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AIRSHOW

CAF FRENCH WING - BULLETIN MENSUEL - MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
PUBLIC EDITION

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EDITORIAL

The new bureau's office is now effective and it is in humid and somewhat cpmd weather that we held our first meeting at the hangar in Le Plessis- Belleville on Sunday the 26th of January.

Before the meeting, we discussed Roger Robert's project of an article dedicated to the Commemorative Air Force and the French Wing, which will be published in the next issue of Pégase, the air and space museum's magazine. We also discussed a series of articles on other CAF units, to be published in Airshow.

Claude gascon, our former Finance Officer, then passed on all relevant documents and material to Jean-Yves Cercy, and all necessary paperwork for our continued operations was signed.

The cost and garanties of our insurances, our relationships with the airfield's management and the sponsorship system of the Spirit of Lewis were some of the topics of the meeting.

Our annual planning is not definitive yet, but we can already tell you that we will be present at the Ferté-Alais airshow during the Pentecost weekend, thanks to our friend and member Jacqueline Clerc who negiocated to make our presence possible. Thank you, Jacqueline!

Stéphane Duchemin

RAYMOND DANIEL, AIR FORCE CADET

(2ND AND FINAL PART)

LET IT BE HUSHED

Airshow - Public Edition

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NEWS

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THIS PAGE'S CONTENT IS FOR MEMBERS ONLY.

Past times... February 11, 1939

By Roger Robert

"BEN" KELSEY BEATS AMERICAN TRANSCONTINENTAL RECORD

Photo US Air Force

One of the 13 YP-38 pre-production aircraft.

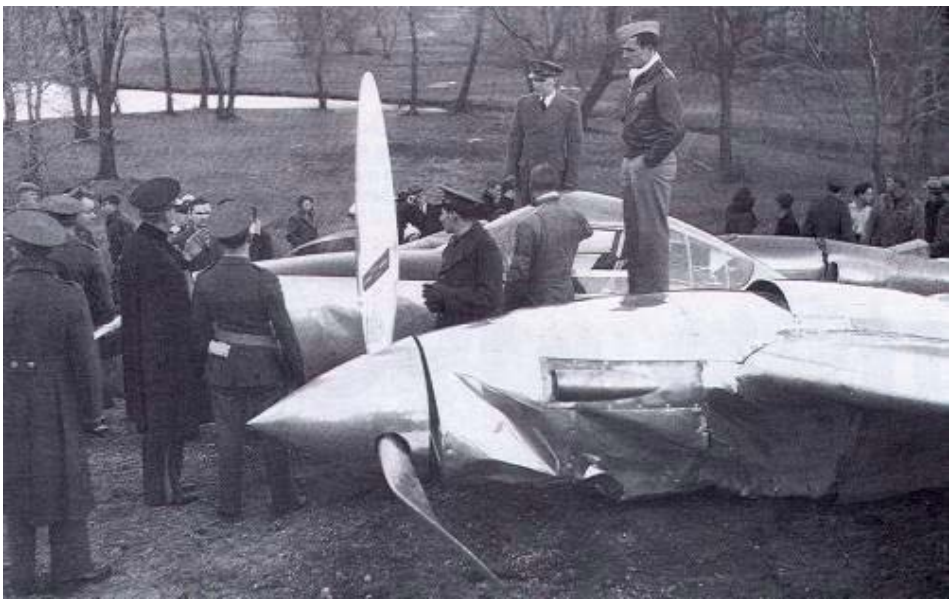
At 9:12 AM on February 11, 1939, "Ben" Kelsey took off from March Field at the controls of the XP-38 prototype in an attempt to break the Amercian intercontinental speed record from California to New York, then held by Howard Hughes in 7 hours 26 minutes and 25 seconds.

He landed in Amarillo, Texas, for the first of his two refuelling stops, then flew on to Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio, where he fueled up again and embarked on the last leg of his transcontinental flight.

He arrived over Mitchell Field in New York at 4:55 PM but his landing was delayed by several training aircraft in the circuit.

As a result, Lieutenant Kelsey reduced power while waiting for his turn to land. When he applied power again, his engines appeared to choke and delivered no power.

The aircraft crashed on a golf course near the airfield. Despite this accident, the Air Corsp ordered 13 pre-production YP-38 in April 1939. The total flight time was 7 hours and 45 minutes but the actual flight time was 7 hours and 2 minutes. ■



The prototype XP-38 ended its transcontinental journey on a golf course in Hampstead.

Benjamin S. "Ben" Kelsey

Born on March 9, 1906, Benjamin Kelsey was an aeronautical engineer and test pilot. He participated in the testing and development of the P-39 Airacobra, P-38 Lightning and P-51 Mustang.

On September 24, 1929, Kelsey flew as observer with Lieutenant Jimmy Doolittle's successful attempt to fly on instruments alone, with no visibility outside of the cockpit.

From late 1936 to early 1937, Kelsey flight-tested the 12-cylinder Curtiss Allison V-1710-C6 installed in the Consolidated XA-11A experimental plane. He was the first to fly the Bell twin-Allison XFM-1 Airacuda prototype on September 1st, 1937.

In addition to his career as test pilot, Kelsey also played a vital role in the procurement and development of modern American fighters in World War Two, working in collaboration with aircraft manufacturers to improve the quantity and quality of their production.

After the war, he held several staff positions and supported the hypersonic X-15 program. He died on March 3, 1981. ■

Let It Be Hushed

By Roy and Irene Grinnell

www.RoyGrinnell.com

This new painting by Roy Grinnell has a somewhat peculiar story. Touched by David Raikes' story, Roy decided to do what he does best to nonour his memory: with a painting!

Sgt. David Raikes was a WW11 bomber pilot and poet who wrote about the pain of losing his RAF comrades. Tragically, David was KIA along with his crew on a night bombing mission to Northern Italy, April 21, 1945, just 10 days prior to the end of hostilities with Germany in Italy.

The crew was assigned to RAF 18 Squadron, flying a Douglas Boston V (A-20K Havoc) BZ590 out of their base, Forli Aerodrome, near Rimini. The mission of April 21 was to bomb a river crossing at Taglio di Po and then perform reconnaissance of the Po valley. A skilled crew, Sgt Raikes was the pilot, Flt Sgt David Perkins, navigator, Flt Sgt Alexander Bostock, radio operator, and gunner, Australian Warrant Officer John Hunt (photo L to R). They were all 20 years old. At 2054 hours, they departed the base and never returned, listed as missing in action.

In July 2011, an Italian group of WWII amateur aviation archeologists called Archeologi dell' Aria found the wreck-

"Let It Be Hushed"

Let it be hushed, let the deep ocean close
Upon these dead. Others may laud the parts they played.
Raise monuments of marble in their names.
But we who flew with them and laughed with them,
We other crews who, living side by side,
In outward contacts slowly came to know
Their inmost parts would rather leave untouched
The wound we healed, the love we buried there.
These men knew moments you have never known,
Nor ever will; we knew those moments too.
And talked of them in whispers late at night
Such confidence was born of danger shared.
We shared their targets too; but we came back
Lightly we talked of it. We packed their kit,
Divided up such common useful things
As cigarettes and chocolate, rations stored
Against a rainy day that never came.
"And they cast lots among them!" Someone said
'it was a pity that he wore his watch;
It was a good one, twenty pounds' he said
He paid for it in Egypt. Now, let's see,
Who's on tonight. Ah, Taffy – you've a good one!
You'd better leave it with me." And we laughed.
Cold were we? Cold at heart. You get that way.
Sometimes we knew what happened; how they crashed.
It was not always on the other side.
One pranged upon the runway, dipped a wing,
The navigator bought it, and the gunner.
The other two got out, a little shaken.
Bob crashed when doing an air test, just low flying
-At least they think it was, they couldn't say.
The plane was burning fiercely when they found it;
One man thrown clear, still living, but he died
On way to hospital. The loss was ours, -
Because I shared an aeroplane with Bob.
We had to get another D for dog.
And some did not come back. We never knew
Whether they lived – at first overdue,
Till minutes changed to hours, and still no news
One went to bed; but roused by later crews,
Asked "Were they back yet?" and being answered 'No',
Went back to sleep
One's waking eyes sought out the empty beds,
And 'Damn', you said, 'another kit to pack';
I never liked that part, you never knew
What privacies your sorting might lay bare.
I always tried to leave my kit arranged
In decent tidiness. You never knew.
But that is past. The healing river flows
And washes clean the wound with passing years.
We grieve not now. There was a time for tears.
When Death stood by us, and we dared not weep.
Let the seas close above them, and the dissolving deep.

David Raikes

age of an aircraft buried in a field near the town of Ferrara, Italy. They had followed leads of elderly town folk who had heard and or seen a plane crash in flames in a nearby field. They had remembered the plane to be buried in the crater that had been made by the crash. It was assumed the aircraft had been brought down by German anti-aircraft fire. Through excavation, human remains were discovered and ultimately the crew identified from a recovered ring worn by David Perkins and a watch carried by John Hunt.

Two years later and 68 years since the loss, July 18, 2013, family members from the UK and Australia, members of the RAF and RAAF, representatives of present day 18 Squadron, and Italian friends came together to intern Sargent Raikes and his crew in a common grave at the Commonwealth war cemetery of Padua, Italy. Final closure and peace for the loss to the crew, family and friends. In 1954, "The Poems of David Raikes" was published. Every year, Radley College, Oxfordshire, UK rewards a poetry prize honoring David Raikes. " ■

Raymond Daniel, Air Force Cadet

The story of a young Frenchman at the CFPNA

US Air Force

Curtiss P-40F Warhawk fighters of the USAAF during a training mission near Moore Field, close to Mission, Texas in 1943. The lead aircraft has just peeled off to start a simulated attack. The best cadets were trained on this fighter on their way to becoming "combat-ready".

By Stéphane Duchemin. Second and final part.

March 19...All that is left for us to do is rest until Friday when a bus will take me to Craig Field which means FIGHTERS.../... March 24, five months ago we were going through this same gate in the opposite direction with not a clue on how to fly. And now here we are with 150 hours of flying on three different aircraft types."

In Craig Field they are introduced to their new aircraft the North American AT-6 "Texan": *"On March 28, we are finally sent to the flightline where we meet our instructors. I have Harshone. He seems like a good guy, somewhat distant but nice!*

Today we are not flying, we are studying the cockpit of the AT-6 and the starting procedure, gear operation (there is a retractable landing gear), hydraulically-actuated flaps (no more cranks, for constant speed and fuel mixture). A real puzzle. After noon ground school, of which 74 hours are to be done."

The first flight on thr AT-6 is a real change from the BT-13. Here are Raymond Daniel's impressions: *"March 30, 1944, I finally flew 1h20 on the North American "Texan" known as the AT-6. What a change from the*

BT-13. It flies very harmoniously. A slight pressure on the stick and rudder and it's turning. In a moment, one rises 300 ft without even noticing it. I learn to retract and extend the gear while flying (the horn is very useful). We do an orientation flight to know all auxiliary fields (there are 5 of them). But landing, what a job! When will I be able to land on my own? We think we are now pilots and then another, more modern airplane, and we have to start from scratch again; we are just as clueless as we were during our first flights in Tuscaloosa. At least this is the last step, after that we receive our wings! A certified pilot in two months if everything goes as planned! What anguish now that the goal is so close. I hope I will make it as in Tuscaloosa and Gunter. No time to fail and be washed out from the program".

Coll. Patrice Laverdet

Buildings at Selma / Craig Field, a familiar sight for the numerous French trainees who were sent to the airfield.

The first flights are difficult and for the first time the body has to endure new sensations: *"April 2, 3rd flight on the AT-6 and we are already doing aerobatics. It is much easier than with that hog of an airplane the BT-13 but for the first time ever I "black out". The "immelmans" in particular are very tough, and "barrels roll" [sic] have the nasty habit of reminding us of our last lunch. Fortunately, that will not be for today. Although I am not feeling well, I am not completely out, luckily. It seems to be a question of habit."*

Some of the training is not done in flight but is nevertheless invaluable to become a good fighter pilot: *"April 5, I don't fly but shoot clay pigeons, which happens to be quite interesting. At first I am not shining with my performance, but I progressively get the hang of it. My shoulder is quite bruised from firing 50 shotgun shots."*

Progression on the AT-6 goes on with formation flying, navigation, night-flying and more ground school. Even this close to earning the wings, the fear of washing out is still present and a mistake is always possible: *"May 9, I begin my night flying with 52 hours of AT-6 under my belt. I make 6 dual landings, including three "blacked out" ones. Fortunately, all goes well and after an hour I am sent off alone. Quite happy to have passed this milestone, I align for take-off. Green light, push the throttle to the wall and we take off. I make two patterns and landings. Now I am climbing to my assigned sector at 45,000 ft [sic] where I must fly in circles for one hour to get used to night-time flying. The air is calm with no disturbances. It's warm. I keep the canopy open. In the distance the lights of Montgomery are shining. Beneath me, the base is shivering with light. One can see the silvery pattern of the river under the moonlight. Above and below me, other aircraft are also circling.*

My flight is now over. I request

Coll. Patrice Laverdet

Other views of Craig Field, showing how important the base was.

Coll. Patrice Laverdet

The big day has come: the "Frenchies" receive their pilots' wings during a ceremony in Craig Field.

permission to land from the tower and begin my descent. Time to turn my lights on. The chances of colliding with another aircraft are quite high, as so many aircraft are circling in the area. There are red and green lights everywhere. I finally make it to my base leg. I flash my lights to indicate I'm coming in and here I am on approach. After landing, my night flying will be over. One less chance to get eliminated! Ah! A good landing. As soon as I am down, I turn my lights on and clear the runway. As I pass the tower, a green light is flashed at me: believing I have an airplane catching up behind me, I apply some power. Suddenly: WATCH OUT! Too late, an aircraft is right in front of me. I kick to the right. A big shock. The unavoidable has happened: after 50 hours, I've hit another airplane. I stop a few meters further, cut the fuel supply and the engine. Quite literally slumping in the cockpit, I think to myself: "What a stroke of bad luck!". Thought flash through my mind: the elimination, getting yelled at, paperwork to be done, endless questionnaires...!!!

Firemen and medics arrive on the scene and I am suddenly surrounded by 36 cars. Confused, I climb down the aircraft. The propeller is bent and the wing's leading edge is damaged. Let's see the other victim. What a disaster, I've done quite a job. The entire empennage is torn off and the fuselage is bent. Magnami was in the aircraft. We look at each other with a sad smile and we return to the flight line with our parachutes on our back. How will we be welcomed there? Probably not well as money comes first here in America, and I can already hear the blame. We've lost two aircraft worth $30,000! My instructor is there. The brave man looks more embarrassed than angry. Ah! Now for the torture room. Half an hour being harassed by two Captains and a Lieutenant. The interrogation is endless. I am blamed for taxiing too fast, but it is ultimately recognized that the tower is largely responsible for the accident, having flashed a green light instead of a red one. Nobody mentions elimination from the program.

At two o'clock in the morning, I finally manage to go to bed. I struggle to fall asleep and spend a bad night, with the fear of elimination always in my mind. So close to receiving my wings! Only some ten hours to go.

May 10, 1944, Magnani and I are summoned to the mandatory examination that follows every accident. I write a lengthy report of the accident, mentioning every detail.

That evening at six, we are back on the flightline as there is more night-flying. With a worried heart I salute my instructor. He is smiling. That must be a good sign. You won't be flying tonight because you've done your three transition hours. Go to bed and sleep well, you'll fly again tomorrow evening. These few words mean everything is fine, that I am not eliminated and that the case is closed. I am not blamed for everything in this in-

Coll. Patrice Laverdet

A North American AT-6 "Texan" used in Craig Field to train future fighter pilots.

cident. Ah! Life also has its good moments."

After some 70 hours on the AT-6, the big day has arrived: *"May 23, the "Great Day" has finally come. For three years I've been hoping for this day to arrive. From the moment I made my first flight in Tuscaloosa 8 months ago, we have been swimming upstream with unrelenting energy to achieve what is a source of great happiness to us: receiving our pilot's wings. When we left Casablanca, there were 143 of us and only 37 are now graduating, fewer than a quarter of us. Indeed, the road has been long and difficult to get here. It is nine in the morning. We are all dressed smartly. We are off for the parade! Many curious people have come. It's quite warm for us. We make this final effort with a smile. What would we not do to become pilots? And now, seated before a richly decorated platform, we are awaiting that great moment. The American Colonel commanding the base delivers a speech in English, which we only partially understand. Another speech by some unknown person, and finally Capitaine Lamaison congratulates us in French.*

Coll. Eric Bellebon

Previously used by the "Tuskegee Airmen", the Oscoda airfield in Michigan state was used for advanced training of French fighter pilots. These P-40 were based on the field.

We are given our wings. With a throbbing heart, I hear my name called out and climb on the platform. The Colonel gives me a string handshake and pins the wings on me. A smart military salute to Capitaine Lamaison, who is handing out congratulations as the pilots pass in front of him.

To finish the ceremony, the orchestra plays the American anthem, followed by the Marseillaise while we are overflown by a tight patrol of aircraft with a familiar hum. What a beautiful day !!!

And now, like a flock of sparrows, we scramble to our rooms to pick our bags which have been ready for day as we are off on leave. Yes, ten long days of leave. We interrogate each other in the bus taking us to Selma. Where are you going in Birmingham? And you? Miami, Florida, how about you? To New York, and you? I am going to New Orleans on the Gulf of Mexico with

Coll. Patrice Laverdet

The 5th French detachment in front of a P-47 on October 8, 1944, in Oscoda. Raymond Daniel is kneeling, in 6th position starting from the right.

"Criticou". Let's not lose any time; we must grab the bus to Montgomery and at ten in the evening 5 of us Frenchies are in the express heading south.

After training on the AT-6, it's time to transition to fighters. The first one they will have to learn to tame is the Curtiss P-40. On the day of the Normandy landings, Raymond Daniel makes his first flight in that machine: *"June 6, 1944, A GREAT DAY ! There are always great days in aviation. Today I am sitting in the cockpit of my new aircraft, quite moved, trying not to forget anything in the procedure, I start the aircraft and here I am taxiing in "S" turns towards the runway. After a careful check of the magnetos, I test the radio. I align myself on the runway and the take-off is now in the hands of God. Full throttle. What a feeling, an incredible roar, 1500 horsepower pulling me at amazing speed. A slight pressure on the stick, I take off and retract the landing gear. Phew! That's done: taking off! The minimum safety altitude is 3000 meters, which is necessary as we are not very confident on our first flight. The long nose up front is quite impressive, especially in turns, which I initially make with very little bank. I'm alone in this aircraft which I've never flown before, and I will have to land in a moment !!!*

Coll. Eric Bellebon

Raymond Daniel with a big grin at the controls of a P-47 Thunderbolt.

Coll. Eric Bellebon

Raymond Daniel in front of his P-47 Thunderbolt.

For the moment, I'm flying with plenty of room under me and gaining a little confidence, turns are becoming tighter, dives faster and zoom climbs closer to the vertical. It's amazing: the slightest pressure on the stick and the 5 tons of the aircraft go up at the rate of 1,000 meters a minute. I dive at 600 kph, then black out coming out of it and regain 2000 meters in an instant (1500 horsepower !!!).

I recall the time in the Alps when, sweating water and blood, climbing to 2000 meters would take me 4 hours of great efforts. I always dreamed of high peaks ! I am satisfied now.

Ah! The tricky part now, the LANDING, turn on approach

Coll. Eric Bellebon

Raymond Daniel with two other pilots in front of a P-47 Thunderbolt nicknamed"Bonnie".

at 200 kph and diving with flaps out at 130 kph I try to land this aircraft. The tower is there to help. I here it telling me "Flare, pull, pull, pull lightly", and here it is: I've done a superb landing. I'm very happy and quite relieved! I come out of the airplane with a light heart. I am not a proud person but I do feel a certain pride and joy. I am now a fighter pilot who has flown a real fighter aircraft! In the evening we all celebrate...!

June 7, 1h30 of flying. I rendez-vous with Deybach over Enderson à 10,000 ft and we engage in a dogfight which is so fierce that we nearly ram each other at 300 mph. That's OK as in the heat of the action we give it our best. We keep maneuvering in split-esses, dives and climbs. We are now heading back to the field in tight formation. Watch out for the landing, which is catastrophic! At least three "booms"!

What do I hear? A P-40's engine quit and it crashed in the trees. I'm told it's Duffy. The poor fellow must be dead. The aircraft is a wreck, with its engine lying 300 meters further and the wings ripped off. We restlessly wait for the ambulance which is rushing towards us and, suprise!, that brave Duffy comes out with only a few scratches. Is that not the best of luck? He spends the evening telling of his ordeal to all of the curious visitors who want to see the P-40 survivor!

After only ten hours on the P-40, the pilots return to the AT-6 for advanced gunnery training: *"June 22... Despite everything, we are starting to shoot. Flying on the AT-6 after having had a taste of the P-40 is quite bizarre. We no longer fly it as an airplane but rather as a toy. Barely 600 horsepower! Strafing is very interesting. We dive on targets laid on the ground. At roughly 100 meters, a slight pressure on the trigger and the bullets whip around the target, and occasionally hit it! After flying at tree-level, we recover altitude in a climb. We also shoot at towed targets, which is even more interesting. The target is a canvas panel towed by another T-6..."*

And last but not least, the young pilots join the combat school in Oscoda and discover a big fighter, the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt, on which they will train and become proficient : *"August 7, 1944, after a long period with no flying, here I am encumbered by my flight gear escalating the P-47. My heart is beating faster than usual. I buckle up and double-check the instruments. Everything is fine. I start the engine and the mechanics remove the chocks. I call the tower, receive instructions on which runway to use and am now taxiing.*

I carefully run up the engine, close the canopy, tighten my straps, close the cowling flaps and trim the aircraft. After requesting clearance to take off by radio, I line up on the runway, lock the tailwheel and push the stick to the wall. A huge noise, the aircraft starts and accelerates: 80, 100, 120, 160 km/h, the aircraft leaves the ground after

Coll. Eric Bellebon

Raymond Daniel and squadron mates in front of a P-47 Thunderbolt on a snow-covered airfield in Germany after the war.

a slight pull of the stick and here I am alone in this aircraft which I've never flown before. At first, I barely dare to move the stick. I keep watching the instruments: oil and fuel pressure, cylinder temperature, revs, manifold pressure, dials, tachometer, altimeter, etc... God, there are so many things to attend to. Slowly I gain altitude and confidence. My turns get tighter and I even go for a few stalls. Now for the hard part, the landing... it's time to light them up.

Coming down to 2,000 ft, I overfly the runway, do a shy turn, lower the landing gear, change fuel tank, set the prop pitch, reduce power, final instruments check and with a heavily-beating heart turn into the approach. I manage to get aligned on the runway. I reduce the throttle a bit more, lower the flaps. Sweat is trickling down my back!! My God, I am going to overshoot. I cut the throttle, lower the flaps to the maximum. This bloody airplane is falling like a rock. I make a perfect arrival, straighten out at 180 km/h, the aircraft loses speed, the runway is flashing beneath the wings, a slight pressure on the stick, a small boom and there I am rolling down the runway. Carried by its momentum, the aircraft reaches the end of the runway, a slight jab on the brakes, unlock the tailwheel and happy to have successfully taken a new step in my flying abilities. I slowly fly towards the parking, what a relief when I take my helmet and oxygen mask off. I am so relieved!

Training continues with bombing and dogfighting exercises: *"September 1944... Today I began dive-bombing. It's fascinating, we dive practically straight down towards the target and in a crushing pull-out we drop a 500 lb bomb, climb back and sometimes are rewarded with smoke right on the target.*

Low-level bombing is also interesting. We fly 30 ft above the ground at 600 km/h to drop our bomb.

We also started strafing, which reminds me of what we did in Florida with the AT-6. The only difference is that we are now firing with six .50 caliber machine-guns.

October 7, shooting at towed targets. Another very amusing exercise. We climb in formation to 10,000 ft and one after another fire at a target towed by a Flying Fortress. At the right moment, a slight pressure on the trigger and fire pours out of the P-47. We zoom climb as close as possible to the Fortress. Sometimes, we do a slow roll under its nose before climbing another 1,500 ft and diving on it again.

October 11. Combat mission. We leave in pairs in formation up to 26,000 ft. Once we get there, we each go our own way for ten seconds, turn sharply and try to get on one another's "six". It's an infernal joust where the aircraft shudders and we constantly lose speed, dive sharply and then climb straight up again. Sometimes, we chase each other for 15 minutes with no results, going from 26,000 ft to 7,000 ft, then climb back to 26,000 ft and start diving and turning again. We often see beautiful white streaks appear on our wingtips. Ah! Flying is a real sport!"

A few more night-time flights and then: *"October 31, 1944. Today, I finished my training on the P-47 with 85 hours. I am theoretically ready for combat and am now a "combat pilot!"...*

After his training, Raymond Daniel was based for a little over a month in Washington and on December 9 was sent to a secret camp camouflaged in a forest on the Atlantic coast, ready to be sent out. He will spend Christmas there and will finally board a Liberty ship headed for Frabce on January 8, 1945. There he will be assigned to a fighter unit in which he took part in the liberation of France and invasion of Germany, remaining with the unit until after the armistice. ■

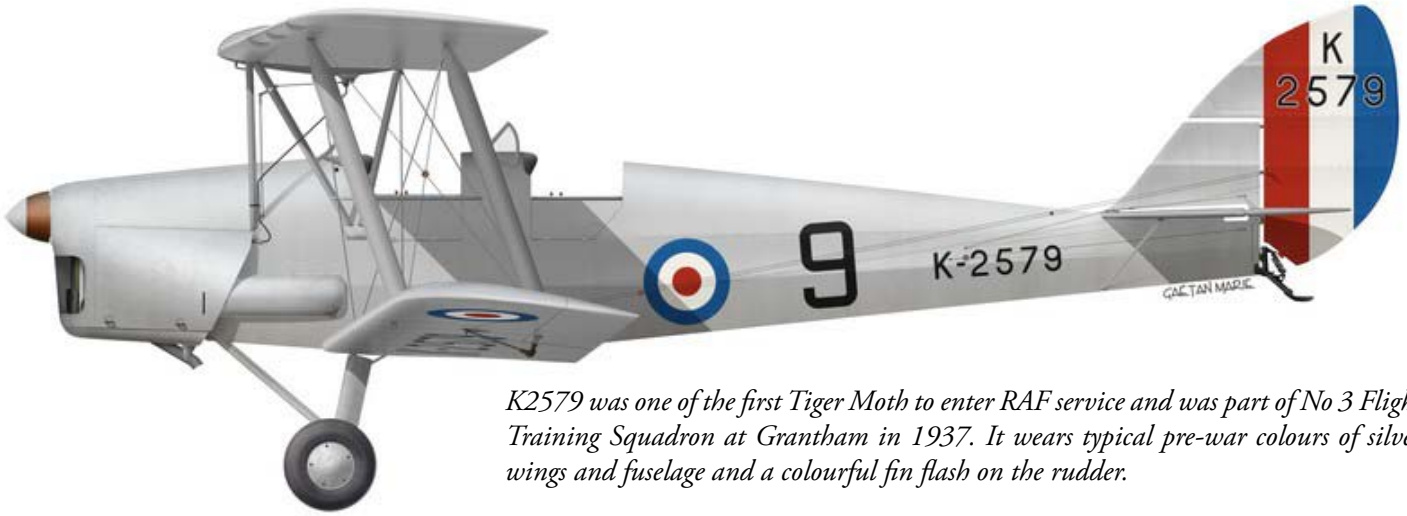
The author thanks Mr & Mrs Eric Bellebon and Mr Patrice Laverdet.

http://patrice.laverdet.pagesperso-orange.fr/

Battle colours: de Havilland Tiger Moth

Illustrations: Bertrand Brown (aka Gaëtan Marie)

www.bravobravoaviation.com



K2579 was one of the first Tiger Moth to enter RAF service and was part of No 3 Flight Training Squadron at Grantham in 1937. It wears typical pre-war colours of silver wings and fuselage and a colourful fin flash on the rudder.

With a war on, the colours became more discreet: This Tiger Moth, T8209, is preserved at the Krakow Aviation Museum and wears its original wartime scheme of No 25 (Polish) Elementary Flying School based in Hucknall in 1943. The upper surface were camouflaged to protect the trainer from enemy fighters, while the yellow undersides were meant to protect it from ...Allied anti-aircraft defences.

Belgium used the Tiger Moth after the war, while waiting for its Stampe SV-4 to be delivered. They were used for training and liaison, the last examples being retired in 1956. This aircraft carries a hood that could cover the rear cockpit for instrument flying training.

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You can contribute to the French Wing's activities according to your preferences, skills and availability and be part of a group of people sharing one passion.

To join the French Wing, contact us by email (see below).

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