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Eclipse in the dark years: pick-up flights, routes of resistance and the Free French

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ABSTRACT
This article charts the importance of clandestine flights from Britain into Occupied France during the Second World War as a route of resistance. These pick-up flights were coordinated from London and were an example of the inter-Allied cooperation and Franco-British negotiation that took place between the Bureau central de renseignement et d’action (BCRA), the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, or MI6) and Special Operations Executive (SOE). The flights allowed General Charles de Gaulle to hold court with the leaders of resistance networks, smoothing problems on the route to a unified resistance council. Likewise, they allowed him to build bridges between vying factions in France and in London, drawing together the movements under his command and personalizing the narrative of resistance. From busy London restaurants and family homes via secret flights to darkened fields in Occupied France, the route of these transfers shaped the character of resistance. This article draws out the personal interactions and connections that underpinned these networks and describes the enduring connections of this route of resistance, starting with the commemoration of Jean Moulin’s crash landing at RAF Tangmere, the forward station for many of these flights.

RÉSUMÉ
Cet article examine l’importance des vols clandestins entre la Grande-Bretagne et la France pendant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale en tant que voies de résistance. Les transferts aériens de résistants, coordonnés à partir de Londres, constituent un exemple de la coopération interalliée mais aussi des négociations franco-britanniques qui ont eu lieu entre le BCRA, SIS et SOE. Les vols ont permis au général Charles de Gaulle de regrouper autour de lui les chefs des réseaux de résistance tout en atténuant les problèmes politiques liés à la construction d’un conseil de résistance unifié. De même, ils lui ont permis de créer des passerelles entre les factions hostiles en France et à Londres, en rassemblant les mouvements sous son commandement et en adaptant à son profit l’histoire de la résistance. Depuis les restaurants animés londoniens, les maisons familiales, en passant par les champs sombres en France occupée, ces voies de résistance ont modifié le caractère de la résistance. Cet article met l’accent sur les interactions personnelles et les liens qui soutenaient ces réseaux. Il décrit également les connexions durables qui se sont forgées entre la France et l’Angleterre à travers ces voies de résistance, notamment les cérémonies de commémoration de l’atterrissage forcé de Jean Moulin.

KEYWORDS
France; London; Moulin; RAF; Resistance; Second World War

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On 24 February 1943, an aircraft took flight under a full moon on a mission entitled ‘Eclipse’. Only two men were aboard: one of them was a seasoned pilot working for a Special Duties squadron, Hugh Verity; the other, carrying with him instructions from General Charles de Gaulle to unify the disparate resistance groups of Occupied France, was Jean Moulin. The aeroplane ran into trouble south of the Loire as thick fog masked the landing field, and they had to turn back towards England. Forced into evasive manoeuvres to avoid detection near Cherbourg, they hurtled north, blind and under pressure. Yet the thick fog had swept back over the Channel, similarly shrouding safe landing on England’s South Coast. As the aircraft’s fuel dwindled, and after 12 unsuccessful attempts to land on the runway, its last shot was a dramatic and dangerous crash landing. At the airfield, ‘a thudding crash was heard, [and] the scream of torn metal as the plane hit the runway.’1 Just three months before Jean Moulin chaired the first meeting of a National Council of Resistance, unifying the internal resistance movements in France, he survived this harrowing crash.2 The difficult process that led to the unification of the resistance is well noted: its political intrigues, clashing personalities and perilous clandestine work. Less noted, however, was how these resistance operatives made their way into Occupied France.

On the 70th anniversary of that flight in 2013, a commemorative event united former servicemen, the local community and both French and British officials. Gathering at the airfield, the former RAF Tangmere in Sussex, the remembrance service included the Mayor of Chichester (the site of the crash) and the Deputy Mayor of Chartres (where Moulin had been Prefect). The bonds which were celebrated illuminated traces of this route of resistance which had transcended the deaths of the participants and their contemporaries and entered into the memorial landscape. This piece will examine the political and cultural transfers which marked the secret flights and the Resistance operations they supported.3 This approach prioritizes the contingent moments and negotiations that underpinned the grand politics and wartime strategy of the era, enriching studies that focus on the bigger picture with granular detail on the logistics of sustaining and supporting resistance in France.4 This article will first outline how routes of resistance inflected ‘the act of resisting’,5 before detailing the structures of the clandestine flight network that constituted this particular route. Next, it will examine how the flights were planned, decentring the external network from the high political circles of London to Soho restaurants and a family home in Sussex. Tracing two key flights made along this route by Christian Pineau and Jean Moulin will then demonstrate how the cross-Channel flights helped to unify factions within the resistance, and to assert the leadership of de Gaulle. The ready availability of this vital bond between nations, maintained both by individual bravery and meticulous planning at a variety of levels, facilitated the development of a cohesive resistance movement under the banner of de Gaulle. What emerges in this reading is the importance of key individuals and their personal connections across these routes of resistance. Based in London, Sussex and Bedfordshire, these figures built relationships that supported and came to characterize the nature of French and British wartime cooperation, and conditioned the success of the Gaullist project.
Routes of Resistance

The networks that supported these flights highlight the critical and contingent role of informal personal relationships in such a delicate juncture between one country’s politics and another’s military operations. They help to develop and explain continuing British military engagement with figures like de Gaulle, who so frequently seemed to imperil good relations with his own words and deeds. Rod Kedward has stressed how ‘mapping’ resistance contributes to our understanding of it, not simply in terms of routes, but also in the contributing influences that these routes had on the character of resistance (its roots, as he puts it).6 His approach calls for the consideration of both literal and figurative paths along which resistance was carried out and sustained, in order to decentre and democratize the story of resistance. ‘Mapping’ these routes affords a clearer understanding of the work needed to maintain them:

The two-way relationship between top and bottom could be one of positive cooperation, or one of tension leading to blunders. It was also one of relative equivalence between those from above in pursuance of the war, and those arriving at refusal and revolt from below.7

The contingency and rivalry involved in these flights complicate de Gaulle’s ‘mythic’ resistance narrative that placed the Free French at the top of an inclusive movement of ‘bons Français’ struggling under a foreign yoke propped up by a few collaborationist traitors.8 Looking at the pick-up flights in the context of resistance provides a useful sense of the many personalities involved in sustaining French and British cooperation, and removes it from a tired story in which the grand personalities of Churchill and de Gaulle clash endlessly as others got on with the fighting. Mapping out how this route took shape and the impact it had on the story of resistance highlights the relationships between above and below, and the ways in which atomized movements and organizations were connected.

Yet these connections were not simply imposed from above. Rather, they were wrought from personal exchanges in France, Britain and beyond. Wartime alliance building relied on arrangements and understandings rather than enduring commitments. The intimate nature of coordinating war is made plain by the relationships (both political and personal) that supported these crucial logistical networks. According to Frank Costigliola:

At a time when historians increasingly focus on the transnational interactions of nonstate actors it merits looking also at how the personalities, emotions, cultural perspectives, intimacies, friendships, and animosities of diplomats and other top officials affected their political reporting and negotiations.9

If we are to recognize the plurality of resistance, and the wide variety of different movements, networks and actors that constituted the kaleidoscopic vision of ‘French Resistance’, then a focus on the interface between these constituent and contributory actors can help to complicate and enrich our understanding. Indeed, as Robert Frank argues, across the spectrum of motivations and actions, resistors were always more focused on a ‘cause’ than on an ‘end’, caught between a delayed resolution and the pressing need to survive.10 With a constant focus on the war effort and striking back against the occupier, these flights supported resistors who relied on their personal contacts, support networks and impressions without the comforting knowledge of an imminent liberation.11 Focusing on personal interactions and transfers along a defined route of resistance allows for a transnational vision of resistant action which creates greater space for an analysis of these causes, studying how they developed and were shaped by the act of resistance itself.
As an example of one neglected ‘route of resistance’ Kedward highlights the importance of maritime links to Occupied France, and the ways in which Breton fishing villages and British special forces interacted and cooperated during wartime and long after, as with the commemoration of Moulin’s landing. The pick-up flights provide another such opportunity to map a ‘route of resistance’, and to draw out the networks, influences and relationships that stemmed from it and lingered in the memorial landscape. As in Costigliola’s piece, friendships, animosities, personalities and cultural perspectives all had a pronounced influence on the process through which these flights were planned. As we shall see, flights were influenced by the people and places who planned them: from the friendly French and British intelligence officers who met regularly for dinner in Soho, to the family who offered resisters in transit warm hospitality at their Sussex home. Along this route of resistance were traces that marked the passage of operatives, politicians and families caught up in conflict and engaging with the act of resistance. Yet the flights themselves also changed the way that de Gaulle was able to engage with resisters in France. The pick-up flights created and sustained a cross-channel connection that was characterized by personal interactions at every stage of its planning and execution, whether those interactions were cultural, political or military. This flight network, Kedward argued, ‘has to be on the greater map’. The story of Moulin’s crash-landing is at once an immediate moment of drama, yet also an illuminating flash which brings the importance of his route into sharp relief, and helps to locate the flights on this greater map of resistance.

The clandestine pickup flights

No. 161 Squadron (see Figure 1) was available for these special-duties flights from February 1942, and Tangmere became an important forward station as it allowed further penetration into France than had the designated special operations airfield, RAF Tempsford in Bedfordshire. Tempsford, west of Cambridge and ‘the boggiest and foggiest [field] in Bomber Command’, seems to have been allocated to special duties out of spite due to Bomber Command’s distaste for their clandestine objectives. During the moon periods which enabled night flying (one week before and after the full moon), 161 Squadron’s Lysanders were run as a detached flight operating exclusively from RAF Tangmere in West Sussex. Pilots were based in Tangmere Cottage across the road from the main station, which provided a discreet entrance for arriving and departing under cover of darkness. The mantelpiece of that cottage held a sizeable collection of champagne bottles, trophies of the successful flights and tokens of gratitude from clandestine passengers. The 161 Squadron Lysander Flight was home to no more than five pilots at any one time, involving around 35 pilots in total up to August 1944, in what RAF reports described as ‘by far one of the most romantic chapters of the war’. The aircraft principally flown on these pick-ups were Westland Lysanders, high-winged monoplanes with a fixed undercarriage modified with an extra fuel tank and fixed ladder on the side. What this meant in real terms was that they were light, manoeuvrable and able to effectively complete short take-offs and landings.

Meticulously planned, coordinated and executed pick-up operations ensured that no pilots nor agents were killed in operations until December 1943, and one pilot joked that due to ropey Air Ministry drivers, the journey from London to Tangmere was often more dangerous than the flight to France. Nonetheless, the danger was made clear in a report written by Major Anthony Bertram after the Liberation of Paris:
These flights called for a high degree of skill, courage and initiative. There were the difficulties of navigation to overcome. The smallness of the aircraft precluded a navigator with the many navigational aids available in a night bomber. The pilot had to map-read his way by the light of the moon; he had to then make a landing on a field he had never seen before, being guided in for a landing by hand-torches manipulated by partisans. These night-flyers navigated by compass and map, tracing the long curves of rivers like the Loire and the Saone as they broke through the borders and boundaries of war-time. The flights had separate but complementary purposes – allowing the transfer of active resistors in and out of France and also allowing agents, operatives and material into the country. Different agencies sought to make use of the flights, notably: the Gaullist secret service, Bureau central de renseignement et d’action (BCRA); the British secret services, the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, also known as MI6); and the newly formed secret warfare organization, the Special Operations Executive (SOE).

Dates, times, weights, planes, personnel and landing fields were all up for negotiation amongst the jostling allies in London. Funding, coding, packing, transport, weather, flak cover and more also had to be hashed out through the systems and professional arrangements of the respective services. With such a complex array of considerations, the process of decision-making gained ever greater importance in the achievement of each organization’s war aims. de Gaulle was directly aware of the special duties flights and had empowered his head of intelligence André Dewavrin (known widely by his codename Col. Passy) to negotiate them on his behalf. In this sense, Passy became a functioning link to coordinate the
efforts of the British and the Gaullist French in London. There was cooperation between the intelligence services of the Free French and their British hosts, but as Olivier Wievorka notes, ‘cooperation between the BCRA and the British secret services was never fully satisfactory to either party’, and this was especially true of planning flights.  

From April 1941 Passy sought to ‘intensify visits to London by leading figures of the Resistance sought by de Gaulle’. Likewise, he ensured that he could examine ‘each month the schedule for Air and Sea Operations planned for France in the next moon period’, thereby trying to improve BCRA influence on the planning of flights. Passy, however, could not command British pilots. This meant negotiations had to take place to ensure interests aligned. The aims and understanding of the British Intelligence Services were not always bound in harmony with those of the Free French, nor were they in fact internally cohesive. The British understanding of the flights has been more readily documented, but certainly they represented a negotiated engagement with the Gaullist cause, which wavered as did relations between the General and his British allies. The Gaullists cooperated best with the British intelligence services (SIS), whilst they tussled more openly with the military aims of the SOE, and the desire of the independent F Section to ensure that co-operation ‘to put it quite brutally – must be one-sided’. Claude Dansey was the Assistant Chief of SIS, and he split its French efforts into two streams: Wilfred ‘Biffy’ Dunderdale led efforts to seek useful contacts and information from the remnants of France’s pre-war Intelligence Service, whilst Kenneth Cohen was tasked with cultivating new contacts. The BCRA’s aim was very much to show itself to the British as the main interface with the resistance, whilst the British maintained an open mind as to other possibilities, and sought to maintain their own networks in France not dependent upon the Free French.  

Passy’s personal ability to mediate between competing Allied interests helped ensure they remained aligned. Buckmaster ‘got along very well with Passy […] [though] we were competing in a sense for not only the people but for aircraft’. Dansey, too, had ‘specially recommended’ Passy to counterparts in the SOE. Likewise, Passy mediated with Buckmaster and Dansey when SIS and the SOE tried to poach Frenchmen before they could declare for de Gaulle. When Moulin had arrived in 1941, the British had taken a close look at him, trying to ascertain the extent of his loyalty to de Gaulle. The interrogation report noted Moulin’s concession that the ‘matter of whether de Gaulle stayed or went could be settled afterwards. He was very emphatic both on this point and on the supplementary point that de Gaulle’s prestige, as a vague idea at least, was already “formidable”.’ So too on Emmanuel d’Astier’s arrival into England, had the British tried to recruit him, attempting to pinch him out from under the not inconsiderable nose of the General. He was told that ‘de Gaulle isn’t serious; it would be more effective to work with the English’. Like Moulin, however, d’Astier refused and reported to the BCRA. The British had committed themselves to supporting resistance in Occupied Europe, though initially under their own authority. This would not last for long, especially as the Free French sought to etch their own authority onto the development of these contacts as the war developed.  

The aim of strengthening the resistance increasingly became that of strengthening de Gaulle’s hold on a unified resistance as the war progressed, and uniting the fissiparous factions of internal resistance movements and networks; the secret Lysander flights contributed to providing the means and the personnel by which this could be realized. de Gaulle seemed to Buckmaster a ‘remote man concerned only with the fair name of France. He resented anything where he had to rely on other countries and was ungracious about accepting help.
– but a patriot above all. I admired him despite the fact he was a very unlikeable person.’

The overbearing nature of the General that so frustrated the British, yet inspired his supporters, necessitated the forging of personal bonds to drive on the ‘gaullist project’ and in planning the flights this fell to Passy and his subordinates in the BCRA.

Ensuring that these tense relationships remained intact was not easy, nor assured. It relied on personal relationships amidst turbulent times, even as the war raged on around them. Looking at the relationships between the top level of military and political cooperation between France and Britain, with the poaching, disagreements and so on, official commitments to support the French were challenging to maintain. Thus, to see fully how these agreements were nurtured and upheld, it is necessary to study connections at a lower level than the high political circles of London, in the blind spots which Laurent Douzou diagnoses between traditional accounts of resistance. As argued by Oliver Wieviorka, it is at the intersection of cooperation between resistors and Allied forces that we can best see where compromise and negotiation happened.

Conference rooms and dinner tables: organizing and planning flights

The organization of the pick-up flights illustrates a particular ‘route of resistance’, and helps us trace some of the characters and influences that stemmed from it. The novelty of the systems for planning and conducting flights meant that they took on something of the character of those who conceived them. In this instance, the informal personal networks of friendly dinners in Soho between SIS, SOE and BCRA officers that supported the logistical planning and conducting of flights complemented the formal processes which governed them at the Air Ministry, SIS Headquarters at Broadway Buildings, or the Conference Room at Norgeby House, Baker Street. The friendships, intimacies and bonds between the people who planned, carried out, and experienced the flights all informed the character of the route, and left lingering traces of their involvement. Amidst the upheaval of war, new organizations and new officials also had to craft their diplomatic relations personally. In the ‘two-way relationship’ described by Kedward, it was informal personal networks that provided ‘positive cooperation’, often to work around the ‘tension’ seen in the high-level jostling between intelligence services.

Formally, operational requests for flights were made by the respective organization. The coordination of special-duties flights for all of the SOE country sections was controlled through ‘The Conference Room’ maintained by AL section on the first floor of Norgeby House at 83 Baker Street (F Section of the SOE was located on the floor above): ‘This Room was to present, by battle-boards and maps, a complete daily picture of what operations were to be flown each night.’ The BCRA made its requests for flights through RF section of the SOE, and therein to the Baker Street Conference Room. SIS made its requests direct to the Air Ministry through Wing Commander Vincent Sofiano, ‘a frequent visitor to both Tempsford and the cottage at Tangmere’, and Sir Douglas Dodds-Parker’s ‘opposite number for Air Operations’ in SIS. SIS plans, it was felt by SOE officers, carried a heavier weight with the special department within the Air Ministry tasked to deal with them, named AI 2(c). With so many different demands, the Air Ministry was very keen to avoid the services liaising directly with squadrons to avoid confusion and overlap, so A.I.2(c) was their direct contact. This group ‘advised S.I.S. and S.O.E. on the air aspect of their projects, and
co-ordinated these with RAF procedures', ruling on the acceptability of landing fields and the availability of resources.48

For the French, everyday negotiations largely fell to Colonel Passy's subordinates in the BCRA who worked more peaceably with the British services than did de Gaulle. Although meetings could be formal, everyday relations were often more personal and more social. The chief Conducting Officer in the SIS for the Special Duties flights was Major Anthony Bertram, appointed by Kenneth Cohen. Bertram described how he flitted between Baker Street and Duke Street, and 'became one of a small group that specialised in the food at the Escargot in Soho'.49 Escargot was one of a clutch of French restaurants in Soho that were frequented by the Free French (also Le Berlemont, Chez Victor, Chez Rose and the Hotel de Boulogne). Another key figure in this group, and a liaison officer between the SIS and BCRA, was Commander John E. Gentry (see Figure 2), who before the war had worked in Bordeaux.50 His appointment to this role in 1942 helped to smooth the relationship between the BCRA and SIS, as noted by Colonel Passy, who singled him out as an important mediator. Gentry (who Passy refers to as Goofy) 'always knew how to demonstrate to his superiors the strength of our [BCRA] arguments'.51 Tellingly, he also noted Gentry's love of French wine.52 Alongside Bertram, he was a conducting officer for the special-duties flights, and the two were the most prolific in ferrying agents down to Sussex to be flown into Occupied France.53 The others were Captain John Golding, Major Eddie Keyser, Thomas Whitelaw and Major 'Ham' Hamilton-Jones. References to Bertram and Gentry in particular are strewn throughout the memoirs of prominent resisters. The Free French naval officer Pierre

![Figure 2. Lysander in Le Bourget, September 1944 (pictured from left to right) Major John Gentry, Major John Saunders, an unidentified officer (thought to be MI9), F. Lt. Charles Peter Clark alias Carter, F. Lt. Ernest Luce in charge of the despatch of agents to France by air (Clark & Luce were Conducting Officers from February to September 1944). Source: Permission for use granted by Caroline Babois-Gentry; photo from her personal collection.](image)
Sonneville specifically noted, for example, that the BCRA’s ‘relations with English officials were good, largely thanks to Commander Gentry […] and Major Bertram’.54

Also part of Bertram’s group of diners at the *Escargot* were André Manuel, Tony Mella and Stéphane Hessel.55 André Manuel was Passy’s deputy, tasked with ensuring cooperation between the different sections of the BCRA.56 Tony Mella, and Stephane Hessel worked in the intelligence section (section R) of the BCRA, and were responsible for northern networks.57 Mella was an artist, and the son of the former manager of the Ritz Hotel; Pierre Sonneville describes him being principally responsible for preparing his mission to France and liaising with British forces.58 Hessel worked with the BCRA from May 1942 until March 1944, before being flown into France by Lysander. He escaped imprisonment in a concentration camp through an audacious scheme of swapping identities with a corpse, orchestrated by his fellow inmate, the RF Section officer FFE Yeo-Thomas. Later Hessel became an influential figure in the United Nations, working to draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.59 It was Mella who recruited Hessel to the BCRA, and they found friendship with André Manuel, who was closer to the chief they perceived as distant and a little authoritative, Col. Passy.60 Many of these figures shared common interests and temperaments: Bertram was an art historian and Mella an artist, while Mella and Hessel were both enthusiasts for antiquities (who named missions and agents after classical figures). Manuel was a graduate of the Ecole Normale Supérieure, where Hessel was studying before the war, and together they knew Paul Valéry’s *Le Cimetière marin* by heart.61 Many of the conducting officers had personal links to France, whether having lived and worked there like Gentry, having served as young men in the First World War like Bertram, or even visiting relatives.62 These connections within and between the services were personal friendships that strengthened the camaraderie of the BCRA just as it strengthened inter-agency cooperation.

Even within the spectrum of the resistance, these friendships helped to smooth affairs and cut across different networks. Hessel was a friend of Christian Pineau, and Pineau warmly describes their evenings out in London over the winter of 1942 to the spring of 1943, ‘he organised a night out for all the French who shared our tastes. We smoked, we drank, we danced, all in an atmosphere that called up the studios of Montparnasse.’63 Sonneville also talks about being taken out for lunch by Mella to an Italian restaurant in Soho where they discussed his mission and sketched out his false identities.64 He also describes eating several times at ‘a French restaurant in Soho the interior of which made him think of a garden in the Ile-de-France’ with his fellow Navy man François A’Weng and others.65 Likewise, Jean Pierre-Bloch (another BCRA officer, who headed the civilian section), describes frequenting a French bistro in Soho ‘run by a Frenchman and his wife’ with Pierre Mendès-France.66 RF Section of SOE also enjoyed good personal relationships with the BCRA, and Wing Commander F.F.E. Yeo-Thomas’ ‘diaries recall frequent drinks and dinner parties’ with close friends in the BCRA like Hessel.67 These meeting places provided a space in which connections between agencies, movements and organizations could be strengthened outside the formality of military hierarchies and political debate, and the personal connections were influential in maintaining the link between the Free French and the internal resistance through this particular route of resistance.

As well as dining at the *Escargot*, Manuel and Hessel both enjoyed social visits to Bignor Manor near Tangmere, another key site in this route of resistance and the family home of Major Anthony Bertram. The use of Bignor Manor had been suggested by Kenneth Cohen of the SIS, who asked Bertram to make out to any enquirers that he was lecturing to French
convalescents. He and his wife Barbara provided a holding station for agents in transit, which represented a welcome pause for the agents from the tension and deprivation of Occupied France. This constant link in the network between France and London left an impression on Pineau, and he describes Bertram glowingly as

[t]he living link between the France of the Resistance and that of Freedom. How many of our fellow fighters, in the dusk before their departure or the dawn of their return, have seen the welcome silhouette of that still-trim young man, and partaken of a little courage and humour in his grand Elizabethan home.

Colonel Passy was a frequent visitor to Bignor Manor both when he was personally on operations to France and when he was receiving high-profile operators. He too praised the Bertrams’ hospitality and ‘delightful home’. In addition, Marie-Madeleine Fourcade described Bignor Manor as ‘like the nursery rhymes of my youth’, and Anthony Bertram (with his flitting between Duke Street and Baker Street) as ‘like Dr. Watson in service of Sherlock Holmes’. Hessel and Manuel both spent weekends holidaying at the Bertrams’ home, and these were meaningful bonds that long outlasted the conflict that forged them. Indeed, the Bertrams’ home was a pleasant respite from the pressures of the war, and a world away from wartime France.

Alongside these fond memories, their pet goat Caroline amused visiting operators and eventually found her way into the BBC broadcasts related to operations (which were of course decided when the flights were planned in London). Operation Caroline (20 August 1943), on which Stephane Hessel flew out to bring back André Manuel’s son, was announced by a broadcast that stated ‘Caroline has a blue dress.’ Barbara Bertram likewise records that when in Paris after the war ‘many French Resistance workers who had never been through the house would ask how Caroline was.’ These were the tokens and symbolic echoes of the networks that facilitated the secret flights. In the friendship and passions of the men that planned these missions and lent them classical names, or simply in the name of a pet goat passing into resistance communications, there is some small echo of the allusions to local and regional history found throughout the resistance press in France as described by Kedward, as this route of resistance nevertheless left real traces on its character.

Even after agreement had been reached on a flight, operations could still be cancelled and personal mediation required. Reasons for cancellations were variously cited as weather, ‘some untoward event in France or even the suspicion of trouble which an indecipherable message might arouse’. The necessity for secrecy meant that pilots and operators could not always be kept fully informed, and Anthony Bertram noted that this could lead to ‘frayed tempers’. One of the figures under Gentry’s command who dealt with these situations was Squadron Leader Tony Compton, tasked with operations, who Bertram described as being

stood between the FFC [Free French], always anxious to mount operations, and Air Ministry, equally anxious to ensure that operations were technically practicable and the risk only reasonable. On the one side there might be over-optimistic and not always technically instructed pressure; on the other an excess of caution, a failure to understand the peculiar importance and difficulty of the work and a certain distrust of agents’ reliability.

The irrepressible Fourcade, for example, expressed her frustration at the frequent cancellation of operations that would support her network, related phlegmatically by her Conducting Officer Major Hamilton-Jones (known as ‘Ham’): ‘He shrugged his shoulders with a jaded look […] ”The reply is bad weather, bad weather”, he said sadly.’ Figures like Compton, ‘Ham’, Bertram and Gentry were actively involved in ensuring that both of these sides could
be reconciled, helping to defuse the tension between demanding Free French schemes and conditional British engagement with ‘the gaullist project’. Their role was pragmatic, facilitating operations between agencies and countries with differing priorities. Against the backdrop of daring missions and high-risk landings, these London-based discussions in formal and informal spaces were an important battlefield on which the course of the war depended. Indeed, Major Anthony Bertram related:

[T]he life of the ‘pen pushers’ in London was not that leisured calm some of the workers in the field imagined. I well remember the frank mails with which Gabriel admitted, after he had been in the London office a month, that he had never before realised what that office work cost in effort and nerve strain.80

This testimony is amplified by the fact that the ‘Gabriel’ mentioned was the codename of Felix Svagrovsky, a decorated résistant with extensive experience in the field.81

Despite all the well-observed turbulence between Churchill and de Gaulle, or the admittedly more amiable arguments between Claude Dansey and Col. Passy,82 it is interesting to see their subordinates dining together and sharing interests, and to see the role of Conducting Officers in mediating between Free French action and British caution, or vice versa. When it came to organizing flights, the involvement of these figures in key positions cast a positive light on meetings between the SIS, the SOE and the BCRA, in which they could establish where operations were needed, which agents were to be involved, and what was to be picked up (in terms of mail bags, and agents already in the field). Sébastien Albertelli has characterized the BCRA as ‘the link between the Free French and the territory of France’, working as a ‘go between’ to secure de Gaulle’s leadership of a centralized resistance. With this definition in mind, the pick-up flights were the strongest bond that the BCRA could rely on. Reasserting the importance of these flights does not radically transform the narrative, but rather, as Albertelli said of the BCRA itself, ‘all the work dedicated to these go-betweens put its action in the spotlight’.83 The group of diners at the Escargot were a tangible example of the personal connections which helped to strengthen and sustain Franco-British relationships despite the turbulence amongst the upper echelons. Indeed, these dinner dates did not dramatically alter the course of the war, yet acknowledging the importance of human connections in the logistics of war provides an illuminating sense of how decisions were made. This route of resistance was plotted out by means both formal and decidedly informal.

**Holding court: unifying factions and asserting de Gaulle’s leadership**

The development of a coordinated internal resistance relied in part on the centrality of the General in this cross-channel network of secret flights, and the personal relationships that mediated the discussions around them. For de Gaulle, however, his authority could not be seen to be so contingent nor negotiated. He consistently projected an air of assumed authority around which the broader structures of resistance would be woven and differing factions united. One of the most important facets of this project was the ability to bring resisters to London and personally hold court with them. By drawing the leaders of networks to London, de Gaulle could reinforce his own position whilst smoothing over nascent problems in the construction of a unified movement. Paul Rivière, one of the operatives that coordinated landings in France, described his impression of those that returned from London on the flights: ‘It seemed that they returned with a new strength, and that they carried with them
the germ of unity that would grow into the French Resistance. By tracking individual journeys made by key resisters, first by Pineau to negotiate de Gaulle’s ‘Declaration to the Resistance Movements’ in April 1942 and then by Moulin to mediate amongst quarrelling internal resistance networks in February 1943, we can begin to understand the influence of this route of resistance beyond planning and diplomacy, and moving towards the act of resistance.

The first leader to travel to London in this way was the trade-unionist Christian Pineau, of the Libération-Nord network, a largely socialist group that developed around a clandestine newspaper and eventually became one of the most important resistance groups of the war. Pineau was picked up by 161 Squadron Lysander on the night of 26 March 1942, and his visit was both indicative of what would become the accepted procedure for the flights, and exemplary of the meaning behind them. Pineau’s journey supported the broader cooperation between Britain and France, but was also indicative of the blurring between political and military struggles that was taking place as de Gaulle sought to assert his authority.

The pick-up was flown by Squadron Leader Guy Lockhart and secured both Christian Pineau and François Faure in a field near Saumur (after a dodgy landing saw the aircraft needing to be physically pushed out of a freshly ploughed field). On landing in England, they were taken by car to Bignor Manor, before Bertram or one of the other Conducting Officers transferred agents to London by car. Upon arriving in London, Pineau had to report to Colonel Passy at Duke Street. One of Passy’s first questions, Pineau relates, was ‘Does the French Resistance recognise the authority of General de Gaulle?’ He replied ‘Yes, without hesitation.’ It was the nature of this authority, however that would prove to be most fickle and most crucial in assuaging the concerns of those in Libération-Nord. Personal audiences facilitated the necessary nuance of the political bartering which built up the connections between resisters.

After his grilling at Duke Street, Pineau was to dine with de Gaulle at the Connaught Hotel where he observed first-hand the difference between the internal resistance and de Gaulle: ‘We look at the problem from the perspective of Liberty; he conceives it from the point of view of History.’ As Gino Raymond described, these audiences in London allowed him to embark on ‘the self-conscious personalisation of the Resistance’. The bombastic charm of de Gaulle in full patriotic mode could override any hint of the abrasive and high-handed character that riled so many in the British establishment. By bringing important figures to him, he established himself at the centre of multiple competing resistance networks, eventually becoming the unifying node through which they all passed. In person, he could forge the structures that became the foundations of resistance. de Gaulle underlined the importance of personal meetings when Pineau mentioned the concerns of André Philip, a member of Libération-Sud and one of the 80 Deputies who had voted against Vichy powers: ‘Listen, he said, he is with you. That pleases me. Perhaps I could arrange to bring him here.’ The intimate nature of negotiating political consensus meant that securing a wartime alliance founded on the concept of resistance had to plaster over divergent visions of the political future.

de Gaulle committed himself to securing the internal Resistance by agreeing to the declaration which reinforced his democratic credentials. This was the ‘Declaration to the Resistance Movements’, with which Pineau returned to France. This was a crucial document in the course of uniting the varied resistance networks and movements, as it offered genuine proof of de Gaulle’s validity as a potential leader. Pineau recounts that, after some
turbulence in the drafting of the document, he only received the final copy on the runway at RAF Tangmere. Their flight was delayed by the arrival of a motorcycle courier and a young airman gave me an envelope signed with the name of General de Gaulle. With this envelope handed to him on the airstrip, Pineau carried the words of de Gaulle in person to Occupied France, making use of this crucial bond between the two nations to shape the character of the Resistance.

Pineau returned to France by Lysander with de Gaulle's Declaration in hand and François Faure again by his side. The Lysander, piloted by Sqn Ldr Alan 'Sticky' Murphy, disgorged its two passengers near Rouen on 27 April 1942 before picking up Pierre Brossolette. Clearly, this was a two-way route, and a constant connection between different factions within France and external networks. When the Lysander delivered Brossolette to England, his arrival in London was extraordinarily significant. Crémieux-Brilhac speaks of 'two feverish months' in London which energized Brossolette and lent clarity to his mission. He immediately befriended Col. Passy and worked closely with the London contingent to extend the authority of the Gaullist cause within Occupied territory, as he brought with him a Northern base of operations which complemented Moulin's Southern base. Albertelli surmises that Brossolette led the creation of a political 'gaullist project' from 1942, envisioning a leadership role for the General in the reconstruction of the country after the war. This increasingly distinguished the Gaullist cause from others, such as that of Giraud, for whom there was 'only one objective, victory.' The hand delivery of the 'Declaration to the Resistance Movements' enhanced the General's promise as a democratic leader, though the return trip of the flight brought with it the personnel to realize that promise. The two-way nature of these pick-up flights was important, and enabled a more lasting conversation to take place between what Kedward has called the different 'resistances.' Where politics did overshadow the Gaullist project, the ability of resistors to come back and forth to London was crucial. Different factions and movements clashed around the figures of Henri Frenay (of Combat), Emmanuel d' Astier, Brossolette and Moulin himself. Brossolette was sent back into France by Lysander on 26 January 1943 not far north of Macon in Ain, notably leaving Britain before Moulin returned on the ill-fated flight mentioned in the introduction. What transpired was something of a power struggle between Brossolette and Moulin as they each tried to 'take control' of the North, differing over Moulin's willingness to allow the involvement of political parties.

This was the background to the second journey to be examined, when Moulin returned to England by Lysander in February 1943 (alongside Delestraint). Moulin sought an audience with the General in London, and in response, de Gaulle drafted a new set of instructions for resistors, designed to aid the consolidation of the movements into one organization with himself at its head. These measures were intended to defuse some of the developing concerns around political representation in the resistance committees in France. It was amidst this political furore that Moulin's crash landing took place at Tangmere, as described above, with his arrival originally scheduled for 24 February 1943. Facing these myriad challenges, the solitude and relative calm of the Lysander flight may have been a relief – a clue perhaps as to why such a rough journey and abrupt landing could be deemed 'agreeable'.

Following the crash landing, Moulin's return to France was scheduled on a flight code-named SIREN II and organized for 19 March 1943. This flight was of crucial importance to the history of France and highlights how influential those smuggled into France by way of Lysander could be. Pierre Delaye, of the Phalanx network, organized a landing field for an
aircraft carrying Jean Moulin, Delestraint, Pineau and 13 packages, which arrived at 11.40 pm on the night of 18 March. Spending no more than eight minutes on the ground, the cargo was quickly disgorged before Fl. Lt. Bridger embarked on a tricky flight home through widespread fog. Poignantly, this flight was Moulin’s last return to France before his capture and death in the run-up to the creation of the Conseil National de la Résistance (CNR). Its first meeting was announced by telegram on 14 May 1943 (and occurred 10 days later), and this was, in many senses, the fruition of the wartime ‘gaullist project’. Moulin’s transfer back to France came at a point when his intervention in Paris was crucial, maintaining the direction towards which de Gaulle and the BCRA had been pushing throughout 1942. That de Gaulle became the pre-eminent figure in the resistance was largely the making of his own intransigence; that his pre-eminence was strengthened by these flights seems in turn undeniable. We can see that at key moments in this struggle, de Gaulle made use of this link to France, with crucial figures like Brossolette, Moulin, d’Astier and Frenay shuttling back and forth from London in response to emerging crises in the organization of the resistance. By allowing the General to build bridges between vying factions, these flights facilitated and strengthened the personal relationships that supported the resistance effort. These bonds helped ensure there was not a major schism amongst the main players, and directly influenced the Gaullist character of the Resistance, as well as its eventual Committee structure. This logistical bond with Britain punched through the conflicts between military and political agendas taking place at the same time, ensuring that this particular route of resistance (and the informal personal networks that supported it) enabled a very personal style of wartime diplomacy.

Today, a local organization exists to commemorate the flight SIREN II, the Association Commémorative de l’Atterrissage d’un Lysander à Melay. Demonstrating the entanglements suggested by Kedward’s ‘route of resistance’, there is a memorial to mark the landing spot at Melay in Saône-et-Loire, and the 70th anniversary was marked with the creation of display panels and speeches from the local Mayor. As with the service at Tangmere, the route left a marked legacy, and forged bonds that survived the war. These links were strong from the immediate post-war period, and resistors and special duties’ servicemen and women kept up regular reunions and commemorations. Veterans like John Gentry, and Barbara and Anthony Bertram continued to meet with their former colleagues like Stephane Hessel, Tony Mella and Marie-Madeleine Fourcade to share dinners and keep their wartime connections alive.

The official memory, at least in France, could be a little less robust than those personal bonds, as demonstrated by the fate of a Lysander presented by the British Ambassador to Paris, Duff Cooper, to the French Government on 27 January 1946. The presentation ceremony conducted on the Cour d’Honneur of the Invalides featured Edmond Michelet the Minister of the Armed Forces, General Lattre de Tassigny the Inspector Général of the French Army, and Louis Saillant from the CNR, as well as ‘detachments of the Royal Air Force, the Armée de l’Air and the Garde Républicaine, with bands and standards’. Two banks of veterans flanked the Lysander: on one side pilots, operators and those who had been delivered by moonlight; and, on the other, British officers and civilians who had organized this route of resistance (amongst them the Bertrams). Yet, after the pomp of the ceremony, the memory of this Franco-British crossing faded at an official level. By the 1960s, the popular memory of the Liberation had been reinforced with the ‘resistentalist’ narrative, that the French nation had been betrayed by traitors, but that it had liberated
itself through faithful popular resistance, and de Gaulle would mark the highest point of
this narrative with the symbolic transfer of Moulin’s ashes to the Panthéon in 1964. Yet, in
1961, when Barbara Bertram and her 11-year-old son Jerome inquired about the Lysander
presented at the Invalides, it seemed to have gone missing. Nevertheless, the memory
endured: a souvenir envelope stamped with a commemoration of the Alliance network in
1977 likewise memorialized the presentation ceremony, bearing a photo of the Lysander
from May 1946 and a depiction of the monument to the pilots of the SD squadrons in Ussel,
in the Corrèze. In reality, despite this, it appears that the aircraft was unceremoniously
scrapped in 1949, after its intended transfer to the Musée de l’Air was forgotten as it lay
in storage. During the high years of the Gaullist resistentialist narrative, the memory
of this Franco-British connection faltered at the state level and its most tangible token
was destroyed. Yet, as symbolized in the Bertrams’ enquiry and the Alliance postcard, the
memories of those involved in acts of resistance and those who helped organize it persisted.

Conclusions

Given the pressures of war and occupation, the skill and bravery of the flights designed to
support the resistance was admirable and the significance of these operations clear. These
flights organized by formal and informal external networks helped to establish control of
the internal resistance for de Gaulle and to lay the foundations of the Liberation. These
cross-channel connections were forged quickly in the realities of war-time London, and
relied in part upon the good relationships of individuals working across British and French
services. The cooperation of figures in the BCRA, SIS and in the SOE to support these oper-
ations made the attainment of shared goals possible, despite the often-stormy relationship
of political figures of higher status. The ways in which this route of resistance developed had
a lasting influence on the individuals involved. Looking at the personal diplomacy between
BCRA, SOE and SIS officers that supported the flights gives a new insight into the personal
diplomacy between de Gaulle and resistance leaders that the flights supported, and helps
to locate the flights on the grander map of resistance activity.

While some of the most daring flights of the war were planned in the SIS Broadway
Buildings and the Baker Street Conference Room, the friendships formed around Soho
dinner tables helped ease the tension that led to them. Indeed, many of these moments
of hospitality stayed with resisters, whether they were grand occasions or home-cooked
meals. Christian Pineau’s journey illustrates these bonds, from the hospitality of Bignor
Manor, through the machinery of the competing organizations in London. The memory
of these bonds, and the traces of the routes, left a memorial legacy too, as shown in the
70th anniversary service that marked Moulin’s crash landing at Tangmere in Sussex and
by the monument to a somewhat safer landing at Melay in Saône-et-Loire. The pick-up
flights brought key figures in the various disparate resistance movements together at the
start of 1942, allowing them to travel to London and seek audiences with de Gaulle. This
personal contact helped secure his authority, knitting together the groups under his aegis.
It also allowed the final draft of the ‘Declaration to the Movements of the Resistance’ to be
delivered by hand, having been exchanged on the runway at RAF Tangmere. This too gave
ordinary resisters the opportunity to believe in the rhetoric of the General over the Channel.
Both the ideas and the personnel of the ‘gaullist project’ were conveyed in the flights that
helped to encourage and sustain resistance in France, and the nodes in this network were not always the grand headquarters of the fighting organizations.

Between these organizations, bridges needed to be built, and this was only hastened by this route of resistance and the logistics that supported it. In February 1943, for example, when the Resistance movements began to splinter, pick-up flights allowed the speedy insertion of figures like Moulin on perilous flights like the mission codenamed ‘Eclipse’. His personal intervention allowed him to strike a conciliatory note, bringing together a council of strong-willed partisans with vastly different desires and political motivations. Achieving this at a key moment aided de Gaulle in battling out Giraud’s competition for leadership of the Resistance movements, and strengthening his own standing internationally even as international forces sought to have him replaced. In London, de Gaulle could hold court with all the key figures in a diverse network of actors, establishing himself as a unifying figure who could build bridges between the vying factions. The use of the resistance narrative as ‘de Gaulle’s gospel’ after the Liberation was one which relied for a large part on the centrality of the General in this cross-channel network of secret flights. Yet, the loss of the Lysander ceremonially presented to mark this connection perhaps illustrates the extent to which the memory was one which relied on informal personal connections. For all this was a story of charismatic Generals, daring flights and secret missions, it was also a story of Soho restaurants, the Bertram family and the London Road from Sussex.

As such, the clandestine flights conducted by Lysander aircraft from the forward station of RAF Tangmere had a formative role in shaping the character of resistance in wartime France. Their multi-layered legacy, as commemorated 70 years after Moulin’s crash landing, represented a longer trend of Franco-British cooperation which has been, if not always harmonious, certainly cognisant of shared values and a bond of longstanding solidarity. Cultural, political and military interactions all shaped the planning and conduct of these pick-up flights, and the flights themselves left a complimentary legacy of entanglements. In gathering to commemorate this route of resistance, its continuing resonance was reaffirmed. Even in France’s darkest moments, the poignancy of flights like ‘Eclipse’ and the routes of resistance marked out by the torch paths of partisans ensured that the long night would end.

Notes

1. McCairns, Lysander Pilot, 46.
3. On cooperation, see Wieviorka, French Resistance, 22–5; and Cremieux-Brilhac, France Libre, 1: 520–4. On the Special Operations Executive (SOE), Mark Seaman’s edited volume Special Operations Executive collects a useful survey of recent research into the methodology of the SOE. On the French in London, Atkin, Forgotten French; Mangold, Britain and the Defeated French; Cremieux-Brilhac, Ici Londres; Kelly and Cornick, A History of the French in London. Alongside Wieviorka’s newly translated work, the most prominent synthetic works on the Resistance are Jackson, Dark Years; Gildea, Marianne in Chains; Gildea, Fighters in the Shadows.
4. Recent work has complicated and enriched our understanding of the relationship between the Free French, the internal resistance and the Allies. Looking at how the maquis interacted with both the Free French and the Allies (and how this guided their military mobilization) is an instructive example of the types of interaction this article describes. See Balu, “The French Maquis,” 192–209; Frank, “Les missions interalliées,” 353–61; Funk, Les Alliés et la Résistance. In a further reflection on inter-Allied cooperation, British engagement with resistant forces
was complicated by the conception of France as a whole (and thus the Free French, Vichy and the internal resistance as different factions), as discussed in Frank, “Identités résistantes et logiques alliées.”

7. Ibid., 497.
8. As described in Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*, 377–8. This narrative has been roundly dispelled in recent scholarship, not least in Muracciole, *Français Libres*. Muracciole traces a sociology of the Free French and surveys their varied backgrounds and motivations, from former International Brigade fighters in the Spanish Civil War to Parisian elites with a sense of adventure. This sort of cross-section adds useful nuance to the worn tale that Gildea laments, and has himself tackled in *Fighters in the Shadows*.

11. Aglan, “La Résistance, le temps, l'espace,” 97; Laborie, “Qu’est ce que la Résistance,” 35.
12. Kedward, “Mapping the Resistance,” 495–7. Indeed, air was clearly not the only means of transfer, and sea communications also played an important part, collaborating with Polish escape lines in the South, and with an increasing penetration into Brittany after 1943. The SOE’s significant use of communications by sea was part of an array of methods, and this article’s focus on air transfers is intended not to overwrite but to complement studies on these links. See Sir Brooks Richards’ important two-volume work *Secret Flotillas*; and, his chapter “SOE and Sea Communications,” 33–46. For recent insights into the role of Bretons in the Free French Movement see Bougeard, “Eléments d’une approche,” 15–28.

15. Body, *Runways to Freedom*, 76–7. Both No. 161 and No. 138 Squadron were based officially at Tempsford. No. 138 Squadron (which had initially undertaken all the work for the secret services) was principally charged with dropping supplies and parachuting agents (overwhelmingly SOE agents and military supplies being placed in the field), whilst 161 Squadron was principally charged with landings and pick-ups (the transfer of intelligence agents, VIPs and hard copy communications being taken to and from the field). This demarcation was not official, and both squadrons continued to parachute agents and supplies. For more, see Foot, *SOE in France*, 73; and, Cremieux-Brilhac, *France Libre*, 1: 427–31. The predominance of SIS and BCRA agents being involved in pick-up flights can be seen by comparing aggregate statistics prepared by the RAF for squadrons 138 and 161 (see the appendices of the Summary Report included in TNA AIR 20/8496), with lists that give much finer detail on the nature of infiltrations and exfiltration. Pierre Tillet has produced (and continues to update) an exceptional document reconciling all available sources on the purpose of flights and identity of passengers. This can be accessed at: http://www.plan-sussex-1944.com (Last accessed February 1, 2017). Also, Hugh Verity lists a record of flights as an appendix to his book *We Landed By Moonlight*. A recent book, compiled by Major Anthony Bertram’s son Jerome, collates the memoirs of Bertram and his wife Barbara, alongside RAF documents and the diary kept of visitors to the Manor. It is an extraordinarily valuable resource for any study of the special duties flights. See Bertram, *Bignor Manor*.

17. Photo of Tangmere Cottage (Interior), National Archives, Kew [hereafter TNA] CN 5/33.
19. Also flown were Hudsons; for an account of Pickard’s first attempt to land a Hudson for a pick-up, see McCairns, *Lysander Pilot*, 44–5.
20. Ibid., 54.
21. “RAF Report on Supporting French Resistance,” TNA AIR 20.8496. The first pick-up in October 1940 was flown by Fl/Lt WR Farley who landed Philip Schneidau, an SIS agent born in France to English parents. Hugh Verity describes plotting out the model for the landing torch path over dinner at Oddenino’s restaurant. We Landed By Moonlight, 34–6; Bertram, Bignor Manor, 261–3.


24. Interview with Col. Maurice Buckmaster, October 17, 1986. IWMSA no. 9452.

25. Wieviorka, French Resistance, 133.


27. Albertelli, Services Secrets, 71.


29. Notably, the Alliance network led by Marie-Madeleine Fourcade showed the complicated relationship between the SIS and the BCRA, and this is recounted in her memoirs as she struggled to have her agent Leon Faye sent by Lysander to France: in Fourcade, L’Arche de Noé, 2: 189–23. For more on Fourcade’s engagement with the British and de Gaulle, see Deacon, “Fitting in to the French Resistance,” 263–6. Likewise, both elements of the SIS maintained contacts outside the BCRA and frequently sought to poach returning French resistors as they were interviewed in the Royal Victoria Patriotic School in Wandsworth before they could declare for de Gaulle. As well as the control of agents and networks, the intelligence services clashed over the use of individual code sets for communication with the field. See Albertelli, “The British, the Free French,” 133; and De Young De La Marck, “de Gaulle, Colonel Passy,” 36–7.

30. Interview with Buckmaster, IWMSA no. 9452.

31. Seaman, Bravest of the Brave, 51.

32. Jefferey, MI6, 397.

33. For an account of R/F section’s brief attempt to court Moulin, see Piquet-Wicks, Four in the Shadows, 40–2.

34. “Interview with M. Moulins (sic), 4 November 1941” quoted in Cordier, Jean Moulin, 1267–9.


37. The best account of the relationship between the SOE, F Section and the BCRA can be found in Foot, SOE in France, 13–40.

38. Interview with Buckmaster, IWMSA no. 9452.


40. Douzou, Résistance française, 243.

41. Wieviorka, French Resistance, 4.

42. Likewise, special training had to be conceived and conducted for pilots, reception committees and those who would identify potential landing sites. Some training for operators was led by the SIS Training Officer for pick-ups, Major Anthony Bertram, also a Conducting Officer for the special-duties flights. A full account of the training procedures is given in Bertram, Bignor Manor, 88–101. A fortnight of every month was dedicated by the pick-up pilots to training ‘operators’ on how to identify potential landing fields, and how to lay the flare-paths that would guide pilots in to land. McCairns, Lysander Pilot, 17–19.


44. “Air Liaison Section History,” TNA HS7–14; W J Mackenzie, “Special Operations Executive (Unpublished History),” 560, CAB 102/650. The name ‘Conference Room’ was designed to distract from the nature of the operations being undertaken, and the AL history acknowledges that the term ‘Operations Room’ would probably have been more apt. There is a further
description of the physical layout of the room in Helm, *Life in Secrets*, 25. Sir Douglas Dodds-Parker claimed responsibility for establishing the Operations Room when he was head of the Air/Sea Transport section of SOE in 1941–42, see “Memorandum by Dodds-Parker titled ‘Contributions’” (c.1997), Magdalen College Archives [hereafter MC] P2/4/2MS/25.


47. Reporting to the Assistant Chief of Air Staff (Intelligence) or ACAS(I). See Grehan, *RAF and the SOE*, 145; “Memo ref DO/1496/42/A12c,” 16/12/1942. TNA AIR 4/2577; “Memo ref TEM/S.8/1/EHF/DO,” 4/7/1944. TNA AIR 4/2577.

48. “Record of the Resources made Available to SIS by the Air Ministry and RAF During the War,” 3 TNA AIR 40/2659.


52. Ibid., §292.


55. Bertram, *Bignor Manor*, 69. See also, Albertelli, *Services secrets*, 120–2. Hessel is one of the ’bridge builders’ cited by Kedward as important to understanding an effort to mapping the resistance. See Kedward, “Mapping the Resistance,” 500–1.


61. Ibid., 284, 345.


65. Ibid., 125–6.


70. Dewavrin (Passy), *Mémoires du chef*, 223.


73. A notice was hung at Tangmere that forbade low-flying manoeuvres over Bignor Manor whilst Caroline the goat was expecting a kid. Bertram, *Bignor Manor*, 204–5.

74. Ibid., 323–4.


77. Ibid.


81. Felix Svagrovsky was involved in the Confrérie Notre-Dame network, before his arrest. He was sprung and made his way to England, where he escaped his initial internment for interview and reported to BCRA. He was then tasked with setting up his own network for air operations in France in February 1943, before being arrested and imprisoned in October 1943. He escaped again, and as he had become exposed in France, spent some three months in London organizing air operations for the BCRA from March 1944. Sadly, he returned to France in June 1944, and was captured by the Gestapo and deported to Neuengamme where he died on 1 April 1945. See Bertram, *Bignor Manor*, 135–6, 148.

82. Passy described how he and “Uncle Claude […] often quarrelled” though maintained a friendly “gentleman’s agreement that they always respected” and remained on good terms. Dewavrin (Passy), *Mémoires du chef*, 84–5.


86. Lockhart is described as an intimidating figure. Memorably, the pick-up pilot McCairns’ first impression of his commanding officer was that Lockhart was “the modern equivalent of Lucifer […] I was never to change my opinion of his satanic influence.” McCairns, *Lysander Pilot*, 14.

87. Foreign nationals entering Britain were ordinarily interviewed at The Royal Victoria Patriotic School. Any French nationals that were cleared would be spoken to by SIS, with the intention of having them work for either Cohen or Dunderdale. This early access (and the ability to co-opt potential operators) was a bone of contention for the BCRA. See Clinton, *Jean Moulin*, 113–4.


90. Ibid., 159.


95. Pineau, *Simple Verité*, 190. The text of de Gaulle’s messages are recorded in the Appendices of Pineau’s wartime memoirs.

96. 161 Squadron ORB, “Bridge Report,” 19. TMAM.


100. Jackson, *Dark Years*, 449–51. Notably, the flight which took Brossolette back to France, codenamed Atala, brought back Rene Massigli and Andre Manuel (as mentioned earlier). The flight was diverted to Tempsford, despite Passy having travelled to Tangmere to meet them. Bertram, *Bignor Manor*, 298–9.


102. Fl. Lt. Bridger, “SIREN II Report,” 146 TMAM. In an illustration of how deeply the flights penetrated into France, it is worth noting that Melay is only around 30 miles from the town of Vichy.


104. My thanks to Martyn Cox for providing photos and an account of the event. See also Delaye-Fouqueau, *Dans les pas*, 51–5, 137–9.
105. The Special Forces Club, in particular, helped facilitate reunions between former resisters and Allied forces. Details of these reunions are outlined in the papers of Sir Douglas Dodd-Parker at Magdalen College, Oxford. See especially, MC:P2/4/2C/16.

106. Phone interview with Caroline Babois-Gentry (daughter of John Gentry), 24/08/17.


111. Bertram, Bignor Manor, 391–2.

112. First-day cover envelope with commemorative handstamps in author’s possession.


114. Albertelli, Services Secrets, 512.

115. Gildea, Marianne in Chains, 379.

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