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AIRSHOW

CAF FRENCH WING - BULLETIN MENSUEL - MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
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EDITORIAL

While the month of November was a quiet one for the French Wing, such was not the case for our nation. The cowardly attacks of Friday the 13th of November have touched all of our fellow countrymen, directly or indirectly. Our thoughts and prayers go to all of the victims of these attacks, as well as their families and relatives.

Our general assembly, which was supposed to take place on the 14th of November, was cancelled and we haven't yet decided on a new date, as we all have busy schedules with Christmas approaching.

The next newsletter will probably be published at the end of the month of December so we would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas!

- Bertrand Brown



PARIS ATTACKS 13 NOVEMBER 2015



PINK LADY: THE IMPOSSIBLE MISSION



Airshow - Public Edition

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French Wing General Assembly



Following the terrorist attacks that took place in Paris and Saint-Denis on Friday, November 13, the French Wing's staff decided to postpone the general assembly, which was to take place the following day at the Air & Space Museum in Le Bourget.

We haven't yet picked a new date for the general assembly, but it will probably take place in the first half of January. Finding a new date during the month of December at such short notice is complicated, as most of our members already have tight schedules. As soon as we have decided upon a new date, you will be informed by email and newsletter, as well as on the French Wing's website.

We thank all of our friends, and particularly our foreign friends, for their support and concern in these troubled times for our country. ■

MEMBERS-ONLY CONTENT.

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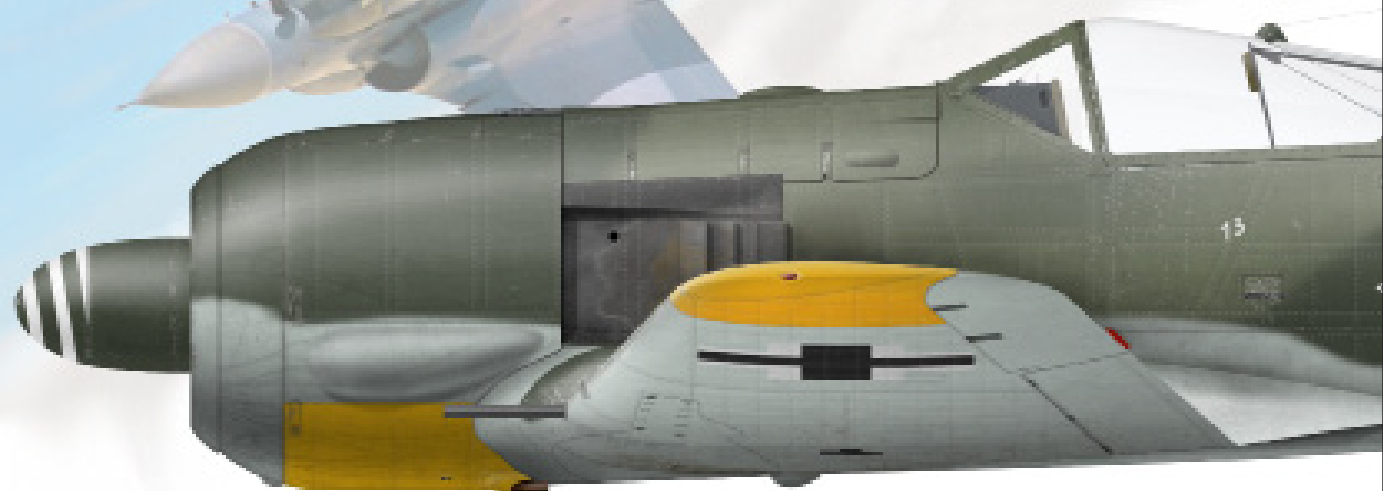
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"the Pink Lady"
l'impossible
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« Pink Lady: the impossible mission »

Extract from the book
« The Pink Lady:
l'impossible mission »
by Patrick Arno.

July 2007. A group of old friends who keeping airworthy a World War II American bomber is about to depart for yet another airshow in England. Shortly after take-off, things begin to go wrong... The crew finds itself in the midst of an apocalyptic storm, which disappears as suddenly as it appeared. Believing they are out of trouble, they pursue their trip only to discover a reality they can hardly grasp: attacked by German fighters, they finally realize that time and space have played a bad joke on them. As they land, they are still in July, but in the year 1944 !!!

A deep rumble pierces the horizon. Instinctively, we look in the direction of

the noise. A long hum informs us that a group is returning from a mission. In the control tower, which is filling with officers, everyone is looking south. Some have binoculars and can observe the show before the others. The first crosses are appearing against the blue sky background. They seem neatly arranged, as if on parade. As they get closer, the "boxes" begin to show gaps, meaning that some will be posted missing today ! I instinctively begin to count the number of aircraft in the first box to arrive :

"6... 7... 8 ! Four are missing ! Immediately, another appears: 5... 6. Only half. Before I can think about it, the third, high box, makes a high-speed fly-by : 8... 9... 10 ! I have a lump in my throat as I know perfectly well that, of all of the missing crew, many are already dead. Damned war ! I make a quick calculation of the number of aircraft that just overflew us: $8 + 6 + 10$! Twenty-four B-17 out of the 36 in the group. One third of the aircraft engaged have been destroyed or damaged, their crews struggling to survive and reach England. What a waste, I thought. The three bows disperse in an orderly fashion to make the final turn that will bring them in front of





the runway on which they'll land. Suddenly, a loudspeaker calls for emergency ambulance and fire-fighting vehicles to proceed to the "crash-landing" area.

A concert of tintinnabulating sirens and bells arises. The ambulance and fire-fighting vehicles race towards the area in an un-orderly fashion contrasting with the impeccable formation of the aircraft. The crash-landing area is outside the triangle formed by the intersection of three runways, parallel to the south-west/north-east runway.

The vehicles have barely arrived that a first B-17 arrives. Its pilot is going to attempt a wheels-up landing. Its wheels aren't lowered, its electrical circuit must be out. The right inner engine is out, trailing a long plume of white smoke.

The aircraft seems to make a proper approach. The sound of its idling engines is covered by the sirens of the firemen racing towards the aircraft in its final trajectory. The machine's nose is slightly high. The tail touches the ground first, delicately, almost grazing it. The B-17 slides in this uncomfortable, almost elegant, position for a few dozen meters and the nose begins to drop slightly. The aircraft's belly touches the ground in a deafening roar, sliding and digging a furrow and shedding parts torn off by the impact and slide. The propellers bend as if they were made of marshmallow. One of them detaches itself and flies away spinning, bouncing



two, three times on the ground before coming to a halt. An engine is torn off and slides beneath the wing. In a grinding of damaged metal sheets, after pivoting slightly to the left, the great bird halts. The whole sequence only lasted a few seconds.

The cloud of earth and dust slowly settles down.



Le nuage de terre et de poussière soulevé se repose petit à petit. Wisps of smoke rise from what is now a shapeless heap of metal. The firemen are already busy spraying the half-desintegrated fuselage of what was still a Flying Fortress five minutes ago.

From where we stand, we can't see the rear door and I can say how many men get out. But on our side, the forward evacuation door has been unlocked, and the men emerge one after another. I count them: 2... 3. I think that's the pilot, co-pilot and flight engineer. The

navigator and bombardier, whose work stations are located in the nose of the aircraft, must have moved to a safer location, probably the radio compartment, which serves as a refuge in the case of a crash-landing.

We don't have time to dwell on this aircraft that another one appears to make a crash-landing of its own. With its left wheel pitifully hanging beneath its engine, it seems badly hit. It's also missing more than a third of its right wing where the outer engine is burning. The propeller is slowly milling. Its electrical circuits are probably out of order as well, and it can't retract the wheel to land in a cleaner configuration which would be less hazardous. The pilot did not choose the events, but the events that have imposed themselves. The aircraft softly descends on an almost-normal path.

With his wings level, the pilot hops over the north/south runway and lands on his valid wheel. He manages to keep the aircraft rolling straight for several ever-lasting seconds but he will eventually have to land the Fortress at any cost, or risk crossing the south-west/north-east runway that is approaching fast. That is the runway which the oth-



er returning aircraft are to use.

As the aircraft creeps down towards the ground, the extended wheel begins to fold and returns to its bay. It wasn't locked, a fortunate thing! The pilot understands he can land his aircraft on the belly without the risk of flipping it over. He flattens it as best he can. Everything is going well, the crash unfolding as for the previous B-17, when there suddenly is an explosion ! It's the right engine fire, whose flames were dangerously grazing the wing's metal sheets. They are red-hot and ignite the wing fuel tanks. The explosion unsettles the aircraft, which abruptly obliquely towards the right before coming to a halt in a burst of incandescent debris. The wing's punctured fuel tanks ignite and explode one after another. Great mushrooms of black smoke of burned fuel rise in the sky. The firemen try to move in to fight the fire, but the unbearable heat prevents them from getting closer. A few agitated shapes can be seen around, and then a shadow engulfed in flames runs away before dropping in the grass, twisting in pain. Two medics have followed him and roll him in a blanket to snuff out the flames. The B-17 is now a gigantic furnace, and the men around it can't get any closer without exposing themselves to the fire, which is voraciously consuming any form of life. Only one man made it out of the inferno. Nine remained captive to the flames and debris. I feel like screaming, shouting that it's unfair, that they haven't deserved this ! My eyes tear up and big tears come rolling down my cheeks. I'm crying ! I'm enraged ! It's the only response I have to this horrible show !

Poor guys. To think they weren't even twenty years old, that they were living their mens' lives without having had the time to be children. Not yet adults, but heroes already. Yes, that is how I pictured them already. Congratulations, guys. What you've done will remain deep in my heart forever. How many men will understand, one day, how much they owe you ? I love

and admire you, guys, and I don't even know if I would have the gut to stay as stoic as you were in such circumstances.

No one ushers a word. It's too hard. It can't get rid of the lump in my throat. I can't even swallow. I look at André, Michel, the others, Roger, Gaston, Maurice... They all have shiny eyes and wet cheeks, and looking at each other only makes things worse.

"Please excuse us, Colonel, says André. We are not used to such sights but, better than you, we fully now how much we owe them."

We wander silently, our heads low and hands in our pockets, bent by pain. The B-17s are landing one after another on the south-west/north-east runway, but we don't feel like watching them. We've had enough for today !

We pile up in the GMC and drive towards the base's exit. The driver makes a left turn on the road that leads to Polebrook, drives a few hundred meters and on the right appears a pleasant Victorian manor in the middle of a grove : Ashton Wold House !

"Well, old chap ! They certainly are treating us nicely", says Michel in an attempt to get our minds off things and lift the morose atmosphere that is surrounding us. ■



Photo USAF

BATTLE COLOURS: HURRICANE ACES

Profil: Bertrand Brown (aka Gaëtan Marie)

www.bravobravoaviation.com



Douglas Bader is one of the best-known British aces. After losing his two legs in crash before the war, he managed to be reassigned as a fighter pilot at the beginning of the conflict. During the battle of Britain, he took command of No 242 Squadron, manned primarily by Canadian pilots. He was credited with 20 aerial victories before being shot down and captured in August 1941.



Ken Mackenzie was a Battle of Britain Hurricane ace with 501 Squadron. On October 7, 1940, he damaged a Messerschmitt Bf 109 and ran out of ammunition. Fearing the enemy pilot would make it back to base and survive to fight another day, he rammed him with the wingtip of his Hurricane (V6799), sending the German down in the Channel. He was credited with 11.5 victories before being shot down and captured in September 1941.



Although he only scored one victory and is not officially an ace, le F/L James Nicolson of No 249 Squadron deserves to be mentioned here as the only Fighter Command pilot to receive the Victoria Cross during World War Two. On August 16, 1940, his aircraft was hit by cannon fire from a Bf 110 and began to burn. As he was about to bale out, he realized his opponent had overshot him. He climbed back in his burning cockpit and shot him., suffering grievous burns in the process.



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