



## **SQUADRON LEADER CECIL RHYS DAVIES 1909-1941: NOTES ON HIS DEATH AND BURIAL**

**Compiled for Richard Hughes-Weston & Carole Cohen  
by Colin Mowl**



**Squadron Leader Davies was the pilot of a Lockheed Hudson aircraft of RAF Coastal Command, with a crew of four others, which went missing on 24/25 December 1941 off the north-west coast of France**

IWM



## CECIL RHYS DAVIES: SUMMARY BIOGRAPHY

Born 12 September 1909, Pontypridd; son of William Rees Davies and Elizabeth Anne Davies, of Christchurch, Monmouthshire

Welsh Rugby cap v England 20 January 1934

Captain Imperial Airways

Royal Air Force, Coastal Command, 224 Squadron

Service Number 28147; mentioned in Despatches

Died 24/12/1941, Aged 32

Interred British War Cemetery, Bayeux, Plot VIII. C.21

### Main sources

- 1) Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)  
<https://www.cwgc.org/find/find-war-dead/results?initial=c%2BR&lastName=davies&serviceNumber=28147&war=2>
- 2) Letters from Air Ministry to W R Davies, 24 June 1942 and 23 November 1943
- 3) 224 Squadron Operations Record Book:
  - a) Summary of Events (Form 540) December 1941 – National Archives Reference AIR/27/1386
  - b) Detail of Work carried out (Form 541) December 1941 – National Archives Reference AIR/27/1386
- 4) Royal Air Force COASTAL COMMAND LOSSES of the Second World War. Volume 1 Aircraft and Crew Losses 1939-1941: Ross McNeill
- 5) Association Bretonne du Souvenir Aérien 1939-45 (ABSA)  
<http://absa3945.e-monsite.com/pages/base-de-donnees/cat-22/24-12-1941.html>
- 6) Wikipedia:
  - a) RAF Coastal Command - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF\\_Coastal\\_Command](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Coastal_Command)
  - b) Lockheed Hudson - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lockheed\\_Hudson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lockheed_Hudson)
- 7) French administrative documents February 1941 see page 9

### **Aircraft identification codes**

The RAF used two types of aircraft identification system:

- A three-letter code painted on the fuselage; the first two letters identified the squadron, in 224 Squadron's case, QX, and the third letter identified the aircraft
- A two letter/three-digit unique serial number

The use of these codes in a squadron's Operations Record Book (ORB) of daily activities varied in the different commands of the RAF. 224 Squadron used both systems in its ORB. Thus we know that on 24 December S/L Davies was flying a Hudson with QX F on its fuselage, with a serial number AM669.

### **Front cover photographs**

From the top left to right: Lockheed Hudson; Pilot at the controls of a Lockheed Hudson; Lockheed Hudson Imperial War Museum (IWM); Squadron Leader Davies' grave, Bayeux; Coastal Command memorial, St Eval, Cornwall

## **SQUADRON LEADER CECIL RHYS DAVIES: NOTES ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS DEATH AND BURIAL**

**Compiled by Colin Mowl for Squadron Leader Davies'  
nephew, Richard Hughes-Weston and niece, Carole Cohen**

In 1941 Cecil Rhys Davies was serving in the RAF's 224 Squadron which was part of Coastal Command. At 22.57 on 24 December 1941, he embarked on a patrol over the Bay of Biscay flying a Lockheed Hudson aircraft with a crew of four. The aircraft failed to return to its base at RAF St Eval and all five airmen were lost.

Richard Hughes-Weston understood from his mother, Squadron Leader Davies' sister, that his remains were never found. However, it is clear from a letter from the Ministry of Aviation dated 23 November 1943 to his father that Squadron Leader Davies' remains and those of Flight Sergeant Tom Houldsworth were retrieved and buried in the cemetery of the coastal village of Locquémeau in Brittany and later transferred to the British War Cemetery at Bayeux. The remains of the other three members of the aircrew were never found. Their names are on the Runnymede Memorial for those with no known grave.

Recent enquiries by Colin Mowl through the Association Bretonne du Souvenir Aérien (ABSA) and the mairie of Trédez-Locquémeau have identified contemporary French administrative reports that confirm the account in the Ministry's letter and provide some information on the circumstances.

These notes collate the information recently available on the circumstances of Squadron Leader Davies' death and burial. They also include:

- information on other members of S/L Davies' crew
- contextual information on the activities of 224 Squadron in December 1941, and
- information on the Lockheed Hudson aircraft flown by S/L Davies
- extracts from commemorative websites and specialist fora which include biographical and other information on S/L Davies and his crew.

Sources consulted are on the page opposite. There may be other documents which contain relevant information. But even if all these were available it would not be possible to compile a comprehensive and accurate account of events. The absence of any communication from the crew or of any eye-witness testimony, for example from other aircraft, make it virtually impossible to construct a comprehensive reliable account.

### 224 Squadron activities in December 1941

At the beginning of December 1941 the squadron was based at Limavady in Northern Ireland, but during the course of a few days around the middle of the month, it relocated to St Eval in Cornwall.



It was from Limavady, on 10 December, that S/L Davies embarked on his penultimate patrol, in Lockheed Hudson E AM532. He was accompanied by Pilot Officer A Bookingham and Flight Sergeants P West and G Chandler. The aircraft was airborne at 08.59, one of four aircraft which took off during an eight- minute period. It returned to Limavady at 15.10, the mission having lasted around six hours. The patrol appears to have been uneventful, with the following brief entry in the squadron's

Operations Record Book (ORB): *"Searched area. Nothing seen."* The map references of the search area are given in the ORB but I am not able to interpret them. The other three patrols also reported *"Nothing seen."*

The relocation to St Eval began on 15 December. Part of the entry in the Squadron "Summary of Events" for that day reads:

*"S/Ldr C R Davies, P/O D Quas, P/O R Phillipps, P/O S V Jenkins, P/O N A Mervyn-Smith, P/O J N Wright proceeded to St Eval by boat and rail on posting of the Squadron."*

Also on the 15<sup>th</sup> a smaller group led by S/L Bartlett transferred by air, with the rest of the Squadron completing the move, mainly by boat and rail, on 18 December.

Operations from St Eval appear to have begun on 22 December with a single patrol. Six aircraft were despatched the following day, four on anti-submarine patrols and two on what were known as "Stopper patrols." One of the patrols found two submarines accompanied by a destroyer and reported their position.



*Coastal Command Memorial St Eval*

## 24 December 1941: the loss of S/L Davies and his crew of four

The Squadron despatched six aircraft on 24 December, the first at 02.31 and the last, S/L Davies' Lockheed Hudson F AM669, at 22.57. The other crew members were:

- Flight Lieutenant Joseph Herbert Higgleton (Age 28)
- Flight Sergeant Tom Ford Houldsworth (Age 22)
- Flight Sergeant Arthur Gooch (Age 22)
- Flight Sergeant Jack Roberts (Age 20)

Each member of the aircrew had a special role. These were co-pilot/observer, navigator, the rear gunner/radio operator and observer/cameraman. I do not have information on which crew members played which role, but it seems as if F/S Houldsworth was the co-pilot. Photos below are from the Imperial War Museum (IWM) collection and show the crew of a 269 Squadron Hudson at Leuchars standing beside the aircraft and the pilot in the cockpit.



The main roles of 224 Squadron at St Eval were searching for U-boats as they moved to and from their bases on the west coast of France and preventing three of the German Navy's capital ships from breaking out from Brest into the Atlantic. In the ORB the mission was described as a "Stepper patrol", as shown in the ORB which is reproduced on page 4. As the words on this copy are not easy to make out they are transcribed immediately below:

P M669	S/Ldr C R Davies F/Lt Stopper patrol	2257	----	This a/c did not return.
	J H Higgleton Sgts			
	Gooch A G Roberts J			
	Houldsworth T P			

### Column 1

Aircraft type & number: **F M669**

### Column 2

Crew: **S/L C R Davies, F/Lt J H Higgleton, Sgts Gooch A G, Roberts J, Houldsworth T F**

### Column 3

Duty: **Stopper Patrol**

### Column 4

Time Up: **22.57**

### Column 5

Time Down: ----

### Column 6

Details of Sortie or Flight; **This a/c did not return.**

DATE	AIRCRAFT TYPE & NUMBER	CREW	Duty	TIME		DETAILS OF SORTIE OR FLIGHT	REFERENCES
				Up	Down		
24.12.41	D AMB27	P/O Crews & Sgts Antonovich A Martin B B Hickman K	Stopper Patrol	0231	0830	S.S. failed at 0537.	STR/06/25/12 14/013/14/12
	G. V9090	P/O B Emery & P/O H Knowles Sgts Page P Martin F	" "	0220	0910	Nothing to report.	STR/07/25/12 14/013/14/12
	B. V9091	P/O H A Harvey-Smith Sgts Mattison R Clent H Flavell H P/Sgt Edgar T	" "	1745	0110	Nothing to report.	STR/01/25/12 14/013/14/12
	E AM631	Sgts Bennett G Williams B Perry K Thompson J R L	A/S Sweep	1936	0146	Saw 50 or 60 fishing vessels seen extending southwards from 47° 32' N 05° 00' W.	STR/03/25/12 14/07/25/12
	G AM781	Sgts James T Sayer R Clifton P Johnson R Leeds G	" "	2025	0220	S.S. failed at 2150. Numerous fishing vessels.	STR/03/25/12 14/07/25/12
	F AM648	S/Ldr C R Davies P/O A J H Higgleton Sgts Goon A G Roberts J Houldsworth T P	Stopper Patrol	2257	---	This a/c did not return.	14/013/14/12
25.12.41	H. V9068	P/O F Everest Sgts Evans H Orr T Harley K	" "	0325	0725	Patrol out short owing to deviation of 13 dya between 02 and P 6 compass.	STR/06/25/12 14/013/14/12
	H AM667	P/O G R Pearl Sgts Millerton C Lilley H Scott R Brown K	A/S Sweep	0550 0628	0610 1300	S.S. u/s. Without S.S. Numerous fishing vessels.	STR/06/25/12 14/08/25/12
	H AM779	P/O J Irvine P/O H Fisher Sgts Taylor D Green B	A/S Escort to secret convoy canal	0617	1332	C/V met and escorted. Nothing further reported.	STR/07/25/12 14/0
	A. V9092	S/Ldr C C C Berlett P/O A Buckingham Sgts West F Chandler C Geedy P	A/S Sweep	0630	1544	Numerous fishing vessels. At 0935 in 51° 46' N 01° 21' W 2 M/V's about 1000 tons course 360 6-8 knots. A five star red cartridge fired seen by one M/V. On message from Group, searched area 15 miles square around 47° 00' N 05° 00' W from 1255.	STR/08/25/12 14/08/25/12
	G AM781	Sgts James V Sayer R Clifton P Leeds G Johnson R	A/S Escort to secret convoy canal	0928	1645	Compass line about 1000 in 50° 36' 40" 30" W and ended at 1607 in 50° 34' N 05° 10" W. C/V met and escorted. Nothing further reported.	STR/010/25/12 14/08/25/12 STR/09/25/12 14/06/25/12

Most operations were given a code word which indicated the nature of the task the aircraft had been given. The code word was entered in the "Duty" column of the ORB. There is some uncertainty and confusion about the designation of the Duty which S/L Davies was undertaking on 24 December. The type-written entries in the ORB were often blurred. A first inspection of the entry in the ORB appeared to describe it as a "Stopper Patrol" and this was also the word used in Ross McNeill's book on Coastal Command Losses. But apart from a handful of other operations from St Eval, this code was not in use elsewhere. Moreover Stopper Patrol did not appear in lists of Coastal Command codes and the only reference to it was in a Forum which gave a less than convincing explanation of its origin.

A closer inspection of the somewhat blurred entries in the ORB indicated that they just as easily be read as "Stopper Patrol." Moreover there were references to "Stopper Patrol" in the official history of the RAF during the Second World War. I intend therefore to use "Stopper" in the rest of this report.

No matter what the patrol's precise objective was, and no matter what name was attached to it, all we know for sure is that the aircraft did not return and that it was lost over the sea<sup>1</sup>. Sometimes when an aircraft is lost, the crew have time to send a radio message describing its plight or they are able to bail out. Neither

<sup>1</sup> If it had been lost over land, wreckage would almost certainly have been found by local inhabitants and its existence shared with Allied land forces or those charged after the war with investigating the missing and identifying the dead.

occurred on this occasion. Often there are eye-witnesses on the ground or on ships at sea. If there were in this case, no account of their eye-witness testimony has yet been found.

It is worth noting some options based on the loss of other aircraft in known circumstances. The following are the main options:

- a) Anti-aircraft fire from the ground
- b) Anti-aircraft fire from ships
- c) Shot down by enemy aircraft
- d) Collision with another aircraft
- e) Engine or other mechanical failure
- f) Running out of fuel
- g) Crashing into the ground either through pilot error or bad visibility

Only options (a) to (c) involve enemy action.

- In the case of Hudson F M669 on 24 December 1941, (a) and (g) can be ruled out for the reasons given above ie no wreckage was found on land
- (e) and (f) seem unlikely, as in both cases one might expect the crew to have time to get off a radio message.
- (d) tended to happen when visibility was bad, for example in fog, and/or when the skies were crowded. There is no evidence that either of these conditions pertained in this case.
- Options (b) and (c), succumbing to enemy gunfire from ships or aircraft, appear therefore the most likely reasons, with running out of fuel and engine failure being the next most likely explanations.

***“Options (b) and (c), succumbing to enemy gunfire from ships or aircraft, appear therefore the most likely reasons, with running out of fuel and engine failure being the next most likely explanations.”***

### Retrieval and burial of the remains

It was on [DATE] that the parents of Squadron Leader Davies received a telegram that he had been posted missing while on active operations. A letter from the Air Ministry on 24 June 1942 stated that for official purposes he had now been presumed to have lost his life on 24 December 1941. A further letter on 23 November 1943 said that information from the International Red Cross was that he had been buried in the cemetery at Locquémeau and that Flight Sergeant Houldsworth had been buried in the adjacent grave. Locquémeau is on the north coast of Brittany (Bretonne) as shown in the map below.







HOLBORN  
TELEPHONE :  
Extn.....

Any communications on the  
subject of this letter should  
be addressed to :—

THE  
UNDER SECRETARY  
OF STATE,

and the following number  
quoted :—

P.364891/41/P.4.(B)

Sir,

I am directed to refer to the letter from  
this department dated the 22nd May, 1942, and  
to inform you that action has now been taken to  
presume, for official purposes, that your son,  
Squadron Leader C.R. Davies, lost his life on  
the 24th December, 1941.

Should any further information be  
received as to place of burial you will be  
immediately notified.

I am to express the sincere sympathy of  
the department with you in your great loss.

I am, Sir,  
Your obedient Servant,

*W. F. Clark*

for Director of Personal Services.

W.R. Davies, Esq.,  
High Winds,  
Christchurch,  
Newport,  
Monmouthshire.



AIR MINISTRY,  
LONDON, W.C.2.

24<sup>th</sup> June, 1942.

GERRARD 9234  
TELEPHONE :  
Extn.....

Any communications on the  
subject of this letter should  
be addressed to :—

THE  
UNDER SECRETARY  
OF STATE,

and the following number  
quoted :— P.364891/41/P.4.B.3.

Your Ref. ....

AIR MINISTRY

(Casualty Branch),

73-77, OXFORD STREET,

W.1

23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1943.

Sir,

I am directed to refer to previous  
correspondence from this Department and to  
inform you that a report has now been  
received from the International Red Cross  
Committee which states that your son, Squadron  
Leader C.R. Davies, Royal Air Force, was  
buried in Locquemeau Cemetery, Grave No. 2,  
at Cotes du Nord, France.

I am to add that one of your son's  
comrades, Sergeant Houldsworth, who also lost  
his life in the same operation, is buried in  
the adjoining grave.

I am, Sir,  
Your obedient Servant,

*S. R. Shrew*

for Director of Personal Services.

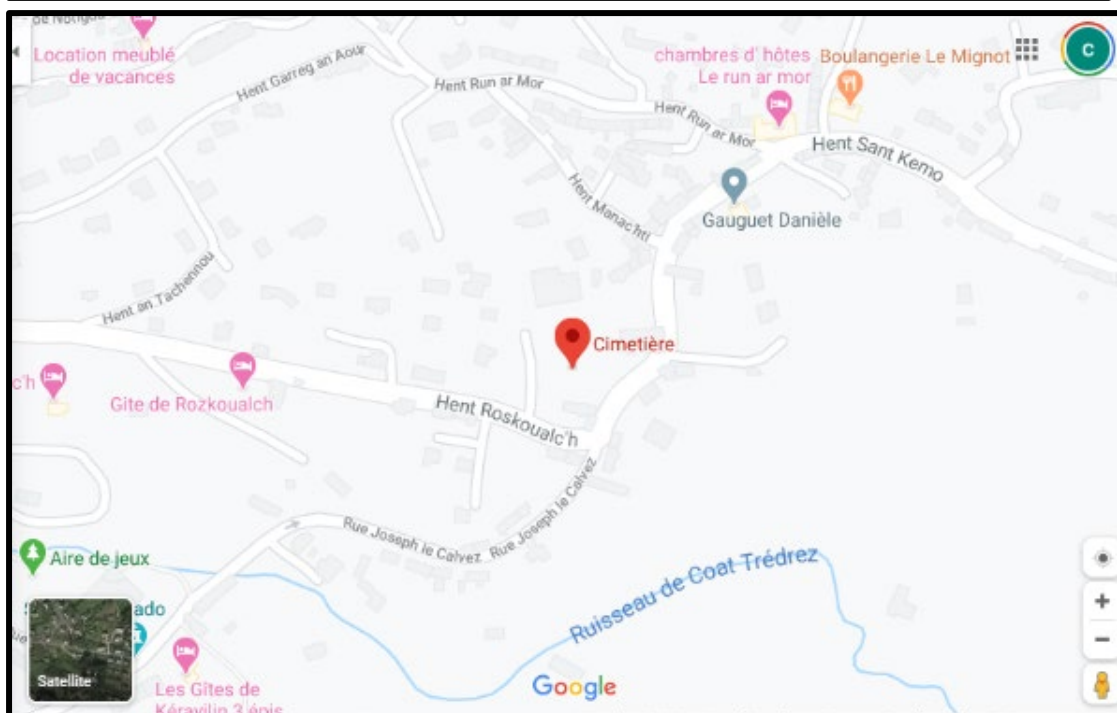
W.R. Davies, Esq.,  
High Winds,  
Christchurch,  
Newport,  
Monmouthshire.

In summary the main points are that

- ***The body of Flight Sergeant Tom Houldsworth was found on the beach at Locquémeau on 4 February 1942***
- ***He was buried in the cemetery at Locquémeau on 5 February 1942 with military honours provided by the occupying German army.***
- ***The body of Squadron Leader Cecil Rhys Davies was found at a coastal location, not a beach, in Locquémeau on 14 February 1942***
- ***Also on 14 February a local French doctor examined the remains, certifying that death occurred some weeks earlier from drowning.***
- ***S/L Davies' remains were buried next to those of Sgt Houldsworth, probably on either 14 or 15 February 1942; no details of the funeral have yet been found***
- ***The bodies of both airmen were exhumed and moved to the British War cemetery at Bayeux on a date not yet known.***

***As an interesting aside, although the doctor who certified S/L Davies' cause of death was a local GP, he was renowned in France for having developed and used the first modern suction cup (ventouse) for the delivery of babies.***

The cemetery (cimetière in French) is located at the intersection of Hent Roskoualc'h and Hent Sant Kemo. (Hent is Breton for road.) GPS 48.7237, -3.5647). See photo and map below.



## The administrative documents

There are four one-page documents:

1. A note from the mayor of Trédrez Locquemeau reporting the recovery of the body F/S Houldsworth on 4 February
2. A letter dated 6 February from the Sub-Prefect of Lannion to the Prefect of the department of the Côtes-du-Nord concerning the circumstances of the funeral of an English airman on 5 February 1942
3. A note from the mayor of Trédrez Locquemeau reporting the recovery of the body S/L Davies on 14 February
4. A handwritten note dated 14 February 1942 by Dr Yves Couzigou reporting that he had examined the body of an English airman called Davis (service no. 28147) and had concluded that death was due to drowning a few weeks earlier.

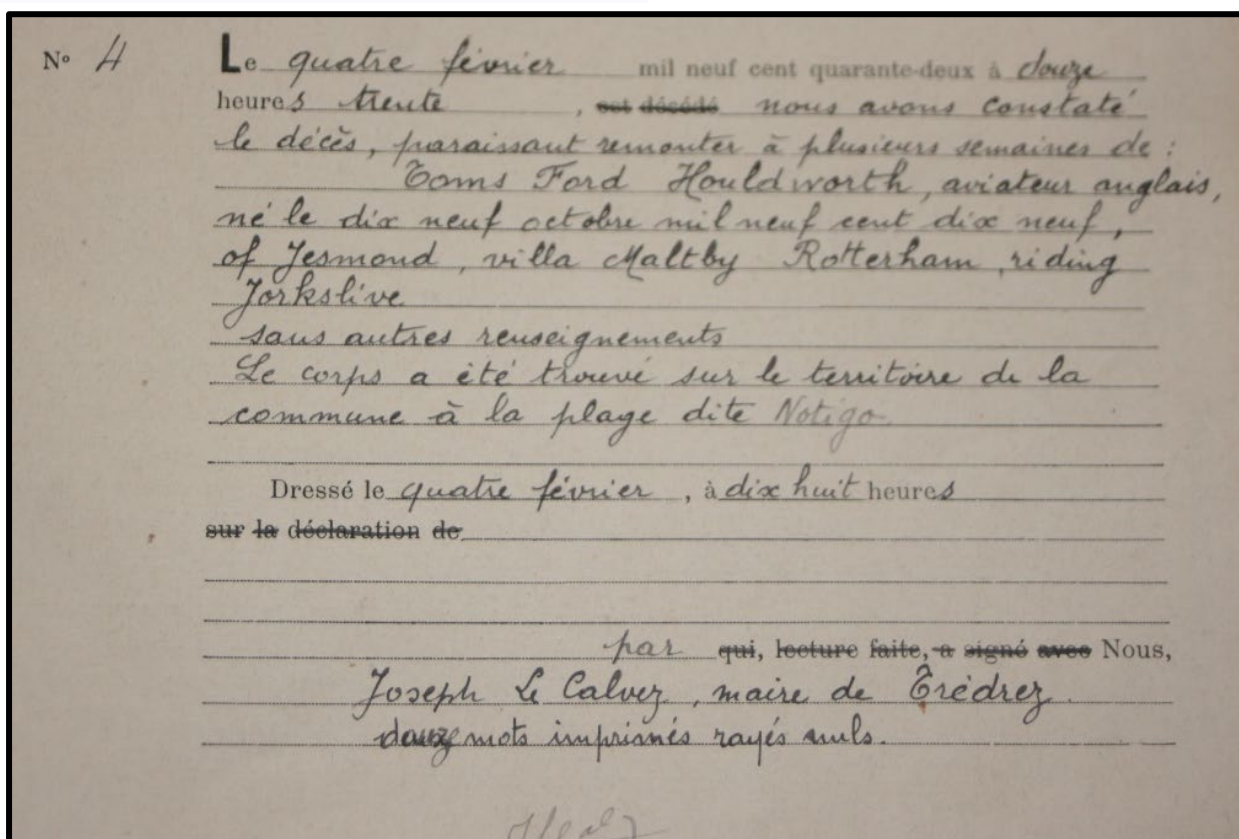
Photocopies of all these documents plus English translations appear below.

### The mayor's notes on the recovery of the bodies

The notes are short, follow a pro forma and are very similar to each other. The note on F/S Houldsworth includes his name, date of birth and that he came from Rotherham. It did not include his service number. It identifies the place where his body was found as the Notigou beach.

The note on S/L Davies also gives his name and date of birth, but the name is slightly mis-spelt as Davis. Unlike for F/S Houldsworth it gives his service number and the number of his life jacket, but does not state where he came from.

The place where his body was found was called Malabri. As can be seen from the map it is close to where F/S Houldsworth's body was found. While it was a coastal location, it was not a beach but appears to have been a rock escarpment down to the water's edge.



**Note on the recovery of F/S Houldsworth's body; English translation in box below**

On the fourth of February nineteen hundred and forty-two at twelve-thirty, we noted that death appeared to have occurred several weeks earlier.

Toms Ford Houldworth, English aviator, born on the 19<sup>th</sup> October nineteen hundred and nineteen from Jesmond, Maltby in the town of Rotherham in the Riding of Yorkshire.

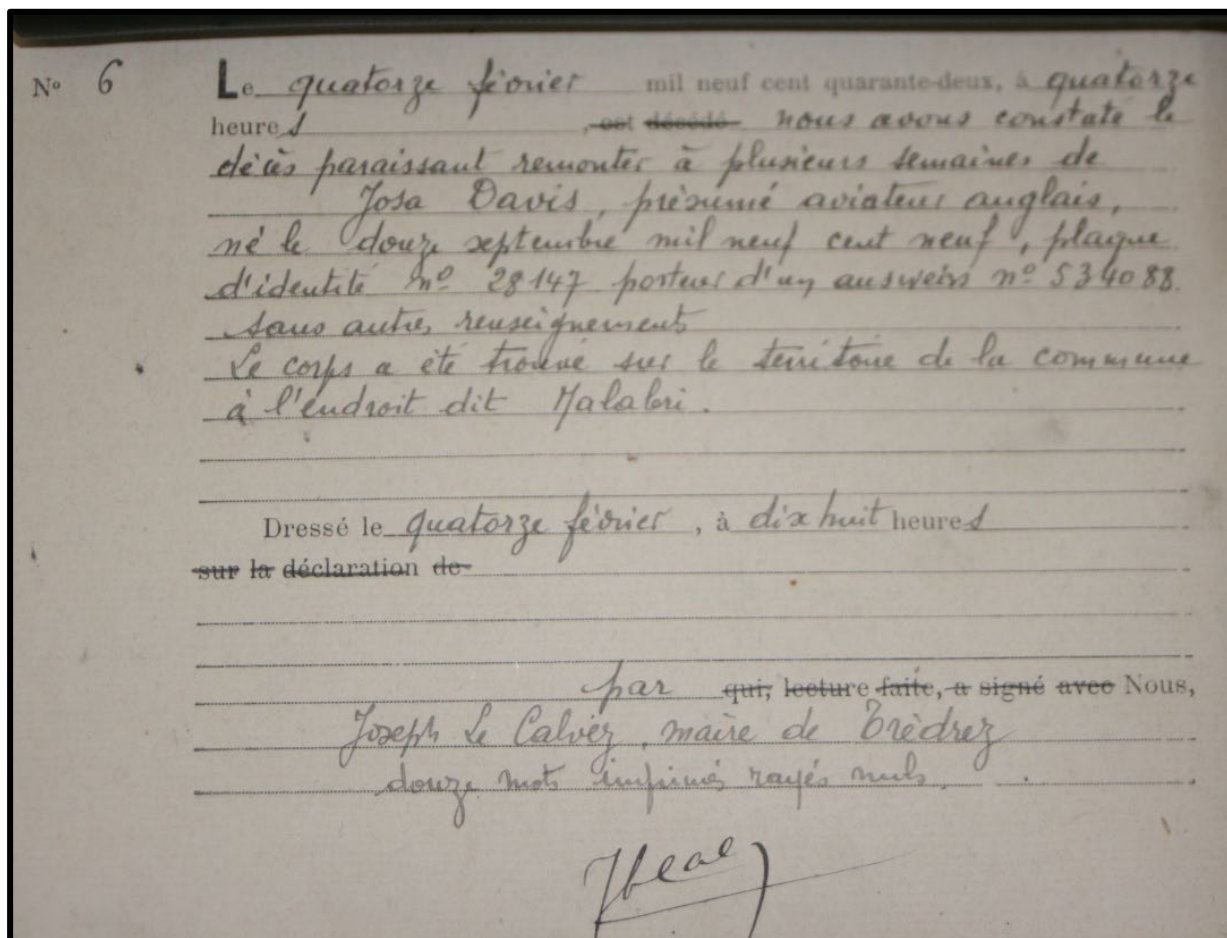
No further information

The body was found on the territory of the commune at the beach known as Notigou.

Drawn up on February 4, at 1800 hours by us, Joseph le Calvez, mayor of Trédrez

Twelve printed words deleted.

As an interesting insight into French administrative procedures, when signing the notes the mayor is required to state how many words he has deleted from the pro forma.



**Note on the recovery of S/L Davies's body; English translation below.**

On the fourteenth of February nineteen hundred and forty-two at 1400 hours, we noted that the death of Josa Davis presumed to have been an English airman, appeared to have occurred several weeks ago.

Born on the 12<sup>th</sup> September nineteen hundred and nine identity badge no. 28147 wearing an identity card No. 534088

No further information

The body was found on the territory of the commune at a location called Malabri.

Drawn up on February 14, at 1800 hours by us, Joseph le Calvez, mayor of Trédrez

Twelve printed words deleted.

## The Sub-Prefect's letter of 6 February to the Departmental Prefect

In the letter the sub-prefect tells his superior about his discussions with German occupying authorities about the funeral of an English Air Force officer held on 5 February and action taken to avoid incidents involving the local population.

He notes that Captain Herrmann, from the Kreiskommandantur<sup>2</sup> had told him that:

- he had information that the inhabitants of Locquémeau were intending to attend the funeral and that this was absolutely forbidden by the German authorities.
- the German authorities would not tolerate any anti-German demonstrations.

The sub-prefect reported that:

- he had discussions with the mayor and the Adjutant<sup>3</sup> of the Gendarmerie at which action to avoid any incidents had been agreed
- the funeral had taken place in the evening without incident and without attendance by the local population
- the Adjutant of the Gendarmerie had reported that military honours had been performed by a detachment from the army of occupation, that a German captain had made some remarks at the graveside and that three rifle volleys had been fired.

An English translation is in the box immediately below and a copy of the original is on the next page.

Yesterday, February 5, around 11 a.m., the German authorities informed me that on the same day, at 3 p.m. the funeral of an English airman whose body had been surrendered by the sea would take place at LOCQUEMEAU-TREDREZ.

Captain HERRMANN, of the Kreiskommandantur<sup>1</sup>, told me that he knew from a certain source that the people of LOCQUEMEAU intended to attend the funeral and that this was absolutely forbidden by German authorities.

He said that he could not tolerate an anti-German demonstration.

I immediately had a meeting with the Mayor of TREDREZ and the Adjutant of the Gendarmerie, with whom I took all the measures necessary to avoid any incidents.

I received a report at the end of the evening that no incident had occurred and that the population had not participated, as ordered by the occupation authorities, in the burial of the body of the English airman.

The Adjutant of the Gendarmerie reported that the military honours were performed by a detachment from the occupying army, that an address had been made by a German captain at the tomb of the English airman and that 3 rifle volleys had been fired.

I thought I should give you this information so that you know what's going on here.

---

<sup>2</sup> District Command

<sup>3</sup> Warrant Officer

J.S.  
SOUS-PREFECTURE  
DE  
LANNION

*Tredrez*

ÉTAT FRANCAIS

PRÉFECTURE DES CÔTES-DU-NORD  
-9 FEV 1942  
CABINET DU PREFET

Cabinet

*Lannion, le 6 février 1942*

*Le Sous-Prefet de l'Arrondissement de Lannion  
à Monsieur le Prefet des Côtes-du-Nord.*

ARCHIVES DÉPARTEMENTALES  
DES CÔTES-D'ARMOR

Hier, 5 février, vers 11 heures, les Autorités allemandes m'ont prévenu que le même jour, à 15 heures, à LOCQUEMEAU en TRE-DREZ, auraient lieu les obsèques d'un aviateur anglais dont le cadavre avait été rejeté par la mer.

M. le Capitaine HERRMANN, de la Kreiskommandantur, m'a déclaré qu'il savait de source certaine que la population de LOCQUEMEAU avait l'intention d'assister aux obsèques et que les autorités allemandes en faisaient défense absolue.

Il précisa qu'il ne pouvait pas tolérer une manifestation anti-allemande.

J'ai eu aussitôt un entretien avec M. le Maire de TREDREZ et l'Adjudant de Gendarmerie, avec lesquels j'ai pris toutes mesures en vue d'éviter tout incident.

Il m'a été rendu compte en fin de soirée qu'aucun incident ne s'était produit et que la population n'avait pas participé, selon l'ordre des Autorités d'occupation, à l'inhumation du corps de cet aviateur anglais.

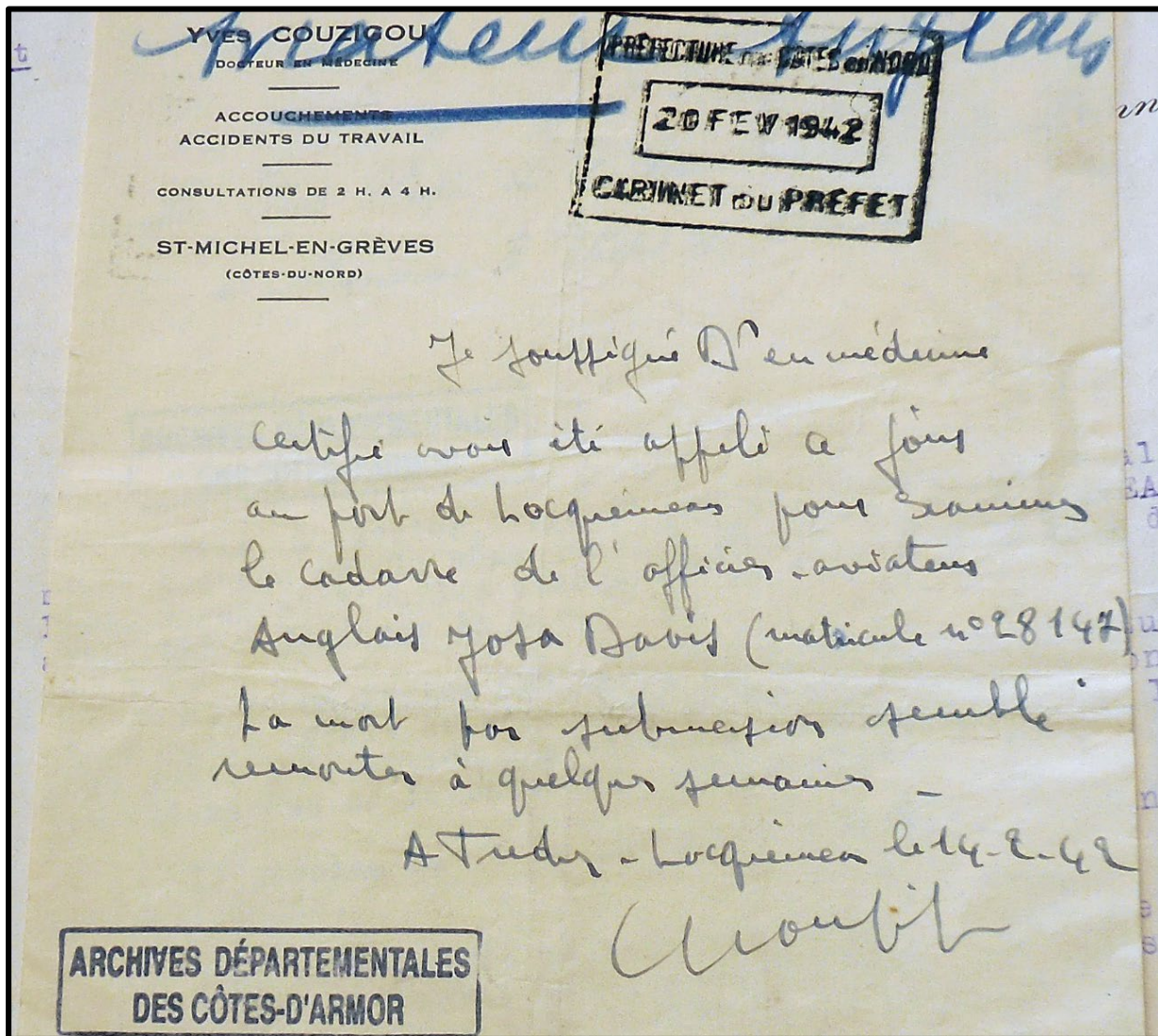
L'Adjudant de Gendarmerie m'a rendu compte que les honneurs militaires ont été rendus par un piquet de l'armée d'occupation, qu'un discours avait été prononcé par un Capitaine allemand sur la tombe de l'aviateur anglais et que 3 salves de mousqueterie avaient été tirées.

J'ai cru devoir vous donner cette information pour que vous n'ignoriez rien de ce qui se passe ici.

Le Sous-Prefet  
*[Signature]*

Dr Yves Couzigou's death certification note dated 14 February

This is handwritten and very short. He identifies the body as that of English Air Force officer Jos Davis and the cause of death as drowning some weeks earlier.



**English translation**

I the undersigned Dr of medicine, certify that I was called today to go to the port of Locquémeau to examine the corpse of an English Air Force officer [Jo] Davis (registration number 28147). Death by drowning seems to have occurred a few weeks ago.

Signed at Tredez-Locquemeau le 14-2.42

Interpretation and comment

The main value of **the notes signed by the mayor** were the dates when the bodies were recovered and their location. It is slightly surprising that while the note on the recovery of F/S Houldsworth's body included quite a lot of biographical information, it did not include his service number. Both notes and that of the doctor included minor spelling errors. This led some of the current day French researchers to question whether the second body was that of S/L Davies, but I argued strongly that there was no doubt that it was his body.

it was quite common in contemporaneous war-time documents for names of places and persons to be mis-spelt, especially when the names were foreign. Numbers were more easily transcribed and the doctor's note correctly quotes S/L Davies' service number. This number can only have come from the dog-tag attached to the body.

The **Sub-Prefect's** letter did not include the name of the English airman whose funeral was its main focus. This is not surprising because it was an ad hoc "political" letter, concerning relations with the occupying power and directed towards preventing anything which would provoke the Germans. It was not part of the administrative process for death certification and burial. The identity of the airman was not relevant. But there is no doubt from the sequence of dates that the body was that of F/S Houldsworth. His body was recovered on 4 February, the funeral referred to was on 5 February and the letter was dated 6 February.

The letter offers some interesting insights into the nature of the occupying forces. The categorical statement that no anti-German demonstrations would be tolerated fits the stereo-type of an oppressive and harsh regime. On the other hand, and while it may be of no comfort to the bereaved relatives, the funeral of F/S Houldsworth was conducted with military honours, which brought respect and dignity to the occasion. Despite all the atrocities, Germany's long and pervasive military tradition, which long preceded the Nazis, meant that "honour" was considered very important.

**Dr Couzigou's note** certifying the cause of death is a poignant and vivid manifestation of the nature of the loss of human life in this conflict. It is also a rare document. Very few families of men who lost their lives in enemy occupied territory, will have such immediate and direct confirmation of the fate that befell their relative. In the totally hypothetical situation of this having been seen by S/L Davies' parents, it would have brought some closure, ending the uncertainty about what had happened to him. But at the same time it would not of course have lessened the pain of his loss.

The precise date of S/L Davies' funeral is not known, but M Dahiot says that it would have been very soon after the certification of cause of death, probably either on 14 or 15 February. We are unlikely to find any more documents in French archives concerning the recovery and burial of the body. M Dahiot tells me that it is very unusual to find any documents relating to these matters.

The main remaining line of enquiry, as recommended by M Dahiot, is to ask the CWGC whether there are reports in their files on the exhumation of the remains at Locquémeau and their re-interment at Bayeux.

Finally, it would be appropriate to say a little more about Dr Couzigou, ostensibly a local GP in a remote Breton village of around 500 people, but also someone, who I discovered by chance was renowned in France for a major innovation in child birth.

### Doctor Yves Couzigou

Dr Yves Couzigou, who certified the causes of Squadron Leader Davies' death, was a GP in the neighbouring village of St Michel-en-Greves, where he practised medicine for most of his career.



However, his influence and reputation went much wider than St Michel en Greves. He was renowned in France as the developer and user of the modern suction cup for delivering babies, also known as the Ventouse . He was also the author of several books on medical subjects. The first box below is the headline of Dr Couzigou's obituary in the Journal de Gynécologie Obstétrique et Biologie de la Reproduction (Journal of Gynaecology Obstetrics and Biology of Human Reproduction). Even allowing for some French nationalistic exaggeration, Dr Couzigou was clearly a remarkable person.



Rendons à César ce qui est à César... La première ventouse obstétricale moderne n'est pas scandinave mais française ! Hommage au Docteur Yves Couzigou (1910–1989)

Give to Caesar what is Caesar's... The first modern obstetrical vacuum extractor is not Scandinavian but French! Tribute to Doctor Yves Couzigou (1910–1989)

### **English translation of an extract from Dr Couzigou's obituary**

"The "modern" suction cup had to wait until the middle of the 20th century before it saw the light of day, and the global obstetric community thinks that the modern suction cup is a Scandinavian invention. Indeed, for all obstetricians, the father of the vacuum extractor is a Swedish man by the name of Tage Malmström whose prototype was presented in 1953 and the first publications on its use date from 1957.

It is however a Frenchman, Dr Yves Couzigou who is the real "father" of the modern suction cup and who delivered the first child to be born using this new instrument! It was also he who first introduced the term "suction cup". Yves Couzigou was born on April 21, 1910 in Tonquédec, a former student of the Naval Health School of Medicine in Bordeaux, he moved as a general practitioner to Saint-Michel-en-Grève on May 19, 1941 where he remained for 32 years at the service of its patients.

Like many of his colleagues at the time, he carried out many deliveries and did not like forceps and the risks they posed to the fetus if not properly used. He wanted to find a different way of helping to extract the fetus and invented "his" suction cup. On December 16, 1946, 7 years before Malmström, he filed his patent for the "obstetric suction cup or eutocic suction cup", and it was in January 1947 that he presented it to the Society of Physicians of Paris. Couzigou's suction cup was even the subject of a medical thesis in 1954, that is to say 3 years before Malmström first published!"

### The crew of F AM669 on 24 December 1941

The crew of five ranged in age from 20 to 32. They were from different parts of the country: Squadron Leader Davies from South Wales, Flight Lieutenant Higgleton from Norfolk, Sergeant Houldsworth from Yorkshire, Sergeant Roberts from Cheshire and Sergeant Gooch from London. Joseph Higgleton and Jack Roberts, the youngest member of the crew, were married.

As noted earlier, other than S/L Davies, it is not clear what roles the crew members played. Sergeant Houldsworth appears to have been the co-pilot/observer. Flight Lieutenant Higgleton may have been the navigator. The other two roles were rear gunner/radio operator and observer/bomb aimer.

Summary biographical details are as follows:<sup>4</sup>

### **Flight Sergeant Arthur Gooch**

Born [xxx]; son of Arthur Luke and Annie Maud Gooch of Hornsey, Middlesex.

Service number: 914261

Age at death: 22 years.

Remains never found; commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial, Panel 43.

### **Flight Lieutenant Joseph Herbert Higgleton**

Born: [xxx]; son of Herbert and Emily Annie Higgleton of King's Lynn, Norfolk

Husband of Alice Mary Higgleton.

Service number: 520339

Age at death 28 years.

Remains never found; commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial, Panel 29

### **Sergeant Jack Roberts**

Born [xxx]; son of William Thomas and Doris Roberts of Crewe, Cheshire

Husband of Betty Roberts

Service number: 646219

Age at death: 20 years

Remains never found; commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial, Panel 51

### **Sergeant Tom Ford Houldsworth**

Born [19 October 1919]; son of Tom and Kate Houldsworth of Maltby, Yorkshire


Service number 1000126

Age at death: 22 years

Remains initially buried at Locquémeau and later transferred to Bayeux War Cemetery VIII C. 8.

There is a full tribute to Tom Houldsworth on at Maltby, Rotherham. See below.

#### Tom Ford Houldsworth - 1000126



Tom Ford Houldsworth was born in Rotherham in the last part of 1919, the second of three children, and only son, born to cashier Tom Houldsworth and his wife Kate (nee Ford). His father was from Maltby and his mother was from Castleford, where they married at All Saints Church on 9 June 1917. The family later lived at Jesmonda Villa, 54 Blyth Road, Maltby. Tom Ford Houldsworth was educated at Rotherham Grammar School.

He enlisted in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve and became a Sergeant, service number 1000126. He trained as a pilot and was posted to 224 Squadron of Coastal Command. The Squadron started the war based at Leuchers in Scotland flying the Lockheed Hudson coastal reconnaissance aircraft. They then moved to Limavady in Northern Ireland in April 1941 and then to St. Eval in Cornwall in December 1941. On 24 December 1941 he was on Hudson mk V serial number AM669 with squadron markings of QX-F which went out on a Stepper Patrol. On the 25 December the aircraft was reported missing when it failed to return. Subsequently the crew were posted 'presumed killed in action'. Tom Ford Houldsworth was 22 years old and is buried in Bayeux War Cemetery.

© IWM (CH 991) Hudson of 224 Squadron

### The Lockheed Hudson

The Lockheed Hudson was an American built light-bomber and coastal reconnaissance aircraft built initially for the Royal Air Force shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War and primarily operated by the RAF thereafter. The Hudson was a military conversion of the Lockheed Model 14 Super Electra airliner, and was the first significant aircraft construction contract for the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation—the initial RAF order for 200 Hudsons far surpassed any previous order the company had received. The Hudson served throughout the war, mainly with Coastal Command but also in transport and training roles as well as delivering agents into occupied France. They were also used

<sup>4</sup> For Squadron Leader Davies see inside front cover

extensively with the Royal Canadian Air Force's anti-submarine squadrons and by the Royal Australian Air Force.

### Box 1: Lockheed Hudson general characteristics

- **Crew:** 6
- **Length:** 44 ft 4 in (13.51 m)
- **Wingspan:** 65 ft 6 in (19.96 m)
- **Height:** 11 ft 10 in (3.62 m)
- **Wing area:** 551 sq ft (51.2 m<sup>2</sup>)
- **Empty weight:** 12,000 lb (5,400 kg)
- **Loaded weight:** 17,500 lb (7,930 kg)
- **Max. takeoff weight:** 18,500 lb (8,390 kg)
- **Powerplant:** 2 × Wright R-1820 Cyclone 9-cylinder radial engines, 1,100 hp (820 kW) each

### Performance

- **Maximum speed:** 218 kt (246 mph, 397 km/h)
- **Range:** 1,700 nmi (1,960 mi, 3,150 km)
- **Service ceiling:** 24,500 ft (7,470 m)
- **Rate of climb:** 1,200 ft/min (6.2 m/s)

### Armament

- **Guns:**
  - 2 × .303 in (7.7 mm) Browning machine guns in dorsal turret
- **Bombs:** 750 lb (340 kg) of bombs or depth charges



### Box 2: Coastal Command losses in the Second World War

Coastal Command lost 2,060 aircraft to all causes; 741 during Anti-submarine (A/S) sorties, 876 during anti-shipping operations (ASO), 42 Mine-laying, 78 during air superiority missions, 129 during bombing raids against land targets, and 194 during photo reconnaissance operations. Some 5,863 personnel were killed in action, 2,317 were killed in accidents, 38 were killed by other causes. Some 986 were wounded, 23 died of natural causes, and 1,100 were wounded by other means than enemy action. This totalled 10,327 casualties in aircrews. Some 159 ground crews were killed in action, 535 were killed in accidents and 218 were killed by other causes. A further 49 were wounded while 224 died of natural causes. Some 466 were wounded by other means for a total of 1,651.

Box 3 gives an overview of the development of Coastal Command from the inter-war years until 1942, by when its role had been clarified and its resources deemed more adequate. But for a more graphic account of what it was like to serve in Coastal Command one can turn to a report in the Daily Telegraph of the unveiling of a memorial in Westminster Abbey on 16 March 2004 (Box 4).

### **Box 3: RAF Coastal Command**

RAF Coastal Command was founded in 1936, to act as the RAF maritime arm, after the Fleet Air Arm became part of the Royal Navy in 1937. Naval aviation was neglected in the inter-war period, 1919–1939, and as a consequence the service did not receive the resources it needed to develop properly or efficiently. This continued until the outbreak of the Second World War, during which it came to prominence. Owing to the Air Ministry's concentration on RAF Fighter Command and RAF Bomber Command, Coastal Command was often referred to as the "Cinderella Service", a phrase first used by the First Lord of the Admiralty at the time A V Alexander.

Its primary task was to protect convoys from the German Kriegsmarine's U-boat force. It also protected Allied shipping from the aerial threat posed by the Luftwaffe. The main operations of Coastal Command were defensive, defending supplies lines in the various theatres of war, most notably the battle of the Atlantic. A limited number of detachments served in the Mediterranean, Middle East and African theatres.

Up to the end of 1940, Coastal Command's Anti-shipping Operations (ASO) campaign against German seaborne trade in north-west European waters had claimed a direct attack on only six vessels, totalling 5,561 tons, and 14 others badly damaged. In exchange, 158 aircraft were shot down or lost to other causes; 26 for every enemy vessel. Human casualties amounted to 600 men including 46 to 50 POWs. Coastal Command's performance contrasted heavily with the service' joint mine-laying effort with Bomber Command, that sank 86 enemy vessels in the same period, (totalling 82,983 tons) and ten others damaged for the loss of just 31 aircraft. The performance of Coastal Command's strike wings was down to poor intelligence and equipment, which it was refused, in favour of diverting them to other roles.

As there was no defined anti-shipping role in pre-war plans, obtaining information on the enemy's seaborne commercial traffic did not receive high priority, and once the war started, it was difficult to establish quickly the means of acquiring this information, especially after the fall of Norway and France in April and May 1940.

The failure of Coastal Command to acquire any tangible results prompted the Admiralty to complain to the Air Ministry on 5 November 1940. In December it was agreed that 15 of the planned new 100 RAF squadrons be given to Coastal Command. These were to be operational by 1941.

In mid-1941, just as ASO units were finding their feet, a large number of personnel and aircraft were sent to Malta (and the Desert Air Force) to interdict Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps supplies from Italy to North Africa. Adding to the problem was a shortage of materials and testing facilities. Restocking squadrons and re-equipping them was slow. Not until 1942 did the ASO squadrons get the recognition needed, in the wake of the German Operation Cerberus. Maintenance was also poor. Each service was to maintain an operational ready rate of 70 to 75 percent. In Coastal Command it was 40, and not much higher in others at that point. Greater emphasis was made and serviceability increased.

#### **Box 4: Tribute to unsung men who tracked the U-boats**

It was known as Cinderella Command, its contribution to victory in the Second World War largely eclipsed in history by the glamour and sacrifice of the fighter and bomber squadrons of the Royal Air Force. The work of Coastal Command was no less vital however, and yesterday (16 March 2004) the Queen paid a belated tribute to the aircrews who helped keep the U-boats at bay by unveiling the first national monument dedicated to their memory at Westminster Abbey.

The relief carving, depicting an eagle surveying the waves, commemorates in particular the 10,875 members of Coastal Command - British, Commonwealth and Allied - who lost their lives between 1939 and 1945.

Among the 1,500 people attending the memorial service that followed were a handful of veterans of the maritime air campaign, all of them in their eighties. They included John Cruickshank, the only living RAF holder of the Victoria Cross. The Venerable Brian Lucas, former chaplain-in-chief of the RAF, described how service with Coastal Command required a distinct personality, involving as it did long and mainly fruitless patrols, often at night and usually hundreds of miles from land.

"At the very least you had to possess an inner conviction that what you were doing was worthwhile," he said. "There was no glamour flying, searching for U-boats day after day. Then there was the loneliness and the endurance. A 20-hour sortie was common and took you far out into the Indian, Atlantic or Arctic oceans. It was all down to you, your crew and your aircraft." When boredom was replaced by sudden, swift action the result could be "a slow death on the empty, savage sea".

Mr Lucas said he had seen at first hand the deadpan humour that helped maritime patrol aircrews get through the job. He had been at a base in Cornwall as fighter pilots described the twists and turns of their displays with sweeps of the hand. A Shackleton crew, weary from a long patrol, stood watching for a while before stepping into the middle of group and giving a description of their latest outing. The hands moved in a straight line, moving neither up nor down, right or left.



The inscription reads:

*"REMEMBER THE SACRIFICE & CONSTANT ENDEAVOUR IN DEFENCE OF FREEDOM,  
THE MEN AND WOMEN OF ROYAL AIR FORCE COASTAL COMMAND, THEIR SUCCESSORS & THEIR COMRADES IN  
THE COMMONWEALTH, ALLIED & OVERSEAS SQUADRONS."*



## ANNEX: TRANSCRIPTIONS OF DOCUMENTS IN FRENCH

Le quatre février mil neuf cent quarante-deux à douze heures trente, nous avons constaté le décès, paraissant remonter à plusieurs semaines de :

Toms Ford Houldworth, aviateur anglais, né le dix neuf octobre mil neuf cent dix neuf of Jesmond, villa Maltby Rotherham, riding Yorkshire sans autres renseignements

Le corps a été trouvé sur le territoire de la commune à la plage dite Notigou.

Dressé le quatre février, à huit heures par Nous, Joseph le Calvez, maire de Trédez

Douze mots imprimés rayés nuls.

### SOUS-PREFECTURE DE LANNION

Cabinet

Lannion, le 6 Février 1942

*Le Sous-Prefet de l'Arrondissement de Lannion  
A Monsieur Le Prefet des Côtes-du-Nord*

Hier, 5 Février, vers 11 heures, les Autorités allemandes m'ont prévenu que le même jour, à 15 heures, à LOCQUEMEAU-TREDREZ auraient lieu les obsèques d'un aviateur anglais dont le corps avait été rejeté par la mer.

M le Capitaine HERRMANN, de la Kreiskommandantur, m'a déclaré qu'il savait de source certaine de la population de LOCQUEMEAU avait l'intention d'assister aux obsèques et que les autorités allemandes en faisaient défense absolue.

Il précisa qu'il ne pouvait pas tolérer une manifestation anti-allemande.

J'ai eu aussitôt un entretien avec M. le Maire de TREDREZ et l'Adjudant de Gendarmerie, avec lesquels j'ai pris toutes assurances en vue d'éviter tout incident.

Il m'a été rendu compte en fin de soirée qu'aucun incident ne s'était produit et que la population n'avait pas participé selon l'ordre des Autorités d'occupation, à l'inhumation du corps de cet aviateur anglais.

L'Adjudant de Gendarmerie m'a rendu compte que les honneurs militaires ont été rendus par un piquet de l'armée d'occupation, qu'un discours avait été prononcé par un Capitaine allemand sur la tombe de l'aviateur anglais et que 3 salves de mousqueterie avaient été tirées.

J'ai cru devoir vous donner cette information pour que vous n'ignoriez rien de ce qui se passe ici.

Le quatorze février mil neuf cent quarante-deux à quatorze heures trente, nous avons constaté le décès, paraissant remonter à plusieurs semaines de :

Josa Davis, présumé aviateur anglais, né le douze septembre mil neuf cent neuf, plaque d'identité no 28147 porteur d'un ausweis no 534088, sans autres renseignements

Le corps a été trouvé sur le territoire de la commune à l'endroit dit Malabri

Dressé le quatorze février, à dix huit heures par Nous, Joseph le Calvez, maire de Trédez

Douze mots imprimés rayés nuls.

Yves COUZIGOU, DOCTEUR DU MEDICINE, ST MICHEL EN-GREVES, (COTES DU NORD)

Je soussigné D'eu en médecine certifiée avons été appelé ce jour au port de -Locquémeau pour examiner le cadavre de l'officier aviateur Anglais [Josa} Davis (matricule N ° 28147). La mort par submersion semble remonter à quelques semaines.

A Trédez-Locquémeau le 14-2-42

[Signature]



WE WILL REMEMBER THEM