

## THE LANCASTER OF MONTAUDRAN: A STRANGE STORY

Once, a friend of mine contacted me because he had found aircraft parts in Toulouse's suburbs. I came to identify them and found out they were British.

I went on the web and I discovered that a Lancaster had been shot down in the south of Toulouse on 6 April 1944. Thanks to my internet friends (the "internet family"!), a French friend put me in contact with a retired lady in Toulouse, Arlette.

Arlette loves WWII aircraft and she knows this Lancaster event very well because she had been welcoming the English crews' families that came on their graves in 2001 (the crews are buried in Toulouse cemetery).

I met her one evening: she was very nice, very interested by the story of the parts recently found, and she told me: "let me look for information and I shall revert to you".

Three weeks later, she sent me a mail "I found the name of a witness who was a witness of this story, he was young at that time in 1944, his name is Nadai, and he lives route de Revel in Toulouse".

Then, I was stunned. Some 20 years ago, when I had just arrived in Toulouse, as a young married couple with 2 kids, I lived Route de Revel and my neighbor's name was... De Nadai !! (I remember they were very nice people !)

So, we went to visit them and they were actually my former neighbors'!! You can't imagine how moving this meeting was. We had not seen each other for more than 20 years. Then, Mr De Nadai, René, told us the whole story. He was 16 when the Lancaster was shot down. The aircraft exploded, there were parts everywhere in the area, scattered all around.

So, I asked him: "maybe there are some parts in your garden? May I search in your garden?" Of course he agreed and we went there: and I did find parts of the Lancaster, including a blade tip portion (the yellow part);

So I thought "If there are parts in his garden, there may be parts also in the neighbor's garden, which is MY former garden, where I lived 20 years ago";

I asked the De Nadai if they thought I could search in their neighbor's garden and they said: "no problem, the current neighbor is a friend, he will be OK if we go in his/your former garden".

So, we went there, we found parts again, and I found ... this beautiful watch in "my" garden !!

Then, again, another chance: I met at the same time a nice Airbus guy who is an expert about old watches.

He made an expertise of this watch and it showed that this watch most probably belonged to one of the crews.

So, twenty years ago, I had under my feet parts of Lancaster + the watch of one the crews.

This story is all 100% true, strange, isn't it ??

PS: a few days after I wrote the article here above, a local newspaper “la dépêche” published an article “an engine found during roadwork’s”. See copy. Of course, it was one Merlin engine of this Lancaster. Coincidence again..