
Tommy's first DFC

1. On the night of August 9/10 1944 Flight Lieutenant Broom was the navigator of an aircraft detailed to take part in the mining of the Dortmund-Ems canal. He navigated his machine with complete success to the markers and then made an accurate timed run to the point of release. Cloud and poor light added to the difficulties but his skill enabled the operation to be completed with speed and precision which completely surprised the defences.

2. Flight Lieutenant Broom has now completed 26 operations on his second tour. He is a most reliable officer with a high sense of duty and responsibility and a member of our most successful crew. He assisted in the planning of this operation and his previous experience of low-level bombing proved extremely useful. I strongly recommend him for the immediate award of the DFC.

DFC 1st Bar

Flight Lieutenant Broom DFC was a navigator in a Mosquito aircraft of 128 Squadron detailed to place a 4000 lb bomb up the mouth of a railway tunnel in the region of Kaiserslautern on the morning of the 1st of January 1945. This operation required great skill, determination and the utmost precision. By his assistance to his pilot this attack was carried out most successfully. Flight Lieutenant Broom has completed 73 operations against German targets the majority of which were heavily defended and including 15 against Berlin. He has at all times shown consistent keenness and skill.

DFC 2nd Bar December 1945

This officer has a long and distinguished record of operational flying. He first flew against the enemy in September 1939 and since then he has completed a large number of day and night sorties against heavily defended targets in Germany. On one occasion he was forced to leave his aircraft by parachute and another time his aircraft crashed in occupied territory but he evaded capture and returned to this country where he resumed operational flying with undiminished enthusiasm. The sterling qualities of courage, leadership and devotion to duty displayed by Squadron Leader Broom have materially contributed to the operational efficiency of each Squadron with which he has served. In addition his work as Squadron Navigation Officer has been worthy of the highest praise.

Tommy operational

9/39 > 11/40

2/42 > 8/42

5/44 > 5/45

The Escape

of W/O TJ Broom RAF

105 Mosquito Squadron

25 August 1942

by Squadron Leader TJ Broom DFC**

25 August 1981

My escape to England after crashing east of Antwerp on 25th August 1942 whilst on way to low level bombing raid on a power station near Cologne.

25th August 1981.

I'm starting this story on the 39th anniversary of the event.

Three crews, F/Lt. Parry and P/O. Robson, F/Lt. Ralston and F/O. Clayton, F/Lt. Costello-Bowen and I were detailed to raid two electric power stations and a switching station near Cologne; our target was the switching station at Brauweiler. We took off from Horsham St. Faith at 7.30 p.m. and went in formation to the Dutch Island at the mouth of the Scheldt where we split up and proceeded individually. Not long after crossing the coast and the Islands, we were very low and brushed the tops of the trees. A few minutes later after crossing over another small wood, suddenly a electricity pylon loomed in front of us. We pulled up, but the starboard engine struck the pylon at its top. Immediately the engine stopped and the propeller stopped. The action of hitting the pylon jammed the controls. We were 80ft up and there was nothing we could do. We were doing about 240 m.p.h., and just had to wait until we hit the ground. I said to Costello-Bowen "well this is it". It's a funny thing, but neither of us were worried and were very calm, although death stared us in the face. We lost height steadily and crossed a couple of fields, then the pine woods loomed up in front. We were bound to crash into them - this was about half a minute after hitting the pylon. Just before we hit the pine trees I instinctively released my safety harness, why I don't know - then we hit and everything went black; no physical pain, just darkness, and I felt myself rolling over and over like a ball. I must have been unconscious for a time although it appeared to be it was not so. When I awoke I was covered in branches and bits of aeroplane, and a strong smell of petrol was in the atmosphere. I struggled up through and was amazed to find I had no injuries, not even a scratch. I must have been flung out of the top of the cockpit as I was right in the front with the nose of the aircraft. It was amazing that the aircraft did not catch fire or the bombs explode. The nose of the aircraft must have passed between two trees - how lucky can you be? My next thought was Costello, and although it was nearly dark, I found him back in some wreckage about 20 yards from where I had been. He was still unconscious and looked in poor shape; both his shoes had been torn off by the rudder pedals. After talking and patting his face for a few moments, he finally awoke. I lifted him up and half carried him about 400 yards away, where we both sat down. He gradually recovered and we were soon talking. We both felt very despondent at the thought of being prisoners of war. We knew we were in open country and it would be a while before anyone (Germans or locals) found us. Costello's ankle was very bad and he was severely shocked. I felt reasonably well (although browned off). We decided to try and get away and see if we could get in touch with an escape organisation - this was a natural thing for any aircrew to do, in fact it was our duty. We chatted, and Costello didn't feel as though he could make it, and told me to go it alone. I went a few yards and then thought 'I can't leave him'. We both had our emergency rations with us and knew that in this state a Benzedrine tablet would do the trick, and give us a lift. With Costello clinging to my arm, we started off and had reached a road when we heard someone approaching. Instantly we dived into the hedge and he passed without noticing us. We set off across fields - it was now dark, and we made our way steadily. (Costello now felt much better and was able to walk alone). As we knew we had to, we were looking for a hiding place before dawn - no use being caught in the open in daylight. Eventually we came to a small wood about 100 yards x 100 yards (small firs, Christmas tree size, about 5 ft). We settled down and slept a little; could hear a clock striking in the distance. Now we were thirsty and decided to go to the edge and see what was around. We found a small ditch at the side of the wood - the water didn't look too good but we had rubber bags and purifying tablets which we used, and we had a drink - not very appetising. We wandered around the edge, keeping inside so we could not be seen from the tracks through the woods, and eventually discovered a hatted camp. We laid down, hidden from the tracks but able to keep the entrance gate (no guards) under observation. We watched for about 4 hours and saw no German soldiers, only nurses going to and fro. We decided it must be a hospital of some sort and decided to take a chance (having seen no Germans around, although we knew they must be searching for us. We didn't know how far a distance we had covered the previous night). We walked over and knocked at first hut - it appeared to be the office. A nurse appeared and was somewhat startled to see us. We walked in and one of the nurses recognised the R.A.F. uniform, and went and fetched a doctor who spoke English. He knew about the crash and that the Germans were searching for us. He wanted to know what we required, and we told him that there was an escape line, but that we only knew that the way to get in touch was to go to the cafes and restaurants near the railway station at Antwerp, and with a quiet word here and there perhaps something might happen.

He was very good, and said he would try with some friends and see what he could do. We were given a boiled egg and a hot drink and it was arranged we would go back to our hiding place (which we showed them), and at six p.m. each evening an English speaking nurse would pass the edge of the wood and whistle a few bars of a current well-known tune. This would be our signal to go to the edge; she would give us a bottle of water and a tomato sandwich each and give us the news. The days were very hot (cloudless sky) and quite cold at night. We each had a small pack with about 12 Horlicks tablets and some chocolate. I had a pullover which I wore for half the night and then passed it to Costello for the remainder of the night. The days were long and we often heard German soldiers passing along the paths. This routine was kept up from Wednesday evening to Friday evening when we were told that no contact had been made and it would be dangerous if we were caught around here as the local inhabitants would be suspected of harbouring us and reprisals would take place. We said we would wait for darkness and would then move off. As darkness fell, we made our way and had only got about 50 yards down the road when the nurse returned and said that contact had been made, and at six p.m. the next day (Saturday) someone would come and start us on our journey. I can remember these days as if it were yesterday, and it is rather queer that neither of us felt any elation, in fact all the way through so far, life had been taken for granted, but all that was about to be altered. We both slept well that night. Saturday seemed to drag on, but about six p.m. we heard our tune and went to the edge of the wood and there was our nurse with another young woman. We could only thank the nurse and ask her to thank all of those who had helped us over the last few days. Although we had only seen the nurse each evening to give us the news and our sandwich and water, they had been taking a tremendous risk and we were very grateful to them. We three then returned to our little den in the woods. We didn't ask her name because if one is captured later it is best not to know, because if one should under certain circumstance reveal a name, a chain reaction could start and the line would be wiped out.

We were questioned to try and establish that we were bona-fide aircrew, and looking back it would appear that they knew all about us - Squadron number, Station Commander, where our home address was, etc. The lady had a suitcase with her, and this contained two suits, also shirt and tie, bottle of water, a lather brush and razor, and a trowel. We shaved and changed and then buried our battledress. We were given a small attache case, each with a few items in it (this came in useful later on the outskirts of Antwerp). She told us we would be going about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile down the road, have a drink in a small restaurant and wait for a train to Antwerp. She told us she would do the talking, and we must not speak. I remember asking if there would be any German soldiers around - yes, she said, but behave just as though you were in England in a strange town where you knew no-one. I wondered what my reactions would be and said I thought I might colour up and become nervous. She said "you'll soon get used to it".

Away we went and had a beer at the restaurant. Out on the balcony there were German soldiers around and to my relief I felt quite normal. Eventually we boarded a train and had to stand. She bought the tickets. At the outskirts of Antwerp the train stopped and the police and Germans boarded and carried out a search (not inspecting papers, for we had none) but for the black market. We reached our destination and discreetly followed the lady to a doctor's house, where she left us and said she would return the following morning (Sunday). The doctor was very kind and after a cold bath (no hot water available), we had a small meal, boiled egg and bread and butter, to get our stomachs used to food again.

We sat around chatting and had a beer, then off to bed.

After breakfast next morning, our guide arrived and we went to the station and caught a train for Brussels - no papers, but no trouble on this short journey.

We were taken to a house about 5 minutes from the station to a grand old lady who lived alone, and told that we would be fetched the following afternoon to go to the "Bon Marche" to have our identity photos taken on the machine in the store.

The grand old lady told us that we would be quite safe as the Germans had the week before raided that street and taken all Jews and suspects. Here we had our first taste of black, doughy bread and acorn coffee.

We were fetched about 5 p.m. on Monday and walked to the Bon Marche. As we were just inside, I was in front, a German put his hand on my shoulder, said something I didn't understand, and took his hand away, and turned away. The guide was now by my side and whispered that he said the store was closing, and to leave. It didn't frighten me - just took me by surprise.

We went back to the house and returned the next afternoon, when all went well.

The next day we moved to another house which I know now to be Carl Servai's (because in 1944 I received a postcard from him). There we were introduced to our guide for the journey to Paris, who gave us our identity cards and said he would fetch us the next day, in the morning. We were staying with a very happy family with young children, and we gave her the nickname "Chumleigh". We were sorry the next morning when our guide (Albert Johnson) - found this out in St. Jean de Luz in 1962 - came for us.

I was Pierre.

At the station the guide bought books similar to "Picture Post" and said that looking and pretending to read these would dissuade our fellow passengers from having a conversation with us. He told us we would go alone, and we should follow him to the train, and sit as near as possible to him. This we did. The carriage had a central corridor with four seats (two facing each other) each side of the corridor. Costello sat next to the guide, and I was opposite, next to what turned out to be a Belgian with a black Army uniform on.

We had booked to Lille (the guide had obtained the tickets). They wouldn't expect evading airmen to go to Lille - more likely to Paris. Presently we heard the call for papers, German police and Gestapo, and they eventually reached us. They were satisfied with the identity cards of Costello and the guide. They were not satisfied with the papers and answers of the Belgian and he was taken away. Then it was my turn. I gave them the identity card. They asked me something else (not knowing the language I didn't have a clue what they were saying) so I gave up my rail ticket. Another question, and I didn't have anything more to give them so I just answered "hmm". It didn't mean yes and it didn't mean no, but it satisfied them and they gave me back my identity card and ticket and passed on. A close shave. Later the guide told me that they had asked where I was going - the ticket answered that, and then was I going to Lille to work in the mines. My "hmm" satisfied them. The next stop was at the Belgian-French frontier where everyone had to get off the train and walk to the check point where all they checked was the contents of the attache case, then on to Lille. At Lille we went to a restaurant near the station and had a meal, a little walk around and then to the station to board a train for Paris. No checks on this journey.

At the Gare du Nord there was no trouble and we three walked to a safe house and there our guide left us. The owner of the flat was a very good man, and he looked after us very well. The food was excellent and he told us (there were four of us at the flat) that after we had gone he would have a spell with no evaders or escapees and he entertained some Germans, from whom he got the excellent food we were having. What a man! He turned over one of the pictures on the wall and there was a portrait of Hitler! No wonder they didn't suspect him of any dealing with escapees. Besides being careful when out, it was very important not to smoke English cigarettes or tobacco. (very early on one chap was picked up because a German had smelled the English cigarette), so me being a pipe man, I had to smoke French tobacco - not very nice, although I didn't smoke outside because not many French men smoke pipes and I didn't want to arouse any suspicions.

We were taken on the Saturday to another flat where a man (I know now to be Dedee's father, Frederic de Jongh) was writing and stamping our passes for the forbidden zone along the Atlantic coast. On the next day, Sunday, we were to leave the Gare d'Austerlitz at ten p.m. It had been decided to leave Costello in Paris, as with his injured ankle he would not be fit enough for the journey over the Pyrenees (in fact he enjoyed a week in Paris, out and about to get fit, and even went to the cinema). Here we had also handed over our money pack (containing French, Belgian and Dutch notes, which all aircrew carried). I left the house about 8.30 p.m. and was told to turn left outside the front door and about 100 yards along I would see a jeweller's shop and a girl with a red hat would be looking in the window. This was my guide to the railway station. She was there when I got there and we duly went to the nearest Metro and boarded a train for the Gare de Austerlitz. There were plenty of Germans around in uniform, and two of them sat opposite us. After about 5 minutes one of them leaned over to me and asked me a question (later I learned where did he have to change to get to a certain station). Quick as a flash my guide answered, then nudged me and we got out at the next station (in case he wondered why I hadn't answered, we made our way on foot to Gare de Austerlitz (much safer)).

We met the others there, Frederic de Jongh and another guide, so our party was 7, 3 guides and 4 evaders. We had quite a time to wait at the platform barrier but no trouble, and then as we passed through, had to show our tickets, identity cards and Atlantic coast pass.

Now came the cheekiest bit - we had a reserved compartment and when we reached it there were some people already occupying it. They wouldn't vacate the compartment so Freddy de Jongh fetched the German commander of the train and other officials who made them get out and let us get in (that took some guts).

We had a pleasant journey. They came around and checked all papers again and we had no trouble. The German commander even looked in later to see if we were alright and wished us a pleasant night.

St. Jean de Luz was the destination at about 7 a.m., and here was a tricky situation - all passengers had to queue on disembarking and only a single exit door was open to go through. On the other side, on each side of the queue there was a German and a French official checking papers, it meant about one in four was checked. (we were told that if one of our evaders was stopped and caught, the others should break out of the queue - there was a low wall about 50 yards to the right, jump over and hide in the town if possible),

However, all went well, they checked the Frenchman in front of me, so I quickly passed through, in fact we all got through. My guide was waiting and we all made our way deviously to our safe house. This was Monday and we were due to set course for Spain on Tuesday. Here we were given a Basque beret and a pair of espadrilles (shoes for the mountains). Now we looked the part with our Basque beret and shoes. We all (four evaders) left St. Jean de Luz on the Tuesday afternoon, separately, with our guides to make our way to the farmhouse at Urrugne, which was at the foothills of the Pyrenees. It was about two hours walking and about two miles inland from the coast. I went with Albert Johnson and we passed over the railway bridge just past Ciboure, exchanged greetings with the German Sentry guarding the bridge, out across country and reached Urrugne without any trouble. Here we all met up, had a meal and later on met our Basque smuggler guide Florentino. He was a very tall and rugged man and only spoke Basque. He checked we were all kitted out correctly and we all had a stout stick.

At nightfall, about 8 p.m., we set off, Florentino, Johnson and us four evaders, in single file, Florentino leading and Johnson checking all was well at the rear. Luckily the weather was fine, no moon, so the darkness suited us. We moved silently up the mountain paths, no-one talking as German patrols were known to be frequently in the area looking for evaders. At last we reached the highest point on the French side and could see the lights over the border, especially to the right we could see the light of the lighthouse at Fuenterrubia sweeping around at the coast where the river Bedasson flowed into the Atlantic. Here we paused for quite a while, sitting around very close to each other. Florentino had found the bottle of brandy which he had hidden, and we all had a swig.

As the next part of the journey was dangerous (down to the valley where the river flowed, then across the river and into Spain) we waited for quite a while, Florentino was waiting to hear the sound of a bird (his lucky bird). At last we heard the bird call and were on our way. We reached the bank of the river and Florentino went up and down the bank checking both banks. On the right hand side some way up, we could see the frontier post with all the lights on. We knew that the Spanish police would be patrolling the other bank. We knew what we had to do after crossing the river. There was a grassy bank about 20 yards wide, then a road (down which now and again passed a car) then a railway track, after this a steep bank which led up the mountain (with quite a few small trees and bushes at the beginning of the climb). The river was fordable at this place, the water up to our waists. We were lucky as after heavy rain and during the winter the river flowed quite fast and was often up to the shoulders, in fact one of the chiefs of the line was drowned here in December 1943.

Away we went across the river, Florentino leading and Johnson at the rear. We held hands and crossed in a chain in case anyone lost their footing. No trouble, and we all climbed the other bank, waited a little. There appeared to be no-one around, all was quiet. Florentino led and we ran across the road, railway track and had started climbing into the bushes when suddenly we were ambushed. A voice called "Halt", then shots rang out. We had been told if anything happened to go back across the river and wait, the others would do the same and we would all eventually meet up.

I ran back and caught my leg on some barbed wire near the river, had to untangle myself and got a deep gash in the calf of my left leg (the only injury I suffered during the whole war). I was lucky as when I reached the river bank I found Florentino there. We could only communicate by sign language, but I could understand what he wanted to do. We hadn't heard anyone cross the river so we waited about 5 minutes and then went forward again to see if we could find any of the others. Again the same thing happened - ambushed. We both ran back and this time crossed back into France, went upstream for about a mile and crossed back into Spain, no trouble at all, and we steadily climbed up and up. We got to the top and then went steadily downwards and eventually reached gentle slopes and green fields. It was now getting light and we had to keep a sharp lookout for the Spanish police for we had stirred up a 'hornet's nest' and no doubt they were searching all the frontier.

We at last reached our destination, a friendly farmhouse. Florentino threw some small stones gently up to the bedroom window and out came the farmer and his wife. We were very tired as we had been marching for about 10 hours. A quick hot drink, and we went to the barn. Cattle were in there, but on the first floor there was plenty of hay stacked up to about five feet. We climbed up and were soon fast asleep. About 10 a.m., we were woken up with big plates of hot soup. We each had two helpings. Just afterwards the farmer came back up and talked to Florentino. The police could be seen approaching the farm. Just after Florentino beckoned me and we looked out of the window stealthily. Two of the police were there, armed, chatting with the farmer and his wife, and having a glass of wine. We went back and covered ourselves with hay. About an hour later the farmer re-appeared and must have given the all clear. About mid-day Florentino came to me and by signs and by pointing at a watch, made me understand he was going away, but would be back about 7 p.m. I dozed and when I looked over the side, there was a family of rats playing just below me. However, they didn't worry me. Time passed very slowly, but eventually Florentino came back. We bade farewell to the farmer and his wife and started on our way downhill. Eventually we reached a main road and there was a car waiting. We boarded, and the next stop was the Consulate in San Sebastian.

There we found that Johnson had arrived on his own, one Polish evader had also made it by himself. We were able to tell the Consul the names of the other two still missing. No doubt they had been captured by the police.

As I was told later on in Madrid, this meant a week or more in a disgusting frontier prison, whilst the systems of release started rolling from the Spanish officials in Madrid, the Spanish being in no hurry to admit they were in custody. From there they would be moved to the concentration camp at Miranda del Ebro, where it would be about 3 weeks before the Embassy could secure their release.

A nice hot bath and a good meal made me feel a different man and also now that I had no need to look over my shoulder, the outlook looked much brighter.

After breakfast the next day, we met the attache from Madrid who always collected the evaders, and boarded his diplomatic car for the journey to Madrid. We stopped at a very nice roadhouse on the way and had a slap-up lunch. At the entrance to each village or town on the way there were always armed police who saluted the car as we passed - if they only knew!

Eventually we drove into the British Embassy in Madrid. There they had a large Army-type hut in the grounds, and we found there were about a dozen servicemen there.

We were interviewed by the Attache and told that we would remain until they could obtain clearance for us and then we would go by train to La Linea, then across no man's land to Gibraltar. This would probably take perhaps a week to ten days. It was quite pleasant here, although we could not go outside - confined to the Embassy gardens. Then we were taken to the attache who said he had obtained release for us but we would have to go to the H.Q. of the Spanish police to prove our identity. None of us would be using our own names, (not R.A.F.). The name I was given was Sgt. Major Cook of the Army. We would give them our proper address at home - it was the name that mattered.

We were taken there and went in front of a senior policeman and filled in a form.

All was well and we returned to the Embassy.

The next day four of us, escorted by the Attache, were delivered to the railway station where we boarded the train for La Linea. We were locked in the carriage with an armed guard outside. We had sandwiches and were given coffee. An uneventful journey, and when we reached La Linea, were escorted by guards to the frontier post police station. (We had been told by the Embassy what to expect - just a check of identity).

I was asked my name; Sg. Major Cook I replied. All well, and we were taken to the frontier gate, released and walked over the pathway to the gate and on to Gibraltar soil; a great moment.

It was September 21st, 4 weeks less a day since I was missing.

We were taken for a medical, then a biller and a night's sleep. Next day, identity, interrogation, kitted out with battledress and given £5 spending money and taken to the Post Office where we were enabled to send a cable to our homes.

We then had to wait for transport back to U.K.

My pilot, Costello-Bowen arrived in Gibraltar fit and well, a week after me. We had a re-union drink.

One went back to U.K. on the first available transport and eventually I boarded the battleship H.M.S. Malaya, and escorted by 3 destroyers left Gibraltar, and a few days later (6th October), anchored in the Clyde off Greenock after a very pleasant trip, often with a Sunderland escort.

We were first off the ship and taken to a barracks under guard, and next day to catch the night train to Euston. We were locked in a carriage under guard and on arrival in London, escorted to the London transit camp at the Grand Central Hotel at Marylebone. Here we were interrogated by M.I. 9 and eventually issued with a certificate to take to R.A.F. Uxbridge. Then we were free to send a telegram home, and taken to Air Ministry. Here we were given a written note stating our identity, had a couple of interviews, asked where I ~~wanted~~ wanted to be posted to. I was told 105 Squadron had now moved to R.A.F. Marham and 1655 Mosquito Training Unit was being formed, and I could be posted to it. This I agreed to do.

Taken then to R.A.F. Uxbridge where I was completely kitted out and given 3 weeks leave, and a railway warrant to Portishead, and one to Kings Lynn on completion of my leave. So I returned to my family at Portishead, my two brothers (both in the Army) obtained leave, also my sister who was drafted to the Bristol Aeroplane Company - and I enjoyed my leave!

My father and mother had never given up hope and naturally were delighted to see me.

X My second brother Bob was killed in action whilst with the Royal Armoured Corps at Mobjez-el-Bab, North Africa in 1943.

After a rest as Chief Ground Instructor 1655 Mosquito Training Unit, I resumed operations with F/Lt Ivor Broom (no relation) with 571Sqn, 128Sqn and then 163Sqn; Ivor as W/Cdr and me S/Ldr. We did another 58 operations (21 to Berlin). This was in 8 Group Pathfinder Force.

Ivor later became Air Marshal Sir Ivor Broom KCB CBE DSO DFC** AFC.
We meet regularly.

Zoersel, June 6th 1998

Dear Mr Broom,

First of all thank you very much for your letter dated May 23rd.

Next I better explain the reason why I was looking for you.

If I tell you that my hometown is the village of Westmalle in northern Belgium than I am sure that the name Westmalle sounds familiar to you.

I am investigating the WW2 aeroplane crashes in my hometown area with the goal to write an article about them. I have tried to write down the events of those days in the next report. I would be pleased to hear your comment on it!

To understand the events on August 25th 1942 we must start our review the previous day. In the night of August 24 ~~on~~ 25 the RAF bombed the German town Frankfurt. On their way back the bombers were intercepted by German nightfighters. Lancaster R 5537 of 97 Squadron was hit and crashed near the Trappist abbey at Westmalle. Seven airmen lost their lives in the crash.

In the evening of that same day August 25th 1942 a Mosquito crash – landed at Westmalle at the hamlet called 'Blauwhoever' (please see enclosed map).

That mosquito was DK 297, GB - ., of 105 Sqn RAF and the crew involved were F/Lt Costello - Bowen (pilot) and yourself as navigator.

I learned that your target that night was the power station at Brauweiler in Germany. A fellow researcher gave me a copy of the article 'escape to fly again' that appeared in The Marker. You state that you had hit a high-tension lead, severely damaging the plane. As you were already flying at a low altitude it must have been clear that a crash was inevitable. Your description of the crash is very accurate, although at the time everything must have happened in a flash!

After hitting the pylon and crossing some fields a wood turned up in front of you. This wood was in fact the Paaltjesdreef, a lane boarded with oak - trees on both sides. Immediately behind this lane there was at the time a pinewood. I have marked to point where you hit the lane with a red arrow.

It must indeed have been a big smash when the Mosquito hit the trees. The a/c completely smashed into pieces and it is a wonder that you both got out alive. Eye – witnesses told me that the fuselage and the two engines each made their ways deep into the wood. Many pine trees were cut off and the wood was full of wreckage - pieces and also several unexploded bombs.

But by the time the first locals came to the site you and Costello – Bowen were already on the run. In the escape and evasion report Costello – Bowen mentioned that you started walking the south - west direction. I have approximately marked the way you followed through the woods. With Costello's wounded foot and in the dark this must have been a great effort.

From your statement I understand that you ended up near the **Lizzie Marsily hospital**, where you saw the nurses. During the war this was a sanatorium where tubercular patients were treated. This explains where they got the good food they gave you.

I have not yet been able to find out who the nurse was you first talked to , but the doctor who helped you was the superintendent, doctor Etienne Debaudt. I realise off course that at the time no names were asked, so this information might be new for you. Doctor Debaudt was a veteran from the First World War during which he served in the Belgian Army.

After a few days hiding in the woods a young woman picked you up. Could this woman have been the famous Dedee De Jong ? It is well possible as I believe Dedee's father was a doctor too.

Anyway after Costello – Bowen and you changed your uniforms for civilian clothes you walked with her down the Nooitrust – street to reach the main Antwerp – Turnhout road. The three of you then had a drink in restaurant / **hotel Beukenhof** that still exists.

At the time you probably didn't know it but you were at that moment less then half a mile from the spot where the 97 Sqn Lancaster crashed! (1 on the map) It was also at the hotel Beukenhof where you took the tram to Antwerp.

As I can read in the article from the Marker your further escape was an incredible adventure.

It is indeed sad news that Costello - Bowen was killed later in the war.

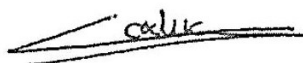
I will take up contact with the family of doctor DeBaudt and ask if they still have any information regarding your escape.

Off course I do have many questions to ask you. Do you still have any wartime photographs? If so, would it be possible to have them reproduced for me please?

If there is anything I can do in return I will be pleased to, and off course I will let you know when new information comes to light.

Looking forward hearing from you,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Luc Cox', with a horizontal line drawn underneath it.

Luc Cox

