

This story is not about a Douris but about an incident on Ikaria during WWII when the Germans occupied Ikaria. I hope you find it interesting.

A CHANCE ENCOUNTER:

Earlier in February 2009 I went into Efthemio's Café in Evidilos with an English friend. Being February everyone was sat inside and the atmosphere was a cosy one of those taking their morning coffee chatting to each other across the room. We chose our seats and ordered our coffee.

One elderly gentleman, who was chatting away, tried to include us in the conversation by asking my companion what he thought of the comment just made. My companion, though speaking Greek, was unable to follow what he had said. Before I had the chance to explain that my companion's Greek was good but not that good, others in the cafe who knew him by sight, told the elderly gentleman that he was "Englesos" that is English.

What followed was amazing. This wonderful lively old man, who introduced himself as *Theohari Kioulanis*, started to tell us that he had been to England and specifically Liverpool. For those that do not know, though both my parents were Greek I was born and brought up in Liverpool, England. The following is the story that he told us.

THE STORY TELLER'S VERSION:

When he was about 8 or 9, just before the end of the war a British plane was shot down by German fighter over Cambos a village, on the north side of the island, just outside of Evidilos. Sadly, both Airmen lost their lives. At the time the Germans were still occupying Ikaria. The local people managed to find the bodies and buried them in the local church. After the war was over, the bodies were removed, he was not aware of where to, but presumed that had been taken back to the UK.

His Father had removed, from one of the pilots, a ring, which he had given to the Red Cross after the war, to be returned to the family of the dead airman. Before doing so however, he had marked the ring. Year's later

when this gentleman was grown up and was going away to Sea; his father showed him a letter of thanks he received for returning the ring from the Dead Airman's family in Liverpool. He was given the letter to take with him and told that if he ever visited Liverpool to go look them up and check that the ring given to them was indeed the one that he handed over to the Red Cross.

He told us that he did actually go to Liverpool. He did actually look up this family. He did get to check the ring and verify that it still had the mark on it that his father had put in order to identify it.

He told us how they were not only pleased to see him but also helped him to get a British Seaman's Book and a job with the White Star Line (a shipping line based in Liverpool). He was full of praise for the hospitality and friendship this family showered him with.

He eventually became a Captain in the Greek Merchant Navy and is obviously now retired. He has lost contact with the family and could not remember names... but was still left with this warm feeling from the whole experience.

This is the story that was narrated to us, for me the fact that a British plane had been shot down over Ikaria was news. I have been coming to Ikaria since I was a little girl and actually lived here for a number of years in the 1970's and have been living here now for a few years but this was the first time I had heard about this war time incident. I could not know how much of the story related to us was true, though it was evident from the remarks the others in the Café made that the plane crash was fact.

THE RESEARCH:

Being interested in history, and with the Liverpool connection, I could not leave it there. I decided to look into it and see what I could confirm. My first task was to check on the internet to see if there was any mention of this event. I found no specific entry but then during World War II so many lost their lives in similar circumstances.

I started asking around on the island to see who else remembered the incident. Everyone, over a certain age, seemed to know about it but had no more information than I had been already told. In particular, I asked a friend, Nikos Koutoufaros, who grew up and still lives in Cambos. He was too young to remember the actual incident but proceeded to tell me

what he knew. It seems that after the bodies were removed, the villagers went and stripped the plane. At the time life was very harsh with people dying all the time in Icaria from hunger due to the German occupation. Any goods coming to the island were regulated by the occupying Troops and even if some things were available not many people had the money to buy them. The hull of the plane was turned into pots and pans, some of which still survive. Niko has promised to root out one of these pans for me to take a picture.

I then contacted various organisations to see if anyone could tell me more about this particular incident. I could not seem to find anymore information and thought that I was destined never to be able to complete the story.

A number of years ago I had a very good friend who was not only a Private Pilot but also works in the aviation industry as a Medical Examiner. I had lost contact with him but knew his email. It was a long shot but I remembered that he was a member of various aviation forums and that maybe, if he was willing to help, he might post up a request for information.

I was very pleased that on contacting him he actually was quite happy to take up the quest. (*see Note 1*) The request was posted but at first no one seemed to be able to shed any more light on the incident.

Eventually a reply was finally posted up on the forum containing information as to the type of plane and the possible identification of the Airmen, quoting a reference from a book. (*see Notes 2 & 3*).

The following is the information that we were able to extract from the replies and from the information (just one paragraph) in the book suggested in one of the replies.

THE FACTS TO DATE (2009):

On 9th February 1944 four planes were returning to their base in Egypt when they were attacked by the Germans M103 fighters over the eastern Aegean. The British planes were Beau fighters (*see note4*) from Squadron 252 (*see note5*). The 252 Squadron was responsible for destroying and disrupting the German shipping supply routes in the Eastern Aegean.

That day three of the four planes were lost, one near Patmos, the other over Icaria and the other into the sea. The information, though naming the pilots that lost their life that day, did not identify which pilots were

flying which planes. We were though told that the pilots were buried in the British War Cemetery at Phaleron just outside Athens. This at least solved the puzzle as to where the bodies of our pilots had been moved to after the war.

LUCKY BREAK:

At this point, this seemed the only information that we were going to be able to uncover. It was though, from the various posts and the information in the book, established that the Pilots shot down over Ikaria were more than likely to have been F/Lt Reginald R Meyer (Pilot) and F/Sgt Peter Grieve (Navigator).

Any attempts to find further information seemed doomed until my Friend tried Google putting in Reginald R Meyer. To his surprise what came up was information on a Sir Christopher Meyer who was listed as the son of Reginald R Meyer killed just days before his birth. Sir Christopher was chairman of the Press Complaints Commission and therefore had warranted an entry.

It was decided to write to Sir Christopher to see if he could confirm our suspicions that it was his father who was shot down over Ikaria. He very kindly replied doing so and giving us the information that both his father and the co-pilot we buried, as he put it, by the islander while the Germans weren't looking and that they both rest in Phaleron Cemetery now. He was off on a trip and so his reply was short but has stated he has some documentation relating to the event, all in Greek, and has promised to get in touch on his return.

So this is where the story stands at the moment. It will be interesting to see the documents that Sir Christopher holds and maybe even to meet him though I doubt if there is much more to uncover in this story, but maybe, at least, we might be able to confirm or refute the Liverpool connection that our Ikarian Story Teller told us about.

Note 1

Copy of Post

Shot down over Greek Island - more info requested

Hope this is the right place to ask this. I've been asked by a friend how to get information about two British pilots who are believed to have been shot down, and killed, by a German plane, over the Greek island of Ikaria (due west of Samos in eastern Aegean), probably in 1944 or 1945. No names known, no aircraft type known. We have just been told this by an elderly resident (happened when he was a young lad !), and are interested in finding out a bit more. I know it's a lot to ask, but has anybody any ideas at all on where to start seeking this kind of information ? ?

Thanks a lot in advance.

Note 2

QUOTE=COL BRUGGY;25844]Gents,

AUS413683 P/O. Frank Phillip STANGER RAAF was the pilot of Beaufighter LZ141, both him and his navigator, 1320816 F/Sgt. J.S.L.REYNOLDS are commemorated on the Alamein Memorial.

Confirmed in the Item Notes of Stanger's undigitised A705. Location given as, near Patmos.

Nannodnai, check Akr. Tsulufi, Patmos.

Col.[/QUOTE]

Thanks Col for info on LZ141 and crew.

Who may have been on LZ271 and LZ287 lost same mission:

F/Lt (Pilot) Reginald R. MEYER - 100613, and

F/Sgt (Nav/WOp) Peter GRIEVE - 1395133,

both buried Phaleron War Cem., Athens, Greece,

and

F/Sgt Walter H. BOON - 1192418 - Alamein Memorial Column 279, and

F/Sgt Alfred W. SOURES - 1391766 - Alamein Memorial Column 280.

Regards,
Henk.

NOTE 3

Posts from RAF Commands Forum

Thomas Stone :

reginald henry rowe meyer flight lieutenant 1006213

he was killed in action on the 09.02.44. serving with 252 Beaufighter squadron.
aircraft serial and crew members name would be most appreciated.
thanks. t.s.

AMRIT:

don't have a serial but he was shotdown by 109s near Leros. Meyer was leading
the sweep of four aircraft. His navigator was :

Name: GRIEVE, PETER

Initials: P

Nationality: United Kingdom

Rank: Flight Sergeant (Nav./W.Op.)

Regiment/Service: Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Unit Text: 252 Sqdn.

Age: 27

Date of Death: 09/02/1944

Service No: 1395133

Additional information: Son of Peter and Helen Grieve, of Gallatown, Kirkcaldy,
Fife.

Casualty Type: Commonwealth War Dead

Grave/Memorial Reference: Joint grave 23. D. 16.

Cemetery: PHALERON WAR CEMETERY

Henk:

rom: The Armed Rovers by252 Sqn lost three Beaufighters this day due to Bf
109s:

LZ287 at Ikaria,

LZ141 and LZ271 off Cape Zulufi

Regards,

Henk.

Nesbi

Thomas Stone

hi. henk and amrit

thanks very much for the information it was most helpful.

regards. tom

NOTE 4



The **Bristol Type 156 Beaufighter**, often referred to as simply the **Beau**, was a British long-range modification the earlier design.

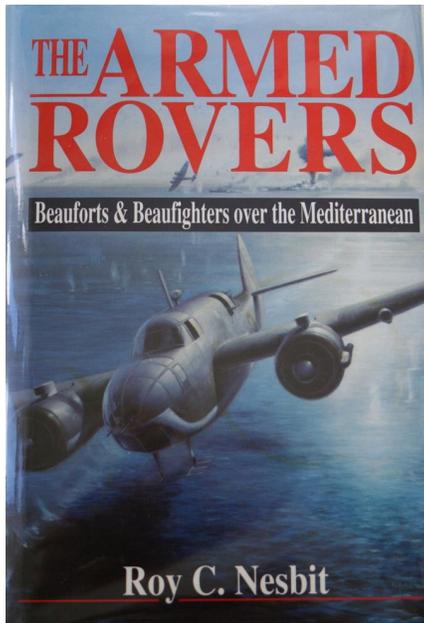
The name Beaufighter is a of "Beaufort" and "fighter".

Unlike the Beaufort, the Beaufighter had a long career and served in almost all theatres of war in the first as a , then as a and eventually replacing the Beaufort as a torpedo bomber. A unique variant was built in by the (DAP) and was known in Australia as the **DAP Beaufighter**.

More information on Beaufighter Planes can be found at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bristol_Beaufighter

NOTE 5



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ROCKET SQUADRONS

All four squadrons carried out similar attacks during the next two months, with almost daily sweeps around the islands or along the Greek coast. Heavy casualties were suffered by 252 Squadron. Two aircraft were caught in downward turbulence when four attacked a caique off the island of Lipsos on 6 February. One hit the mast and recovered but the other, crewed by Flying Officer C.H. Mason and Sergeant J.R. Smith, came down in the sea. Fortunately the men reached Turkey and eventually returned to the squadron. A sweep of four aircraft on 9 February met with disastrous results when they were attacked by three Me 109s near Leros. Flight Lieutenant Reginald Meyer, who was leading the formation, was shot down and lost his life, together with his navigator, Flight Sergeant Peter Grieve. A similar fate befell Flight Sergeants Alfred W. Squires and Walter H. Boon in another aircraft. A third was also shot down, and both the Australian pilot, Pilot Officer Frank P. Stanger, and the RAF navigator, Flight Sergeant James S.L. Reynolds, were killed. The only Beaufighter which returned was flown by Flight Sergeant A.D. Pitt, who managed to reach cloud cover.

Other Beaufighters were lost in February. Warrant Officer Keith Wright of 227 Squadron was killed on 11 February when his Beaufighter was shot down during an attack led by Buchanan in the western Aegean. However, his navigator, Sergeant G.L. Jones, was reported as 'safe and well'. Two days later, Flying Officer Joseph Unwin and Flight Sergeant Kenneth R. Farmer of 47 Squadron were killed when attacking caiques at Hydra. On 16 February, Wing Commander Buchanan was shot down into the sea when leading four Beaufighters of 227 Squadron against a dredger in the Gulf of Argolis, about sixty miles south-west of Athens. A Bulgarian member of the ground staff who had been allowed to fly on the sortie, Leading Aircraftman