



December
2022

22

INFO

Edito

Dear friends,
The 2nd semester of this year 2022 was rich in events and emotions around the duty of memory. We had the pleasure of hosting several families of missing airmen. We should also underline the tributes paid to Allied crews, to an American GI and to a Breton civilian assassinated by the Germans in 1944. Of course, I would like to thank all the contributors to this newsletter.

I wish you a good reading.

Benoît Paquet

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And also

- Welcome to...
- Thanks to ...
- New : « *Vannes-Meucon, l'aérodrome sous l'occupation 39-45* »
- Support the ABSA 39-45

In memory of the Lady Godiva !

By **Benoît Paquet** (photos Benoît Paquet unless otherwise stated, artwork Jean-Marie Guillou)



Aerial photo taken from the video produced by ATM Communication - Plourhan. [Link to the video, click here](#)

ATM Communication

When the "Martin clan" embarks on the organization of an event, they really do things properly. Then, from July 15 to 17, Ronan and Gilles Martin, respectively nephew and brother of our friend Jean-Michel, organized an American camp in Plourhan (22), which was also an opportunity to remember the drama of B-17 "Lady Godiva" fallen on May 29, 1943 off Saint-Quay Portrieux.

Under the sun of Plourhan

From July 15 to 17, 2022, under a nice Breton sun, an exhibition of military vehicles was organized in the heart of an American military camp by the new association, « The Breizh Liberators », created by Ronan and Gilles Martin.



Close-up of the Sherman tank, one of the main attractions of the day

An event that Frédéric Hénoff and I did not want to miss !



The three friends of ABSA 39-45 ! From left to right : Jean-Michel Martin, dressed for the occasion as an American mechanic, Frédéric Hénoff and Benoît Paquet, all of them smiling !

It was an opportunity to discover many vehicles including an impressive Sherman tank, but also a Dodge 4x4 (liaison vehicle), a US Brockway truck (truck assigned to bridge construction), an M8 Greyhound (armoured reconnaissance vehicle) , a Pacific tank recovery tractor and a US Diamond-type truck.

In memory of the Lady Godiva !

By **Benoît Paquet** (photos Benoît Paquet unless otherwise stated, artwork Jean-Marie Guillou)



The imposing Sherman tank.



Armored 6-wheel drive M8 Greyhound



A Dodge 4x4 vehicle



The impressive tank recovery tractor Pacific



A Brockway truck for bridge construction



Diamond-type 6-wheel drive US truck

In memory of the Lady Godiva !

By **Benoît Paquet** (photos Benoît Paquet unless otherwise stated, artwork Jean-Marie Guillou)



Jean-Michel Martin tells the tragedy of Lady Godiva

The event organized by "The Breizh Liberators" was also dedicated to the memory of the crew of the Boeing B-17F (serial number 42-29878) "Lady Godiva" shot down on May 29, 1943 off Saint-Quay Portrieux

On the initiative of Jean-Michel Martin, a long-standing member of ABSA 39-45 and referent for the « Côtes d'Armor », a convoy of military vehicles sat off this Sunday, July 17, 2022 and went to the heart of Plourhan, at the foot of the commemorative stele of the "Lady Godiva" and her crew. There, a small troop gathered with emotion and our friend Jean- Michel told us about this fatal day of May 29, 1943.



A convoy goes to the commemorative stele of "Lady Godiva". At the head of the procession, an American Half-track.



Jean-Michel Martin (ABSA 39-45) tells the story of the Boeing B-17 "Lady Godiva" at the foot of the Plourhan commemorative stele...



... in front of a "troop" of enthusiasts who are visibly very attentive and moved.

In memory of the Lady Godiva !

By **Benoît Paquet** (photos Benoît Paquet unless otherwise stated, artwork Jean-Marie Guillou)

May 29, 1943, the « Lady Godiva » fell off Saint-Quay Portrieux

It was around 3:30 p.m. that day, when the B-17F « Lady Godiva » of 379th Bomb Group, 526th Bombardment Squadron, took off from the RAF base in Kimbolton (Cambridgeshire, England). The mission was the submarine base of Saint-Nazaire. A total of 147 B-17s (out of 169 planned) took off from 7 different airfields north of London.

The crew consisted of 10 men :

- 1st Lt Theodore M. Peterson, pilot
- 2nd Lt Jack W. Bourn, co-pilot
- 2nd Lt Woodrow P. Moore, navigator
- 2nd Lt Warren J. Rosacker, bombardier
- T/Sgt John M. Scott, radio operator
- T/Sgt Maynard M. Spencer, top turret gunner
- Sgt William T. Ayres, right waist gunner
- S/Sgt Paul R. Cribelar, left waist gunner
- S/Sgt William E. Blubaugh, ball turret gunner
- S/Sgt Gideon A. Brown, tail gunner



Photo of Theo Peterson's crew in 1943. We can see, kneeling from left to right, Gideon Brown, Woodrow Moore and Paul Cribelar.

Approaching the target, the Flak (anti-aircraft defense) opened fire on the bombers. The « Lady Godiva » was suddenly hit on the left wing. Nevertheless, the pilot Theo Peterson decided to continue the mission. Over the submarine base, the bomb aimer Warren Rosacker dropped the bomb load. But the B-17 was hit again by the Flak. The two left engines caught fire. The pilot reduced the power of the two affected engines and feathered the propellers¹, while copilot Jack Bourn activated the fire extinguishers. The plane was heading north, slowly losing altitude. It was then attacked by German fighters. A 3rd engine was then

hit and the evacuation order was given. All of the crew members successfully bailed out, with pilot Theo Peterson bailing out last. They landed on the village of Plourhan. Eight of the ten crew members were captured by the Germans and sent to different Stalags. Only **Theo Peterson (photo)** and the radio operator, John Scott managed to escape the occupier and reached England through Spain, helped by the French Resistance.



Theodore Peterson, center surrounded by Joe Wall (at his right) and Ed Millson (at his left) of the 526th BS.

Photo FRE 4746 © collection Roger Freeman - [American Air Museum](http://AmericanAirMuseum.com)

The plane, meanwhile, finished its flight off Saint-Quay Portrieux. A few years later, a propeller from the plane was brought up from the sea and erected as a commemorative stele in Plourhan. In 1987, it was inaugurated by the pilot, Theo Peterson.



Underwater photo of a piece of the wing structure of the B-17 « Lady Godiva » off Saint-Quay Portrieux.

Photo © Jean-Michel Martin collection (ABSA 39-45)

We could not conclude this article without remembering that the crew was helped by many Breton civilians who were unfortunately sent to deportation ; among them, **Armand Hery, Roger Daniel, Albert Le Joncour, Mr Lanlo, Mr Ligeron** and **Mr Gauthier** did not come back. We pay tribute to them ! ■

¹ Most propellers are with variable pitch, meaning the angle of attack of the blades can be changed. In case of engine failure, the propeller is oriented on its edge so that it offers the least possible resistance to the air, like a « flag ».

July-August 2022 : 3 plane engines in Monterblanc (56)

by Benoît Paquet (photos ABSA 39-45 and Air Memorial)

As already mentioned in our previous newsletter, an exhibition was held throughout the summer (from July 13th to August 27th) in the media library in Monterblanc (56). It was co-organized by the Air Memorial Association and ABSA 39-45. It was the first time since 1944 that thanks to this unique exhibition, three engines from the famous German fighter Messerschmitt 109 had been displayed.

What did these three engines have in common ? They equipped 3 planes from the Jagdgeschwader 53 based in Vannes-Meucon. They had been shot down on June 12th and 13th 1944. In other words it was the first time they had been brought back together in 78 years!

A static exhibition



The first step of the exhibition consisted in loading and unloading the three engines, which was done successfully thanks to the worthy contribution of the technical team from the Monterblanc city hall that handled the items with great care.



Association Bretonne du Souvenir Aérien 1939-1945
Mairie de Châteaubriant (44146)
Association reconnue d'intérêt général
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The three engines were thus displayed in their original state, similar to the one they were in, when they were excavated in 1982, 2003 and 2004. The engine which was discovered in 1982 was **Unteroffizier Helmut Rosenbaum's** ; it crashed on June 12th 1944 in Romillé (35) (photo). The pilot was wounded. The engine found out in 2003 is one of the two Me 109G that crashed in Augan on June 13th 1944 ; Unteroffizier Herbert Lies was one of the pilots while Feldwebel Heinz Hädrich was the other one. Both pilots were wounded. In spite of lengthy research the identity of the plane equipped with that engine hasn't been acknowledged yet. Then, the engine which was found out in 2004 is **Leutnant Harti Schmiedel's** ; he was killed on June 12th 1944 as he crashed at 'Le Rheu', near Rennes (35) (photo). His story is told in a book listed by ABSA 39-45 (see on last page).



Besides these 3 engines, other items were displayed such as various pieces of planes, uniforms and other models. The exhibition was inaugurated on July 20th by the **Mayor of Monterblanc, Mr Alban Moquet**. Visitors came regularly until late August.



July-August 2022 : 3 plane engines in Monterblanc (56)

by Benoît Paquet (photos ABSA 39-45 and Air Memorial)



Frank Bernard (Air Memorial) and Frédéric Henoff (ABSA 39-45) answering numerous questions.

Two lectures around the exhibition

Two lectures were organized on July 22nd and August 19th by Frank Bernard (Air Memorial 56), Frédéric Hénoff and myself (ABSA 39-45).

Topics:

The history of Vannes-Meucon airfield from 1937 to 1944 : 'popular aviation' as early as 1937 (photo □), the Luftwaffe from 1940 to 1944 (photo □), the USAAF in 1944-1945 (photo □), without forgetting to mention the GCB 1/18 Vendée from September 1944.

The story of the 3 Me 109 that crashed on June 12th and 13th 1944.

These lectures gave us the opportunity to recall a whole span of local history ; our associations were also pleased to have met enthusiastic people .



A nice press survey

This exhibition was a nice showcase for our respective associations in Monterblanc and on a larger scale in Morbihan ; we were delighted to see that the exhibition was surveyed by the local press (**Le Télégramme**, **Ouest-France**) and the English press (**Fly Past**) ! We must also mention the magazine that all aviation fans know so well (**Le Fana de l'Aviation**) which published a nice article on its facebook page.

Such a nice event could not have succeeded without the backup and benevolence of Monterblanc municipality ; this is why ABSA 39-45 and Air Memorial heartily thank Monsieur **Alban Moquet, the Mayor of Monterblanc** and his team, especially Madame **Le Corre**, Madame **Quellenec** from the media library, Madame **Tanguy**, deputy mayor, Monsieur **Larcin**, delegate counsellor and Monsieur **Le Hé** and his technical team.



The collage includes several newspaper clippings:

- Journal Le Télégramme**, 12 juillet 2022: "À Monterblanc, trois moteurs d'avions tout l'été à la médiathèque".
- Ouest-France**, 15/07/2022: "Monterblanc. Trois moteurs d'avions de la Seconde Guerre mondiale exposés à la médiathèque".
- Ouest-France**, 12/07/2022: "Monterblanc. Deux associations relatent le crash de 3 avions en 1944".

 There is also a **FlyPast** magazine article titled "Australian Twin Pioneer flies to new home" and another article titled "Excavated Messerschmitt engines on display".



Association Bretonne du Souvenir Aérien 1939-1945

Mairie de Châteaubriant (44) - FRANCE

Association reconnue d'intérêt général

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New tribute to Pandora's Box in Saint Nazaire (44)

by **Benoît Paquet** (photos family Beck-Masters unless otherwise specified)

In 2018 we met Larry Smelser, the son of the B-17 pilot who crashed off Saint Nazaire on November 23rd 1942 (see newsletters #8 and #15). On September 14th and 15th 2022 we had the great pleasure to meet Robert (Bob) Beck and his wife Gwen. Bob is the nephew of the engineer and top turret gunner of Pandora's Box, Alwy G. Masters who was reported missing with all the crew members.

Historical reminder.

On November 23rd 1942, four American bombers (Boeing B-17) from 324th Bombardment Squadron and 91st Bombardment Group, take off from Bassingbourn airfield, England. B-17 Pandora's Box (s/n 41-24503), the leading aircraft, takes off at 10:56 am with two 2000 lb bombs on board. The four aircrafts join six other B-17. One of them, Memphis Bell, turns around owing to engine damages. Some time before flying over the French coast, the squadron is attacked by numerous German fighter planes (Focke-Wulf Fw 190). The attack intensifies and several damaged planes have to turn back. Only five planes including our Pandora's Box get close. Roughly 15 km from Saint-Nazaire they are attacked again, which prevents them from bombing the submarine base. They cluster for protection and head for England. Above the sea

Pandora's Box drops its bombs. 1st Lt Nathan Corman, onboard B-17 # 41-24506 spots Pandora's Box with its two damaged engines (# 1 and # 3). Onboard the latter, Major Smelser asks 1st Lt Corman to fly on and get back on his own. There are several explanations as to the crash location between Saint Nazaire and Brest ; it is likely that it occurred around 30 miles North West of Saint Nazaire. The plane was « awarded » to the German fighter pilot Egon Mayer onboard his Focke-Wulf Fw 190 from Jagdgeschwader 2, based in Vannes-Meucon. The eleven crew members are reported missing.

Alvy G.Masters, The Pandora's Box Sioux

Alvy Gillette Masters (**photo**) was born on October 5th 1919 in Culbertson, Montana (formerly Sheridan County, nowadays Roosevelt County) in the heart of the Indian reservation in Fort Peck. Alvy was a member of the Sioux tribe. Several years later his family settled in Medicine Lake, 25 miles further North.



Un B-17 du 91st Bomb Group à Bassingbourn.
Photo Roger Freeman Collection © [www.fre716](http://www.fre716.com)

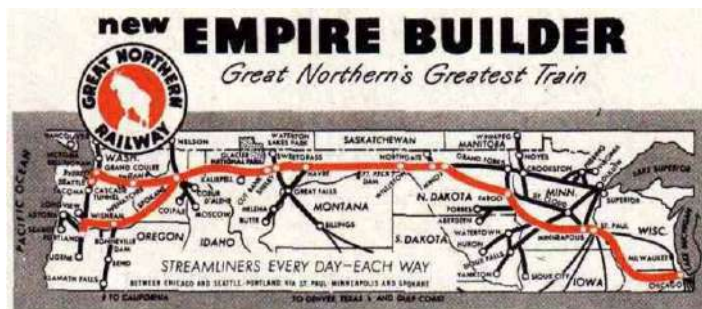
New tribute to Pandora's Box in Saint Nazaire (44)

by Benoît Paquet (photos family Beck-Masters unless otherwise specified)



Alvy and his sister Wilma, in front of their house in Medicine Lake

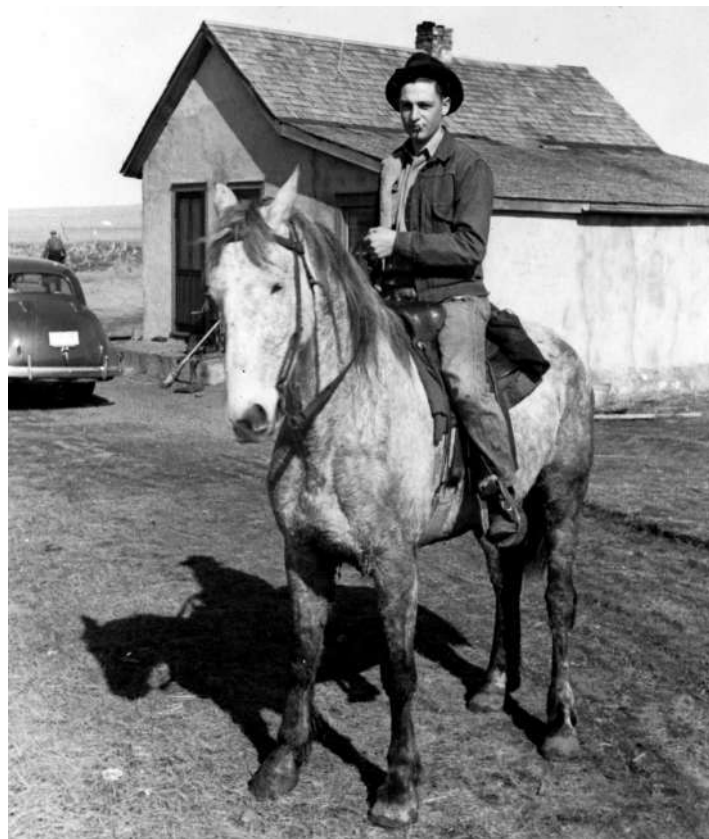
Alvy joined the USAAF (service number 39603073) and was assigned to Mac Dill base in Florida ; he graduated as a Technical Sergeant, a promotion signed by Colonel Wray, Commanding Officer of 91st BG. He was then transferred to Walla Walla base (Washington State). He travelled by train and stopped over at Culbertson to see his family. From Saint Paul to Walla Walla, Alvy seems to have taken the Empire Builder, a train from the Great Northern Railway, a station being located seven blocks away from his family's house in Culbertson .



The route used by the Empire Builder, the train from Great Northern Railway Company. It is likely that Alvy took the southern route after Spokane and stopped over at Wishram to get to Walla Walla.



Alvy in Culbertson as he was being transferred to Walla Walla. He's wearing his new Sergeant's stripes. He is with his mother, Bernice. His younger brother Gordon, who is still alive, is standing before him. Donald and John Beck, Robert's brothers, are sitting on the ground.



Alvy on horseback outside the farm in Medicine Lake .

New tribute to Pandora's Box in Saint Nazaire (44)

by **Benoît Paquet** (photos family Beck-Masters unless otherwise specified)

Bob Beck pays tribute to his uncle Alvy.

On September 14th and 15th we had the great pleasure to meet Gwen and Bob Beck in Saint Nazaire to pay tribute to Bob's uncle, Alvy G. Masters. Madame Lydie Mahé, deputy mayor and vice president of Saint Nazaire agglomeration, in charge of Military matters and Commemorations, attended this eventful day. Gwen and Bob's visit had been reported by the regional newspaper, Ouest-France, which allowed a number of people to join us, especially during the ceremony at the Sammy at 10 a.m on September 14th. After the ceremony we proceeded to visit, on

that special WWII day, the stele that commemorates the British Commando Unit that attacked the maritime district on March 28th 1942 in Saint Nazaire, then the famous submarine base and we finished our visit by the « Ecomusée » of Saint-Nazaire ; it is worth mentioning that there was a display on the occupation of Saint Nazaire as well as one on the development of ... aviation !



Daniel Dahiot , Honorary President of ABSA 39-45 , Bob Beck and Lydie Mahé, Deputy mayor, are about to lay a wreath at the base of the Sammy, the monument that commemorates the arrival of American troops in Saint Nazaire in 1917 . Photo © ABSA 39-45



Benoît, Bob and Gwen in front of Operation Chariot. Photo © ABSA 39-45



Facing the Sammy, from left to right : Lydie Mahé, Deputy mayor of Saint Nazaire, Bob and Gwen Beck, Benoît Paquet, Pierre Mahé, Daniel Dahiot (ABSA 39-45). Photo © ABSA 39-45

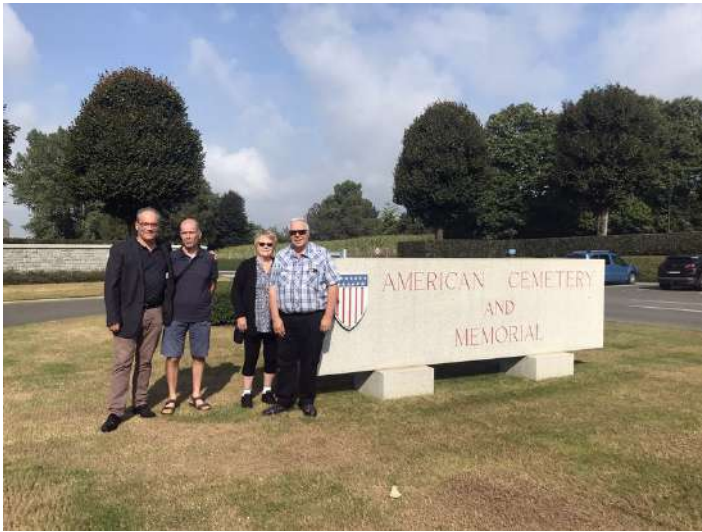


Bob and Gwen inside the submarine base. Photo © ABSA 39-45

New tribute to Pandora's Box in Saint Nazaire (44)

by **Benoît Paquet** (photos family Beck-Masters unless otherwise specified)

The day after, on September 15th 2022 we headed for the American cemetery in Saint James, in the Manche, in order to pay homage to 2 crew members from Pandora's Box whose names are surprisingly recorded on the Wall of the Missing (Joseph Medved and Fidel Hernandez), unlike the other crew members whose names are recorded on the Wall of the Missing in the American cemetery of Cambridge, England, close to the RAF Bassingbourn base where the bomber took off in 1942. Frédéric Hénoff (ABSA 39-45) and his wife Gisèle joined us on the occasion.



Benoît Paquet, Frédéric Hénoff (ABSA 39-45), Gwen and Bob Beck standing at the American cemetery of Saint-James (50).
Photo © ABSA 39-45



Bob Beck also laying a flower in front of Fidel Hernandez' name, ball turret gunner on the Pandora's Box. . Photo © ABSA 39-45

Yet, Gwen and Bob's trip didn't end at Saint James cemetery ! They went on their journey to England, to Bassingbourn RAF base from which Pandora's Box took off ; they proceeded to the American cemetery in Cambridge where they laid a wreath at the names of the crew members. The superintendent of the cemetery brought out the name of Bob's uncle, Alvy G. Masters with some sand from Omaha Beach ; this was undoubtedly a great emotional moment for Bob. Then Gwen and Bob visited the American Chapel in St Paul's Cathedral, in London where the names of the missing airmen are recorded



Bob Beck, visibly moved, is laying a flower at the foot of Joseph Medved's name, gunner in Pandora's Box ; it is recorded on the Wall of the Missing in Saint James cemetery (50).
Photo © ABSA 39-45



Bob and Gwen standing at the entrance of the RAF base in Bassingbourn.

New tribute to Pandora's Box in Saint Nazaire (44)

by **Benoît Paquet** (photos family Beck-Masters unless otherwise specified)



Alvy G. Masters' name engraved on the Wall of the Missing in the American cemetery of Cambridge, brought forth by the Superintendent of the cemetery with the help of some sand from Omaha Beach .



Alvy G. Masters' name is recorded in the missing American airmen book (page 279) in the American Chapel of St Paul's Cathedral, in London.



Bob Beck à la Chapelle américaine de la Cathédrale Saint-Paul à Londres où sont honorés dans un registre les aviateurs disparus.



On May 12th 1945, only 3 days after the end of the war in Europe, Alvy G. Masters had his name registered on a promotion article of a rally urging Americans to raise funds to buy war bonds for the war in the Pacific.

Pandora's Box is one of the numerous B-17 missing off Saint Nazaire. Along with madame Lydie Mahé, we agreed on keeping in touch and planning a broader event with the families in order to have a larger commemoration about all the missing airmen. ■

Heritage Days 2022

By **Benoît Paquet** (photos Bunker Archéo unless otherwise stated)

The Bunker Archéo 56 association is a partner of ABSA 39-45 and also a member of our association. The activity of this association, which we presented in our previous newsletter (page 25), is to promote the heritage of the Second World War in Morbihan, in particular around the airfield of Vannes-Meucon, very rich in infrastructure. It proceeds to the inventory of the bunkers and renovates them in order to open them to the public. This is why it was just natural for Bunker Archéo 56 to exhibit during Heritage Days 2022 on **September 17 and 18, 2022**.



Many visitors discover with surprise the bunkers restored by Bunker Archéo 56 in Vannes-Meucon

As part of our partnership, Mathieu Fromage, president of this association, had the good idea and the kindness to invite us to the event to exhibit some of our aircraft parts (a Me 109 drop tank, the hub of propeller of a P-51 Mustang and the radio of Harti Schmiedel's Me 109). A great opportunity to develop our notoriety with the public in Morbihan.



The ABSA 39-45 booth at the Heritage Days in Vannes-Meucon. Photo ABSA 39-45

It was therefore under a bright and beautiful sun that Frédéric Hénoff on Saturday, and I on Sunday, were present to welcome the visitors to the Mangolerian site, near the airfield, in the town of Monterblanc (56).

Visitors had the opportunity to visit various bunkers opened for the occasion by Bunker Archéo 56, but also to attend "old-fashioned" plowing demonstrations, carried out by the Tracto-Breizh association (**photo below**), also invited by Mathieu Fromage, president of Bunker Archéo 56.



A beautiful weekend and as usual great encounters with many curious and passionate people. ■

The ceremony of November 5, 2022 in Grand-Champ (56)

By Frank Bernard, Air Mémorial and ABSA 39-45 (photos Air Mémorial unless otherwise stated)



The Air Memorial association is an association created on June 28, 2003 in Vannes airport. Its activity is to retrace the history of aviation in our region and above all the story of the Allied airmen who fought in the skies of Morbihan during World War II. The story of those who lost their lives but also those who survived.

This commemoration follows researches carried out at the end of the 1990s by 2 associations, the « Ailes Anciennes Armorique » and the « Conservatoire Aéronautique de Cornouaille », which resulted in the inauguration of a commemorative stele on November 8, 1998 in Grand-Champ with the families of the crew.

Grand-Champ (56), November, 2022.

The Air Memorial association initiated the ceremony which was held that day with the help and support of **Mr. Yves Bleunven**, Mayor of the city of Grand-Champ, Mr. Le Thierry Le Mao, President of the UNACITA of the county of Grand-Champ and Mr. Didier Roze, President of the committee of Auray-Pluvigner of the French Souvenir. A tribute was paid that day to the crew of a British Royal Air Force bomber shot down on November 8, 1942 at "Lesranigo" in the town of Grand-Champ.



Yves Bleunven, Mayor of Grand-Champ (56), and Dominique Le Meur, Deputy and Departmental Councillor, pay tribute to the crew of the Wellington BJ768 on November 5, 2022.



Frank Bernard, President of Air Memorial, lays a wreath at the foot of the commemorative stele erected in 1998 in honor of the crew of the Wellington BJ768.

As a preamble.

779 airmen from the Royal Air Force and air forces from Commonwealth countries are buried in Brittany. Among these, three Britons and two Australians rest in the cemetery of Boismoreau in Vannes. This crew is the crew of the bomber Vickers Wellington BJ768 shot

The ceremony of November 5, 2022 in Grand-Champ (56)

By Frank Bernard, Air Mémorial and ABSA 39-45 (photos Air Mémorial unless otherwise stated)

down at Grand-Champ on the evening of November 8, 1942. These airmen belong to No 142 Squadron of Bomber Command, the bombing force of the Royal Air Force. Out of more than 100,000 aircrew, who served in this air force, about 55% were killed. This is the highest loss rate of the Allied armies.



Bomber Vickers Wellington QT-M of No 142 Sqn RAF

The events of November 8, 1942.

Mathurin Le Talour was 17 years old in 1942. Accompanied by his brothers Jean and Joachim, he returned this Sunday evening from the neighboring village of Coulac and joined his parents' home in "Lesranigo" in the town of Grand-Champ. Along the way, they suddenly distinguish searchlights sweeping the sky and accompanied by intense fire from the Flak, the anti-aircraft defense. The family farm was very close to the Vannes-Meucon airfield.

Suddenly a huge explosion occurred, then an intense blaze ignited a meadow belonging to the family, located only a few hundred meters from their house. A plane has just crashed. The neighbors soon joined them, then the gendarmes and the German soldiers. The latter quickly started looking for possible survivors and searched the farm from top to bottom. The next day, 2 craters caused by the engines of the plane were visible, as for the wreckage, it continued to burn for 2 or 3 days.

The crew of the Wellington consisted of the pilot, Sergeant Ronald Granville Evison, 21, the navigator, Pilot Officer Douglas James Bradshaw, 30, the bombardier, Sergeant Cyril Sydney Herbert Hill, 20, all 3 of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. But also radio operator, Flight Sergeant Claude Bernard Sautelle, 28, and finally gunner Flight Sergeant Kenneth Gard Pearce, 25, both from the Royal Australian Air Force



Sergeant Ronald Granville Evison, 21 (pilot)



Pilot Officer Douglas James Bradshaw, 30 (navigator)



Sergeant Cyril Sydney Herbert Hill, 20 (bombardier)



Flight Sergeant Claude Bernard Sautelle, 28 (radio)



Flight Sergeant Kenneth Gard Pearce, 25 (gunner)

Photos of the crew - coll. ABSA 39-45

These men carried out their first war operation aboard the Wellington on the night of November 6 to 7, 1942, it was a mine-dropping mission between St Nazaire and the Frisian Islands. The bomber took off from RAF Waltham air base in Lincolnshire but returned to land shortly after without having been able to drop its mines, the target not having been located.

On the night of November 8 to 9, 1942, 10 Bomber Command aircrafts took off for a new mine-dropping mission in the Bay of Biscay. Ronald Evison's aircraft takes off at 5:41 p.m., this is the crew's second mission. For the crew, this second mission came to a tragic ending above the town of Grand-Champ, shot down by the gunners of Meucon.

The ceremony of November 5, 2022 in Grand-Champ (56)

By Frank Bernard, Air Mémorial and ABSA 39-45 (photos Air Mémorial unless otherwise stated)

The Germans decided to bury the crew in Vannes on November 11, 1942. Several hundred people went there to pay tribute to airmen on this symbolic day of commemoration for the French people.

The occupying German forces then decided to postpone the burial to the following day. To avoid any disturbance to public order, the Germans made the surroundings of the cemetery not accessible to the population. On January 3, 1943 the BBC thanked the people of Vannes for their expressions of sympathy.

July 1989.

In the summer of 1989, with the authorization of Jean-Paul Le Talour, son of Mathurin, an excavation campaign was carried out on the crash site. The bomber's two propeller shafts were extracted from the ground.



Excavation of a propeller shaft in Lesranigo in July 1989



One of the Wellington BJ768 propeller shaft.

56 years later, Sunday November 8, 1998.

On November 8, 1998, family members of Sergeant Evison and Pilot Officer Bradshaw go in the morning to the graves of the crew in Vannes. They are Mrs. Pamela Wood, sister of the pilot, Mrs. Mary Bradshaw widow of the navigator, his son John and his wife Olga. Then at 11:30 a.m., in Grand-Champ, at the end of the mass, Mrs Bradshaw unveil the plate with the name of the five airmen in presence of Mr Celestin Blévin, Mayor of the city as well as family members.



Pamela Wood, sister of the pilot and Marie Bradshaw, widow of the navigator at Grand-Champ on November 8, 1998.

In 2000, the Australians

The relatives of Sergeant Kenneth Pearce, one of the 2 Australian airmen, went to Grand-Champ : David Pearce his brother, accompanied by family members. On 1st March, after having gathered at the cemetery, a visit to "Lesranigo" was organized followed by a wreath laying at the foot of the monument in the presence of the Mayor Mr. Célestin Blévin. ■



David Pearce, brother of the Australian aviator Kenneth Pearce, with Mr Célestin Blévin, Mayor - March 1, 2000.

A day of tribute at Nivillac (Morbihan, Brittany)

By **Benoît Paquet**

We had the opportunity to present you in our newsletters n°14 to 17 the unusual and tragic journey of the French airmen Joseph Rollier and René Détrait, who fell at Izernac (Morbihan) on September 22, 1944. On November 11, we had the opportunity to experience an exceptional and unique moment in the presence of the families of these two airmen.

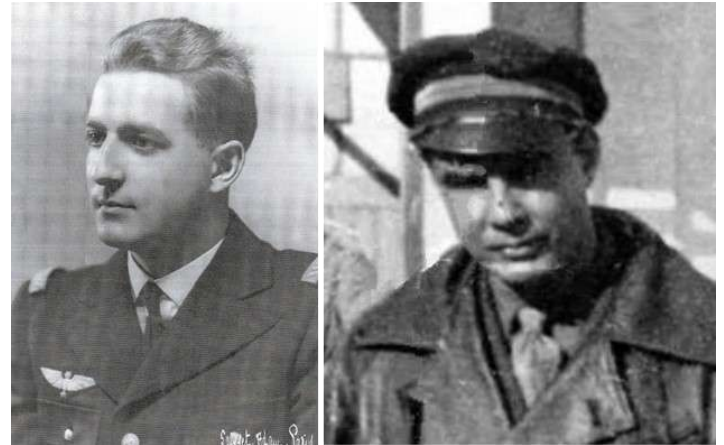
September 22, 1944

While the Allied forces had begun the liberation of Europe, and were moving into Holland towards Germany (Operation Market Garden), the main French ports were still occupied. The Germans had entrenched themselves in the famous 'pockets of the Atlantic', including that of Saint-Nazaire, surrounded by French resistance and American units. The air support of these units in the field was then provided, among others, by the 'Groupe de Chasse et de Bombardement 1/18 Vendée'.



A German in front of the "Sammy" in Saint-Nazaire
Photo © Benoît Paquet collection - ABSA 39-45

It was therefore precisely on September 22, 1944 that took off from the airfield of Vannes-Meucon, early in the afternoon, Captain **Joseph Rollier**, pilot, and Second Lieutenant **René Détrait**, observer and gunner, aged 31 and 30 respectively, both airmen within the Vendée group. They take off aboard an American aircraft, the Douglas A-24. Their mission : to recognize and, if possible to attack a German command post in the Roche-Bernard region. Around 4 p.m., they spotted German soldiers on the road, at Izernac, near Nivillac. Our two airmen then perform a strafing pass at very low altitude. But Joseph Rollier, the pilot, was hit in the head by return fire from the ground. Mortally injured, he was unable to recover the plane, which struck a power line and crashed nearby.



Joseph Rollier

René Détrait

Photos Mrs Duval (Souvenir Français of Morbihan) and Détrait family

Joseph Rollier is killed, and René Détrait is seriously injured. Joseph Rollier was buried initially in Nivillac, then after the war in the national necropolis of Saint Anne d'Auray. A large crowd attended his funeral and the Germans paid him military honors by firing a salvo. As for René Détrait, his left leg probably fractured by his machine gun, he was taken first to the Pontchâteau hospital, then to the Marine-Lazarett in La Baule. He was repatriated to the French lines at the end of November 1944 as part of an exchange of prisoners organized by the International Red Cross



A Douglas A-24 of the GCB 1/18 Vendée Artwork © Jean-Marie Guillou

November 11, 2022

On November 11, 2022, France commemorates the anniversary of the Armistice signed on November 11, 1918 but also pays tribute to all soldiers who died for France. At the initiative of the 'Nivillac Histoire et Patrimoine' association and its young and dynamic president, Julien Chesnin, and in collaboration with the **ABSA 39-45**, ONACVG and the 'Souvenir Français', a special day of commemoration was organized in presence of no less than 26 descendants of the families of our two airmen

A day of tribute at Nivillac (Morbihan, Brittany)

By Benoît Paquet

9:30 am, at the commemorative stele of Izernac

In the presence of the families, the Deputy of Morbihan Paul Molac, the mayors of Nivillac Guy David, and La Roche Bernard, Bruno Le Borgne, the representatives of the various army corps, the flag holders and about sixty other people, a moving tribute was paid to the two airmen.

First of all, some speeches by Julien Chesnin, Guy David and myself allowed us to remember the tragic event of September 22, 1944.



Julien Chesnin ('Nivillac Histoire et Patrimoine') and Benoît Paquet (ABSA 39-45) commemorate the crash of September 22, 1944.
Photos © Détrait family

Then the mayor of Nivillac created a surprise by offering the medal of the city to the representatives of the two families, **Jean Rollier**, son of the pilot, and **Marthe-Elisabeth Détrait-Eladari**, daughter of the gunner. On this occasion, the latter made poignant speeches of thanks and testimony.



Guy David, mayor of Nivillac, offers the medal of the city to Jean Rollier and Marthe-Elisabeth Détrait-Eladari in presence of their families. Photo © Benoît Paquet - ABSA 39-45

Then we attended the traditional laying of wreaths, including the wreath from ABSA 39-45 laid by an inter-generational quartet made up of **Daniel Dahiot**, honorary president of the association, **Pierre Mahé**, historical member, but also **Gaspard Rollier** and **Alice Détrait**, great-grandchildren of the two airmen.



Gaspard Rollier, great-grandson of pilot Joseph Rollier, Pierre Mahé and Daniel Dahiot (ABSA 39-45) and Alice Détrait, great-granddaughter of gunner René Détrait, lay a wreath at the foot of the commemorative stele of September 22, 1944.
Photo © Benoît Paquet - ABSA 39-45

The ceremony ended with a vibrant Marseillaise sung a cappella by the participants. We then returned to Nivillac to warm up at the village cafe with a few hot drinks.



A lot of members of the ABSA 39-45 team was present to pay tribute to the airmen, here in front of the very flowery stele. From left to right : Pierre Mahé, Dominique Renaud, Daniel Dahiot, Benoît Paquet, Frédéric Hénoff, Dominique Godde and Mathieu Fromage. Photo © Benoît Paquet - ABSA 39-45

A day of tribute at Nivillac (Morbihan, Brittany)

By Benoît Paquet



The children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of airmen Détrait and Rollier, with Frédéric Hénoff, Julien Chesnin and Benoît Paquet, kneeling in front of the stele. Photo © Benoît Paquet - ABSA 39-45

11:00 am, November 11 ceremony

Around 11 a.m., a large crowd, including the Rollier and Détrait families, gathered in front of the town hall of Nivillac and began a procession behind the flag holders towards the war memorial of the town. A tribute was paid there by the mayor of Nivillac and the patriotic associations with a strong moment dedicated to Brigadier Eric Marot, in the presence of his family ; Aged 21, this young soldier was killed on September 8, 1992 in Sarajevo, aboard a vehicle at in a humanitarian convoy.



The ceremony of homage to the dead of all wars in front of the church of Nivillac. Photo © Benoît Paquet - ABSA 39-45

The ceremony was followed by a 'friendship drink' at the Cultural Center 'Le Forum de Nivillac', which was an opportunity to discover the exhibition "The wings of Victory" proposed by the ONACVG as well as the various posters of ABSA 39-45, including one devoted to the airmen Rollier and Détrait.



Camille Détrait, son of machine gunner René Détrait and his son Bernard in front of the poster dedicated to the crash of Izernac (September 22, 1944), at the exhibition « The wings of victory » at the 'Forum de Nivillac'. Photo © Benoît Paquet - ABSA 39-45

A day of tribute at Nivillac (Morbihan, Brittany)

By **Benoît Paquet**

12:30 p.m., a moment of conviviality !

Invited by the city of Nivillac, the families and associations who participated in the tribute ceremonies were invited to a pleasant lunch in a restaurant privatized for the occasion. It was an opportunity for warm exchanges between the various guests.

3:30 pm, conference by the ABSA 39-45



Frédéric Hénoff and Benoit Paquet present the story of the airmen Rollier and Détrait in front of a hundred people in the auditorium of the 'Forum de Nivillac'.

Photo © Guillaume Détrait and Benoit Paquet - ABSA 39-45

To close this day dedicated to the duty of memory, a conference was organized in the sumptuous auditorium of the 'Forum de Nivillac'. Frédéric Hénoff and me had the pleasure of presenting with more details the creation of the pockets of the Atlantic, the story of the 'Groupement Patrie' in which was the GCB 1/18 Vendée, and of course the drama of September 22, 1944 in Izernac. We would like to insist on the tremendous research work carried out over several months by Frédéric Hénoff, in collaboration with the families ; the result of his work was essential to know with more details the history of this air group and the two airmen Rollier and Détrait.

The conference ended with testimonials from **Jean Rollier**, son of the pilot, and **Guillaume Détrait**, grandson of the gunner, to whom ABSA 39-45 had the pleasure to offer a framed profile of a Douglas A-24, drawn by our friend and Breton illustrator, Jean-Marie Guillou, as well as a copy of the book « Vannes-Meucon - The airfield under occupation - 39-45 » offered by Mathieu Fromage, president of the Bunker Archéo 56 association and member of ABSA 39-45.



Guillaume Détrait, grandson of machine gunner René Détrait, gives his testimony after Jean Rollier (on the right), son of pilot Joseph Rollier, under the benevolent eye of Frédéric Hénoff.

Photo © Benoit Paquet - ABSA 39-45

To mark this day, members of the Détrait and Rollier families signed the poster dedicated to their ancestors before leaving (**photo ►**).



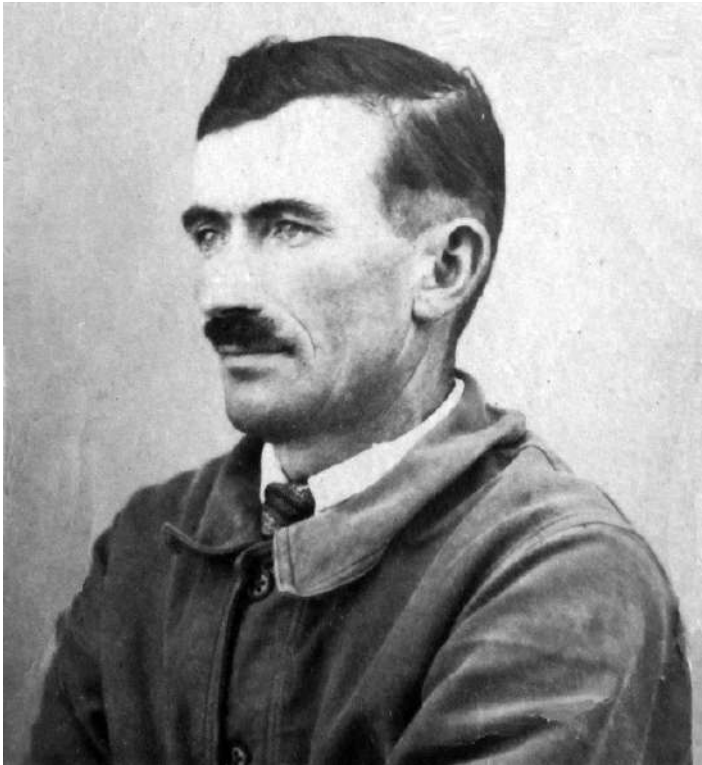
I cannot end this article without thanking all those who made this magnificent day a success, because I know that it is the result of a lot of preparatory work :

- **Julien Chesnin**, president of 'Nivillac Histoire et Patrimoine'
- The associations **ONACVG** and the **Souvenir Français**
- **Guy David**, Mayor of Nivillac
- **Frédéric Hénoff**, member of ABSA 39-45
- and of course **all the family members of the two airmen** and especially **Jean Rollier, Pauline Vacher-Détrait** and **Guillaume Détrait**. ■

November 11, 2022 in Plélo (22) : tribute to Eugène Moulin

By Jimmy Tual (photos Jimmy Tual)

In 2014, I began an investigation regarding the disappearance of Eugène Moulin, a farmer living in La Haie in Saint-Vran, between Merdrignac and Collinée.



Eugène Moulin

May 21, 1944 in Laurenan (Côtes du Nord, Brittany)

Eugène Moulin's drama is linked to the story of Czechoslovak airman Robert Ossendorf, nicknamed Bob. On May 21, 1944, Bob made an emergency landing in Laurenan. Despite the risks, he was hidden by Simone and Francis Poilvert, at Beaujaune in Saint-Jacut-du-Mené. On June 20, he left with a group of armed resistance fighters. They spent the night in the courtyard of Eugène Moulin's farm. Aware of the risks of reprisals, Eugene reproaches them for their lack of discretion. Bob was then taken to Moncontour and then to the Bréfeillac manor of Lucienne Péan de Ponfily in Pommeret. He was finally transferred to Plouha and evacuated on the night of July 12 to 13, 1944 by the Shelburn network (operation Crozier 1).

Meanwhile, repression fell on the Moulin family. On June 29, Eugene was arrested at home by the Sipo-SD of Saint-Brieuc (the "Gestapo") who accused him of not having reported the passage of armed men. He said to his daughter Suzanne : "Don't cry, I haven't done anything, tomorrow I'll be there". The farm was looted and burned. Eugène Moulin was taken to Saint-Brieuc jail. The German authorities stated that they transferred him to Rennes on July 10, 1944, but in fact,



Robert Ossendorf, nicknamed « Bob », in the cockpit of his Spitfire.

he disappeared. The investigation opened at that time concluded that he was taken out of prison with the 17 men found massacred in the wood of Malau-nay in Ploumagoar. He was recognized 'Death for France' but his body was not found. For the Moulin family, it was the beginning of long years of questioning. I had been able to discuss this drama several times with his daughter Suzanne, who unfortunately died in the summer of 2022.

The truth about the disappearance of Eugène Moulin

The answer will finally come in October 2015 following the consultation of a report from the Châtelaudren gendarmerie written on July 9, 1944. On that day, a Gestapo car stopped at the entrance of Beauchamp woods in Plélo and an unidentified man was executed. The gendarmes were notified and took a photograph of the victim.

Multiple concordant elements allowed the reopening of the judicial inquiry which led in December 2017 to the establishment of a historical fact : Eugène Moulin was executed on July 9, 1944 in Plélo. This investigation was made possible thanks to the support of the Association of Friends of the Foundation for the Memory of Deportation (AFMD 22), represented by Éliane-Claire Poulmarc'h and thanks to the research of the Association (ABSA 39-45) carried out in particular by Jean-Michel Martin.

The tribute of November 11, 2022

The question then arose of a possible inscription of the name of Eugène Moulin in Plélo. Jean Gauffeny, head of the Veterans Affairs of Plélo, was of great help, thanks to his commitments for the memory. The Covid-19 pandemic however, slowed the progress of the

November 11, 2022 in Plélo (22) : tribute to Eugène Moulin

By Jimmy Tual (photos Jimmy Tual)



The photo of Eugène Moulin, killed by the Gestapo on July 9, 1944, taken by the French gendarmes.

project. Contacts started again in the spring of 2022 and the city of Plélo proposed to add the name of Eugène Moulin on the War Memorial in Plélo during the ceremony of November 11, 2022.



The name of Eugène Moulin is added to the 1939-1945 stele at Plélo (Côtes d'Armor, Brittany).

This event was planned in connection with the members of his family and in particular his grandchildren Michèle and Rémy. In 2016, I had also found Robert Ossendorf's family contact through his great-grandson Jan. The latter had repeatedly expressed the wish to come in our region in the footsteps of Robert Ossendorf. Informed of the November 11 ceremony, he decided to come by car with his mother Daniela, especially from the Czech Republic. Éliane-Claire Poulmarc'h for AFMD 22 and Jean-Michel Martin for ABSA 39-45 were of course also present.

It was therefore a very emotional ceremony that took place in Plélo. After the reading of the ministerial message by Mayor Jérémy Meuro, I read a text summarizing the investigation regarding the disappearance of Eugène Moulin. Rémy Moulin then gave a dignified and moving speech on behalf of the Moulin family. Daniela and Jan were very surprised and moved by such an attachment to the memory



from left to right : Évelyne Gaspailard (mayor of Saint-Vran), Michèle and Rémy (grandchildren of Eugène Moulin), Jean Michel Martin (ABSA 39-45), Jan et Daniela (great grandson and granddaughter of Robert Ossendorf), Jimmy Tual (AFMD 22 and ABSA 39-45), Éliane-Claire Poulmarc'h (AFMD 22), Jérémy Meuro (mayor of Plélo).

brought by all these people. The municipality then invited us to the friendship drink and to a meal animated by the musicians Cécile and Dominique Moisan. At the end of the afternoon, **Jean-Michel Martin** and I gave a tour of the Plage Bonaparte area to **Daniela** and **Jan** (photo ▼).



We thank the municipal councilor Marie Bayle who stayed with us all day long to facilitate the exchanges in English with Jan who then translated to her mother in the Czech language.

How to describe these moments ? We were back in 1944 when Robert Ossendorf, wounded and operated in Pommeret, had to come down from the cliff to successfully evacuate our region... Daniela and Jan being housed in Saint-Brieuc, we separated to regain our strength before the day of Saturday November 12.

The descendants of Robert Ossendorf in the Côtes d'Armor

By Jimmy Tual (photos Jimmy Tual)



On November 12, 2022, the day after this day of homage to Eugène Moulin, Jimmy Tual accompanied Jan, the great-grandson of Robert "Bob" Ossendorf, and his mother Daniela, in the footsteps of their ancestor during his crash in May 1944.

◀ Warrant Officer **Robert Ossendorf**,
No. 312 (Czech) Squadron RAF

Saturday morning, I accompanied Daniela and Jan (with Martine Josselin for the English translation) on the site of the emergency landing made by Bob on May 21, 1944 in the large 'Lande de Madame à Laurenan' ? We were welcomed and guided by Sébastien Pinard. He transmitted us the memories of his family and led us to the place of landing of the aircraft after a long slide on a strip of meadow.



Sébastien Pinard explains the layout of the site to Daniela and Jan.



Daniela and Jan at the landing site of their ancestor "Bob" Ossendorf, who fell on May 21, 1944

We then went to the Beaujaune farm where Francis and Simone Poilvert hid Bob from May 21 to June 20, 1944. The current owners gave us access to the renovated sites. Léon Poilvert (9 years old at that time, son of Francis and Simone) came to recall moving "memories".



Léon Poilvert with Jan and Daniela at Beaujaune.

The descendants of Robert Ossendorf in the Côtes d'Armor

By Jimmy Tual (photos Jimmy Tual)



Jimmy Tual with Jan and Daniela at the Bréfeillac manor house

The emotion was very strong for everyone when they saw that the attachment rings for the horses had been preserved. Léon and Denise Poilvert wanted to invite us to an aperitif at their home in Merdrignac (22). Jan and Daniela were once again able to benefit from French hospitality.

We finally left for Moncontour where Bob was hidden and wounded when fighting with his resistant friends. We ended our "memory tour" with the **Bréfeillac manor house** of the Péan de Ponfilly family in Pommeret where Bob stayed before being taken to Plouha.

It was already time for Jan and Daniela to go back to the Czech Republic in the middle of the afternoon. These two days have therefore been very intense and we will certainly have to meet again with a less busy schedule. Contacts are made for future reunions in Brittany or the Czech Republic ! ■



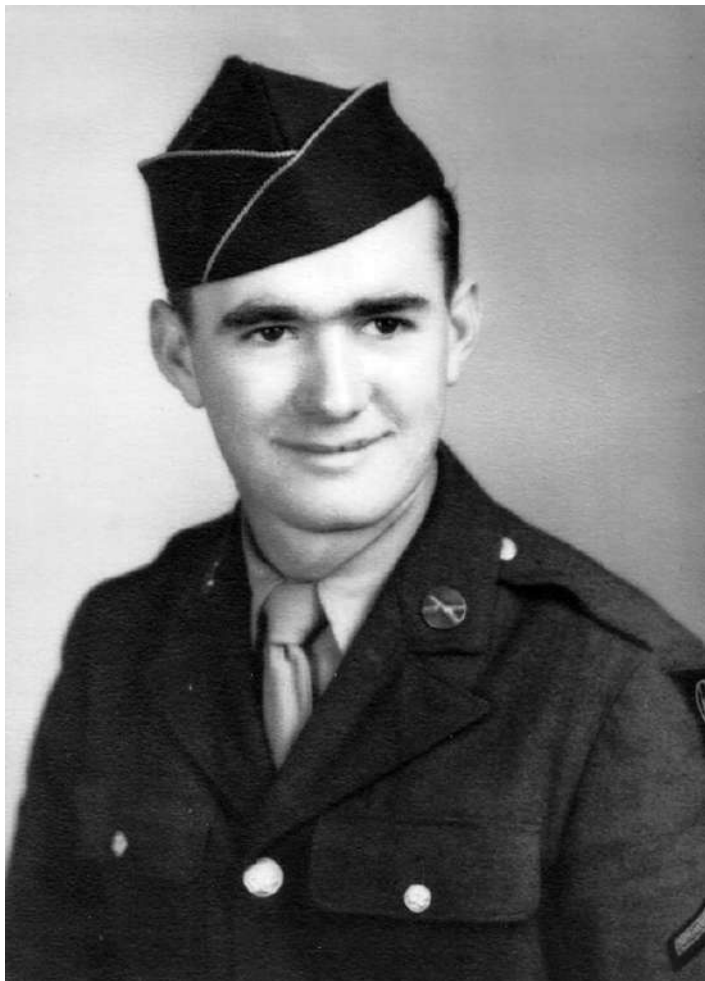
Jan and Daniela with our translator Martine Josselin at the Bréfeillac manor house.

Edward Keenan's tribute to his brother "Dunnie"

By **Benoît Paquet** (photos and documents Edward Keenan)

For once, we are going to pay tribute to an American infantry soldier. It was while working with Daniel Dahiot on the brochure devoted to B-26s accident over the English Channel that we were put in contact with Edward Keenan, an American whose brother was killed on July 8, 1944 in Normandy. To mark the 50th anniversary of the death of his brother Charles, nicknamed "Dunnie", Edward Keenan wrote a moving poem which we have decided to publish in our newsletter.

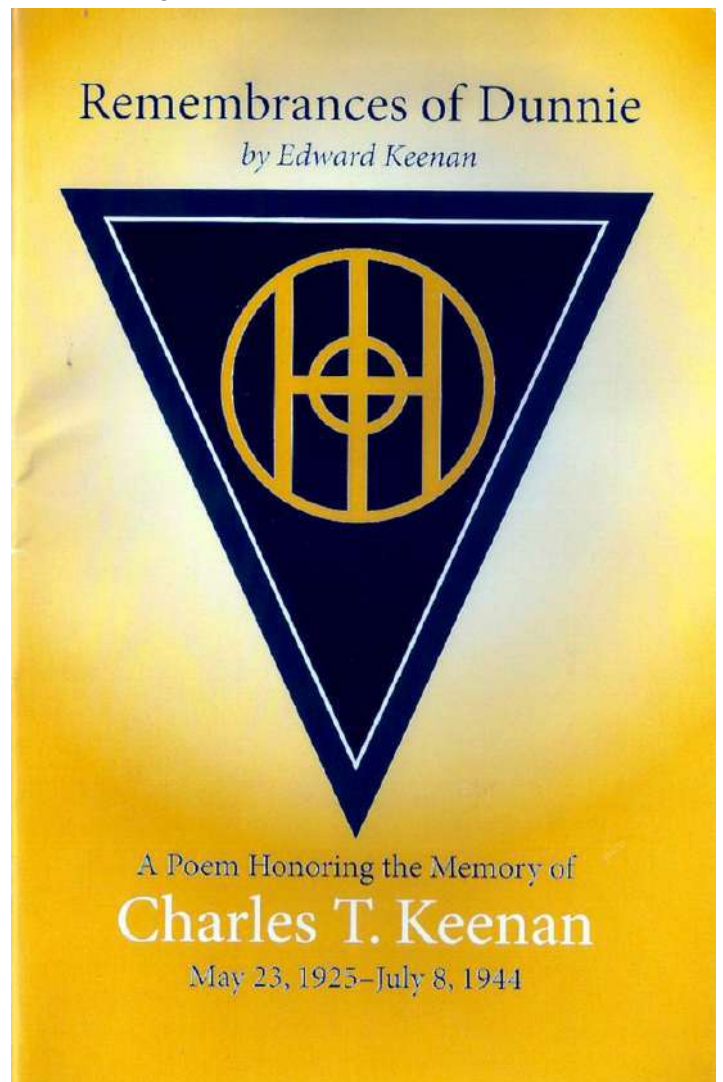
Charles T. Keenan, May 23, 1925 - July 8, 1944



Charles T. Keenan, nicknamed "Dunnie", belonged to 330th Infantry Regiment of the 83th Infantry Division, whose members were mostly from Ohio. This infantry division also had a nickname, the "Thunderbolt" division, a nickname inscribed on their crest. Edward Keenan uses this nickname in his poem.

"Dunnie" was killed at the age of 19, just 13 months after graduating from Roman Catholic High School. He is buried in the American Cemetery in Colleville in

Normandy (plot F, row 8, grave 5). On the cover of the poem, printed by Edward, we find the black triangle representing the crest of the 83th Infantry Division.



The first part of the poem is Edward's reflection on the meaning of his brother's short life, who fought for the "freedom of others" rather than entering the seminary.

The second part tells the life of "Dunnie" after high school. Edward Keenan then remembers the day - he was 8 years old - when his brother woke him up early one morning and gave him a big hug.

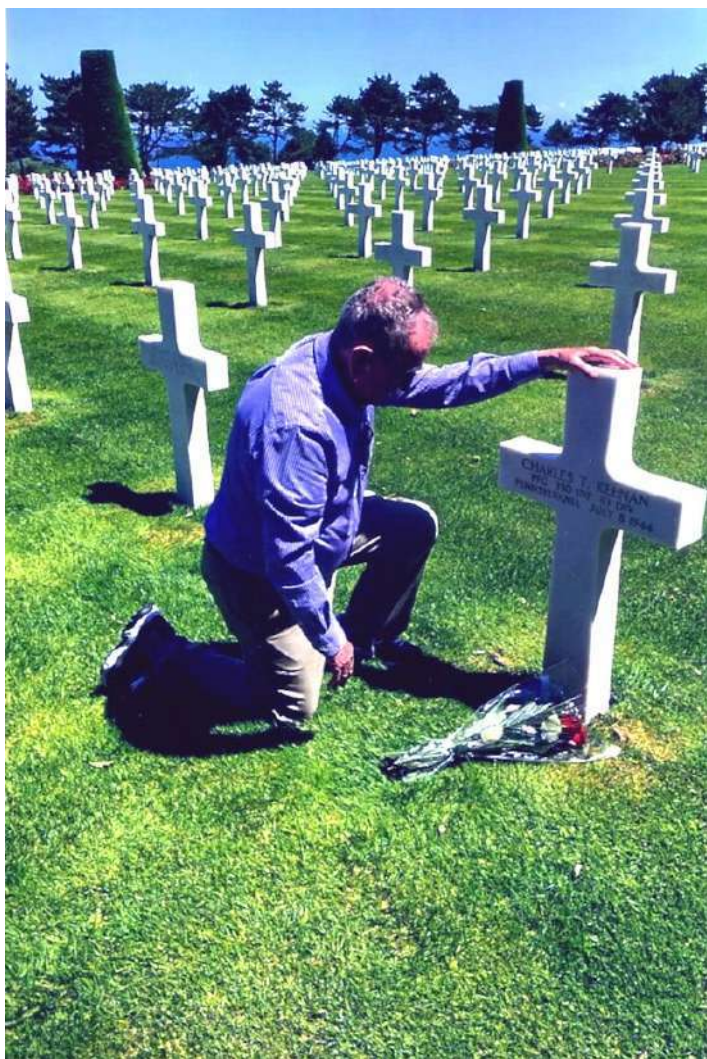
The most emotional part of the story was the day their mother received that terrible telegram at the end of July informing them of the death of "Dunnie" on July 8, 1944. On July 10, their father had sent a letter to Charles to inform him that the pastor of their St. Francis Xavier church had died...on July 8 ! Edward remembers perfectly well where he was that day : with three of his friends, he was repainting his "wagon" in red, offered by his father, which was then to be used to

Edward Keenan's tribute to his brother "Dunnie"

By **Benoît Paquet** (photos and documents Edward Keenan)

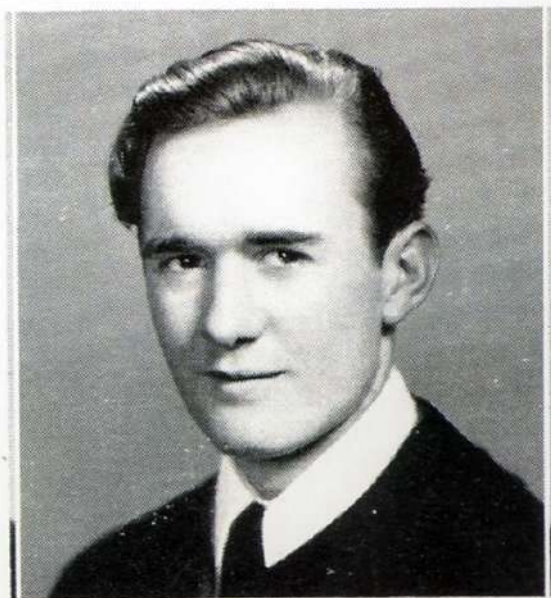
collect scrap metal to contribute to the war effort. His friend Billy's mother arrived and told Edward he had better go home ; arriving home, he saw his mother outside, crying. Under the influence of emotion, Edward Keenan no longer remembers today these few minutes of pain. He then remembers going back to tell his friends that his brother had been killed. A friend of his then suggested painting the name "Dunnie" on the side of the car, to pay tribute to his deceased brother.

The end of the poem concludes with Edward and his wife's visit to the American military cemetery in 1992. He left a small holy card that day, handwritten by his mother, to "reunite" one last time the mother and her son. This moment was too emotional for Edward and he had some difficulty breathing ; Edward and his wife feared a heart attack which luckily didn't happen.



Edward Keenan, visibly distressed, in front of his brother's grave at the American cemetery in Colleville-sur-mer.

CHARLES T. KEENAN
859 N. Stillman Street
St. Francis Xavier
General
"Chas."
Latin Club '43, Prom Com-
mittee '43.



Charles T. Keenan, in the "Yearbook" of Roman Catholic High School, from which he graduated just 13 months before he was killed on July 8, 1944 in Normandy.



Charles T. Keenan, was awarded the "Bronze Star Medal" posthumously.

Discover on the next page this poem, entitled "Remembrances of Dunnie", written by Edward Keenan in 1994. ■

Remembrances of Dinnie

After fifty Springs' low turning tides,
Only fragments of memories remain,
Visual echoes of troubled skies past,
As a family searches to recall,
From the mind's dormant files,
Remembrances of Dinnie,
A life and a line ordained :
Not to be continuous,
But be marrow for others' freedom ;
Not other sacrifice,
But be sacrifice for the common good ;
Not to live a full life,
But live faithfully
To old ideals and principals
Fostered at BSA and a school and Church
With Roman origins

In his siblings
Collective and selective recollections,
These portrait-artists
Transcendental colors
Consistently detail acts and traits
Of goodness and kindness,
Affirming the prophecy such behavior
« Will follow us all the rest of our lives. »
For Jody, the original « Oz, »
Dinnie was :
Big brother and friend,
And, occasional patron.
Whom Joe would honor
On his stenciled right arm.
For Tommy, a.k.a., « Big Oz, »
Dinnie was :
Popular, stylish and, industrious.
A three-part stamp he, too, would collect.

Both younger brothers
Saw Dinnie as « always working, »
Often operating on both sides
Of the print media's street.
At dawn, delivering inquirers ;
At dusk, capturing the market,
At 16th, for the bulletin.
For Helen, Dinnie was :
Sensitive brother,
Handsome altar boy,
And, designated guide
For arts and entertainment.
Helen knew :
The copper penny collection of Dinnie's
Three-part apron
Had three deep pockets :
Home, school and the latest « reet pleat. »

When Dinnie and classmate friends,
Like Joe and Harry,
Responded to the call of patriotic Sam,
They set aside values of their youth -
The latest moves of the jitterbug craze -
To invest everything in khaki
and blue chips of government issue,
Thus, did Dinnie - an honored chair
Of the (Prom) board
Of the « Zoot suites » of Fairmount
(Corporately headquartered
Outside Rosie's) -
Embarked on his life-long odyssey,
A terrible journey -
Terminating in Sainteny, France.

Helen recalls the day before
Dinnie's conveying began,
A final gesture -
A trip to town on a « 48, »
A first-run movie, a sanitized story,
Irving Berlin's « This is the Army. »
While the military's ultimate purpose
Would be obscured
From Helen's tender eyes
For one last day together.
After three months consuming the best
In a « consolidated mess, »
Living the good life
On « three hots and a cot. »
Dinnie's assignment was posted :
You are now a foot-soldier in a Thunderbolt
Take the B3rd express to Omaha,
That is, the beach

But France would wait
For its long-term « Liberator-guest, »
One final gratuity was due
This son of the « Swing era, »
He needed a 10-day pass,
A movable feast a morale boost,
Opportunity to fulfill a promise :
« I'll be home for Christmas, »
A whirlwind visit would ensue
That wintry morning of December of '43.
Dinnie, too, needed remembrances.
In order to :
Sustain him on swollen seas
And scarred land ; warm him
Before the expected winter frost ;
Link him with his Irish roots.

As the platform disappeared
In evening shadows the priority train,
With its precious cargo,
Accelerated away from 30th street,
A station numerically older
Than the train's passengers.
A war was awaiting - the young, of course.
With Dinnie's leave expended,
And his head at half-rest,
A scapular of new family memories
Enveloped him, comforting him.
The troop train's ETA
Was still hours away.
It's destination a port of embarkation.
Dinnie tried to settle in, unsuccessfully.
The miracle 10-day leave
Of hope and joy at BSA, ruled.

His thoughts were of family
There was :
Dad's excited shouts,
Upon Dinnie's early morning arrival,
Trying to rouse a slumbering family,
Excitement heard down
To the College wall.
Or, the shake and a hug it took,
To arouse little Eddie ;
Or the beautiful smile from Mom
When he presented her
With his soldier-portrait ;
Or, the proud determination of Jody,
« I'm next, » (To serve).

Or, the similarity of features
And interests he now saw
In an admiring Tommy.
Or, Helen's soft smile
An image, he felt,
Of her Mother's goodness.
Precious, deep sleep was long overdue
This leave-weary, and, worried
18 year-old son.
An earlier-camp letter dispatched
To a cousin about warm socks
And cold feet would belie his receipt,
Months later.
Of a Bronze Star Medal.
For now, the hard road
Was beyond this track's bed.

A late morning telegram announcing
« A Governments' regrets, »
Would pierce a mother's heart,
Her soulful cry shattering
Stillman's summer air,
For minutes and years to come.
A blue star turned gold.
One recollection of the saddest of days,
Comes from little Eddie who ran
From Billy's back yard
Toward the street's commotion.
The telegram's message
Confounded Eddie's young mind.
It wouldn't allow for
Understanding death.

Returning to the day's work -
Major reconstruction of
The little red wagon -
The Committee's furtive minds
Began to wonder.
They knew, desperately,
Eddie wanted big brother, Dinnie, alive.
The kids Committee reasoned
« If other heroes » 'live again'
On the side of aircraft carriers,
Maybe ... why not Dinnie ?
So, with renewed determination
And resolve,
This diminutive Committee of four
Returned to their serious work at hand.
The now dry red painted wagon
Would lovingly absorb
It's new immaculate inscription :
« PFC Charles T. Keenan. »

Returning to locate his Dad,
Eddie tugged on his arm
While drawing curtains of Irish-lace
Exposing the wagon below.
Regretfully, after viewing
His caring son's artistry,
The loving, but, now,
Very distraught Father
Knew, in his heart,
It was neither time nor taste
For such a display of family pride.
With mostly tears of confusion,
The young, shaken artist
Would paint over
The memorial red wagon's inscription
Using resurrection red
The color of the day
In Philadelphia and France.

At Normandy's edge
A top a rugged bluff that slopes, easily.
To the Atlantic's floor,
A visitor's periphery encompasses
French coastline
With an American Indian name,
Historic real estate now known
Forever as « Omaha Beach. »
From the bluff's overlook
As a visitor executes
A military « about face. »
He is confronted by a chilling
Sobering scene of war's aftermath.
A three-dimensional canvas is framed
In a visitor's psyche.

Symmetrically aligned rows
Of white marble reached upward
From a carpet of emerald green
As a visitor surveys
The American Cemetery at Normandy.
Beneath this solemn ground
Rest, forever, many Mothers' flowers
Who gave their all
In ransoming others' for justice's sake.
At the cemetery's entrance
A large statuette depicts
American youth arising from the waves.
For many believers,
Those resting beneath
The marble crosses arose long before
The symbol was dye-cast.

While some graves are known but to God,
One heir of the promise
Known to the Keenan's of Fairmount -
One of the 9,300 who inherited
A piece of France, in perpetuity -
Is « Dinnie » our brother
And 50 years spiritual companion
With whom, in God's own time,
We hope to be united.
« We remember, fondly, his short life,
And the glory of his spirit. »¹

The above represents my recollections as well as those of Jody, Tommy and Helen.

Ed Keenan, July 8, 1994



¹ The inscription is carved into the marble on the base of the altar in the Chapel in the Normandy-American Cemetery.

Welcome to ...

by **Benoît Paquet**

It is always with great pleasure that ABSA 39-45 welcomes new members. We already had a French member living in the United States, today, here is a new American member !

• Robert « Bob » Beck (Phoenix, Arizona, USA)

In this number 22 of our newsletter, you have read an article presenting the visit in Europe of Robert "Bob" Beck who came to pay tribute to his uncle who died in 1942 off the coast of Saint-Nazaire. In recognition of our research and support work for families, "Bob" has decided, for our greatest pleasure, to join the ABSA 39-45. **Thank you so much "Bob" !**



• Bruno Rat (Maine et Loire)

Hello,

I introduce myself. Bruno RAT, 61 years old and young retiree. I live in the small town of Saint Lambert la Potherie near Angers. I did my military service in the naval aviation base at Landivisiau in the 80s where I discovered a passion for planes and the men who fly these machines.



I practiced model making after the army for about 5 years at the Avrillé flying club at that time. For several years I have been working on the crash of a flying fortress which allowed me to meet members of ABSA 39-45 for multiple information and research techniques which proved to be successful. So I've been working since on writing a book about this story and the task is huge. I also met or spoke with passionate people who make you move in the right direction.

I also have a passion for Brittany and its musical folklore (I'm a bagpipe player) and I spent a few years during my summer holidays in a small village on the Brittany coast, Penhors, so for me being part of ABSA 39-45 was obvious.

Kenavo

Thanks to ...

• David Tye

More and more regularly, on the occasion of events, exhibitions or simply by knowing people, people donate miscellaneous objects or books to the ABSA 39-45.



When they are donated objects, we store them with our numerous parts coming from past excavations, waiting for our expected exhibition space.

When they are donations of books or documents, they enrich our already substantial collection and are available to members of our association ABSA 39-45 ;



A set of books donated by David Tye to ABSA 39-45.
Photo Frédéric Hénoff - ABSA 39-45

they can consult them for their historical research or just read them for their pleasure.

This is how recently, an English friend of Jean-Michel Martin donated us a large set of magnificent aviation books that you can see on the above photo.

Note a large number of books on the Douglas DC-3 Dakota. No doubt that David Tye is passionate about this mythical transport plane !

The ABSA 39-45 warmly thanks David Tye for this precious gift which therefore joins the already rich library of our association. ■

New books

• Vannes-Meucon

The airfield under occupation 39-45

M. Fromage, F. Nebout, F. Hénoff, J. Schmitz

The detailed history of Vannes airfield has yet to be written, and this little book published by the association Bunker Archéo 56, well known by members of ABSA 39-45, contributes to it. Written by four people, and abundantly illustrated, it recounts one of the dark pages of this aerodrome. This is the result of investigations in the field and in the archives. A local history book that will find its place in the library of any World War II aviation lover.

200 pages - format 15 cm x 21 cm, square-glued spine and soft cover. Written in french language.

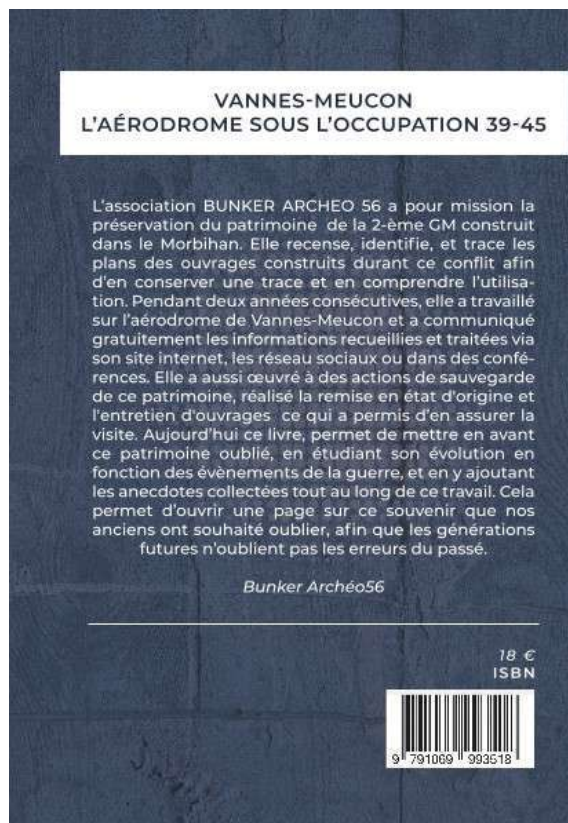
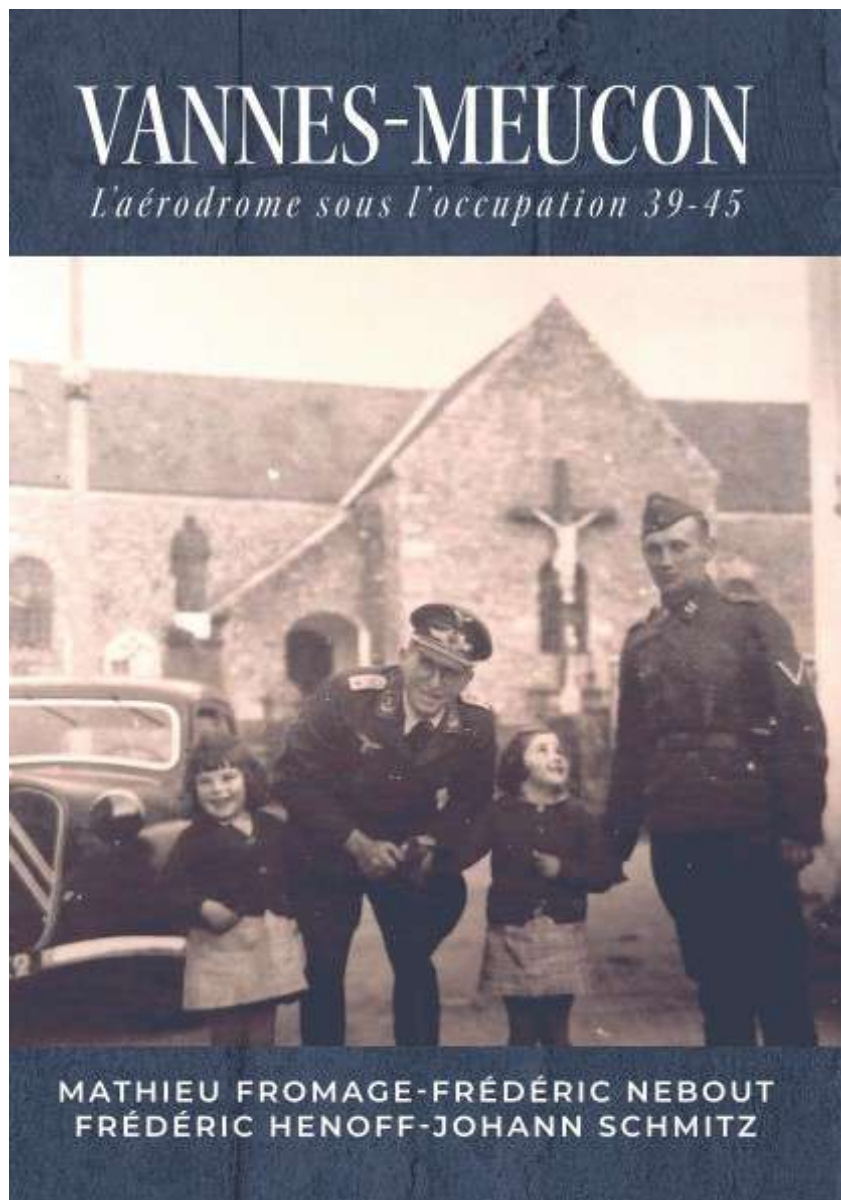
To be ordered directly from the Bunker Archéo 56 association (bunkerarcheomorbihan@gmail.com) or from Frédéric Hénoff (frederic.henoff@free.fr).

More information :

<http://www.aerostories.org/~aerobiblio/article7194.html>

Price :

- ABSA 39-45 member rate : 15 €
- non member rate : 18 €
- shipping costs (France) : 6 €
- ask for shipping costs out of France



BROCHURE " Le SUSFU—Edern, le 23/01/1943 "

32 pages, in French - Format : 21 x 29,7 cm

The last minutes of the Boeing B-17 « SUSFU » which fell in Edern (near Brest) on January 23, 1943 during a raid led by the 303rd BG on Lorient. You will discover the story of Radio Operator Sergeant Sebastian Vogel, who crossed the Channel to reach England

Price :

- ABSA 39-45 member rate : 7 €
- non-member rate : 9 €
- shipping fees (France) : 4 €



You are interested in the history of the Second World War in our region (Western France), you want to participate in our ceremonies and events, you want to contribute to our research or simply support our action, then join ABSA 39-45.

The annual subscription is 32 €.

For more information, contact Benoit Paquet
b.paquet@orange.fr - +33 (0)682 860 391

BROCHURE " Collision mortelle au dessus de la Manche entre eux Martin B-26 Marauder le 25 août 1944 "

24 pages, in French - Format : 21 x 29,7 cm

The very detailed story of the collision between two B-26 Marauders over the English Channel. These planes were returning from a bombing mission on the coastal defenses of the Crozon peninsula. Daniel Dahiot informs us about the extensive research he has carried out regarding the crew members.

Price :

- ABSA 39-45 member rate : 7 €
- non-member rate : 9 €
- shipping fees (France) : 4 €



DVD " Shelburn "

Nicolas Guillou, director of the film "The Shelburn Network", gave us some DVDs of his film available at the special rate of 10 € (+ 4 € shipping costs to France)

To order the DVD*
 « Shelburn »,
 contact Benoit Paquet
b.paquet@orange.fr
 +33 (0)682 860 391



* zone 2 (Europe)

BOOK " Porté disparu - 12 juin 1944 "

124 pages, in French - Format : 21 x 29,7 cm

The story of Lt Harti SCHMIEDEL, German pilot who fell on June 12, 1944 at « Le Rheu » (near Rennes, Brittany). The book traces his life, but also tells the story of the investigation carried out by our association as well as the arrival in France of the pilot's ex-fiancée, Margot..

Price :

- ABSA 39-45 member rate : 15 €
- non-member rate : 19 €
- shipping costs (France) : 6 €



To place an order, please contact Frédéric Hénoff :
frederic.henoff@free.fr