



November  
2024

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INFO

## Edito

Dear friends,  
Here is our newsletter at last ! Our activity has been so rich in 2024, that it took quite a long time to write it !

In this letter you will read about our news until the end of June. We are already preparing issue # 27 of our letter which will present our activity in the second half of the year, which will be just as rich.

In issue # 26 you will discover tributes to missing airmen, lectures, and many other subjects.

It is also with great emotion and sadness that we deplore the disappearance of Michel Dolcini and Janine Cerizier, to whom we dedicate this issue.

I thank the contributors to this newsletter, who are ever more numerous with each issue.

Yours sincerely

Benoit Paquet

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# The Battle of April 11, 1944 off the coast of St. Nazaire

by Pierre Babin

## Losses and claims of the antagonists

*The full story of this battle was told by Pierre Babin in issues # 648, 649 and 650 (November, December 2023 and January 2024) from the magazine "Le FANA". This story was to include - in addition - a detailed list of the losses and claims of the antagonists, but the publisher ultimately did not include these developments in his publication. For this reason, Pierre suggested that we should include them in our newsletter... We have immediately accepted taking into account the historical interest of his article. At first here are a few words to recall this battle.*

When informed about the return to its base at Saint-Nazaire of a Kriegsmarine submarine (U-255), the RAF mobilized around ten Mosquitos from No. 248 and No 151 Squadrons, including two "Tsetse" Mosquitos equipped with 57 mm Molins cannons.

On the German side, the submarine had a double escort : a maritime escort composed of five "Flak-ships" and an aerial escort composed of around ten Ju 88s from I./ZG1.

The battle, brief but furious, first took place from 9:30 am, at the mouth of the Loire estuary. Then in the afternoon, around 3:30 pm, with aircrafts from the same units (only Squadron 151 for the RAF however), the battle went on at the same place, and as fiercely : the goal was, in this second phase, for both parties, to recover the crews whose aircrafts had fallen into the sea during the morning's fighting.

On both sides, losses were significant, in terms of people and aircrafts. But, finally, the U-255 was able to return to its base, without damage. In this newsletter we list and publish the losses and the claims, real or supposed, of the opponents.



June 1944, Predannack, group photo of the crews of No. 151 RAF Squadron in front of a Mosquito of their unit ; 12 airmen in this photo took part in the battle of 11.04.1944 off the coast of Saint Nazaire : ① W/O. G.D.Kelsey, ② F/O. H.Turner, ③ F/O. M.C.Partridge, ④ F/Lt E.P.Horrex, ⑤ P/O. W.T.Hutchinson, ⑥ Capt. J.W.Bray (USAAF), ⑦ F/Lt N.L.Gibbs, ⑧ F/Lt. D.S. Handley, ⑨ W/Cdr G.H.Goodman (Commanding Officer), ⑩ S/Ldr R.H.Harrison, ⑪ F/Lt J.H.Etherton, ⑫ F/Lt F.E.Thomas.

Photo with courtesy of [www.151squadron.org.uk](http://www.151squadron.org.uk)

# The Battle of April 11, 1944 off the coast of St. Nazaire

by Pierre Babin

## Losses and claims of I./ZG1 during the morning of April 11, 1944.

Aircraft : Werknummer, Staffel number	Crew : pilot (P), observer (O), Wireless op ® with age when known	Take off time and location	Time and location of return or loss (Quadrat plan)	Fate of the crew and aircraft	Claims : hour, location (Quadrat plan)
Junkers Ju 88					
Ju 88 R-2 751 043 1./Staffel	(P) Hptm. Günther MOLTRECH, 31, Staffelkapitän 1./ZG 1 (O) Uffz. Hans GRÖTZINGER, 22 (R) Uffz. Günther DIETERMANN, 24	7:02 Lorient	crash 9:36 near the Mouth of the Loire river, Pl.Qu.14W/3887	- airmen lost at sea - aircraft destroyed	
Ju 88 R-2 750 933 1./Staffel	(P) Uffz. Hermann FORELL, 21 (O)Uffz. Hubert KUHNERT, 25 (R) Obgr. Wilhelm BEYER, 20	between 7:02 and 7:05 Lorient	crash between 9:35 and 9:40, near the mouth of the Loire river, Pl.Qu.14W/3887	- airmen lost at sea - KUHNERT' body failed on the shore, - aircraft destroyed	
Ju 88 R-2 751 046 1./Staffel	(P) Uffz. Josef HORVATH, 23 (O) Uffz. Werner HERRMANN, 23 (R) Gefr. Hans NAMHOFF, 20	7:02 Lorient	sea-landing, near the mouth of the Loire river, between 9:35 et 9:40 Pl.Qu.14W/3880	- HORVATH lost at sea - NAMHOFF et HERRMANN recovered, injured - aircraft destroyed	1 Mosquito claimed, near the mouth of the Loire river, <b>not</b> confirmed
Ju 88 R-2 1./Staffel	(P) Lt. Knud GMELIN, 22, Staffelführer 1./ZG1 (O) unknown (R) Uffz. Gerhard ZIMMERMANN	7:02 Lorient	10:12 Lorient	- crew safe - aircraft damaged	- 3 Mosquitos claimed by Lt. GMELIN (2 confirmed at 9:36 and 9:40) - 1 Mosquito by Uffz. ZIMMERMANN (confirmed at 9:37), all near the mouth of the Loire river. Pl.Qu.14W/3880

### Total losses :

- 3 Ju 88 shot down and destroyed
- 1 Ju 88 damaged
- 7 crew members killed, 2 injured

### Total claims :

- 3 Mosquitos shot down, destroyed and confirmed
- 1 Mosquito shot down claimed, not confirmed



Junkers Ju 88 C.  
Photo Bundesarchiv [Bild 101-484-2984-31A / Gehm / CC-BY-SA 3.0](#)

# The Battle of April 11, 1944 off the coast of St. Nazaire

by Pierre Babin

## Losses and claims of No. 248 Squadron RAF during the morning of 11 April 1944.

Aircraft	Crew with age when known	Take off time and location	Time and location of return or loss	Fate of the crew	Fate of the aircraft	Claims
<b>Mosquitos Mk VI</b>						
« W » LR345	W/CDR. O.J.M. BARRON (pilot), 27 F/O. R.T. WOODCRAFT (navigator), 43	7:45 Predannack	aircraft shot down between 9:36 and 9:40, near the mouth of the Loire river	crew killed	lost at sea, totally destroyed	
« Y » LR349	F/Lt. K. LIVERSIDGE (pilot), 27 SGT. L. E. NEWENS (navigator) 21	7:45 Predannack	emergency sea-landing between 9:36 and 9:40, near the mouth of the Loire river	crew safe, rescued in dinghy, captured	lost at sea, totally destroyed	
« T » LR362	F/Lt. S.G. NUNN (pilot), F/O. J.M. CARLIN (navigator)	7:45 Predannack	belly landing on return to Predannack, between 11:24 and 11:48	safe	damaged by the fight, repairable	
« Z » LM346	F/O. G.N.E. YEATES (pilot), F/O. T.C. SCOTT (navigator)	7:45 Predannack	between 11:24 and 11:48, Predannack	safe	no damage	1 Ju 88 shot down
« F » LR399	F/SGT. W.W. SCOTT (pilot), F/SGT. J. BLACKBURN (navigator)	7:45 Predannack	between 11:24 and 11:48, Predannack	safe	no damage	1 Ju 88 probable
« G » MM413	F/SGT. P. HUNT (pilot), 24 F/SGT. W.W.M. MILNE (navigator), 23	7:55 (approx.) Take off delayed at Predannack	crashed at 8:01, near Predannack, pilot error	crew killed	exploded, totally destroyed	
<b>Mosquitos Mk XVIII 'Tsetse'</b>						
« I » MM425	F/O. B.C. ROBERTS (pilot), F/SGT. P. WINSOR (navigator)	7:45 Predannack	between 11:24 and 11:48, Predannack	safe	no damage	
« L » HX903	F/O. HAMLETT (pilot), W/O. MUDD (navigator)	7:45 Predannack	8:52, anticipated return to Predannack for technical reasons	safe	motor power supply issue, without visible damage	

### Total losses :

4 airmen killed, 2 prisoners  
3 Mosquitos destroyed, 1 damaged

### Total claims :

1 Ju 88 shot down  
1 Ju 88 probably shot down

**Precision :** 4 Mosquitos from No. 248 Squadron RAF flew over the battle site in the second part of the afternoon of April 11, 1944. They did not meet any enemy aircraft, and did not spot any boats of survivors from the morning or early afternoon fights. Therefore, they returned to their base at Predannack without combat, without incident and without damage. This fact, which may seem insignificant, needs to be mentioned : the group of Mosquitos was led by Squadron Leader J. Maurice, who – under this pseudonym – was none other than the famous French Free French pilot Max Guedj, assigned to No. 248 Squadron RAF. Promoted to Wing Commander.

In December 1944, he was killed in air combat on January 15, 1945 when leading a group of 19 Mosquitos, after his aircraft was shot down by Luftwaffe Fw 190s near the Norwegian coast, while attacking an oil tanker.

Max Guedj known as « Maurice » ►  
Photo Davyan - Public domain  
(Source Wikipedia)



# The Battle of April 11, 1944 off the coast of St. Nazaire

by Pierre Babin



February 1944 : Mosquito « Tsetse » MM424 from No. 248 Squadron RAF ; The 57 mm Molins cannon can be clearly seen below the nose of the aircraft.

Photo Imperial War Museum - [reference AIP 125958](https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/object/125958)

## Losses and claims of No. 151 Squadron RAF during the morning of April 11, 1944.

Aircraft	Crew with age when known	Take off time and location	Time and location of return or loss	Fate of the crew	Fate of the aircraft	Claims
Mosquitos Mk XIII						
MM 448	W/Cdr. G.H. GOODMAN (pilot), 27 F/O .W.F.E. THOMAS (navigator)	7:55 Predannack	11:30 Portreath	Safe	no damage	1 Ju 88 shot down (*)
MM 479	F/Lt. J.H. ETHERTON (pilot) F/Lt. N.L. GIBBS (navigator)	7:55 Predannack	12:15 Portreath	Safe	no damage	1 Ju 88 damaged 1 Flak ship damaged
MM 494	F/O. H. TURNER (pilot) (Australian) F/O. M.C. PARTRIDGE (navigator) (Australian)	7:55 Predannack	12:15 Portreath	Safe	no damage	1 Ju 88 shot down (*) 1 Flak ship damaged
MM 468	F/Sgt. A. HEATH (pilot) P/O. J.B. COTTRIL (navigator)	7:50 Predannack	11:25 Portreath	Safe	no damage	1 Ju 88 damaged
HK 503	F/Lt. D.S. HANDLEY (pilot) Capt. J.W. BRAY (USAAF) (navigator)	7:55 Predannack	12:15 Predannack	Safe	no damage	1 Ju 88 shot down (*)
MM 505	P/O. H.K. KEMP (RNZAF) (pilot), 22 F/Sgt. J.R. MAIDMENT (navigator), 21	7:55 Predannack	Aircraft shot down between 9:30 and 9:40, near the mouth of the Loire river	- crew lost at sea - KEMP's body failed on the shore	totally destroyed	

(\*) one of the 3 Ju 88s considered to be "shot down" but was – probably – not

### Total losses :

- 1 Mosquito destroyed
- 2 crew members missing (deceased)

### Total claims :

- 3 Ju 88s shot down except for one
- 2 Ju 88 damaged
- 2 Flak ships damaged

# The Battle of April 11, 1944 off the coast of St. Nazaire

by Pierre Babin

## Losses and claims of I./ZG1 during the afternoon of April 11, 1944.

Aircraft : Werknummer, Staffel #	Crew : pilot (P), observator (O), wireless op. (R) with age when known	Take off time and location	Time and location of return or loss (plan Quadrat)	Fate of the crew and aircraft	Claims : hour, location (Quadrat plan)
Junkers Ju 88					
Ju 88 C-6, 750 891 2./Staffel	(P) Lt. Helmut MESSERSCHMITT, 22 (R) Uffz. Hans SCHÜSSLER, 22 (O)Uffz. Rolf STUMPF, 22	approx. 12:50 Vannes	crash between 15:35 and 15:40, near the mouth of the Loire river, Pl.Qu.14W/3887	- airmen lost at sea - aircraft destroyed	
Ju 88 C-6, 750 404 2./Staffel	(P) Uffz. Hans REICHELDMANN, 22 (O) Ofw. Willy BOLDT, 25 (R) Ogfr. Hermann WEISBROD, 21	approx. 12:50 Vannes	crash between 15:35 and 15:40, landing close to the Loire river mouth,Pl.Qu.14W/3884	- airmen lost at sea - aircraft destroyed	
Ju 88 C-6, 720 105 2./Staffel	(P) Uffz. Gerhard FRITZ, 22 (O) Uffz. Paul ULLMANN 21 (R) Uffz. Jörg ZINK	approx. 12:50 Vannes	a sudden water landing close to the Loire river mouth between 15h36 and 15h40 Pl.Qu.14W/3715	- FRITZ lost at sea - ULMANN injured and rescued - ZINK rescued safe - aircraft destroyed	
Ju 88 C-6, 720 961 3./Staffel	(P) Uffz. Fritz SPRANG, 21 (O) Uffz. Wilhelm LENGFELD, 22 (R) Uffz. Alfons HIESINGER 20	12:38 Lorient	a sudden water landing close to the Loire river mouth between 15h36 and 15h40 Pl.Qu.14W/3874	- LENGFELD lost at sea - SPRANG and HIESINGER injured and rescued - aircraft destroyed	1 Mosquito claimed at 15:36, confirmed Pl.Qu. 14W/3824 (*)
(*) During the afternoon mission of I./ZG 1, the Uffz. Fritz SPRANG claimed one victory over a Mosquito... which he shot down immediately before his Ju 88, hit by fire from another Mosquito from RAF Squadron No. 151, was forced to crash at sea.					
Ju 88 C-6, 3./Staffel	(P) Uffz. Fritz GILFERT (O) and (R) unknown	12:38 Lorient	return to Lorient probably 16:27	crew safe	1 Mosquito claimed 15:36, confirmed Pl.Qu. 14W/3824
Ju 88 C-6, 3./ Staffel, code (2N+DL) (**)	(P) Uffz. Ernst VON DER SCHMIDT (O) Uffz. Rolf. JOHENNEKEN (R) unknown	12:38 Lorient	return to Lorient 16:22 with port engine only	crew safe starboard engine damaged, out of order	1 Mosquito claimed 15:38, confirmed Pl. Qu.14W/3874
Ju 88 (prob. R-2), 2./Staffel	(P) Oblt. Albrecht BELLSTEDT, 22, < Staffelkapitän 2./ZG 1 (O) and (R) unknown	approx. 12:50 Vannes	return to Vannes approximatively 16:30	crew safe	- 1 Mosquito claimed 15:38, confirmed Pl.Qu.14W/3725 - 1 Mosquito damaged
3 of the 4 victories above, claimed by the crews of 2./ and 3./ZG 1 and confirmed at the end of the process of validating the claims for Luftwaffe airmen, are the stuff of the greatest fantasy... a practice of "overclaiming" neither honest nor rare... of which the Luftwaffe did not, however, have a monopoly... (**) The letter "L" of this registration corresponds to the belonging of this Ju 88 to the 3./Staffel of ZG 1.					

### Total losses :

4 Ju 88 shot down and destroyed  
8 crew members killed, 3 injured

### Total claims :

4 Mosquitos shot down... officially confirmed,  
but only one actually shot down and destroyed

# The Battle of April 11, 1944 off the coast of St. Nazaire

by Pierre Babin

## Losses and claims of No. 151 Squadron RAF during the afternoon of April 11, 1944.

Aircraft	Crew with age when known	Take off time and location	Time and location of return or loss	Fate of the crew	Fate of the aircraft	Claims
Mosquitos Mk XIII						
MM 446	S/Ldr. R.H. HARRISON F/O. E.P.A. HORREX	14:10 Predannack	17:00 Predannack	Safe	no damage	1 Ju 88 shot down 1 Ju 88 probable (*)
unknown	P/O. HUTCHINSON F/Sgt. PORTER	14:10 Predannack	17:10 Predannack	Safe	nos damage	
MM 475	W/O. W.G .PENMAN 22 Sgt. E.C.C. STEVENSON 22	14:10 Predannack	Aircraft shot down between 15:36 and 15:38, near the mouth of the Loire river	crew killed	Lost at sea, totally destroyed	
MM 438	F/Sgt. J. PLAYFORD 23 W/O. G.D. KELSEY 21	14:10 Predannack	17:10, emergency landing on return at Predannack	safe	destroyed : damaged and irreparable	2 Ju 88 shot down 1 Ju 88 damaged
(*) the Ju 88 considered as « probable » was – probably – shot down						

### Total losses :

- 2 Mosquitos destroyed
- 2 crew members lost (deceased)

### Total claims :

- 3 Ju 88 destroyed and confirmed
- 1 Ju 88 probable (probably shot down)
- 1 Ju 88 damaged

## Loss summary for the whole day

### RAF losses :

Aircrafts : 6 Mosquitos destroyed, 1 Mosquito damaged  
Crew members : 8 killed, 2 prisoners

### Luftwaffe losses :

Aircrafts : 7 Ju 88 destroyed, 2 Ju 88 damaged  
Crew members : 15 killed, 5 injured

To stress the importance of these losses at the end of the battle (airmen killed and aircraft totally destroyed), it should be noted that they represented, for the RAF units involved, almost a third of the number of airmen mobilized (10/34) and aircraft engaged (6/17). And for those of the Luftwaffe (excluding injured) a little less than a quarter of the number of airmen mobilized (15/66) and almost a third of the aircraft used (7/22). ■



# Exhibition at the Departmental Archives of Nantes (44)

by **Benoît Paquet** (photos by the author unless otherwise stated)



The famous [Procraft](#) project is now current to our newsletter readers.

This research program on the protection of aeronautical heritage 39-45, which ended in Prague in September 2023 (see newsletter # 25), was the source of a very beautiful exhibition entitled « **Memory of the Airs** » from April 5 to June 30, at the Departmental Archives of Loire-Atlantique. ABSA 39-45 contributed to this exhibition by providing various artefacts (from the collection of our friend Pierre Mahé) but also models, loaned by the Châteaubriant Model Club and by Pascal Gaste, a model maker from Evreux.



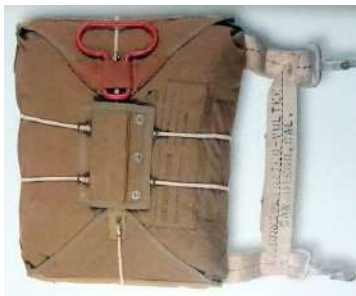
The container parachuted by the SOE on July 17, 1944 to the Resistance in Drouges (35). This rare piece was loaned by the Resistance Museum in Châteaubriant (44) where it is exhibited today.

Note in this exhibition the presence of a container parachuted on July 17, 1944 in Drouges (35) for the Resistance. This container, loaned for the occasion by the [Musée de la Résistance de Châteaubriant](#) (and the AMRC), could hold up to 160 kg of equipment.



Artefacts from the Pierre Mahé collection (ABSA 39-45) exhibited under a plexiglass canopy :

- **socks** knitted out of parachute strings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Blaine Barritt, bomb aimer aboard the B-24 Liberator "Do Jim Don" which crashed on June 12, 1944 in Langan (35). Five of the ten crew members were killed, one was captured and four were hidden by Breton civilians before being recovered by American troops. Blaine Barritt was among them.
- **Mk 8 type glasses** of a Royal Air Force pilot's found in Sainte-Mère Eglise area in Normandy.
- A **navigation compass** from the Boeing B-17 "High Ball" which fell at Muzillac (56) on June 28, 1943.
- a **rescue parachute handle** worn by American airmen during World War II.



Model of the Boeing B-17F s/n 42-5175 that fell into the sea off the coast of Goélo on February 16, 1943, made by Bernard lochum and loaned by the Châteaubriant Model Club. Next to it is the model of the Dewoitine D-520 No. 266 of Second Lieutenant Pomier-Layrargues of GC II/7, shot down and killed on June 5, 1940 in the Bray-sur-Somme area after shooting down two Messerschmitt Bf 109s (model made by Pascal Gaste, a model maker from Evreux).



Model of the Lockheed P-38J Lightning "PegO'My Heart II" which crashed on September 6, 1944 near Plérin (22). The pilot, Cyril B. Coenen, bailed out. The model was made by Claude Sidou and was loaned by the Châteaubriant Model Club. Next to it, three pieces of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's P-38 Lightning found in the Mediterranean sea.

# Exhibition at the Departmental Archives of Nantes (44)

by **Benoît Paquet** (photos by the author unless otherwise stated)

The masterpiece of the exhibition was undoubtedly the part of wing from the Supermarine Spitfire Mk VII of Warrant Officer ATKINSON who disappeared off the coast of Binic on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1944 (see our website : [link](#)).

This part of wing, found in 1988 by a fish trawler, was used for the searches carried out by the Arc'Antique Laboratory for the Procraft project.



**William James ATKINSON**

Photo © Australian War Memorial - Photo P11016.008



Benoît Paquet (ABSA 39-45) led a conference on June 4, 2024 on the theme "Aeronautical research 39-45: when archeology means human history !" at the Departmental Archives of Loire-Atlantique in front of about forty people.

Photo with courtesy of Ludovic Guiet (Archives Départementales de Loire-Atlantique)



The part of wing of the Spitfire Mk VII of Warrant Officer William James Atkinson, an Australian pilot missing in action on June 1<sup>st</sup> 1944, off the coast of Binic. This exceptional piece was used for research by the Arc'Antique Laboratory ; on the right side of the wing, we can see areas delimited by adhesive tape marking the various tests of protective products. The Arc'Antique laboratory had the good idea of presenting next to this artefact a model where the exhibited piece was symbolized in red, allowing visitors to better visualize it in the aircraft.

Furthermore, during the exhibition, a series of conferences was proposed to the public on the theme of the Second World War. Part of it was a conference that I had the honor and pleasure of hosting on June 4 on the theme " **Aeronautical research 39-45: when archaeology means human history !** " ; this was a great moment of presentation and exchanges with about forty people. I had the opportunity to present the rich and exciting activity of ABSA 39-45.



On the opening day of the exhibition "Mémoire des Airs" at the Loire-Atlantique Departmental Archives in Nantes, from left to right : Lionel Le Scornec (ABSA 39-45), Cynthia Morin, Jane Échinard and Élodie Guilminot (Arc'Antique), Jean-François Le Clerc (Aéroscope Atlantique) and Benoît Paquet (ABSA 39-45).

# Tribute to the crew of a Hampden in Pont-St-Martin (44)

by **Benoît Paquet** (photos by the author unless otherwise stated)



The "Association pour la Recherche d'Épaves Aéronautiques" organized a tribute to the crew of the Hampden Mk I AD 750 which fell at Pont-Saint-Martin on February 4, 1941. This took place near Nantes-Atlantique airport, close to the Super-Constellation of the association "Amicale du Super Constellation" in a sunny rural atmosphere.

On May 8, 2024, our association was invited to a two fold event organized by the AREA association ([Association pour la Recherche d'Épaves Aéronautiques](#)) chaired by our friend **Jérôme BATARD** at the Super-Constellation exhibition site at Nantes-Atlantique (association [Amicale du Super Constellation](#)).

A tribute was therefore paid to the crew in the presence of Peter Burton, great-nephew of the co-pilot George Harold Frederick Inniss, and his partner, Mrs Stevenson. On this occasion, Mr Yves François, mayor of Pont-Saint-Martin from 2001 to 2014, handed over a mayor's scarf and a city medal with great emotion in a gesture of recognition and gratitude.



Jérôme Batard (left) and Nicolas Roturier (holding the microphone), from AREA, pay tribute to the crew of the Hampden Mk I AD750, standing a few meters away from the Super Constellation.

During this day May 8, Jérôme and his team had decided to pay tribute to the crew of the Handley Page Hampden Mk I AD 750 which fell on February 4, 1941 at Pont-Saint-Martin (44), and to inaugurate their small museum installed in a refurbished container to exhibit the parts of the different aircrafts which fell in the sector and that the AREA association found over the years.



Yves François, former mayor of Pont-Saint-Martin, offers Peter Burton a mayor's scarf and the town's medal, in recognition of the sacrifice of his great-uncle, George Inniss, co-pilot of the plane, alongside Mrs Stevenson and Jérôme Batard.

Then all the guests had the pleasure of discovering the AREA association museum installed in a refurbished container.

# Tribute to the crew of a Hampden in Pont-St-Martin (44)

by Benoît Paquet (photos by the author unless otherwise stated)



The AREA museum, hosted in a refurbished container with doors and windows, on the site of the "Amicale du Super-Constellation" near Nantes-Atlantique airport.



Inside the container, many parts from aircrafts found by AREA over the years, including :

- The Handley Page Hampden fallen on February 4, 1941.
- The Vickers Wellington fallen on May 8, 1941.
- A Focke-Wulf Fw 190.



Handley Page Hampden engine cylinders.



Parts of a BMW 801 D-2 engine from a German FW 190 fighter.

We warmly thank the AREA and Jérôme Batard for this invitation which allowed us to make new contacts and to collect new information and photos, especially from Mr Burton. This will enable us to enrich the page dedicated to the brave crew mentioned in the Handley Page Hampden on our website.

To discover it, follow this link : [link](#). ■

The crew of the Handley Page Hampden AD750 from No. 106 Squadron RAF :

- Pilot Officer George Harold Frederick INNISS **1**
- Flying Officer William Kelman Burr THOMAS **2**
- Sergeant Frederick Arnold COLSON **3**
- Sergeant Jack Lewis FRANCO

(photos Inniss family, Christine Buteau and Jérôme Batard, Nick Archer)



# Tribute to a Fleet Air Arm pilot.

by **Frédéric Hénoff** (photos Benoît Paquet unless otherwise stated)

On May 12, 2024, off the coast of Saint-Malo a tribute at sea was paid to Lt Anthony Dennis Hawkins-King's whose Seafire sea crashed eighty years earlier. This ceremony was initiated by Frédéric Hénoff and ABSA 39-45 represented by Benoît Paquet, Olivier Brichet and Thierry Trotin, two divers who are aviation fans. It began by welcoming the members of the pilot's family, Gail Lawson (nee Culpan), Russell Anthony Culpan and his wife Deborah at the « Bas Sablons » in Saint-Malo.



From left to right : Benoît Paquet, Deborah and Anthony Culpan, Gail Lawson and Frédéric Hénoff around a photo of a model wearing the uniform of an RAF pilot, from Pierre Mahé's collection. In the background, near the Zodiac, Olivier Brichet.

After sailing for one hour, a few miles north of the island of Cézembre, Frédéric Hénoff recalled – in English – the memory of this 28-year-old young man. Then, Gail Lawson threw a wreath of flowers and Deborah Culpan threw some rose petals from her garden!



Frédéric Hénoff (left) pays tribute, in English, to Lieutenant Hawkins -King, at the place where he disappeared on May 12, 1944, off the coast of Saint-Malo.



Gail Lawson lays a wreath at sea, just where Anthony Hawkins-King fell on May 12, 1944.



The emotion is great for Anthony and Deborah Culpan, as well as for Gail Lawson when "God Save the King" rings out.

To the sound of God Save the King, all the participants gathered to conclude this tribute, which was deeply moving by its simplicity.

Watch the video of this tribute on our Youtube channel by clicking [here](#) or on the image below.



# Tribute to a Fleet Air Arm pilot.

by Frédéric Hénoff (photos Benoît Paquet unless otherwise stated)



The English family of Lieutenant Hawkins-King was moved so was the small group of French people who accompanied. They felt pride and honor. At the top left, Michel Coué carries the portrait of Lieutenant Hawkins-King. On the right, Olivier Brichet and Arnaud Coué. Below, Thierry Trotin and his son, Gabriel.

Back in Saint-Malo, all the participants met at the Saint-Jouan-des-Guérets recreation hall for a friendly drink and meal. They were welcomed by the mayor, Mrs Marie-France Ferret, as well as two of her deputies, Dominique Busnouf and Philippe Pitel. Mrs Ferret and Benoît Paquet recalled the importance of the duty of memory and the commemorations so that these young soldiers who died for our Freedom do not fall into oblivion. Thus history should not repeat itself, particularly in current troubled periods in Eastern Europe and Middle East. ■

## May 12, 1944, Lieutenant Anthony Dennis Hawkins-King disappeared off the coast of Saint-Malo.



Lieutenant Anthony Dennis Hawkins-King from No. 887 Royal Naval Air Squadron.  
Photo Hawkins-King family

From mid-April 1944, Allied air forces, including the British Fleet Air Arm (F.A.A.), were involved in preparations for the invasion of Europe. F.A.A. fighter squadrons, equipped with Seafire fighters, including the 24 Naval Fighter Wing, were stationed at R.A.F. Culmhead and carried out offensive missions over France.

These squadrons carried out nearly 400 sorties, attacking strategic targets or protecting other allied aircrafts.

On May 12, 1944, R.A.F. Hawker Typhoon fighter-bombers, protected by Supermarine Seafires, attacked German ships at Saint-Malo. The main targets were not destroyed, but damages were caused to the port infrastructure and the city, and civilian casualties were unfortunately to be deplored.

Lieutenant Anthony Dennis Hawkins-King, an experienced pilot from No. 887 Squadron, was flying Supermarine Seafire LR837 that day.

He was unfortunately shot down off the coast of Saint-Malo during this mission, his Seafire crashing into the sea.

Only son, Hawkins-King left behind his fiancée Marjorie and his mother, widowed since 1941.



# Monday May 13, 2024, tribute to John Nathan Denesha.

by **Jean-Michel Martin** (photo « Collège Lycée Saint-Charles La Providence - Saint Briuc » unless otherwise stated)



Jean-Michel Martin, from ABSA 39-45, a great specialist in « Côtes d'Armor », presents to the students of the Collège Saint-Charles in Saint-Brieuc the dramatic story of John Nathan Denesha.

On May 13, 2024, the « Association Bretonne du Souvenir Aérien 39-45 » was invited by the director of the « Collège Lycée Saint-Charles » in Saint-Brieuc. **Gilles, Ronan and Ludvine Martin**, from the 1944 Liberation American vehicle conservation group, *The Breizh Liberators*, went to Saint-Charles School. They were welcomed by **Mrs Lautier**, a teacher. In the morning, an ABSA 39-45 lecture was presented to the students in the school's auditorium. The latter paid a lot of attention to the tragedy of the death of the young American pilot, Lieutenant John Nathan DENESHA, aged 22, on June 7, 1944 in Ploufragan in the crash of his Mustang P-51 aircraft, hit by German artillery.



Le « clan Martin » auprès des enfants du collège Saint-Charles : Ludvine, Ronan, Gilles, Eugénie et Jean-Michel.

In the schoolyard, the children were also able to take a little ride in Gilles' Dodge truck. Under the the courtyard shade [it was raining], the children discovered American equipment of World War Two. The director asked whether it was possible to offer the same conference as in the morning to other students. This is how the story of this drama was presented again in the early afternoon.

Thanks to Mrs. Lautier and the Director for their warm welcome. The students came to meet and thank us. This was a great day as part of the remembrance events for the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Liberation promoted by this dynamic school. ■

## June 7, 1944, a one-way flight for John Nathan Denesha.



On June 7, 1944, 16 Mustang P-51s of the 357th F.G. took off around 12:30 p.m., led by Major John A. Storch. The mission was to fly over occupied Brittany and attack targets of opportunity. Storch organized his mission into 8 groups of two aircrafts. He flew with 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt John Nathan Denesha, who arrived on May 24, 1944 at RAF Leiston base.

When they arrived on the Breton coasts, the group dispersed. Storch and Denesha approached the town of Plancœt, northwest of Dinan. Suddenly, they were attacked by enemy fire from anti-aircraft batteries. Storch immediately shouted to his wingman to clear to the left but Lieutenant Denesha continued in a straight line. Then Storch saw a large fire on the ground in a small field. It was Denesha's aircraft that was burning. It was around 2:15 p.m. John Nathan Denesha was just 22 years old. He was born on January 21, 1922 in the state of New York, in the town of Saint Lawrence.

On June 4, 2011, a memorial service was held in his memory, attended by his sister, Kay Peggs, who traveled specially from the United States to pay tribute to her late brother.



◀ John Nathan Denesha surrounded by his two sisters, Kay and Betty.

(Photos ABSA 39-45)

In June 2011, Kay Peggs (in white alongside Jean-Michel Martin) paid tribute to her brother, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt John Nathan Denesha, killed on June 7, 1944. ▶



# The 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Coësmes (35)

by **Benoît Paquet** (photos by the author unless otherwise stated)

From May 24 to 26, 2024, as part of the commemoration of the D-Day 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the ACPG-CATM of Coësmes organized an exhibition about « The Second World War in Coësmes », in the town's Recreation Hall

In this exhibition, visitors had the opportunity to discover the stories of some of the town's inhabitants who were prisoners of war or deported, thanks to numerous documents. The collection of these documents was the result of an extensive research work carried out by Pierre Lauglé of the ACPG-CATM Coësmes.



The numerous documents collected by Pierre Lauglé presented to the visitors the individual stories of many inhabitants of Coësmes during the Second World War.

The exhibition was also the opportunity to recall the activity of resistance networks in the region. Daniel Jolys, from the « Cercle d'Histoire du Pays Martignolais », was there to present his latest book, « Oscar Buckmaster, a Resistance network in Upper Brittany ».



At the entrance to the exhibition, the ABSA 39-45 kakemonos, presenting pilots in Second World War uniforms, were welcoming the visitors !

In addition, a film was shown to present the testimonies of two residents of Coësmes who told their own memories of this dark period and the consequences of the war on their familial history.



Jean-Pierre Lebée (ACPG-CATM Coësmes) presents a video to visitors in which two residents share their memories of this dark period. The emotion is great.

As a partner of this exhibition, our association ABSA 39-45 was presenting various parts and models of aircrafts, but also and above all was recalling the history of the Martin B-26 Marauder « Miss Take » s/n 42-95821 which fell at Coësmes on July 8, 1944.



The ABSA 39-45 booth is ready to welcome the visitors !



# The 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Coësmes (35)

by **Benoît Paquet** (photos by the author unless otherwise stated)



As usual, children are curious and ask many questions about the parts on display.



Daniel Jolys and Pierre Mahé talk to visitors visibly interested in local history.



Daniel Jolys, Olivier Gruel (in front of his jeep positioned at the entrance to the exhibition), Pierre Lauglé and Jean-Pierre Lebée (ACPG CATM), Benoît Paquet and Pierre Mahé (ABSA 39-45).

Out of the eight crew members, one was captured, the rear gunner, and the other seven were able to escape, helped by the local Resistance. We had the opportunity to present the story of this crew, written by Daniel Jolys, in our newsletters # 20 ([link](#)) and 21 ([link](#)).



The B-26 Marauder « Miss Take » fallen in Cësmes on July 8, 1944.  
artwork! © Jean-Marie Guillou

As usual, this exhibition was an opportunity for the members of our association (Pierre Mahé, Dominique Renaud and myself) to promote our activity (to adults as well as to school children whose Friday was dedicated to them) as well as to make wonderful encounters.

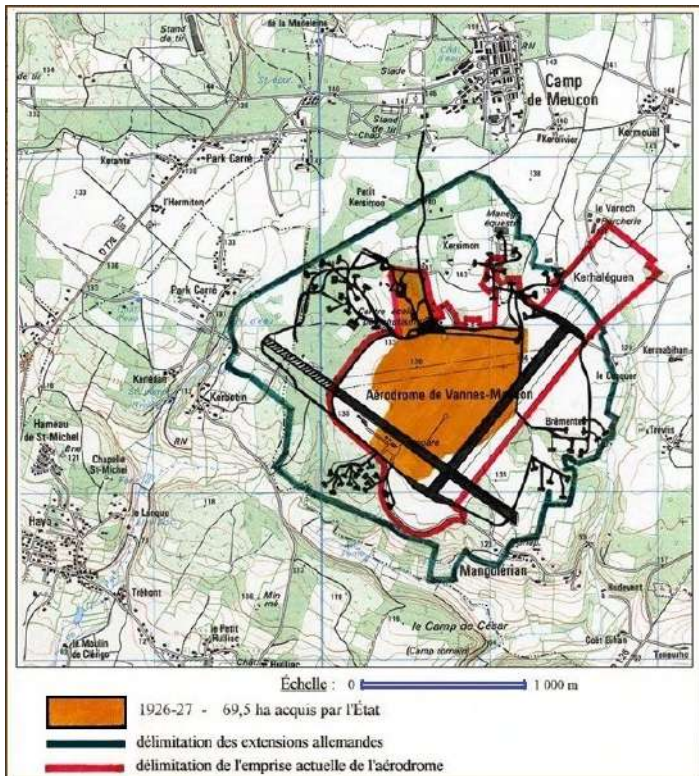
We would like to thank sincerely **Pierre Lauglé** and **Jean-Pierre Lebée**, respectively treasurer and president of the ACPG-CATM Coësmes, for having associated us with this exhibition but also for their warm welcome. ■

# History of the Vannes-Monterblanc airfield (56)

by Jacques Daniel, Association of Friends of the Safran Museum (photos and documents by the author unless otherwise stated)

Jacques Daniel is now a regular reader of our newsletter ; and when he decided to write an article on the history of Vannes airfield, it was with great pleasure that we decided to publish it.

Brittany had a lot of airfields built in the last century. Among these airfields, Vannes-Monterblanc (formerly known as Vannes-Meucon) has a special history due to its strategic role during the Second World War. Here is its history



Located 5 miles northeast of Vannes, in the commune of Monterblanc, the airfield site is a former artillery training center. In 1917, the site and its surroundings hosted a training center in artillery, captive balloon, and piloting, created for the training of American troops before their departure to the front.

The airfield became a civil airfield in 1926, and between the two wars, it hosted a flying club in 1935 and, two years later, a basic popular aviation flying school, EEP No. 27. With 10 aircraft (monoplanes and biplanes) [5 De Havilland DH-60 "Gipsy Moth", 3 Salmson D.6 "Cri-cri", 1 Caudron C-280 "Phalène" and 1 Morane-Saulnier MS-230], EEP No. 27 was part of the

35 similar schools - including four in Brittany - created from 1936 in metropolitan France and the colonies. They were part of the initial training program for non-commissioned officer pilots and enlisted men of the French Air Force. From the end of June 1940, Brittany was completely occupied by the German army. The Luftwaffe set up on these airfields and used them in particular to bomb English territory during the Battle of Britain from July 1940.

The Vannes-Meucon airfield, codenamed E 228/XII was the subject of major development work between August 1940 and July 1941, with two intersecting concrete runways measuring 1,325 m x 60 m and 1,342 m x 60 m, equipped with permanent lighting. Around them were four groups of dispersal areas in wooded areas, each created for a squadron (a total of 41 shelters for large aircraft and 21 shelters for small aircraft), construction of 36 metal hangars and numerous blockhouses. Particular care was taken with camouflage, with the painting of the runways, but also the creation of a false hedgerow. The land would occupy an area of 450 hectares.

More than fifteen air units (fighter, bomber, transport, weather reconnaissance, training and mine detection/destruction) followed one another on the ground for four years. Two squadrons stood out : Kampfgeschwader KGr 100 " Viking " with Heinkel He 111 H-3s (August 1940 – June 1941), and the emblematic Jagdgeschwader JG 2 "Richthofen" with Focke-Wulf Fw 190 A3 and A4 (November 1942 to October 1943).

In the second half of 1940, it was the Heinkel 111 H3s from Meucon which inflicted the most serious night bombings that Great Britain suffered : the docks of London, Coventry, etc. As for the fighter squadrons, their mission was mainly to defend the Normandy and Breton airspace against intrusions by Allied aircraft.

<sup>1</sup> Naming of the Luftwaffe airfields :  
- E = military airfield  
- 228 = current numbering  
- XII = Military Air Region in charge of implementation

# History of the Vannes-Monterblanc airfield (56)

by Jacques Daniel, Association of Friends of the Safran Museum (photos and documents by the author unless otherwise stated)



Junkers Ju-52 MS "Mausi". A total of approximately 70 Ju 52/3m were converted to the version "MinenSuch" (Minesweepers).

Southern Brittany was the scene of many air battles, due in particular to the strategic location of the Vannes airfield, which was in charge of protecting the submarine bases of Lorient and Saint-Nazaire, targets of the Allied air force. In this context, two special magnetic mine search units equipped with Junkers Ju 52 MS "Mausi" or MinenSuch ("Minesweepers") were successively stationed in 1942 and 1943.

The Junkers Ju 52 MS is equipped with a 14-metre duralumin ring attached under the fuselage and wings, through which electric current circulated. An electric generator, driven by a diesel engine, located in the aircraft's cabin creates a magnetic field with a radiation of about 100 metres. The aircraft flies at a speed of 75 mph and at an altitude of about 60-90 ft above the sea surface. A magnetic mine submerged to a depth of about 210-240 fr can thus be detected. The magnetic field detonates it.

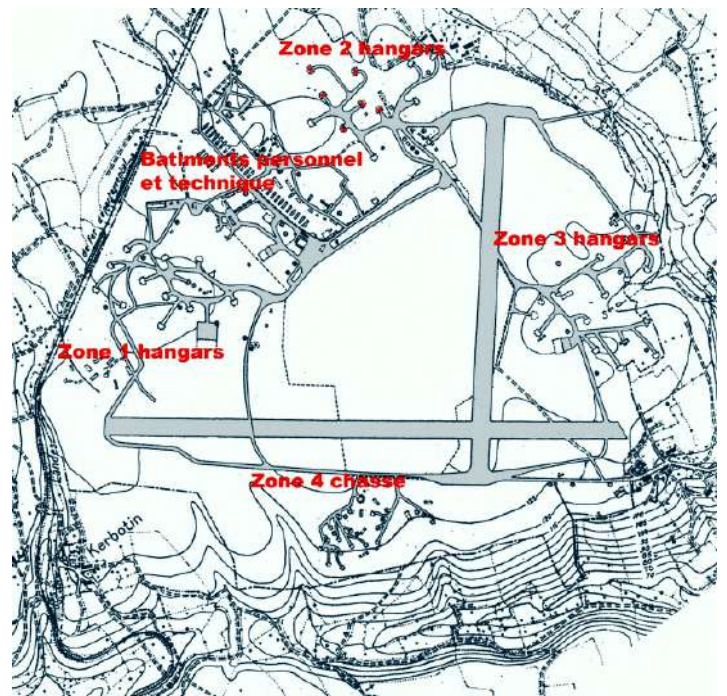
In mid-February 1942, a detachment of the Sonderkommando Maus, a special unit of the Luftwaffe whose mission was to develop combat techniques in the field of mine countermeasures, was stationed for the so-called "Channel Dash" operation. Better known as "Operation Cerberus", it consisted of secretly transferring the three battlecruisers, Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Prinz Eugen, and a large escort of destroyers and torpedo boats, from Brest and Lorient to the ports of northern Germany via the English Channel.

In preparation for the operation, the mission of the three-engine aircraft was to explode the sea mines discovered near Lorient, with heavy air support provided by the Luftwaffe (Operation "Donnerkeil").

One year and a half later, in September 1943, a second squadron of Minensuchgruppe 1 equipped with Junkers Ju-52 MS, arrived at Meucon. Close to

the submarine bases of Lorient and Saint-Nazaire, its role was to support the mine clearance vessels as the three-engine provided greater efficiency.

A special Luftwaffe unit stationed also on the airfield : the Wettererkundungsstaffeln 51 (also called Wekusta or Westa) specialized in long-range weather reconnaissance. Using twin-engine Junkers Ju 88 D1 and D5 aircrafts, its main task was to collect weather data from southwest Ireland to northwest Spain. The typical flight duration was about 6 hours, during which the aircraft covered 1,250 miles over the ocean.



Meucon airfield plan

Like many Luftwaffe airfields, a decoy airfield was set up in November 1940 in the commune of Grand-Champ, 11 km northwest of the Meucon airfield. Known under the code name E 20/XIII, it was an exact replica of the Meucon runways with wooden aircrafts (see photo on the next page). Also dedicated to emergency landings, it became a satellite or dispersal airfield in June 1944. In order to preserve the Meucon airfield, the two false runways were lit at night to attract raids by Allied bombers, and false wooden aircrafts were regularly moved.

# History of the Vannes-Monterblanc airfield (56)

by Jacques Daniel, Association of Friends of the Safran Museum (photos and documents by the author unless otherwise stated)

Bombed several times, the false airfield was not discovered by the Allies until the spring of 1943.



Grand-Champ decoy airfield (1943).

Several German aces (« Experten ») stayed in Vannes-Meucon, including Joseph "Sepp" Wurmheller (1917 - 1944). Belonging to JG 2 "Richthofen", he is one of the rare Luftwaffe pilots to have exceeded 100 air kills (102) against Western forces. In addition to 300 combat missions, all his victories, except 9 Soviet aircrafts, were claimed against Anglo-American forces including 54 Spitfires and 22 four-engine B-17 Flying Fortresses, B-24 Liberator and B-26 Marauder. Exhausted by five years of combat, he disappeared in aerial combat on June 22, 1944

As everywhere else on the French coast, the Vannes airfield was bombed three times : in March 1941, at night, by 4 twin-engine Bristol Blenheim Mk IVs of the Royal Air Force, in September 1943 by a group of 55 four-engine Boeing B-17 F Flying Fortresses of the US Army Air Force (USAAF) and in June 1944 by 55 Boeing B-17 Fs. After the most devastating raid, there were about 450 bomb craters on the south-western part of the field and about 80 impacts on the taxiways ; three hangars were hit, an aircraft shelter was destroyed as well as four Messerschmitt Me 109 G-6s.

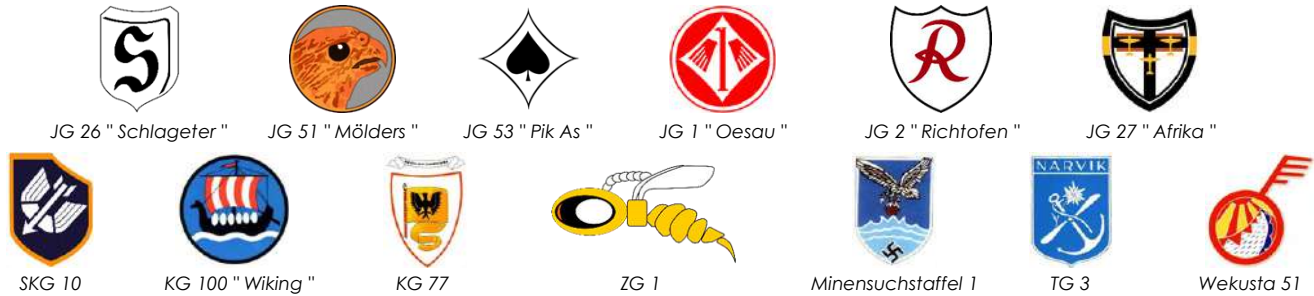
## Luftwaffe squadrons in Vannes-Meucon (1940 – 1944)<sup>2</sup>

Jagdgeschwader 26 "Schlageter"	Engr./	February – June 1941	Messerschmitt Me 109 E/F
Jagdgeschwader 51 "Mölders"	1. Staffel	October 1941 – January 1942	Messerschmitt Me 109 F
Jagdgeschwader 53 "Pik As"	1. et 2. Staffel	June 8, 1941 – Septembre 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1941	Messerschmitt Me 109 E/F
Jagdgeschwader 1 "Oesau"	IV. Gruppe 10./JG 1, 11./JG 1, 12./JG 1	January 6 to 31, 1942	Messerschmitt Me 109 E
Jagdgeschwader 2 "Richthofen"	III. Gruppe Stab III./JG 2, 7./JG 2, 9./JG 2, 10./JG 2	November 22, 1942 – October 1943	Focke-Wulf Fw 190 A3/A4
Jagdgeschwader 27 "Afrika"	I. Gruppe Stab I./JG 27, 1./JG 27, 2./JG 27, 3./JG 27	June 17 to 22, 1944	Messerschmitt Me 109 G6
Jagdgeschwader 53 "Pik As"	II. Gruppe Stab I./JG 53, 4./JG 53, 5./JG 53, 6./JG 53	June 7 to 15, 1944	Messerschmitt Me 109 G6
Schnellkampfgeschwader 10	II. Gruppe 6./SKG 10	May – June 1943	Focke-Wulf Fw 190 A
Kampfgruppe 100 "Viking"	Stab KG 100, 1. 2. 3. Staffel	August 9, 1940 – June 17, 1941	Heinkel He-111 H3
Kampfgeschwader 77	III. Gruppe Stab III./KG 77, 7. 8. 9. KG 77	May 10 - June 30, 1942	Junkers Ju-88 A
Zerstörergeschwader (ZG) 1	I. Gruppe Stab I./ZG 1, 2. ZG 1	December 1943 - June 12, 1944	Junkers Ju-88 C6
Minensuchstaffel 1.	1. Staffel	April 1942 - September 1943	Junkers Ju-52 MS
Transportgeschwader 3	III. Gruppe 11.TG 3	May - June 1943	Junkers Ju-52 3m
Erprobungskommando 188		June – November 1943	Junkers Ju-188 E1
Wettererkundungsstaffel 51 (Wekusta 51)		July 6, 1943 – June 13, 1944	Junkers Ju-88

# History of the Vannes-Monterblanc airfield (56)

by Jacques Daniel, Association of Friends of the Safran Museum (photos and documents by the author unless otherwise stated)

## Badges of the Luftwaffe squadrons in Vannes-Meucon (1940 – 1944)



During their retreat, at the beginning of August 1944, the Germans destroyed the installations. After they took possession of the airfield a few days later, the 850<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion of the 9<sup>th</sup> Air Force cleared mines, destroyed Luftwaffe aircraft, repaired concrete runways and extended the NW/SE runway by 525 m with a tarmac structure. Designated "A-33" by the USAAF<sup>3</sup> at the end of August, a squadron of Northrop P-61A "Black Widow" three-seater twin-engine night fighters from the 425<sup>th</sup> Night Fighter Squadron (NFS) stationed for about one month - from August 18 to September 11, 1944.

During its stay in Meucon, the unit lost an aircraft in combat with its crew during a machine-gunning mission on a Flak gun near Riantec (south-east from

<sup>2</sup> In accordance with the typical Luftwaffe organization, a Geschwader, which is the equivalent of a Squadron, is composed of three or even four Gruppen or Groups. The different Geschwader types are : bombing (KG), rapid bombing (SKG), fighting (JG), ground attack (SKG), transport (TG), reconnaissance, etc. Geschwader are named with an Arabic numeral following its designation. It is the custom to give a name in honor of a distinguished person, for example Jagdgeschwader 2 was named Jagdgeschwader 2 "Richthofen" in memory of the 80-air kill ace of the First World War, Manfred von Richthofen.

Designated by Roman numerals, I, II, III and IV, each Gruppe is composed of a Stab or General Staff and three or four Staffeln, the equivalent of a Flight. Each Staffeln is generally composed of nine aircrafts.

Designated by Arabic numerals, for example 6./JG 27, the Staffeln of Gruppe I are numbered 1, 2 and 3, those of Gruppe II are numbered 4, 5 and 6, etc.

<sup>3</sup> In 1944-1945, Allied airfields built on land taken from the Germans were divided into several categories : Emergency Landing Strips (ELS), Supply & Evacuation (S&E), Refuelling & Rearming (R&R) and finally Advanced Landing Grounds (ALG). ALG " A " refers to the US Air Force. ALG " B " refers to the British Air Forces.

Lorient). Once the threat of the Luftwaffe lowered in the region, the night fighters were moved to the east ; the airfield became an airfield for refueling and evacuation of the wounded victims that needed to be



P-61 Black Widow s/n 42-5580 du 425<sup>th</sup> N.F.S. en Septembre 1944.  
Photo NARA 342-FH-3A17542-B61362AC

treated before being sent back to England or United States. The 425<sup>th</sup> NFS left Vannes and made room for the Douglas A-24 B "Dauntless" dive bombers of the Fighter and Bomber Group GCB 1/18 "Vendée", in charge of supporting the Allied attacks against the Lorient pocket and the fortified positions on the Atlantic coast. They had various accidents and incidents, and losses were important, with three aircrafts shot down on a mission over the Lorient pocket. The unit was assigned on the airfield between mid-September 1944 and March 1945.

On June 20, 1945, the airfield returned to French civilian control but, heavily damaged, it required major reconstruction, and the main runway was renovated and resurfaced with asphalt. Today, it is a regional civilian airport, a training site for civil and military parachuting, and dedicated to tourist and business aviation. The former secondary runway (13/31) is now a concrete parking area with remaining asphalt stains applied to wartime bomb craters left by the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force. A grass runway (965 m long and 60 m wide - 08/26) was built after the war.

Sources : « Bases anciennes » (DGAC 2005). « Luftwaffe Airfields 1935 – 1945 France ». Association Bretonne du Souvenir Aérien 39-45 - « Les escadres de la Luftwaffe à Vannes-Meucon (1940 – 1944) ». German, English and American websites. « Vannes-Meucon - L'aérodrome sous l'occupation » (Bunker Archéo 56).

# The 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Liberation in Saint-Grégoire (35)

by **Benoît Paquet** (photos by the author unless otherwise stated)

The UNC of Saint-Grégoire, especially Mr. Marcel Baron organized an exhibition in Saint-Grégoire on June 22, 2024, north of Rennes, to celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Brittany as well as the battle of « Maison-Blanche » (from August 1 to August 3, 1944).



The UNC Saint-Grégoire recalls the circumstances of the liberation of the village and pays tribute to those who were killed.

ABSA 39-45 was invited to exhibit under a small tent and it was with great pleasure that we found ourselves, Pierre Mahé, Dominique Godde and myself under a radiant sun enjoying jeeps and vintage vehicles.



Benoît Paquet, Pierre Mahé and Dominique Godde in front of the ABSA 39-45 stand, under a nice sunny weather.

Many visitors went to this exhibition in the center of the town of Saint-Grégoire, in a communal festival atmosphere that had a « smell » of liberation.



The exhibition, which received the label "80<sup>th</sup> anniversary", made adults but also children happy !



A lot of visitors on the stand of our association ABSA 39-45.

It was a pleasure to meet the association "Atlantique Mémoire" (from Châteaubriant) with their American jeeps on site. Thanks to Marcel Baron and the UNC Saint-Grégoire for their invitation. ■



The association "Atlantique Mémoire", coming from Châteaubriant, gives an air of liberation to the event !

# The 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Liberation, Dompierre-du-Chemin

by Benoît Paquet

The UNC of Dompierre-du-Chemin and Luitré, with the CM1 and CM2 of the Intercommunal Educational Group Luitré-Dompierre-La Selle, organized an exhibition about the liberation of 1944 on June 23, 2024 at the Luitré sports hall.



In front of the ABSA stand 39-45 (from left to right) : Jérôme Courteaux and Benoît Paquet alongside officials Louis Pautrel (departmental councillor of Ille-et-Vilaine and mayor of Ferré), Françoise Gatel (senator of Ille-et-Vilaine, now Deputy Minister for Rural Affairs, Trade and Crafts), Jean-Yves Torel (president of the UNC Luitré) and Michel Ballucis (mayor of Luitré-Dompierre).  
Photo Benoît Paquet, ABSA 39-45

Our association ABSA 39-45, invited by the UNC and represented by Pierre Mahé and myself, had the pleasure of exhibiting aircraft parts, models and other kakemonos. As usual, it was an opportunity to meet great people and collect new information from the other exhibitors.

A significant moment was the conference that the UNC allowed us to present the activity of ABSA 39-45 and especially the topic of the archaeology of 39-45 aviation.



Benoît Paquet makes a conference on the topic of the archaeology of 39-45 aviation. Photo Pierre Mahé, ABSA 39-45

The day ended with a friendly "family photo" taken by the organizers.



Various exhibitors and collectors present uniforms, objects, photos and documents from 1944. Photo Benoît Paquet, ABSA 39-45

We would like to thank the UNC and especially Jérôme Courteaux for their invitation but also and moreover the warmth of their welcome. ■



The « smiling » exhibitors pose next to vintage vehicles to immortalize this June 23, 2024 at the Luitré sports hall. Photo U.N.C. Luitré-Dompierre

# « Grey notebook »

by **Benoît Paquet**

*It is with great sadness that we recently learned of the death of a member and the wife of another member of ABSA 39-45. All members of our association join to convey their sincere condolences to both families.*

## • **Michel Dolcini, from Guichen (1947 - 2024)**

Michel Dolcini was one of the pioneers of ABSA 39-45, which he joined in 2009. All those who met Michel during our excavations or events remember his kindness, discretion, and especially his constant good humor. He always put in a little word of humor in every circumstance.

He often volunteered for excavations, commemorations or welcoming airmen's families.

Michel had been a soldier in the health sector



*Michel, in 2018 in Châteaubriant, surrounded by his friends Pierre Mahé and Carlos Camacho, also historic members of ABSA 39-45.  
Photo Benoît Paquet*



*Michel Dolcini, with a passionate look, interviewed by France 2 (french TV channel) during an excavation in 2013.*



*Michel (arrow), always smiling, with the whole team during this excavation in 2013. Photo ABSA 39-45*

Beyond his human qualities, he was an enthusiast who was particularly interested in aircraft armament.

**We send all our friendly thoughts to his wife Marie-Christine, his children and grandchildren.**

## • **Janine Cerizier, from Beaulieu-sur-Layon (1944-2024)**

Gérard Cerizier joined ABSA 39-45 in early 2024. (see the welcome article in the following pages).

It was with great sadness that Gérard informed us at the beginning of September of the death of his wife Janine on September 3, 2024. After 57 years living together, the pain is huge for Gérard.

Although he is still little known to the other members of ABSA 39-45, we have received many expressions of sympathy from members.



*Janine Cerizier, passed away on September 3, 2024.  
Photo famille Cerizier*



# Welcome to ...

by **Benoît Paquet**

*It is now a tradition to welcome new members who have registered since our latest news-letter. We will start with Dany Bouché, a member registered for almost two years and to whom we had neglected to write a welcome article.*

## • **Dany Bouché (Plancoët, 22)**

Squadron Leader Dany Bouché has a long and prestigious career in the French Air Force, marked by successive promotions and high-level missions.

Assigned in 1969 to the Air Force Technical Training School in Saintes, he started as a Lance Corporal in 1971, before becoming a Sergeant in 1972 after specializing in ground radar mechanics. He was assigned to Mont-de-Marsan where he distinguished himself with his rigorous work, and then, in 1978, became an instructor in Rochefort, where he excelled in educational preparation, which led him to the rank of Warrant Officer in 1984.

Once he passed the reserve officer examination, he joined the corps of air mechanic officers in 1985. His first mission abroad took place in Chad as part of operation « Épervier », where he ensured, as technical assistant to the Commander of the Air Defense, the maintenance of the « Centaur » radar. Back in France, he was in charge of technical divisions in Metz, acquiring a recognized expertise in tactical transmissions, particularly in Chad and as part of Operation « Daguet » in Saudi Arabia, where he stands out for his professionalism ; he then received the « Croix de Guerre » for external theaters of operations.

Commander of the transmission section of the Colmar base, Dany was then responsible for the implementation of the ANTINEA system and became head of IT security, where his organizational skills were highlighted. In 1992, he was appointed to the Air Force Transmission Command in Villacoublay, and became Flight Lieutenant in 1993. He contributed to the deployment of the MTBA program, where his methodical approach was appreciated. From 1998, he joined the Information Systems Office of the General Staff in Paris. His contributions to telecommunications include innovations such as a videoconferencing system and solutions for drone images transmission also participating in inspections of telecommunications sites overseas.



Photo collection Dany Bouché

« As a field worker », with conviction, he also supervises the Defense Preparation Days, and continues his assignment in Chad, commanding the joint-army transmissions of Operation « Épervier ».

Before his retirement in 2005, Dany Bouché conducted a study on the information systems deployed, highlighting his knowledge and expertise one last time. He holds numerous distinctions (Legion of Honor, National Order of Merit, TOE War Cross, TOE Combatant's Cross, Medal of Recognition of the Nation, Gold Medal of National Defense, Chad and Middle East Commemorative Medal and Saudi Arabia and Kuwait Medals).

Regarding his membership in ABSA 39-45, Dany Bouché specifies : « I would like to join ABSA 39-45 to participate in the activities of the association according to my commitment to the service of the Air Force and more generally for aviation. It is also to show solidarity with those who are involved in the duty of remembrance that we owe to the younger generation ».

# Welcome to ...

by **Benoît Paquet** (photos of the author)



- but Gérard is also a specialist in the Second World War and as such, he has built up an incredible collection of uniforms over the years.

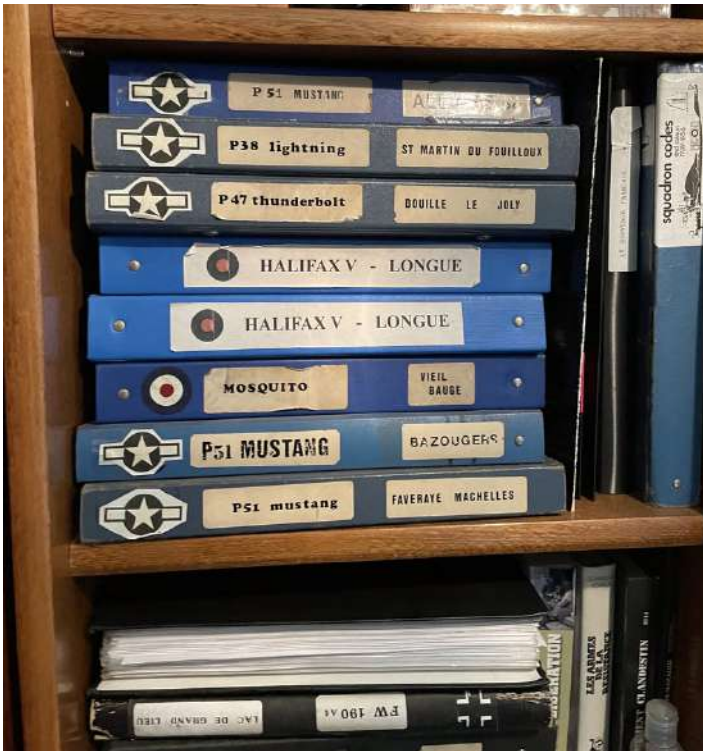
We met Gérard at his home with Bruno Rat, and we presented to him the activity of our association ; then Gérard expressed the wish to join us.

We welcome him and present to you some of the most beautiful pieces of his uniforms collection. ■

## • Gérard Cerizier (Beaulieu-sur-Layon, 49)

Gérard Cerizier is passionate in two ways :

- living in Maine-et-Loire, he spent many years searching aircrafts that crashed in this department during the Second World War. He has built up a richly documented library relating to each crash, both for Allied and German planes.



Gérard Cerizier has compiled richly documented files for many aircrafts that crashed in Maine-et-Loire.



# Welcome to ...

by Benoît Paquet

## • Thierry Trotin (Saint-Jouan des Guéréts, 35) and Olivier Brichet (Rennes, 35)

For once, we welcome two new members at the same time, but for the simple reason that these two friends have been inseparable for years, and they share a common passion, scuba diving !



### Olivier Brichet :

« I was born in 1963. From a very young age, fascinated by the world of silence, I never missed an opportunity to observe the marine environment using a mask and snorkel. At that time, I became enthusiastic about the television series of Commander Cousteau and the Odyssey of the Calypso. As a teenager, I was passionate about the history of the Second World War, especially aviation and the navy. I built models and read the pilots' stories : the famous « Le grand cirque » by Pierre Clostermann, and many blue books from the « Leur aventure » collection<sup>1</sup>, purchased at second-hand booksellers or at discount markets...

At 17, I performed my first scuba dive alone, it was a revelation ! Today, scuba diving is one of the last areas where adventure is still possible, just a few kilometers from home ! Many seabeds, even close ones, remain unexplored.

I started research at sea with my friend Jean Simoni, who had been living in the south of France for several years. In 1994, I met Thierry Trotin because we share

<sup>1</sup> Publisher « J'ai lu »

<sup>2</sup> « Éditions Glénat » - 2019

<sup>3</sup> « Éditions du Phare » - 2001

the same passions : diving and the Second World War. Our project is to identify the wrecks in our region and to discover new ones. Since then, the dives have been coming one after the other, when our free time and the weather allowed it.

Our approach is that of passionate « amateurs », proceeding without subsidies, with our own equipment. Despite our modest means, we have discovered and identified several wrecks ! We will continue to search, as long as our health allows us to dive. One life will not be enough for us to find all the wrecks we are looking for...

Since 1992, I have been conducting archival research on the aircrafts and ships sunk in my region. This research has allowed me to meet wonderful people, such as Claude Archambault, Remi Chuinard and Claude Hélias... I have also maintained regular contact with veterans of the Second World War, Germans, Canadians and English. All these moving testimonies have allowed me to better understand the history of the German navy in northern Brittany, as well as the battles that took place at sea. Each shipwreck represents a human tragedy. Contact with the families of these missing sailors or airmen is the culmination of our approach.

I practice underwater photography and I draw wrecks, to offer a view of them in their entirety. Writing is part of my desire to share knowledge of submerged heritage with the public. In addition to articles in the diving magazines, I published, with Thierry Trotin, Jean Louis Maurette and Christophe Moriceau : « Plongée sur les épaves de France »<sup>2</sup> (Diving on the wrecks of France).

Using my knowledge of the Kriegsmarine, I also published with Eric Peyle : « La Marine allemande à Saint-Malo 1940-1944 »<sup>3</sup> (The German Navy in Saint-Malo 1940-1944).



### Thierry Trotin

« I was born in 1963 in Cancale and I spent my entire childhood and adolescence in Saint Malo. Very early, I was passionate about the Second World War and devoted a large part of my free time to making models of boats and aircrafts from this period that covered the ceiling of my room.

# Welcome to ...

by **Benoît Paquet**

At 10, I was already reading the « Fana de l'aviation », « Mach 1 » and any publication related to naval and air battles.



At 14, during a trip with my parents in Lincolnshire, I had the chance to visit the Bomber Command bases at Scampton and Coningsby. And I saw my favourite plane : the **Avro Lancaster** !



At 15, I started spearfishing in the Bay of Saint-Malo and discovered a fascinating world. And when I was 24, thanks to my friend Yves Leleu, a diving instructor, I started scuba diving. I quickly left the associative environment for independent diving on the coasts of Brittany and Ireland. It was a revelation and a passion that would never leave me. Six years later, I met Olivier Brichet with whom I shared the same passions : scuba diving and the Second World War. Olivier shared with me his interest in looking for wrecks and it was the beginning of a great collective adventure. Under the sea, in addition to discovery, I like to film. And to ensure better shots when Olivier takes photos, I also act as the lighting technician. From the combined use of video and photography, Olivier's airbrushed works on canvas are born.

The discovery of new wrecks is always full of emotion for us. Beyond the historical interest it holds, it tells above all a human story. Thanks to Jean-Michel Martin, I met ABSA 39-45 a few years ago and its members, like me, passionate and sensitive to the duty of remembrance. ■

## • Pierre Lauglé (Coësmes, 35)

Pierre Lauglé is a citizen of peace in the ACPG-CATM association of Coësmes. He had known ABSA 39-45 for a long time, having been in contact in the past with Daniel Dahiot. In February 2024, he contacted us about two topics :



- on the one hand, an exhibition on June 23, 2024 on the theme of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation.

- on the other hand he asked us for information about the fall during the war in Coësmes of an aircraft or a "mysterious" bomb.

For the exhibition, it was of course with great pleasure that we participated as you have been able to read in this newsletter. And for the "mysterious bomb", Daniel Dahiot investigated and his almost definitive conclusions are that it was a Henschel Hs 293 flying bomb that fell from a German Dornier aircraft. We are currently translating German documents that will allow us to make our minds.



Passionné, Pierre Lauglé ne manque aucune occasion de sensibiliser les jeunes à l'histoire de Coësmes.

Pierre Lauglé is a history enthusiast, especially local history. He already organized an exhibition on the first world war in Coësmes a few years ago.

The exchanges between Pierre Lauglé and ABSA 39-45 were very rich and warm, and it was therefore quite natural for Pierre to join our association. We are obviously very happy to welcome him. ■

## 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 303<sup>rd</sup> 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 : 10 €
- shipping fees (France) : 4 €

## 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 :

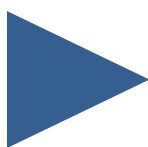
- ABSA 39-45 member rate : 7 €
- non-member rate : 10 €
- shipping fees (France) : 4 €

## NEW : DANS LE CIEL DE France Histoire de la JG 2 « RICHTOFEN »

by Erik Mombeeck et Jean-Louis Roba

[volume 1 : 1934-1940]

300 pages, in French - Format 21 x 29,7 cm

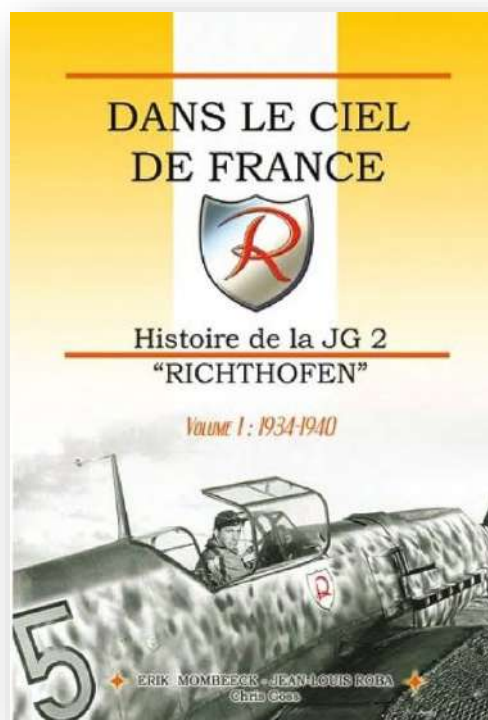


Eric Mombeeck and Jean-Louis Roba are undisputed and recognized Luftwaffe specialists. They wrote a series of books dedicated to the famous JG 2 "Richtofen", the fruit of their long years of researches. They have on several occasions provided their friendly assistance to our association during searches for plane crashes in Brittany.

Eric Mombeeck is offering a batch of books today 'Dans le ciel de France - Histoire de la JG 2 "Richtofen" (volume 1: 1934-1940)' at a low price. This first volume relates the very detailed history of this squadron, from its creation to the end of 1940. The JG 2 was engaged in the Battle of France then the Battle of Britain from airfields in Normandy, Brittany or in the North of France. The facts are described in detail and are based on numerous testimonies and documents. To read urgently !

### Price :

- ABSA 39-45 member rate : 30 €
- non-member rate : 35 €
- shipping fees (France) : Colissimo 10 € - Mondial Relay 7 €

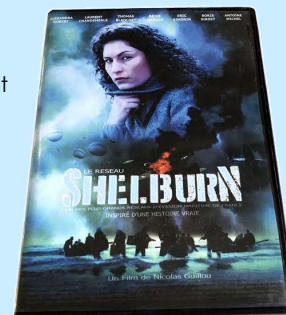


For any book or brochure order, please contact Frédéric Hénoff : [frederic.henoff@free.fr](mailto:frederic.henoff@free.fr) - +33 (0)603 598 572

## 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](mailto:b.paquet@orange.fr)  
+33 (0)682 860 391  
\* zone 2 (Europe)



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](mailto:b.paquet@orange.fr) - +33 (0)682 860 391