

## POSTSCRIPT

# The Death of Lancaster 'K' King

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About twenty years after the war ended I bought a book entitled 'Lancaster - The story of a famous bomber'. At the rear of the book the fate of every Lancaster is listed. The entry for 'K' King reads as follows:-

JB 421. 49 SQ. 7th. October 43, (Delivery date to squadron)  
Missing (Salbris) 7/8th May 1944. 399 hours (total hours flown)

'K' King was one of 7,374 Lancasters built during the war period, they are all listed in this book.

I discovered that Salbris is a small town in France south, south east of Paris. I had no idea why it should have been a target for Bomber Command.

The matter rested until I read a letter in the Autumn 1994 issue of the 'Itercomm', the quarterly magazine of the Air Crew Association:

### SALBRIS RAID

The following letter has been forwarded to the Aircrew Association for publication.

I effect some researches on the raid of SALBRIS, night of 78 May 1944. This operation has been effected by 5eme Group and Squadrons 44-49-106-619-83-627. Seven Lancasters have been shot down and there are only two survivors from seven crews. I want to organise an exhibition on this operation in order not to forget the sacrifice of many young men of Bomber Command.

Can you place an advertisement in your magazine to research and contact some people who have taken part in this operation?

Please contact: Alain Charpentier, La Procurerie, Cidex 579, 41300 Orcay, France. Tel: 54 83

34 56.

The reader will recall that I left the Squadron at the end of February 1944 so 'K' King had survived another 2½ months on operations completing a total of 399 hours to which I had contributed 250. At the end of '43 and beginning of '44 the anticipated life of a Lancaster was 40 hours so 'K' King had been blessed with a charmed life.

I wrote to M. Charpentier explaining that I could not give him any information about the missing airmen but I could about one of the aircraft shot down.

I received a letter by return of post, a copy of which I have included overleaf.

## Death of Lancaster 'K' King

So there was an ammunition dump at Salbris and presumably, because the raid took place only a short time before the Invasion of France, it must have had considerable significance.

I sent a print of my 'K' King painting to M. Charpentier - I didn't have a suitable photograph. Also, fifty years on, it appears that there still exists a few bits of 'K' King. I wonder why he is so sure? Perhaps scraps of the aircraft lettering appear on the 'sheets' of the plane found by the Frenchman. Maybe, one day, I will get around to seeing them.

However, not only did I spot the 'Intercom' letter but so did our 49 Squadron historian 'Uncle' Will Hay and he has sent off all the 49 Squadron details of this operation to the Frenchman.

A Pilot Officer Anderson was the pilot on this fateful trip. Along with his crew it was their first operation, they were all killed and are buried in St. Doulichard cemetery.

Fourteen Lancasters took off for the raid on Salbris and 'K' King was the only aircraft which failed to return to Fiskerton.

Other Squadrons sent a total of 325 aircraft of which six failed to return.

Conclusion:- 'A raid well planned and executed. Target destroyed'.

La Procurerie  
Cidex 579  
41300 ORÇAY

TEL : 54.83.34.56

ORÇAY le 27 Octobre 1994

Dear Eric Jones,

Thank you for your letter and your informations.

If there was an operation on Salbris, it's because there was an ammunition dump and a storage depot. Unfortunately seven Lancaster were shot down by nightfighter (12% of losses) It was not "a piece of cake" for the aircrew. Your 'K' for King is fall in a small village Souesmes, near Salbris. She explode in fly and all the crew have

been killed. It was:

pilot	A.L Anderson	P/O
F/E	R.L FOWLS	Sgt
NAV	J.C ROACH	P/O
W/OP	R.W LONG	W/O
A/G	E.W RUSHTON	Sgt
B/A	F.J PINCH	F/Sgt
A/G	B. McLEOD	Sgt

They are buried in ST Dorichard cemetery. I founded some sheets of your plane in the woods. Have you a photo of JB 421? Can you send me a copy?

You have had some luck to complete your tour, because in spring 1944, Bomber Command suffered severe losses and I think that there was not many survivors.

Have you take part in operation on french target?

Frenchs targets were considered better than on german country, but in some operations there was many losses.

Example: Mailly le Camps 42 aircrafts lost  
Salbris 7  
Vierzon 14 etc..

Thank you again for your interest, and excuse me for my bad english.

Amicalement.



The owner of the wood, has said to me  
that there is the pilot seat but he  
don't remember where is it!  
I have found the nephew of the pilot

R/O ARTHUR LESLIE ANDERSON.

His address is: MICHAEL A. ANDERSON

12. COMBEDRIVE

WEST DENTON PARK

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE NE1584U

My best wishes to you two.

AVEC TOUTE MON ADMIRATION

POUR CE QUE VOUS FVEZ FAIT

PENDANT LA GUERRE.

BIEN AMICALEMENT.

Alain

ALAIN CHARENTIER

LA PROCURERIE

41300 ORCAY.

Dear Eric & Sophie,

How are you? I hope that you and  
your wife are in good health.

I think you will be very pleased to  
have a small part of JB 421-EA-K

I have found this in a wood, not  
far from the crash-site. I think you  
will be surprised 51 years after to be  
in contact with you. I will  
you always at the base!

There is also an engine, but how  
to put it in a letter!

I don't know what piece is it. But

it's in good condition.

Shortly after receiving this  
letter I heard our  
postman trying to get  
a large envelope  
through the letter box.  
It was a small section  
of the fuselage of  
'K' King. I thought  
it needed a permanent  
home, so it is now  
framed with some  
details of it's  
history.

