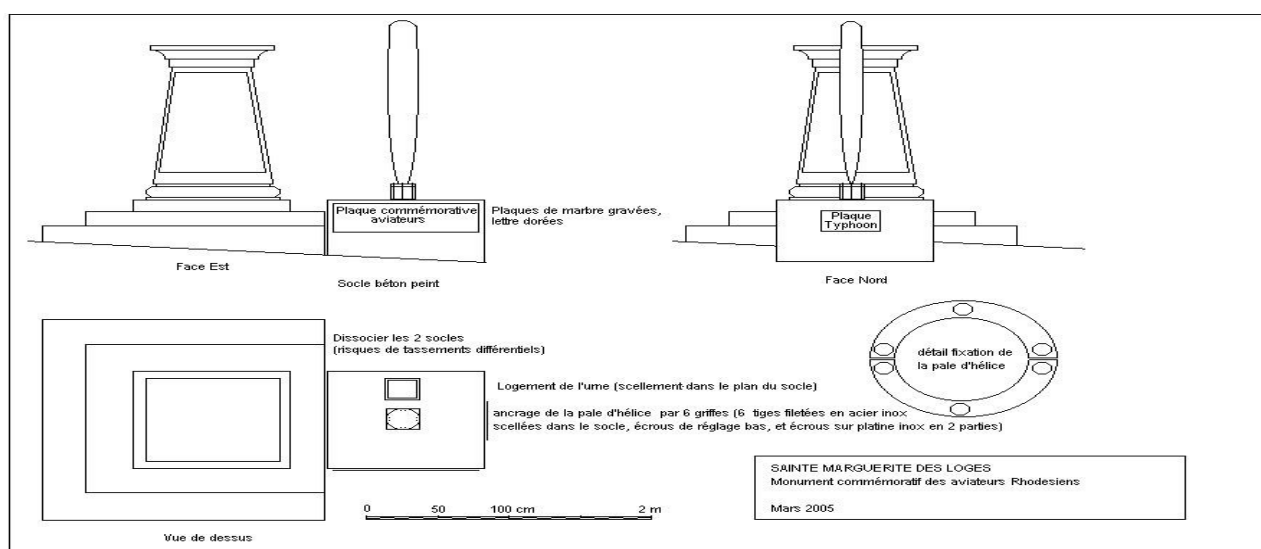


**STORY OF THE SECOND MEMORIAL ~
 COMMEMORATING ALL RHODESIAN AIR CREW
 KILLED DURING WORLD WAR II**

This is the sequel to the initiative of the late Bill Dives DFC, in establishing a Memorial Plaque in Normandy dedicated to Rhodesian Air Crew who gave their all over France during World War II. This Plaque is located at the entrance to the Church Yard of Ste Marguerite des Loges in Calvados, and the unveiling ceremony took place on Saturday 26th June 2004. Unfortunately Bill did not live to witness the final phase of his aspirations.

Three prominent citizens of the village played a key role in the fulfilment of Bill's aspirations – General Coignard - elder statesman and veteran of the Algerian War, Patrice Bellais - the Mayor, and Jean Camus – President of the Veterans Association. Soon after the Ceremony they called a meeting attended by Martin Dives and Bill Musgrave, at which they outlined their idea to consolidate the Rhodesian connection by broadening the scope of the Memorial to embrace all Rhodesian Air Crew killed during World War II. To this end they proposed that a new memorial be constructed in close proximity to the existing World War Monument, and submitted the layout design shown below. The main feature of the memorial to be a propeller blade recovered from the remains of a Typhoon shot down in the area, and possibly Royce Love's aircraft. The blade to be mounted on an independent pedestal, together matching the height of the World War Monument.



It was agreed that the unveiling ceremony should take place on Sunday 17 July 2005, the annual feast day for the village, with the traditional mass to be transformed into an ecumenical service attended by an Anglican Minister. So began the necessary arrangements and preparatory work:

- *The construction of the Memorial was put out to tender, and the work was completed during May/June 2005.*

- *A Roll of Honour covering the names of 450 Rhodesian Air Crew killed on active service during World War II was completed in book form ready to be lodged in the Town Hall.*
- *The Head of the Anglican Parish in France, The Reverend Houghton, welcomed the idea of an ecumenical service, and also agreed to participate in the inauguration of the memorial and the village lunch.*
- *The French Government informed that they would be represented by Monsieur Bernard Andrieu – “Sous Prefet de Arrondissement de Lisieux”, and the British Embassy in Paris would be sending Wing Commander Graham August – “Chef de Cabinet de l’Attache de Defense”*
- *With the presence of senior government officials, the French Army agreed to send a detachment of troops to provide a military guard of honour.*
- *Last but not least, a small bag of soil from Matabeleland was sent to provide a fitting consecration for the Memorial.*

So came the day – Sunday 17 July 2005, and the gathering of officials began at the Town Hall, welcomed by the Mayor Patrice Bellais, and General Coignard. Besides the dignitaries named above, these included:

- *Jean Camus – President of The Veterans Association, together with flag bearers representing Local Veterans’ Associations.*
- *Martin Dives, having taken over the mantle of his late father Bill Dives DFC, and wife Loretta.*
- *Members of ANSA to whom Bill Dives was so dedicated, including the President Jacques Paris, Michel Baudouin, Maurice Durand, Philippe Cornu and Guy Mauger.*



Gathering at the Town Hall – General Coignard at the Entrance

From the Rhodesian side there were:

Bill Musgrave and Emmanuel Huille, representing Nos 237 and 44 (Rhodesia) Squadrons respectively.

Kevin Hughes and wife Cheryl to who came to pay homage to Kevin's grandfather, Frank Stanley Howard, one of the specially selected pilots of 601 Squadron chosen to fly-off Spitfires from the US Carrier SS Wasp in April 1942 to relieve the desperate situation in Malta. Ordered into action immediately after landing and involved in daily dog-fights until shot down and killed on 20 May 1942.

Marguerite Kennedy - ex Sipolilo, close friends of Dives Family, who with her husband runs a self catering set-up in the area, and, ex Rhodesians Keith and Anne Hawthorn who have been living in Normandy for many years, and are related to Brian McKelvin.

Proceedings commenced with the handover of the Roll Of Honour, containing the names of 450 Rhodesian Air Crew killed in action during World War II. This took place within the confines of the Town Hall, with Bill Musgrave presenting the Roll of Honour Book to the Mayor, Patrice Bellais.

Then all officials gathered outside the Town Hall, and following behind the flag bearers proceeded to the church, in which the citizens of the village and surrounding areas had taken their seats.



Flag Bearers Leading

The ecumenical service was appreciated by all, with an excellent repartee between the Catholic Minister, Father Zacharie speaking in French, and the Anglican Minister the Rev David Houghton speaking in English. Martin Dives read a prayer in Hebrew for the Rhodesian Jewish Airmen. At the end of the service the congregation was led out of the church by Jean Camus and Martin Dives, each carrying a wreath to commemorate the French Veterans Association and Rhodesian Air Crew respectively.



Jean Camus and Martin Dives exiting the church

From the church everyone walked up the short distance to the World War Monument. All the dignitaries and local citizens gathered around to pay homage to the war dead, with a contingent of 10 French soldiers from their base in Caen providing a guard of honour. To close off the proceedings, the Mayor, Patrice Bellais and Martin Dives each laid wreaths at the Monument Aux Morts in honour of those from Ste Marguerite who lost their lives in the two World Wars. This was followed by the singing of the French national anthem La Marseillaise followed by the playing of ‘God Save The Queen’.



Service at World War Monument – Prior to Unveiling of Rhodesian Memorial

Proceedings were then focussed on the Rhodesian Memorial, with interested spectators surrounding the structure, led by the guard of honour who formed up on two sides of the memorial. The guard of honour presented arms and there were salutes by Wing Commander Graham August and Monsieur Bernard Andrieux.

The Union Jack was unveiled to reveal a Typhoon propeller blade mounted on a plinth alongside the Monument ‘Aux Morts’, with inscriptions on the plaques on two sides of the base of the Memorial.



Main Plinth Inscription

Bill Musgrave, veteran Spitfire Pilot from 237 Squadron then placed several handfuls of soil brought from Matabeleland in a hole at the base of the plinth, which was then sealed with concrete.

Adjacent Plinth Inscription



Royce Love



Wreaths were placed by the Mayor, by Bill Musgrave on behalf of the Air Force Association of Rhodesia, by the President of ANSA, Jacques Paris, by Anne-Marie Ehrlich on behalf of the Commonwealth Allies, and by Martin Dives.



Floral Tributes



AFA Tribute

After the service, everyone moved over to the old “lavoire” (outdoor laundry which is a pool with a shed) for a vin d’honneur and then, still in brilliant sunshine, to the marquee in the field above the church, where some 400 hundred people sat down to a 3 hour long four course meal washed down with wine and the local cider. The partying by the younger generation went on till after the fireworks at around midnight.



The next day we met the Mayor in his working clothes. He told us that he had been an “agriculteur” until a few years ago, when one morning his young bull charged him, knocked him down, broke most of his ribs, and would have killed him had it not been for his dog who so distracted the bull that he was able to escape – and live to tell the tale.



MARTIN DIVES'S SPEECH:

At Sainte Marguerite des Loges, near Livarot, Calvados, Normandy, France.

The memorial we are unveiling today is, to our knowledge, the first of its kind anywhere in the world. This is a magnificent and fitting tribute to the outstanding contribution made by the Rhodesian airmen in defeating Hitler in World War II.

The names and the details of the 450 Rhodesian airmen who lost their lives on active service in the Royal Air Force are recorded in a book we have lodged today with the Mayor of Ste Marguerite des Loges.

They comprise 450 out of the 2000 Rhodesians who volunteered to join the Royal Air Force in WWII. They and the people of Rhodesia, like the people of Normandy, paid a heavy price.

A large number of these young men joined three Rhodesian squadrons, 44 (Rhodesia) Squadron, 237 (Rhodesia) Squadron and 266 (Rhodesia) Squadron, while others were assigned to other RAF Squadrons. I will briefly describe each of the dedicated Rhodesian squadrons:

44 (Rhodesia) Squadron, was the first to fly Lancaster Bombers, and is represented here today by 44 (Rhodesia) Squadron Association member Mr Emmanuel Huille. As many of you know, William Dives, my father, was assigned to 44 Squadron. He spent the last years of his life here in Normandy. This monument will make him feel very humble and as well as proud and grateful to his friends here in France.

237 (Rhodesia) Squadron who flew their Spitfires into Southern France after the Invasion in August 1944, is represented here today by my friend and veteran Spitfire pilot Mr Bill Musgrave. He and his wife Margery and other diligent researchers are responsible for compiling the list of airmen, which took many hours of work.

266 (Rhodesia) Squadron flew Typhoons in Normandy from D-Day onwards. Royce Love, who is buried in the churchyard here, was in this squadron.

Patrice Bellais, Général Joël Coignard, Mr Jean Camus, Président des Anciens Combattants et Mme Camus, Mr Jacques Paris Président de l'Association Normande du Souvenir Aérien, we are deeply grateful to you. This is the realisation of another dream which we spoke about last year. We appreciate your abiding and steadfast memories and your warm embrace.

On behalf of the mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, children, grandchildren, nephews and nieces, cousins, relatives and loyal friends of those brave Rhodesian airmen who paid the supreme sacrifice, we thank you and we say together to them:

“ We shall not forget”.