



Mr Deverell (top left) with his crew in 1943

War hero Colin Deverell with his medals Pictures: Paul Amos

# Modest war hero awarded France's top military honour

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War hero Colin Deverell describes the success of flying missions he took part in across occupied France as "lucky".  
But a letter informing the 94-year-old that he has been appointed a Chevalier in the Ordre National de la Legion d'Honneur, tells a different story.  
The award of France's top military honour reflects the Second World War escapades of the flight engineer who as a 19-year-old took part in 34 Lancaster operations between May and December 1943.  
In January 1944 he joined a crew flying Stirling bombers out of Tuddenham, a former RAF station in Suffolk to take part in duties in France with the Special Operations Executive.  
The bombers were laden down with 14 tanks of fuel and were flown overnight across France



Mr Deverell in 1943

to Lyons near the Swiss border to parachute-drop weapons, wireless equipment and food to the French resistance.  
Supplies were jettisoned from the rear bomb doors on sight of a circle of lights from the resist-

ance on the ground.  
The return journey involved a steep climb to evade E-boats and German gunners.  
Colin, who rose to the rank of flight lieutenant, once had to tackle a cockpit fire mid-flight with a combination of extinguishers and a blanket to smother the flames.  
He describes the success of his missions, that he later found out helped caused disruption to the railway network, as "lucky".  
Commenting on his award, the president of the Tenterden branch of the Royal British Legion said: "I'm absolutely honoured.  
"I've never had anything like it. I do have the Distinguished Flying Medal from my bomber days but this is above everything.  
It's France's main gallantry medal that's being awarded since 1802 and was given out by Napoleon in the Battle of Waterloo in 1815."  
The letter he received from the

French ambassador to London states: "I offer you my warmest congratulations on this high honour, which recognizes your military engagement and steadfast involvement in the Liberation of France during the Second World War.  
"As we contemplate this

Europe of peace, we must never forget the heroes like you who came from Britain and the Commonwealth to begin the liberation of Europe by liberating France.  
"We owe our freedom and security to your dedication, because you were ready to risk your life."