

George D'Arcy

Born on the 3rd January 1921 in Kirkdale, Liverpool North.

Peacetime profession: Clerk; Living at, 62 Scarisbrick Crescent, West Derby, Liverpool 11.

Joined the Royal Air Force on the 28th October 1940;

1126009 Flt Sgt. D'Arcy was commissioned and promoted to 169392 Plt Off. with effect 19th December 1943. London Gazette the 1st February 1944;

Promoted to Fg Off. with effect 19th June 1944. London Gazette 21st July 1944;

Awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) whilst with 426 (Thunderbird) Squadron, RCAF. London Gazette 8th December 1944;

Promoted to Flt Lt. with effect the 19th December 1945. London Gazette 18th January 1946;

Appointed to commission as Fg Off. in the RAFVR Training Branch with effect 23rd May 1949. London Gazette 26th July 1949;

Extension of service for 4 years with effect 24th May 1954. London Gazette 15th June 1954;

Extension of service for 4 years with effect 24th May 1958. London Gazette 10th June 1958;

Extension of service for 4 years with effect 24th May 1962. London Gazette 19th June 1962;

Extension of service for 4 years with effect 24th May 1966. London Gazette 24th May 1966;

Retired from the RAF on an unknown date but retired from No. 1913 Sqn Air Training Corps (ATC) in 1969.

Passed away on the 11th November 2005, aged 84 years, in Liverpool, Merseyside.

Grandad's story – Fell from the sky at 03:15hrs 29th June 1944

We took off from Linton on Ouse at 22:20 hrs on 28th June 1944 in a Halifax aircraft on a bombing mission to the marshalling yards at Metz. After an uneventful trip apart from a near collision over the target, we had almost reached the French coast on the homeward journey. As this was my 30th Operational sortie, I was hoping it would be the last time we would be doing this. We had reached Barneville and reached the point of congratulating ourselves that we had done it again when it just happened, the thing all crews dreaded, the thump, thump of cannon shells hitting the aircraft and then the bright light of a fire starting in the port wing and then blazing up quite suddenly, the petrol tanks had been holed. The pilot took very little time to realise we could not make it and within a couple of minutes came the words we had heard many times before but now in reality. BALE OUT, JUMP, JUMP, JUMP, BALE OUT, JUMP, JUMP, JUMP.

Back at base, we had done this many times in training and we could get out of the aircraft in no time at all. Although this was only our third trip in our aircraft which to us was a new type

(previously we had flown in Lancasters) this was the real thing and within seconds the Navigator had opened the escape hatch and was away. I just clamped my morse key down, pushed detonator buttons, pulled my earphone jack from its socket, parachute out of its stowage, clipped on and I reckon I was out of that hatch in record time. After tumbling over and over for what I thought was a very long time (probably a few seconds) I pulled the handle of the parachute and with a sudden crack and jerk I was swinging on the end of a nice white umbrella. The thing which struck me most was the sudden quiet, one minute the roar of four engines the next peace and quiet, it was amazing. But there I was swinging my way earthwards. I could see our aircraft hurtling towards the ground and blazing like a torch. It seemed to explode on the way down and then quite a larger one as it hit the ground. Meanwhile, I could see two other chutes in the air but strangely they seemed far away. Then a tree slipped past and I realised that I was very near the ground and just had time to get my feet together when thud, I had hit the ground and quite hard too as my knee came up and hit me under the chin. But at least I had arrived all in one piece I hoped. Banging the release box, I was quickly out of my harness and started to collect the parachute together and making a bundle of it, the next thing was to hide it. It was now about 03:30 hours and of course still dark. I could not see anything about me except that I seemed to be in a wood as all I could see were trees and wondering why I had not finished up in one. My first stroke of luck.

I now dug a hole as best I could and put the parachute and harness into it and then covered it up with leaves which I scraped up from under the trees. I then stamped on the lot hoping that it would not be too easily seen the next day. I then started walking in a downhill direction moving through the trees and making very little noise. I then came up against a wire fence and promptly climbed over the top. Having taken only a few steps I came to a halt. Why? I don't know. But I did, and then it struck me, no trees. I was in the open and could see nothing ahead at all. Making my way back to the fence, I climbed back over and keeping the fence to my right I started to follow it. After a few minutes I came to a path and followed it still going downhill then I heard the water just ahead of me. It was a very wide river (at least to me it was) because I could not see the other bank. I presumed from our route that this was the River Seine and from what I could see of the stars I was on the south bank. As the light improved I saw a house on the side of the river and made my way to the rear and hid in the bushes. At this time, I went through my pockets and escape kit, badges of rank and flying brevet were removed from my battledress jacket and together with the covers of the kits were buried in the soil.

Whilst I waited thoughts were going through my head as to what I should do, what plans should I make, would it be better to wait and see who lived in the house or should I make off before daylight but the light was improving each minute and it would soon be light enough for me to see and decide what to do then.

Suddenly voices could be heard and rather excited at that. Of course I could not understand a word of it and moving around a little, I saw a group of people gathered round a tree in the branches of which was a parachute. One of the crew had really been up a tree that night. However, I did not make my presence known and left them to do what they could about the parachute as I am sure that when they had gathered it up it would be well taken care of. Making my way back to my original spot I noticed that what I took to be a house was just a derelict building so I guessed there would be no people in there to get in touch with.

During our escape lectures we had always been told it was much safer to move at night and rest during the day, but after sitting for an hour or so in the cover of the bushes, I decided rightly or wrongly depending on how things went to move on [at 09:00 hrs]. Finding the path was easy as I was only a few yards from it and so I started to retrace my steps of last night, thinking it would be wiser I left the path and took to the trees. Keeping the path in sight, I

made my way uphill and in a southerly direction, on the way I noticed the fence which I had reclaimed and realised how lucky I had been as the ground dropped very sharply and had I kept on walking I most certainly would have had a nasty fall to the river bank below, perhaps luck would be with me all the way.

Although I had kept a very watchful eye for anyone moving in my area so far the only people I had seen were the folks around the parachute and so with my blouse over my shoulder I made my way through the trees, but now they were thinning out and very soon I came to a secondary road. After watching it for quite a time and not seeing one person on it I once more trusted to luck and stepped out of the trees and turning west started walking. Soon however a figure appeared walking towards me. It turned out to be a young man and as he neared me I tried to act and look natural but I could tell by the way he looked at me as we passed that I had not succeeded. However, without turning round I kept on my way and soon came on some cottages.

I decided to call at one of them and so up the path I walked and knocked on the door. A woman answered my call and as my French was non-existent apart from what we had learned parrot fashion I now put to the test “Anglais Aviateur avez vous eau s’il vous plait”. What it sounded like I do not know but I was quickly ushered inside and given a drink. The woman could not speak English so we could only make signs to each other. I remember there was a small child in the room and in the centre an iron stove on which there was a pan of what I took to be soup cooking. Then a man appeared who I took to be the woman’s husband and a quick exchange of words took place. I could pick up the words “Anglais” and “Aviateur” but nothing else. I could only look blankly on and hope for the best. [the house of M and Madame Roland Aubert].

I was given a bowl of what I took to be potato soup but whatever it was it tasted excellent to me. After the meal, I was taken into the other room and the man went out but very soon he came back with another chap who had a jacket and a pair of trousers with him. He indicated that I should wear them and I lost no time in putting them on. The trousers were far too large for me but anything at all was better than none, and if I had any doubts about how I looked (before the youth this morning had convinced me that I looked what I was – an English flyer) these clothes would certainly help). Later in the afternoon they gave me my uniform in a parcel and indicated that I should go with them, so I said goodbye to madame and the child and was then taken into the trees on the opposite side of the road and hidden in a thicket. I was told to stay until someone came for me, these instructions of course were all by sign language but it is amazing how one can grasp the knowledge of what is intended but of course one can misunderstand them as I was soon to find out.

Rain had started to fall and I was in for a wet evening, with nothing to do but wait. Time passed very slowly and although I had not had any sleep last night I only dozed fitfully. Later, the noise of someone coming through the undergrowth had me wide awake in an instant but I had no need to worry. It was one of my helpers coming to take me on the next part of my journey.

In a very short time I was entering another house, larger than the one I had left. There to greet me was Madame Fortier who again could not speak English but there was no doubt about my welcome. This amazed me throughout my journeys as not one person seemed to think about the consequences their actions could bring upon themselves and their families. From the actions and the small amount of English from one of the men present I was under the impression that I would be taken away that same night by truck or car, however this was not to be and after a meal I was taken upstairs and shown into a bedroom where I was to stay the night. Again, I was given instructions which I took to mean that I need not get up too early in the morning. However, after a good night’s sleep I wandered downstairs for

breakfast and was invited to a game of chess. Although I knew the basic moves of the game I was not really a chess player and am afraid I was no match for my opponent who had no difficulty in beating me each game we played [opponent was an escaped Russian prisoner – Eugene Orislave Romanovitch). One night or several days here?]

[Madame Fortier lived next to a chateau full of German soldiers].

Next day I said goodbye to Madame Fortier and was taken to the home of Monsieur George Lerat. After questions about my mishap on being shot down I was asked for the passport photographs which were always carried by crews for an eventuality such as this. I took this to mean that Monsieur was to try and procure an Identity Card for me. Shortly afterwards, Monsieur Lerat escorted me along the bank of the River Seine. It was then that I noticed how high the south was in relation to the north. In fact on our way we passed the remains of a Whitley Bomber which had ploughed straight into the south bank and had burned out. From the position of the aircraft it had flown into the high south bank and I should think there would have been no survivors. Soon however we arrived at my next hiding place – a hole in the side of the high south bank. We squeezed our way into the narrow entrance but it surprisingly opened out into a large cave with the only light of course coming through the small opening. Thus it was a very dark and gloomy place and I hoped that my stay here would not be for long. Monsieur then left indicating that food and drink would be brought to me next morning. After a very cold night, Madame Lerat brought me some welcome food and a hot drink in a thermos flask and the news that perhaps tomorrow my papers would be ready and then I could move again.

I spent most of the day in the cave [la Foulerie] but vowed that later that night I would emerge from the cave and spend the night on the outside as I was sure it would be warmer and it was. I slept like a log.

I was awakened by the sound of aircraft engines coming from the east and sitting on the bank I could look out over the low northern part of the Seine and there they were. Three Fw 190's flying very low. In fact they were almost at my height and I had no difficulty in identifying them and also the fact that they were carrying external bombs under the wings. I hoped that they were going in a single journey. All day the sound of aircraft could be heard and all of them allied machines of all types. Spitfires, Lightnings, Mustangs, Thunderbolts, Bostons, Mitchells, Fortresses and Typhoons. All seemed to be in a hurry to get there and back, I wished one of them could have nipped down and picked me up.

When breakfast arrived I was told that in all probability I would be moving later on in the day and by the signs and the word "bicyclette" I presumed that they were asking if I could ride a bicycle. When I nodded in the affirmative they looked quite pleased so I naturally assumed that we would be travelling by cycle. Sure enough later in the day Monsieur and Madame Lerat and also Mademoiselle Suzanne Hermier [George Lerat's sister] arrived complete with identity card, certificate of travel and two bicycles. My name was now Georges Desmont, Ouvrier Agricole.

[Forged identity card made by M Lucien Massicard, teacher at Barneville-sur-Seine].

I understand now that when I said "Ouvrier Agricole" Monsieur Lerat remarked that I would not get ten metres if I had to speak so I became [deaf and] dumb. I had to. Suzanne, who could speak English, gave me the necessary instructions on how we were to travel. She would ride ahead and I was to follow about 100 metres behind and not to forget to ride on the right side of the road. So, with my uniform in a box on the rear of my cycle off we went on a nice, pleasant ride out into the countryside. Well it was a pleasant day, I remember that, and after an uneventful journey (yes I remembered to ride on the wrong side of the

road) we arrived at the bicycle store in Lieurey. [Or – When he went through Montfort-sur-Risle, in the middle of a German convoy, he rode on the left as he would have done in Liverpool].

Quite a number of people were assembled to greet me and the schoolmistress could speak excellent English so we had no trouble with our sign language at Lieurey. She told me I would be with Suzanne and her mother during the day and at night would cross the street and sleep in the bicycle shop. I remember that first night very well for the amusing incident with Suzanne who turned to me and in English said “Come you sleep with me tonight” and the school mistress roared with laughter and explained to them all what Suzanne had said. Then they all had a good laugh at Suzanne’s expense.

During my stay at the butchery at Lieurey [for about a month – second floor, on corner of road to Pont L’Eveque] we would listen to the news of the battle on a hidden radio of Suzanne’s and we always expected the breakthrough to happen the next day. Of course, we were disappointed on many occasions and I received a new name “Monsieur Peut-etre” because each day people would say to me maybe they will advance today and my stock answer was always “perhaps” so they called me Mr Perhaps. [When Germans came to the house, George hid in the attic with an old wardrobe placed in front of the door to hide the entrance].

Whilst returning from a visit to the local school, Suzanne, the Schoolmistress and me were approaching the butchery just before curfew time. As we came to the cross-roads in the centre of Lieurey, a German car stopped and an Officer climbed out and called after me Monsieur, Monsieur, but as arranged I ignored his calls and hoped he would not be annoyed about it. However, Suzanne gave him a suitable excuse for me. She gave him directions to where he wanted to go and I was very relieved when we continued on our way back to the bicycle shop. Soon I had to leave my friends in Lieurey. They looked after me exceptionally well. In fact they really spoilt me in the lengths they went to help me even to finding some tea which is not normally used in France. I believe it was from the NAAFI stores left behind at Le Havre in the early part of the war. Wherever it came from, I enjoyed it very much, and my thanks go to those courageous people who helped to provide so much for me.

Come the morning when I was told to be ready to move and later that day I said my farewells to my helpers in Lieurey. That night found me in the home of one of the resistance chiefs [Capitaine Marcel Vesque] of the area. The first thing was whether I spoke French to which I replied “I do not speak French” in the little French I had picked up since being shot down. Then I had to sing “It’s a Long Way to Tipperary” and “God Save The King”. With my voice I am sure they were as pleased as I was when I had finished. Then off to a local barn [on the abandoned farm on the Guinness estate] which was the headquarters of the group. There I found the rest of the party together with two American Officers [Lieutenants Butler and Hall – Hall was later killed after returning to flying duties], both fighter pilots who had also been shot down and passed on to the Resistance. At least I would have someone to have a talk to during the day and the long summer evenings. [There were also two Luxembourgers who spoke English].

Lt. Butler has been identified as 1st Lt. Robert K. Butler O-694045, pilot from the 487th Fighter Sqn, 352nd Fighter Grp whose P-51B #42-106449 ‘Princess Elizabeth’ was shot down near Epaignes on the 6th June 1944.

Lt. Hall is believed to be 2nd Lt. Harry W. Hohl Jr. O-559937, pilot from 404th Fighter Sqn, 371st Fighter Grp whose P-47D #42-25567 was shot down in the Caen area on the 8th June 1944.

Inexplicably, 2nd Lt. Hohl was permitted to return to flying duties and as a Capt. was KiA on the 2nd January 1945 when his P-47D #42-76384 was shot down by German fighters.

During my stay with the group we received a supply drop from the RAF but not without me getting some black looks from them because on the night the drop was to take place they were all excited and keyed up in expectation of the arms and ammunition they would be getting. We had arrived at the dropping zone in good time but as time went by and no aircraft appeared it was obvious that we would not be getting any supply drop that night. So, with mutterings about the efficiency of the RAF we made our way back to the barn. The next night the whole dangerous business had to be gone through again. This time, right on the button, came the sound of aircraft engines and then came the necessary identification signals and the Mosquito made a dummy run over the Drop Zone (DZ) and circling round came in again and this time, there on the end of a parachute, was a large cannister. Quickly it was split into two parts and each group took charge of its own cannister. As quietly as we had arrived we made our way back to headquarters. Next morning came the job of unpacking our gift parcel. The contents consisted of Sten machine guns, rifles, revolvers, hand grenades and ammunition. The rifles and revolvers were in greased packing paper and all had to be degreased and cleaned.

So the job was started but it did not take long for us to pack it up and take off into the trees for safety. Two brothers with the group now started to show each other how to clean a rifle. We could not understand what they were saying but when a round is put into the breach and the bolt pushed home. Then they started to argue about what is right and what is wrong and it is time to go. As we went, from the trees we also saw one of them trying to put a detonator in a hand grenade and although they just screwed home they were doing anything but screw them into the base. However, they stopped when we ran. When things had settled down again we gave them the knowhow on the rifle and the hand grenades without anyone being hurt. The main thing so far as I was concerned was did they know where the safety catch was on both the rifle and the revolver.

13:00 hrs, Sunday, 13th August 1944

On the Lieurey-Cormeilles road. 20 men hidden in a ditch on the left hand side of the road with Vesque. 20 more in the ditch on the right hand side of the road with "Gueule d'Acier". The staff officer from Koenig was given the order to attack. Marcel Vesque waited impatiently for that. At 15:00 hrs, a car – Wehrmacht Major Georg J.M. Ertle is captured and his comrades and dog are shot. They were returning from Paris.

We understood them to say that he was being kept as a hostage in the hope that the Germans would release a radio operator who had been captured. Whether he ever was released, I never knew. Grandad was told that Major Ertle was his responsibility and from then on were inseparable.

On 14th August, word was received that SS troops had taken 35 inhabitants of Cormelles hostage in reprisal for the Beaulieu ambush and they were being held at Pont-L'Eveque. Capitaine Vesque was furious and the two Americans and George thought Major Ertle would be taken away and not seen again. Grandad asked Major Ertle if he would write a letter to his Commanding Officer to say that he was a hostage with the local resistance and to ask for the release of the hostages. Capitaine Vesque agreed to this. The letter was written stating that the resistance was holding three German officers, their names and ranks were stated and the Commandant was informed that if the hostages were not released before 18:00 hrs on the 16th August, the Resistance would execute the officers. If the hostages were released, the officers would be detained by the Resistance until such time as the Allied

forces liberated the area. The letter was sent to German Army Headquarters at Honfleur and later the same day, all 35 hostages were released.

They operated a 24 hour guard of the three prisoners. During the day we operated a 4 hour on duty and 4 hour off duty rotation. It was not difficult during the day because there was always a number of the group in the barn or in the near vicinity and there was only one entrance to the barn. From dusk to dawn two were on guard at all times plus of course the sleeping members of the group. Most members left the barn at night and we presumed that they lived locally.

The barn was not very large and we divided it into three rooms with the one entrance. No tables or chairs. In fact, the barn was completely empty apart from some straw. There was a good reason for this as the barn was very close to a wood and could be evacuated in seconds leaving just the straw. The Resistance had a warning system of whistles:

1 – stay in the barn; 2 – prepare to leave; 3 – leave at once.

Later on, two other German soldiers were also taken prisoner by the group. They happened to be driving in a ration truck at the time so I guessed we would be okay for rations for a while. What they were carrying we never did find out, but cigarette smoking increased. This led to a rather strange incident. As the German Major was already sleeping with us, the group gave us the two soldiers as well. So, into our room in the barn came the newcomers but they had hardly set foot into the room before they were kicked out by the Major who promptly told us he was not staying in the same room as them. So, we had to split up and of course this led to our duties being increased as we had the job of looking after them and seeing they did not escape. It certainly would not have improved matters if one of them had managed to get away. The Major, who could speak a little English, did mention to us that he could land us in Ireland in a submarine that did not have to surface if we would help him to escape but to us this was not possible, especially as our anti-submarine now in use seemed to be getting the better of the U-boats. He was of course giving us information about the snorkel device which was now being used by the German submarine service. With our forces so near to us that we expected a breakthrough at Caen any time we simply told him that as far as we were concerned he was as good as in a prisoner of war camp right now.

Then came the day we had to leave the barn in a hurry as a couple of the boys had run into trouble that morning and visitors were expected (and not the kind of visitors we wanted to see). So, within a few minutes of the alarm being given we had packed all our bits and pieces and left the barn to the rightful owners, the cows. No sign of our occupation could be seen and we left the headquarters as a group with the three Germans to be looked after by the two Americans and me. We each made ourselves responsible for one of them and thereafter we were right behind them come what may. The Chief obviously had planned for such an eventuality as this for without hesitation he led us into the woods with the knowledge that he knew where he was going to and how he was going to get there. We halted during the afternoon and early evening and then moved as it was going dark. I had no idea which way we were going and it was now pitch dark but we found our refuge alright. This was another barn but larger than the last one. Next day we left and to our surprise we finished up in the barn we had left the previous day. I said to the two Americans "How cheeky can you get". But before we arrived we had quite a night of it when crossing a wheat field as we ran into a couple of German columns and had a hair raising time getting through them during which time they were under attack by night fighters helped by flares dropped by a Mosquito.

Everybody dropped to the ground to await the end of the attack which did not take too long. When the flares died away I got to my feet and found that Major Ertle was by my side.

Capitaine Vesques checked that all was well and that the prisoners were still part of the group and in the confusion that was going on in the column of German troops we crossed the road without one person being challenged. Luck was on our side that night. Through a few more fields of wheat and then we were in a wood and we were back in the original barn.

It seemed as though a search party had passed through the valley and had examined the barn and finding nothing but straw had left within minutes.

The troops we had brushed with the previous night were retreating and an air of expectancy ran through the unit as we expected to hear the news that the British had broken through at Caen. Obviously, they were in touch with a radio somewhere (probably at the farm) but they were well informed. Air activity had more than increased during the last few days. Allied aircraft seemed to be in the air almost 24 hours a day now. Quite close to us were a number of drop tanks from fighter aircraft and the fields and trees were littered with strips of silver paper which the night bombers had been dropping for months past to saturate the German radar screens.

Then came the news we were all waiting for. Caen had at last been taken and the German Army was attempting to retreat across the Seine. The radio now indicated that a great battle was being fought at Falaise with the Royal Air Force and the American Air Force taking a terrible toll on the German Army. George told Major Ertle that he was lucky to be out of the fighting and within a few days he would be out of the hands of the Resistance and in the hands of the British.

During the early morning on Saturday 26th August the sound of heavy lorries could be heard on the main road, one or two muffled explosions were also heard and word went around that the Germans were pulling out. No one could sleep any more that night and very early in the morning some small arms could be heard and we were all agog with excitement that this was to be the day.

Later that morning along comes a chap on a horse waving his arms and shouting the "Tommies ici, Tommies ici". This was the signal for a wild west show as first one and then another loosed off a shot from a pistol or rifle. The two Americans and I were always packed and ready for a quick getaway. All we had to do was pick up our cases and boxes and we were ready to go. So, a rather strange cavalcade set off that morning to meet the British. One resistance group, two Americans, one British and three Germans. The only people who were not pleased were the three Germans as they were heading for a wire cage. I noticed, although we were all excited, that without exception we all kept in the middle of the road. All of us were wary of mines and at this time I guessed that no one wanted to step on one. We arrived on the outskirts of the village of [Calonne between Cormeilles and Ponti'Eveque] and sure enough there they were, these familiar figures in khaki. A couple of soldiers were searching the road with mine detectors and on the other side of the stream, a tank with bridging equipment ready to throw a bridge across the stream. I guessed that this was probably one of the explosions I had heard during the night.

I went over to the soldier operating the mine detector and said "You have certainly taken your time getting here". He looked at me rather hard and replied "You speak bloody good English" and I answered "I ought to, I was born in England and it's the only language I know". I then explained who I was and that we had two Americans and three Germans including a Major with us. I introduced Capitaine Vesque as the leader of the group. He asked if I would like a cup of tea as the lads were brewing up on the other side of the stream. As soon as the bridge was in position we could nip over and have a cup of tea and some white bread and butter. As soon as the tank had put the bridge in position we made our way across and gave our information to the officer in charge of the first tank and he

relayed it on to British Headquarters by radio. They informed him that a jeep would be sent to take us to their HQ. Meanwhile the tea had been made and I sure enjoyed it, tea had never tasted better.

As the tank column made off over the stream, we said goodbye to the Chief and the resistance boys who had now offered to accompany the English troops on the next stage of their advance. I do not know the names of any members of the resistance group as I made a rule not to take any names of any people who helped me, but I would like to thank them all for their help and the courage they showed over a long period of time, knowing full well what the consequences would be, this to my mind was courage of a high order.

Two jeeps came quickly along the road to pick us up and we were taken off to their Brigade HQ. On our way I turned to Major Ertle and said "I promised you that I would personally deliver you to the first British troops we contacted and I have kept that promise". Major Ertle thanked me and offered me his wristwatch which I refused. He pressed me to take it saying that it would be stolen from him by the first British soldier to see it. I said that I did not think anybody would steal his watch, how wrong I was.

We arrived at Brigade HQ and we were all placed under guard while awaiting interrogation. I was called to see the Intelligence Officer but before I went into the tent I saw that a British Sergeant had seen the watch on the Major's wrist and had immediately removed it. During my interrogation I informed the Intelligence Officer what I had seen and all I received was a shrug of the shoulders.

After interrogation we were free to have a meal, but before moving off to the mess we waited for the Major to be interrogated and then he was being taken away to the PoW compounds we went over and said our goodbyes. He was not a Nazi but had fought in the 1918 war and in fact the conversations we had with him he showed us that he actually despised the Nazi system but being a soldier he had done his job to the best of his ability.

That night we spent under a truck in an orchard and next morning after breakfast Hall, Butler and I climbed into a jeep for a journey to Bayeaux. From there we were to fly to London. On the way we passed through the battle area and it was littered with wrecked vehicles, tanks, guns of all types, uncleared dead littered the hedges and ditches. When I looked at all this I was glad I had joined the RAF and not the Army. At least war in the air was intermittent with your base to come back to and a good meal and a decent bed. The boys in the Army were really living rough. On the way we passed through Caen, the driver said it was Caen and I have no doubt he was right but all I could see was mounds of rubble. The road had actually been bulldozed clear but of Caen itself I could see nothing at all. At 7th Armoured Division HQ at Bayeaux we were taken to a reception centre where we found quite a number of special services personnel and also evaders and escapers. I was given army battledress in place of my civilian clothes and looked rather odd with an RAF blue shirt but what matter, at a time like this a boiler suit would have done. I left my uniform in Lieurey.

From the reception centre we were driven out to an airstrip just outside Bayeaux, here on 2th August 1944 we boarded a Dakota aircraft of RAF Transport Command and flown to RAF Station Northolt just outside London. After 8 weeks I was now back home.

We were taken to a hotel which had been taken over by the Services which we could not leave until after we had been interrogated. This took two days in which I mentioned the Schnorkel was fitted to submarines.

My helpers:

1. Madame et Monsieur Cauderan 21Bd Jourdan? Cite Universitaire Paris 14
2. Madame et Monsieur Lerat, Directrue d'Ecole Hauville Eure
3. Madame et Monsieur Fortier, 6 rue Su 8 Mai Grand Couronne S Maritime
4. Madame et Monsieur Carron, butchery, Lierey Eure
5. The Members of the Resistance who to this day I do not know.

Grandad's missions

426 (Thunderbird) Squadron, RCAF from May 1943 to June 1944

Sortie No	Date	Aircraft Serial	Type	Target	Notes
1	23 Sep 1943	DS759	Lancaster B.II	Mannheim	FE: Sgt. W.T. Mabey
2	18 Oct 1943	DS759		Hanover	
3	20 Oct 1943	DS760	Lancaster B.II	Leipzig	
4	22 Oct 1943	DS760		Kassel	Compass u/s. Bombs Jettisoned. RTB
5	3 Nov 1943	DS760		Düsseldorf	
6	26 Nov 1943	DS760		Berlin	
7	2 Dec 1943	DS760		Berlin	Gee u/s, Jettisoned 4000lb 'Cookie'. RTB
8	3 Dec 1943	DS760		Leipzig	
9	5 Jan 1944	DS759	Lancaster B.II	Stettin	FE: Sgt. T.R. King
10	14 Jan 1944	LL675	Lancaster B.II	Braunschweig	FE: Sgt. W.T. Mabey
11	20 Jan 1944	DS722	Lancaster B.II	Berlin	2nd P: Flt Sgt. M.A. Mckenzie
12	21 Jan 1944	DS722		Magdeburg	2nd P: Flt Lt. T.E. Shaw
13	27 Jan 1944	DS722		Berlin	2nd P: Fg Off. A.G. Plummer. AG(MU): Flt Sgt. J. McCrory
14	28 Jan 1944	LL675	Lancaster B.II	Berlin	AG(MU): Flt Sgt. J. McCrory
15	30 Jan 1944	LL675		Berlin	AG(MU): Flt Sgt. J. McCrory
16	24 Feb 1944	DS848	Lancaster B.II	Schweinfurt	AG(R) Sgt. K.L.D Sam. 2nd P: Fg Off. L.A. Reland
17	25 Feb 1944	DS848		Augsburg	AG(R) Sgt. K.L.D Sam
18	22 Mar 1944	DS838	Lancaster B.II	Frankfurt	Fg Off. D'Arcy flew on 1st Lt. J.K. Smith's crew
19	19 May 1944	LK796	Halifax B.III	Merville-Franceville	FE: Sgt. R. Thompson
20	22 May 1944	LK796		Le Mans	2nd P: Fg Off. W.J. Taylor.
21	27 May 1944	LK796		Bourg-Léopold	
22	31 May 1944	LK796		La Fèvre	2nd P: Plt Off. J.D. Little
23	2 Jun 1944	LK796		Neufchâtel	
24	6 Jun 1944	LK796		Coutances	D-Day
25	7 Jun 1944	LK796		Achères	
26	9 Jun 1944	LK886	Halifax B.III	Le Mans	
27	12 Jun 1944	LK796		Cambrai	u/c failure. Jettisoned 10x500lb bombs. RTB
28	14 Jun 1944	LK796		Saint-Pol	
29	15 Jun 1944	LK796		Boulogne Port	Daylight sortie
30	24 Jun 1944	NP683	Halifax B.VII	Bamières	FE: Sgt Thompson promoted to Plt Off.
31	27 Jun 1944	NP683		Forêt d'Eawy	
32	28 Jun 1944	NP683		Metz	FE: Sgt. Docherty. a/c Failed to Return