

255 SQUADRON. MAY 1941. HIRTON LINDSEY.						78.05	
						Time carried forward: 57.30 20.35	
Date	Hour	Aircraft Type and No.	Pilot	Duty	REMARKS (including results of bombing, gunnery, exercises, etc.)	Flying Times	
						Day	Night
1.5.41	1520	MAGISTER T. 9820.	P/O BALLANTINE.	DUAL FLYING.	TURNS, CLIMBING AND GLIDING.	1.00	
3.5.41	1620	DEFIANT I	P/O BALLANTINE.	N.F. TEST.		.30	
3.5.41	1650	N. 3333.B.	P/O BALLANTINE.	OPERATIONS.	PATROL OVER SHEFFIELD AND LIVERPOOL.		1.35
3.5.41	2230	DEFIANT I	P/O BALLANTINE.	OPERATIONS.	PATROL OVER SHEFFIELD AND LIVERPOOL.		1.35
3.5.41	0005	N. 3333.B.	P/O BALLANTINE.	OPERATIONS.	PATROL OVER SHEFFIELD AND LIVERPOOL.		1.35
4.5.41	0340	DEFIANT I	P/O BALLANTINE.	BOMBER AIRCRAFT	SHOT DOWN - BALE D OUT.		.15
4.5.41	0355	N. 3333.B.	P/O BALLANTINE.	BOMBER AIRCRAFT	SHOT DOWN - BALE D OUT.		.15
<p><i>INJURIES!!</i> { PILOT - 1 BULLET GRAZE ON FOREHEAD. } WHILE PATROLLING 4,000 FT. 6 MILES S.E. LINCOLN.</p> <p>{ SELF - 1 BRUISED EYE, 1 SPRAINED BACK } AIRCRAFT CAUGHT FIRE FOLLOWING 2 CANNON SHELLS IN ENGINE. BALE D OUT 15,000 FT.</p> <p>ATTACKED BY ENEMY AIRCRAFT (2 JU. 88 @ ME. 110 (?))</p>							
7.5.41	1810	DEFIANT I	P/O BALLANTINE.	N.F. TEST.		.35	
7.5.41	1845	N. 1810.K.	P/O BALLANTINE.	N.F. TEST.		.35	
7.5.41	2335	DEFIANT I	P/O BALLANTINE.	OPERATIONS.	PATROL HULL AREA 14,000 FT. FOLLOWED S.L.		1.30
7.5.41	0105	N. 1810.K.	P/O BALLANTINE.	OPERATIONS.	PATROL HULL AREA 14,000 FT. FOLLOWED S.L.		1.30
8.5.41	0235	DEFIANT I	P/O BALLANTINE.	OPERATIONS.	PATROL HULL AREA 14,000 FT.		.40
8.5.41	0315	N. 1810.K.	P/O BALLANTINE.	OPERATIONS.	PATROL HULL AREA 14,000 FT.		.40
9.5.41	0105	DEFIANT I	P/O BALLANTINE.	FIGHTER NIGHT PATROL HULL 16,000 FT. (LAYER PATROL)			.55
9.5.41	0300	N. 1940.B.	P/O BALLANTINE.	FIGHTER NIGHT PATROL HULL 16,000 FT. (LAYER PATROL)			.55
9.5.41	1755	DEFIANT I	P/O BALLANTINE.	N.F. TEST.		.35	
9.5.41	1830	N. 1940.B.	P/O BALLANTINE.	N.F. TEST.		.35	
10.5.41	0130	DEFIANT I	P/O BALLANTINE.	FIGHTER NIGHT PATROL HULL 17,500 FT. 30 CAL. GIVE BOMBED			1.50
10.5.41	0250	N. 1940.B.	P/O BALLANTINE.	FIGHTER NIGHT PATROL HULL 17,500 FT. 30 CAL. GIVE BOMBED			1.50
12.5.41	1950	DEFIANT I	Sgt. JOHNSON.	AIR TEST AND		.30	
12.5.41	2020	N. 1617.J.	Sgt. JOHNSON.	AIR TEST AND		.30	
12.5.41				TARGET (CANNON).			
12.5.41				P/O BALLANTINE POSTED TO M.S.F.U.			
LARK FARM - NOCTON FEN, POTTER HANWORTH, LINCOLN.						TOTAL TIME	60.40 28.20



Left: Chris McTaggart's log book detailing the night in question. Note that he has altered his name (post-war) to Madsen C on a subsequent entry. Chris was a historian's dream as he not only entered the serial number of each aircraft he flew in but also the individual aircraft identity letter!

As the crew reported, it was later established that the Defiant was indeed shot down. 255 Squadron's Intelligence Officer wrote shortly after the event:

Plots shown 3 E/A in the vicinity at the time, 2 of which were converging on Defiant at exact time and place where explosions occurred. Although engine buried itself 15 feet in ground a few large pieces of a/c were recognisable and on a wing there was a hole

which appeared to have been caused by m/g fire. About 100 yards from the crashed plane several pieces of fairing were discovered punctured by m/g fire. Since the ammunition had been seen and heard by pilot and A/G to explode in the pit made by the crash there

can be no question of these holes having been made by the Defiant's own guns.

The Defiant was, of course, a complete write-off.

Finding N3333

The fact that a Defiant night fighter had crashed near Lincoln in the early hours of 4th May 1941 was no secret. The loss is referred to in several published books and on the internet, but all previous attempts to locate the actual site had failed. In the years since the war the land around the village of Potterhanworth, 6 miles south-east of Lincoln, has changed enormously. Many miles of hedges and ditches that delineated the small family farms have been 'grubbed out' and the patchwork of small fields and paddocks have been transformed into vast featureless 'prairies'. The wartime location given for the crash site, 'Lark Farm, Nocton Fen' no longer exists. It is now part of the Beeswax Dyson Farming organisation, owned by inventor Sir James Dyson, that aims to improve sustainable farming in the UK.

Clearly, obtaining permission to search for a crashed WW2 on the estate would not be a case of simply knocking on the farmer's front door!

A project was agreed by the estate manager to search an area that had been identified as a likely crash site. One witness had been found who had worked on 'Lark Farm' in the 1940s and he had been able to narrow the crash site down to two fields - as they had been in 1941. By superimposing a wartime map showing Lark Farm on modern satellite imagery, and aligning features identifiable on both, the rough area of the crash site could be estimated in the sea of featureless hectares.

The persistence of the team's lead 'wreck hunter' Gareth Jones was eventually rewarded when a fragment of aluminium caused a reading on a metal detector - after several years of research and organisation Defiant N3333 was within reach.

The Excavation

In recent years the team who would conduct the excavation of N3333 have arranged 'digs' for several TV documentaries shown in the UK by the BBC, Channel 4 and Channel 5, and in Canada, Australia and the USA. In early 2018 the production company 'Emporium Productions' were compiling a short-list of ideas for Series 2 of 'WW2 Treasure Hunters' - shown in the UK on the History Channel - did we have anything planned?

The story behind the Defiant, the Blitz on Britain, and the excavation of N3333 was approved and detailed preparations began. Permission for the dig was granted by Beeswax Dyson Farming and Sir James Dyson (himself an aviation enthusiast - who displays both a Harrier and a Lightning at his company's headquarters). Beeswax Dyson brought in their own Health and Safety consultant to ensure full compliance with Health and Safety regulations and personal welfare in the form of Portaloos on site. Environmental Impact and Risk Assessments were completed had to be prepared and rigidly adhered to. The excavation itself was supervised by Dr Phil Marter, Senior Lecturer in Archaeology at Winchester University.

A licence for the excavation was granted by the Ministry of Defence under the Protection of Military Remains Act.

The excavation finally took place in August 2018. After a site exclusion zone had been established the excavator flattened the area of crop where a magnetometer survey had identified significant remains lay buried. Dr Phil Marter and his team from Winchester University completed a ground penetrating Radar survey as part of an on-going study of this method applied to aircraft wreck sites.



THE DIG



Left: This view of the propeller being lifted out of the hole shows the comparatively shallow depth that the wreckage was found at and the extent of the excavations. The dig took place in a huge open expanse of Lincolnshire 'prairie' on a very hot and windy day in June 2018.

Below: The pilot's daughter Christine was traced thanks to an obscure connection with his family home in Horning and a breeder of Pekingese dogs in Canada!



On a blisteringly hot day Suggs and co-presenter Stephen Taylor filmed their introduction to the programme and the dig began. Just below plough depth the tip of a propeller emerged – and was duly filmed and 'venerated'. Despite dark tales of there being 'running sand' and 'bottomless peat' into which the excavator might sink, the ground proved firm and dry. It became clear that the Defiant had fallen in a slightly 'over-the-vertical' attitude and had burnt in the crater it had formed for some considerable time. Despite this, one of the next major items discovered was the Defiant's tailwheel and leg. This was rapidly followed by the turret

and cockpit area from where two of the 303 Brownings emerged. Beneath this was the Merlin engine.

After pauses for filming the engine was lifted from its resting place and found to be in remarkably good condition, with two holes blasted in its casing just as it crew reported.

The Crew

The show's format has presenter Stephen Taylor overseeing excavations, while 'Madness' frontman 'Suggs' discovers the historical background of the story. The 'Treasure' being as much in the background story as in the items gleaned from the earth.

As you might suspect, there is a tremendous amount of work behind the scenes to ensure that 'Suggs' bumps into the right people!

Emporium were keen to know if any relatives of the Defiant's two crew could be traced and our team set about trying to locate the descendants of 'P/O A A Ballantine and Sgt C McTaggart'. Both men had safely parachuted from the Defiant. Initial research by Simon Parry showed that there was no trace of 'McTaggart', and it was assumed that he survived the war. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission recorded an Arthur Alexander Ballantine, who had been killed during the Normandy Invasion on June 20th

1944, with such an exact name match it seemed likely to be our man. One small clue was that he came from the village of Horning in Norfolk and that he left a widow, but there is no trace of a Ballantine family in Horning today. A Google search, however, did associate 'Horning' with a breeder of Pekingese dogs in Canada - named Ballantine - could there be a link? A message was passed via the Canadian Kennel Club, and Christine Ballantine got in touch – yes – she was 'Sandy' Ballantine's daughter!

Christine was only eight months old when her father had been killed in Normandy. She had moved to Canada in the 1960s where she



Above: Appearing out of the mud is the Defiant's Merlin engine complete with the Rolls-Royce name on the engine block. A couple of exhaust stacks can be seen below the name.

Left: The propeller back above ground after 77 years. The lack of bend on the blade on the ground suggests that it wasn't under power when it hit the ground.

had a chance meeting with 'Sgt McTaggart', her Dad's gunner. To further complicate the story 'McTaggart' had by now reverted to an earlier Danish family name and was Chris 'Kris' Madsen. Christine was flown from Canada to take part in the programme and miraculously appears, bang on cue, with 'Suggs' at the crash site of her father's Defiant. A few days earlier

she had been taken to Normandy to see where her father had died and make an emotional visit to La Deliverance War Cemetery, Douvres, where he is buried. Now in the her 70's Christine remarked, 'That will probably be the last time I see his grave.'



Top Left: 'Suggs' introduces Christine Ballantine to the programme. Christine had flown over from Canada to take part in the programme about her father's aircraft.

Above: Two of the Browning machine guns from the Defiant's turret.

Left: The engine after cleaning, the exhaust stacks are more visible now.

Far left: Probably the rarest find of all, the tailwheel and strut. Team Leader Gareth Jones attached an air line to the tyre and found it to be still operational after all these years!



Nick Trudgian
'Still colouring in' Part One



Editor Mark Postlethwaite joined fellow professional aviation artist Nick Trudgian on an Oxford park bench to feed the ducks and reflect upon the glory days of the Aviation Art scene when limited editions of 1000 sold out within days and glamorous groupies used to camp outside their houses, (we may have made that last one up...)



MP So Nick, here we are, like a couple of slightly ragged 80s pop stars, reflecting back on the glory days of our profession. Let's go back to the beginning, how did you get into painting aircraft?

NT Yes, it's funny how you can go from new 'kid on the block' to ragged old pop star in the blink of an eye!

How did I start? Well, like most artists, I started very young. 'Colouring in' they called it at infant school. "Careful round the edges and scribble in the middle" we were told. It's still excellent advice. Aren't we incredibly lucky that we have both been able to make a living out of colouring in?

I drew pictures in sketch books that I bought from the local post office for 6 old pence. (I am 60 next birthday). My dad and uncle were in the RAF in World War II and I had been born near a railway line, so I drew trains and planes...what else?

The first professional artist I was aware of was Terence Cuneo who did the wonderful covers for the Triang Hornby model railway catalogues. Then there was David Shepherd, most famous for painting elephants but he also did military and train subjects and he even owned full sized steam trains, bought with the proceeds of being an artist ... what better life could there be? Never grow up, surround yourself with your favourite things and paint pictures for a living. Perfect.

So I spent five years at art college and had my heart set on being an oil painter. I am sure I wasn't the only one seduced by the dream. But it was fortunate that in my five years at college I learned how to be a commercial illustrator because that's what I became when reality smacked me in the face.

In the art world where you make pictures and prints to hang on people's walls, if you're not 'known' then nobody wants to know you. In fact, there are influential people who will

Nick is a well known train fancier, (if that's the right word)! In this photo Nick is driving a steam loco on the most southerly railway in the world at Rio Turbio in Argentina in 1996. The engine was built in the 1950s by Mitsubishi who just a few years before were building Zero fighters.

actually try to damage your chances because they don't want any more competition. It was a hard lesson. One gallery owner in Plymouth told me that "not only can you not paint but you don't know anything about trains either". That last bit stung me the most. After all, I was an enthusiastic train spotter and proud of it! My artist pal Martin, who was with me, suggested he hold the man down while I thumped him. Instead I smiled, inwardly, because I realised why I had agitated this man so much. Many of the pictures on his walls were dreadful but he had a lot of money invested in them. He needed to disillusion me enough that not only would I go away, I wouldn't show my work to anyone else either.

But I did. Just a few weeks later I was exhibiting artwork at a London show when David Shepherd, happily the guest speaker at the event, introduced me to his publishers, the biggest in Britain at the time, and I started painting for them. Back in Plymouth, the grumpy gallery owner sold great numbers of that publisher's prints and he needed to stay in with them. The next time I happened to be passing his gallery the owner actually ran into the street, almost kissed me and invited



me in for coffee, desperate to see what new artwork I had. Martin was with me again and he whispered in my ear that I should still thump him.

So I had a bit of a breakthrough but it was still the case that there wasn't much of a living to be had until you became a well known name. My fellow students were by now all earning proper money as commercial illustrators, working in industry and advertising so, a bit crest-fallen, I did the same. The happy twist was that apart from the dreadfully unsociable hours we had to work, I loved it !!!

As an illustrator you didn't have to be known, you just had to be capable. So long as you had a good portfolio of past work you

could compete head to head with artists that had been in the business for years. It was a breath of fresh air, a bit like being a young footballer. So long as you could score a goal then you got picked for the team.

MP Funnily enough at the same time, I was a photographer and the situation was the same, if your portfolio was good enough you got work. I even managed to shoot some lingerie catalogues which almost matched the excitement of aviation art! People always ask me why I gave that up, why did you leave illustrating?

NT After just a few years, a big dark cloud loomed on the horizon. It was digital art, produced on a computer. Most artists had to make the switch and because the software was so clever, even back then in the late 1980s, traditional skills lost their value. Heaven forbid, even graphic designers could now create their own paintings instead of employing us! Both my dreams seemed to be fading before my eyes, and I was only 28 years old with a mortgage, wife, cat, dog and expensive model railway habit to feed (not necessarily in that order)

I believe that to succeed in a business like art you need one third talent, one third very hard work and one third sheer luck. And I was