

1944 - 2024

B17-G "CHANNEL EXPRESS III"



AUSSAC-VADALLE - JAULDES
Charente - FRANCE



The history :

June 19, 1944

A few days after the D-Day, which launched the reconquest of Europe by allied forces, bombing operations of the strategic sites continue with intensity in order to weaken the forces of Adolf Hitler's Reich.

Thus, the crew of the Boeing B17-G named « CHANNEL EXPRESS III » was assigned a bombing mission at the Bordeaux-Mérignac airfield.

At 5:15 a.m., « Channel Express III » took off from Deenethorpe Airfield, England and joined the bomber squadron, flying at 31,000 feet above France because of poor weather conditions.

Above the target, the sky was clear and the only enemy opposition was an anti-aircraft defense of moderate intensity but very accurate, reveals the «march» log of the 612nd bombing squadron.

Above the villages of Jauldes, Coulgens and Aussac Vadalle, the « Channel Express III » exploded in flight after breaking away from the formation.

Lt Kelly and his co-pilot, Lt Coyne, who were flying alongside, reported seeing smoke in the cockpit that probably came from a fire on board.

3 crew members, Lt W. Massey (pilot), Lt L. Stelljes (bomber) and Sgt F. Berard (sup turret) managed to extract themselves from the parts of the aircraft, open their parachutes and were picked up by inhabitants when they touched the ground and then by the Resistance.

The other seven crew members perished in the crash.

70-4011(29-1-44)



The crew is posing in front of the B17 "Channel Express III"



The aviators in front of the battle scarred tail on return from a previous mission.

Existing steles :

Township of Jauldes, a stone stele was erected in June 1945 at the crossroads of the Roman road.



Township of Aussac Vadalle, in the forest north of the stele of Jauldes, on the site known as the crash point, a stele in raw concrete was poured and completed by a metal plate on May 8, 2000 on the foundation of the first stele project.

The project :

In this year of 80th anniversary of the crash, world events remind us, if necessary, to our duty of remembrance.

The occasion seemed very appropriate to Aussac-Vadalle's Association of Veterans and Prisoners of War, to replace the existing concrete base with a natural stone stele, worthier of the sacrifice made by these airmen.

Conscious to give a territorial dimension to our project, we approached a local artist, accustomed to commemorative achievements such as, in others, the recent restoration of the memorial of the Resistance of Chasseneuil-sur-Bonnieure. It is Marc DELIGNY, sculptor of his state in his Tusson's workshop (16140 - France).

After serious discussion about the event, its local and historical impact, the project took shape under the brushes of its creator.



The inauguration of the monument is planned on the occasion of the commemorative ceremony on the anniversary of the crash, June 19, 2024 in the presence of civil and military authorities, the Consul of the United States in Bordeaux, associations of Veterans, the population and project stakeholders.



Achievement and budget :

Work's details :

Cutting stone elements with frame for the stele, it will receive the engraving of the names of the missing airmen, a bas-relief featuring the B17 G bomber will be carved.

The metal commemorative plaque of the old stele will be reused on the base.

The insignia of the US Air Force (1943-1947) will be carved on the top of the stele.



On the other side of the Monument, engraving in letter in the "Roman" style in V (In memory of the crew of Channel Express III fallen for our freedom on June 19, 1944).

Below the engraving, badge medal of the 401st Bomber Group, 612th Bomber squadron, bas-relief carved on the bottom of the stele.



High part of the stele, American star carved same as the other face.

Dimension: width base 0.90m, width stele 0.76m, height 1.96m, depth base 0.37m, depth stele 0.25m

Budget :

The cutting, the sculpture of the stone stele and its installation represent a total sum of **12,000€ TTC**

Funding :

The Association of Veterans, Prisoners and Victims of War of Aussac-Vadalle

Municipality of Aussac-Vadalle

Public and institutional donors

Sponsors - Private donors

If you wish to make a donation, you can subscribe via the hello asso platform (link and QR code below).

<https://www.helloasso.com/associations/amicale-des-anciens-combattants-prisonniers-et-victimes-de-guerre-de-la-commune-d-aussac/collectes/stele-b17-g-channel-express-iii>



Contact : The Association of Veterans, Prisoners and Victims of War of Aussac-Vadalle

Mairie
61 Rue de la République
16560 AUSSAC-VADALLE
FRANCE