

80th ANNIVERSARY OF THE RETURN TO BORDEAUX

346 Guyenne & 347 Tunisie Squadrons

HISTORY OF THE SQUADRONS

In the Spring of 1944, two French Squadrons were formed at RAF Elvington near York in the north east of England. They remained there until the end of the war and beyond. In England they undertook intensive re-training with RAF Bomber Command before commencing operational missions with the Handley Page Halifax. On the 16th May, 346 'Guyenne' Squadron was formed, followed by 347 'Tunisie' on the 20th June. The two French squadrons would include around 2,300 personnel consisting of aviators, ground crew, mechanics and other staff.

During training exercises and when returning from operational missions, the two squadrons suffered many losses. French aviators and crew who died, were buried in Stonefall Cemetery in Harrogate, alongside Commonwealth aviators. During the 1950's, French aviators were disinterred and repatriated to France.

At the end of the war, Guyenne and Tunisie returned to liberated France with the Halifax heavy bombers in which they'd flown. The Squadrons arrived in October 1945 at Bordeaux's Merignac Airport to become the basis for the new French Air Force. During their time stationed in York and their 18 months of service for the Royal Air Force, the squadrons had lost 50% of their aircrews.



Upon the return of the surviving aviators to Bordeaux, a military Parade was held in their honour at the Place des Quinconces on the 25th November 1945.



80th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

On Thursday 16th October, Richard and I were delighted to be invited to the 80th Anniversary celebrations of the return of 346 and 347 Squadrons to Bordeaux. Attending with other guests at the Air Force Base in Merignac, we watched from the Guest Stand as both the Royal Air Force Band and that of the French Air Force opened the military ceremony.



Following the ceremony, guests were directed towards the cinema where a presentation was given of the history of the two squadrons. This was followed by a buffet.

Whilst at the ceremony we were delighted to meet up once again with Ian Richardson from the Yorkshire Air Museum at Elvington, where the French Squadrons were based when it was RAF Elvington. Also in attendance was Air Attaché at the French Embassy in London, Colonel Emmanuel Emond. The Colonel had attended at our charity's ANZAC ceremony in Harrogate in April 2025 and we were once again delighted to meet him.



We were also delighted to make the acquaintance of Air Vice Marshall Jason Appleton who conveyed his appreciation to us for what ANZAC REMEMBRANCE is achieving as a charity.



WHAT A GREAT DAY AT MERIGNAC