

Lt Antoine Jean Emile Laurent Free French Legion D'Honneur, Croix de Guerre

Antoine was born on 16 February 1910 in Chambéry, Savoie, France, the son of Aimé Marius Laurent and Marie Thérèse Vullion, of Yenne, France. In June 1936 he married Geneviève Ousset-Bouquet.

In 1930, Antoine entered the French Naval Academy and served on a number of ships including the "Admiral Charner" and "Primauguet" before commencing pilot training at Orly. He gained his wings in October 1937 and served as a seaplane pilot at a number of Naval Air Bases before he converted to fighter aircraft in April 1940. Assigned to the 4AC Sqn at Hyères, he was posted to Algeria before he was demobbed in January 1941.

Antoine commenced flying transport aircraft for a private firm in Morocco until, on 16 June 1941, he flew from Rabat to Gibraltar in a Cauldron Simoun aircraft and joined the Free French Forces. Antoine arrived in England in July and, following training with the RAF, was posted to 615 Sqn at RAF Manston, Kent flying Hurricanes. Antoine completed 40 sorties with the squadron before he was posted to 138 Sqn to fly the Lysander on Special Ops.

In October/November 1941 the Lysander Flt had been building up its aircrew strength, and Antoine was in the final stages of training when, on 28 November 1941 Antoine departed RAF Tempsford in Lysander IIIA T1771 (NF), together with a squadron engineer, on a training flight. In poor daylight visibility, Antoine hit trees on Hungry Hill, north of Farnham, Surrey and crashed nearby, killing both on board.

Also killed : LAC John Arthur Martin Harkness (Ground Crew)

Originally buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, after the war his remains were transferred to his home town of Yenne, Savoie, France

Antoine is commemorated on Wall Panel 196

Photo Source: memorial-national-des-marins.fr

