

7 December 1945.

My dear Roy,

I did not succeed up to now to find out how you have been arrested in Belgium. From rumours it seems that Vandenhove has been betrayed by somebody who watched the house. Baron Dony was taken in the same way, and sold to the Germans by a maid-servant who wanted to get money. I have been arrested myself after somebody had sent an anonymous letter but I never knew who it was.

You will find enclosed the report I wrote about the case. It is well known that your landing rendered the Germans so mad that they issued special warnings in the newspapers after it, but we did not know at the time.

Tell me a little about your life now. Did you fly again, and what kind of ship. How are you getting on?

I left the airfield in August after the Atom got hold of the Yaps. Since then I am out of work though I have so many things to do that I am glad to be free for the moment. I have left the Army definitely. They did not accept to take me back as pilot as I am 38 years old and that I belonged to the reserve. May be that I shall get a new job soon.

The economical situation in Belgium is growing better but the political one is far to be favorable. Compared with France and Holland, we are recovering faster but our problems are not so hard to solve. Moreover, a small country like Belgium, even prosperous, will never weigh in the universal balance and that is why the big nations let her recover and help her. There is no need to speak of competition on foreign markets when speaking of Belgium, as the volume of business will never be big enough in the same branch to trouble a competitor of the big nations.

The pollen is more political than economical and the communists work a lot. They are very active and take profit of all dissensions to win some ground.

I am sending this letter to your club, as you very probably did not receive the one I sent to the officer's Mess. What is your address where I can always reach you? Did you go back to the Channel Islands? I think that you once lived there.

I wish you and your folks a very merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Cheris

Gule D. Itmen

The landing of the Wellington W-5423 "G".

In preparing this report I have endeavoured to write all I know about the eventful landing of a R.A.F. bomber, the Wellington W-5423 "G", in enemy territory, outskirts of Antwerp, Belgium, on 6 August 1941.

One member of her crew numbering six, succeeded to get back to England. Though the others were unhurt and had escaped, they have been recaptured and sent to Germany.

I should wish, now that the whole crew is back home, that they read carefully the following pages and try to remember the names of the Belgians who escorted, sheltered or visited them.

During more than six months, I have investigated about the case and have come to a stop. The chain of agents is almost complete except for two or three names.

May be somebody might jog my memory by recalling a name, a nickname, a location of house or street, thus enabling me to bring full light over a problem which is still unsolved.

Any detail or supplementary information will be welcome and help to complete one of the most adventurous stories of a R.A.F. crew who rendered the Germans mad for one time.

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The climate in Belgium, August 1941.

The night raids of the R.A.F. intensified with the good weather conditions. A non-stop offensive over Aachen and Cologne began. The course of the bombers passed over the city of Liège and the Germans had soon installed a row of 240 searchlights cooperating with a dozen Me.110 night fighters, between Liège and the Dutch boarder. It was the last barrage the allied ships had to cross before reaching Germany and fifty beams of light were often converging on the same bomber. The people of Liège, my home city, could see the tracer shells of the defense of Aachen and were anxiously following the combats.

Since a few months already, patriots had entered secret organisations connected with London. Their main job was to collect general information about the German installations. Incidentally they helped allied airmen who had been obliged to bail out with parachute or were forced to land. Other groups had specialized in sabotage of the high tension posts and cables bringing the juice to the batteries of searchlights.

As more planes had been brought down since the beginning of August, the agents spread all over Belgium were advised to be on the look out for lost airmen. They had to take care of them, personally and to hand them over to their chief of sector. The latter knew where to contact the special "Escape Service", leading to U.K. via France, Spain, Portugal or Gibraltar, at that time.

<sup>4/5</sup>  
AUGUST 6th, 1941, in Liège.

At zero o'clock, Central European time, the German interceptors took off and passed over Liège whilst the searchlights all switched on. The moon was full and the beams were not very efficient. The first British pathfinder crossed the barrage. Ten minutes later we watched the first combats. A bomber escaped by releasing her bombs which fell at half a mile distance from my house. The alarm was given. At 0,45' o'clock, a ship was brought down in flames, North of Liège. A few minutes later I saw another one diving in the direction of the harbor. She was blazing and exploded in the air. During an hour we heard about a dozen combats seeing only the flares and the cones of light working like scissors and trying to get the ships. At half past two, one of them passed South of Liège, on her way home. An engine did not work well. Every time she was putting full throttle, the flames of exhaust were clearly visible so that the searchlights could easily catch her again when she tried to escape. A German fighter intercepted her. They machine gunned on both sides but no result was seen. At 3 o'clock, everything was over.

The next morning I got the following information : nine allied ships had been brought down in our area. A Wellington had fallen in flames into the harbor of Liège. Her wreckage lay partly on the embankment, partly in the river. The Germans allowed the people to watch. They were always proud to show that they were able to bring down R.A.F. planes. Three bodies were still in the water and they removed them. I heard that one of the airmen, probably belonging to that ship, had bailed out and had been rescued in a tree near Cheratte. Doctor Gilles, belonging to our crew, had already sent him to safety in a shelter near Huy. Two other members of the plane were missing. The people had run to rescue an airman coming down with parachute. They welcome him with the words "Engliab !"

He was a German pilot and groaned some unpleasant words. The people ran away and kept quiet for the rest of the night.

In town, the fires caused by explosive bombs and incendiaries had been stopped. Thirty people had been killed. An agent coming from Verviers told us that the Tyre and Rubber plant Englebert, Aachen branch, had been completely destroyed.

On August 10th, bills were stuck up on the walls in town and a note was issued in all the newspapers of Belgium. It read as follows: "The German Headquarters warn all Belgians that anyone convinced to bring aid to enemy aviators will be sentenced to death. Anybody who knows where an airman is hidden and does not report to the Feldgendarmarie, will be sentenced even if he did not contact him. A reward of 5000 Marks will be given to the person whose information will lead to the capture of an enemy. Name of informer will not be disclosed.

Two days later, a lady friend, Mrs. Masson, called at the telephone and told me that she had found tobacco for me. She asked me to come and visit her in the evening, what I did.

- You told me once, she said, that if I ever heard of allied airmen lost in this country, you could perhaps do something for them.

- Yes, where are they?

- In a villa (cottage), at ten miles from here. If you agree, I shall introduce you to a man who could lead you there.

- Who is he?

- May be you know Mr. HACHA?

- I know him from school. I'll go with him, but I do not want to see other people than the airmen. I'll give you my answer to-morrow. I must first contact some friends.

August 13th, I saw several agents of my group. Doctor Gilles said that he would look for accommodation and I had to hand the Airmen to Mr. Demeux after having crossed the bridge of the Meuse. The best time was at six o'clock p.m., next day. - Be careful, he added. I do not know what the Germans have eaten, but they are patrolling everywhere. You saw the warning in the newspapers and on the walls?

- Yes, I have cut it out of the paper.

- Ask them a lot of questions and make sure that they are British.

On August 14th, in the afternoon, I entered the cottage where the airmen were hidden, accompanied by Hacha. That is how I made the acquaintance of Roy B. Langlois, Jack L. Newton and Richard A. Copley.

From information I collected or from what I saw myself, the Wellington bomber W-5423 "G" on her return from a mission over Aachen was hit by anti aircraft gun and began to loose altitude. The pilot, realizing that the ship would not be able to get home, landed on a large field. It was 2,10' o'clock a.m. 5 August 1941. The plane had landed on a German airfield in Durne, outskirts of Antwerp, Belgium.

The crew, numbering six was composed as follows :

Roy B. LANGLOIS, Pilot and captain of the ship, serial number 37938

Jack L. NEWTON, nr 742570 Bombardier

Richard A. COPLEY, nr 748217 Radio.

Mac LAREN second pilot

H. FURREL navigator

R. PORTEOUS rear gunner.

Realizing that they had landed on an enemy airfield, the crew set fire to the ship and climbed the fence surrounding the airstrip. The crew ran away and was split into two parties. One of them was composed of LANGLOIS, NEWTON and COPLEY. I shall not speak of the three others.

Langlois and his two friends walked in circles all night in the neighbourhood of Antwerp and were contacted the next morning by a Belgian patriot

MR. R. DEMOULIN, living presently 14 rue Montebello, Antwerp.

He hid the three airmen in a wheat field and supplied them with food and cigarettes. In the evening, he came back and took the British to the farm of

Mr. Alphonse de VOOGT, Fermier, KAPPELLENVELD, Boushout. ANTWERP.

where they slept one night. In the morning they were given civilian clothes and taken by

Miss Van ECKHOVE, 14 rue Montebello, Antwerp to the house of

Mr. P. DUQUENNE, 146 Avenue de Belgique, Antwerp, where they slept night.

The Germans had been so surprised to see the ship take fire on their airfield that they did not think at first that the crew was safe. Moreover they tried to fight the fire with their extinguishers. At dawn they knew that the airmen were not in the wreckage and they sent patrols everywhere. It was most urgent to put space between the British and the Germans and

Miss RAYMONDE TROCKAY, 32 Quai Orban, Liège, together with Mr Duquesne took our friends to Brussels, where Mr Duquesne left, and Miss Trockay, knowing people in Liège, took again the train and arrived in Liège with Langlois, Newton and Copley at the house of the old

Doctor de BIE, rue de la Station, Chênée, Liège.

This house was visited by a lot of people as Doctor de Bie belonged to the Red Cross and had an office sending parcels to Prisoners of War. Therefore the three airmen did not like to stay too long in that house fearing that people would speak... what they did of course. Two days after their arrival there, a big part of the city already knew about British airmen being hidden in Chênée and

Chevalier A.G.PASTEUR, living in "Le Bersail", Embourg, Liège, thought that it was high time to move them before the Germans heard the story.

He visited them and introduced himself. He had been belonging to the Royal Flying Corp as Liaison officer of the Belgian Army during the previous war and could speak English. He learned that the airmen had just boated Aachen. The Tyre and rubber factory Englebert was flat. When he told Langlois that this factory was the German branch of the Englebert works of Liège, and that he had been the manager of the destroyed plant there was some excitement.

Together with MR Pierre HACHA, 5 rue J.B. Neunier, Bruxelles, they took the decision to transfer the airmen to the house of Hacha's sister,

Mrs Henry de RIJCKER, Embourg par Chênée, Liège. Henry de Rijkker is Professor at the University of Liège. In this house they stayed three days. The two young children were asking so many questions that it seemed better to move again. May be our friends will remember that they heard a speech of H.M. the Queen at the E.B.C. while staying there.

Up to now, nobody had succeeded to contact a line of evacuation.

Hacha transferred the airmen to the cottage of

MR. FRANÇOIS, "Bois-le-Comte", Comzé-Andoumont. Mr François lives presently at Uaines Mélite, REMICOURT, Belgium.

As the Germans had heard something, the François were anxious to be discovered and they had invited the Consul of Italy for the evening. Of course the latter did not know that his hosts were sheltering airmen. If the Germans had come for a search, they would not have insisted when seeing the Italian Consul. Hacha had contacted a lot of friends, and among them

Mrs Henry MASSON, 34 Quai Nativa Liège, who knew an agent connected with an Information service. She arranged a meeting between Hacha and

Bailé V. WITMEUR, 195 rue de Campine, Liège, who was a pilot of the Belgian Air Force and belonged to the organization Beaver-Bâton, connected with U.K. Hacha and Witmeur arrived in Comzé-Andoumont, in the afternoon of 14th August 1941. The François had left their house, and they found the three

airmen at the first story of the house. Langlois and Newton were listening to the radio and Copley was just having a bath. Hearing noise, he came out of the bath-room and saw Witmeur climbing the stairs, alone and was rather excited. Witmeur asked a lot of questions, names, serial numbers, kind of mission, location of landing. Hacha and Witmeur were anxious because they had seen a motor-car of the Feldgendarmarie on the road, as they were reaching the cottage. There was a knock at the door. It was not possible to see who it was. Then they heard the visitor walking in the gravel, round the cottage. After several minutes, they saw what it was. A man, realizing that there was nobody in the house, had gone to the kitchen-garden and stolen vegetables.

The transfer to Liège was settled for the same afternoon. Witmeur started the first to see if the way was clear in Liège. Hacha and a friend Georges MARCHAND, Ingénieur à Ougrée-Marillaye, accompanied the airmen in the bus. It was raining heavily. As the people were staring at the airmen who kept silent, Hacha feared that they would be recognised and came out of the bus before the spot of the rendez-vous. He asked Langlois to follow the avenue and take the first street to the left. He could not miss it... but there was a misunderstanding and he missed it. When Witmeur arrived he saw Hacha with Newton and Copley. The rain was pouring down. They had stopped before the German firm "Acier Marathon", exactly where they could meet Germans. Hacha said that Langlois was lost. Fortunately, after having taken the second street to the left, Langlois came back. The bridge was clear. Witmeur passed, followed by the three friends. There was nobody in sight. As they reached the other side of the bridge, Witmeur saw the German Consul, who knew him. They stared at each other and he did not even notice the three men following.

The airmen had to follow Witmeur until he spoke to a man waiting on the avenue, along the river. This one was

Paul DONEUX, 30 rue Louis James, Liège.

Instead of being alone, as it had been settled, he was speaking to another man Eugène VANDEWERDT, rue Albert de Cuyck, Liège.

Witmeur did not know the latter. He stopped. The airmen stopped. As Doneux and the man seemed to be discussing, Witmeur approached and they said

- What have you done. These three men are not English, they are German. They have taken the papers on the corpses of the three airmen who have been taken out of the water.

- I am sure they are British. They were forced to land in Antwerp, on the airfield of Dourne.

- Where ? on the German airfield ? ... you fool, why not in the moon ? They have told you that because they know that you will not be able to enter the field and confirm their story. I do not take them.

and they had been obliged to wait 40 minutes before it was permitted. BCC Digital Archive



- I can't go backwards and take them in my house then.

- You'll be taken, said Doneux.

- I am sure that they are true British, though their story is amazing. Vandeweerd had left. Doneux and Witmeur entered the long street where the latter lived. Doneux said again :

- What makes you think that they are English ?

- Because they showed me photos of a motor with a British registration plate. I recognized well the man. Moreover I can speak sufficient English to notice a foreign accent. Look at the smallest of the three. He is Typical Anglo-Saxon.

- Have they got money with them ?

- Yes, Belgian, French and Dutch. There has been a doubt at the beginning because some of their bank notes had been issued here during the occupation. I saw it from the signature of the manager of the National Bank, but they told me that the people in Antwerp had given them some money and they were able to tell the ones they received in England and the notes they were given here. So that it seems all right.

- Look out. Two German officers are standing at the corner of the street near your house ...

- May be they are waiting the street car ?

- Not on that side ... turn back.

Witmeur and Doneux turned back, followed by the airmen. Vandeweerd had alerted other agents of Beaver Bâton.

Doctor Georges GILLES, 32 rue des Guillemins, Liège and Fernand CARLIER, 48 rue Albert de Cuyck, Liège. They had a meeting in the café where they were waiting.

Witmeur and Doneux turned round. Doneux said :

- Even if they are Germans, everything is not lost if I can reach the hôtel with them, but we must make sure that nobody follows us. I shall put them there till we are sure. Leave me now and wait for news. We shall send a message by radio, after we have confirmed supplementary details. If they are not O.K., we shall kill them.

It was seven o'clock p.m. when they entered the

Hôtel de Provence whose owner was Eugène DEMEURE, living now 12 rue Roule Liège.

The airmen had to tell again their story. They did not agree on the hour of the take off in England. One said they had left at midnight, another said forty minutes later. Finally they remembered that the time of departure had been fixed at 0 o'clock but that there was something wrong with the rear turret and they had been obliged to wait 40 minutes before it was repaired.



who? Not permitted.

They refused to give the name of the airfield, but gave three names of 'drones', and also the number of their squadron. It was necessary because of the circumstances. A message was sent by radio during the night, and it was answered favourably. They were not German.

Carlier and Edgard DEFAU, 47 Avenue de l'Observatoire, Liège, had found shelters for them. On 15th August, Defau came to the Hôtel de Provence with a friend of his,

Mr. René DEBAETS, 82 rue du Coq, Liège, and took Newton to the house of Debaets.

Mr. Jean HUFKENS, 8a, Place Saint Paul, Liège, took Langlois and Mr. Armand LOUWYFOSSE, 252 rue du Laveu, Liège, sheltered Copley.

They remained in these houses till the 8th of September. May be Langlois will remember that while he was staying at 'Mr. Hufkens', the latter was obliged to receive a member of the German Luftwaffe, who spent part of the evening. Langlois, in the next room could see the German pilot through the key-hole. *Actually only a curtain between us.*

During that time, the chief of the organization Beaver Bâton Mr. Nicolas MONANI, 4 Quai des Pêcheurs, Liège, visited our friends and contacted the "Escape Service". It was necessary to wait as a lot of airmen had been rescued during the month and it was not possible to pass them all at the same time.

However, Mr. Monani took further steps and it was arranged to transfer the airmen to Brussels where they would wait their false papers. On the 8th of September, Defau arrived with Copley at the house of Hufkens, Newton came also and Mr. Monani took the three airmen to the square before the Post-Office, where

Mr. Louis RADMECKER, Commissary of Police, rue Auguste Donnay 49, Liège, took care of them.

From here on.... what happened? It is not clear.

Mr. Rademecker must have accompanied the airmen to the station of Ans where a man or a woman (I could not find) took them in the train till Brussels. They passed the night at the house of a Lieutenant of the Belgian Army and his sister. Who are they and where do they live, I do not know. They stayed there the 8, 9, 10 and 11th September. Newton must already have been separated from Langlois and Copley, who remained together. Newton must have met afterwards a young girl about twenty years old, rather *Yes small* whose name is perhaps Jacqueline de Jonghe. He arrived in France safely, passed in Spain, Lissaton and arrived in U.K. in 1942. *During Day 41?*

Langlois and Copley were visited in their shelter, between the 8th and the 11th, by

No names given.

Baron Jacques Dony, 18 rue Jacques de Lalaing, Bruxelles.

He could not offer accomodation in his own house as he lived at his mother's, but he had a lot of friends and transfered Langlois and Copley to the house of Mr or Mrs X ? (I do not know the name). They slept the night of 12th September. Baron Dony came again and took our two airmen in the house of

*Monnet - back in chain.*

Mr. Jean VANDENHOVE, 66 rue Washington, Bruxelles. They *correct*

remained there till the 2nd of October 1941. The German Geheime Feld Polizei, raided the house on 2nd October and took Langlois, Copley and their host Jean Vandenhove, after a pursuit in the sewers running from the house. It took them seven hours to get hold of them. Transferred to the prison of Saint Gilles,

Yes

No.

*How long*

Langlois and Copley remained about a fortnight before being sent to Germany. Langlois had been taken with secret papers containing information which had been given to him by Hufkens and hidden in a cake. The Germans must have found them, but at that time, and during several months, nobody in the Organisation Beaver-Bâton, knew what had happened to the airmen. Vandenhove, who was probably only an indicator of Baron Dony, never spoke. He must have been specially courageous, because though terribly beaten, the Germans never succeeded to get something from him. Last time he was seen by two fellow prisoners, he had been transferred to Germany and tortured in such a way that his fellows had been obliged to carry him. He died two days later.

Yes.

Considering the list of names, the chain is nearly complete.

Now I should like to know if the names of a Miss Tellier and a Miss Vandijk have something to do with this chain. Could Langlois or Copley remember something about them, their age, their address?

Now this is what happened to the members of Beaver Bâton.

All except one, were searched by the Germans. The owner of the Hôtel de Provence, Eugène Damsure escaped. Witmeur was arrested the first in April 1942. Monami succeeded to go to U.K. in Spring 1942, but was taken again when landing with parachute in June 1942. Doctor Gilles, Commissaire Radenecker and Baron Dony were sentenced to death and shot. Vandeweerd was killed. Donsaux, obliged to hide himself was found dying alone in an abandoned house at the liberation of Brussels and died. Carlier and Debaets died from starvation in the concentration camps of Germany. Defau, Hufkens, Monami and Lovenfosse remained about two years in Dachau or Oranienburg, and came back in a bad shape. There is still a doubt about Debaets whose death is not official.

As the three other members of the crew of the Wellington, Mac Laren, H. Burrell and Porteous, they had taken the direction of Antwerp and were sheltered during a period of several weeks, by

*Jean Hufkens captured in Paris  
had previously escaped from St. Gilles prison*

Mme de BROECKHAER, 21 rue Geullincks, Antwerp.

They were visited there several times by

Lt. Commander W. GRISAR, Royal Navy, H.M.S. "Royal Athelstan"

13 rue du Prince, Antwerp.

At the end of August 1941, I was informed that three airmen belonging to the crew of Wellington W 5423-"G" wanted to go back home. The information came via Pasteger-Bacha. I gave the names of Langlois, Newton and Copley, telling that in order to get the O.K., the others had to give the same names. They never succeeded to reach England, but I know nothing more about the story.

When Lt. Commander Grisar arrived in England in 1942, he went to the Air Ministry and gave a report of what he knew about the landing of the Wellington on the German airfield, and helped thus to confirm the report of Newton who had been alone lucky to get back safely.

I realize that my style is smoky and excuse me to have been so long.



7/10/1945.

Emile V. WITMEUR

195 rue de Campine, Liège.