

# THE DROPZONE

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## WAR HEROINE, 93, GETS HER WINGS AT LAST

By John Harding

PEARL WITHERINGTON who was denied the Military Cross because she was a woman, sent back the MBE offered to her in recognition of her war-time exploits in the SOE.



**Pearl Witherington as a young SOE operative**

Photo credits: Daily Telegraph

During the war, the Nazis had placed a bounty of one million Francs on her head and a civilian honour was of no interest to a person who had commanded 1,500 French resistance fighters. She was a real life Charlotte Gray\* who risked all to serve her country and a small ceremony recently held in France was a sign that it might never be too late to obtain a thank-you from ones country.

Some 63 years after she had made what a parachute instructor called an "almost recklessly low jump" from 300 feet into unfamiliar territory behind enemy lines, she finally collected her parachute wings.

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### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Tom Reeves pays tribute to David Mace
- Keith Taylor reviews the development of the B-17 Flying Fortress
- Harold Watson recalls a mission to Denmark with a report from one of the recipients of the supplies

\*Charlotte Gray

By Sebastian Faulks

A novel, set in Occupied France

Pearl, now known as Pearl Cornioley, the widow of a resistance fighter she married after the second World War, felt that she should have received her wings to mark her parachute training before the drop into occupied France in 1943.

Her case was, however, overlooked, probably because of the secret nature of the SOE together with official reluctance to admit that women had undertaken such dangerous roles. However, in 2002 Squadron Leader Rhys Cowsill, a RAF parachute jump instructor saw her being interviewed on television and travelled to France to meet her and take up her cause.

He joined Major Jack Lemmon of the Parachute Regiment to present the wings at the retirement home where Mrs Cornioley now lives in Chateaufieux. Still spirited despite "a few rusty spare parts", Mrs Cornioley said how thrilled she was to receive this belated acknowledgement. She said that she did not refuse the MBE because she considered it an insult, but the MBE is a civilian award and if you are going to do a job at all, do it properly.

Mrs Cornioley was born in Paris to English parents and worked in the British Embassy. When the war began, she escaped to England and put her fluent French to use after joining what she did not realise at the time was the SOE. She was dropped from a RAF Halifax near Chateauroux in the southern Loire and joined the "Wrestler" resistance group of Maquis fighters until France's liberation.

The story of her exploits was published in 1997 with the title of "Pauline" which was her French codename. She says that she knew she risked capture and that the training had prepared her and others to hold out and keep quiet for at least 48 hours to let others get out.

The most awful things that she remembers are actually travelling by unheated trains in the bitter winter of 1943/1944. She blended in as much as she could, carrying plenty of pro-German newspapers and being tall and her hair in plaits like German women, she was never interrogated.

She admits that it was all very dangerous but she never regretted the experience. "It made me very open minded and added great richness to my life".

Don Touhig, minister with responsibility for veterans said that he was delighted that Mrs

Cornioley's long wait for her wings was over and praised her outstanding bravery. He added that it was clear that her determination and selfless commitment contributed in no small measure to the success gained by the Allies.



**Pearl gets her wings**

Photo Credits: Daily Telegraph

## Visitors

Since Easter, in addition to the weekend visitors, the museum has entertained 15 groups who made day or evening visits. These included The Bentley Owners Club, Rothwell Wine Club, Northampton Grammar School, Ranger Scouts, Desborough Civic Group and various Local History Groups and Church Groups. There are four more bookings through September/October.

We also had a visit by the curator of the museum at Bruntingthorpe.

Congratulations go to him and his team for obtaining funding for the restoration of the Vulcan bomber.

## THE BOEING B 17 FLYING FORTRESS By Keith Taylor

To-day the name of Boeing is synonymous with the successful production of civil airliners, despite strong opposition from Airbus Industrie in Europe. Yet times have not always been so good. For the latter part of the 1920s and 1930s Boeing was struggling to survive.

William E. Boeing was born in Detroit on 01-10-1881, the son of a wealthy timber merchant. His fascination with aviation began with a flight in a Curtiss seaplane from Lake Washington in July, 1914. He struck up a friendship and an informal partnership with a U.S. Navy Officer, Commander G. Conrad Westervelt. They produced their first aircraft, the B & W Model 1 (B & W from their names) in 1916.

The entry of America into the first World War in 1917 gave Boeing its first production order. Peacetime, however, heralded lean times for Boeing, the P26 "Peashooter" of the early '30s was a life saver, as was the Boeing 247 which provided the company with much needed revenue, some of which funded the model 299 (later called the B17).

In May, 1934 the U.S. Army Air Corps announced a competition for a new multi-engined bomber (which in the 1930s included twin engined aircraft). All entrants had to be built and flown to Wright Field, Ohio for evaluation in late 1935. Boeing's Model 299 combined features of the 247 and the as yet unbuilt XB-15. It was rolled out on the 17th July, 1935 and its first flight was made on the 28th July.

A reporter for the Seattle Times, Dick Williams wrote "The model 299 was a "flying fortress" due to its size and the number of guns it carried". Boeing used the capital Fs and the name "Flying Fortress" was copyrighted and adopted by the A.A.F. On the 20th August, 1935 the model 299 flew from Seattle to Wright Field in the record time of 9 hours and 3 minutes at an average speed of 233mph to cover the 2,100 miles. Although test flights on the



The Boeing Model 299.  
Prototype for the B17 series

model 299 had only totalled 14 hours, so far it had been an outstanding success. Immediate production orders were rumoured.

The Model 299 was powered by four Pratt and Whitney R-1690E Hornet engines of 750 h.p. giving it a cruising speed of 236 mph at only 63% power. One of its safety features which had been designed to protect the aircraft, ironically led to its demise. Due to the large area of the flying control surfaces, elevators, ailerons and rudder, which might have been damaged by high winds when at rest on the ground, control locks had been fitted. These were operated by a single pushdown/pullup lever situated next to the tail-wheel lock in the floor between pilot and co-pilot seats, having the same effect as a steering lock fitted to cars.

Shortly before completion of the final tests, the model 299 was well ahead of its competitors, the Douglas DB1 and the Martin B10. The pilot, Major P.O. Hill, took off with the lock engaged. Tragically the aircraft entered a steep climb, stalled and crashed killing Major Hill. Observer Lee Towers died two days later. Co-pilot Putt and the other crew members all survived although they were seriously burned. Since the model 299 could not complete the required tests it was disqualified. Douglas won the contest and secured an initial order for 133 B18s which were essentially a bomber version of the DC2, a forerunner of the famous DC3 Dakota.

All was not lost however. The 299 had made a lasting impression on the evaluation team and in January, 1936 a contract was awarded for 13 aircraft (one static for tests and 12 flying machines) worth US \$ 3.824 million, thus saving Boeing's financial bacon. The 299 had cost, including insurance after the loss, U.S.\$ 500,000. These 13 aircraft were given the designation YB17. These YB17s were externally very similar to the 299 but under the skin they featured many changes. The major change was the fitting of more powerful engines, 1000 hp Wright R-1820-39 Cyclone nine cylinder single row radial engines. Flying the Boeing flag, goodwill missions were flown to Argentina and Brazil, breaking all existing records.

Despite this, politicians and the U.S. Navy were unsure of it and the role of bombers generally and were opposed to anything which might threaten their supreme position. Amongst its supporters, however, were Brigadier General Frank Andrews and Lt. Curtis LeMay. These two men sparked off a huge row between the Air Corps and the Navy. Three YB17s of the 2nd B.G. intercepted the Italian liner "Rex" some 700 miles out to sea.

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Andrews lost his job and the Air Corps were banned from operating more than 100 miles out to sea (temporarily anyway).

The **YB17A** was first flown in April 1938, having Wright Cyclone R-1820-56 engines with turbosuperchargers as well as the Norden bombsight. This aircraft was probably responsible for finally convincing the U.S. "powers that be" of the virtues of the long range bomber.

The **B17B** Fortress was the next model, basically similar to the YB17A. It had a newly designed nose but its maximum permissible weight increased to 46,178 lb (20,946 Kg).

**B17C** Fortress - engines uprated and increased turbo boost Wright R-1820-65. Gun blisters removed and replaced with flat panels. 20 B17Cs were delivered to the Royal Air Force No.90 Squadron at West Raynham, Norfolk in April, 1941. moving later to Polebrook, Northants. Many lessons were learned from the B17C. These B17Cs (R.A.F. name Fortress I ) actually made a mockery of the name "Flying Fortress" since they were in fact, very vulnerable to frontal and tail attacks by fighters.

**B17D.** Outwardly similar to the C except for engine cowl flaps. Other improvements included self sealing fuel tanks, armour protection, twin 0.50" guns in ventral position. The electrical system changed from 12V to 24V. Low pressure oxygen system was installed and bomb racks were modified.

**B17E.** Incorporated major changes like the completely redesigned rear fuselage of greater width, length and depth. New vertical tail surfaces with a large fin fillet. Overall length was increased by 5ft 11in (1.8m). Armament now comprised a single 0.30in machine gun in the plexiglass nose, single 0.50in guns in the waist positions, twin 0.50in guns in the tail with the gunner housed in a compartment below the rudder. Twin 0.50in in the mid upper turret behind the cockpit and twin 0.50in guns in the ventral ball turret. Engines were Wright Cyclone R-1820-65.

**B17F.** Certainly the first to be subject to mass production with 3,405 machines built in a period of only 15 months. The B17F was manufactured at three different locations. The manufacturer's code consisted of two letters i.e. Boeing = BO , Douglas at Long Beach, California = DL and Lockheed-Vega at Burbank, California = VE. These twocode letter were added at the end of the aircraft designation i.e. B17F-50-VE (or DL or BO) Externally it was very similar to the B17E except for a slightly longer unframed plexiglass nose cone. Under the skin there were more than 400 changes including uprated R-1820-97 engines. Maximum weight increased to

65,500lb (29,711 Kg).

**YB40** – could be subtitled "It sounded like a good idea at the time". The YB40 was designed as an escort gun-ship in the absence of long-range fighter escorts which were not available until the P51 Mustang became operational in December, 1943.

The YB40 was a standard B17F with the upper coaming between the cockpit roof and the wireless operator's hatch shortened to take another mid-upper turret. Waist gun windows were staggered and housed twin 0.50s and a chin turret was fitted. No bombs were carried but ammunition was doubled and some of it stored in the bomb bay. The all up weight was a staggering 72,000 lb. A lot of armour plate was carried.

The idea was to fly in formation with the bombers, protecting them with their 16 guns but a tail heavy centre of gravity caused by the armour plate made formation flying very difficult

Also, once the normal B17s had dropped their bombs they were considerably lighter (and therefore faster) than the YB40. The result was that the bombers had to slow down to let the YB40s stay with them, a dangerous thing to do over enemy territory. After nine missions between May and July,1943, the idea was abandoned. They realised that the chin turret and staggered waist gun positions were good ideas and these were adopted in the B17G as well as some late B17Fs.

**B17G.** Basically similar to the F but had the chin turret and later marks had a shorter but larger rear gun compartment known as the Cheyenne Turret. The G was the last model of the B17 variants and the most numerous. 8,680 were produced (Boeing 4,035, Vega 2,250, Douglas 2,395 ). The RAF received 85 as the Fortress III. With mass production came great efficiency. In 1942 it took 54,800 man- hours to build a B17E. In 1944 it



Fuselage detail of a YB-40 showing twin gun waist Position installation and the second, mid-fuselage, dorsal turret

took just 18,600 man-hours to build the B17G. The B17E cost US\$ 298,000.

The B17G cost \$204,370 and in 1945 this was reduced to \$187,742. All subsequent variations after the war were modified B17Gs.

**XB/YB 40.** Heavily armed bomber escort. Idea abandoned after 9 ops.. Aircraft afterwards used as trainers.

**XB38.** B17E re-engined with 4 Allison liquid cooled in-line engines. Aircraft lost in crash.

**B17H / SB17.** Gs converted for air-sea search. Carried a droppable lifeboat by parachute.

**PB1W / PB1G.** Used by U.S. Navy painted gloss blue. Carried APS20 radar for anti – submarine patrol.

**QB17M / N.** Radio controlled from ground or mother ship. Collected radiation samples from atom bomb tests.

**DB17P.** Drone director aircraft to control QB17s (as above). RB17. Reconnaissance version of the B17. Formerly called F9. carried 6 cameras.

**TB17.** B17 used for training.

**VB17G / CB17.** VIP transport. Plush interior with sleeping accommodation. Served until late 50s.

**MB17.** B17 converted for use as a launching platform for guided missiles.

**JB17.** Post war engine test bed. Test engine fitted in the nose. Cockpit moved aft 52 in. to retain centre of gravity because of extra weight in the nose.

**XC108.** B17 converted to a personal transport for General Douglas MacArthur in 1943.

**XC108A.** B17 stripped interior for cargo. Upward opening freight door on port side.

**XC108B.** B17F converted to carry fuel in fuel cells in the bomb bay.

**BQ7.** War-weary B17Fs and Gs were stripped of all guns, bombing equipment and armour and then packed with 20,000 lb (9073 Kg) of high explosive. A two man crew flew to a certain altitude and course then bailed out and control was taken over by a mother-ship which guided the BQ7 to its target. Due to early radio control equipment being unreliable if not downright dangerous, the experiment known as



B17-F air tanker N1340N, converted in 1970.

“Aphrodite” was cancelled. Joseph P. Kennedy, brother of U.S. President John F. Kennedy, was killed in a parallel programme using the B24.

One aircraft “Gremlin Gus II” had the complete upper decking removed, leaving an open cockpit. It was never used operationally but was used as a runabout or hack.

#### OTHER EXPERIMENTAL B17s.

Project Reed. B17E. 41-9112 “Dreamboat” used B24 nose and tail turrets and B26 Marauder mid-upper turret.

TB17G-95VE. 44-85531. Painted all black and used for clandestine ops. In Vietnam, Oct 1957 B17G-95-DL 44-83785. Fitted with sky hook for picking up agents. Starred in the film “Thunderball”.

B17G-105-VE. 44-85784 Fitted with a manned wing-tip gunner’s station. Now the famous “Sally B”

B17F. Civil registration N1340N. Converted in 1970 and fitted with 4 Rolls Royce Dart turbo-props from a Viscount airliner. To preserve the C of G and accommodate the long turbine engines, the propellers extended nearly to the nose of the B17. Whilst fighting a forest fire in October 1970 it crashed, sadly killing its crew.

B17s were operated by USA, Britain, Bolivia, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Israel, Portugal, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark. Even Japan evaluated a B17D and E. The famous German KG200 had about seven or eight B17s.

It is rumoured that Hitler had prepared the famous test pilot Hanna Reitsch to collect him from the Chancellery in a Feisler Storch and fly him to an airfield (possibly Rechlin) where a B17 (The Germans even had the nerve to call them Dornier Do 200 !) was waiting to fly him to South America via the Azores but, as we all know, he was trapped in Berlin until his death.

B17 photo credits:

‘B17 Flying Fortress (Details and Scale)’ by Alwyn T. Lloyd and Terry D. Moore 1982



The Curtiss-Wright testbed mounted a reciprocating R-3350 engine in the centre location.

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At Creil, just outside Paris, the Institute Geographique Nationale (I.G.N.) operated 14 B17s on survey work well into the 1980s including 'Pink Lady', 'Chateau Du Verneuil' and three others now called "Sally B" and "Mary Alice", kept at Duxford, and 'Thunderbird', flying in the United States. "Chateau Du Verneuil" sadly crashed at Binbrook, Lincolnshire during the filming of 'Memphis Belle', fortunately without loss of life.

**B17 SURVIVORS**

COUNTRY	MUSEUM	FLYING OR BEING RESTORED TO FLY	TOTAL
Brazil	2		2
France	1	1	2
U.K.	2	1	3
U.S.A.	19	17	36
TOTAL	24	19	43
TOTAL SURVIVING B 17s:			43



**B17F 41-24539 Jersey Bounce (358 BS) VK-K**



**B17F 42-5434 Lady Luck (360 BS) PU-J**

Pictures reproduced by kind permission of Mark Styling, 303 rd BG (H) Association Hell's Angels

The Hell's Angels were based at Molesworth

## EDITORIAL

by John Harding

Welcome to our second issue for 2006. Firstly, may I apologise for the delay in getting this issue "to press". As some of you may know, Roy has had to step down due to pressure of work as the producer of our news sheet and Fred has taken up the challenge. We hope that, with Roy's continued help as an advisor that we will be able to produce a worthwhile issue with articles of interest to our members.

Following a recent committee meeting it is worth noting a number of points that were raised. The roof repairs mentioned in the Editorial of our last issue were again mentioned and the latest information on this extremely expensive project is that two contractors have examined the roof and, at the time of writing, one has submitted an estimate. No decision has yet been taken on when and how the renovation will take place. As we pointed out before, it needs to be decided whether this will be a complete or a partial repair.

The Classic Car week-end held in July was not entirely successful but Tom has, as a result, made quite a few contacts that will be of use next year. After discussion with some of this years entrants, Tom has decided that next year the event will take place on one day only, Sunday.

Fly tipping on the airfield has become something of a problem. An increasing amount of rubbish is being dumped on the road leading across the airfield and Fred has met with representatives of Northamptonshire County Council Highways Department and the land owners in an effort to put a stop to this ongoing problem. It should also be noted that the area around the memorial is often subjected to the same objectionable habit and although there is a nearby container, rubbish is still to be seen scattered around the site. Members who are passing by the memorial are requested to stop and help to keep the area as tidy as possible.

Roy's recent Treasurer's Report showed a healthy balance in hand but visitor numbers during June and July were considerably less than for the same period for 2005.

This could be due to the hot weather or the TV coverage of the football World Cup, but we hope that this is only a temporary blip and that for the remainder of the year attendance figures will increase and be comparable with previous years.

Since the publication of our previous issue, we have lost one of our most active members, David Mace, who sadly died early in June. Tom Reeves has written a short obituary to David and our sympathy goes out to Brenda, his wife who has also had to bear the trauma of the later death of David's father Bert - a double tragedy for her - in a period of just two months.

Lastly, although we are, for the time being, managing to find articles that we believe are of interest to our members, we would like to remind everyone that in order to produce our newsheet we need you to send in your views, comments and, where possible, articles in order to keep "The Dropzone" going as a worthwhile publication.



David Mace  
1948—2006

## OBITUARY

**DAVID MACE 1948 - 2006**

**A short tribute by Tom Reeves**

David was born at Nuneaton on the 10th March, 1948. He went to school at Kingsthorpe Grove, Northampton and later to Bective Senior School. He left school at the age of 16 and worked for a time in a solicitor's office and later at Burton's in the warehouse.

He joined the Air Training Corps (the A.T.C.) and was promoted to corporal, serving in that organisation for many years. His wish was to join the Royal Air Force as a pilot but it was during the medical examination that it was discovered that he was diabetic and from this he never fully recovered.

David joined the Harrington Aviation Museum Society in the 1990s and was a very active member, later becoming a committee member. He met his wife Brenda in 2000 and she also became an active member of HAMS.

He had two main interests in life, one was Unidentified Flying Objects (U.F.O.s) and he was a member of that society for many years. His second interest was the general subject of aircraft and it was this interest that took him to many air shows. He followed, in particular, the Duxford based B17 Fortress "Sally B" wherever she landed.

David made many friends during his time at the museum, being particularly remembered for his good nature and good humour, both being well borne despite his handicaps.

He will be sadly missed by us all.



David with some of his many friends at the museum.

## FRANCIS CAMMAERTS

### A Conscientious Objector who joined the SOE

Story and photo credits Daily Telegraph, edited by John Harding

In a recent issue of the Daily Telegraph the death was reported at the age of 90 of Francis Cammaerts who, in his earlier life, refused to be conscripted into the forces but later joined the SOE and served with distinction. We thought that his exploits are worthy of recording in "The Dropzone" and with this in mind we give below a precis of the original obituary.

Having refused to join the armed forces at the start of World War II, Francis Cammaerts eventually became one of the most remarkable members of the SOE. Based in Provence, he set up almost single handed, a Resistance Organisation comprising more than 10,000 fighters whose aim was to disrupt and severely hamper German troop movements and eventually to play a major part in the invasion into southern France.

He was known to his compatriots as "le Grand Diable Anglais" - the great English devil but he would not take this himself, always saying that the French were "no ordinary men".



FRANCIS CAMMAERTS SOE

He was born during the first World War, the son of a Belgian poet, and knowing what the war had done to his father's country made him determined to become a conscientious objector. As a result of this he was sent to work on the land in Lincolnshire where he met and married his wife.

A friend from earlier days in teaching had joined the SOE and it was he who realised that Cammaerts, who was bilingual would make an ideal recruit. Eventually Cammaerts was persuaded to give up his objections to military service and in July 1942 Selwyn Jepson, SOE's main headhunter, recruited him into the organisation. Jepson was later to say that Cammaerts was a man of the highest principles and having been put to work on the land by the Conscientious Objector's Board, his motives were "absolutely pure". His instructors during training were not too convinced about his suitability, describing him as a plodder with no flair for sabotage or leadership. They were soon to be proved wrong.

Cammaerts was promoted to Captain and was assigned to F Section which organised Resistance operations in France. He was flown into occupied France in a Lysander to work with the Carte network, a group of Resistants who operated across southern France. Shortly after his arrival Cammaerts was introduced to a Colonel Heinrich Verbeck who claimed to be anti Nazi and wanted to work with the Resistance.

Cammaerts distrusted him and it was later found out that Verbeck was, in fact, an Abwehr Sergeant who had been involved with a large spread of Resistance Networks. A French pilot who was in the SOE had been taken in by Verbeck, and had given away details of the Resistance Movement. So Cammaerts cut himself off from all contact with Carte and moved to the mountains to create his own Network which was code named Jockey and which would eventually stretch from the Mediterranean, north to Lyons and across to the borders with Switzerland and Italy.

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He often narrowly avoided capture and it was due to his wide circle of friends that he was saved. One of his two main lieutenants, Cecily Lefort was captured and tortured by the Gestapo but the system that Cammaerts had set up ensured that his network survived. On one occasion he had a narrow escape when taking some weapons from Avignon to Marseilles and was stopped by some SS troops who started to cut the seat material in the back of the car.

His associate spoke very good German said "What are you doing ?" and they replied that an American bomber had been shot down and they were looking for the crew. The reply was "You don't think that we have sewn them into the back seat, do you ?" The Germans laughed and left – the boot of the car which was unlocked was full of weapons! On another occasion he was stopped after getting off a train in Avignon and a lot of time was spent looking over his papers. Eventually he coughed and bit his lip to draw blood which he spat on the platform whereupon his papers were quickly returned to him – the Germans being afraid of TB which was common at the time.

His Network aided the speed of the Allied advance in the area and the capture of Grenoble, for example, was speeded up considerably when his Maquis guides led troops over the mountains to gain the city's surrender within a week. Cammaerts was promoted to lieutenant-colonel and decorated with the DSO, Legion d'Honneur, Croix de Guerre and the American Medal of Freedom.

After the war he returned to education and reached high posts in the profession. In 1989 he retired to the same region in France where he had served with the Maquis during the war.

On Tuesday, 5th September 2006, we were pleased to welcome to the museum  
**Mr M.R.D. Foot.**

Mr Foot is the SOE Historian and author of the books

"SOE in France" and  
'SOE The Special Operations Executive  
1940—1946'

## A Resistance Story

By Harold Watson

(Former Flt. Engineer, 161 Sqn. RAF  
Tempsford)

This is a story of a Resistance Drop carried out on the North East Corner of Zealand, Denmark on the 13<sup>th</sup> April 1945. It is told by a Resistance member on the ground and the Flight Engineer of the aircraft carrying out the operation.

Reports had been received that the German Forces were going to make a final stand at Copenhagen and it was vital that arms be delivered to the Resistance Groups close to the Capital.

Bill Hansen was a fish merchant at the small port of Sjaellads Odde. He had been a member of the Resistance for some time but his group had never received an arms drop. The Group consisted of 23 persons from the villages of Sjaellands Odde, Lumsaas, Hojby Sj and Nykobing Sj.

In his own words Bill Hansen describes the run up to the drop:

"A few days before the reception of the weapons took place we were all assembled to discuss matters. Each man was given his task to perform; thus some were to guard the entrances of the wood. Others were to guard the open space, where the containers were supposed to fall, before and after the dropping of the weapons. Others were to load the containers onto lorries.

Everything was arranged in such way that we could leave the wood about twenty minutes after the drop, if everything turned out as expected. It did not. After having received these first instructions we waited in eager expectation for the orders to turn out. Only one man from each of the above mentioned villages knew the code word. By way of precaution the members of the Resistance Group were always told as little as possible about the plans. If the Germans should happen to take a man it would be a good thing for the group that he knew as little as possible.

On 12<sup>th</sup> April at 1830 hrs the code word STIG was broadcast from London and as soon as it came it meant that the plane was ready to start from England. If the same word was broadcast again at 2045 hrs it meant that the plane had started. We could not wait to hear the broadcast at 2045 hrs, as we had to be at the reception place in the wood. This was about 30km from Sjaellands Odde and we had to be there before darkness fell. It was not allowed to drive a car after dark, as if we did the Germans would stop us.

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A small lorry started from Sjaellands at about 1900 hrs. It was camouflaged with fish boxes covered with a canvas covering. Among the boxes and under the covering lay the members of the group from Sjaellands Odde and Lumsaas along with their bicycles. These were used for the last part of the way, as not all of us would go direct to the wood at the same time. The members from Hoby Sj and Nykobing came on their bicycle the whole way.

We were armed with revolvers and Tommy guns but there were only enough for half of us. The wood guard lived near the wood and until that evening did not know that anything was about to take place. One of our members (a policeman) had been instructed to explain the plans to him.

On reaching the guard's house the policeman saw that the wood guard had a guest in his house so he dared not enter. He tried in many ways to call his attention without any result. At last by rattling a window of an adjoining room he succeeded in making the guard come to the window.

You will understand his fright when reaching out his arm into the darkness to shut the window he was caught by the wrist by a 'stranger'. Fortunately the two men knew each other from their private lives so the policeman did not take long to explain the situation to his friend. The wood guard was all right and was told to put out all lights for the rest of the night, keep quiet and not pick up the telephone if it rang.

At 2000 hrs everybody was at his place in the wood. Everything was quiet, the night was not quite dark and the weather was calm. Now the only thing to do was to wait for the plane from England. It was the first time we were to receive weapons and a man from headquarters, had been sent to give us last minute instructions. Unfortunately he was inadequate for the task that we will mention later on. As an excuse for the managers it may be said that at the last moment they had been obliged to send another man who was not experienced. In the last days before the end of the war lots of qualified people were wanted for dropping weapons, sabotage and so on.

Time passed. We had nothing to do, only wait. The night was quiet and so still that we heard air raid warnings and 'all clear' from Holbaek 20km away. When we heard the warning at about 0100 hrs we thought that the plane from London was coming. When the 'all clear' came and passed (it was now 0230 hrs) we began to doubt. We will just put in here that other members of the group had heard the code word repeated at 2045 hrs. Something might have happened to the plane, engine trouble or trouble with the Germans. But then about 0230 hrs, we cannot tell the exact hour, we heard the machine

coming. It came whistling across the place and we flashed the lights.

Great, yes, great was our disappointment when the plane left again without dropping anything. For a moment we thought that it might have been a German plane sent out to reconnoitre but then the plane came back again. This time, a little to one side on the place towards the wood. But this time the containers came down, twenty-four of them, as far as we can remember.

Now we ask ourselves did we make a mistake with the lights? The instructor from headquarters told us not to light the lamps until the plane was just over our heads. We thought it would have been better to stand with the lamps lit early so that the pilot could see them as he came in.

We have heard from the English pilots that a spruce thicket was easily mistaken for open land, Perhaps it was due to such a mistake or our holding the lights wrong that the containers did not come down on the open space but fell into a spruce thicket nearby. It was very difficult to get them out and then another thing our instructor did not tell us (we suppose he did not know but we found out later), that there were straps on the end of the containers with which to carry them.

We had to carry the containers with our bare hands, which became badly abraded by the sharp edges. Having worked hard for two hours we dared not stay any longer as it was becoming light so we had to leave a few of the containers which we hid as carefully as possible. Later on they were carried away.

Four parachutes remained hanging in some high trees, which we did not notice until daybreak. Two of our pals were sent out the next day to take them down before too many strangers saw them."



*Continued on page 12*

Meanwhile, back in England at RAF Station Tempsford, in Bedfordshire, a Stirling Mark 4, X – X-Ray, of 161 Squadron, was being prepared for take off by its crew.

It was their 29<sup>th</sup> similar such operation and at their specialist briefing they had been told the importance of this particular drop. It was stressed that this operation must be successful as it might have a great importance in the future conduct of the war in Denmark, and every effort must be ensured that the weapons reach the group for which they were intended.

It was a clear moonlight night with a slight touch of a spring frost in the air. This was to be the only aircraft from this Squadron operating in the Zealand area of Denmark and take off was perfect. The English coast was crossed at Cromer at a height of 1500 feet and course set for Denmark. The crossing of the North Sea was trouble free with perfect visibility and the Danish Coast was crossed at Ringobing Fjord, Jutland at 500 feet.

At the briefing the crew were told that the Drop Zone would be on the edge of a large wood. As the aircraft approached the drop zone the wood was identified but there were no lights. However, as the aircraft passed over the wood and was directly over a small clearing, the lights suddenly came on. Once over the clearing the lights were hidden by the trees.

The clearing could be identified by a very large tree and could be clearly seen in the moonlight. A further run up to the target was made with all eyes on the tree. Once over the clearing the containers were dropped from a height of 500 feet.

The aircraft then returned over Denmark at a height of 300 feet and except for sighting anti aircraft fire on the coast, it was an uneventful trip.

We now return to Bill Hansen's story:

"Before going on with our story we want to say that other places would have been much more suitable for reception of weapons but because the Germans were too near those places Kongore wood was chosen.

There were Germans in Gniben (military battery), Ebbelokke (military battery), where the road led straight through the German Camp, Hojby Sj (military battery), Nykobing Sj (the same), Klint (the same), Hove (the same), Hunsted (Gestapo and troops). Furthermore there were several observation points that we have not mentioned.

When the containers had been loaded onto two lorries they were brought to a farm at Nr Asmindrup and carried up to a loft above a stable. Until that moment we had not seen or heard a single German

Unpacking began the next day. We were three men and what things we saw – something for us indeed – Bazookas, guns, explosives, cartridges, revolvers, etc.

When that day had nearly come to an end we got a telephone message that we must leave the place and remove the weapons because the Germans had found out everything and had taken the men sent back to the wood to fetch the parachutes. Later on we learnt that it was not true but we have never been able to find out where the telephone message came from.



**Danish Drop Zone**  
**The containers landed in the trees**

Well – you will understand how busy we got with the packing again. First we hid the parachutes in the hay-loft then we tried to drown the containers into a liquid manure tank. It could not hold very many, so we dug a hole and hid the rest of them.

During the night the weapons were moved on carriages to various places. The plan was that we would have kept them in the above-mentioned loft until the day that they might be wanted.

A great many of them were now carried through the German Camp at Ebbelokke though nothing happened. They were hidden under fish boxes and the Germans themselves helped our driver pass the car under their telegraph wires. At this place, however, the Germans did not often examine cars, but if they had done so that night it might have been a 'pretty kettle of fish'!

*Continued on page 13*

This is an instance of the German naivety, credulity, stupidity and want of humour, which over and over again was used by the Danish Resistance when moving through difficult situations. Many times after that small supplies of weapons, which had been cleaned, were sent through that camp in the same way. Most of the weapons we received were sent to Copenhagen where they had great difficulty in getting arms as they depended on reception places in the country.

Fortunately the war ended on the threshold of Denmark so that we did not need to use the weapons to fight against the Germans in Denmark beside the allied armies. They were used, however for many watch purposes immediately after the end of the occupation. During the occupation many fights occurred between Danish saboteurs and Germans and between other Danish Resistance people on one side and the Germans, Gestapo and Hipo on the other side. In these fights the English weapons were indispensable.

Without the English drops of weapons the Danish Resistance movement would have been much smaller than it was. We are greatly indebted to the English Government and especially the English airmen in the Royal Air Force for the great deed of carrying weapons to Denmark."

*All the towns and villages mentioned can be found on the Map of the North Coast of Zealand, Denmark.*

The crew were to fly one more operation. The following night they were again briefed to fly to Zealand, this time to another drop zone south of Copenhagen. Again it was stressed that every effort was to be made to deliver the containers, but this time the Resistance Group were not in position and there were no lights. Actions by the Germans had prevented the Group getting into position.

While returning across Denmark and flying at 200 feet over the Lakes, the aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire from a German naval vessel. Severe damage was caused to the rear of the aircraft, with one elevator shot away, the rudder badly damaged plus part of the fin. With great difficulty the aircraft was flown back to England, losing power on one engine on the way. On landing one member of the crew was immediately taken to hospital. The powers that be decided that the crew had completed their tour of operations.



Harold Watson and his crew



Stirling Mk. IV

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appreciated, please send  
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We're on the Web!  
WWW.  
[harringtonmuseum.  
org.uk](http://harringtonmuseum.org.uk)



### HAMS Christmas Party

Will be held on Monday

4th December 2006

at Harborough Golf Club

Please contact Vera to

book your place

## Overseas Visitors

In June Ms Ryan Yager from Detroit, USA, visited the museum while on holiday in England. Ms Yager was eager to see where her grandfather had spent part of his wartime military service.

Ms Yager's grandfather is Arthur Bogusz who we are told is 'hale and hearty', but feels he is a bit too old now to journey to Harrington himself. Arthur served in the 406 Bomb Squadron and was flight engineer with the Clinton Rabbitt crew. He flew 35 missions in the aircraft named Brer Rabbit.

Ms Yager was accompanied by two friends, Ms Heidi Weisenberger, and Ms Tosha Korf.

On behalf of her grandfather, Ms Yager made a donation of £20 to the museum.



L to R: Ms Korf, Ms Yager and Ms Weisenberger



### Brer Rabbit Crew

Back L-R : C.H.Rabbitt, Pilot. E.G.Asbury, Co-Pilot.  
F.M Olson, Navigator. D. Leinhauser, Bombardier.

Front L-R: N.Rasnak, W.Gunner. S.C.Sianis, Radio Op.  
M.Tauger, T.Gunner.  
A.Bogusz, Flight Engineer and T.Turret Gunner.