

Account dictated by flight engineer A. Christison 2210273 a week after his return

We were on our way back from a long trip that started on Sunday the 26th November 1944 when we came to the decision that we had not enough fuel to get back to England. Some of the navigational instruments had also gone haywire and were of no use to us. The weather was really appalling and we could not see the ground nor the stars above, we were in solid cloud. We then decided to land at a drome given to us at the briefing so flew there and called them up but got no reply (later we learnt they had no facilities for night flying at all). By this time our fuel was really low so we flew away from the town and bailed out. I actually was last but one to go and never saw the ground till I hit it with my behind due to cloud and rain.

I landed in the middle of a ploughed field which was very damp and muddy, it was dark and pouring with rain. I hadn't the vaguest idea where I was, I found my torch in my Mae West and with the aid of its light made my way to a canal and walked along its bank till I came to a cart track which eventually led to a road. On hearing a cock crow to my right I turned toward the sound and after three quarters of an hour I reached a farm on the outskirts of a village, but the gates were locked. I could see a light shining in a window so I shouted , the gate was opened by a woman who took me into the house. She gave me some coffee and a roll and butter whilst I dried myself by the fire. The door opened and a man came in holding a automatic pistol keeping me covered he was not convinced that I was RAF but when I produced a packet of Woodbines and offered him one he realised I must be British. Drinks were produced and it was smiles all round. I was then escorted to another house where a woman spoke a fair amount of English. After more drinks and coffee and much discussion it was decided to drive me from Montigny where I had landed , to Donnemarie, where there was a police station, and a telephone.

On arrival I found six of the crew there already and shortly afterwards we were joined by our skipper making our crew complete. We were naturally delighted to see each other especially as there were no injuries. The villagers plied us with food and drink all of which they could ill afford to give us, we accepted as refusal was liable to cause offence. The police managed to contact the French military at Provins who sent cars to take us there. On arrival we were given another meal in the officers mess. It was now 3 p.m. on Monday, a call was made to Le Bourget that we were safe and sound (this we learnt later was signalled to Britain at 3.30 p.m.).

We were told that our aircraft had come down in open fields and was scattered over a wide area in small pieces. Then to a military hospital and looked after by a very large nurse. Finally to bed very weary, we were woken at 7 o'clock and had dinner and a walk around the town then back to bed for eleven. We woke at 10 o'clock on Tuesday morning and were treated to breakfast in bed, whilst there was a stream of visitors shaking us by the hand and wishing us luck. We were about to have a shower when a lorry arrived to take us to Le Bourget . First though we went back to collect our parachutes. Then lunch in a local restaurant and off to Le Bourget, where we arrived having got lost along the way. Dinner and a chance to buy English cigarettes, a walk around the town and a few drinks despite the rain then to bed on straw mattresses. Next morning we reported to the Medical Officer for a check up .Then issued with a razor and toothbrush we at long last were able to make ourselves respectable again.

Then on board a Dakota for a flight to Croydon arriving at 1.30 p.m. on Wednesday, after Customs and Censor off to the receiving centre at St.John's Wood. When we arrived we sent wires to our folks to say we were safe . We were then issued with new uniform to replace our torn and muddy ones, suitably attired we went to the pub for a celebratory drink then to bed. On Thursday morning we were debriefed and given another medical. After lunch we went to the Air Ministry and were issued with rail passes back to North Cheadle, we were also told we were entitled to seven days survivors leave. That evening we went to a show in the West End then bed. We caught the 08.30 train to Creake where we arrived at 4.30p.m. Next morning yet another debrief, and given four days leave! With a scramble managed to catch the six o'clock train which arrived in Goole next morning.

From W.R.Corley's Bomber Command Losses

Aircraft Halifax III from 171 Squadron NA 108 6 YV took off from North Creake operation bomber support.

Ran low on fuel and after encountering severe icing abandoned East of Paris

This was the first Halifax III to be lost from 171 Sqdn which had been reformed on 8th September 1944 from C Flt of 199 Sqdn for duties with 100 group.

Crew

Flight Sergeant R.F.Allen (pilot)

Flight Sergeant J. Allen 1595307

Flight Sergeant A. Christison 2210273 (Flight Engineer)

Flight Sergeant L B S Simmons 1577387

J Fyfe 1563050

Flight Sergeant L.M Keen RNZAF 4214158

W/O S. Cook 2210273 (Specialist Operator)

A.J.S Scanlan RNZAF

Father is front right

