

TALLYHO!



The newsletter of the 609 (WEST RIDING) squadron association



1926 - 2022

LATE SUMMER & EARLY AUTUMN EDITION 2022





**609 (WEST RIDING) SQUADRON ASSOCIATION
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 Component
Commander.
Honorary Vice -President
609 Sqn Association

For Holland



Arjan Wemmers
Representative and
Historian

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609 (WR) SQUADRON ASSOCIATION



Belgium, Putte 20th of January 2022.

Foreword

A word from the Vice President

Conrad K. Roumieux

609 Sqn Association

Tally Ho – Late Summer & Early Autumn Edition 2022

“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.

London Bridge is Down

Welcome

This edition of the Tally Ho Newsletter should have reached you last June. Unfortunately, we had to postpone due to circumstances. But here we are !!!

We do hope that this edition will be an interesting one and that it will, once again, cover the historical facts of the Squadron as well as the updates on what the 609 Sqn gang is up to in Leeming.

We would thank everybody for sending in their articles, stories, information that is the base of the Tally Ho. You are all gems that make this possible. But that goes for all of you who carry 609 Sqn in your hearts.

Enjoy the reading, enjoy this Tally Ho edition.

Best regards to all and keep it healthy and safe.
Tally Ho !!!

Conrad
Vice President
609 Sqn Association





The Queen

We all knew it was coming when we heard the news that Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II passed away on September the 8th at Balmoral Castle, one of her beloved places.

What we did not realize is that no one was ready for this news that was inevitable to come our way but still shocked us all. And not alone throughout the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth but till far outside the borders.

She was a true monarch who reigned for over 70 years, a mother, grandmother, a mum to her nation, a listening ear, full of wisdom, knowledge combined with an endless energy, a good sense of humour and so many other addon's.

As a Belgian citizen I mourned her death as so many others did. And then you think ... if we feel sad about her passing how must her nation feel ...

The funeral was one we will never see again. A farewell to a grand lady who will always be in our hearts.

This Tally Ho is dedicated to her. May she rest in peace next to her beloved husband, parents, family.

*As we lay you down to rest ma'am,
As sorrow sweeps the land,
May Phillip be there waiting,
To take your weary hand.
Your reign for us is over,
Your guiding light no more,
You're now at peace, your duties done,
As many gone before.
And when you cross the pearly gates,
Where hero's dare to tread,
And greet the faithful fallen,
The battalion of the dead.
A million brave young soldiers,
Who's lives had never been,
To welcome home their Queen.*





**609 (WEST RIDING) SQUADRON ASSOCIATION
Belgian Branch Office**

Our deepest condolences with the passing of,

Her Majesty Queen Elisabeth II

Belgium, 10th of September 2022.

Dear Mr. Ambassador,

As acting Vice President for 609 Squadron Association in the UK and Representative for the association in Belgium, France and the Netherlands we would like to pass our deepest condolences for the passing of Queen Elisabeth II.

More in particular to her successor King Charles III, her family and the people of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth.

It is without doubt that Queen Elisabeth II was loved by her people and beyond the borders in many countries around the globe.

She was an amazing Lady, a true Royal that cared for the people and an inspiration to the many.

Although we all knew this was about to happen no one can still believe she is no more.

We will all miss her lovely smile, her humor, her sharpness, the many traditions she valued and took care of.

May she rest in peace and be reunited with her late husband high up in the clouds where the angels sing and fly with them into eternity.

On behalf of 609 Sqn Association, our members, supporting members.

Tally Ho !!!

Conrad K. Roumieux
Vice President

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Conrad K. Roumieux', written over the typed name and title.

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Mr Conrad K. Roumieux
Vice President
609 Squadron Association, Belgian Branch Office
Vogelstraat 37
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22 September 2022

Dear Mr Roumieux,

My sincere thanks for your kind condolences on the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. It is very gracious of you to write, and your thoughtful message is deeply appreciated.

I will ensure your condolences are conveyed to Buckingham Palace. The Royal Family are grateful for all the message of support that they are receiving.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Shearman'.

Martin Shearman
British Ambassador to Belgium

Passing of former 609 Squadron Leader Brian Waite

Some of us and myself received another bad news.

Our dear friend and former Squadron Leader Brian Waite passed away in his sleep a couple of weeks ago and has been cremated according to his wish together with a small private family ceremony.

We received the news through his wife Louise and the below words in her email followed the phone call she had with Jeff Metcalfe.

“Dear Jeff and David

It seems like some people may wish to pay their respects to Brian's passing or honour their connection with him. And as you know, I'd prefer not to have cards or flowers or charitable donations.

So I've written below what Brian will want. Please feel free to copy it and distribute to others as you feel is right.

Thank you both for your loving support. And David, I'll reply very soon, your message was heart-warming.

Louise (Waite)

X

"Instead of cards, flowers or charitable donations (as beautiful as they are), what Brian would love is this. He would love you to choose something which brings you joy. Goodness knows we all need more of it.

It could be lighting a candle, planting spring bulbs, visiting a place you've always wanted to go, walking in nature, eating chocolate, going on an adventure, taking up a new hobby or simply sitting quietly or so many other things. You choose.

Do it in honour of Brian if you wish, but most of all do it with love".

We wish Louise the strength and power to go one with life after the loss of her husband Brian, the Boss, Squadron Leader Waite, a friend, a man with a golden heart that never said no but rather said yes or we will try to get it sorted.



Born in 1947; Squadron Leader Brian Waite was educated at King's School, Grantham and Loughborough College of Physical Education. Following a teaching "career" of ten years in Kent, he joined the Royal Air Force as an Administration (Secretarial) Officer in 1981. A three and a half-year tour in Germany followed a short tour as Officer Commanding General Duties Flight at RAF West Drayton. Stationed at RAF Wildenrath, a year as cashier was followed by a tour as a Squadron Intelligence Officer on 92 Squadron, equipped with Phantom aircraft. ON returning to the UK, he entered the RAF recruiting world, commanding offices at Leicester and Peterborough. Two years later he was posted to RAF College Cranwell to undertake Flight Commander duties on Initial Officers Training. Two "Admin" tours followed in quick succession; OC PMS at RAF Church Fenton and OC SSF at RAF Boscombe Down. During these tours, and due to enforced retirement from competitive sport, he organized hill-walking expeditions to North America. Promotion to Squadron Leader in 1994 was followed by a position in the Marketing Wing of the Directorate of Recruitment and Selection at RAF Cranwell. He was responsible for the Exhibition Fleet and co-ordination of the outdoor and indoor shows, attended by the Recruitment Field Force. Retirement from the Royal Air Force in 1997 led in two years living in Norfolk, before taking up the post of OC Support Flight on the recently reformed Air Defence Support Squadron, now 609, in March 1999. He was married to Louise, a research physiotherapist, and enjoyed watching sport, hill walking, Indian cooking and listening to music.

After Brian left the Squadron our ties with him faded but when we managed to speak to him, he was the same Brian that we have all known.

He was a bridge for 609 Sqn with 609 Sqn Association as well as with the Belgian 609 Sqn Association members, Honorary members and supporting members.

He was the one asking me to pick up the role of Vice President. He was the one backing us up visiting Belgium frequently with a small bus filled with dedicated squadron members accompanied by William the Goat.

A true gentleman who turned 74 years old.



Col. Raymond 'Cheval' Laillemant

Sqr. Ldr. Brian Waite

Thank you, Brian, for everything you did, fly high in eternity and rest in peace.

Tally Ho !!!



Corporal "Tommo" Thomson

Lord Lieutenants Award

(Email from our President David Darley)

Hello Tommo

I was planning to wait until we returned from our little Greek island before sending my heartiest congratulations on the Lord Lieutenants Award, but our wise Belgian colleague has prompted action. These awards are not made lightly, and I have some knowledge of the process. One of my former customers was Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, and as a result I know that recipients must be exceptionally meritorious.

If this has come as a complete surprise, even better! You may have thought that your efforts were nothing out of the ordinary, so why this? Because others who are in receipt of your good work think very much to the contrary! You may also feel, " why not others who similarly put themselves out for a good cause?". Simply because you are seen to go that extra mile, and that makes you a bit special!

Enjoy the feeling, the congratulations, and the knowledge that what you do is so much appreciated by many others. In this particular case, 609 West Riding Squadron and its Association. I don't have to add "keep it up" because of course, you will.

Thanks a million, enjoy a beer, and stay out of the sun for the next few days. You will be 5°C hotter at home than we will be in the middle of the Greek summer!

Very best wishes,

David Darley
Many Thanks

Tommo

Cpl Thomson 758
A Flight
609 Squadron



On Fri, 15 Jul 2022, 19:19 Conrad - Atako Technology Chemicals, <conrad@atako-tech-chemicals.com> wrote:

Dear Alistair,

On behalf of 609 Sqn Association, it's members, supporting members, enthusiasts, and comity we would like to congratulate you for being awarded a Lord Lieutenants Award for your sterling efforts at the Squadron, the Association and beyond.

We have heard that you will be invited to a ceremony in York on the 29th of Sep 22 in the presence of Her Majesties Lord – Lieutenant of North Yorkshire Mrs. Johanna Ropner, who will present the award.

This award makes you proud, makes your family proud, makes us all proud, the Squadron, the Association, and friends.

We will cover this in the Tally Ho Newsletter at the end of the year so do make sure there are pictures available from the ceremony.

Again, congratulations from us all, for all your efforts and keep the momentum going.

A million thank you's for all you have done and how many "Belgian" beers should we need to celebrate this special occasion?

The lads up there in the skies, pilots, ground staff and absent friends send you a thumbs up and a big smile !!!
And so do we !!!

Best regards & Tally Ho !!!

Conrad

Vice President

609 Sqn Association

POC for Belgium – Holland.

Passing of Luc Haesebeyt – partner of our ‘Matron’ Diane Gyselinck

If I recall it right the bad news reached us in 2020 that Luc was not well and that he was terminally ill. The doctors were not optimistic and did not give him long to live. In his case 95% patients would pass away within a year. Must say that Luc did not give in

Luc fought, supported by the love of Diane (who had to set aside her role a Matron that was temporarily taken up by my niece Rita Jaspis) and the love of his children, grandchildren, family, and friends.

Luc used to be an International Director in the Pharmaceutical business and travelled the world, had a lot of knowledge to share, wisdom and always a listening ear. Again, a superb gentleman with a heart of gold.

He fought his last battle and fought hard but lost the battle on the 6th of February 2022 surrounded by Diane and his loved one's.

Luc reached the age of 74 years old.

May he rest in peace and not be forgotten.

As for Diane ... I spoke to her last weekend, and she would love to pick up her role again as Matron of 609 Sqn Association here in Belgium and will be accompanying us to formal events to represent the flag of 609 Sqn, the Squadrons history.

Born in Zottegem 1st of May 1948 – Passed away in Zottegem 6th of February 2022

Sad news coming from Belgium,

Luc Haesebeyt, loyal and loving partner of our “Matron” Diane Gyselinck, has passed away after a courageous fight of 2 years that he finally lost.

He leaves behind Diane, 2 sons, his grandchildren, family, and friends.

We will remember Luc as a warm hearted, kind and friendly person who accompanied Diane to many of the 609 Sqn Associations occasions here in Belgium, France and Holland.

Luc was cremated, and the service was held on Friday the 11th of February at 15.00 pm at the Crematorium Siesegem in Aalst – Belgium.

On behalf of 609 Sqn Association, 609 Sqn Leeming, we pass our deepest condolences to Diane and Luc’s family for this loss.

May they find the strength to overcome and accept this loss looking back to the many beautiful moments they had together.



Diane and Luc

RIP Luc, Tally Ho !!!



Diane and Luc

The Squadron 86th Annual Dinner

The Squadron 86th Annual Dinner took place on 12 February 2022 at the Metropole Hotel with Honoured Guests Being Mr David Darlie the President of 609 Association along with Mr Jeff Metcalfe (Ex Co of 609 Squadron), Mr David Franks and Mr Ray Fisher. This was a black-tie event designed to mimic the original squadron dinner hosted at the Metropole in 1936.



609 Current CO Squadron Leader Merv Ashe with Flt Lieutenant "Anth" Berralla and former Sqn. Ldr. Jeff Metcalfe.



The Evening was well attended by Squadron Members, along with Wives and Family members. The event was a roaring success organised and hosted by Flt Keith Geldert who did a fantastic job utilising Squadron flags and other precious items such as a Coveted Silver mug signed by original Squadron Pilots along with other Squadron Memorabilia.



The evening started with drinks and Group photographs on the Main Stairwell followed by the arrival of Honoured Guests to the Top Table.

It was a sparkling event with the tables decked out with Candelabras, Flags, and memos giving a brief history of the Squadron on each table along with individual place settings.

The Dinner was followed with Speeches and awards a notable highlight being Sgt Jenny Jeffels winning the coveted Reservist of the Year Award.

It was also proudly announced that the Squadron had also won the Kemp Dirk Trophy for best Recruiting & Retention within the RAF Reserves

At the end of the speeches, it was time to say a fond farewell to several Squadron members who are leaving 609 for pastures new. This included short speeches and an exchange of gifts to help them on their way. Starting with Flight Lieutenant Anth Berralla who has started a Career as a Regular Serving Officer in the RAF Regiment. This was followed by Mr Ray Fisher who retired after many years' gallant service with 609; with Air Specialists David Franks who has a new role with Network Rail in his Civilian life and Mark Pearson who has started a new career with the MPGS.

These are all Gentleman and Characters who will be missed on the Squadron.

Finally, the Function room was rearranged for further entertainment which carried on to the early hours of Sunday Morning.



Coveted Silver mug signed by original Squadron Pilots along with other Squadron Memorabilia.







Tribute to Warrant Officer F David Linacre



Tribute by his son Douglas Linacre (Aus) 609 (WR)Squadron1945

David was born in 1924 the third of 4 brothers. His youth was full of sailing and skiing. When WW11 arrived, as a mere boy, he thought it would be a good idea to join the air force. He leant to fly at Ballarat, and then he was seconded to the RAF in England to join a regiment of foreigners defending the empire; Aussies, French and Belgians, Canadians and Poles: eventually 609 Squadron. He flew Hurricanes and Spitfires, then finally Typhoons that operated over Europe until the war's end.

However, I'm here to talk mostly about my father's sporting life. Many here will know David through his involvement in sport. He was an honorary life member of two clubs – the Royal Brighton yacht club, and the Victoria Golf club. Both clubs had family connections – his father was Commodore of Royal Brighton, and his father was a member of Victoria Golf club and had a hole in one at Victoria. Dad also became Commodore of Royal Brighton yacht Club, and I think he always expected to get that hole in one. I saw him come within four inches of doing so at the fourth hole at Victoria, and the ball just stopped short.

Dad loved golf, although it was mostly a winter sport for him until the last 20 years or so, when he played three times per week no matter the weather. He was proud to be one of “The Monday Boys”. He told me that in 1946 while at Melbourne University, his father paid him to play with him at Victoria! Also, while at Melbourne Uni, he got a “Blue” for skiing.

Dad did not ski much after the war, but about 15 years ago we all went up as a family and Dad was very good – although he turned as if he was on cross-country skis. I had forgotten, that in his day, they did not have the smooth machine groomed piste slopes that make skiing much easier these days.

David would often talk about improving his golf – but his claims were always partly in jest: he used to make fun with us all about how to improve his game. Despite his immensely competitive spirit, his current irons are over 20 years old. Despite talking about improving his game, he was happy to use his old irons. Although I did notice that the older, he got, his bag sported increasingly more modern woods – but never a famous expensive brand like a Galloway. He delighted in doing the un-expected with those woods – such as using a wood from the sand bunkers, when no one else would use such a club from such a position. He also loved playing golf both with my son John, and especially with my nephew Fergus Linacre who hits a very good ball indeed.

Golf wasn't about the equipment for David, or even the actual score. It was primarily about two things: the pure competitive tussle with his fellow playing partners – and, he really loved the camaraderie of *Club Life*.

So, on behalf of Dad to all those that played with him and knew him at his club Victoria – I thank you all. He really loved playing you all and winning the money on the 18th made it even sweeter!

If I may go back to Dad's youth, as Philip said, David came from a household of four brothers, and no sisters, who all sailed boats almost as soon as they could write. Add David's famous yachtsman father to those brothers, and there were five very good yachtsmen all in the one household in Brighton. I always felt that such an environment must have been the bedrock for sharpening Dad's competitive instincts.



Dad was becoming a brilliant dinghy sailor, but the war intervened, and instead of racing boats, he stepped into doing something much more dangerous, but something that he also not only loved, but that he treated equally competitively – flying the world's fastest of all time propeller airplanes. Through various training regimes and examinations and flying tests, David was quite proud of his very high scores in Spitfires firing bombs at ground targets. There he said he used sailing techniques to judge time and distance, and he said that was why the Air Force sent him to fly Typhoons, a two and a half thousand horsepower single seater fighter that carried rocket powered missiles at heavily defended ground targets.



The statistics showed that most people got shot down flying Typhoons – and there's no doubt that David brought the intensity that allowed him to survive in that deadly environment into his competitive sailing. Anyone who ever sailed with him would know what I am talking about.



Dad sailed in classes of boats where the quality of the boat made a big difference to how competitive you could be. But despite not having the fastest boat, and in sailing not having the fastest boat is even worse than playing with old iron golf clubs - he won State championships in the Elite Dragon class, and he won an Australian Championship in what was at that time the very competitive Jubilee class. And in whatever class he sailed, he was always challenging to win.



I recall at a Geelong regatta Dad sailing his Dragon class keel boat yacht in gale force winds that were so fierce that a very well sailed Dragon sank. David and his crew were the only boat to set their spinnaker and they won the race. By the way, the spinnaker – which rhymes with Linacre – is the big colourful sail that can be quite dangerous in a high wind.

David forged great teams in his boats, he was a great heavy weather sailor. Curiously too he was brilliant in very light weather.

Yes, Dad was a courageous sailor, but that was just one aspect of his sailing. He had immense perseverance, great judgement, and his ability to evaluate what his crews could win him immense loyalty.

There was another aspect to David's yacht racing, and that was his desire to help people. Many people have told me of how David had helped them with their sailing. The curious thing is that Dad never talked about his many deeds – the stories that I know about have come directly to me from those whom he helped. From having a teenage Buster Hooper – who was Head Australian Olympic Yachting Coach for two Olympic games – crew with Dad in Buster's first big regatta – the English-Speaking Union - to helping Hugo Ottaway get an international Australian blazer back in 1970, to helping John Bertrand get finance assistance out of John Bryson. David was often doing what he could to help people in sailing. Also, when my son John was sailing Sabots, I'd sometimes see Dad's red Mercedes parked along Albert Park Lake – he followed John's exploits with a great fervour.

Dad also sailed with my brother Philip for many years, and I sailed together with them in the Soling Worlds: three Linacre's on the one boat, over in France. Recently we hired a 43-foot Benetteau at Christmas, and Dad and Mum and Helga and John and I stayed on the boat in Constitution dock, and we watched John compete in his first one up Sabot national campaign.

I remember in when I was still at school, Dad's joy at being made Club Captain at Royal Brighton. Only a couple of years later, David would be Commodore, and would manage the Olympic Team in Germany in 1972, where the Australians were the top Sailing team, and where they won two golds and bronze (the Bronze medal was John Bertrand's, who is here now).

John Bertrand told me how David ran a program the 72 Olympics that was years ahead of its time, he sought out the best methods and provided more tools to run the team better than any other, such as getting the crews over early to race well before the games, having an on-course weather program, having team spirit and strategy and de-briefing meetings, and making it enjoyable.

Interestingly when David arrived at the Olympic venue in Kiel in Germany, he went across to the British Army who had a base at, and he introduced himself to the commander, and spoke of his war experiences flying with 609 squadron. Dad came away from the meeting with fleet of rubber duckies outboard powered boats, which would serve the Aussie team very well indeed. He took his guile, charm and vision which provided a competitive advantage for the Olympic team.

Dad was an expert on yachting rules and was the rules advisor to an America's Cup campaign, and he became an international yachting judge, at a time when there were very few Australian international yachting judges. There are more now, as Australian yachting judges have now become very highly regarded internationally, some of which was due to Dad's excellence. David was also known to be wonderful in protest committees, being fair but also always controlling the meeting and always being very polite which many people have commented on. Dad was also awarded by Yachting Australia in the 1980s. he was on rules committees until only few years ago and was a national rules consultant. He kept in touch with many areas of yachting, and he used the internet to keep in touch. He was my America's Cup resource and he used to keep me update on what was happening and his thoughts about it via email.

I think Dad had really had four homes in his life – his childhood home, his home with Julia my Mum, his yacht club home, and his golf club home. But at the core of his life was my Mum Julia. She always supported his efforts, no matter the time and commitment that it cost her. With his yachting travels he always took Mum, and he spoke daily to her no matter where he was. And Julia experienced some wonderful experiences and made great friends on their trips. There are many stories, but one that would impress the non-Republicans here would be when at a Norwegian Feast Dinner, a card was found under Dad's plate. He and Julia were invited to a private meeting with the King Ulaf of Norway, and the Prince, where they stayed for some considerable time. And where Mum claims they did not just talk about sailing.



While David Linacre was a fierce competitor, and although he loved to not only play by the rules but with the rules, it was his delight of the tussle of competition with like fellows that he so much loved. From teaching me how to play cards, from having the odd wager, to playing with his sons and grandsons, to helping people across the whole world of yachting, to setting up processes and methods that have stood the test of time, he made a great contribution and he will be sorely missed.



609 Sqn Medical Officer Doc Bell, Squadron Leader Pinkie Stark (OC March to end- May 1945), WO David Linacre, in July 2000

Former Wing of General Albert “Pitje” Laforce

Article by Eric Dauchy

Belgium’s Air Transport: The Early Years

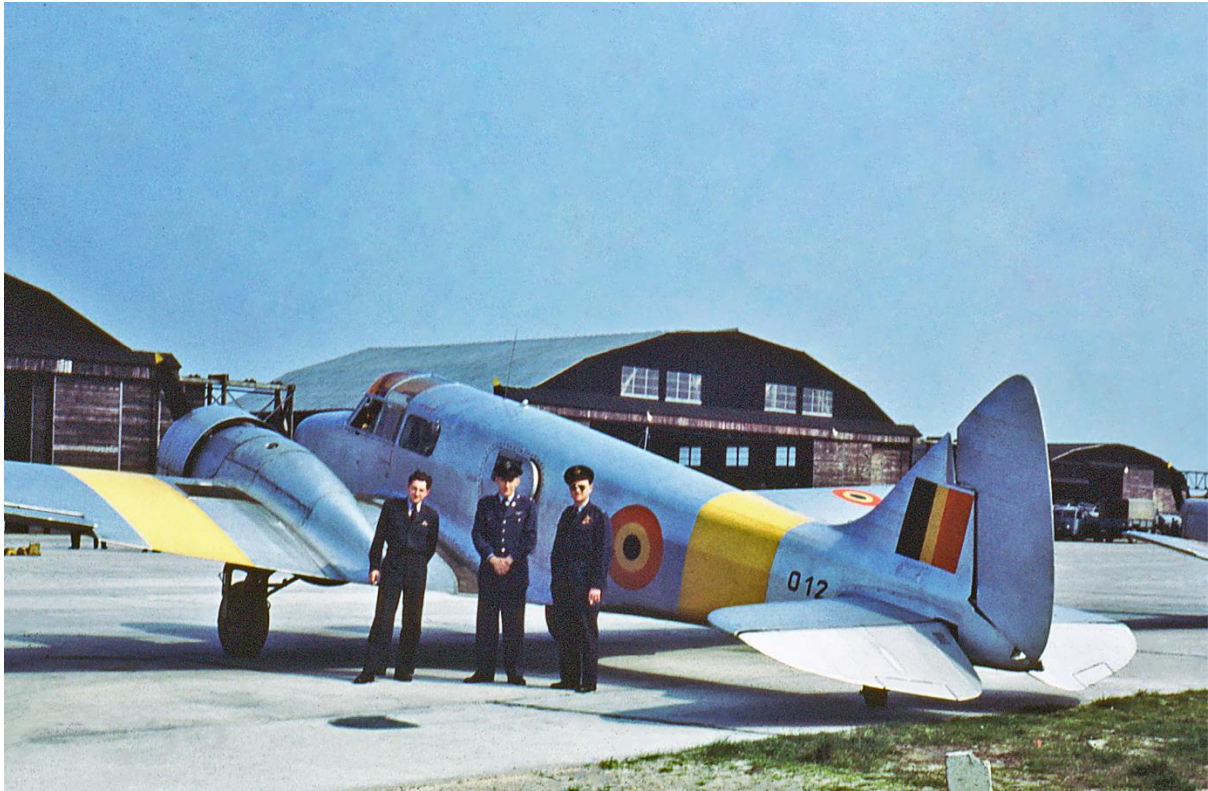
Belgium has played a significant role in aviation history, punching positively above its weight for a tiny European country – and always in the thick of battle during European conflicts, due to its strategic location.

When the German armies overran the Low Countries in 1940, for the second time in the 20th century, scores of Belgian pilots and aviation personnel made it safely to England. They were warmly welcomed by RAF Fighter Command and RAF Bomber Command, where they soon were integrated into operational flying units.

The official birth of Belgium’s Air Transport Unit dates from 1 April 1947, with the creation of 169 Wing. It operated through 366 Squadron with five C-47 Dakotas, and 367 Squadron, equipped with nine AVRO Ansons, six Airspeed Oxfords, four de Havilland Dominies and three Percival Proctors. Three Hawker Hurricanes were added for good measure, as communication/recce and weather reconnaissance.



Avro Anson Mk I, NA-6 in 1953 at Melsbroek in front of a Fromson hangar. These hangars were built by the Fromson company in Manchester. They are still in place, 75 years later!



366 Squadron had a lucky start, initially taking on one extra C-47 each week! This was courtesy of the United States Air Force and its (very) large stock of Dakota aircraft at Fürstenfeldbruck in Germany. Belgium received a total of 41 Dakota transporters between 1946 and 1952.

In 1947, the King travelled on a SABENA commercial airliner and was accompanied by a C-47 with the tail number K10, refurbished as a VIP aircraft. Under the command of Lt Col Florent Van Rollegem, two crews flew the first VIP flight from Brussels to Leopoldville in Congo in five days, with stopovers in Tunis, Cairo, Khartoum, Juba and Stanleyville. The flight opened a regular route between Belgium and Congo. It became clear that Belgium now needed a suitable airbase. In the autumn of that same year, a delegation flew to Kamina, south Congo, to study the infrastructural requirements of a military airbase in Africa.

Take-off for Dakota 15th Wing

On 1 May 1948, one year after the Belgian Air Force had officially created its Air Transport Unit, the originally British wartime-patterned structure was renamed 15 Air Transport Wing, and 366 and 367 Squadron were renamed 20 and 21 Squadron.

Chief of Staff, General Lucien Leboutte granted 15 Wing its official watchword – TENACITY, with the crest depicting an Indian Sioux Chief's head.



Origins of the Sioux Chief

In 1937, Sgt Roger Delannay joined the 9/V/1 Ae at Bierset, flying a Renard R-31. Delannay, a former Scout whose totem was a Sioux Indian, created the now-legendary Sioux Chief crest and the watchword 'TENACITY'. The Sioux was immediately adopted by the pilots of the flight, with the Sioux chief emblazoned on their R-31, whilst 'TENACITY' was embroidered on their breast pocket. The 9 Recce squadron carried a Sioux Chief with a blue circle, while 11 Squadron carried a red circle.

Delannay was shot down in his Fiat CR.42 by a German Me-109 on the first day of hostilities, 10 May 1940 over St Truiden. He parachuted safely but was killed by ground fire. He was due to be married 10 days later...



Monument in honour of Flt Sge Roger Delannay. (Hangar Flying – Paul Van Caesbroeck)

Post-War Multi-tasking

Firmly embedded in the new post-war military structure, 15 Wing expanded quickly. It took on a wide-range of roles, including short-haul and long-haul flights (to Africa mainly), VIP flights as Royal Transport Squadron, paradrops, aerial photography and it served as an air transport training unit.

New Era – New Missions

In the early Fifties, the C-47 workhorses of 15 Wing were becoming too cumbersome for Belgium, taking between four and five days to travel to Congo. They were replaced for passenger transport by an ex-SABENA DC-4 Skymaster in November 1950, followed by a similar plane from SAS in May 1954. The KX-1 and -2 registered Skymasters now did the Brussels-Tripoli-Kano-Leopoldville-Kamina trip in a day and a half – and became the backbone of the air link between Belgium and the Belgian Congo.



DC-4/C-54 OT-CWV next to a USAF C-54 Skymaster. (Photo: Guy Viselé)



Kamina AB, 1959: three Bristol Sycamores with C-119s, parked in front of the airport building.



Taken from the Tower at Kamina, two C-119s stand parked, with two C-47s in the background. (Photo: BAF?)

As the C-47 was being phased out, the Belgian Air Ministry decided on a major strategic leap forward. 15 Wing was thus structured as a genuine tactical air transport wing – ultimately a smart and forward-looking move.

The first of two brand-new Fairchild C-119 Flying Boxcars landed at Melsbroek Airport on 24 September 1952.



The delivery of the C-119 was a phased process, as the initial batch of 18 C-119F built in 1952) were complemented in 1953-54 by another 22 C-119G plus a follow-up purchase of six more Gs in 1958. (Photo: Guy Viselé)

Budget restrictions led to the initial 18 C-119F aircraft being put into storage. Eight of those were later transferred via MAAG-BELUX to Norway, and the 10 remaining planes were handed back to the USAF. The ‘Norwegian’ Boxcars remained American property and were after their retirement flown in full USAF livery back to Tucson, AZ.

Despite the budget restrictions at the time, 21 Squadron in 1953 received 12 Percival Pembrokes C Mk. 1 to replace the aged Oxfords and Ansons Mk. 1 – light liaison aircraft with six to eight passenger seats.



Percival Pembroke OT-ZAI (RM-9) at Melsbroek. (Photo: Guy Viselé)

Kamina – Katanga anchor

The (now former) Belgian Air Force base of Kamina, at the former Katanga province in south Congo, lies at an elevation of 3,543 feet (1,080 m) above mean sea level. It has two runways, each with an asphalt surface measuring 2,700 by 45 metres (8,858 ft × 148 ft). Katanga was of strategic economic importance for Belgium because of its gold, uranium and copper mines.

Kamina was planned as a military fortress to protect the economic interests of Belgium. It fielded a sizeable airborne para group, with four detachments and an advanced flying school, the latter thanks to ideal flying conditions in the area.



Belgian Air Force DC-6B OT-CDA, parked next to C-47 OT-CWA at Melsbroek.

(Photo: Guy Viselé)



C-119 OT-CBH in 1972. (Photo: Georges Van Belleghem)

1960s – High Noon for 15th Wing

The 1960s saw 15 Wing at its best. It was a balanced and well-structured unit with enough aircraft to fulfil its role as a multi-tasking air transport wing.

The major highlights of this decade for 15 Wing operations were:

- The independence of Congo;
- Start of flying operations at Solenzara (Corsica);
- First of the regular transatlantic flights to the USA;
- Integration of air transport duties along NATO exercises;
- Development of humanitarian missions across the world;
- Tactical support for the 1964 uprising in Congo.

Congo

The global push for independence of erstwhile colonial territories was in full swing. Belgium increased its air power at Kamina from three to seven C-47s and another six C-119 troop transporters to support its economic interests.

A series of political and military events in the summer of 1960 resulted in over 860 missions being flown, with nearly 4,000 people evacuated to safety from the Congo. Detailed information on these events can be found in a series of publications here.

Solenzara

With the Congo chapter now firmly closed, 1 Battalion Para was looking for suitable training grounds outside Belgium. The aim was to prepare for international missions as part of its NATO commitments.

Poor weather conditions in Belgium (“Belgium has all of the British weather, just one day later...” goes the saying) were among the hurdles to the paratroopers gaining a world-class reputation. Other challenges included the small size of the country. So closer cooperation with France was only logical.

The French air base at Solenzara, on the island of Corsica, was already in use by the Belgian Air Force. Here it trained fighter pilots in air-air and air-ground combat, which required significant air transport logistics support. 15 Wing built on this expertise to become a fully-fledged international air transport specialist, with a growing reputation as a can-do Wing. The paratroopers loved it from the get-go.

NATO

In 1960, NATO created Allied Command Europe Mobile Force as a fast and mobile force command to strengthen the northern part of NATO in Scandinavia as well as in the south and east towards Turkey, should a military threat materialize. Annual military exercises on a grand scale gave 15 Wing valuable expertise in deploying mobile fighting forces quickly to the edges of NATO alliance's battlegrounds.

Transatlantic Flights

Captain Raymond Baccaert is credited as the first pilot to inaugurate transatlantic flights between Belgium and the USA. Following training at the Military Air Transport Service (MATS) on McGuire AFB (New Jersey) and test flights with a USAF and a US Navy DC-6, Capt. Baccaert flew DC-6 KY-1 from Brussels over Prestwick and Goose Bay to McGuire on 17 December 1962, thus opening a new line for 15 Wing.

1964 Uprising

The young Republic of Congo was close to implosion in 1964 and Belgium was asked for support to help create the *Force Aérienne Tactique Congolaise* (Fatac). The Brussels-Kamina air bridge was reinstated and 15 Wing excelled in numerous ferry flights, para drops and cargo flights throughout this turbulent period.

In this period, 15 Wing developed a system of free drops, as braking chutes were unknown at that time. The aircraft would approach the drop zone at a height of 20-30 metres, with minimum flying speed. At the captain's go, aid packages were pushed out of the plane. The risks involved were high, but the crews of 15 Wing did an amazing job and never lost an aircraft. The system developed by 15 Wing later became known as VLAD (Very Low Altitude Delivery) and was the precursor to the current world standard VLAGES drop technique (*Very Low Altitude Gravity Extraction System*).



Low-level dropping of humanitarian aid in Africa. (Photo: BAF)

The Seventies: Clean Sweep

After 20 years, the C-119 Flying Boxcars were officially retired from service in 1972 but kept flying until the last five landed at Koksijde on 9 July 1973. More than a quarter of a million para drops took place out of the reliable C-119, and 30,000 of these were in free fall.

With a near clean sweep, comes a new wind, as the saying goes. 15 Wing welcomed its first Lockheed C-130H Hercules on 25 July 1972. Flight Commander Charlie Vingerhoets was at the controls of CH-01 upon landing at the home base of Melsbroek.

The Pembrokes were complemented by two Swearingen Merlin III. Two new Dassault Falcon 20E planes were used for VIP flights, urgent medical flights for organ transplants and fast airlift of patients. That same year, 1976, saw the four DC-6s being replaced by two former SABENA Boeing B-727s and the first of three Hawker Siddeley HS 748 planes.



Rare photo of Swearingen III Merlin CF-03 during maintenance at Melsbroek. CF-03 crashed at Lille-Lesquin, France on 16 April 1980 with the loss of both pilots.

Gripping photos of the impact of the African drought in the early 1970 shook the world into action, and they made a lasting impact on 15 Wing. The vast Sahel, which runs nearly the breadth of the continent, south of the Sahara Desert, experienced some of its driest conditions (with 60°C temperatures) in years. The horrendous food crisis led to help coming through international aid organizations, supported by 15 Wing. A non-stop supply chain was organized, flying in food supplies from Belgium between May and September 1973 and continuing for another five months in 1974 – flying local rescue and supply missions in Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso and Mali.

The now well-established Very Low Drop system was shown to the international community and adopted worldwide, with a package loss under 3.5 %. It was a truly revolutionary technique!

Red Bean

1978 was a very difficult year for Belgium. A flare-up of anti-European sentiment culminated in 2,000 rebels and foreign mercenaries attacking and overwhelming Kolwezi, a town of 100,000 in ore-rich Shaba Province, Congo, in an orgy of violence on 11 May 1978.



Kolwezi, 1978. (Photo: BAF)

Belgium immediately reacted and marshalled ten C-130 Hercules and its two B-727s for the support and relief operation, codenamed 'Red Bean'. SABENA flew in the rest of the Para regiment on eight B-707 flights. Thanks to a coordinated Belgian campaign, the rebels were pushed out of Kolwezi, liberating hundreds of Europeans, and flying them to safety. The complex operation involved USAF C-141 aircraft to ferry fuel in and one C-130H temporarily was kitted out as a tanker aircraft, shuttling 24/7 between Kamina and Kinshasa to ensure that flying operations were secure. The operation ended on 20 May 1978 with the uprising crushed and Kolwezi back under the control of local forces. Some 2,200 Europeans and 3,000 Africans were evacuated, while 60 Europeans and about 100 Africans were massacred. One Belgian paratrooper was killed in the operation.

Humanitarian Missions: 1980-1989

The Eighties were defined for 15 Wing by flying a series of humanitarian missions to support people affected in crisis after crisis across the globe.

Various international relief missions were carried out in the Eighties:

- December 1981: North Yemen, earthquake.
- October 1983: Erzurum, Turkey, earthquake.
- January 1984: SAR off the Scottish Coast for a missing trawler.
- October 1984: Bolivia, three missions to deliver a total of 45 tons of technical aid for Belgium's Development Agency.
- December 1984-1987: start of a multi-year airlift programme to help the population in Ethiopia stricken by drought, poverty, and political upheaval.
- April 1989: UN Operation *Lifeline*, to create an air bridge between Khartoum and southern Sudan.



Humanitarian Aid Mission by 15 Wing C-130 in Eastern Africa. (Photo: BAF)

- March 1989: helping Morocco to fight a locust plague.
- August 1989: relief flights to support refugees from Burundi to Rwanda, following political turmoil in the region.



Delivering another cargo load of humanitarian aid. (Photo: BAF)

- October 1989: in support of a Nicaragua tornado relief programme.
- October 1989: humanitarian aid programme to Niger, West Darfur/Sudan for the EU.
- December 1989: Armenia earthquake: between 25,000 and 50,000 people were killed and up to 130,000 were injured. A 15 Wing C-130 was chartered by Médecins sans Frontières and the Association of Armenians in Belgium, with medical aid, blankets and tents.
- December 1989: popular uprising in Romania, which led to medical support flights, including 800 litres of blood for Romania's hospitals and numerous humanitarian flights, one including flying out children for adoption to Belgium.
- Throughout 1989: technical training support for the Zairean Air Force by 15 Wing.

Invited to participate at the annual USAF *MAC Tactical Airlift Competition*, Belgium in 1990 further earned the admiration of international airlift transport professionals from the 13 participating countries.

That same year, 15 Wing found itself buzzing like a beehive! In August, eight C-130s and one B-727 were ferrying staff out of Zaire at the end of Belgium's technical cooperation programme there. Shortly afterwards, Belgian C-130s were in action to repatriate 9,400 Egyptian refugees from Iraq and Kuwait, where they were stranded in Jordan. During this programme, which was part of the ongoing Gulf Crisis at the time, 15 Wing in October successfully managed Operation Green Beam to protect and guarantee safe passage of fellow Belgians out of Rwanda, following the political crisis there. One month earlier, Operation Blue Beam, in cooperation with the USAF and SABENA, had evacuated 4,000 Westerners from the deepest pockets of that Central African country.

At the same time, 15 Wing C-130Hs airlifted US, French and British coalition equipment, and materiel into Saudi-Arabia. The Belgian Hercules also supported Belgian minesweepers operating off the coast of Kuwait. During Desert Shield and Desert Storm, 15 Wing flew parts of a Dutch Patriot missile system to Dyrbakir in eastern Turkey.

Halfway Home

In 1992 and after 20 years of service, 15 Wing received confirmation of a Midlife Update for its highly productive C-130 aircraft.

The 12 C-130 Hercs totalled 104,000 flying hours between them, flying over 900,000 paras to their drop zones. At the height of the Sahel drought relief programme, 15 Wing dropped 7,760 tons of food safely for grateful populations, thanks to its world-class VLAGES system.

Operations Silver Back and Blue Safari

Yet the world never stands still. The horrific genocidal events of the 1994 conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes in Rwanda, which led to an estimated one million people being killed, made for a highly flammable situation when trying to secure the extraction of Europeans from that country.

Under Operation Silver Back, C-130 aircraft from 15 Wing loaded up troops and materiel in Europe and flew to Nairobi as their Forward Operating Base (FOB). For the operation into Kigali, an assault landing and an alternative airdrop operation had been prepared. Belgium's 2 Commando Battalion which was in Rwanda under the UN flag, secured Kigali Airport by the time of arrival of the Hercs. However, the plans then changed, with cautionary but normal landings being flown. Belgian paratroopers then scoured the capital city and its surroundings for people in need of repatriation and they secured a successful extraction of 1,400 people, with the final flight out on 19 April 1994.

Anti-Belgian sentiment was running high when Operation Blue Safari started the same day. This ensured the safe withdrawal of all military staff and materiel from Rwanda, with Hercules turnaround times at 10 minutes and engines running – underlining the high levels of professionalism of all involved. This was an international effort with the support of some NATO countries and local governments in Kenya, Tanzania and Djibouti signing off for a successful mission, once again.

Falcon 900

International rescue missions are always front-page news, so one key component of 15 Wing has been rather overlooked. VIP transport had taken a backseat for a while, but this was soon addressed with the arrival of a second-hand Falcon 900 on 13 March 1994.

New Millennium, New Challenges

The year 2000 as just a few days old when the southwest of France was hit by a terrible winter storm. Belgian C-130s immediately swung into action and carried troops and materiel to the stricken region. At precisely the same time, another mission set out from Melsbroek to help the starving population of Tirana, Albania during NATO operation Joint Falcon, in the chaotic wars of the Balkans at the time.

Two months later, 15 Wing was helping in Mozambique during a series of floods. This was Belgium at its very best.

McChord AFB: Good Show!

In the spring of 2000, 15 Wing and a selection of Belgian paratroopers were invited to participate in the USAF annual airlift competition at McChord AFB, WA.

A total of 100 teams took part in this highly prestigious battle of the best. Belgium's C-130H was the sole entrant featuring the updated avionics suite, which meant there was no need for a navigator!



*15 Wing returned home with two top prizes for Belgium: Best Air Crew and Best International Team! Good Show!!
(Photo: BAF)*

Two new EMBRAER 135s and two -145 regional jets were acquired in 2000 and adapted for medevac missions as well as for VIP flights. These ERJ-135/145s were withdrawn from service in 2019, while the Falcon 20 and 900 were retired in 2019. These VIP aircraft were replaced by two Dassault Falcon 7X (OO-Lum and OO-FAE) on dry lease from Luxaviation: both are currently in use.



Dassault Falcon 7X. (Photo: Kristof Moens, BAF)

Airbus A321-231 (reg. CS-TRJ) – with a capacity of 152 passengers and leased since May 2014 from Portuguese company HiFly – made its final flight from Melsbroek in December 2020. This was because Belgium had joined the NATO Multi-Role Tanker Transport (**MRTT**) Programme, which includes Airbus A-330s being stationed at Eindhoven, The Netherlands.

On 27 May 2003, Belgium ordered seven Airbus A400M airlifters to replace its Lockheed C-130 Hercules transport aircraft. The Belgian Air Component will also manage the single aircraft bought by Luxembourg. The first aircraft, CT-01 for the Luxembourg Armed Forces, arrived at Melsbroek airbase on 9 October 2020, followed by the first Belgian Air Force plane (CT-02) on 20 December 2020. The full complement of 15 Wing A400M aircraft will be completed by 2024.



Approach of Airbus A400M towards Melsbroek. (Photo: Kristof Moens, BAF)



15 Wing's visibility in the world continues to grow, with humanitarian missions all over the world. The most recent mission included the evacuation at Kabul in August 2021. That famous Sioux Indian Chief's head is now as well-known globally as Belgium's warm hospitality and that strong can-do attitude. Tenacity indeed!



Where do old aircraft go? The lucky ones fly off to airfields, where they can be carefully restored and cared for by dedicated volunteers, for the benefit of today and tomorrow's generations.

In Belgium, the only museum exclusively dedicated to military airlift history is found at Melsbroek, next to the current 15 Wing AFB. It also happens to be one of the world's rare museums dedicated to Air Transport.

Preserving the incredible heritage of air mobility requires a team effort. This involves volunteers and financial supporters to advance our mission as an aviation education, cultural, historical, and inspirational facility for the public and for the Belgian Air Force Community.

The current President of DAKOTA is Colonel (Ret) Jacques Lousberg. He was formerly in charge of the C-130 avionics upgrade programme, CO TCU, 20 Squadron and 15W Operations Group, as well as commander of the then newly formed Movement and Transport Coordination Center at the Ministry of Defence. Col Lousberg mainly flew C-130 and A310 in 15 Wing until his retirement in 2005. He had a second career in commercial aviation as an A310, A330, A340 and A380 captain and ended his career after logging 24,390 flying hours.

Today, DAKOTA is a well-run non-profit organization. Its mandate is to acquire, document, preserve and maintain a collection of aircraft that were flown by the Belgian military transport wing from the beginning of World War II to the present. Its role is to preserve the artefacts, books, periodicals and manuals relating to this mandate. The Museum houses representations of all aircraft that ever flew with the 15 Wing, an extensive aviation Exhibit Gallery, plus the most up-to-date archive on all aircraft types, upgrade programmes and missions prepared, flown and safely maintained by the men and women of 15 Wing.

DAKOTA has the following aircraft in its static collection:

- C-47
- Percival Pembroke
- C-119

The DAKOTA association boasts a comprehensive aviation library, together with an impressive photo and video collection. Mission logbooks from aircrew can be consulted on request. Restoration programmes of a B-727 cockpit and a C-130 aircraft are ongoing.

Visit <http://dakota15wing.be> for more information.

Should you like to donate to the museum, please contact Eric Dauchy at +32 498 513 077

or at secretariaatdakota@gmail.com. Please send information about your proposed donation via email or phone us, prior to bringing any objects to the museum.

With thanks to Piet Claes '[Historiek van de 15e Wing](#)' and the team at DAKOTA for their invaluable support.

With thanks to Terry Brisco for editing the article.

- (1) Serge VERBEECK, *De C-47B Dakota bij de Belgische Luchtmacht* (C-47 Dakota with the Belgian Air Force) can be obtained from [The Flying Twins](#) or from [the author](#) for 40 EUR, with 8 EUR post and packing.

Article by his son-in-law Jos Moeys

Albert "Pitje" LAFORCE...

1922 – 2018



Yes! That's him.... Together with his old friends and pilots of 609 Squadron.

Born on November 11th 1922 he was only 17 and a half when Germany invaded Belgium on May 10, 1940. Because of the ever-worsening military situation the decision was taken by his parents to flee to England. A logical decision for a man in charge of his family and who happened to work on the mailboat! But not for Albert who decided to stay. After all he had a job to do namely to deliver telegrams – by then mostly calls for reservists to join the army. However, only a day or two later when delivering telegrams in the evening the first two bombs were dropped north of Ostend by the German Luftwaffe and this made him quickly change his mind! Together with his father, mother and three sisters he left home with some of their belongings to embark on a boat for England. He recalls they were part of a convoy of 3 boats leaving Ostend.

His military records say he arrived in Folkestone on board of the Belgian mail boat Prince Leopold on May 17 1940. Maurice - his 10-year older brother - was the only one of the family to remain in Belgium since he was a soldier in the Belgian army.

Once in England they were given a place to live by the authorities at n° 7 on Royal Avenue in Chelsea London SW3. A posh area with huge nice houses, not far from the Belgian embassy. They lived in the basement with ample room and a street view from below. Mother had a household job at the nearby embassy. Eldest daughter Victoire found herself another job in London and with the danger of Germany bombing London the two youngest children Gaby and Esther were evacuated to the north of England as so many children, British and others.

During the Blitz (end of 1940 till spring 1941) Albert together with his mother and father had to shelter every night in a

kind of bunker under the park near Sloane square. In the daytime he made himself useful in the Rescue Service. The Germans unleashed their bombing power at the centre of London... But the irony was great! He fled to England because of two German bombs on Ostend but ended up in London in a far worse situation. That's when he took a decisive decision: he decided he wanted to bomb the Germans and make them pay for it! But that was easier said than done... One way or another he applied for the RAF. However in vain! Instead - after the Blitz in 1941- he was summoned to join the Belgian Army in England. Since he had some experience working for the Belgian Post Office he was assigned to the Signal Corps (Transmission troops) in [Malvern camp](#) on December 15th 1941 and learned Morse code, something that would prove to be beneficial. Nevertheless his real ambition was the Airforce.

And yes - due to the many losses - airmen were in strong demand and the Belgians were asked to deliver. At an application interview he told the recruiting officer of his ambition to bomb the Germans and make them pay for what they did during the Blitz. The Belgian Airforce officer was stunned, had never heard this argument before and accepted him for a "flying career". Something of a dream coming thru...

The lucky ones who passed the selection process went to the [ACRC Regent's park \(Aircrew Receiving Centre\) in London](#) {15/05/42 – 05/07/42 info logbook}

The khaki uniforms were thrown away (these are his words...) and replaced by the air force blue RAF uniforms.



Albert as a candidate student-pilot sitting 2nd left when in the ACRC and what a dream it was at the age of 19!

All the selected Belgians found themselves as a sub-group in the [#17 ITW Initial Training Wing](#) of the RAF at Scarborough {05/07/42 – 08/09/42 info logbook#2}. They learned basic military skills and Morse code which he knew already from his stay in the Signal Corps! The instructor noticed this apparently uninterested student in his classroom, only to find out he was bored because he knew already... He was promptly appointed Morse code instructor for a group of about 30 people. Problem solved!



Albert sitting on the first row fourth from the left

On September 22th 1942 they moved to an airfield where they learned to take off, turn around the airbase and land again. This was on **Tiger Moth** at the [#6 EFTS Elementary Flying Training School](#) in Sywell near Northampton. {08/09/42 –

15/10/42 info logbook#2}

At the end of this 10 hours training course they had to fly solo. A selection was then made. Some of the trainees were refused, others became candidate navigators or candidate pilots.

Being part of the latter Albert then moved to an “intermediate” camp in a park (*Heaton Park*) with temporary barracks near Manchester in the [#2 ADCD Air Crew Dispersal Centre](#). However, it turned out to be all but temporary. Due to the many losses of Allied ships in the Atlantic by German U-boats, their transport to Canada proved to be difficult. As a result, the numbers of candidate-pilots awaiting their transfer increased continuously... It came to protests and riots and the Group-Captain had to calm the spirits and explain the matter. After about 8 weeks on January 4th 1943 he was finally on a transport ship that returned empty to the US. It was all but comfortable since they were sleeping in berths in the hull. He remembers having been ill almost all the time. In order to avoid German U-boats the ship took a long route via Iceland which they were able to see. They finally arrived in Canada at the [PDC Ottawa “Personnel Dispersal Centre”](#) on January 13th 1943 and at some point in time were put on a train to their next destination.

On February 8th they arrived at airbase “DeWinton” in Winnipeg [#31 EFTS Elementary Flying Training School](#) {07/02/43 – 17/04/43 info logbook#2} to complete the elementary flying course on **Tiger Moth** (DH.82A Tiger Moth II). It was still winter and at the end of the course they deserved a 10 days leave. Albert went with friend Raymond Van Wijmers to Vancouver where they were housed at a Canadian doctor's home.



At “DeWinton” in Winnipeg #31 EFTS (Elementary Flying Training School) with his friend R. Van Wymers

After this well-earned rest came the move to the airbase of Medicine Hat being home for [#34 SFTS Service Flying Training School](#) {17/04/43 – 06/08/43 info logbook#2} for the more advanced flying course on **Harvard** aircraft. It is only then, when exercise flying from Medicine Hat to DeWinton that they noticed the airfield in DeWinton had proper hard runways! Due to the snow at DeWinton they had never realized this and thought a grass runway was all there was!



At "Medecine Hat" #34 SFTS (Service Flying Training School) 2nd from left

At the end of the course in Medecine Hat they were finally awarded their pilot wings on august 6th.

The military record then mentions [#31 PDC Personnel Dispersal Centre](#) {10/08/43 – 12/09/43 info logbook#2} which seems to have been in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada to prepare their return to Europe.

This time the return crossing of the Atlantic was a more pleasant experience... They were onboard the modified Queen Elisabeth. However, in order to optimize the ship's capacity 8 hour shifts were created. They all received a badge A, B or C. Berths were shared by 3 men. Every 8 hours they moved and stayed elsewhere on the ship for another 16 hours! All under strict supervision. The passenger cabins had been modified with 3 times 3 stacked beds so at least 9 people could share a cabin. The bow and stern of the ship had been equipped with heavy machine guns and as a result the decks were forbidden to the soldier passengers. Fortunately the voyage was a lot quicker as well, only taking about four or five days before docking at Hull harbour.

From there the journey for about 50 pilots and navigators went by train to Harrogate to a hotel that was taken over by the RAF's [#7 PRC Personnel Reception Centre](#) in Harrogate, Yorkshire {19/09/43 – 22/02/44 info logbook#2}. From there they went to a small airfield near Peterborough at the [#7 AFU Advanced Flying Unit](#) in Bishop's Court {22/02/44 – 22/05/44 info logbook#2} on February 22th 1944 to get acquainted with night flying! They totalized an important number of hours of "circuits and bumps" on **Master** and later on **Hurricane**.

From information on the internet I learned that *"the AFU's were to 'educate' pilots, navigators and bomb aimers who had trained in places like Canada, USA and South Africa about flying in European weather without 'distant horizons' due to our weather etc"* (end quote).

Unfortunately a teammate got killed by German airfare during one of their nightly exercises!

Albert then returned to the hotel in Harrogate... and that had another important consequence. His attention was drawn on a young girl! Norah, his wife to be! She was working for the RAF as a clerk. It would later in their marriage at the end of the war in 1945.

But first they were now being trained to become operational combat pilots in an OTU on **Spitfire (I II and V)**. This happened at RAF Kirton Lindsey in North Lincolnshire at the **#53 OTU Operational Training Unit** from may 21th 1944 onwards {22/05/44 – 27/07/44 info logbook#2}.

Once that accomplished all pilots needed to be assigned to a fighting squadron. Some were assigned to one of the Belgian manned squadrons of the RAF (349 or 350). However, Albert was assigned to the English RAAF (auxiliary) squadron 609WR (West Riding) equipped with the new “rocket” **Typhoon** Fighters. Their rollout had started in spring 1942.

So, first a conversion course was on order. This took place near Bristol at RAF Aston Down {27/07/44 – 15/08/44 info logbook#2} then home of **#3 TEU Tactical Exercise Unit**. The first take-off with the Typhoon was a very special experience. The “beast” as it was called was fully in control and the student pilot was more-or-less reduced to a passenger roll... The operational training consisted of bombing a target on a platform in Bristol Bay. They didn't use the real stuff but rather “concrete” training bombs, first starting at high altitude and progressively lowering the altitude in order to learn how to avoid crashing after having unleashed their fake bombing power.



Albert in front of a Typhoon (notice bombs and rockets)

#84 GSU Thruxton 16/08/44– 30/08/44

#18 APC Fairwood 30/08/44 – 17/09/44

Note: all the aforementioned dates are taken from the summary at the start of the second logbook, the first one having been stolen! There is no other way of putting it: borrowed and not being returned by an unknown person who made misuse of an elderly man who he regretted this so much! It belongs to the family!

By now they were finally ready for action, ready for battle!

Fully operational to Squadron 609's needs he joined it at Merville (FR) (airfield B53) on September 19th as **F/sgt**. From here on Alberts real combat missions could start. These included mostly "recce" missions and attacking unfriendly enemy positions like trains and railway lines and barges as well as shelter places and military convoys. Unfortunately, a couple of days before, on the 14th of September 1944 Belgian CO Squadron-Leader Raymond "Cheval" Lallemand was hit by flak and returned to base where he crash landed his Typhoon. He was badly burned and returned to England to be treated in hospital and recover.

609 squadron was part of 123 Wing together with squadrons 164 and 189. The squadron followed the frontline and moved several times. It went from **Merville (FR)** to **Ursel (BE)** on 30/10/44 where it saw a fierce battle in an attempt to recapture the isle of Walcheren (Vlissingen). Allied troops were already way into Belgian territory but needed supply of material and petrol for the advancing troops. The only port large enough was of course Antwerp but the use of the Schelde estuary was impossible due to the enemy's firing power on the isle of Walcheren. Albert recalled these missions as particularly dangerous and on (date) *he received a bullet through the Typhoon's hood which grazed his cheek and drew blood!* They couldn't come close to the German positions because of the danger they posed and if they did succeed to eliminate one the next day it was back there with full firing power!

In the end the island of Walcheren was taken back in a coordinated attack from sea and land troops.

Albert received his commission to **Pilot Officer (P/O)** on 28/11/44 when the squadron had moved on to **Gilze Ryen (NL)** on 24/11/44 and where on 01/12/44 the squadron saw the visit of General Dwight Eisenhower, Allied Supreme Commander. Then 609 moved further on to **Chievres (BE)** on 31/12/44.



In Chievres... awaiting better wheather (P/O Laforce 2nd left)

From Chievres 609 again moved to **Gilze Ryen (NL)** on 19/01/45 and then to **Nijmegen (NL) (Kluis)** on 21/03/45.



*Pictures taken in Gilze Ryen with above one of their Typhoons and below left Albert sitting on the front row second from the left (next to Jan Matthys... of course with his pipe!) and looking right into the camera on the third picture... The next move was to **Plantlunne (DE)** on 17/04/45 and finally on 04/05/45 the last war mission (recce) of 609 was flown by the duo P/O's Albert Laforce and Jan Matthys. On 08/05/45 **V Day** marked the end of World War 2.*

On 15/05/45 the Squadron's Operations Record Book tells us: "Albert Laforce went on a leave today which he will doubtless remember for many years to come, for on returning, he will be a married man. With "Snowy Reynolds" as his best man, Albert is to be married in Yorkshire on Saturday next, and we all wish him and his wife many years of happiness together, and thrust that their troubles will only be little ones".

*On 27/05/45 the squadron moved to **Wunstorf (DE)** and the day after Albert was promoted to **Flying Officer (F/O)**.*

At that time the Belgian manned RAF squadron 349 was also in Wunstorf under the command of Sqn Ldr 'Cheval' Lallemand who, was back on duty! The Belgians of 609 were to be integrated in 349 or 350 squadron. October 10, 1945 is the official date at which Albert joined 349 as per his military records.

The Squadron then moved to Fassberg somewhere in November 1945 and finally – almost a year later – on October 15, 1946 the Belgian Air Force was created. On October 24th 349 and 350 BE squadrons flew back to Belgium Beauvechain. In February 1946 he received the "*Croix de Guerre 1940 avec Palme*" for having been "*pilote d'une escadrille d'attaque de troupes au sol à l'époque de l'invasion, (qui) se distingua dans les dangereuses missions dévolues à son unité, détruisant ou endommageant au cours de plus de 78 heures de vol, 3 navires, 12 barges, 5 locomotives et 10 autres véhicules*".

After some time, Albert was posted to Koksijde as Chief Instructor on Spit XIV in the fighter aircraft school



chief instructor of 120th promotion

After his stay in Koksijde he returned to the "Chasse" in Beauvechain joining the 4th squadron flying Meteor.



CO of "A" Flight of 4th squadron

A medical check-up then decided his future career! Needing glasses to improve his sight his time flying combat airplanes was over. Albert moves to Transport and flies C-119 and DC-6 with respectively long trips to Congo and the US. He becomes Colonel and is CO of 15th Transport Wing. After 4 years he leaves Transport and is responsible for "Education and Training" of new pilots.

Finally, he ends his career with a three-year assignment as a Brigadier General in Rheindahlen where he is second in Command of 2ATAF.



Albert retired from the Airforce on the 1st of January 1976.

609 (West Riding) Squadron - C Flight Training Weekend

On Saturday 23 April 2022, Dr Ian Pepper who is the Head of Centre at the College of Policing, County Durham, visited 609(WR) SQN at RAF Leeming and gave a presentation to 609 Squadron Police Flt.

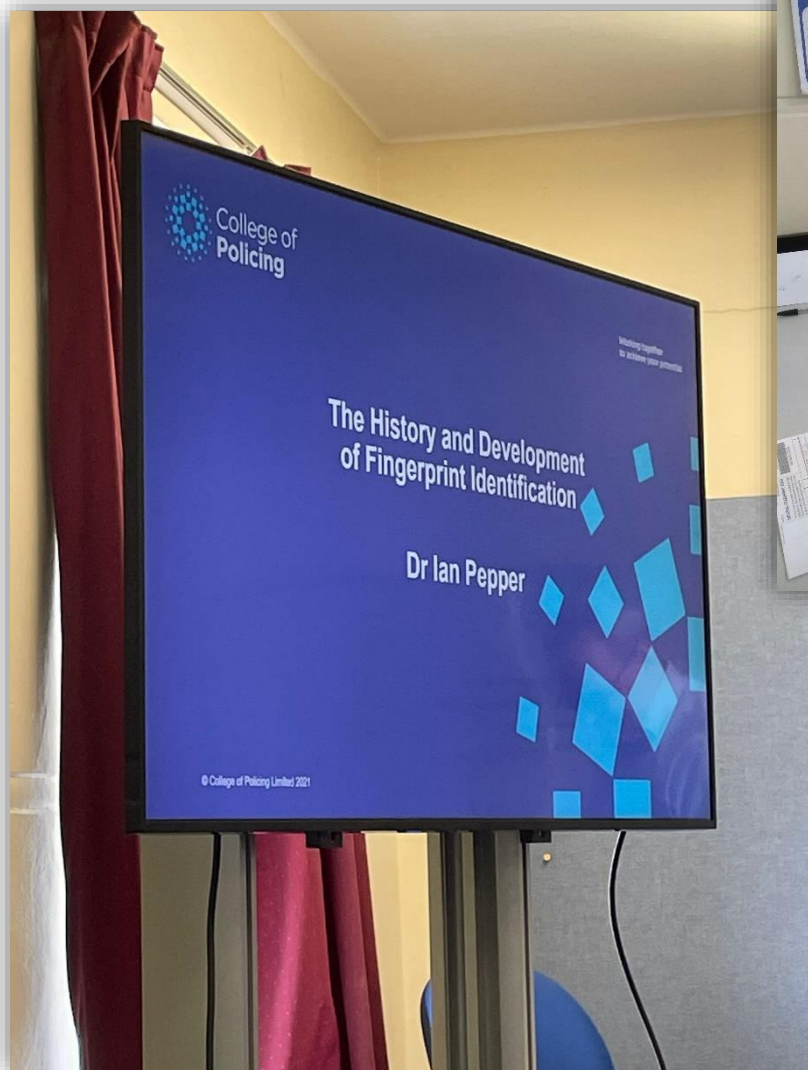
Dr Pepper is an expert in the field of Crime Scene Investigation, he teaches both nationally and internationally and has years of experience with West Yorkshire Police.

The subject of Dr Peppers talk was on the science and history of fingerprinting. During the talk he explained how fingerprint officers identify different features in a fingerprint and present their findings at court.

After his talk Flt personnel honed their skills at cataloguing fingerprints and then practiced taking each other's fingerprints using the different methods learned in the lesson.

Overall, a very rewarding weekend enhancing our police skill set and being trained by a master on this subject.

TALLY HO !!!





The nature of this EX was a mixture of FD and AT activities, given the name 'Snow Eagle' it gives away the AT may involve snow..... Unfortunately, Germany this April had a distinct lack of snow, however, we managed to get two days on the slopes.

The EX was based at Robson Resilience Centre, Bad Hindelang, Germany. The briefs for the serials were given on the evening of the prior day to ensure we could have the kit ready for early morning departures and also the temperamental weather conditions.

The EX also has a staff ride element, some thought provoking stands in Dachau the first concentration camp built by Nazi Germany and a couple of stands in Munich where we debated the bombing of Munich, the Nazi party and other elements of WW2.

The Ex was civilianised in every respect meaning no uniform or rank was used whilst we were on FD or AT serials.

RRC Germany.

Day one 03 Apr 22:

I left from RAF Leeming on Saturday afternoon to travel to Heathrow for an overnight stay and then an onward flight to Munich on the 10th. Within 5 minutes of getting on the train south the news filtered through that the flight on the 10th had been cancelled..... Great start.

As the JO responsible for the PTVR's attending a started to contact all to understand where they were and what arrangements they had in place. Some were mid travel; some were at Heathrow and luckily for some they hadn't left yet. I started liaising with the staff at RRC Bavaria to let them know the status and to start making arrangements and agreeing a plan of action.

It was decided that we'd meet at the airport on the 04th and be loaded onto a later flight making our journey to Munich 24 hours later than planned but still with the full complement of 27.



Day two 04 Apr 22:

Day two was spent ensuring everyone was rounded up at the hotel, where a kit and admin check was completed before transiting to the airport. Due to staffing issues, and cancellations I did a brief before leaving to ensure everyone was clear on the plan. Setting up a WhatsApp group to enable comms through the airport where keeping us all together would prove difficult.

We managed to get through and met up in the London Pride pub where we were all introduced and I met up with WO Gaz Edwards, who was going to be one of the DS for the week. Gaz is a wealth of knowledge and supported us all fantastically with his humour, knowledge and understanding of the life of PTVR.

On to the flight and a 3 hour transfer at the other side to the RRC where we'd spend the week as our hub. On arrival we had an arrivals brief, were given our rooms and instructions for the following morning. Apparently, there was going to be some skiing Afterall.

Day three 05 Apr 22:

Early start on the morning where we went to the stores and got kitted out for a day skiing. The groups were split based on ability to ensure the correct level of instruction. The stores were immaculate, and all the requirements were met for kit to enable us to spend the day mostly on our backsides.

A 40-minute bus ride to the venue for the day which was Oberstdorf ski resort. On arrival we were given our instructors and a day of learning the fundamentals of skiing were undertaken.

During the day discussions were had around military life the Ethos of the Air force and the differing roles of PTVRs.

Day Four 06 Apr 22:

Another Early start and a change of plan, good weather meant we could go and ski again, this time we'd be going over the border to Austria. This ski resort was much bigger, and it certainly helped with the sun being out. A full day skiing was had, and some individuals were able to move to more advanced groups, with some making the red runs.

After a full day of skiing some of us decided to get out and run 10k such was the great conditions and the beautiful valley we were staying in.



We set off very early on day five to head firstly to Dachau, the first Nazi concentration camp with an unbelievable history. We had several stands and were able to spend time reading and learning some of the history of the camp and reminding ourselves of the sacrifices of the many. The camp itself and the area is a stark reminder to the atrocities of the war and the timing with the current conflict in the Ukraine gave a good reminder.

Following the visit to Dachau we moved into Munich to follow the footsteps of the Nazi party formation and do stands on some of the areas where major historical events were held. The city is beautiful and the people very welcoming.

After the stands we had a few hours spent in the city, some tried as many local beers as they could muster before the bus journey back to the RRC.





Day six 08 Apr 22:

Another weather affected day.... However, we didn't let that stop us on PTVR Snow Eagle. It was time to get our rock-climbing gear on and head to the indoor mountain climbing arena. Another first for quite a few of us but another great example of the kit held at the RRC and the ability to adapt and overcome.

A full day bouldering and rope assisted climbing commenced with some fierce RAF competition ensuing. An extremely tough on the upper body but great day had by all.

The end of the day was packing up and the departure brief ready for an 0350 departure to the Airport.

Day seven 09 Apr 22:

The last day, lots of travel and goodbyes to new friends that I would possibly never have met. A valuable week that was made even better by being all PTVR's. It's very rare that we'd all get on an EX together, but I think it was well worth it. the DS were all fantastic and I learned so much on the FD days.

609 (West Riding) Squadron – Excalibur submission

With most Covid-19 restrictions now removed the squadron has been able to get back to functioning in a normal manner. This has meant weekend training and exercises have fully resumed as well as augmenting Regular units, overseas training and supporting local events. As 609 (WR) Sqn is a Battle of Britain sqn there is much history and tradition attached to it and events which include these have also been able to take place again.

Military Reserves Exchange Program

Four members of 609 (West Riding) Squadron participated in a two-week Military Reserve Exchange Programme (MREP) with the 125th Air National Guard Security Forces Squadron (125 SFS) based in Jacksonville, Florida. Due to the global pandemic, this was the first MREP since 2017.

Like the RAF Regiment, Air National Guard Security Force Squadrons play a major role in the base and perimeter security of air installations. However, unlike the RAF Regiment, Security Force Squadrons also feature an integrated Law Enforcement role, as opposed to working closely with a separate military police force such as the RAF Police.

Following a short period of visits and tours to units and HQ formations across the Florida Air Nation Guard, the 609 MREP team moved to the Camp Blanding Joint Training Centre in Starke, Clay County.

The 609 team were paired with a team from the 125 SFS who were conducting pre-deployment training in preparation for a six-month deployment to Africa. Through this arrangement the 609 MREP team were able to participate in a variety of training activities include basic patrol skills, civil disturbance and riot control techniques, and fitness training. The 609 team were also given the opportunity to train with one of the teams from the Security Force Assistance Brigade, a specialised United States Army unit formed to conduct security force assistance (SFA) missions: to train, advise, assist, enable, and accompany operations with allied and partner nations. As well as undergoing lessons on tactical medicine training, the 609 team were able to participate in a development session on 'movement to contact' drills, resulting in the exchange of techniques,



experiences, and lessons learned which the SFAB team were keen to take forward as they develop new drills for their next deployment.

Finally, having heard of the RAF Regiment Annual Fitness Test (RAFT), both the SFS and SFAB teams were also keen to pit themselves against the 609 MREP team in some early morning 'rucks' (tabbing), during which the Brits proved to lead the way!

Post the military training phase, the 609 MREP team then enjoyed an excellent R&R package involving visits to St Augustine (the oldest city in the US), Universal Studios in Orlando, a local baseball game, and of course the beach!



As well as ensuring that the military training was as meaningful and relevant as possible within the confines of the programme, our hosts went out of their way to make us feel incredibly welcome and integrated within their unit – a real testament to that 'southern hospitality' you hear of, with genuine friendships formed across the Atlantic. As Reservists, the MREP is likely to be a once in a lifetime opportunity, however it will also be experience which the which the 609 team are unlikely to ever forget.

A contingent from 125 SFS will conduct the reciprocal exchange to 609 Sqn in September of this year, which fits in nicely with our Annual Continuation Training on Catterick Training Area. As such, the Squadron is busy pulling together a training programme that we hope will provide our colleagues in 125 SFS with the same levels of training, hosting, and cultural experiences they were able to show us.



Battle of Britain Presentation: Fg Off Charles Nevil Overton DFC, 609 Sqn, RAF.

Throughout the Battle of Britain, Fg Off Overton survived numerous dog fights against enemy aircraft, including on 30th May 1940, when he (the youngest pilot in the Sqn at the time) and his fellow pilots, flew 609 Sqn's first patrol of the war to cover the Dunkirk evacuation, with a superb display of air fighting.

It was this humble, private and modest fighter pilot which I had the honour to attend the Dedication of, at St Hugh's School, Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire, on an overcast 20th May 2022, in company with Sqn Ldr Ashe (OC 609 Sqn), Sgt Wood and Sgt Foster. St Hugh's was a poignant setting for this Dedication as it was here that FO Overton had been one of the first entry of boys to attend the school, when it opened in 1925, in the heart of what is now Bomber County.

In the company of Fg Off Overton's family and friends, the service was opened by the now Headmaster of St Hugh's Mr J Wyld who along with the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Lincolnshire Mr Francis Dymoke, the Battle of Britain Historical Society historian Mr Nicholas Hall, Charles Nevil Overton and Sqn Ldr Ashe, recalled and reminisced on the duty and stories of Fg Off Overton.



This was followed by poems and readings by the St Hugh's School Head Boy Harry H, Head Girl Ruby, Deputy Head Boy Freddie, then a prayer and hymn led by Padre (SqN Ldr) John Mbayo, RAF Coningsby.

It was then the turn of the St Hugh's School Orchestra and Choir to demonstrate their wonderful talent by playing Land of Hope and Glory, the Dambusters March and singing a joyful and extremely catchy War Time Medley, which certainly generated lots of smiles and got a few of the audience's feet tapping and swaying along.



The formalities were then carried out, with the Dedication and unveiling of Plaque followed by the School Orchestra and Choir leading the singing of the National Anthem, which proudly concluded the Service of Dedication.

A buffet lunch and refreshments in the School Sports Pavilion provided the perfect opportunity for those attending to congregate, learn more about Fg Off Overton thanks to personal belongings which had been kindly donated for the event and converse about their common connection to this truly heroic individual.

The sound of young voices could then be heard getting louder, as all the School staff and children made their way onto the School field and all eyes turned excitedly to the skies. There was much excitement and anticipation but there was no mistaking the 'sound of freedom' as we received a salute by a lone Spitfire from the BBMF, much to the pleasure of the thrilled crowd on the ground.

Although there had been clouds in the sky all morning, there was no way our moods could be dampened, at what had had been a truly memorable occasion for all who had had the pleasure and privilege to have been there.

Sgt Jules Millott

Squadron mascot makes debut at RAFBF and Sue Ryder charity event

609 Sqn's mascot, Fg Off William de Goat II and I were invited to be part of the parade held at Coverham Abbey, Leyburn. This was a charity event being hosted by both Honourary Air Commadore's from 607 (County of Durham) and 609 (West Riding) Sqn. This was William's first ever parade since 609 (WR) Sqn adopted him as our mascot and he was to wear his new Colours with the Sqn badge and battle honours.

The morning of Saturday 21 May at 0900 hrs saw myself pulling into the carpark of Big Sheep little Cow in Bedale with William's trailer hitched to my car and was met by Sophie and Halcyon who look after Fg Off de Goat and are responsible for training him. He was brought out of his pen and was a little reluctant to get in the trailer until he was persuaded by the offer of food, just like his predecessors.



On arrival at Coverham Abbey, Sophie and Halcyon got William out of his trailer, gave him a brush down and placed on his new Colours. Looking smart in his new coat we were asked to stand at the entrance to the Abbey to greet the invited guest. Nearly all the guest remarked on how smart he looked, with some of them holding William's halter and posing for pictures, he took it all in his stride and clearly enjoyed the attention.

After the sunset ceremony and flypast of the Lancaster and a display from a Battle of Britain Spitfire, William was taken for a walk through the guest area where he represented the Sqn with flying colours, behaving impeccably (and not leaving any deposits).

With his first parade complete and for his outstanding behaviour he has now been promoted to Flt Lt. His appearance, along with that of other 609 Sqn personnel contributed to a hugely successful fundraising evening which raised around £90,000 for the RAF Benevolent Fund and Sue Ryder.

The tradition of having a British Toggenburg goat as the 609 (WR) Sqn mascot dates back to 1941 when one was gifted to the squadron by a local farm lady and provided much morale to the squadron throughout the war. The original goat was named William de Goat (Billy) and was promoted several times up to the rank of Air Commodore, each time after a notable misdemeanour such as causing havoc in the ops room, butting a sentry, and eating the OC's mess bill.

Sgt Keith Wood "and William" !!!



This exercise was a blend of AT and FD which took a mix of Part Time Reservists from across the RAF to the Robson Resilience Centre, Bad Hindelang, Germany for a week in April. The exercise consisted of two days skiing, rock climbing, and a staff ride to Dachau and Munich.

After collecting our ski equipment, we formed groups based on ability to ensure the correct level of instruction. The equipment was immaculate, and all the requirements were met to enable us to spend the day mostly on our backsides! The first days' skiing was at the Oberstdorf ski resort where our instructors spent the day teaching us the fundamentals of skiing. The second day of skiing was over the border in Austria and this resort was much bigger and we managed a full day skiing in the sun which allowed some of the more advanced skiers to move on to the red runs. During the days spent skiing discussions were held around military life, the Ethos of the Air force, and the differing roles of PTVRs.

The staff ride started with a trip to Dachau, the first Nazi concentration camp with an unbelievable history. We had several stands and were able to spend time reading and learning some of the history of the camp and reminding ourselves of the sacrifices of the many. The camp itself and the area is a stark reminder to the atrocities of the war and the timing with the current conflict in the Ukraine gave a good reminder. Following the visit to Dachau we moved into Munich to follow the footsteps of the Nazi party formation and we did stands on some of the areas where major historical events were held. The city is beautiful and the people very welcoming.

For the final day It was time to get our rock-climbing gear on and head to the indoor mountain climbing arena. Another first for quite a few of us but another great example of the kit held at the RRC and the ability to adapt and overcome. A full day bouldering and also rope assisted climbing commenced with some fierce RAF competition ensuing. Extremely tough on the upper body but great day to round up a very eventful and thought-provoking week.

Flt Lt Al Pattison

Book Review by Sqn Ldr Merv Ashe

RAW COURAGE

04.10.2022

Conrad

This is to go with the photo's I have sent via WhatsApp...

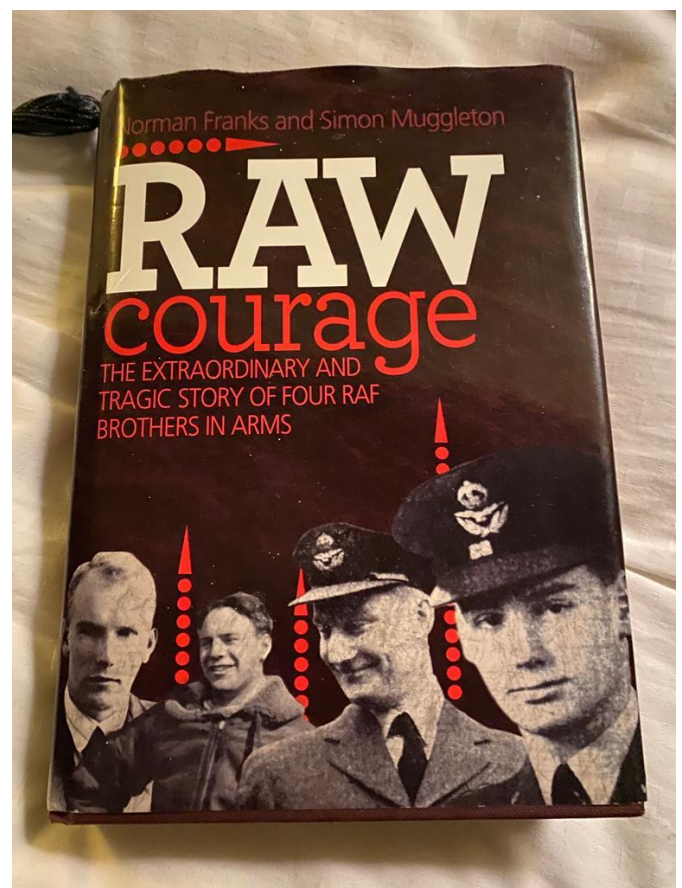
I endeavor to find books about the Sqn that you would not normally find on the shelf.

This is the captivating story of the four Raw brothers, all of whom served in the Royal Air force. The eldest three flew during WWII and all three died. The youngest, not old enough to see wartime flying, flew night fighters post war, ending up flying spitfires with the Battle of Britian Memorial Flight. The eldest brother, John was killed in a flying accident just as he was starting a job as a flying instructor, in 1941. Peter was a fighter pilot, flying Typhoons with our beloved 609 Sqn, winning the DFC. Sadly, he was killed in action with 183 Sqn in 1944. Tony flew Hampden and Lancaster bombers, received the DFC & AFC, but was also killed in action in 1944. All four boys kept up a loving correspondence with their mother, right from their time at Wellington School, until their passing. This book tells of their lives through these letters, written at a time when people wrote almost daily to each other often just a few lines, it is a touching memorial to four young men who served their country and its air force well. However, all four left living testaments to their young lives and gallantry as RAF pilots in war & peace.

Merv Ashe

OC 609 (WR) Sqn

Tally Ho !!!



Raw Courage: The Extraordinary and Tragic Story of Four RAF Brothers in Arms (Fictional Characters and Real Events) Hardcover – December 27, 2011

by Norman Franks (Author), Simon Muggleton (Author)

5.0 out of 5 stars_ 7 ratings

The book is available on ;

<https://www.bol.com/be/nl/p/raw-courage/9200000034371393/>

<https://www.burwaybooks.co.uk/product/raw-courage-norman-franks/>

This is the captivating story of the four Raw brothers, all of whom served with the Royal Air Force. The eldest three flew during WW2 and all three died.

The youngest, not old enough to see wartime flying, flew night-fighters in the postwar years, ending up flying Spitfires with the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. The eldest brother, John, was killed in a flying accident just as he was starting a job as a flying instructor, in 1941. Peter was a fighter pilot, flying Typhoons with 609 Squadron, winning the DFC. Sadly he was killed in action with 183 Squadron in 1944. Tony flew Hampden and Lancaster bombers, received the DFC and AFC, but was also killed in action in 1944.

Their father had been a naval officer, serving mainly in destroyers in WW1, winning the DSC. He remained in the navy post war to become a commander but then became a barrister at law before his untimely death in 1932. All four boys kept up a healthy and loving correspondence with their mother, right from their time at Wellington School, until their passing.

The book tells of their lives through these letters, written at a time when people wrote almost daily to each other, if only a few lines. It is a touching memorial to four young men who served their country and its air force well. Sadly too, Michael, whose RAF career brought him the AFC, died of cancer in 1986, but all four left living testaments to their young lives and gallantry as RAF pilots in war and peace.



Above left: Peter with the famous 609 mascot, W/Cdr William de Goat, and Raymond Lallemand to his left.
 Above right: Roy Payne, Peter and W/Cdr de Goat.
 Right: Captain Orde's charcoal drawing of Peter, 5 April 1943.
 Below: Peter with W/Cdr William de Goat, clearly in a stubborn mood.

Top: Peter's later Typhoon DN406 marked PR-F. The name 'Mavis' still appears by the cockpit while just above the wing-root eighteen train symbols appear in white.

Left: Peter's CO with 609 Squadron was Roland Beamont DSO DFC & Bar. They later flew together testing Typhoons and Tempests at Langley.



Posing for the press, Peter and his pal Howard Skett looking interested.

Peter in his Typhoon PR-C, with his ground crew and pet dogs.

Peter (far right standing) as part of 609's rugby team, November 1942.

Members of 609 (West Riding) Squadron at Langley in 1942. Standing: Howard Skett, Erik Haabjoern, Roland Beamont, M Cameron, Peter Raw, Anton Poley, sitting: West, J S Humphries, Remy van Lierde, André Blanco, Johnnie Payne and Raymond Lallemand.

Tally Ho newsletter

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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

Belgian Air Force Association:

www.BAFassociation.be

Facebook:

Website:

609 (WR) squadron Association
<https://www.609wrsquadron.co.uk/>

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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/>

