

The Irish Adventure
of
Richard Kukura
and
Tommy Hulme
and the
Fate of Their



Beaufighter JL710

St Patrick's Night 1943

**This booklet is dedicated
to
Richard Kukura,
Tommy Hulme,
All the brave men of
the RAAF and RAF
who so often
risked their lives for us
and to
The People of Templeport and Corlough
who showed
generosity and kindness
to
Two strangers in trouble.**

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About this booklet and the web site.

The purpose of this booklet is to put on permanent record as much as possible of the history of the Crash of the Beaufighter JL710 beside St Mogue's Island on 17th March 1943.

Although I've always been interested in the 'plane crash on the Island and collected many small pieces of it I knew very little of the truth about the event.

The interest was re-sparked when neighbours who had a wide interest in WW II aeroplanes asked questions which I couldn't answer. The meeting with John and Sue Patterson was the start of a lasting friendship.

Dennis Burke who runs the website listing the belligerent air crashes of WW II in Ireland www.skynet.ie/~dan/war was able to obtain at David Earl's suggestion the Pilot's name from records at the RAF Museum Hendon. (page 37)

John Patterson who was used to researching genealogical websites diligently searched for the name 'Kukura' and eventually found a Stephanie Kukura who some years earlier had asked on a genealogical forum for information about her husband's ancestors. John wrote to her, surprisingly she still used the same email address and replied that she was married to a nephew of Richard the pilot of the aircraft.

This booklet tells the rest of the story as far as we have so far found out.

If you can add anything please contact us and we'll put the information on the website at www.bawnboy.utvinternet.com/Beaufighter-JL710 where you should be to find the latest information as well as many colour photographs. Alternatively, you may visit www.bawnboy.com where you'll find links to Bawnboy related web pages.

NR 4th June 2006

Since I wrote the piece above a great deal has happened and so much more information is still coming in that this booklet has had to be expanded several times and is still not large enough to include all the stories, information and photographs we have.

Some photos (page 45) were already in this booklet before the engine recovery operation. It yielded many more parts and photos than were previously available. Unfortunately it was too close to the print deadline to attempt to layout the booklet again. Regrettably; as it has to go to the printers today it can't be as comprehensive as I would have liked but I'll try to put the additional information and pictures on the website.

NR 7th July 2006

The Irish Adventure



Richard Kukura and Tommy Hulme in Ireland

The events leading to the Crash of JL710 by Flight Lieutenant Richard Kukura (Retired)

May 10, 2004

On the 17th of March 1943, my navigator/wireless operator and I, a pilot officer, sat in the crew room at RAF Station, Port Ellen, on the Isle of Islay. We were waiting for the violent storm that was raging outside, to abate. We had orders to do a flight, the plan of which was Port Ellen to Rockall, a rock the size of a football field, some one hundred miles out west in the Atlantic Ocean. From Rockall we were to fly to the Isle of St Kilda. From there we were to continue to Taree, on the north west corner of Scotland, and then return to base at Port Ellen.

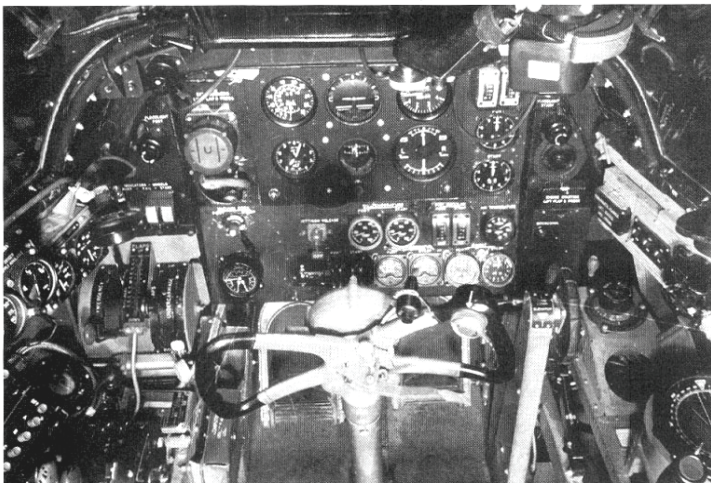
The purpose of this flight was to test the operation of the Beaufighter aircraft and its fuel consumption, preparatory to flying it to the Middle East. In this case, Cairo, Egypt.

My navigator, whom I had known only a few weeks, was Flight Sergeant Tommy Hulme, an Englishman who was born in the village of Marple Bridge, near the city of Stockport. He proved to be a gem of a man and also a gem at his job in the aeroplane.

At approximately 3.30 pm the storm appeared to calm somewhat, and we were ordered to take off. This we did at 4.10 pm. Very soon after take-off we found ourselves in the thick of the storm again. Tommy computed the wind at 63 knots, which is almost hurricane force. Cloud base was 500 feet and intermittent heavy rain made visibility difficult. However, Tommy was equal to the task. When our estimated time of arrival came, Rockall appeared in an enormous trough beneath us shedding tons of water from its granite surface, and then disappeared in a mountainous swell.

On reaching St Kilda we flew over the natural harbour and in it were four ships taking shelter from the storm. This made me think that we were idiots to be out in weather that made ships take shelter.

On the way to Taree, the weather started to improve and by the time we arrived a few of the last rays of a peeping sun glinted off the flooded landing field. On setting course for Port Ellen in failing light, I saw directly ahead of us a great bank of cloud, which seemed to indicate we were going to fly back into the storm. A short time later the cloud base was 800 feet and night was upon us.



The cockpit of a Beaufighter (photo Wikipedia)

Tommy contacted Base to check on our course and reported that all was well. A moment later there was a huge thump in the aircraft and a great sucking draft swept through the aeroplane. Our speed dropped by about 4 knots. I checked the controls and everything worked. The engines were still running sweetly. Then Tommy called me on the intercom and asked me if I wanted the bad news or the worse news first. I told him to give it to me as it came. He told me that the entry hatch cover had slammed open. It appeared that the ground crew had not shut it correctly and the slipstream had worked on it until it opened. Tommy had told me that the great draft had sucked out all his papers and maps and also the secret information we carried that could have helped us in finding our position from time to time.

The worst blow of all was at the time of the hatch cover slamming open, Tommy had been using the radio and it was in the "use" position that brought it out on a cantilever arrangement that placed it above the entry well. The hatch cover had hit the radio and caused a lot of damage.

So there we were, on course for Port Ellen, but with no way of knowing if we would remain on course. Any change in wind speed or direction could put us off course, and waiting by the runway was a 3 000m mountain. Our prospects at that time were not bright.

Tommy told me that he was going to try and repair the radio, and I told him, for the purpose of safety, I was going to climb through the overcast, remaining on the same course. We broke cloud at 7 000 feet and above the cloud there was a very small slice of moon.

Some time elapsed before Tommy told me that he had repaired the radio to work on one valve. However, we could not receive transmission; only transmit. He kept broadcasting our plight so our situation was well known to all.

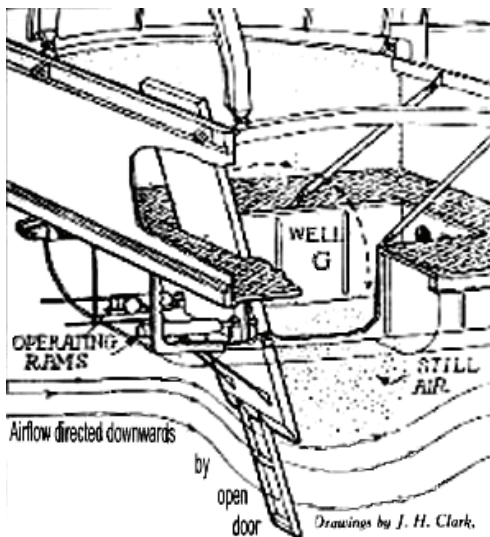
When our estimated time of arrival had passed, I started to fly a square search pattern in the hope I would find a break in the cloud. All the time hoping a night fighter, fitted with radar, would intercept us and, with the aid of signalling lamps, we would be able to converse. This way we would be led to safety. It did not happen, and I decided to fly south to find a break in the cloud and escape from the influence of the storm. By this time we did not know our position and fuel was becoming important.

We were flying due south for about a half an hour when I saw light reflected on a bank of cloud. A minute or so on we were driving through a hole in the cloud with an image in my mind of a double row of light. My heart said flare path, but my brain said city lights in Eire. I found myself flying west, down a city main street at an altitude of 300 feet and as the twin row of lights ended, I could see white caps below us. This told me that we were over a city on the west coast of Eire.

Because of our fuel situation I had to make quick assumption as to which city this was. On the spur of the moment the city of Donegal was my pick. Knowing that the border between Northern and Southern Ireland ran roughly from east to west to a point where it turned north somewhat east of Donegal, I did a U turn and steered due east. Simultaneously I climbed hard to avoid any high ground. My aim was to cross the border before the fuel ran out. I decided not to take into consideration the Earth's magnetic variation or the aircraft's magnetic deviation. I thought that the maximum error in the course I was steering would not be more than 10 degrees, and in a flying time of about fifteen minutes or so the difference would not matter.

When I estimated that I had approximately five minutes of fuel left I told Tommy to prepare to abandon the aircraft. When the fuel gauges showed zero, I wished him luck and told him to jump. He returned my good wishes and was soon gone.

It was time for me to go, so I pulled the release for the hatch to open, with no result. I pulled the release a few times, but still without result. That left me with two choices and very little time. The first choice was to exit from the top hatch, which was used for escape after ditching into an ocean or lake. The disadvantages were, with parachute attached, it would take more time to



The Escape hatch showing the ladder
(J.H. Clarke The Aeroplane Magazine)

exit because the top hatch is small, and there was a very real risk of being hit by the tail of the plane or the rudder.

The alternative and the course I decided to take, was to unbuckle my safety harness and parachute straps, lay back the backrest of my seat and turn over on my stomach, after making sure that the aircraft was flying straight and level. I then wriggled my head and shoulders down into the exit well, placed the four fingers of each hand onto the bottom edge of the hatch cover and pushed toward myself with all my strength. It did the trick, and I was lucky to get my hands and face out of the way as the hatch cover slammed up and locked.

Trying to remain calm, I pulled myself away from the well, turned the right way up and buckled on my parachute. I then took the controls and straightened up the starboard wing, which had dropped somewhat in the meantime. I then congratulated myself that I had done everything and was ready to go.

In quick time I climbed down the in-built ladder in the hatch cover, stood for a second on the bottom rung, then pushed myself off into space. There was a muffled roar and I looked up and saw my aircraft disappear. The parachute opened and I forgot all else, but the pain in my groin. I had forgotten to tighten the leg straps on the parachute harness. With a lot of pulling on the shrouds and the leg straps, I was able to sit on the straps in comfort but this took some time.

I was then able to look around. I had already gone through one layer of cloud and after a moment I went into another layer. Then below me was only scattered cloud with dark patches in between. It could have been either land or water. Then I was through that band and I could see fields and stands of timber and other patches I could not identify.

I thought to myself, "I must be getting close." Then my left knee hit the ground forcefully, turning me over. My head crashed into a depression. I was turned over onto my back with a terrible thump while rolling in between boulders. This knocked the breath out of me.

There I lay in a lot of pain. Some minutes later, after the pain had subsided sufficiently, I was able to ascertain if I had sustained any serious injuries. My body appeared to be unbroken and there was no blood. The wind was cold and strong and was the cause for landing so severely. I stood up and followed regulations by rolling up my parachute and tying it up into a bundle.

Looking around, I saw to the right of me a stand of what appeared to be Cypress trees and behind the trees was a ghostly white shape. I realised it was a house when I saw a patch of pale light about half way down its length. I realised that the light was an open door. With an overcast sky, I had no idea of direction. Also I did not have a pocket compass. I decided to take a chance and called out, "Is anyone there?"

Voices answered and two shadows detached from the Cypress trees and came toward me. I walked forward to meet them. One of the two was a boy. They invited me into the

house where a woman waited at the open door. It was apparent that the family had been disturbed by the crashing Beaufighter and had gone outside to see what had happened. They were a pleasant looking middle-aged couple with a boy who appeared to be about 12 years old. I told them why I was there, while enjoying the roaring fire that was alight in the farmhouse kitchen. I asked them if I was in Eire and they said yes, adding I was about three miles from the border. At that time it was just midnight.

In the meantime, the woman busied herself around the fire and in a short time I was sitting down to bacon and eggs, and appreciating their kindness to a stranger.



Cypress trees at Mohereagh with house behind



Richard found help at this house in Mohereagh

After some conversation, which I tried to keep to a minimum, I told them that I had to move on and if they would kindly point me in the direction of the border. They protested and told me that I was welcome to a bed for the night. I declined, explaining that I would be “interned” if caught by the authorities. They were not familiar with the term but when I substituted the word, “prison”, they caught on.

After a small discussion between the man and the woman, they told me that they would send the boy down the mountain to bring back a man “who knew all about these matters” and would lead me to the border. This I accepted and the boy went off by himself.

About thirty or forty minutes later the boy returned with a man who appeared to be about forty years old. After greeting me, he told me that we would have to wait until 3 am so that there would be no one on the tracks. And so it was. We conversed in generalities until it was time to leave.

When I got up I thanked my benefactors for all their kindness and offered the woman my parachute to remember me by. She accepted it gladly and then my guide and I left on our journey to the border.

It took us about an hour of silent walking until my guide stopped and told me to sit on a handy log while he went to a nearby police station to bring back some transport. Some time later I heard a car coming and I hid behind a shrub. When I saw two policemen and my guide exit from an old Chevrolet I showed myself and was greeted by the police. I thanked my guide and shook his hand. He seemed anxious to be off and we said our good-byes. Very quickly he disappeared and left me with the feeling that he had done things like this before.

The police took me back to the police station where I found a bed ready for me. After I gave them a rundown on what had happened, I finally got to bed at about 4.30 am. Just after 9 am a constable awakened me to more bacon and eggs and with the news that Tommy had escaped over the border. He was waiting to be picked up at an army observation post not very far away. The police car took me to the observation post where I was reunited with Tommy, a happy occasion.

From there the police took us to an Australian Sunderland Flying Boat squadron on Loch Neagh where we were debriefed and treated for our injuries. After five days of being pampered by the medical officer, we were flown back to Port Ellen. Our adventure was over.

Now I must tell you Tommy's story as he told it to me. Tommy always wore RAF issue flying boots, which were always a loose fit, and inside them he wore woollen socks. At the moment of his parachute opening, the shock peeled off his boots and socks leaving him to land in bare feet.

Tommy carried a small hand compass and with the aid of this he headed east. Finding a road that went in



The Presbytery where Tommy got the shoes!

the same direction he walked for a short distance but his feet began troubling him. At that time he came to a house with some light showing and he knocked on the front door. A light was switched on and the door opened revealing a Catholic priest. Tommy explained the situation and asked the priest if he could give him a pair of old shoes. The priest shut the door but left the light switched on. Tommy waited and a moment later the door opened and a pair of old sandshoes was thrown out. Then the door was slammed shut and the light switched off.

Tommy continued in an easterly direction. His sore feet gave him a lot of discomfort as the sand shoes did not fit very well. As dawn broke Tommy saw a building ahead painted in camouflage colours. He headed for it. Someone shouted for him to stop but instead he ran. A shot was fired but Tommy reached the army observation post safely. Tommy told me he had walked nine miles to the border. This tallies with the fact that I used up a couple of minutes escaping from the Beaufighter.

This is what I remember, but perhaps I have forgotten a few happenings as my memory has been dimmed with the passing of the years. In four days I will be eighty-seven years old.

Tommy Hulme (T. W. HULME) died on the 28th of June 1995, aged 81.

Written by *Richard Kukura* May 10, 2004

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Initial Training School, Pearce, Perth, Western Australia; 21st July 1941
www.awm.gov.au

© Australian War Memorial

P03901.001

Group portrait of members of Course 17A of 5 Initial Training School (5 I.T.S) photographed on their first day of training. 415155 AC2 Richard Kukura is in the back row forth from left.

Tommy Hulme's story

Written by his Daughter Liz Rothwell

Richard Kukura, my father's pilot has already given an account of their experience together in Ireland. As my father is no longer with us, I would like to include a few details gleaned from his reminiscences and mementoes:

My father spoke about the loss of his Lighthouse Identification Chart alongside the maps when the hatch blew open in the storm, and the fact that the radio transmitter had been damaged. All the lighthouse keys had been changed. At one point they sighted a light which he believed to be the Instrahull Lighthouse, but without the key he couldn't be sure. Richard circled the light and my father asked them who they were on the Aldis Lamp. But it was automatic, there was no-one there.

Right: Young Tommy in his RAF uniform.

Below: Tommy Hulme in the map room.





**Tommy and Betty Hulme on their wedding day on
10th December 1941**



The field where Tommy Hulme landed in Corlough

He remembered calling Bircham Newton for a fix and course for England. They received his signal but said that his signal was far too weak for a fix, due to damage to the transmitter. The cloud base was low and Port Ellen on Islay is surrounded by mountains of 2,000ft. Fuel was dangerously low. It was decided that baling out was the only option.

As soon as he emerged from the escape hatch and onto the ladder, the force of the wind blew his flying boots off. As he parachuted down my father hoped their calculations had been correct, that he was not over the sea. After passing through several layers of cloud and nearing earth he heard a dog bark - it was a very welcome sound. He was fortunate to land in boggy ground which served to soften his fall.

He had landed in Southern Ireland, neutral territory. After walking without shoes for some time, he was given kind help from a priest who directed him to the border.

Richard Kukura has taken up the story from 1943 to 1945.

My father returned to England in April 1946, after three years abroad. His journey included a memorable

After much searching we were eventually lucky enough to make contact with Tommy's daughter Liz Rothwell. On 20th May 2006 I spoke to her in Wales, she was most interested in furthering discussions with us and has sent us the photographs of her Father as well as the stories he told of his very short time in Ireland and a little of what happened to Richard and himself later on in the war.

One lovely snippet she offered was that after an injury caused by enemy fire from below the aircraft Tommy always used to carry with him a piece of steel on which to sit. He claimed it saved his life on more than one occasion!

NR

jeep ride through Italy from Naples to Milan where he managed to view Leonardo da Vinci's 'The Last Supper' in the damaged church of S. Maria Delle Grazie. He then joined a troop train from Milan. My mother has kept the 'MEDLOC FOLDER' - a leaflet and map providing information about the train journey for the troops. The train passed South of Lake Maggiore, through the Simplon Tunnel to Switzerland, across France via Dijon, Sens and Paris to Calais. There were 'Feeding Halts' at Domodossola, Villers Les Pots, Epluches, where 'washing facilities' were also available. The ferry from Calais then took him across to Folkestone.

Although Richard Kukura (Dick to my father) lived far away in Australia after the war ended, and they had very little contact, I know that their close bond and friendship endured. My father always talked about Richard's skill as a pilot, and how it had played a major part in their joint survival.

Our family would like to thank the Research Group and all those who contributed for their time and interest. We have been very touched.

Liz Rothwell © May 2006

Right: A photo his daughter Liz took of the escape hatch of a Beaufighter in the RAF museum, London. This is the same aircraft as pictured on page 44.

(Photo: Liz Rothwell)



Below: James Joseph 'Tucker' McGovern with Nigel behind him looking at the field where Tommy Hulme landed without his boots. (Photo: John Patterson)



The Events From This Side

On the night of March 17th, 1943, as German forces recaptured Kharkov in the Ukraine, as the British Eighth Army prepared to assault Axis forces in Tunisia and as Japanese forces continued their inexorable advance into Burma, the area around the village of Bawnboy, amid the rolling hills of County Cavan, Ireland received three unexpected visitors. One of these was a fearsome twin engined strike fighter of the Royal Air Force (RAF), a Bristol Beaufighter. The two other visitors were probably less fearsome, they were the pilot and navigator of the stricken aircraft. All that was known officially for many years was that an aircraft had crashed, without its crew into the end of St. Mogues's Island in Templeport Lake. Its crew it was assumed had nailed out and landed in Northern Ireland.

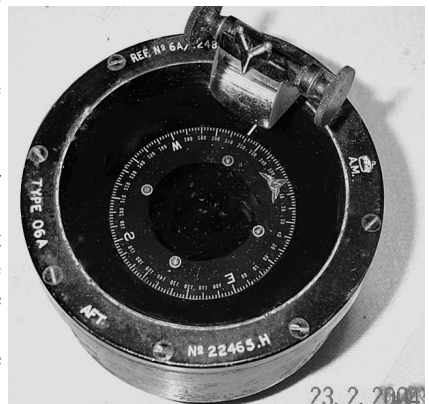
One of over 150 such incidents involving belligerent aircraft in Ireland during 1939 and 1945 little appeared to be publicly known about this incident until 2004 when I was contacted by two interested Bawnboy locals, Nigel and John wondering if I might know any detailed information on the incident. I could not help them with any more detailed knowledge at that time. Luckily, included in the correspondences at that time was David Earl, author and researcher of Second World War high ground aircraft crashes. He suggested that the aircraft might well be Beaufighter serial number JL710.

Nigel, a Templeport resident, told, "I live very near St Mogue's Island and as a child in the fifties and early sixties used to love rowing to the island when the lake was low and finding pieces of the plane. Of course the Irish Army had taken most of it away very soon after the accident and there were only pieces of aluminium cladding, spars and other small pieces of twisted metal left to find. Many people at the time used to feed their chickens off pieces of the flat sections. It is still possible to find pieces of aluminium in the water although tourists have found and taken away most of them now".

He continued, "Many local people remember the crash and hearing the plane circling for ages. Some thought they were going to be bombed! Just before the crash a local woman heard a bang on the roof of her house about a mile and a half away. She thought a bomb had been dropped which hadn't exploded. Some days later, she had a man go up on the



Above: Compass with box
Below: Type 06A Compass
(approximately 4" Diameter)



roof to investigate. He found a wooden box, painted RAF Blue, which he took down. It contained a 'Hand bearing compass', known as a Type 06A. The 06A compass handle contains a torch, which may be used independently but when normally screwed to the base of the compass illuminates the rose for taking night bearings through the prism. On the inside of the hinged lid of the box there is a rubber stamped mark indicating that the compass was checked at the Admiralty Compass Observatory on 30 May 1942. As I had always coveted the compass, the woman, who had been a family friend who had known my great grandparents, gave it to me sometime in the late sixties."

Aidan McGovern of Kildoeagh told his neighbour Nigel in March 2004 that in March 1943 he was a young adolescent confined to home because he wasn't well. His home is within a short distance of St. Mogue's Island and very close to where the council boat, or (Erne type) cot as it was then, was kept to carry the funeral corteges out to burials on St. Mogue's Island.

On St Patrick's night 1943 there was a Parochial dance in the hall of the workhouse in Bawnboy and an aeroplane was heard circling progressively lower, making circles of about five miles diameter between Corlough and Templeport. After the noise of the circling plane ceased abruptly many of the revellers realizing that it had crashed went searching and some were nearly lost on Gowlagh bog where they thought the aircraft had come down.

Aidan's father Michael was visiting Rector Armstrong at the Rectory and was about to leave for home at 11 o'clock when the plane flew very low over Corboy Hill. It crashed in the water with a very loud explosion and flash slightly to the North of St. Mogue's Island but just short of the adjacent island. Aidan's father and the rector took the Rector's boat out in the dark to the crash location and attempted to look for survivors but as calling didn't



The 'Cot' boat at Templeport Lake with the 'Crash' island at the right.

elicit any response and the search in the dark was abandoned due to the smell of petrol and the danger of fire.

The next morning the Garda (police) arrived and shortly after security was taken over by the Irish Army who brought in a raft to remove all they could. Security was very tight and no local people were allowed near the crash site. The operation took up to three weeks during which time he remembers having some of the soldiers billeted in the family home. They slept beside the fire in the kitchen/living room in their own sleeping bags. At one stage Aidan was shown the belts of 20mm machine gun ammunition, every second shell of which was a tracer. He particularly remembers one of the propellers with yellow tipped blades, which 'weighed about six stone', was around his house for many years, but regrettably may have been put into the foundations of their new house, built in the late fifties. In 2006 when I was introduced to him, he recalled the salvaged fuel tanks having a thick rubber coating on the insides which reflects the aircraft's self sealing fuel tanks.

Another local resident David Breiden of Ballyconnell remembers watching from the window in his school classroom the boats and raft going to and back from the Island when the army were recovering whatever they could. When asked about the dance in Bawnboy he told that he thought there was another dance in Templeport Hall on the same night. Since St Patrick's day would have been a public holiday and as dance halls were small and most people had to walk or cycle it would have been very probable that dances were held in both locations. He was only eleven and would have been too young at the time to attend dances!



Dennis Burke holding a piece of a spar from JL710 in photo taken from St Mogue's Island jetty. Part of the small Island can be seen on the right. JL710 probably would have circled in from the left, low across the farm buildings in the distant centre then hit the water to the right of the boat



Aidan McGovern and his sister Mena on his new BSA 350 in front of their old house at the edge of Templeport lake over which the plane flew very low, almost skimming the chimney just before crashing .(photo Aidan McGovern, about 1953)

Armed with this knowledge I requested a copy of the aircraft's 1943 crash report from the RAF Museum at Hendon, London. I was delighted to receive this some time in 2004 and from this was able to obtain the pilot's name, one R. Kakura (*sic*). This in itself would not have helped much except that the form recorded his nationality as Australian. This was a stroke of luck of sorts as one can search for details of all wartime Australian personnel on an Australian Government website. This quickly confirmed the name and serial number of the man as Richard Kukura 415155 and gave me his place of enlistment. It was with some hope that I contacted some of the local radio stations and war museum in the locality. However, having passed on this seemingly limited information to Nigel and John in Cavan, it was John who made the subsequent lucky find of a Stephanie Kukura on a genealogy web site. Stephanie turned out to be none other than our pilots nephew's wife. And, more surprisingly, Richard was found to be alive and well in Perth Western Australia. And so John and Nigel were able to correspond with Richard and the results of this are visible in this publication. Over the ensuing two years Richard was able to recount for us the details of their escape from their lost aircraft and also of their subsequent service in the Mediterranean theatre. It was through Richard that we also learned that unfortunately Tommy had passed away in 1995.

A visit in October 2005 to the Irish Military Archives allowed me to view the Irish Army Intelligence File, on the incident. Unfortunately, the file is a little sparse for the

simple reason that the day after the crash in Cavan, a Liberator bomber landed in Donegal and the investigating officer had to make his way to that location to deal with the crew of seven on that aircraft. At the time that the report was filed, it was recorded that the crew had landed in Northern Ireland after bailing out. The aircraft was described as having crashed "Into a harbour of a small island and was completely wrecked". The aircraft was described as having blown up on impact, with the wreckage lying a about 100 yards from the shore. The fuselage was said to be blocking the way to the graveyard, there being a graveyard on the island with the remains of a church. Local boats were reported to be unsuitable for accessing the wreckage. Nevertheless, as can be seen Irish Army personnel salvaged the wreckage.

In May 2006, Nigel, finally managed to get me to visit the area around Bawnboy. Nigel was kind enough bring me to the three landing sites, those of Richard, Tommy and their Beaufighter. I was also shown one of the casings from the aircrafts 20mm cannon shells and the many remaining pieces of the unfortunate aircraft. I was introduced to Aidan McGovern who as a child witnessed the Army recovery of the aircraft wreckage. I cannot thank Nigel enough for the hospitality shown to me on the day and the time he gave over to me. It was very much appreciated!

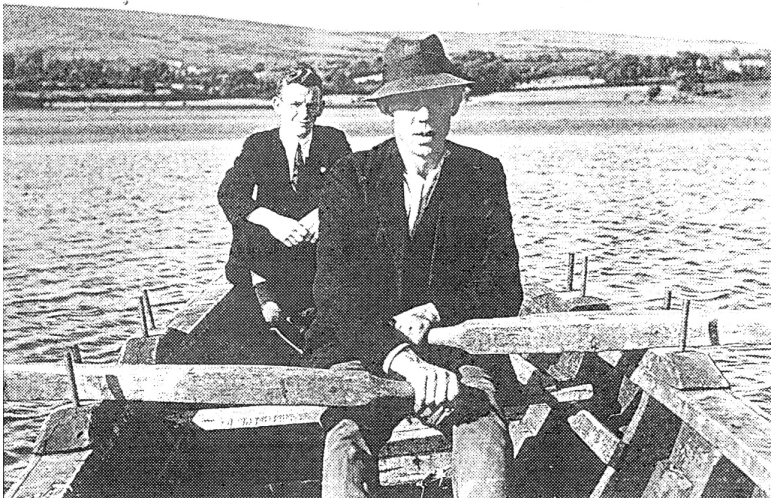
Finally by another happy coincidence, Tommy's daughter Liz had written to Richard in 2006 to keep in touch and by reply she was told of Nigel's efforts to trace this history. Liz has since then been able to fill in some of the details of Tommy's experiences on that night in March 1943.

And so, it is with delight that I thank Nigel and the people of Bawnboy for bringing back to life a small and lost part of Ireland's Emergency history, and I welcome the families of Richard Kukura and Tommy Hulme back to the area where their relatives began their wartime adventures, it is my honour to have assisted in whatever small way to this happy event.

*Dennis
Burke*

June 2006

**Michael
McGovern rowing
the old 'Cot' with
Canon Tiernan
behind.** (Photo Fr
Brown S.J. 1939 from
Chris Maguire's book
Bawnboy and Tem-
pleport 1999)



“The Night The Plane Came Down”

Phil McManus recalls The Templeport Emergency

Templeport Hall was packed. So were Cloone, Drumnamore, Creevaley, . . . it was St. Patrick’s Night and back in 1943 that meant our only dance during Lent.

The war had been raging now for four and a half years but who cared, on St. Patrick’s Night? We danced to our hearts content to top hits like “Now is the hour”, “Darling live till morn”, and “The Valley of Knockanure” — eat your heart out Michael Jackson!

The part I hated most about the war was having to eat brown bread — and I hated the rationing. Everything was rationed. Fags were scarce — and they were dear too — ten fags for seven pence, but they could cost you a shilling on the black market. It was the time, too, of plenty of work but no money. Whole families had to stay at home from school to help with the compulsory tillage — each farmer had to till a quarter of his farm. There were plenty of people about, and this meant big crowds at the local dances, but this St. Patrick’s Night was to prove very special. A local lad burst in, full of excitement. He hadn’t been at the dance as his mother had died a few months previously — and in those days no one went dancing for twelve months if there had been a death in the house. We have lost our sense of values in this regard too. Anyway he told us that an aeroplane had flown in a circle around Templeport, Aughawillan and Corlough — it was very noisy, there were lights flashing, each time it circled it was coming lower, almost touching the houses and trees. He thought it had crashed somewhere between Templeport Creamery and Corlough.



Part of the Plane is still functioning! P. J. (Sonny) Callaghan, Aughawillan, points to the hydraulic pump on a water tank at his home. Sonny heard the plane crash, cycled to Port Lake. took the pump as a souvenir and eventually put it to use when he built the tank in 1952.

Many of us had never seen a plane so we abandoned the girlfriends and headed off on the bikes in search of this phenomenon. Other fellows took to the fields, Eventually we discovered that the plane had crashed into Port Lake beside St Mogue’s Island. The Church of Ireland rector, who lived near the lake, led a group of people on a rescue mission for survivors. They found no survivors — or bodies — but they did find plenty of live ammunition on board.

Souvenir hunters brought home some of the bullets and shells and amused themselves for the remainder of Lent exploding them in a big fire. They knew very little of the dangers of such a carry on — but luckily no one was injured.

March 18th was Ballyconnell Fair Day. They were there from Corlough, Aughawillan, Kiltyhugh, Ballinamore, Garadice, Newtowngore, Drumeela — but the farmers from Templeport were the centre of attention and they were all authorities on what had happened — even though a lot of them had been in bed during it all.

It gradually transpired that the pilot and co-pilot had baled out — one of them near Kinawley and the other near Corlough. The Parish Priest gave him a pair of Wellingtons and he headed off for the North.

The local L.D.F. were put on duty at the lake to keep sightseers and souvenir hunters away. One night they were joined by the L.D.F. from Aughawillan and they became souvenir hunters themselves! Parts of the plane, I'm sure, are still to be found somewhere in the Aughawillan area. The army eventually came and took away the remainder of the live ammunition. Whatever was left is now at the bottom of Port Lake.

For many years every event around Templeport centred around “the night the plane came down” — everything happened that night, on the day before, or the day after. Local people claimed that our local saint, St Mogue, took the controls of the plane after the pilot baled out and guided it safely away from the homes of the parish. But he probably had St. Patrick as Co-pilot! St. Mogue saved us in other ways too. People going to America always brought St. Mogue's Clay with them to guarantee a safe passage. Indeed some Corlough people who survived the ill-fated Titanic believed it was St. Mogue's clay that had saved them from a watery grave. When building a house people had faith in St. Mogue too — they put some of the clay into the walls of the house to guard against fire. Indeed it was the only fire insurance policy many of us had!



John Patrick Flynn (above) and Paddy Quinn (below) remember the excitement around Aughawillan on the night the plane came down.



Little wonder, then, that hundreds of people from Leitrim and West Cavan attend St. Mogue's Stations every January, and many families still bury their dead in the cemetery on St. Mogue's Island.

St. Mogue — often called St. Aidan — is said to have actually been born on this same island. He became Bishop of Ferns and retired in his old age to county Leitrim where he died. He was buried on the island which was then named after him.

But to come back to the plane.

There were numerous stories as to what it was doing around Templeport on that St. Patrick's Night in '43. Perhaps the most popular one was about a local man who had joined the British army at the beginning of the war when he had been working in England. However, he had left the army for health reasons. (He was sick of it). On that night he was convinced it was a German plane sent out to kidnap him, or maybe kill him. He wasn't seen around Templeport for days after. **After the night the plane came down!**



Patrick McCartan, Drummucker, remembers the night the plane came down and the stories at Ballyconnell Fair the next day.

Phil McManus
Leitrim Guardian 1989

Snippets

During a telephone call to his sister Maura now living in England earlier this week Aidan McGovern mentioned he was going to attend the meeting to discuss the Beaufighter crash and asked her if she remembered anything of the event. She did! She told her brother Aidan that not only did she hear the plane but saw it through the house window. She described it as making a tremendous roar, having flashing lights and must have been just over chimney level. She thought it clipped two Ash trees which were between the lake and the front of their house.

Aidan had often wondered where his mother had been on that night. According to his sister Maura their mother had been visiting a elderly neighbour, a Mrs Reilly who lived a few hundred yards towards the main road.

When their mother returned she was extremely relieved that her children were safe; having been so close to death if the plane had hit the roof.

If you read Dennis Burke's account you may remember that their father Michael McGovern had spent the evening up at the rectory then went out in the boat with the Rector to the crash site to look for survivors.

Jim McGoldrick's Recollections

Jim McGoldrick from Gortnacorrige was an officer in the local defence force during the war. His unit covered the Bawnboy and Corlough area while the rest of Templeport was in the Ballyconnell area. Jim had seen fighter aircraft before. They used to pass within sight of his home while returning north from anti-submarine patrols in the Atlantic. On one occasion in early or mid 1942 he saw a damaged fighter flying quite low and being nursed back to base in Fermanagh by several other aircraft. It didn't make it, eventually crashing near Mullan, the crew escaped unscathed.

Regarding the Templeport crash, Jim recalls that on St Patrick's night both the LDF and the Gardai were well aware of the plane's plight as it passed low over this locality. The local Gardai had access to Packie McGeough's car and Jim along with Sergeant Roche and Guard Morgan arrived at Port lake within an hour and a half of the crash. They woke Michael McGovern and went out to the plane. They were relieved to find that the seat straps were unbuckled and that the two crewmen had apparently baled out. Michael didn't mention that he'd already been out to the Island with Rector Armstrong, Jim thinks this may have been because Michael wanted them to believe they were the first there.



Marion and Jim McGoldrick at their home (6/06)

The priority then was to seal off the crash site and also organise patrols to be on the lookout for the two missing crew. We now know that they evaded capture and returned safely to the north. Meanwhile, back at Port, Jim and his comrades were ordered to requisition all local boats on the lake. These were then moored at the County Council boathouse and the Bawnboy LDF mounted a round-the-clock guard on them. Three days later they were withdrawn and replaced by the Ballyconnell - Templeport squad, who were themselves later replaced by the regular army and Ordnance personnel, who commenced salvage work. (The Air Corps had R.A.F. advisors in civilian clothes along with them) Jim doesn't know any details of this phase of the operation.

When we asked Jim about the airman's escape from Corlough back to Northern Ireland he replied that the airman would have been unchallenged as the LDF volunteers designated to patrol that area had "gone to a dance!". Jim explained that he'd heard later that after leaving the Corlough Presbytery the airman had walked in a north easterly direction and arrived in Swanlinbar on Church Road. This would have taken Tommy across the Pedar a Voher's crossroads immortalised in two of Percy French's most popular songs, Phil the Fluter's Ball and Eileen Oge. (Pedar a Voher's means 'Peter of the road' and is often written as 'Pedravor' or 'Petrovore' as in the song "the flower of Ardmagullian and the pride of petrovore ... with a toot on the flute and a twiddle on the fiddle ...").

Oliver Brady & NR 6th July 2006

Snippets

Katie Dolaghan Remembers

I was married only a week and remember I was at the dance in Templeport Hall with my new husband Peter known as a 'P' when soon after eleven o'clock someone came in and shouted that there was a plane circling around. Fitzpatrick's Band of Milltown were playing but we all rushed out and saw very clearly the lights of it as it passed over, it was flying very low and making lots of noise. It seemed to be an awful big looking machine but as most of us had never seen one at that time, we didn't know any better.

Later during the dance someone came in and said it had come down in Port Lake.

As we came home past Cafferty's Cross William Cafferty was standing outside his house, he confirmed that the plane was down and told us he thought there must have been lives lost.

The next day Georgie Gault arrived at our house, he told us he was going to see where the aeroplane was. He went on down and later came back with some pieces of it. I think he must have been going to the plane nearly every day for weeks! I particularly remember him coming with something which looked like an anchor about three or four inches long, I don't remember what it was.

Seamus Brady's dad told him that on the evening of 17th March 1934 when people were going to dances they called to his mother's shop beside Port lake where they bought minerals and biscuits. Some time later during the night while the dances were still on he heard the loud rumbling noise of an aeroplane. It circled about three times, he noticed that each time it came round it was lower. On the last trip it crossed the house and flew to the Island.

His dad went to the Island the following day and thought it "Fearful" when he saw the tail of the plane sticking up in the air. He also was surprised about all the mud which had been blown up to the tops of the bushes and trees!

Seamus also told me he had recovered a blade of one of the propellers which still had the hub attached, it was very heavy and while trying to take it out of the old Cot boat with Michael McGovern they had nearly capsized it! He explained that some people from a war museum in Northern Ireland had asked for it and been given it. He heard years later that it had been on display in a pub in Enniskillen but didn't remember which one.

John Edwards recalls that On St Patrick's Night 1943 John, his mother, Peter, Tom, Shelia and Nancy were at home in Killycrin. "We heard an aeroplane flying around for a long time, it made several rounds and finally it crashed. We knew it was an aeroplane in trouble. We knew it wasn't going to last too long, there was a sharp noise off it."

Oliver Brady's interview with two colourful locals

An ancient Irish legend tells of the arrival of a mythical race called the Tuatha De Danann in Sliabh an Iarainn (Slieve Aneiran - the Iron Mountain). One variant of the tale says they came down in a mist while another says they arrived on the mountain in ships.

..... On St Patrick's night, 1943 two men came down through the clouds and mist that covered Sliabh an Iarainn's sister mountains Cuilcagh and Slieve Rushen. They had abandoned a 'ship' of sorts namely an RAF Bristol Beaufighter. The plane continued on and finally came down near another legendary location, St Mogue's Island in Port Lake. Both plane and crew soon assumed mythical status. It would be an exaggeration to suggest that the crew's adventures were on a par with those of the Tuatha De Danann but fact and fiction mingle together to make the incident one of the more enduring episodes of recent folk memory.

What makes the story so intriguing is that, unlike the De Danann, who stayed around and fought with their new neighbours, Tommy Hulme and Richard Kukura vanished in to The North within hours of landing and had minimal contact with at most ten local people.

The plane and parachutes were the physical evidence of their presence. The Tuatha De Danann if they even existed have left no evidence and parachutes are not mentioned in the old sagas.

For decades the story fascinated locals. Many myths and assumptions sprung up about its final journey e.g. It was believed that the plane came across the land border, its most likely base being Enniskillen. It was also widely believed that mechanical failure of either engines or controls were responsible for the mishap, in fact it probably ran out of fuel! Even myths about the actual names of the crew emerged, as will be outlined later in my interview with George Gault.

As time passed the plane crash faded from the folk memory. In today's modern world of instant news it would barely merit a mention. Today we have a very short attention span. Even a major fatal air crash is a 'three day wonder'. It would take the re-arrival of the Tuatha De Danann or that of a space ship full of little green men to generate the kind of excitement and interest that the Beaufighter caused.

For local historians the incident has all the ingredients for a great story. It is strange that it took so long for the incident to be investigated. All credit is due to Dennis Burke, John Patterson and David Earle for their efforts but, most of all we are indebted to Richard Kukura for his extremely lucid and detailed account of the plane's final journey. He has filled in some major pieces of the jigsaw puzzle. It is pity that Tommy Hulme was never able to return here and see where JL710 finally came to rest but we hope Richard and Olga Kukura will do so in the not too distant future. Personally, when Nigel showed me photographs of Tommy and Richard, I felt a sense of privilege in that I've seen the images of two men that a whole generation of local people, many of whom have passed away would like to have seen, particularly face to face.

Again from the local history perspective the story is not completely ended,. The absence

of Guarda and RUC records is unusual. Were they lost? Or because of wartime censorship and because there were no fatalities was it conveniently airbrushed from official accounts. Army records are very scant but there are some snippets although some enigmas still remain. How much of the plane was officially retrieved? How much might still lie beneath the waters of Port Lake?

While I have heard many stories relating to the 1943 'plane crash, I have based this article on tape recordings, conducted in 1999, with Benny O'Reilly and George Gault sadly, now both deceased. To transcribe their stories would take up too much space, so I will describe mostly in my own words what they told me, quoting them verbatim on the more interesting aspects of their stories.

Their versions tally in most details. I will deal with Benny's version first as he was one of the first men on the scene. I conducted two taped interviews with Benny and for convenience, will mingle excerpts from both.

Interview with Benny Reilly

Benny and his brothers John and Terry were at home that night. In common with others, Benny seems to have special memories of the roar of the incoming 'plane. He describes his initial experience as follows:

"And then this 'plane came over You'd run out to see a 'plane at any time that time. They were new fangled and it went across the house and, of course they came running out when they heard it. It disappeared over the back of the house and we're standing there and back it comes with an odious roar of it. I said, My God, they're going to bomb us out of it tonight! And we stood down behind the wall of the house and it just tore across the house, do ya know! Heading for Corlough direction, and By Jesus, back it comes again and the roar of it. The pilot you see had baled out. What ever way he left the controls, it was for to circle the 'plane anyway. It continued to circle and circle 'til it finally came down."

Initially Benny thought that it was a bomb attack on the creamery as he heard what he described "as an explosion" coming from that direction. He, Terry and John went to the creamery by bike. It was intact. They then went to Smith's cross where they met Guard Cassidy and he thought Guard Morgan, (the local policemen). The Guards were in Tommy Mullaly's car, if Tommy was driving was not established. They concluded that the 'plane had crashed, but where? Some thought Cor Bog, others Killyran. People were beginning to emerge particularly from local dance halls and excitement was rife. The O'Reilly brothers went off in different directions, with instructions to report back to the Guards, should they find anything. Eventually, they joined up again at the rectory, where they heard from Revd Armstrong and Michael McGovern that the plane had landed on Port Lake beside the little island.

After leaving the rectory they met the Guards again and for a while Benny was "that excited and fearin "that he was unable to remember exactly where the 'plane was. The O'Reilly's then went to Donohoe's of Ray and borrowed the Cot, which they brought out to the Island. Benny must have been even more excited when he rowed out to the scene where he thought he saw "big red letters on the plane stating 250 lbs High Explosive ". On return-

ing to the shore, Benny again met Guard Cassidy who was anxious to get out to the Island. Benny negotiated the loan of Henry Wilcox's boat and he and Guard Cassidy went back out to the Island.

Next day he came back. In his words "It was getting fierce thronged around these parts". It would appear that at least five or six local boats were busy plying to and from the Island. One local boatman, probably fed up with all the fuss, began to stipulate who could and who could not get on to his boat. Benny explained that his brother Terry was refused permission to board. He was incensed at this and being a good swimmer, he suggested that he was of a mind to swim out and take the oars off the boat in mid lake leaving boatman and passengers stranded.

We discussed aspects of Salvage for a while. Benny said that John took away lots of little nuts and screws that were later very useful when they were used for repairing horse harnesses. I think webbing was mentioned as well and was probably used for the same purpose. The O'Reilly's took away lots of bullets. Benny describes them as cannon ammunition. I think they were 20mm machine gun shells. He spoke of some of them being like flares or rockets. They used to detonate them using a vice, hammer and nail. His description of the light emitted from these flares is vague. I think there were actually tracer rounds.

Another aspect, which Benny describes, I find hard to explain. He says that the plane was covered in a luminous substance which would have made it more visible if it was under water. He said that he got this stuff on his overalls. If, ordinarily, the overall were dry, you wouldn't notice it, however if they got wet, it would light up as if one had "poured white or fresh blue paint on them"

These are just some of the snippets that Benny related to me.

Oliver Brady Interview with Georgie Gault

George Gault's version corresponds with Benny O'Reilly's in many ways. He was at home in bed that night and heard the "Sound of a plane 'hovering' about and an awful hum and an awful buzz".

Ballyconnell Fair was on the next day where George and his father had gone to sell cattle. The main topic on the way to Ballyconnell was the 'plane crash. According to George, the news spread through the fair "like wildfire". Naturally, George could hardly wait to get back to the crash scene from the fair. He and his friend Willie Wilcox went out to the Island in a boat that they co-owned. The scene was "Like a picnic . . . like a football match". Quoting George again; "The plane was upside down in the water. It came in and caught in the tops of the trees and somersaulted". George said that he could see the 'plane's machine guns lying in the water.

We dealt for a while with salvage operations carried out by George and his friends. They went out several times in the days following the crash and retrieved various items including copper flasks. They brought these home, "Reddened them in the fire" and successfully converted them into fishing baits with which they caught many pike.

They also engaged in another more dangerous type of recycling. Owing to the scarcity of shotgun cartridges, they attempted to use the gunpowder from the twenty millimetre machine gun bullets in used shotgun cartridge cases. They packed the powder into the cartridge followed by lead shot obtained from the local creamery. (This lead shot was used for testing the butterfat content in milk.) George describes the venture into the munitions business like this:

‘You know what we were after. There were no cartridges here, the Emergence was on . . . We thought if could salvage all these bullets which were in brass cases we could empty them and fill our own cartridges.’ George went on to explain that he removed what he called the ‘anvil’ from the used shotgun cartridge. I presume what he described as the ‘anvil’ was the percussion detonation cap. He then replaced this with a toy cap from a child’s cap gun. It was now time to test the new invention. George loaded his shot gun and fired it. The result? According to George “ it let off a kind of a ‘whoof ‘ and the lead shot fell out on the grass and burned up in front of me.”

Later, while talking to soldiers who were stationed at Bellnacur bridge he told them what he’d been up to. Needless to say they were not impressed, telling him how lucky he was, a soldier explained that the toy gun cap had not been strong enough to detonate the powder. Gunpowder for rifles and machine guns requires a far more powerful detonation charge than that used in shotgun cartridges. A soldier commented, “So that’s what you were doing, trying to make cartridges. Well you are a very lucky man that’s standing there this evening. The cap you had in the cartridge wasn’t strong enough to explode what you had in the gun. If it had been strong enough neither you nor the gun would be here. You’s were playing with fire.”

George also told me, that Terry Reilly Benny’s brother was going away with the radio transmitter but the soldiers took it from him. Terry was very technically minded and possibly might have succeeded where Tommy Hulme had failed.

Mention of Tommy Hulme brings me to a peculiar aspect of George’s story. George and a friend found and read what appears to have been a logbook detailing flights of the Beaufighter. He says that the crewmen’s names were Hume and Hulmeyer. But he does not mention Richard Kukura or a similar name. For a very observant man it is strange that he got the names so wrong. It was not until 2004 that I found out their real names!

So ends a minute sample of snippets of what is, arguably, one of the most exciting nights in the history of the area.

Oliver Brady 13th June 2006

Snippets

A story told by Patrick Duffy; a story he heard often as a child told by his parents.

The cannon shells were used by many locals who extracted the powder to fill shotgun cartridges. On one occasion one exploded while being dismantled in a vice and the bullet went out through a doorway and cleanly decapitated a turkey outside!

Local Recollections – Corlough & Moherreagh (Handed Down) as to what happened to the crew of Beaufighter JL710

The Corlough Landing:-

Source: This view is based on the recollection of the late Joseph McGovern, father of James Joseph 'Tucker' McGovern & his sister, Chrissy, from both of whom this account has come, together with comment from another family member now in England

What was reported: Joseph McGovern is reported to have said that one crew member parachuted into a field atop what is known as Quinn's Hill (the parachute was seen still on the field next morning; it had been initially mistaken for a skiff of over-night snow). The crew member is reported to have seen several lights in a thatched cottage house (now a stone ruin in a grove of trees) just past a cow byre (a remnant of which is still visible). He is said to have gone down the hill to this house (which belonged to a Peter McGovern) and been met by the same man at his door with an axe in his hand. Apparently, the crew member was able to reassure Peter McGovern and secured direction to the nearby Corlough Presbytery (up the hill via an ass cart track).

Variants:

There are different sub-versions: according to one version, the landing paddock was said to be lower down the hill; another, is that there were two houses that the crew member went to - one known as 'Phadrick's' (Peter's) & the other, known as 'Featheree's'; the crew member is said to have burnt his papers in the first and been fed in the second; this differs from the first view that has him being fed in the Presbytery; another snippet was that the priest, whom we know to have been Father John McGovern, gave the crewman a "Pair of Bad Shoes", and that he, Father John, sent or told his nephew (Jack 'Barney' McManus) to show the crew member to the border but, on this same version, Jack only took him part of the way and then pointed him in the direction of the border.

The Moherreagh Landing:-

Source: Meanwhile, it emerged from our continuing inquiries that a second parachute landing site was in the area of Moherreagh. This view is based on the recollections of Frank Reilly as to what his Father reported seeing on the occasion of the crash. At the time, the Reilly's were living near the house of some people called Heavey in Moherreagh

What was reported: On the night of 17th March, Frank Reilly says that he was told by his late father, that he was visiting Heaveys when they heard the plane pass over (and possibly the subsequent explosion). They looked out and thought they saw something white in the sky. Later a voice outside called them to the door where they found a uniformed man who they took in and fed. There was a young boy in the house who was an orphan named Phil Reilly, but no relation to Frank Reilly

The Heaveys subsequently moved out of the district & Phil Reilly was last known to be in England. Frank Reilly believes that 'as the young boy', Phil, would have been 17 years old at the time.

Which Crew Member landed Where:

Initially, we assumed the crew member who landed on the Corlough site was Richard. This was probably because of the references to a young nephew which seemed to fit in with Richard's own early reference to the role of a young boy. And the photos we have provided of a landing site, the Presbytery, and anything else that related to Corlough, have been provided on the assumption that they bear on Richard's experience after landing.

As we were still wedded to this assumption when we only recently became aware of Moherreagh as the other landing site, we took it that this must be where the other (then unknown) crew member must have made his landing. But in the light of Richard's recollection we believe that crew member (whom we now know was Tommy) is more likely to have been the one who landed in Corlough. This is because the elements of Richard's recollection and those of what was originally said about what happened at these landing sites fit better together on this new proposition. And so, contrariwise, Richard, seem to us to have been the crew member who landed in Moherreagh.

That is our view which we can elaborate on but we would be much more interested in anything Richard might have to say on these respective local accounts of what happened after he & Tommy departed their unfortunate Beaufighter.

John Patterson 23-05-2004

Snippets

At the first meeting of the committee to make arrangements for the Kukura's visit to Ireland Pat McAdam who remembered the incident told us that he had been at school at the time but shortly after the crash had visited the Island on Easter Sunday (25th April). He said he particularly remembered the 'plane with its tail stuck up into the air.

Snippets

Last Monday 26th June Packie Joe Brady took me out to the area near St Mogue's Island where as boatman he remembers having taken divers to some twenty years ago. On that occasion they appeared to locate a single large section of the aeroplane; as when two of the divers were in the water one was able to feel the other jumping up and down twenty feet away.

We had with us a 10 foot aluminium pole with which we attempted to find whatever piece of plane had been the cause of the diver's excitement those years ago but unfortunately we weren't able to locate anything of significance.

1943 - 1945

To give you some information on the service completed by Tommy and myself, I am sending you a short version of what I can remember. I hope that it will be what you want.

Not seen your Website yet as I am not on the Internet, however, I hope to see it soon. I wish you all the best of luck.

After our Irish adventure, I took a couple of weeks to recover somewhat from my injuries. I was then sent to Bristol to the Beaufighter factory to pick up a new aircraft and then took it back to Islay. A few days later I had carried out the necessary tests and flew down to Portreath in Cornwall where, overnight, the wing machine guns were removed and extra fuel tanks were fitted in their place. The guns were stored in the fuselage along with a heavy load of spare parts for the Middle East. My cannons were allowed only twenty rounds each. It took us five and three-quarter hours to reach Gibraltar.

The following morning we set course for Algiers and had a trouble free flight, reaching there by eleven o'clock. After having lunch, we took off again, this time south over the Atlas Mountains into the Sahara to avoid the fighting in Tunisia, then east to Castel Benito in Libya. Quite clearly next morning we were flying not far from the sea toward Marble Arch and reached it in the middle of a sandstorm. The storm blew itself out over night leaving everything covered in a thick layer of red dust. In a short time we were on our way again and at about mid-day we landed on an aerodrome outside Cairo. Here we were separated from our aeroplane and trucked to Al Maza, a transit camp where we would be accommodated until we were posted to a Squadron. A few days later, while visiting the City, I met Olga at an afternoon dance and two weeks later we were engaged to be married. With a good slice of luck we were married a month later.



**Richard and Olga on their wedding day in Cairo, Egypt
in July 1943**

Meanwhile, Tommy and I were posted to a Beaufighter Squadron on Malta and were flying regular sorties against the enemy.

In July 1943 the Squadron was posted temporarily to the desert at Gardabia to provide long-range escort for the allied invasion of Sicily. As the invasion progressed northward, we also progressed to the north to a permanent aerodrome at Catania right next to the Mt Etna volcano.

In September we were moved to the west coast of Sicily, to a landing strip called Borizzo. From this Base we began attacks on enemy shipping off the French and Spanish coasts.

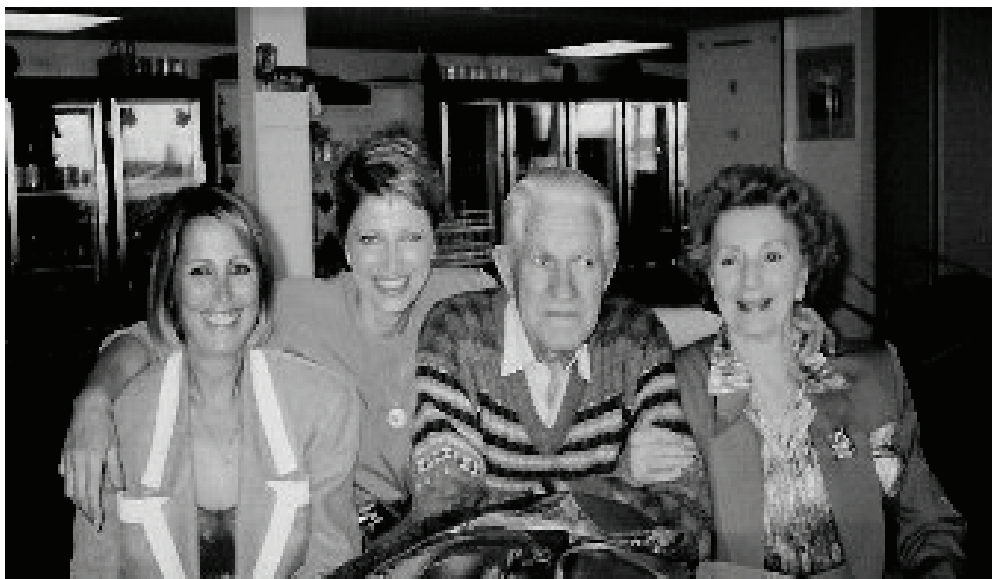
Quite suddenly, the whole Squadron was moved to Gibraltar to fly long-range escort for the Battleships bringing Churchill and Roosevelt to their conference at Casablanca. We then returned to Base. In January 1944 we were posted to Alghero on the northwest coast of Sardinia from where we continued to attack enemy shipping.

July of 1944 saw Tommy and I posted to Cyprus as instructors. We stayed there until January 1945. Then Tommy was posted back to the UK and I was posted to Cairo. In February 1945 I was posted, and accompanied by Olga, back to Australia by ship. I was discharged in the following year.

Written by *Richard Kukura*

December 4 2005

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**From left to right : Their daughters: Nicole & Lynette, Richard and Olga Kukura
on their sixtieth wedding anniversary in July 2003**

(Photo taken at the East Fremantle Yacht Club where they are members)

The “Bawnboy Aeroplane”

Interview with Cllr Wilson Elliot M.B.E.

As a result of the meeting I attended in the Templeport Community Centre I realised that there wasn't much research done on the ground north of the border. With this in mind I thought I would call with Wilson, a historian in local events, townlands, surnames and families. I've got to know Wilson well in recent years so I called to see him at his home.

On the day I called he was sitting in the kitchen so I pulled up a chair and started to chat about things in general, the weather, the garden, etc.

Then I asked him,

“Did you ever hear anything about a plane crash in Cavan during the war.” Without hesitation he looked straight at me and said “The Bawnboy Plane!”

I asked “What do you know about the Bawnboy plane.”

“I saw it” he answered.

“You saw it in the lake” I asked.

“No” he answered “I saw it coming up the road on the back of a long lorry. One of them low loaders. I remember it well” he said, “like yesterday. I was out the back of the house, and I heard my Mother calling “Come quick.” I ran to the front of the house to see what was the problem and there it was on the back of the lorry. Badly damaged in the front, with the wings lying either side and the colour was grey.”

I then asked “Could you put a date on that.

He said “I do believe it as shortly after my Father died and he died 7/4/43”.

“Where did you live then?”

“Drumhack. between Mullen & Florencecourt, on the main road.”

“How old were you?”

“19”

Edward J Brogan 26/6/06

Eddie's story

In the late autumn of 2004 I rowed a boat from Nigel's shore on Templeport Lake to St. Mogue's Island. I had with me Willie Seaman. Willie an accomplished diver, and like myself interested in World War II memorabilia.

Some eighteen years previous Willie had dived on the Beaufighter crash site, so we knew exactly where to go and what to expect.

On Willie's first dive that day he came up to report that the thick layer of matted vegetation on the lake floor that he experienced before, was still there, but we came prepared. I handed Willie down a garden edging tool. With this he cut hatches in the vegetation, this allowed him search in the mud and silt below. This is slow and tiring work under water.

Over several dives that day Willie brought up Aircraft Radio parts Some high explosive 20mm Cannon round heads. A Bristol Hercules spark plug! More interestingly while probing the lake bed nearer the shore among the reed beds we struck something very hard several feet under the mud, when the probe was withdrawn a glug of oil came to the surface, this was engine oil. Not only could I see it but from the boat I could smell it. We both concluded there is an engine down there.

As established at the meeting in Templeport Community Centre the aircraft nose dived in the lake beside the Island and on impact the huge fourteen cylinder Bristol Hercules engines would have sheared their mountings, continued on their way and lodged deep in the lake bed.

Willie and I both agree that an engine could be surfaced.

This would require time and engineering. This would require funding.

Edward J Brogan 27/6/06

Engine recovery operation

It is with regret that I must report our extreme disappointment, we not only did not recover a complete engine but even failed to recover any single large pieces.

Willie Seaman and Eddie Brogan worked very hard all day on Saturday and Sunday cutting water weed roots and blowing away tons of mud but no complete engine was found. There was lots



Eddie on the raft with derrick we assembled to attempt to lift an engine
of oil and many broken engine parts buried in clay below the roots and mud. We all really thought we had found the engine on Saturday when gallons of oil rose to the surface!

Recovery of wreck from land has its own problems, obviously the damage is greater than in deep water. Recovery in water is easier provided it is reasonably deep (5-10m). Recovery from a combination of water which is more than wading depth and less than two to three metres combined with plant roots, mud and boulder clay on top of bedrock is the most difficult. Not only is the damage to the aircraft as bad as on land but the site is water logged as well.

Sea water is easier! Fresh water recovery is far more difficult and hazardous. Due to the amount of silt caused by decaying vegetation visibility is nil once activity starts. Lake water carries all sorts of invisible diseases, add to this the oil from the engines, sharps, etc and the urgency of the recovery to reduce the unwanted souvenir hunters things become quite hectic.

Soon after the aircraft hit the water it seemed to have nose dived (also from reports we had previously from observers) and made a trench in the clay three or four feet below water level approximately the length of its wing span. Much of the 'trench' was filled with mud and had weed roots matted together which Willie cut. He found what he thought were three deeper places in the clay with a higher bank in front (towards St Mogues Island) which may have been pushed forward by the diving aircraft. He had been convinced that the middle of the deeper and larger 'holes' was the nose while the other two were Port and Starboard engines. As indicated above he dug in to the bank and although he found lots of small engine pieces there was nothing large. The biggest appeared to be bits of engine cowling, some pieces of supercharger, crank case, plug leads, oil pipes and other small pieces of unidentifiable aluminium, copper, brass, steel, stainless steel, Bakelite and Paxolin. An eight by three inch piece of Perspex which may have been windscreen appeared to have been burnt at one end.

We now assume that either the very badly damaged engines were removed by the Irish army in the Spring of 1943 or by treasure (scrap metal) hunters after the site had been abandoned by the authorities. We already knew of one local man who has one of the very bent engine sleeve valves.

A bit away from the locations where we thought the engines should have been we found hundreds of miscellaneous parts, the most significant of which were a piece of cylinder with a small piece of head still attached and somewhat later in the evening before abandoning the efforts Isabel donned the diving gear and during her searching found a piston crown complete with rings.

For the readers who are not familiar with fresh water diving in these lakes I should explain that once the mud is stirred by any activity visibility drops to zero, it's dark and it isn't possible to see even inches in front so every inch needs to be searched with fingers. It's inevitable that sharp parts cut them but minor cuts aren't noticeable until the diver surfaces.

W.S. & NR 3rd July 2006



Above: Willie Seaman showing a piece of JL710 he'd just found
Below: Isabel Rofé with the piston crown she'd recovered



Some of the pieces we recovered still on the seat & in the bottom of the rowing boat; they still have to be washed and sorted

Copy of crash report obtained from Military archives Dublin in June 2004

X/1157

Ref No:
ACE/S/160SecretHeadquarters,
The Air Corps,
Baldonnal Aerodrome,
Clonsilla,
Co. DublinChief Staff Officer,
G. 2. Branch,
Department of Defence.

21st April, 1943

Crash of Beaufighter Aircraft at
Bawnboy, Co. Cavan, on the 18/3/43.

Sir,

I have the honour to submit report in connection with crash of above mentioned aircraft at Bawnboy on the 18/3/43.

Type of Aircraft Beaufighter fitted with two Bristol Hercules engines.

Service Markings: A.L. 710

Cause of Crash: Unknown

Probable Mission: Unknown

The Aircraft crashed at approximately 23.00 hours on the 17/3/43. The crew of two bailed out, and landed in Northern Ireland. It crashed into the harbour of a small island and was completely wrecked. Salvage of anything was impossible.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your Obedient Servant.

COMMANDANT

Operations, and Executive Officer-The Air Corps.

WJK/ER.

MILITARY ARCHIVES

30 JUN 2004

CATH. BRUGHA BARRACKS

Copy of correspondence obtained from Military archives Dublin in June 2004

X/1157

Reference No: G2/X/1157

G2/X/1146

G.2 Branch,
Department of Defence,
Parkgate,
Dublin.

10th August, 1943.

Officer Commanding,
Air Corps.

Articles salvaged from Belligerent
Aircraft Crashes.

Certain articles including a damaged Syko machine and maps recovered from plane crash at Williamstown and an Air Force code recovered from plane crash at Bawnboy, 18th March, 1943, were collected here by an Air Corps ~~unit~~ on 1st June this year.

These articles were handed over by an N.C.O. of this Branch in the absence of the Officer who normally deals with such transactions. This N.C.O. was not aware that such articles as the Syko machine, maps and Air Force Code are retained here and not by the Air Corps and I would be glad if you would take the necessary steps to have them returned.

I have been endeavouring to settle this matter by telephone on a number of occasions but without the desired result.

[Signature]

(Dan Bryan)

A/COLONEL.

C.S.O. G.2 BRANCH.

MILITARY ARCHIVES

30 JUN 2004

CATHAL BRUGHBA BARRACKS

In the accompanying letter P. B. Brennan Commandant of Military Archives, Cathal Brugha, Barracks, Rathmines, Dublin says that "The Air Force Code" referred to has not survived.



The Moherreagh field where Richard Kukura landed. The house where he was given hospitality is to the left of this photo and Cuilcagh mountain is the peak to the right of centre.



Dennis Burke at the house in Moherreagh where Richard Kukura was given bacon and eggs. The house would have been thatched in those days



The field in Corlough known locally as 'Quinn's Hill' where Tommy was pleased to hear a dog bark before landing without boots or socks.



Pedar a Voher's crossroads. Although Tommy didn't know it he walked across this internationally known crossroads on his way from Corlough to Swanlinbar. The place was immortalised in two of Percy French's songs, Phil the Fluter's Ball and Eileen Oge (Photo taken on 6th July 2006)



Templeport lake with the small island beside St Mogue's Island (extreme right) beside which JL710 came to rest. On the left is St Peter's Church Templeport. (Photo taken June 2006)



Templeport Lake with St Mogue's Island in the centre and Moherreagh where Richard landed on the slope of Slieve Rushen mountain to the right of the photo. (Photo taken from Darra fort)



St Mogue's Island in Templeport Lake taken from Council Boathouse (mid-winter)
The Beaufighter approached the small island (left of St Mogue's) from approximately this direction



St Mogue's Island in Templeport Lake taken from the top of St Peter's Church tower.
JL710 approached from the right and came to rest on the small island to the right of St Mogue's

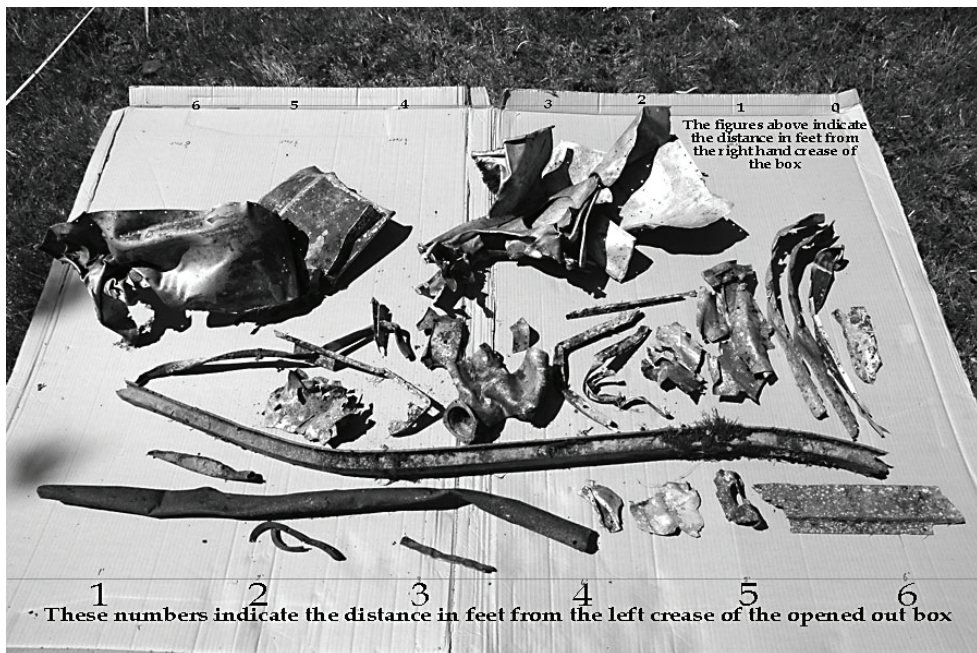
A Beaufighter presently in the RAF museum at Hendon outside London.

This photograph was given to Aidan McGovern by some people who came many years ago to investigate the Crash site.

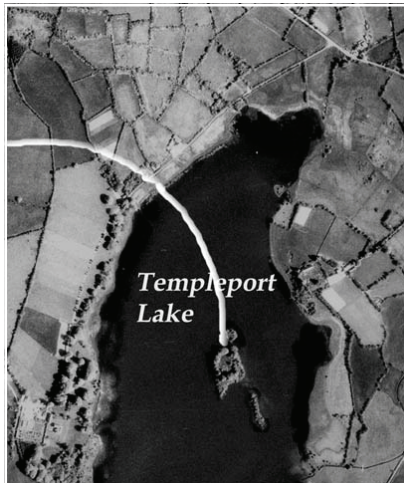
You can see a close-up photograph taken by Liz Rothwell of the escape hatch on page 15.



Beaufighter specifications	
Full Name	Bristol Type 156 Beaufighter Mk VIc
Beaufighter JL710	One of 555 built at the Bristol MAP Shadow factory at Old Mixon Weston Super Mare
Type	Maritime Strike Fighter
Developer and Primary Manufacturer	Bristol Aeroplane Company Ltd, Filton & Whitchurch, Bristol
Maiden flight -Prototype	17 July 1939
Primary users	Royal Air Force & Canadian, New Zealand and Australian Air Forces
Produced	1940-1945
Total Built	5,562 in UK + 364 in Australia (Mk VIc 518 at Bristol - 175 at Fairey)
Wingspan	57' 10" (17.6 m)
Length	41' 8" (12.7 m)
Height	15' 10" (4.83 m)
Weight	14900 lbs (7296 kg) (Max Empty) Max (AUW) 21,000lb (9,500kg)
Speed	337 mph (542 kmph) at 16,000 ft (4861m)
Service Ceiling	26,000ft (7899 m)
Range	1810 miles (2913 km)
Engine	2 x Bristol Hercules VI or XIV 1,670 hp (1230 Kw) (14 cylinder radial, sleeve valve)
Propeller	2 x D.H. Three blade, variable-pitch, Bracket type 6/6, 12ft 9in (3.89m) diameter.
Rate of Climb	1,600 ft/min (487 m/min)
Crew	2 (Pilot & Navigator, radio operator)
Weapons	Rockets, bombs or even torpedoes could be carried in addition to the arms below
Cannon 20 mm Hispano	4 in ventral bay below pilot
Machine guns 0.303"	2 in Port wing + 4 in Starboard wing + one Type K in dorsal cupola



Above: A few of the pieces that remain of Beaufighter JL 710



Above: JL710 had been flying in ever decreasing circles, this appears to have been the curved final approach! The front cover shows a stylised version of the probable course of the final decent.

Left: Close-ups of two of the many pieces of the Beaufighter which have been rescued from the lake A 12" ruler

From the National Archives of Australia

World War Two Service

Flight Lieutenant

RICHARD KUKURA

415155



Service

Royal Australian Air Force

Date of Birth

14 May 1917

Place of Birth

BOULDER CITY, WA

Date of Enlistment

21 July 1941

Place of Enlistment

PERTH, WA

Next of Kin

KUKURA, OLGA

Date of Discharge

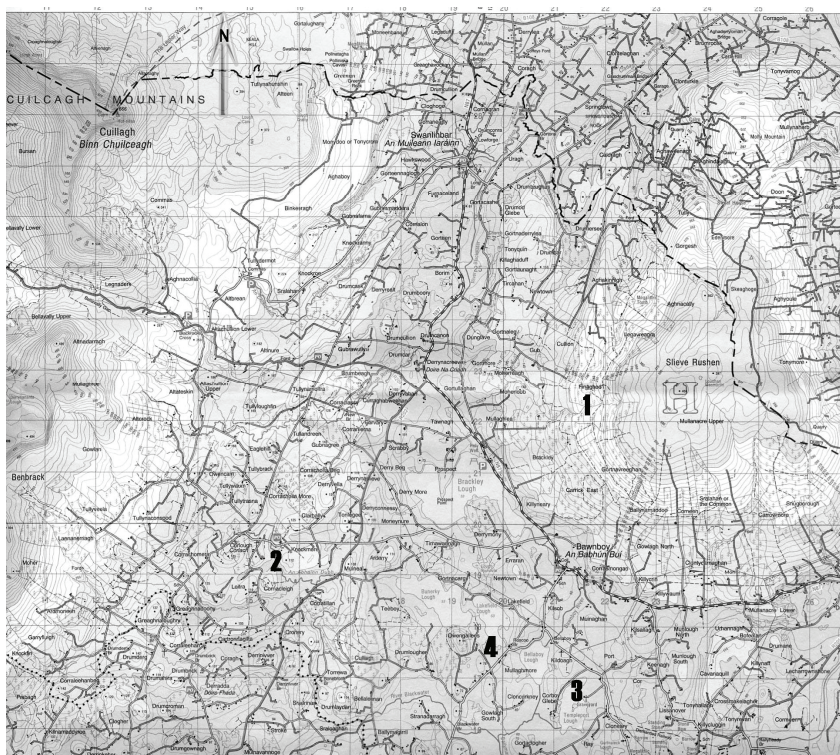
1 July 1947

Posting at Discharge

HQME

Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs

Above: Richard's WWII Service Record Below: Map of the area



Left:

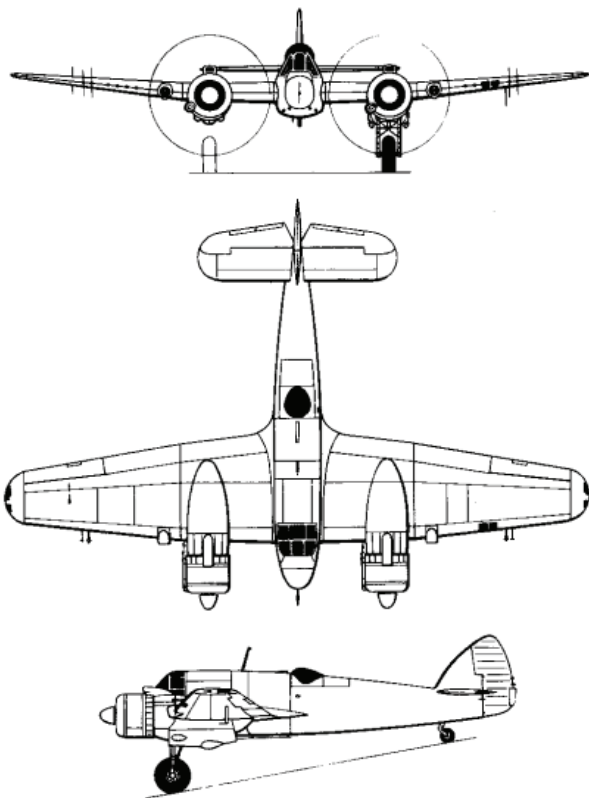
**1 Mohercagh
where Richard
landed.**

**2 Corlough
where Tommy
landed.**

**3 St Mogue's
Island,
Templeport
where JL 710
finally came to
rest.**

**4 Owengalles
where the
compass fell.**

Ordnance Survey
Ireland 1:50 000
Discovery Series
No: 27A available at all good
book shops or
from their web-
site at
www.irlgov.ie/osi



Beaufighter Outline

The Beaufighter engines were 2x fourteen-cylinder, two-Row, sleeve-valve, 1670 hp (1230 kW) Bristol Hercules VI or XVI Air Cooled Radials

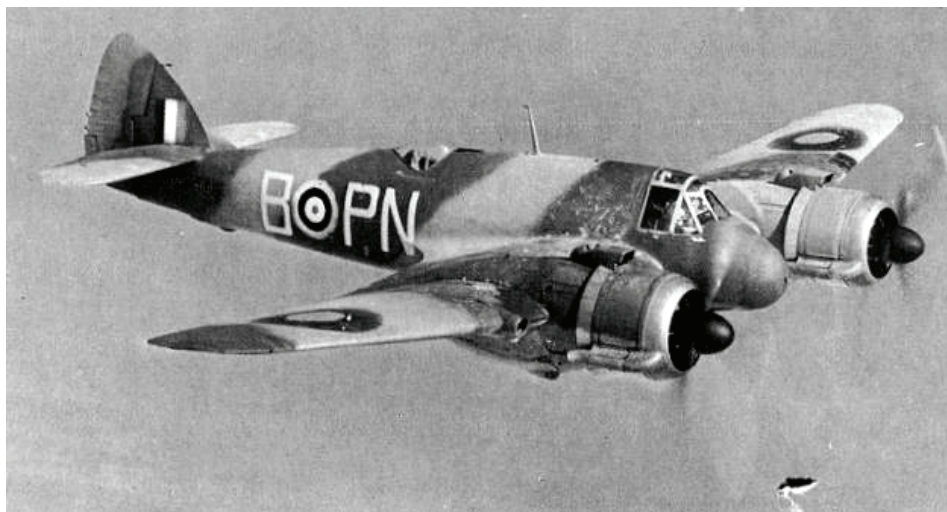
The sleeve valve was used in preference to the poppet valve because it had a number of performance advantages (as well as some disadvantages) at that time. In a two row radial engine there wasn't enough room to allow cams and pushrods for all the required valves.

Armaments

The Beaufighter carried a substantial selection of armaments, four (forward facing) 20mm canon in ventral bay and six (forward facing) 0.303in (7.7mm) machine guns in the wings (two in the port and four in the star board wings)

A Single Vickers 'K' 0.303in machine gun fitted in the dorsal cupola.

It had the capacity to carry 250lb (113kg) bombs under each wing. Provision to carry one 22.5in (57.2cm) American or 18in (45.7cm) British torpedo.



Above: A 'Beau' in flight (Photo Commonwealth of Australia - Department of Defence)

Acknowledgements and Thanks

Many thanks are due to: Richard, Olga, Nikki, Lynette and Stephanie Kukura without whom this booklet and web site wouldn't have been possible.

The story by Richard Kukura in this booklet is part of what may become his War Time Memoirs and may not be copied without his permission . © Richard Kukura 2004

Liz Rothwell provided photographs and an article about her father's time in Ireland and subsequently which are much appreciated.

Thanks are also due to so many others who made useful contributions to the research, this booklet and the website: Aidan Brady, Aidan McGovern, Benny Reilly, Chris Maguire, Ciaran Maguire, David Breiden, Eddie Brogan, Frank Reilly, Gene P Owen McGovern, Georgie Gault, Isabel Rofé, James McGovern, Jim McGoldrick, John Edwards, Katie Dolaghan, Kevin McCaffrey, Margaret McIntyre, Maura McGovern, Oliver Brady, Phil McManus, Seamus Brady, Sean McHugh, Sean O'Reilly, Sean Smith, Staff at Ballinamore library, James Joseph McGovern, Terry McIntyre, Fr Tom McKiernan, Tommy 'Tucker' McGovern, The staff of the Ballyconnell branch of Cavan County Council, Packie Joe Brady, Patrick Duffy, Willie Seamen, Councillor Wilson Elliot M.B.E., John Patterson, Dennis Burke and Dave Earl.

Apologies to those who have helped but been left out.

The photograph of Initial Training School, Pearce, Perth, W.A. and A 'Beau' in flight were provided by the Australian War Memorial Collection. Richard's service record is from Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs.

The Cockpit of a Beaufighter is from Wikipedia.

The map on page 46 is from the Ordnance Survey Ireland 1:50 000 Discovery Series No: 27A and should be available at all good book shops or from their website at www.irlgov.ie/osi

Finally, a huge Thank You to Sue and John Patterson for all the support and help with the preparation and layout of this booklet.

NR 7th July 2006

The JL710 Committee

The committee who are organising the events for 16th July and collecting the funds to enable not only the printing of this booklet but for accommodation and feeding of our guests, the expenses of lifting the engine and many other incidental expenses.

Chairman: Councillor Peter McVitty, **Vice Chairman:** Councillor Sean Smith,
Secretary: Isabel Rofé, **Assistant Secretary:** Oliver Brady,
Treasurer: Kevin McCaffrey

Bristol Hercules Engine lifting team

Without doubt the credit for the diving and searching operation in the mud several feet below the surface of the water must go to Willie Seaman and Eddie Brogan who gave up many days of their spare time to attempt the 'rescue' of the sixty three year old engine.

Others who assisted with raft preparation and moving were Aidan Brady, Connor McGovern, Gabriel McGovern, Isabel Rofé, Kevin McCaffrey (senior), Kevin McCaffrey (Junior), Sean McCaffrey, Nial McCaffrey, Paddy McKiernan, Pauric McCaffrey & Terry McIntyre.

Editor's postscript

On reading through some of these stories more objectively than when concentrating on trying to get the formatting into some kind of reasonable shape I was surprised at the very wide differences between the descriptions of the event from the different contributors. It's difficult enough to have two different reports of events that happened only a short time ago agree!

As Richard himself said in his story written especially for us at the beginning of this booklet "*This is what I remember, but perhaps I have forgotten a few happenings as my memory has been dimmed with the passing of the years*". So it must be far more difficult for others who might be relating someone else's accounts of the events of that St Patrick's night just over sixty three years ago. We might consider that as Richard hadn't had the opportunity to compare notes with anyone else his memory was not influenced by the stories others told here in Templeport and the surrounding areas.

The other surprise that came out of Oliver Brady's story and Phil McManus' written sixteen years ago was the sense that perhaps St Patrick and St Mogue really did look after Richard and Tommy not only on the night itself but also during the remainder of their time together in the war.

I hope you enjoyed this little booklet and it gave you a small idea of how one part of our history fits into place.

NR 13th June 2006

At a meeting in the Templeport Resource Centre on 20th July the JL710 committee and all present agreed that all profits from the sale of this booklet and the other fund raising activities would be given to St Luke's Cancer Hospital in Dublin along with the Bawnboy Festival committee's contribution.

NR 5th July 2006

Edited by *NR*

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