

EVIDENCE OF COLLISION

HALIFAX 111 NP934

AIR27/493 No. 51 SQUADRON ORBs January-December 1944

Halifax 111 NP934MH-V (F/O D N Twilley) took off from Snaith at 02.58 to attack the primary target. Nothing has been heard of this aircraft since the time of taking off and it is reported missing.

F/O B M Twilley Reported missing from operations.

NOTE:- Information received from 2nd TAF, via H.Q.B.C. the effect that this aircraft was found in a woods at position 0.5099 South of Charlerot (sic). Two persons identified (F/O Twilley and E/O Cassini). The crew of eight killed.

CONCLUSION from the above information

4 GROUP

1. Halifax 111 LV818 F (F/L G W Body) 10 Squadron

This aircraft was not heard of since taking off. Is this the aircraft lost in the battle area by unknown cause?

2. Halifax 111 NP934 MH-V (F/O B M Twilley) 51 Squadron

This aircraft found in woods South of Charlerot (sic). This is therefore one of the aircraft lost in Belgium by unknown cause.

3. Halifax 111 NR248 is not recorded in 51 Squadron's ORBs
Halifax 111 NA294 MH-A (W/O W A Bates) 51 Squadron

This aircraft was seen to dive at full throttle and blow up in mid air at position E8923 (east of Koblenz - what was it doing this far east?). Is this the aircraft outstanding?

4. Halifax 111 NR239 J (F/O W L Lynd) 158 Squadron

This aircraft made a crash landing near Brussels. This is therefore the unknown Halifax from 158 Squadron and the other aircraft lost Belgium by unknown cause.

One therefore needs to try and find out more information on the following aircraft:-

Halifax 111 LV818-F and Halifax 111 NA294 MH-A.

Are these the aircraft that are recorded as outstanding and lost in the battle area?

Is the aircraft from 578 Squadron that crashed AOT the same as that wrecked in a taxiing accident?

What has happened to the aircraft outstanding?

HALIFAX 11 NR118 U

AIR27/1865 No. 434 Squadron ORBs with Appendices June 1943-June 1945

On return all aircraft were diverted due to weather conditions at base (Croft). All aircraft returned safely to base later on in the afternoon with the exception of aircraft "U" NR118 with pilot Can. J21853 F/L J M Parrott who became airborne at 02.50hrs and has since not been heard from.

Halifax "U" NR118 (F/L Parrott) took off from Croft at 02.50 since then nothing has been heard from it.

AIR28/176 Stations: Croft ORBs August 1943-June 1945

"X" of 434 Squadron claim one ME 109 shot down and destroyed.

We regret to report the following aircraft missing "U" of 434 Squadron.

AIR14/3470 Bomber Command Aircraft Losses K Reports No. 6 Group Nos 1-11
December 1944-March 1945

Report No. 6G/h Report on Aircrew landing on allied occupied Territory

Squadron: 434 Station: Croft
Aircraft: Halifax 111 (sic) NR 118 U

This report is based on the story of the sole survivor (P/O Herber Browne [RCAP] No. J90827) of the crash who is still very shaken and nervous as a result of his experience. His recollection of events, times and places is not very clear and there may be some inaccuracies.

Shortly after having set course and while flying down England at 80 feet the pilot (F/Lt J Parrott) remarked that he wasn't feeling well but was well enough to carry on. The aircraft climbed over the channel to the briefed height of 17,000 feet. The crew kept asking the pilot if he was alright. He claimed he was but the crew noticed the aircraft was weaving as though he was unable to hold it steady. The air bomber (F/S A Kurtzhals) left his position and set beside the pilot so he could help him if necessary.

The aircraft was still weaving but they carried on and according to the Navigator (F/O S Pearce) were only three minutes late. Weather was clear, visibility good, no ground defences and no enemy fighters were seen.

The Wireless Operator (P/O H Browne) went off the intercom, in order to listen in on the Group Broadcast (6.30hrs [by this time they should have been over Duisburg]). Suddenly the Navigator jumped to his feet and folded his seat back, the wireless operator immediately took off his helmet and reached for his parachute, and at almost the same time the aircraft nosed straight up and then fell over on one wing. Browne does not know why Pearce left his seat or why the aircraft nosed vertically up. Browne remembers no more from this point until he recovered consciousness falling free through the air. After pulling the ripcord he lost consciousness again. He recovered consciousness hanging from his parachute in a tree. It was still dark. After walking some time he came to a quarry, and finding himself in Belgium he was taken to a small town. Browne was then taken to Charleroi which was a long drive from the small town.

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REPORT ON AIRCRAFT LANDING IN ALIEN COUNTRY TERRITORY

Squad - 134 Station - Croft (64 Base)
 Letter - U A/C No. - 10118
 Type - Halifax
 Mark - III
 Date - 17/18th December 1944
 Target - Duisburg

Pilot - Barrett, J. W/Lt J.21255 4 Ops. Killed in crash.
 Nav. - Parsons, S. W/O J.27503 4 Ops. Killed in crash.
 W/Op. - Brown, H. P/O J.90827 20 Ops. Injured, now in U.K.
 P/Eng. - Jensen, L. Sgt R.90704 4 Ops. Killed in crash.
 A/B. - Kurtshals, A. P/S R.110453 4 Ops. Killed in crash.
 W/Op. - Divitsoff, A. P/S R.209473 4 Ops. Killed in crash.
 P/O. - Olafson, G. W/S R.192540 4 Ops. Killed in crash.

Interviewer's Comments

This report is based on the story of the sole survivor of the crash who is still very shaken and nervous as a result of his experiences. His recollection of events, times and places is not very clear and there may be some inaccuracies.

Surname - Brown:

Christian Name - Herbert

R.A.F. (R.C.A.F.)

Number - J.90827

Nationality - Canadian

Shortly after having set course and while flying down England at 8000 feet the pilot remarked that he wasn't feeling well, but was well enough to carry on. The aircraft climbed over the channel to the briefed height of 17,000 feet and the crew kept asking the pilot if he was alright. He claimed he was but the crew noticed the aircraft was weaving as though he was unable to hold it steady.

They thought he might be short of oxygen but a careful check of the oxygen system failed to support this theory. As an added check the Pilot used the oxygen bottles but no improvement could be noted so the A/B left his position and sat beside the pilot so he could help him, if necessary.

Although the pilot claimed he wasn't feeling too badly, the Navigator suggested to him that they should turn back. This the Pilot refused to do and when the Navigator repeated his suggestion the Pilot refused again saying that if he did he would be sent to Sheffield.

The aircraft was still weaving but they carried on and according to the Navigator, were only three minutes late.

Weather was clear, visibility good, no ground defences and no enemy fighters were seen.

At this time the W/Op went off the intercom, in order to listen in on the Group Broadcast (0630 hrs). He was nervous and worried, so kept watching the Navigator who was naturally still on the intercom.

Suddenly the Navigator jumped to his feet and folded his seat back, the W/Op immediately took off his harness and reached for his parachute, and at almost the same time the aircraft nosed straight up and then fell over on one wing (not definite whether to port or starboard.) The W/Op states he does not know why the Navigator left his seat or why the aircraft nosed vertically up. Not being on the intercom, he couldn't hear anything that might have been said, and so, just reacted automatically when the Navigator moved.

The W/Op remembers no more from this point until he regained consciousness falling free through the air. His head was cut and bleeding and his leg was only clipped on one side. He completed hooking it up, pulled the ripcord and lost consciousness again.

He recovered consciousness again hanging from his parachute in a tree. He somehow got out of his harness and down the tree, losing consciousness again on the ground.

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When he recovered consciousness this time, it was still dark, so waiting until it became light, he started to hunt for help. His head was covered with blood, trousers badly torn and both boots had evidently come off when his 'cinch' opened.

After walking some time he came to a stone or mud quarry, and finding a workman, was able to ask for help, using his phrase book.

From here on things were very hazy, but he clearly recalls being taken into an office, finding out he was in Belgium, that the Belgian police arrived first and later a Doctor who took him into a small town and treated his injuries.

Later the German Military Police arrived and took him to Charleroi in an ambulance. He has no idea where this small town is except that it was a long drive from there to Charleroi.

The next morning an American Army Officer came in to see him. He stated they had found the crashed aircraft and there were six bodies in it. Five were identified by various means but they were unable to identify the sixth. The W/O asked the names of those identified and then supplied the name of the sixth member of the crew, the W/O, W/Sgt. A. Divitout.

After a time in different hospitals, Charleroi (one week), Huesme (one week), 17th General Hospital, Le Mans (very doubtful as to the location of this hospital), he was sent to Paris (66 H^o, Rue de Valenciennes, St. Hippolyte) and finally back to England.

Walter E. ... S/P

W. E. ... Squadron Leader,
Base Intelligence Officer,
No. 64 (I. U. S. M.) Base,
R.M.S. ...

AN ENQUIRY INTO THE CRASH OF HALIFAX III NP 934

OF 51 SQUADRON ON 18 DECEMBER 1944.

Inspection identification letters of 51 Sqdn. were MH and this particular aircraft's letter was V, hence MH-V.

Crew - F/O B.H. Twibley (pilot)
Sgt. A. Holden (navigator)
F/O F.W. Cassini (bomb-aimer)
P/Sgt. R. Hall (wireless operator)
Sgt. R.C. Challenger (flight engineer)
F/Sgt. H.B. Jones (air gunner)
W/O H.W.T. Hillsbrand (argunner)

This crew was on its 20th operation. On this occasion the aircraft was carrying F/O E.H. Barton, a new pilot on the squadron who was there for experience before getting with his own crew. The target was DUISBURG. Two aircraft from 51 Sqdn. were lost that night. I was the only survivor of the other aircraft, MH-A, and I undertook this enquiry on behalf of Mrs. R. CAMUS, the sister of F/Sgt. Jones, who was only 4 at the time of her brother's death. My own aircraft was attacked and set on fire by a Junkers 88 Horn by lieutenant Walker soon after the bombs had been dropped on Duisburg.

MH-V took off from Smith at 0255, and I see from my own diary that MH-A took off at 0300, so we were next off after F/O Twibley.

On an earlier raid on Essen the bomb-load consisted of one 2000 pound high-explosive bomb and 12 SBC's (Small Bomb Containers) each containing 90 4 pound incendiary bombs, and the load on this occasion was probably much the same.

The route to the target was Brest - Reading - Brighton - across the Channel to France and Belgium - then NE towards Duisburg. The Bomb-Command report of this operation states that 523 aircraft were dispatched and 8 were lost. Amongst details given it states that "two collided and crashed over Charleroi."

Information that I have gathered from various sources leads me to believe that the two aircraft were MH-V from Smith

and NR 118 from 434 Squadron at Croft. There was one survivor from NR 118, P/O H. Brown, the wireless operator, who came down by parachute into territory held by British forces. His de-briefing report should be studied, as it gives a good idea of what actually happened.

The crash occurred at 0810 on 15 December, and as the time on target was about 0800 it would appear that both aircraft had bombed and were on their way home.

As you see from the report, the pilot of NR 118, P/O Parrett was in some distress, having complained early in the flight of feeling unwell, which caused much worry to the rest of the crew, and they were understandably nervous. It seems to me that either P/O Parrett had a sudden attack of whatever was troubling him, possibly appendicitis, or his nerve gave way under stress, and he was barely in control of the aircraft. Seeing another Halifax on a collision course, he pulled up ~~up~~ sharply, stalled, fell over onto one wing, and plunged down. A consideration of the facts that I have gathered leads me to say that this is the only likely explanation of the accident. I cannot see how the wireless operator was the only one to get free - the navigator would have been the first to go (which is why I was the only one to get out of our aircraft), then the bomb aimer then the wireless operator third.

The details concerning F/O Turley's crew came to me by courtesy of Eddy Danner, whose letter is enclosed, as the aircraft concerned crashed in the vicinity of where he lives.

Henry Wagner

FINDINGS FROM LOST AIRCRAFT ON THE DUISBURG TARGET ON 17/18 DECEMBER 1

AIR14/2791 BOMBER COMMAND and AIRCRAFT LOSSES K REPORTS
MISSING AIRCRAFT REGISTER 1943-1945

Records 4 missing aircraft from 4 Group
5 missing aircraft from 6 Group

Namely

4 GROUP	6 GROUP
10 Sqn. Halifax 111 LV818	424 Sqn.
X 51 Sqn. Halifax 111 NP934	426 Sqn. Halifax V11 LW209
51 Sqn. Halifax 111 NR248	432 Sqn. Halifax V11 NP699 O
158 Sqn. Halifax	432 Sqn. Halifax V11 NP701 G
	434 Sqn. Halifax 11 <u>NR118 U</u>

These are borne out in the following records:-

AIR14/3457 BOMBER COMMAND REPORTS ON OPERATIONAL SORTIES
September-December 1944

4 Group (1/10, 2/51, 1/158)
6 Group (1/424, 1/426, 2/432, 1/434)

AIR25/94 GROUPS: No. 4 BOMBER GROUP ORBs January-December 1944

8 aircraft failed to start
14 aircraft Abortive not over enemy territory
1/10, 1/51 Missing (A/P G)
1/51, 1/578 Crashed AOT (A/P H, A/P G)
1 aircraft Outstanding (A/P H)

AIR24/303 COMMANDS: BOMBER COMMAND INTELLIGENCE REPORTS ON OPERATIONS
APPENDICES December 1944

Records 9 losses and goes on to say 3 aircraft are missing.

Aircraft Destroyed 3 were lost only 2 of these losses were observed. I was caused by fighter over the Ruhr and another by target flak. But 6 other aircraft were wrecked beyond repair. 2 collided and crashed over CHARLEROI, 2 crashed in Belgium and a third in the battle area, and one was wrecked in a taxiing accident. This force was heavily engaged by fighters. They were intercepted over the target after the first 10 minutes of their rather prolonged attack and were effectively attacked on the NW leg out of the Ruhr at least 5 Gruppen of fighters were up against them. However, only 9 aircraft were lost with another 1 wrecked beyond repair. No returning aircraft was seriously damaged by enemy action on this night.

A Chart shows

4 Group missing 1 + 3"
6 Group Missing 1 + - 1 + 2

Key: " = 1 a/c Battle area Unknown cause
2 a/c Belgium Unknown cause
- = 1 a/c near Rheims Collision
1 a/c Charleroi Collision

This is borne out by the following records:-

The crash of Halifax H C U ZK-EB 205 (Zulu king) 15th April 1944

- S H J Pearce survives plane crash 15th April 1944, five aircrew killed plus three civilians. House demolished. (archive picture) and archive documents of the crash.
- John Tynski (survivor) gives his fascinating account of the accident. See Letter. (Tynski now lives in Nova Scotia Canada. (archive pictures of John Tynski at Dishforth Yorkshire) +enlistment photos of the other crew members.
- Tynski and Pearce taken to the military hospital North Allerton Yorkshire, (archive documents gives a full account of the injuries.)
- Henry Powell (English) flight engineer taken to his home town of Balham/Streatham where he is now buried.
- Canadian crew buried at the Stone fall cemetery Harrogate.(archive photograph)
- Civilians, Mr and Mrs Stone taken to Thirsk mortuary (listed on website for civilians killed during the war).
- Mr McNulty (Irish farm labourer) also killed when he happened to be passing after a night out down the local pub.
- Engines from the bomber blocks LNER railway line, causing long delays.

S H J Pearce killed 18th December, 1944

- After recovering from his injuries Harry Pearce reports for duty with the 434 Bluenose Squadron Croft, Yorkshire.
- Pearce teams up with his new crew (archive photograph crew in front of Halifax, "Pubwneh"
- Missions included Jutch 16/11/44 Monster 18/11/44 Castrop Rauxel 21/11/44 Neus 27/11/44.(archive documents of those missions)
- Final Mission, Duisberg 18th December 1944. Combined forces of 523 aircraft.
- T/O Croft Yorkshire 02.50 crashed Pesche, Belgium at approx 6.15am (one survivor Herbert Brown Wireless operator) See statement
- American army denies any knowledge of other crashed aircraft (see Brown's statement).
- Bodies taken to "Les Fosses" buried at approx 4pm the same day.(archive documents)
- Bodies re-interred to Leopoldsburg Commonwealth cemetery Belgium 1947.
- Herbert Brown survivor gives his statement of events. (archive document)
-
- Air Ministry asked to supply information to the cause of the crash, by concerned relative (archive document)
- Air Ministry responds with a watered down version of event's (archive document)
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- Air Ministry holds back vital information as to the cause of the crash.
- Four aircraft of 434 432 10& 51 squadrons have crashed in unexplained circumstances. 28 men killed.
- One of those killed only 18 years old. X
- Of those bodies recovered, they were also re-interred to the Leopoldburg Commonwealth cemetery Belgium, where they all occupy a corner of the cemetery including Harry Pearce's crew.
- All aircraft crashed over allied territory, with no reports of engagement either from the ground or enemy aircraft.
- Civilian, French,(old lady) blown out of bed by the explosion, suffers a heart attack and dies when she discovers the severed hand of an airman on the floor that was blown through the window (archive document)
- Body of Douglas Mole, (10 sqdrn) Found 1948 after being discovered in woodland. His son David only one week old at the time his father was killed. (archive Document)
- David Mole now lives Darlington County Durham with his wife Ann.
- Max Krakovsky pilot (432sqdrn) survives. Changes his name to Carson after the war.

- Remains of airman found beside engine when dug-up 1953 (thought to be those of Zadorozny 432 sqdm (archive photograph of zadorozny)
- *Jean Bodart (witness) describes the scene of devastation at the crash site. Bombs strewn around, the body of one of the aircrew laying in road, engines almost buried. (letter written July 2003)*
- Engines, still lay buried at the crash site today.
- All relatives of the crew traced.
- Memorial took place 8th May 2003, in attendance relatives of the pilot and air gunners sister.
- Pearce's brother to visit crash site in 2004 with the possibility of Harry Pearce's daughter (1 year old in 1944).
- Wreckage of the aircraft collected 2003 from the crash site. Including live ammunition
- Aircraft crashed three kilometres from the historic site of Adolf Hitler's headquarters at Bruly de Pesche.

interesting facts about 434 bluenose Squadron

- 434 Squadron bluenose was formed in Halifax Nova Scotia, many of its recruits came from a seafaring background.
- Squadron was named after the famous "Bluenose schooner" as depicted on Canadian 10 cent coin. Its name originated as a derogatory term used to describe Nova Scotian's as Bluenose. for the colour of their noses, due to the cold Canadian winters.
- Propeller spinners painted bright blue as a personal mark of the bluenose Squadron, this was to the annoyance of the Air Ministry who referred to them as those upstart colonials.
- Lord Haw-Haw a German propagandist and traitor, said of the Bluenose Squadron, after a particularly successful raid:
 - * The RCA F had gathered together in this single squadron- the Bluenose- the worst pirates, thugs, murderers and brigands from the prisons of Canada
- Lord Haw Haw was hanged for treason after the war.
- The 434 Squadron suffered particularly heavy losses during the war, the numbers 13 seemed to play a part in their bad luck. 434, the 13th Squadron formed, when the first man reported for duty on the 13th day.
- Harry Pearce and crew documented in Alan Todds book " Pilgrimages of grace" as the last Halifax loss from "Croff" of WW 2.