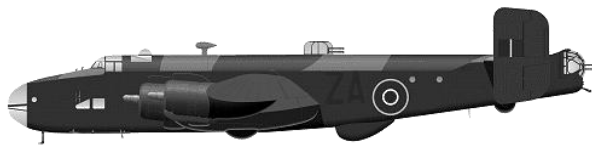




‘ LOST IN FRANCE ‘

**A 10 Squadron Halifax Mk 3 aircraft
LV 882 (ZA- D)
was shot down and crashed
near the villages of Hermeray and Raizeux,
south-west of Paris**

3 June 1944



HALIFAX - LV 882

**NARRATIVE TO ACCOMPANY THE IMAGE BELOW, PRESENTED TO 10 SQUADRON
ON REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY, 8 NOVEMBER 2015
AT THE 10 SQN WAR MEMORIAL, MELBOURNE, YORKS.**



A 10 Squadron Mk 3 Halifax, LV 882 (ZA - D) was shot down on the night of 2/3 June 1944 whilst engaged in a raid on the Trappes railway yards, southwest of Paris near Versailles. With D-Day some 4 days later, this raid is presumed to have been planned for the prevention of reinforcements being able to reach the Channel coast by train after the subsequent invasion. As the second of twelve other 10 Sqn aircraft on the raid, ZA-B departed RAF Melbourne at 2236 hrs and crashed near the villages of Raizeux and Hermeray due west of Rambouillet. Another 10 Squadron Halifax MZ 630 (ZA -S) was also shot down that night with 4 of it's crew becoming prisoners of war, one evading capture and two being killed..

It was rumoured by the local French community that Halifax LV 882 had been possibly shot down by a Focke-Wulf 190 belonging to the Schnellkampfgeschwader 10 (SKG 10), a Luftwaffe fast bomber and night-fighter wing based at the nearby Dreux Air Base, some 15 miles to the northwest. The unit's commanding officer was Major Kurt Dahlmann, one of the most decorated of all WW2 Luftwaffe pilots. [This has not yet been substantiated.]

All the Halifax crew members except one were killed. The aircraft's WOp Sgt Alec Hunter, although injured in the foot, evaded capture thanks to the gallant assistance rendered by the local Raizeux villagers. In particular, Gabrielle Goumand, the mother of a Mme Irène Moreau was instrumental in helping.

Many years later in 1988, Hunter was able to thank Irène personally for her mother's assistance. Hunter's uniform, worn at the time of his abandonment of the aircraft by parachute, had been kept for 44 years by Mme Moreau's mother. It is at present uncertain where this meeting took place but, when they met, she returned Hunter's RAF uniform to him in 'parade standard' condition.

It has been noted in a past 10 Squadron Association Newsletter No: 9 dated December 1988 on page 10, that Hunter had in fact then re-donated this uniform to the Caen Military

Museum in France. This had featured in a short television account made by Thames TV in their '*Reporting London*' programme on Monday 24 October 1988. Attempts to establish details of this meeting and obtain further information from Hunter's family are still ongoing at the time of writing this account (*November 2015*).



LV 882's CREW

Capt & pilot	:	Sgt Vijendra Kumar
Navigator	:	Fg Off Ernest Osborne Heyworth (RCAF)
Air Bomber	:	Fg Off Charles Delaney Taylor
Wireless Operator	:	Sgt Alec Hunter
Mid-Upper Gunner	:	Sgt Thomas Blacklock
Flight Engineer	:	Sgt John Thomas Archer
Tail Gunner	:	Sgt Gerald O'Leary



According to the 10 Squadron Operations Record Book (Form 541) the route planned for this raid was:

Melbourne - Basingstoke - Pevensey Bay - 49.49N 00.30E - 48.44N 01.20E - Target Trappes - 48.42N 02.05E - 48.35N 02.00E - 40.40N 01.05E - 49.13N 01.00E - 49.49N 00.30E – Base

The northing for the return leg position at highlighted position 40.40N 01.05E must be disputed as a typing error, since this position is just off the Mediterranean coast, southwest of Barcelona. - Typing errors in these documents have been found to be fairly common occurrences.

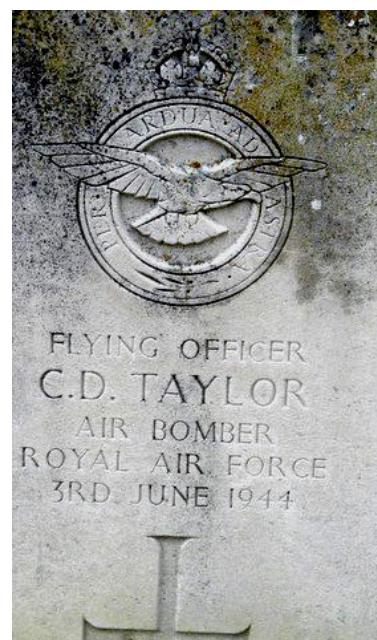
The aircraft that took off just 2 mins before ZA-D, landed back at Melbourne at 0317hrs and the one that took off 2 mins after ZA-D, landed back at 0332 hrs.

OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK						
DETAIL OF WORK CARRIED OUT						
NO. 10 SQUADRON						
By _____						
FOR THE MONTH OF JUNE 1944						
DATE	AIRCRAFT TYPE & NUMBER	CREW	DUTY	TIME	DETAILS OF SORTIE OR FLIGHT	REFERENCES
2nd/3rd June 1944			Bombing attack on TRAPERS			
			Route :- Base, Basingstoke, Portsmouth Bay, 49.49 North - 00.30 East, 48.44 North - 01.20 East, Target - 48.42 North - 02.05 East, 48.35 North - 02.00 East, 40.40 North, - 01.05 East, 49.13 North - 01.00 East, 49.49 North - 00.31 East.			
			Bomb Load 12 x 500 lbs GP. 10.0.003, 6 x 500 lbs G.P. fused tail inst.			
	Halifax III LV.912 "A"	S/S Hadley Capt S/O Rich T Nav S/S Mosley-Leigh A/B Sgt Tomlinson W WOE Sgt Grant A M/U Sgt Brittain M W/E Sgt Flanagan M W/E	Bombing	22.28 03.23	Bombed primary target at 00.55 hours from 10,500 feet on RED & YELLOW T.I's. Visibility good, no cloud below. No opposition encountered. Bombed large fire in centre of marked area.	
	Halifax III LV.882 "B"	Sgt Kumar V Capt S/O E Mayworth Nav (GAW/2.5197) S/O CO Taylor A/B Sgt Hunter A WOE Sgt Blacklock T M/U Sgt Blacklock J W/E Sgt O'Leary G T/G	Bombing	22.36	MISSING	
	Halifax III LV.545 "D"	Sgt Bond A Capt Sgt Ayton B Nav S/O Williams G A/B Sgt Lowrey A WOE Sgt Pope G M/U Sgt Bird E W/E Sgt Rough F T/G	Bombing	22.30 03.35	Bombed primary target at 00.55 hrs from 11,500 feet on YELLOW T.I's. and visual identification of target. No cloud. Number of lights observed running the length of the yard and gun flashes were seen coming from same positions. Bombs aimed at centre of lights. On leaving target several fires observed in marked area.	

10 Sqn's F541 (Ops Record Book) records the loss of LV 882
with the simple word
' MISSING '



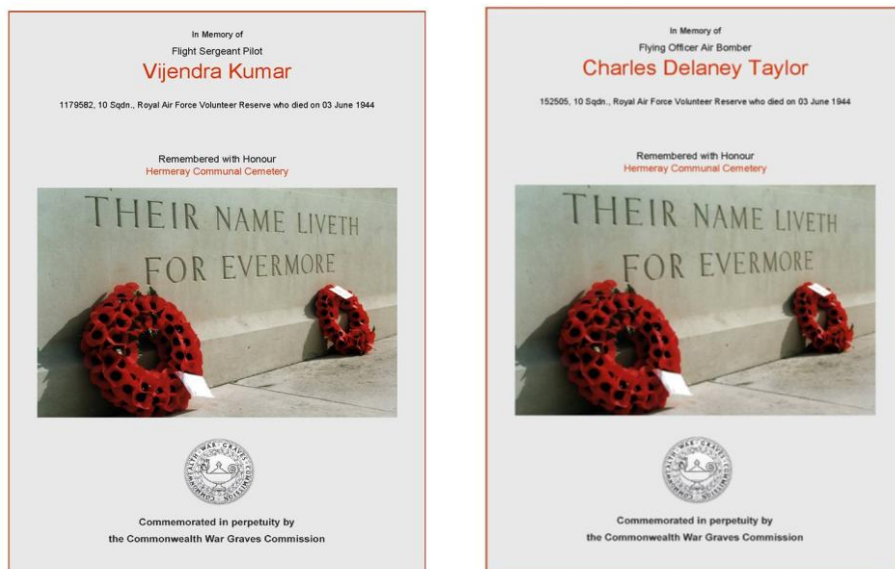
The captain Sgt Kumar and bomb aimer Fg Off Taylor are buried in the Hermeray community cemetery where they are honoured each year on VE Day (8 May) by the local community.



The Captain's & Air Bomber's graves at Hermeray



The Hermeray Community Cemetery



CGWC Commemorations for Sgt Kumar & Fg Off Taylor

The remaining four crew members, Fg Off Heyworth, Sgt Blacklock, Sgt Archer and Sgt O'Leary are all buried in the St Desir Military Cemetery near Caen. However it is not known at present where the first three were originally buried but it is known that Sgt O'Leary was initially buried, presumably by the German authorities, in a cemetery in nearby Chartres. After WW2 his remains were then re-interred in the St Desir cemetery. This was a fairly common occurrence which the CWGC carried out. Heyworth, Archer and Blacklock are buried next to each other in St Desir and their graves together with Sgt O'Leary's, were visited by a 10 Squadron party in 2012 whilst awaiting the first delivery of the Airbus A330 *Voyager* aircraft, with which the 21st century Squadron is now equipped. O'Leary is buried some distance away from the other three graves.



St Desir Military Cemetery, near Caen, Northern France



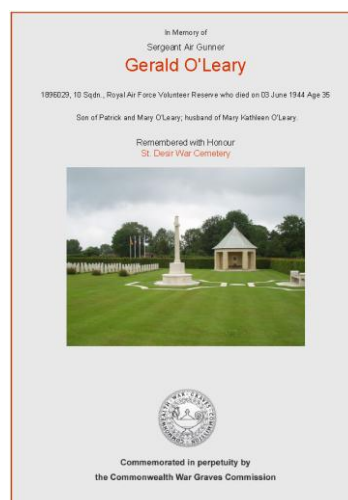
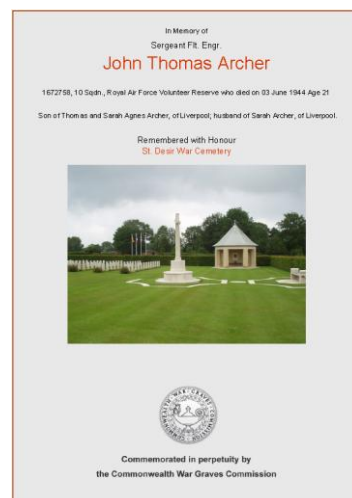
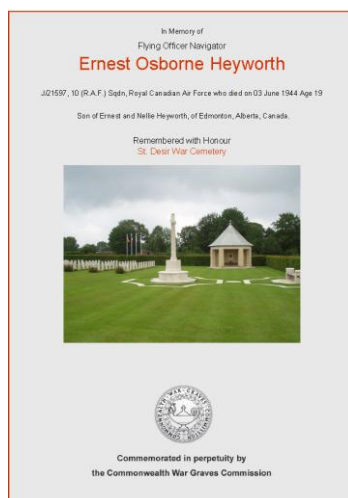
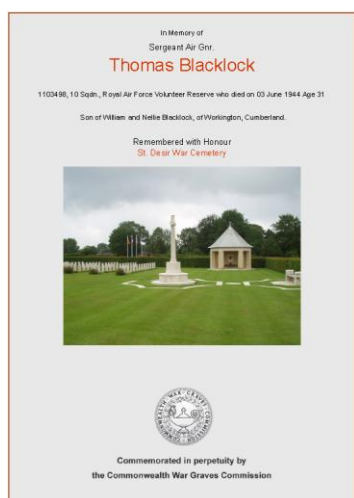
The graves of Sgt Blacklock, Fg Off Heyworth and Sgt Archer are together in St Desir.....



.....whilst Sgt G. O'Leary's grave is in another area of the cemetery.



St Desir Military Cemetery



CWGC Commemorations for Sgt Blacklock, Fg Off Heyworth, Sgt Archer & Sgt O'Leary



Sgt Gerald O'Leary was aged 35 yrs at the time of his death.



LATER RESEARCH 2014-2015

In February 2014 an email to the 10 Sqn Association website provided the start to the research into this Halifax crash. Bernard Leroy had been a local Hermeray, French boy at the time of the crash and wrote to inform the Association that he recalled the crash and later went on to provide much valuable research information about the incident, all obtained from local sources in the Hermeray, Raiseaux and Chartres areas. Bernard's first email stated:

The aircraft crashed in a meadow near by my uncle's house at Hermeray (Seine et Oise, now 78) France. The aircraft was completely destroyed (see picture below) and one engine was found in the marsh about 400m away from the main site. I was a 14-year old boy at that time. The next day some German airmen came to inspect the wreckage of the aircraft and exchanged a few words with the locals. It was said that the Halifax had been shot down by the Chief of Dreux (German) Air Base. As you probably know one of the crew had jumped by parachute and managed to escape being helped by people of Raizeux, the village on the other side of the river. The other crew members were dead, two of them are buried at the Hermeray graveyard. Recently someone showed me the serial number plates of the aircraft which had been collected on the spot. (see picture below).

>> Regards, Bernard Leroy



The Plates measure 7.8 x 4 cms each

Bernard, who no longer lives in Hermeray, had nevertheless learned that every year, the two crew members, buried in Hermeray, are honoured by the local community on the anniversaries of D-Day (8 May) when the French celebrate 'Memorial Day'.

“The Hermeray Bulletin” 2014



Le crash de l'Halifax

2 JUIN 1944 – 22H36 – L'Halifax III LV882 ZA-D avec à son bord 7 membres d'équipage décolle de Melbourn en Angleterre pour bombarder la gare de triage de Trappes.

DATE	NATION	DÉPARTEMENT	UNITÉ	MISSION
03-06-1944	ANGLETERRE/ COMMON.	YVELINES	10 SQ RAF	TRAPPES (78) : ATTAQUE VOIES FERRÉES

Le 10^e squadron est composé de 128 avions dont 105 Halifaxes (bombardiers), 19 Lancasters (bombardiers) et 4 mosquitos (chasseurs bombardiers d'escorte). Les groupes 1, 4 et 8 bombardent Trappes. La plupart des bombes tombent à l'est de la cible.



De retour de mission, l'Halifax III, après avoir largué 18 bombes de 300 kg, est touché par la chasse de nuit Allemande.

Il s'écrase le 3 juin dans la nuit à la sortie d'Amblaincourt vers le Theil.

L'armée Allemande emporte les corps des : sergent J.T. Archer, sergent G. O'Leary, sergent T. Blacklock et du flight officer E.O. Heyworth. Ils reposent au cimetière militaire de Saint Désir près de Lisieux. Quelques jours après le crash, les corps du pilote le sergent V. Kumar et du flight

officer C.D. Taylor sont retrouvés dans la carcasse de l'avion. Ils sont inhumés en présence de très nombreux habitants dans le cimetière d'Hermeray.

Le sergent A. Hunter sera le seul survivant de ce crash. Au cours de cette mission, sur 128 avions, 15 Halifaxes et 1 Lancaster n'ont pas rejoint l'Angleterre. F.D.



COMMÉMORATION

Le 8 mai

Nous venons de commémorer les 70 ans du débarquement des alliés en Normandie, souvenons-nous qu'il aura fallu un an de plus pour que la guerre se termine.

À Hermeray, nous organisons une cérémonie chaque année avec l'association des Anciens combattants (Hermeray/Raizeux), et nous allons ensemble aux cimetières puis aux monuments aux morts.

Cette année la commémoration a été encore plus émouvante. Dans le cime-

tière d'Hermeray deux aviateurs Anglais sont inhumés. Les Anglais habitant nos communes se sont joints à nous pour leur rendre un hommage appuyé.

Après le cimetière nous nous sommes tous retrouvés au monument aux morts où nous attendaient les enfants de l'école, et c'est tous ensemble que nous avons chanté « Le Chant des Partisans » écrit par deux très grands écrivains du XX^e siècle que sont Joseph Kessel et son neveu Maurice Druon.

La cérémonie s'est terminée par le pot de l'amitié, les échanges étaient soit en français, soit en anglais. C.LB.



C'est seulement le 20 mars 1953 que le 8 mai a été déclaré jour férié de commémoration en France. Le président Charles de Gaulle supprime le caractère férié de ce jour par un décret le 11 avril 1959 et c'est à la demande du président François Mitterrand que cette commémoration et ce jour férié seront rétablis, par la loi du 2 octobre 1981. Depuis cette date, chaque année nous commémorons, partout en France, la victoire contre le Nazisme.

Hermeray & Raizeux residents honour Sgt Kumar & Fg Off Taylor each year on Memorial Day

Bernard Leroy had also found photographs of the crash, attended by the daughters and son of a Léon Fauvergue who, at probable great risk to himself and his family, had retrieved the Halifax's modification and identity plates.

A local poster from Hermeray at the time, pictured below was also provided. It announces the fact that males, assisting downed enemy [RAF or American] aircrew would be shot, females would be sent to concentration camps and rewards leading to the capture of evading aircrew could amount to sums up to Fr 10,000.

Bekanntmachung

Jede männliche Person, die notge landete oder durch Fallschirmabsprung gerettete feindliche Flugzeugbesatzungen direkt oder indirekt unterstützt, ihnen zur Flucht verhilft, sie verbirgt oder ihnen sonstwie behilflich ist, wird sofort standrechtlich erschossen.

Frauen die derartige Unterstützungen leisten, werden in Konzentrationslager nach Deutschland abgeführt.

Personen, die notgelandete Flugzeugbesatzungen oder Fallschirmabspringer sicherstellen oder durch ihr Verhalten zur Sicherstellung beitragen, erhalten eine Belohnung bis zu 10.000 fr. In besonderen Fällen wird die Belohnung noch erhöht.

AVIS

Toute personne du sexe masculin, qui aiderait directement ou indirectement les équipages d'avions ennemis descendus en parachutes ou ayant fait un atterrissage forcé, qui favoriserait leur fuite, les cacherait, ou leur viendrait en aide, de quelque façon que ce soit, **sera fusillé** sur le champ.

Les femmes qui se rendraient coupables du même délit, seront envoyées dans des camps de concentration situés en Allemagne.

Les personnes qui s'empareront d'équipages, contraints à atterrir ou de parachutistes ou qui auront contribué par leur attitude à leur capture, recevront une prime pouvant aller jusqu'à 10.000 francs. Dans certains cas particuliers cette récompense sera encore augmentée.

Paris, den 22 September 1941

Der Militärattaché in Frankreich:

VON STUELPNAGEL,
Général der Infanterie.

German Poster advising local French citizens assisting enemy aircrew of the consequences if found.



The wreckage of LV 882 with Léon Fauvergue's two little daughters,

Facing severe consequences therefore, from the German authorities, if found with them, Léon Fauvergue had retrieved two aluminium modification and identity plates from the Halifax wreckage, keeping them hidden for the rest of the war and remaining in his and his son Pierre's safe custody for the next 71 years.

In 2015 Pierre Fauvergue made contact with the 10 Squadron Association and offered to return them to their rightful home at 10 Squadron. Association member Dick King then obtained a piece of wood from John Rowbottom, the owner of Melrose Farm, - the site of the former RAF Melbourne. The wood had come from an old RAF building door at Melbourne, retained after the building's demolition. Cleaned up and varnished the plates have now been mounted on it, with a small plaque of explanation as to how the crashed aircraft is once again symbolically reunited with its former base.



Father & Son: Léon and Pierre Fauvergue (whose photo was taken in 2015)

At time of the crash and until his retirement Léon was an executive at Ets Kulhman, a chemical industry company. He passed away in 1989, at the age of 87. His two daughters (*pictured under the blue arrow above*) are Louise-Marie the eldest, and Françoise the youngest. Their brother Pierre Fauvergue, who returned the aircraft's plates, is now retired. It is Pierre's wish, knowing that his late father would appreciate his name being remembered for his deed, that they be returned to 10 Squadron in 2015, its Centenary year.



From: L'Association des "Ailes Anciennes" Le Bourget 1992

Dans la nuit du 2 au 3 juin, la gare de triage de Trappes est à nouveau attaquée : 105 Halifax, 19 Lancaster, et 4 Mosquito participent au bombardement. La pleine lune rend la nuit claire et elle permet aux chasseurs de nuit Allemands de discerner facilement les bombardiers qui prennent le chemin du retour. 16 quadrimoteurs sont abattus entre l'ouest de la Région Parisienne et la Normandie, dont certains dans notre secteur à :

A Hermeray, dans la nuit du 2 au 3 juin, un Halifax tombe en flammes dans la plaine d'Amblaincourt. De l'équipage de sept aviateurs, deux sont enterrés au cimetière d'Hermeray: C.D. Taylor et V. Kumar, trois corps calcinés ont été emmenés par les Allemands, et reposent au cimetière militaire de St Denis, près de Lisieux. Le corps du navigateur Canadien, Heyworth, n'a jamais été retrouvé.

Un seul est rescapé, le radio, le sergent Alec Hunter, qui ayant pu sauter en parachute, tombe à Raizeux, à 150 m. de la limite du domaine de la Baste, alors occupé par les Allemands. Bien que blessé au pied, il peut se traîner au petit matin jusqu'à la ferme Goumand, aux Roches, où il est recueilli et soigné par la mère de Mme Irène Moreau, qui l'héberge et le cache, ce qui n'était pas sans risques. Elle lui procure des vêtements civils. Aidé par les résistants, il quittera Raizeux et pourra regagner son Angleterre natale, mais seulement en Octobre suivant.

Les retrouvailles après quarante quatre ans - En effet, le 9 juillet 1988, Alec Hunter écrit à Mme Moreau : (traduction)"...Je suis très reconnaissant à votre maman qui me recueillit...le matin du 3 juin vers 6 heures. J'étais blessé au pied droit, et votre maman le lava, le soigna avec de l'alcool, et le banda. Je me souviens des vêtements qui étaient "tres grande (en français dans le texte)" - Le 24 octobre 1988 à Caen, lors de l'Assemblée Générale des Vétérans de la Royal Air Force Association, Mme Moreau remet à Alec Hunter l'uniforme militaire, qu'il portait le 2 juin et qu'elle avait soigneusement conservé. L'uniforme est maintenant au musée de la RAF près de Caen.

TRANSLATION OF THE ABOVE:

At Hermeray, on the night of 2nd/3rd June, a Halifax crashed in flames into the Amblaincourt plain. Out of the seven-man crew: two were buried in Hermeray Cemetery – C.D. Taylor and V. Kumar; three burnt bodies were taken away by the Germans and now lie in the St. Denis Military Cemetery near Lisieux. The body of the Canadian navigator, Heyworth, was never found.

Only one man escaped. The radio operator, Flight Sergeant Alec Hunter. He managed to bail out and landed at Raizeux, just 150 metres from the perimeter of Chateau de la Baste, which was at that time occupied by the Germans. Although his foot was injured, he was able to drag himself in the early hours of the morning as far as Goumand Farm at Les Roches where he was taken in and cared for by the mother of Madame Irène Moreau, who gave him refuge and hid him, which was not without its risks. She obtained civilian clothing for him. Aided by the Resistance, he left Raizeux and managed to return to his native England, but not until the following October.

Reunion after forty-four years: On 9th July 1988, Alec Hunter writes to Madame Moreau thus: "...I am very grateful to your Mum who took me in...on the morning of 3rd June at about 6 am. I had an injury to my right foot and your mother washed it, applied alcohol to it and bandaged it up. I remember the clothes which were "très grande" (*these two words were written in French by Hunter*)".

On 24th October 1988 at Caen, on the occasion of a General Meeting of the Veterans of the Royal Air Force Association, Madame Moreau returned to Alec Hunter, the military uniform which he was wearing on 2nd June 1944 and which she had carefully looked after ever since. The uniform is now at the RAF Museum near Caen.



Bernard Leroy's Investigations

In 2015 Bernard writes:

In order to help you deal with the amount of information collected over the last two years I have made, based on the information now on hand, a summary of what I perceive was the sequence of events during LV 882's last minutes preceding the crash and of what happened in the following days :

The last flying moments of the Halifax LV 882 D

On the night of 2 to 3 June 1944 the LV 882 was returning home in UK with a crew of 7 men after the bombing of the marshalling railway station of Trappes in the south-west of Paris. The weather was clear with moonlight and when reaching La Boissière the Halifax became the target of a German night fighter. Hit by bullets the aircraft was soon in flames. The first one to leave the plane was the flight engineer, Sgt J. Archer (see note 1). The second one was the wireless operator, Sgt A. Hunter (2) over Raizeux, and finally the tail gunner Sgt G. O'Leary (3) over Hermeray. When the plane finally crashed there were still 4 men on board : Sgt V. Kumar, pilot & captain; F/O A. Heyworth, navigator; F/O C.D. Taylor, bomb aimer; and Sgt T. Blacklock, mid upper gunner.

Later in the day of 3 June, the Germans came from Dreux airbase, passing through La Boissière they collected the body of Sgt Archer. Then they went to Amblaincourt (Hermeray) the site of the crash, where they saw, in the meadow, the bodies of F/O Heyworth and Sgt Blacklock which they collected too, leaving with the three bodies which they carried to Chartres cemetery (4).

According to witnesses the Commandant of Dreux airbase, author of the attack, came in person to look at the wreckage (5).

Some days later the villagers alerted by a strong smell dug out under the wreckage and extracted the bodies of Sgt Kumar and F/O Taylor whom they later buried at Hermeray cemetery.

Note (1) *Most newspaper articles mention that the 3 corpses carried back to Chartres by the Germans were collected at Amblaincourt. However a book, entitled "Forced Landings" which the 10 Sqn Association referred to, states that the body of Sgt Archer had been picked up at La Boissière. I also recall having heard that one of the bodies was recovered not far from Mittainville, which is a village adjacent to La Boissière. I have written to the Mayor of La Boissière to get confirmation of this fact but I have not yet received any answer.*

In my summary here I have used the wording : ...Sgt Archer was the first to 'leave' the aircraft because we don't really know whether Archer jumped out on his own will or was simply ejected accidentally from the aircraft. We do know that it was soon after the loss of one engine and half of the landing gear that the crash occurred.

Note (2) *Sgt Hunter's story is well known now. He landed near La Baste occupied by German soldiers and crawled to the "ferme Goumand" where he was taken care of by Gabrielle Morin, the mother of Irene Moreau. His escape has been confirmed by his own letter to his helper later in 1988. Unfortunately Henri Collet, the man who helped him by bringing him a bicycle to join 'Epernon' and the Resistance network was later caught by the Germans at Auxerre (Yonne) and shot dead by them on 24 August 1944.*

Note (3) *Sgt O'Leary landed at Amblaincourt not far from the crash site. He was picked up by the farmer Georges Chateau who brought him to Raizeux. From there what happened to him is unknown. Since he had been buried at Chartres separately from the other crew members I have contacted the man responsible for the cemetery's administration, Patrice Rondel, who said that Sgt O'Leary died at La Taie (10km from Chartres). Was he being carried to Freteval where the Resistance was locating many airmen waiting for the Allied landing and the Liberation? How did he die? I have never been told that Sgt O'Leary was wounded when he landed and if he was I don't see why they would have carried him so far away. If the Germans had caught him and his helper both with civilian clothes and shot them that would be known, since the Germans were doing such things openly to discourage people from helping airmen. Various scenarios can be considered but none with solid support. We also have to keep in mind that, at that particular time of the war in this area, any vehicle moving on a road was a target for Allied fighters and the possibility of a 'friendly' attack cannot be systematically excluded.*

I have tried to get more information about the resistance network who took care of him but G. Chateau, the farmer who took him to Raizeux, has now passed away long ago. As for Marie Charlotte Blottas, the dress-maker who had been involved in helping some airmen, she was arrested and sent to the concentration camp of Ravensbruck where she died on 2 March 1945. I am not aware of any other source of information available for the moment.

Note (4) *There has been a lot of confusion by the media and other sources of information about the identity of the 3 bodies carried away from the crash site by the Germans. It is clear from Chartres Cemetery registration books, they were Archer, Heyworth and Blacklock who were buried side by side and later on transferred to St Desir Cemetery where they were again buried side by side. The body of Sgt O'Leary, brought in later from La Taie, was buried in another section of the St Desir Cemetery.*

Note (5) *At that time the Schnellgeschwader 10 (SKG 10) equipped with the night version of Focke-Wulf 190-A was based at Dreux under the command of Maj Kurt Dahlmann.*

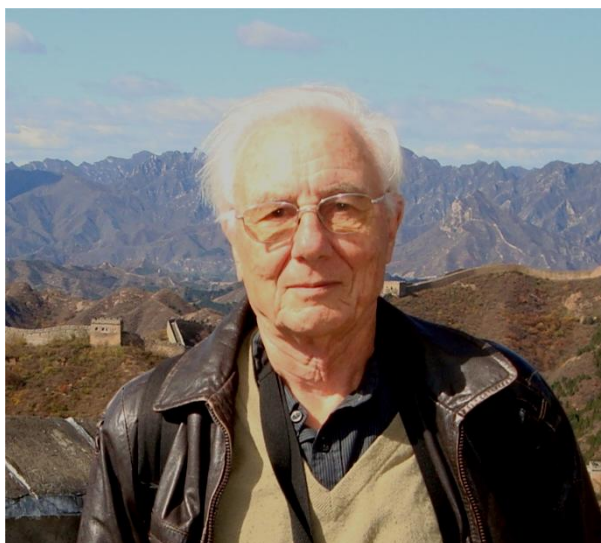
By not being aware locally that the aircraft had a crew of seven, it was generally thought that all the crew but one had died in the crash; and consequently that the airman taken to Raizeux was the same person who later wrote to thank his helper, whereas the successive events which occurred during the last moments of this tragedy were more complex.

I hope this summary can give a clearer understanding of the sequence of events.

*Best wishes,
Bernard*



***Bernard Leroy (right front) as a young man in the French Armée de l'Air,
taken in French Indo-China during the 1950s***



Bernard Leroy 2015

*The 10 Squadron Association wishes to thank Bernard for his diligence and
friendship during the time he has spent carrying out so much research work about
LV 882 on behalf of the Association . We are most grateful.*



Bernard Leroy also informed the Association of a strange question that had arisen in 1988 when the brother of the crew's Air Bomber, Fg Off Charles Delaney Taylor had visited his brother's burial site in Hermeray. Richard Taylor had queried whether it was really his brother who lay in the grave. His thoughts were published by a local newspaper at the time (*see below*) and were based on two points: a letter received by Taylor's mother after the crash, written by Taylor was dated 1 July 1944 – a month *after* the crash. His brother, Richard, also queried the Service Number of Fg Off Taylor's identity-tag which was not the one he had believed to be his brother's: it is an established fact though, that some Air Forces did change the Service Number of airmen once they were commissioned as officers and this may well have been the case with Taylor whose ID tags were found on his body.) It would also seem most unreasonable and therefore fair to assume that if Taylor had escaped he would have been documented as such back in the UK. Furthermore it is most likely that if he had survived he would have made contact with his mother, once back home. Or, if he had gone to Canada, records of this would exist rather than remaining unknown anywhere until as late as 1988, when his brother had made his suggestions that it was not Taylor in the Hermeray grave. One has to assume that Taylor's letter to his mother, dated 1 July 1944 was merely a slip of the pen or otherwise misread as 'Jul' instead of 'Jun'. It is nevertheless odd that he did not record a next of kin in his service documents.

Newspaper "ECHO Républicain" - local Chartres news 30 April 1988

"ECHO REPUBLICAIN"

30/04/88

CHARTRES ARRONDISSEMENT

MAINTENON

Le mystère a duré 44 ans...

L'aviateur britannique enterré à Hermeray est-il bien mort ?

Dans la nuit du 2 au 3 juin 44, la mission d'un Halifax de la RAF contre la gare de triage de Trappes tourne court. Il s'écrase dans un champ à Hermeray. Parmi l'équipage, Charles-Delaney Taylor. Donné comme mort par les autorités officielles, son frère Richard est venu mardi, 44 ans après, sur les lieux de la catastrophe. Des indices convergents l'ont incité à croire que son frère était toujours vivant !



Marcel, le fossoyeur, un des trop rares témoins de cette tragédie



Charles-Delaney Taylor occupait les fonctions de bombardier à bord du Halifax de l'escadron chargé du bombardement de la gare de triage de Trappes



Emotion pour M. Taylor qui 44 ans après arpente le terrain où vraisemblablement son frère a trouvé la mort (à gauche aux côtés de M. Martin des « Ailes Anciennes »

INTENSE moment d'émotion pour Richard Taylor et son épouse. Ils sont venus de Cardiff en Angleterre pour aller sur la tombe de pierre blanche du petit cimetière d'Hermeray. Une tombe très sobre, placée, juste devant celle du pilote d'origine indienne, Uijendra Kumar. Trois autres membres de l'équipage, récupérés par les Allemands, ont été enterrés au cimetière militaire de Saint-Denis à Lisieux. On ne relèvera qu'un seul survivant, le sergent Hunter. Récupéré par la Résistance, il retrouvera son pays en octobre. Officiellement, on compte six morts mais l'équipage comptait sept personnes. Qui est donc ce septième homme ? Il s'agit du navigateur, un certain Heyworth, canadien, qui n'a jamais été retrouvé...

Richard Taylor a longtemps accepté la mort de son frère.

Mais cette année, deux jours avant Noël, il apprend que son frère vit au Canada. Installé après guerre. Il se serait même marié avec une jeune femme de Newcastle dans le Nouveau Brunswick. Plus curieux encore, le 4 janvier, en triant des papiers de famille, il retrouve une lettre écrite par Charles-Delaney à sa mère portant la date du 1^{er} juillet 44, soit près d'un mois après le vol tragique. Il ne fait aucune allusion au « crash » du Halifax.

Le mauvais sort a voulu que cette mère ait reçu un télégramme officiel annonçant la mort de son fils, huit jours après cette lettre...

Un courrier officiel des autorités allemandes confirme bien la mort de trois aviateurs mais Charles-Delaney n'est pas sur la liste. Un autre courrier, émanant

des autorités britanniques, confirme au contraire la mort de l'officier et que sa dépouille repose bel et bien à Hermeray. Qui croire ?

Une histoire de numéro matricule

Ne pouvant supporter ce doute angoissant, Richard Taylor et son épouse n'ont pas baissé les bras pour connaître la vérité sur la destinée de Charles-Delaney. N'a-t-il pas été confondu avec Heyworth ? Lorsque les autorités britanniques ont cherché à identifier les victimes, il a fallu exhumer les corps. Une plaque au nom de G.D. Taylor (et non C.D.) a bien été retrouvée mais cette plaque se trouvait sur un corps en décomposition déjà fort avancée. Le numéro matricule 152.505 ne correspond pas au

matricule inscrit sur le carnet de vol personnel de l'aviateur, n° 131.6198. Un carnet bleu qui date de la période d'entraînement de Charles-Delaney, en janvier 43 dans les forces aériennes canadiennes. Curieusement, la liste des victimes ne mentionne pas les origines familiales de l'aviateur. On lit « no next of kin given » ce qui veut dire que l'on ignore tout des membres de la famille à prévenir en cas d'accident.

Aujourd'hui, à Hermeray, il ne reste que quelques témoins oculaires. Le temps a passé, les souvenirs se sont émoussés depuis 44 ans. Un homme, Marcel Collin, fossoyeur pendant 30 ans, est toujours là. Richard Taylor l'a rencontré mardi. Mais le brave homme ne se souvient pas si parmi les corps se trouvait un garçon aux cheveux crépus.

« Les corps n'étaient pas beaux à voir. Il fallait mettre son mouchoir dans la bouche pour approcher. Quelques jours plus tard, on a retrouvé un autre corps. C'était encore pire ». Avait-il la peau blanche ou noire ? Impossible de le dire. Comment a-t-on pu identifier avec certitude les corps dans de telles conditions ? Mystère... Et l'homme, cet Heyworth, que la Résistance a récupéré ? *« Les Boches étaient là. Les patriotes s'en sont occupés mais c'était pas le moment ».* On parle aussi d'un homme qui aurait été récupéré gravement brûlé par une infirmière du village. De qui s'agit-il ?

Mardi, Richard Taylor et son épouse ont rencontré sur place Serge Martin et Jean-Pierre Niclot, de l'association des « Ailes Anciennes » qui depuis

des années mènent des recherches sur les avions bombardiers tombés dans le secteur. Avec eux, John Sheehan, officier de liaison de la R.A.F. Renseignements pris par ce dernier auprès des archives de l'armée de l'air britannique à Gloucester, près de Londres, il ne fait aucun doute que l'homme au matricule 152.505 ne fait qu'un avec celui qui en 43 avait le matricule 131.6198. Son numéro a changé lorsqu'il est devenu officier. Il est donc pratiquement certain que l'homme qui repose à Hermeray est bien le frère de Richard Taylor. Le mystère de la lettre reste donc entier. L'avait-il écrite quelques jours avant en l'anti-datant ? S'est-il trompé de date ? Il n'en fallait pas plus pour jeter le trouble 44 années durant dans l'esprit d'une famille.

THIERRY NOËL

Translation of the Echo Republicain article:

Newspaper Article entitled “Echo Républicain” 30 March 1988

Chartres Arrondissement

Maintenon

The mystery has lasted 44 years...

Is the British airman buried at Hermeray really dead?

Above photographs of Marcel and Charles-Delaney Taylor:

On the night of 2nd/3rd June ‘44, the mission of an RAF Halifax against the marshalling yard at Trappes is cut short. It crashes in a field at Hermeray. Among the crew is Charles-Delaney Taylor. Reported as dead by the official authorities, his brother Richard came on Tuesday, 44 years after the event, to the site of the catastrophe. Conflicting information made him believe that his brother was still alive!

Picture captions: 1) Marcel, a gravedigger, one of the very few witnesses of this tragedy, 2) Charles-Delaney Taylor served as bomb-aimer on board the Halifax in the squadron whose mission was to bomb the marshalling yards at Trappes, 3) an emotional Mr Richard Taylor surveys the site where, in all likelihood, his brother met his death (on the left beside Monsieur Martin of “Ailes Anciennes”).

It was a moment of intense emotion for Richard Taylor and his wife. They came from Cardiff in England (sic) to go to the grave of white stone in the little cemetery at Hermeray. A very plain grave, located just in front of that of the Indian pilot, Vijendra Kumar. Three other members of the crew recovered by the Germans were buried at the St. Denis Military Cemetery at Lisieux. Only one survivor is recorded, Sergeant Hunter. Rescued by the Resistance, he made it back to his home country that October. Officially six died, but the crew had seven members. Who then is this seventh man? That would be the navigator Heyworth, a Canadian who was never found.

For a long time, Richard Taylor had accepted his brother’s death. But this year, two days before Christmas, he learned that his brother was living in Canada where he had gone after the war. It was even said that he had married a young woman from Newcastle, New Brunswick. Even more curious than this was the fact that on 4th January, when he was sorting through some family papers, he found a letter, written by Charles-Delaney to his mother and bearing the date 1st July ‘44, that is about one month after the tragic flight. He makes no mention of the crash of the Halifax in the letter.

Such was the course of fate, that this mother then received an official telegram, informing her of her son’s death, eight days after this letter...

An official dispatch from the German authorities does indeed confirm the deaths of three airmen but Charles-Delaney is not on the list. Another dispatch, issued by the British authorities, on the other hand, confirms the officer’s death and that his remains most definitely repose at Hermeray. Who to believe?

A story of a Service number

Unable to put up with this nagging doubt, Richard Taylor and his wife, have not given up their efforts to find out what really happened to Charles-Delaney. Could he have been confused with Heyworth? When the British authorities decided to identify the victims, they had to exhumate the bodies. An identity tag in the name of G.D. Taylor (and not C.D. Taylor) was indeed recovered but this tag was found on a body already in an advanced state of decomposition. The Service Number 152505 differs from that recorded in the airman’s personal flight log, number 1316198. A blue log which dates from Charles-Delaney’s training period with the Royal Canadian Air Force in January 1943. Strangely, the list of victims does not mention the family origins of the airman. It reads “no next of kin given” which means that no names have been given of members of the family to be notified in the event of an accident.

Today in Hermeray, only a few eye-witnesses remain. Time has passed. Memories have dimmed over the 44 years. One man, Marcel Collin, gravedigger for 30 years, is still there. Richard Taylor met him on Tuesday. But the old chap does not remember whether there was a lad with frizzy hair amongst the bodies.

“The bodies were not nice to look at. You had to put your handkerchief in your mouth when you got near. Some days later, another body was found. That was even worse.” Did it have white or black skin? Impossible to say. How could the bodies be identified with any degree of certainty in these conditions? Mystery... And the man, this Heyworth, whom the Resistance rescued. “The Boches were there. The patriots took care of it but it wasn’t the time (to ask questions)”. There was also talk of a man who had been rescued with severe burns by a nurse in the village. Who could that have been?

On Tuesday, at the site, Richard Taylor and his wife met Serge Martin and Jean-Pierre Niclot from the “Ailes Anciennes” (Ancient Wings) association, who for years have conducted research into bombers which came down in the area. With them was John Sheehan, an RAF liaison officer. According to information obtained by him in the RAF archives at Gloucester, near London (sic), there is no doubt that the man with the Service Number 152505 is one and the same as the one who had the number 1316198 in 1943. His number changed when he became an officer. It is, therefore, practically certain that the man who lies at Hermeray is indeed the brother of Richard Taylor. The mystery of the letter, therefore, still remains intact. Had he written it several days before and post-dated it? Did he mistakenly write the wrong date? It took no more than that to trouble the minds of a family for 44 long years.

Thierry Noël



Author of this Article, Dick King writes in October 2015:

Having been helped so much in researching this interesting story by Bernard Leroy, we sadly knew nothing about the background of most of the crew, particularly the captain and pilot, Sgt Vijendra Kumar. We had assumed that he was one of the thousands of colonial and commonwealth forces who had answered the call to help the Allied cause. In September 2015 however, I met the nephew of Sgt Vijendra Kumar who was of course the pilot of LV 882.

By a most strange coincidence a friend of Kumar's nephew was doing some electrical work in a small company near me, in Leek, Staffs. The company is run by a Mike Wilmott - now an Assoc member, who is a relative of a crew member of the much publicised Halifax LV 881 German/ Winchester University 2014/15 excavation project and whose Registration Number preceded LV 882's.

In an even greater coincidence Kumar's nephew, Mike Sain is a chap whom I took as a flight-deck passenger on a Boeing 757 to Las Palmas and back, one night way back in 1992 when I was airline flying with Air 2000. (*We could take authorised passengers on the flight-deck in those days before September 11th 2001. - Mike and I had a mutual friend in the Airline who had asked me if I would oblige.*) Mike now works as a civilian for the RAF at their Air Traffic School and is also a civilian flying instructor in his spare time. He lives but 10 miles from me.

Over a few coffees in a local café Mike told me how the Kumar family had come to the UK from Delhi in India some time before WW2, eventually to settle in Birmingham, where the family ran an engineering business. A photograph of the hitherto unknown Vijendra Kumar was given to me showing him in his RAF uniform with his mother Chandra.

Sadly the flight of Vijendra Kumar's Halifax LV 882 was only the second which he and his crew flew operationally on 10 Squadron; their first being a 23 aircraft bombing raid to Ferme Durville on the day before their fated flight to Trappes and subsequent crash in Hermeray/Raizeux. They had only just been posted in to 10 Squadron at Melbourne on 16 May 1944, from No 41 Base which consisted of RAF Marston Moor along with its satellite airfields at Rufforth, Riccall and Acaster Malbis.



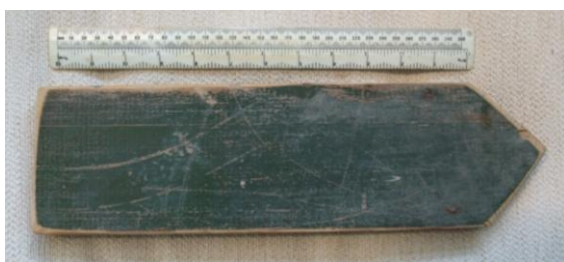
LV 882's captain & pilot Sgt Vijendra Kumar with his mother Chandra



HALIFAX LV 882

A 10 SQN HALIFAX MK3, SHOT DOWN ON 3 JUNE 1944, CRASHED NEAR HERMERAY, SOUTHWEST OF PARIS, KILLING ALL BUT ONE OF ITS CREW. THEY ARE BURIED AT HERMERAY AND ST DESIR. LV 882's ID AND MOD PLATES WERE RETRIEVED BY M. LÉON FAUVERGUE WHOSE SON RETURNED THEM TO THE SQN IN 2015. MOUNTED HERE ON WOOD FROM A WW2 RAF MELBOURNE DOOR SYMBOLICALLY REUNITES THEM WITH THEIR BASE LEFT 71 YRS BEFORE.

The Inscription accompanying LV 882's Plates,



The original wood from an old RAF Melbourne door.

THE 1915 – 2015 POPPY

In 1915, a Canadian doctor, Lt Col John McCrae, inspired by the profusion of poppies growing in battle-scarred fields, wrote the now famous poem, 'In Flanders Fields'. The poppy was later adopted as the symbol of Remembrance.

Marking 10 Squadron's Centenary year, a small 1915–2015 poppy has been affixed to the side of the Melbourne wood on which LV 882's plates are mounted.



*Dick King
The 10 Squadron Association
November 2015*



*A WW2 10 Squadron Halifax returns to RAF Melbourne,
passing the Seaton Ross Mill landmark.*

—

LV 882's crew were not to see this again.

'Lost in France'

they are

' Always Remembered '

