitfire-florennes.be/>

History of Manston Airfield

<https://www.facebook.com/manstonhistory>

