

Ken Trott 16 August 2002

*197 Squadron, RAF Needs Oar Point and Hurn, Hawker Typhoon coded **OV#A**, serial number **MN209***

In July 1944 I was stationed at Hurn airfield near Bournemouth, having moved with 197 Squadron (Hawker Typhoons) from Needs Oar Point near Beaulieu in the New Forest, our base for D Day operations. At that time, we were carrying out offensive operations over France in support of the troops now based in Normandy. On the 11th of July we flew from Hurn to make our first landing on French soil at airfield B3 St Croix as our base. This had been constructed with Sommerfield metal tracking to provide a base for refuelling, re-arming, plus tented accommodation. I later carried out two operations over France, the plan being to stay there until the 13th when we would return to Hurn in the evening. On the 13th we were on standby and eventually four of us were briefed for an armed recce in the Caen area, the section being led by Wing Commander Baldwin, his number 2 and myself with my number 2.

We took off about 5 p.m. and headed in the direction of Caen. While in the area south of Le Havre I observed a German half-track troop carrier and requested permission to attack. This was given and the two of us turned towards the half-track making a cannon attack on the way down. As we pulled away, I queried whether if I could make another attack as the vehicle had now been abandoned, however I was informed by the Wing Commander to re-join him as they were being attacked by approximately 30 Me 109s.

I quickly climbed up to about 4000 feet and spotted several 109s ahead of me just below broken cloud. I closed to make an attack, but they obviously had seen us and broke to sweep passed out of sight. By this time, I was in cloud and on my own, I broke cloud and noticed a solitary Me 109 coming in my direction, I lined up for ahead on attack firing my four cannons. The next minute I realised I would have to break to avoid a collision, as I did so my starboard wing collided with the wing of the 109. I felt my head hit the cockpit cover and my left shoulder the side of the cockpit, my helmet, oxygen mask, goggles and revolver holster were torn from my body, and I hurtled into space with only my parachute intact. I realised I would have to pull my ripcord as I my altitude was only about 3000 feet, the next minute the canopy opened, and I lost consciousness.

I came to, to find myself hanging from a tree in an orchard surrounded by several armed Germans, one of whom was attempting to release me from my parachute harness. This he did and I fell on top of him. The German N.C.O motioned me to stand up and put my arms up, it was then that I found my left arm stayed by my side, I could not move it in any way. We proceeded across a stream and through fields to a French farmhouse where the Germans had their HQ. I was then taken up some stairs and met a German

officer seated behind a desk. I saluted him, a wise move, as I was then invited to sit down. After a brief interrogation I was asked if I felt well enough to be moved, I nodded and I then proceeded with an escort to an open top car parked in the nearby farmyard. We set off with me and my escort in the back seat and after a few minutes we arrived in the village of Pont – L'Evèque where I was taken to a school room.

By that time, I was feeling rather unwell and coughing up blood. The guard called his superior and eventually I was moved to a nearby chateau, part of German military hospital. Over the next few weeks, I was moved on to Evreux, Paris, Trier (Luxembourg) and finally arrived at Stalag Luft III, Sagan, Germany at the end of September 1944.

Wing Commander Baldwin and his number 2 returned to B3; my number 2 was badly hit by flak but managed to get back to B3, but his aircraft was a write off. Sadly, he died last year (2001). W/Co Baldwin stayed on with the RAF and was listed as missing over Korea. The other pilot I understand survived the war, but I don't know any more about him.