

NOT TO BE TAKEN AWAY

(Red 1)-Flt. Cmdr. J.B.Nicolson, Leader of Red Section

(Red 2)-Pilot Officer Martyn King. (Red 3)-Sqd. Leader Eric King

(Red 2 Was Killed During This Action)

(J.B.Nicolson V.C.)

' ' A Day To Remember in 1940 ' '

It was the 16th of August and I had just arrived home after a thirteen and a half hour journey from Mac Marry in Scotland, the time being just after 1000, when my wife informed me that the air-raid sirens had just been sounded. Immediately I telephoned L.D.V. headquarters (Army HQ, 30 Commercial Road, Southampton), for information concerning details of the duty roster. Captain Hughes informed me that six L.D.V.'s had completed their duties at 0900, after a twenty-four hour duration. (I do recall that the "all clear" siren had sounded whilst using the telephone). I was told by Captain Hughes to stand-by at the areas of Shirley and Millbrook, and I would be joined later by four more L.D.V.'s, but not until 1600. This meant I would be on duty for the rest of the day. It was about 1230 when the sirens sounded again. I took up duty in Park road, at a short distance from home (2 Mansion Road). It was not long before aeroplanes appeared from all directions, and there were so many that I was unable to count them. I saw four 110 ME's, which appeared in line, and for about twenty minutes there was "quite a mix-up". I then saw two German aeroplanes on fire, and falling towards the Isle of Wight. Next I saw three Hurricanes: one travelling in an Easterly direction from Southampton towards Salisbury, but I temporarily lost sight of the remaining two. It was the roar of a 110 ME that made me turn around and look. It was climbing from a dive. I then realized what the German was about to do, for above him was a Hurricane heading North-East with its' engine smoking slightly. I did not hear any firing but saw the Hurricane diving suddenly to earth. I thought the pilot must be dead as he was so long in bailing out. I then saw a parachute opening. I calculated he should come down near Regent's Park Road and Millbrook Road. However, I was horrified when I saw the panel in his parachute split-he dropped like a stone, and was killed crashing through the tree at number 3 Clifton Road, Regent's Park (I later learned that he was Red 2-Martyn King, and his Hurricane had crashed at Lee near Romsey).

I followed the course of two German fighters being chased in by a Hurricane. They circled towards Winchester, then turned towards the New Forest. One German pulled out of the fight, the other appeared to be hit. Whilst over the Cxford area, the Hurricane lost speed and height as smoke poured from it. A parachute appeared from it as it nose-dived to earth (The Hurricane crashed on the corner of Bakers Drove and Rownhams Lane). As the pilot descended I saw tracer bullets being fired at him.

I commandeered a small green van and told the driver to "step on it". Keeping the descending parachutist in view, we stopped on the Redbridge road. The pilot overhead was descending into fields behind a cottage. As I went through a hedge, so did a soldier in plimsols and shirtsleeves (A.E.Dukes). When we reached the pilot he was partly mixed-up with his parachute and muttering dire threats against the troops who had fired at him. The L.D.V.'s were blamed, but I learned later that it was the Canadians based in the Docks and the R.E.'s stationed at Sparshatt's garage.

Turning to make the pilot comfortable (Nicolson), I saw that he was badly burnt across the face and hands. His coat-sleeves and the bottom of his trousers had been blown away. The bone and ankle of his left foot was protruding through the flesh and the remains of his sock. Whilst kneeling beside him, three shots were directed at us from the North corner of the field (Allington road and old Millbrook road), and I told the soldier to keep down. The injured pilot's words were unrepeatable. I stood up and drew my revolver, holding it at head-height, hoping if seen, it would deter any further firing. From the South end of the Field I heard shouting from the road, and from several places in the hedge I saw soldiers and civilians break through, with a Police officer appearing from a little further down. Some of the soldiers stopped and put their rifles to their shoulders. I immediately ran towards the officer, shouting "Stop! He's one of ours!". The officer immediately turned right across the soldier's path. He threw up his arms, placing himself between them and myself, and somehow managed to stop a nasty situation. He then went to Nicolson's side. I managed to stop another soldier. He looked a little frightened when he realised that I was pointing my revolver at him. I asked, "How many shots did you fire, and where did you come from?". He replied, "We are the R.E.'s at Sparshatt's garage", and in the same breath added, "Do you mind if I can go?".

Returning to Nicolson, he had just finished dictating a telegram. I heard him say, "Sign it Nick-the wife will not worry". Looking around, I noticed an R.A.F. officer approaching with a W.A.F. officer. The soldiers and civilians had gone, leaving only five of us: Nicolson, A.E.Dukes, E.Coleman, a civilian, and myself. I then left the group to search for 303 cartridge cases. I found four at the entrance of Allington road. At the South end of the field I found a further seven.

It was over half an hour before Nicolson was rushed to Hospital. I then went to see his aeroplane that had crashed at Rownhams. From there I returned home to make my preliminary report to Captain Hughes. He told me that I would have to make a full report at a later date.

I then proceeded to the Royal South Hampshire Hospital and saw Nicolson in a private room. Having had a conversation with him I was told by a nurse that his wife had arrived. Whilst leaving I was stopped and questioned by an R.A.F. officer. He enquired the nature of my visit to Nicolson. I told him that any information concerning Nicolson could be obtained through Captain Hughes (by now the time was approximately 1840).

I had not slept for about forty-three hours, but I sensed something was dramatically wrong when I arrived home. My wife said "You must ring Captain Hughes at nine O' clock". After a further ten minutes she asked, "Did you shoot that airman?". I replied, "No" and she then said that Captain Hughes had sounded extremely angry when he had spoken to her on the telephone.

At 2100 I rang Captain Hughes. He said, "I have some questions to ask you, and I have been down to th armoury and found your rifle still in the rack. Did you have any weapons with you?" I replied, "Yes-a French 9mm 6 chamber revolver." He said, "I have just been informed that an L.D.V. has shot a fellow officer with a shotgun." I said, "That's totally impossible-I was the only L.D.V. present." He asked, "Where did you find the 303's?" I told him that Nicolson had asked the same question, and I told him aswell as Captain Hughes, that they were left there by the R.E.'s from Sparshatt's garage at Totton.

After a pause Captain Hughes said, "See me at HQ tomorrow" (HQ was at 30 Commercial Road).

The following day at the enquiry I refused to sign their statement, it being totally incorrect. They refused mine as I had two witnesses (Eric Coleman and A.E. Dukes) and on account of having arranged further dates to meet Nicolson.

At the enquiry, Captain Hughes said "It is a severe charge that has been made, shooting a fellow officer-and no shotgun? If I had to put this charge before Stanley's commanding officer, with his record of seven years with the 5/7 Hampshire T.A.'s, his opinion would be the same as mine-a cover-up and a fabrication of the truth. In this I find there is no case to answer on behalf of the L.D.V.'s."

The above is a true account,

R W F Stanley

Mr R.W.F. Stanley

August 16th 1986