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PRESS KIT

1941

In memory of the ten FALLEN RAF airmen at Pont Saint Martin


Handley Page Hampden


Hampden crash on February 4



Vickers-Wellington MK II


Wellington crash on May 8

Inauguration at Pont Saint Martin

“ Chemin de s Loreaux ”

MAY 21, 2016

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THE HISTORICAL BACKDROP:

When on September 1 , 1939, German troops invaded Poland, mobilization was general. On the 3rd, France, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand declare war on Germany. The French army goes to the front full of hope and under the terms of past military agreements, the British send troops as reinforcements. English soldiers arrive on the site of Château-Bougon to set up a camp and an air base there.

Very quickly, the site became a logistics base intended to support the offensive elements dispersed on the northern and eastern fronts of France. From the month of May, after nine months of phoney war, Germany attacks the Netherlands, Belgium and France, under the effect of terror and in total chaos, ten million civilians throw themselves on the roads, seeking to migrate south. Many will perish under the attacks of the enemy aviation. On May 20, on reaching the English Channel, the Germans cut the French army in two. Caught in a vice, the Franco-British forces retreated and fell back on Dunkirk. In the region, the allies flowed back from all sides and fell back on Saint-Nazaire in order to embark for a maritime repatriation. These boardings will give rise to the terrible tragedy of the liner Lancastria which will cause several thousand deaths.

JUNE 20, 1941

Upon their arrival on June 20, the Germans of the Luftwaffe took possession from the site of Château-Bougon and used it as a base for their bombers heading for England. They requisition the Bréguet aeronautical construction factories adjoining the aerodrome to manufacture elements of Heinkel bombers there.
Château-Bougon will become for the years that will follow a strategic target of the allies.

JUNE 22, 1941

On June 22, Pétain signed the armistice but led with an iron fist by Winston Churchill, supported by a handful of men claiming to be from Free France.
The United Kingdom refuses to follow this example, which forces Hitler to attempt the invasion of England, but very quickly, the Führer must face the facts: a landing is impossible. It only remains for him to embark on one of the greatest operations in history: the Battle of Britain. The "Luftwaffe" engages in an aerial bombing campaign called the Blitz. The city of London is mainly affected, but the cities of Coventry, Plymouth, Bimingham and Liverpool are not spared. Hitler's objective is to terrorize the English in order to force the government to make peace with Germany. Bad calculation! The British resist and subject the German air force to bitter failures which will force the Führer to abandon the project.

FEBRUARY 1941

In February 1941, the construction of the Saint-Nazaire submarine base began.
This shelter will serve as protection for German U-boats when they return from missions in the Atlantic. Their operations consist in torpedoing the vessels carrying out supply shuttles between the United States and England. This base will become a frequent target of Allied bombardments.



German soldiers inspecting a sabotaged and abandoned English plane at Château-Bougon



Former English control tower visible in Château-Bougon

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When the Battle of Britain ended in October 1940, the RAF programmed bombing missions on towns and installations in Germany as well as interventions on strategic enemy sites in France

DRAMAS THAT HAPPENED AT PONT SAINT MARTIN:

HANDLEY-PAGE HAMPDEN CRASH ON FEBRUARY 4, 1941

On February 4, 1941 at 5:30 p.m., the Hampden I AD750 of the 106th Squadron took off with 5 other aircraft from the Finninglay base in Yorkshire. Their mission is for 4 of them, including the Hampden I AD750, to drop mines in the Saint Nazaire area, and for the other two to bomb the Château-Bougon aerodrome occupied by the Air Force. German.

They left the English coast at Lyme-Regis, flew over the French coast at 2,500 feet above Étables-sur-Mer and headed for Quiberon, Le Croisic, before arriving in Saint-Nazaire.

The sky is so cloudy that the target is not very visible at 2000 feet. Three planes including the Hampden I AD750 still manage to drop their mines while a fourth fails. The formation then headed for Château-Bougon where two planes dropped their bombs on the airfield and its installations. It was then that the Hampden I AD750 was hit at 10:30 p.m. by German FLAK. It exploded just before hitting the ground in a field near Château-Bougon in the town of Pont Saint Martin.

The 4 crew members perish in the crash.



Handley-Page Hampden's group departing on a mission



German officers behind the plane's empennage the day after the crash



George H. F. HINNIS
Pilot Officer - RAF
Second Pilot - 24 ans



Jack L. FRANCO
Sergeant - RAF
W. Op / Air Gnr - 24 ans



Frederick A. COLSON
Sergeant - RAF
W. Op : Air Gnr - 18 ans



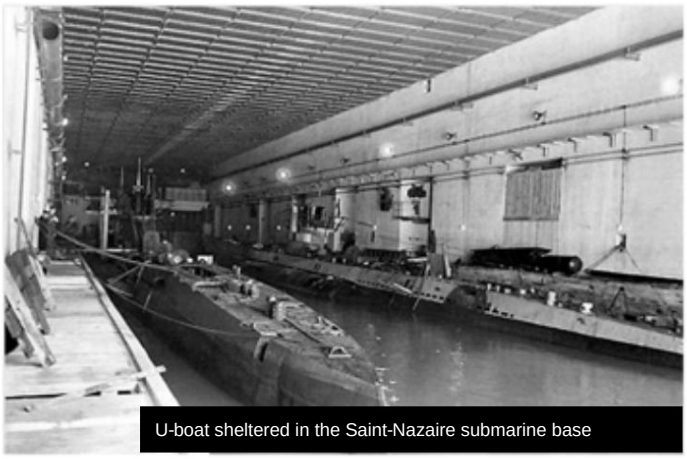
William K. B. THOMAS
Flying Officer - RAF
Pilot - 26 ans

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VICKERS-WELLINGTON CRASH ON MAY 8, 1941

The Wellington IC R1374 took off on 7 May 1941 at 10.30 p.m. from Newton airfield in Nottinghamshire, with 9 other planes from 150th Squadron and 5 planes from 103rd Squadron.
Each loaded with 230-kilogram bombs, their mission is to bombard the Saint-Nazaire submarine base. They reach the objective on a clear night and after an accurate drop of 80 bombs from an altitude of 8,000 to 12,000 feet, they set course back to their base.
We will never know if the Wellington IC R1374 was hit by the anti-aircraft batteries or if it suffered a technical failure. What is certain is that the pilot Frederick SAVAGE took a course opposite to that of the return to England by heading towards the aerodrome of Château-Bougon. He wanted to attempt a landing there and thus save his crew. Everyone knew that this decision meant captivity in Germany until the end of the war. But the plane will not reach its goal and will crash in a field of Pont Saint Martin a few hundred meters from the point of fall of the Hampden.

The 6 crew members perished in the crash.



U-boat sheltered in the Saint-Nazaire submarine base



German officers in front of the remains of the Wellington



John L. HART
Sergeant - RAF
Air Gunner - 22 ans



Peter V. READ
Sergeant - RAF
Air gunner - 20 ans



Leonard F. HARRIS
Sergeant - RAF
W. Op - 21 ans







Wray W. HEYWOOD
Sergeant - RCAF
Air Observer - 21 ans



John M. FULFORD
Sergeant - RAF
Second Pilot - 22 ans



Frederick H. SAVAGE
Flight Lieutenant - RAF
Pilot - 27 ans

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THE SOLDIERS REST IN THE PONT DU CENS CEMETERY

The bodies of the victims of the crashes of February 4 and May 8, 1941 were all buried by the German authorities in the military square of the Pont du Cens cemetery in Nantes where
they are still resting.

The war continued with its share of suffering and drama until 1945.
The events of Pont Saint Martin gradually fell into oblivion in this post-war period when everything had to be rebuilt and wounds healed by looking to the future, even if some witnesses who lived through the dramas closest to them kept secretly deep in their memory the image of these traumatic scenes.



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A DISCOVERY THAT WILL MARK THE BEGINNING OF A GREAT ADVENTURE

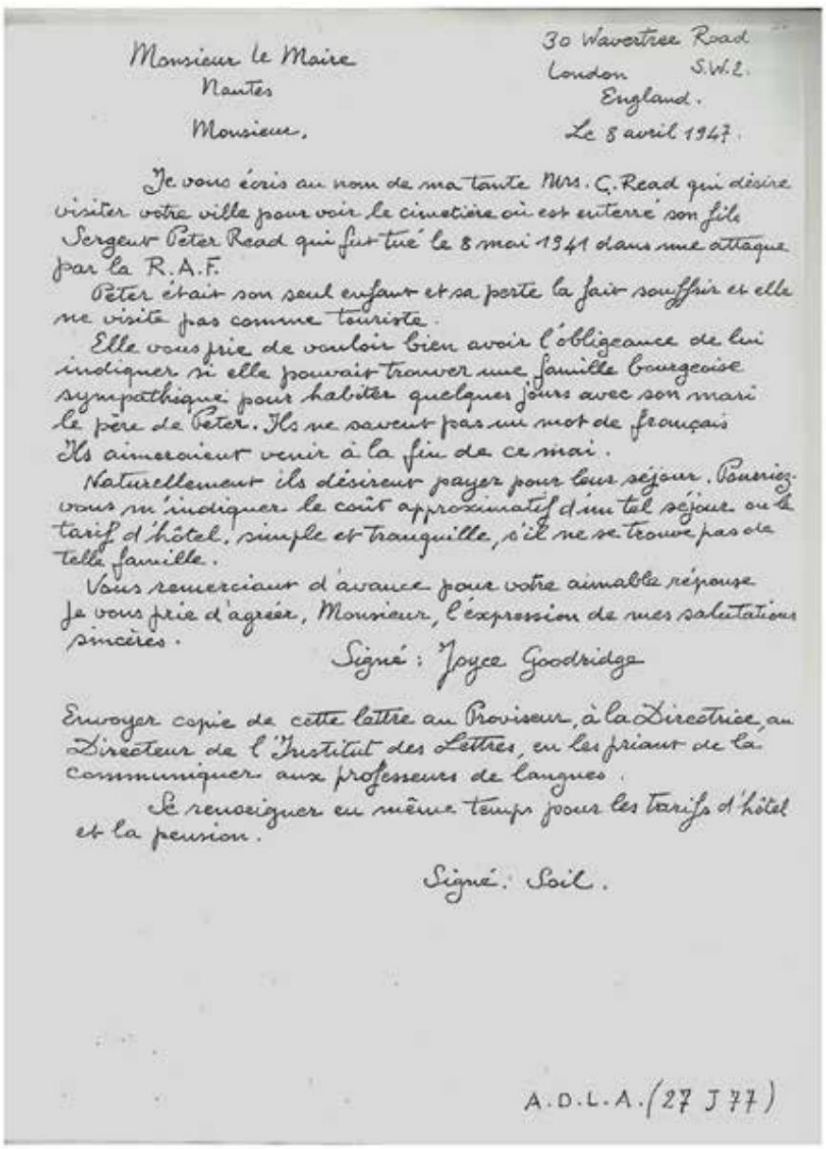
It was in October 2008 that Mr Jean-Lou Ordonneau, member of the association "Sur Les Chemins d'Herbonne" discovered in the departmental archives a letter dated 1947, addressed to the mayor of Nantes by Mrs. Goodridge. This is a request on behalf of his aunt Mrs Read to find out if it is possible to find accommodation in town so that she can come with her family to pray at the grave of her son Peter, who died in the crash of his plane in Pont Saint Martin, May 8, 1941.

Jérôme Batard, also a member of the association and passionate about history, understands that events of great historical importance have taken place in the town. Wanting to know more, he got in touch with Mr Didier Giraudeau who brought to light the story of an American B 17 bomber that fell in 1943 in the town of Saint-Colomban. The latter advises him to contact a Breton association

specialized in research related to aeronautics, the ABSA, which will surely be able to help him in his research. Jérôme contacts Mr Daniel Dahiot who is the president and immediately the adventure starts. Daniel calls Jonathan Dive, a contact living in England, and he works to find the families of the victims.

Patricia Harris, sister-in-law of Sergeant Léonard Harris, contacted by Jonathan, contacted Jérôme Batard by email and her commitment was such that she very quickly became the relay for the latter with other English families. Very quickly, Jérôme realizes that a first-rate event is taking shape and he gets in touch with the town hall of Pont Saint Martin to ask for its support. The Mayor at the time, Yves François, was immediately captivated by the process and ensured that he would support any development of this memory work.

Christine Buteau, elected municipal official, supports the search for the family of aviator Wray Heywood in Canada, a process that will be crowned with success.



Monsieur le Maire
Nantes

30 Wavertree Road
London S.W.2.
England.
Le 8 avril 1947.

Monsieur,

Je vous écris au nom de ma tante Mrs. G. Read qui désire visiter votre ville pour voir le cimetière où est enterré son fils Sergeur Peter Read qui fut tué le 8 mai 1941 dans une attaque par la R.A.F.

Peter était son seul enfant et sa perte la fait souffrir et elle ne visite pas comme touriste.

Elle vous prie de vouloir bien avoir l'obligeance de lui indiquer si elle pourrait trouver une famille bourgeoise sympathique pour habiter quelques jours avec son mari le père de Peter. Ils ne savent pas un mot de français
Ils aimeraient venir à la fin de ce mai.

Naturellement ils désirent payer pour leur séjour. Pourriez-vous m'indiquer le coût approximatif d'un tel séjour ou le tarif d'hôtel, simple et tranquille, s'il ne se trouve pas de telle famille.

Vous remerciant d'avance pour votre aimable réponse
Je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur, l'expression de mes salutations sincères.

Signé : Joyce Goodridge

Envoyer copie de cette lettre au Proviseur, à la Directrice, au Directeur de l'Institut des Lettres, en les priant de la communiquer aux professeurs de langues.

Se renseigner en même temps pour les tarifs d'hôtel et la pension.

Signé : Soil.

A.D.L.A. (27 J 77)

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SEARCHING FOR TESTIMONIALS

Jérôme Batard wishes to obtain as much information as possible on what happened in February and May 1941 in Pont Saint Martin. He discovers that the crashes took place on agricultural land belonging to the Poisson family. These brothers, who were 18 and 15 years old respectively at the time, remember these dramas perfectly and admit to having been haunted all their lives by the horror they witnessed. Their emotion is great to learn that so long after these events people who did not know the war care to revive the memory of these poor young men who died for freedom.

Through the story of the two brothers, Jérôme learns that on the night of February 4 to 5, 1941, the Poisson family heard the crash of the Hampden shot down by the enemy flak. Very quickly, from early morning, the Germans were on the scene and removed what remained of 3 bodies near the wreckage of the plane and found the remains of the pilot Thomas, who had fallen a little further away with his parachute which did not save his life. The jump having been made too low, the latter did not open. When the soldiers leave the scene, Gérard and Bernard, who have been waiting hidden behind a hedge, approach the wreckage and discover the horror. The bodies of the poor young people must have been shredded as human fragments remain at the site, carelessly left behind by the Germans. By observing the remains of the plane, the two young people discover a navy blue sweater which they recover. Shortly after, they make a wooden box in which they place the human remains and bury it in a nearby hedge. They make a wooden cross and plant it on the makeshift grave for piety.

In 1946, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas, parents of the pilot came to France to go to the place where their son perished and meditate in front of the small grave before going to the cemetery of Pont-du-Cens. Bernard Poisson shows the sweater, the mother recognizes it immediately, it was she who had knitted it herself and she takes it away as her child's last souvenir.



Mr and Mrs Thomas in 1946

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Regarding the crash of the Wellington, May 8, 1941, it is impossible to know what were the reasons for the loss of this aircraft. Whether it is damage linked to the enemy DCA or a purely technical problem, what is certain is that the pilot, feeling his plane in distress, heads for the Château-Bougon aerodrome to attempt a landing there. The reason for this decision becomes obvious to Jérôme when the English family tells him that Frederick Savage was based at the same airfield at the start of the war and that, having accomplished several missions there, he knows them very well. The choice of this track is then presented to him as obvious. We know that the attempt will unfortunately fail a few cables from the goal. The airplane, having lost too much altitude, slid on its belly over a distance of about 300 meters and crashed on an embankment. Immediately after the impact, the aircraft caught fire, leaving no chance for the crew members to escape the flames. A witness living nearby at the time wakes up again, despite the passage of time, hearing in his nightmares the howls of pain of the poor airmen.

Early the next morning, as usual, the German soldiers invade the premises and renew their macabre task. When the bodies were freed from the wreckage and taken away, they disappeared only to return several months later to recover the remains of scrap metal. In these very hard times of war for the population, which lacks everything, no opportunity to recover is neglected. Many people come around the wreckage to collect pieces of aluminum, steel and other elements that can be used to make utensils or bring in some money.

This is how Mr Jean-Baptiste Pineau found near the plane a bracelet and a gemstone watch whose glass was broken. While examining these objects, he notices that the watch is of Canadian manufacture and that the bracelet bears the initials W.
W. H as well as a serial number. He keeps these finds preciously, thinking that maybe one day he will have the opportunity to give them to members of the family of the aviator who wore them.

The opportunity to carry out this project never having presented itself, Mr. Pineau will entrust the objects to his children, Jean and Marie-Thérèse at the end of his life, asking them to take care of them in order to return them, if one day becomes possible. Over time, Jean will become its custodian.



Personal objects of an aviator found by Jean-Baptiste Pineau

The owner of these objects was Wray William Heywood (WWH). He was the only Canadian airman. His first name will be given to his nephew in his memory.

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Armed with the information collected, Jérôme decides to go further in the process, by carrying out research on the two crash sites. Only, he does not know how to operate with regard to the equipment necessary for the detection of remains buried in the ground and what are the legal provisions concerning this type of intervention.
Daniel Dahiot of the ABSA (Breton Air Souvenir Association) directed him to a small local association, the AREA (Association for the Research of Aeronautical Wrecks) which could support him in this project. The so-called association passionate about the subject decides to fully commit to the operation.

EXCAVATIONS AT THE HAMPDEN SITE

Thus, on January 18, 2011, a whole team armed with detectors and shovels followed the excavator that the municipality of Pont Saint Martin had made available free of charge.
Jérôme is accompanied by agents from the mine clearance service of Saint Herblain, in case ammunition is unearthed, which is almost inevitable when it comes to military aircraft. Also present are members of the AREA, the ABSA as well as people from the Saint Père en Retz association “Souvenir du Lancaster”. Excavation

take place in difficult conditions, in a ground soaked by the rains.
Quickly, the first remains come out of the ground. In the largest parts, we find two engine cylinders, an on-board fire extinguisher, an oil filter and a multitude of various small elements, including a machine gun magazine still filled with its ammunition.

The latter are immediately recovered by the deminers in order to proceed with their destruction.
The prize for the most moving discovery goes to Joël Barteau de Saint
Father in Retz. Thanks to his methodical and meticulous work, he finds the watch of one of the victims of the crash, well hidden in a clod of earth which at first glance seemed quite innocuous. The object has lost its glass as well as most of its hands, but studying what remains of it, Joël discovers that it stopped precisely at the time of the crash. At the end of the day, the exhumed pieces are entrusted to the AREA, which will clean and preserve them.

SOME PICTURES OF RESEARCH
JANUARY 18, 2011


The highlight of the day


The on-board fire extinguisher


Chief Clearance Brief


One of the engine cylinders


A well-managed operation


Difficult working conditions for men


The oil filter


And for the machines

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EXCAVATIONS ON THE WELLINGTON SITE

On May 2, 2011, all the teams came together again to explore the crash zone of the Wellington. The research is laborious because the remains of the plane seem rare, but with perseverance, the efforts end up being rewarded. Many small fragments are discovered and an object especially, causes a great fright to the excavators. By digging at the place where a detector reports a rather large mass, an object of cylindrical and elongated shape appears. The work is immediately stopped, it may be a bomb. The team calls in the chief deminer, who after having evacuated the area, studies the element which is very little cleared of the earth which surrounds it and, scratching carefully around it, he determines to the great relief of all that it is This is one of the plane's oxygen cylinders.

SOME PHOTOS OF THE RESEARCH MAY 2, 2011



Part of the team before the research



A real work of digging



Lots of small items



The object of all fears



A plaque featuring the English Crown and the Air-Ministry letters AM

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THE COMMEMORATION

At the same time as Jérôme and his teams are active in research, the municipality of Pont Saint Martin is preparing a commemoration in memory of the young airmen.
English and Canadian families will be invited to stay in the town to participate in commemorative events.

In order to carry out this project, which is scheduled for May 8, 2011, a steering committee has been set up. It is headed by two elected municipal officials, Mrs. Marie-Anne David, and Mrs. Christine Buteau. The committee is made up of representatives of several associations such as Sur Les Chemins d'Herbonne, the National Union of Veterans, AREJ and AREA. All these contributors, each in their area of expertise, contribute to the organization of catering and accommodation, travel, ceremonies and exhibitions.

On May 6, families of airmen arrive at Pont Saint Martin and are welcomed by Mayor Yves François.
They then return to their host families.

On May 7 in the morning, a trip is planned to Nantes for a ceremony at the Pont du Cens cemetery, the municipality of the city has invited official, military and civilian personalities for the event. The afternoon is devoted to contemplation at the crash sites. On the site of the Hampden Bernard Poisson tells the families what he and his brother witnessed in 1941. These moments are undoubtedly the most emotionally charged of the whole stay of the families.



Reflection on the Wellington site

Some people fill boxes with dirt from places to take it home. Following this, at the end of the day, the atmosphere relaxes by visiting the cellar of a wine producer in the town and the evening ends with a grill at the farm at Jérôme's in a simple and friendly atmosphere.



Bernard Poisson on the Hampden site

The day of May 8 begins with a mass in the church of Pont Saint Martin followed by the traditional ceremony at the war memorial. Following this, on the square of the town hall took place the inauguration by the Mayor and the officials of a stele in memory of the young airmen. Jean Pineau's grandchildren give Wray Heywood's nephew the watch and bracelet that belonged to him. Jean, no more than his father, will have lived this long-awaited moment, illness having taken him away a few months earlier. After the reception and the exhibition of the parts of the aircraft found, the day ends with a meal. As they leave, the families express their gratitude to all those involved in this wonderful initiative.



At the Pont-du-Cens cemetery

Most disturbing is that many admit that they will finally be able to mourn because they now know where the planes fell and where the bodies lie. For 70 years they remained in the dark because, certainly for the sake of simplification, the military authorities had informed them that the losses had taken place at sea.



Tears in your eyes, Wray Heywood receives his uncle's personal items



Inauguration of the stele

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Following this unforgettable adventure, Jérôme Batard decided to join the AREA association and he became its president.

PROJECT TO ESTABLISH A MEMORIAL PANEL

The association of the memory of the Boivre events and that of the memory of the Lancaster have merged to create the Association Souvenir Boivre Lancaster – ABSL. They are the initiators of the project "It Path of there memory 39/45 in country of Retz ".
was during a commemoration in honor of the airmen who disappeared in the crash of their Lancaster bomber in Saint-Père en Retz that Jérôme Batard and Nicolas Roturier discovered the project of this journey of memory during a discussion with Michel Gautier, the president of the ASBL association. They are immediately seduced by this project and express the desire to include the site of the crashes of Pont Saint Martin. The idea is submitted to the Mayor of the commune Mr François who, as he has already done for previous projects, declares that he will give his full support to this idea. His successor, Mr Fétiveau, will express the desire to ensure its continuity.

The inauguration of the remembrance panel will take place on May 21, 2016 and all families of airmen are, of course, invited to the event.
This panel will complement the stele located near the town hall.



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The historical panel dedicated to the Allied plane crashes of Pont Saint Martin is part of a larger memorial tourism project

" Way of the memory 39-45 in Country of Retz »

Initiated by the Association Souvenir Boivre Lancaster - ASBL, it will eventually include about fifteen historical panels installed on the very places where the key events of the last war took place in the Pays de Retz.

It is a question of inscribing history in the territory and even in the landscape to share it with the inhabitants or reveal it to holidaymakers or newcomers. This project is of historical and cultural interest likely to mobilize history and remembrance associations as well as veterans' associations. It makes it possible to collect and share the words of the last witnesses, to associate the schools, colleges and high schools of the perimeter concerned by each installation.

The non-profit organization, together with each municipality and local association concerned, relies on a “” charter Path of memory and forms a working group to carry out each project. Each enamelled lava stone panel is developed according to the same graphic charter and manufactured by the same company. The working group conducts historical research, collects testimonies and photos, writes the narrative of the panel. Whenever necessary, recourse is had to historians specializing in the subject treated.

The approval of ONAC-VG is requested for each panel.

The red thread of this project is a logo "which Path of there memory 39/45 in Country of Retz " allows it to be included in the documentation of tourist offices and the tours of our region and on the website of the ASBL: http://chemin-memoire39-45paysderetz .e mysite.com/.

This site marked with a QR code on each panel allows you to locate it on a map of the Pays de Retz, but also to collect all the additional information concerning each act of war mentioned (historical stories, testimonies, photos)

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LIST OF PLACES AND FACTS THAT DESERVE TO APPEAR IN THIS ITINERARY, WITHOUT HIERARCHY AND WITHOUT PREJUDICE OF THEIR RELATIVE IMPORTANCE.

- Boivre disaster of March 17, 1945. Two panels (one installed in 2006, another in March 2015)

- Sinking of the Lancastria on June 17, 1940. Memorial (panel and stele) at La Pointe Saint Gildas. Inauguration June 18, 2016.

- Resistance fighters and deportees from Saint-Père-en-Retz. Panel near the stele. In project for 2017.

- Hostage taking of August 26, 1944 in Pornic. Panel project in August 2017.

- Exchange of prisoners at La Rogère, November 29, 1944. Panel inaugurated in November 2014.

- La Brosse explosion on May 12, 1945 in Saint-Viaud. Stele on May 9, 2015. Panel inaugurated on October 1 , 2016.

- Allied aircraft crashes:

  - B24 Liberator above Croix-Bodon in Saint-Brévin on December 5, 1943 (9 airmen killed). Stele inaugurated on May 8, 1999. Panel project in the fall of 2017.

  - American B17 above the village of Morandières on May 1 , 1943 (6 airmen You are). Memorial (stele and panel) inaugurated on May 2, 2015.

  - Anglo-Canadian Lancaster above the Pichonnais at Saint-Père-en-Retz on April 3, 1943 (7 airmen killed). Stele inaugurated on April 5, 2009. Panel inaugurated on April 6, 2013.

  - Lockeed Hudson of the RAF at the Bretesches in Saint-Viaud on December 21, 1941 (4 airmen killed). Stele inaugurated on September 11, 2010. Historical panel inaugurated on October 12, 2013.

  - British plane crashes in Pont-Saint-Martin: a Hampden on February 4 1941 and a Wellington on May 8, 1941. Panel inaugurated on May 21, 2016.

- Southern pocket of Saint-Nazaire. Summary of the military events (scuttling of the Télindière on August 10, 1944, surrender of the Osttruppen of the South Pocket on September 4, 1944, German offensives of October 15 and December 21, 1944, bombardments of the Pas Bochet station at La Sicaudais and the castle du Prieuré in Saint-Père-en-Retz on December 26, 1944. Role of the 1st GMR, 8th Leather, 93rd RI and all external battalions Tribute to the FFI and volunteer combatants (including Maurice Pollono and his three companions). Liberation of the southern pocket.Interview of the Roulais ravine on May 9, 1945. Several panels could be installed near the monument of the southern pocket at La Sicaudais.

Seven panels have already been installed, there will be a dozen in 2017 and fifteen in 2020. This list is not exhaustive. Town halls, associations or groups of local historians who so wish may complete it. (Contact: Michel Gautier, president ASBL - 06 81 94 27 66)

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USEFUL INFORMATION

PANEL LOCATION

The panel will be set up along the Chemin des Loreaux near the two memorial sites.



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RAF Hampden Mk. I AD750 ZN crashes and Wellington Mk. IC R1374 JN-G of the RAF on 4 February 1941

Memory Path

In these places died, for our freedom, ten young allied airmen.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Ha crashes

Hampden Mk. I AD750 ZN crashes and RAF Wellington Mk. IC R1374 JN-G on 8 May 1941 at Pont-Saint-Martin

History of Hampden

On Tuesday, February 4, 1941 at 5:30 p.m., the Hampden I AD750 belonging to 106 Squadron takes off with 5 other planes from RAF Finningley airfield in Yorkshire. Their mission consists of dropping mines near Saint-Nazaire and bombing the airfield of Château-Bougon occupied by the German Air Force.

They left the English coast at Lyme Regis, flew over the French coast at 2500 feet (762 m) above Étables-sur-Mer and headed to Quiberon, Le Croisic, before reaching the Grand Charpentier lighthouse in the Loire estuary, near Saint-Nazaire. Five airplanes, including the Hampden I AD750, manage to drop their mines, while a sixth fails.

The formation then heads for the second target, airfield Château-Bougon, where the cloud cover is very thick at 2000 feet. Only two planes - and probably the Hampden I AD750 - manage to drop their bombs on the airfield installations.

It was then that the Hampden piloted by William THOMAS is hit at 22:30 by German FLAK. It explodes just before touching the ground, in a field near Château-Bougon, on the territory of the commune of Pont-Saint-Martin.

The next day, at dawn, the German soldiers were on the scene to remove what remains of the bodies of 4 crew members. After the soldiers left, two teenagers, Bernard and Gérard POISSON, whose parents owned the field, go to the scene and discover the horror. They collected the forgotten human remains, buried them on site and installed a small cross there for piety.

In the frame of the aircraft, they discovered a sweater which they delivered to the family of William Thomas in 1946.

Wellington's History

The Wellington IC R1374 took off on May 7, 1941 at 22 h 30 from RAF Newton airfield in Nottinghamshire with 9 other planes of 150th Squadron and 5 Squadron. Each loaded with 6 bombs of 230 kilos; their mission was to bomb the submarine base in Saint-Nazaire. They reach the target on a clear night at an altitude of 8000 feet (2438 m), they set course towards the return to England.

We will never know if the Wellington was hit by anti-aircraft batteries or suffered a technical failure. What is certain is that the pilot Frederick SAVAGE took a course opposite to the return to England heading towards the airfield Château-Bougon. Perhaps he wanted to try to land there and save his crew.

The next day, at dawn, the Germans came to remove what remains of the bodies of the crew.

German soldiers in front of the remains of the Hampden

remains of the Wellington

Watch from one of Hampden airmen.

curb chain of Sergeant Heywood.

The remains of the 10 airmen who tragically perished at Pont-Saint-Martin are buried in the military square of the Pont du Cens cemetery in Nantes

George HF INNIS Pilot Officer - RAF Second Pilot - 24 years old	William KB THOMAS Flying Officer - RAF Driver - 26 years old	Leonard F. HARRIS Sergeant - RAF Wireless Operator - 21 years old
Peter V. READ Sergeant - RAF W. Op. / Air Gnr. - 18 years old	Frederick A. COLSON Sergeant - RAF W. Op. / Air Gnr. - 18 years old	Jack L. FRANCO Sergeant - RAF W. Op. / Air Gnr. - 24 years
Frederick H. SAVAGE Flight Lieutenant - RAF Pilot - 27 years old	John M. FULFORD Sergeant - RAF Second Pilot - 22 years old	Wray W. HEYWOOD Sergeant - RCAF Air Observer

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May 21, 2016

Historical panel of the *Chemin de la Mémoire 39-45 in the Pays de Retz* inaugurated on May 21, 2016

Funded by the municipality of Pont-Saint-Martin and produced by the Association Souvenir Boivre Lancaster - ASBL, in partnership with the Aeronautical Research Association - AREA and with the support of the National Union of Combatants, associations "Sur les Chemins d'Herbonne" and "Meetings, Exchanges and Twinning".

Photo credits: AREA, "Sur les Chemins d'Herbonne".

PONT SAINT MARTIN

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