

Two Days in May
3rd May. Dunholme lodge

Lancaster, JB134 P G-G at its dispersal, was one of 300 ordered from AV Roe Chadderton, Between June and December 1943. It had already done over 340 hours of bombing attacks, thirteen to Berlin and many more to similarly well defended targets in Germany and others in enemy held France etc.

It had been damaged seven times by Anti air craft fire, had been Bombed by aircraft flying above, attacked by German fighters and damaged at least five times, in return, they shot down two of them!

Today, 3rd May 1944, P G-G was going through all the routine of testing, inspection, and arming, in preparation for another operation and soon the bombload would be delivered.

The Crew. Weary as they were, having been on "ops" the previous night were more than "Browned Off" to see that they were "On" again. They were pleased to have been told at briefing however, that it was an "easy target" in France, called Maily -Camp and also that the radio op Harry Brady & the Gunners Jack Malby & Freddy Joy, had all been awarded the Immediate Distinguished Flying Medal. Little was made of the fact that the attack was to be in full moonlight and that there at least 5 German Fighter units on the outer & homeward tracks along the way. Just one other point.... The "OP" was only going to be worth one half a Point toward the 30 needed to complete their Tour and a long need rest.

P G-G took off from Dunholme at about 10 pm, with the full crew of seven on board, plus one extra, there to "Gain experience"

The official records show, "Nothing further was heard from this aircraft."

Courboin village France. There had been no sleep for the villagers on the night of the 3rd May, as later reported by the Schoolmaster, the villagers had been kept awake by the roaring, from 10pm (??) onward of the R.A.F aircraft above. At about quarter To midnight, a massive explosion from the valley just below the village is best reported on by the Schoolmaster, but, it signalled the end of PG-G and the lives of the eight crewmen.

Flight Out... Nothing can be known positively about this from the aircraft, but fragments from an named observers. It is considered however, that PG-G had reached a position over Chateau-Thierry, 50 miles from the target when it was attacked by one of hundreds of German fighters. A running battle ensued, & the Lancaster was next spotted with two engines on fire, over the village of Courboin where it was observed sweep away and subsequently crash and exploded in the valley a hundred yards from the village. The German Fighter then came down low, circled the crash three times exposing his own against the flames.

A NEW DAY - MAY 4TH 1944

At Shipley, West Yorkshire, ** May 1944 dawned, after a quiet night, with sunshine pleasant and normal.

Granny was fast asleep, it was only 7.30 a.m and Mum was just about to go out to work and the son of the house wakened to a feeling of apprehension, wondering why and what the day had to hold. The answer was 'Get up, go to work and find out'. Normality, was already a thing of the past. A telegram at 10.30a.m confirmed the fact.

In the small Village of Courboin, 35 miles south west of Paris, normality also became a thing of the past, at about 11.45p.m on the 3rd of May, the previous night. By that time the drone of R A F Bombers overhead had long since put an end to any thoughts of sleep for the approximately 200 inhabitants. Within minutes, a huge explosion almost put an end to the village of Courboin as a wounded Lancaster crashed and exploded in the valley perhaps 200 yards away, destroying it, and damaging some remote properties almost 2000 yards away. Of the crew of 8 Airmen, there was no immediate sign, but as the 4th of May dawned it became evident that all 8 were killed.

The new day for Courboin had begun.



A Steen photograph of hundreds of villagers from miles around leaving the village of Courboin following the explosion of the bombs to their last resting place in the village graveyard.

Mr. Michel, of Courboin, Teacher, has written this account, whose authenticity we confirm.

Wednesday 3rd May 1944, 10 p.m.

A beautiful Spring night, soft, starlit. The moon is shining high in the sky. A milky clarity bathes the sleeping countryside.

For a quarter of an hour the powerful R.A.F. bombers have been passing over the village in a roar of thunder, pursued by a number of enemy fighters, skimming over the rooftops, clinging onto their tails like angry, fierce, little terriers. Canon fire, followed by burst of machine gun fire. The battle rages.

10.15 p.m. An aircraft in flames, an absolute torch, comes in from the South West. Suddenly two red missiles light up the sky, then an incredible explosion rents the air. Throughout the entire village, windows shatter, roof tiles tumble off, doors and windows slam.

I comprehend what has happened - very close by, one of our poor friends has crashed to earth with its entire load of bombs. We have to rush to render assistance if it is possible. Let us hurry before the Boche arrive. There are bound to be parachutists to help. We shall hide them. I don't have time to put on my jacket or my shoes, but I run. It doesn't take long to run 600 metres. What a sight! Below the cemetery, along a gully, an opaque, red cloud rises up. The forest is burning in over twenty places. The heat is intense. A pungent smell fills the air. Machine gun fire rattles out. Impossible to get close. No-one around. I will come back at dawn. I will be the first. When I get close to the cemetery, I notice a plane flying very low which circles three times above the inferno and disappears in the night.

Thursday 4th May. I arrive as day breaks. The sight that meets my eyes is worse than anything I could have imagined. In the middle of a meadow surrounding the woods is a kind of huge crater from which flames and smoke are still escaping. A copse has completely disappeared. The ground is burnt, blackened, devastated over an area more than 2000 metres wide. Within 150 metres of the site, tattered clothes hang here and there, on the branches of mutilated trees, half-charred. Others are strewn around on the ground, mixed with turned clay and human remains. I am sorry to have to report these sad details. On a scrap of material, I read "Wadsworth". Is this the name of a crew member? Will we ever know anything about these brave boys who gave their youth and their life for our freedom?

8 a.m. Lots of people about. My daughter picks up a wad of partly burned French banknotes, 1800 francs, which she gives to the police. A brave woman gives me an identity tag which I shall keep carefully. It bears the name H. BRADY R.A.F. 120.963. We mustn't give anything to the Boche. Soon they arrive. Five of them, accompanied by three French policemen. The report is quickly made. The "Verts-de-gris" are especially keen to find out whether the English plane was brought down in aerial combat.

We refuse to give them this satisfaction (no, an accident). They want us to put the remains of the airmen into a sack for immediate burial. After all, they are only English, no need to stand on ceremony!

Once the Boche have left, our rural policeman arrives. A brave man, who is to spend hours piously collecting the remains of our unfortunate friends. I have to say that he conducted this painful duty with laudable courage and honesty. However he received no payment, the mayor said cynically "Did you see them this time? They came to your house". The village wheelwright made the coffin, in which we placed the remains of these poor crushed bodies, on the silky whiteness of a parachute. And at midday on Friday 5th May the coffin, which was taken into the chancel of the church, soon disappeared under an avalanche of flowers.

I visit the parish priest who lives 5 kilometres away. We agree that we should conduct a religious service for the English airmen which is worthy of their sacrifice. Nothing could be too beautiful for them. We agree on the next day, Saturday.

2 p.m., 6th May
The news has spread quickly. At the agreed time, the little church draped in black cloth is full to bursting. Including the school children, more than four hundred people are there. Such a throng has never before been seen here. Two old women have walked more than 10 kilometres for the occasion. After the absolution, the priest delivers the funeral oration in praise of these heroes who displayed such supreme and magnificent courage, in order to save the population of the village, to deliberately manage to crash outside its borders.

I am at the head of the eight pallbearers. The man on my right is concerned about the presence of a "Fritz" in the village square. So what! We shall see. In fact right in the middle of the square, a German officer is standing to attention and saluting. At the cemetery, sprays of flowers pile up. The last benediction is said over the coffin. I take a few discreet photographs. The ceremony is over. When I return, I see the Mayor shaking the hand of the Boche officer. An hour later, an unknown hand has placed a little English flag with the words "To our valiant airmen" on the beflowered grave.

One month later, at 11 p.m. on 8th June, I was going up to bed when a car stopped at my door. Two "Verts-de-gris" got out, submachine guns in their hands. It was bound to happen to me. For two years I had been repeatedly singled out, I had had nothing but trouble. On 19th March 1943, an inquiry, my house was searched! On 10th October 1943, a visit from a Gestapo agent, disguised as a priest etc. This time a huge devil of a military policeman put his hand on my collar and pushed me into the car shouting "Now PARISS". I thought of Fresnes. Half-dressed, head bare, bare feet in my shoes, I only had time to cry out to my children "Goodbye little ones". With two such brutes, you don't know what to expect. This time I had committed the crime of encouraging the Resistance by organising a big public event for the English. I was bound to be deported.

But on 10. June, after three interrogations and two bowls of soup which you wouldn't have offered to a dog, I had the incredible luck, instead of leaving for Compiègne, the antechamber of the Nazi paradise, to be given my freedom with these benevolent words: "You have been marked with red ink! Look out! You know what red ink means to us?"
Yes, unfortunately! We know, accursed race! The blood of the martyrs cries vengeance!

A little true story.

An English parachutist came down in the village of Courboin. A small ten year old boy helped to hide him. A little while afterwards, the military police arrived and questioned the little boy.

"Did you see any strangers?"

"No."

"We'll give you some sweets if you tell us."

"But I have nothing to tell you."

"We'll give you three kilos of sweets."

"I don't know anything at all."

"You can have a big bag of sweets."

"I didn't see anyone."

The military police went away, heads bowed.

Y

Pilot Officer 159050 Douglas Arnold Wadsworth DFC

Born 16 February 1921 Age 23.

Born Threlstone, South Yorkshire (!)

Attended Penistone Grammar School. Civilian Civil
Company Rep (Commercial Boiler) joined RAF 6.3.41.

Promotion to P/O effective 10-March-1944.

1st op 30/31-8.1943 with 29 OTU. 1st op with 619
(as 2nd pilot) 29/30.12.43 - Berlin.

Sgt 1499247 Arthur Maylor. Born in 1922 - age 22

First op was to fly as second air bomber with
TB134 on the attack on Mailly-le-camp 3/4 May 44.
Nothing else known, at time of his death, he was
based in Blackburn Lanes.

A distant relative did not respond to further
enquiries.

Flight Sgt 1511190 John Longton. Born 4.5.23 aged 21

in South Shields. Apprentice Joiner ex Air
Training Corps. Trained as Air Bomber (Bomb-
aimer) in Canada under Empire Training Scheme.

Promoted Flight Sgt March 1944

* Research of timings indicates that TB134 was
shot-down 15 mins before John's 21st birthday.
(11.45 pm 3 May)

Sgt 1589723. John Raymond Burgess. Born 1925
age 19.

Though I located friends of John as a youth,
at 19, little was known other than he was
a member of 'The Boys Brigade' and held a
bronze medal of the Royal Life Saving Society.
His best position was Flight Engineer.

Flight Sgt 1576638 Arthur(?) Clifford Stenton, age 22
Born 13.7.21. Educated, Alderman Newton Boys
Grammar School. Awarded scholarship Dec 1932.
Became a clerk with London North Eastern Railway
Co. He had an artistic temperament and also
played the piano. Trained for South Africa as
Navigator. On return to UK at 1654 Heavy
Conversion Unit Highley Motts, met up with
Sgt's Joy and Malby and shortly after joined 619 Sqn
became Navigator to the crew of TB134, replacing
the original Nav' who left the crew on posting away.*

* Name & Reason not disclosed -

Sgt. 1592172 Jack Harrison Mattley DFM born 26.12.06
age 36. Educated Belle-Vue Grammar School Bradford
& Bradford Technical College studying Textiles & Design
Enjoys type but outgoing cyclist as hobby & sport.
Married, son born 3 months after 3/4 May 1944. One time
member of Home Guard trained as Air Gunner (mid upper)
and shot down JU88 along with a second shared on.
Bunsieck attacks to Munich April 44.

Sgt 1397521 Frederick Henry Joy DFM. age 23. DFM.
 Born Canterbury 1921. Educated Payne Smith
 School. I do not know anything re. occupation,
 early RAT life & training before 619 Sqn.
 No 1 Air Gunnery School, No 17 Operational Training
 Unit and 1654 Heavy Conversion Unit.
 Freddie - who I met just once - was also responsible
 along with Jack Maltby for shooting down the
 JU 88s. He came home with Jack Maltby on a 48 hour
 Pass half day through their team. They slept for
 most of the 48 hours!

Sgt. 1209681. Henry George Brady. D.F.M. Age ?
 Henry was married and had - DFM, 2 children.
 As Wireless Operator, he also operated what was
 in 1944 secret device coded as M.O. N.I.C.A. a type of
 RADAR which warned of enemy aircraft in the vicinity.
 He believes that Henry - like Jack Maltby - was old for
 a gun member and had more family responsibility
 than most. It will be seen from his recommendation
 for the DFM. that he played a vital part in safe guardship
 TB134 and the crew during attacks by enemy fighters.
 In a brief conversation with his daughter some years
 ago I told her of his actions as "wireless operator" -
 she said "I had no idea that he had such an important
 job" - which of us did say I!

The awards of OTC & DFM to the two members were classed as Immediate Awards, that is, they were awarded for a particular act of bravery or distinguished flying. The recommendations reflect that:- Particulars of Meritorious Service 3.5.44
Henry Brady - On the night of 22/23 April 44 Sgt Brady was the sole operator in an attack in an aircraft detailed to bomb Brunswick. Shortly after leaving the target he identified an enemy aircraft by means of special equipment. At the appropriate moment, he ordered the pilot to take evasive action, thus preventing fire from the 'EA' causing serious damage to his aircraft. Visibility was poor and the gunners were unable to see the EA until it closed to within 500 yards, when they opened fire. The enemy aircraft broke away and was lost from sight by the gunners. Sgt Brady kept contact with it and reported its mere movements so that the gunners were able to identify it as a Ju 88, and open fire when it made a second attack. It missed their Lancaster, but their return fire was seen to strike the enemy and it broke away. Sgt Brady maintained contact and as the enemy closed for a third attack, he again gave his pilot directions for combat manoeuvres - subsequently, fire from both gunners caused the EA to die away with smoke pouring from both engines and it has been claimed as probably destroyed.

There is no doubt that Sgt Brady's skill and coolness saved his aircraft from being destroyed or very seriously damaged and enabled the 2 gunners to see the EA at near visibility & probably destroy it. This illustrates the sterling quality of Sgt Brady, who has always set a fine example to his own comrades and to his Squadron as a whole. I strongly recommend Sgt Brady for an Immediate Award of the DFM.

Signed AS Bullen Group Capt Commanding & RA Cockburn AIR Commodore
RAF Dunkirk base ACC 5 Group RAF

Sgt Jack Harrison Maltby - (3.5.44)

Sgt Maltby has now made 19 1/3 operational sorties as rear-upper gunner against targets in Germany and Occupied Europe. Among targets attacked are have been such heavily defended cities as Berlin, Leipzig, Stuttgart and Frankfurt.

On the night of April 22/23, and shortly after bombing the target, his aircraft was attacked three times in succession by a Tu88. By good shooting and excellent co-operation with the rear gunner he drove off the enemy fighter and, finally, shot it down with smoke pouring from both engines. The Tu88 is claimed as probably destroyed.

Sgt Maltby's keenness and efficient crew co-operation have played a large part in making his crew one of the best in the Squadron. The confidence he inspires in the other crew members has greatly assisted them in their completion of many successful sorties, and his teamwork with the Rear Gunner of his crew has enabled the latter to show highly satisfactory combat results. He possesses the offensive spirit to a high degree.

I strongly recommend Sgt Maltby for an Immediate Award of the Distinguished Flying Medal.

3.5.44 Col Butler - Group Capt Commandy RAF Dunkeld Lodge.

Recommended for Immediate Award

RA. Durham? Cdr Vice Marshal AOC
5 Group RAF

Over.