



The Officers' Mess,
R.A.F. Bradwell Bay,
Essex.

Wednesday 25th August.

My dear Mrs. Hamilton,

You must have wondered why I have not written sooner; I had hoped to be able to fly up to Guy and visit you so that I could tell you personally all that I can remember of the night Charles and I were shot down, but on rejoining the Squadron I find that it is impossible as long as we are at Bradwell Bay. Later, if the opportunity arises, I will certainly take advantage of it.

It was not until a few minutes ago, when I was shown your letter by F/Lt Custance, that I knew that you had written to me; I have received your letter and I very much



regret what must have seemed
inexcusably bad manners: I don't
know what address you were given
by the Adjutant, but I have been in
so many places since I returned to
England that only my home address
was sure to have found me: I am very
sorry indeed.

I don't know how much
Ken Davison was able to tell you
of the events of that night, but I
feel that you would prefer me
to tell you all I can, both good and
bad, as they happened.

We had destroyed our first
enemy aircraft together only two
nights before, and for the third night
in succession were detailed for what
is known as "Bomber support" for a
raid on Kiel.



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When it was all over and
the bombers were on their way home
we had to stay until the end of our
patrol time and we were hit over the
target and set on fire. Charles stopped
the engine when I asked him to, because
it was on fire — the fire went out,
but another in the wing was getting
rapidly worse and we decided to turn
us that it would be safest to head
towards Field Marshal Montgomery's
armies to the South-West, at that time
surrounding Bremen; to do this we had
to cross about thirty miles of sea
as against the three hundred which lay
between us and home.

As soon as we were hit I
told Charles to put on his parachute
pack and be ready to bale out should
anything else happen — this he did:



a few minutes later we were going along very slowly on fire and on one engine in what I could only guess to be the right direction; I was blind in one eye and we had no compass left; the aircraft was like a torch and we could not maintain height properly. A German night-fighter must have seen us because, not long after, there was another very loud explosion and the aeroplane went completely out of control and large pieces fell off. It was going down in a steep dive and I shouted to Charles to get out, which he had already started to do.

I still could not see with one eye, and with the cockpit full of smoke and flames and on fire, it was very confusing.

While Charles was getting out through the door I was trying to get the roof escape-hatch open and to ~~wear~~ my straps because I knew that there would not time for both of us to leave by the door.

After that I found myself half in and half out of the roof, caught, I think, by my parachute. The next thing I knew was that I was far from the aircraft trying to find my upcord.

I came down just on the land near the coast at the top of the bulge of land which lies between Wiesmunde and Jantzenburg, and after walking all night I lay up all next day. When I was eventually forced to give myself up I was picked up with some Russian slave labourers before being taken to a Luftwaffe camp. All the time I



expected to hear from the Germans
some news of Charles because when
I last saw him he was quite unkempt;
then when they never mentioned him I
thought it probable that he was still
walking; you will appreciate that it
was impossible for me to ask the Germans
whether they had captured another officer
because it would have immediately
given away the fact that I was not
the day-fighter pilot for which they
looked me and they would have passed
me for information about secret
equipment etc. I asked all my fellow
prisoners whether they had come across
him in their travels across Germany
but they all said no and I began to
think that he must have landed
in the sea.

He was very calm throughout a

 very unpleasant" indeed and when I was hit he managed to find a handkerchief to stop the bleeding. We had been together at West Malling in 1941 and had always been the best of friends. All our successes had been together and until we ~~were~~ closed up neither of us had shot down anything.

It is very hard for me, who have returned at last from that sortie, to find words to tell you my feelings. All I can say is how sorry I am and how proud I was to fly with him. This is very inadequate, I know, and I ask you to forgive me for that.

If there is anything at all that I can do to help you in any way please let me know, and I will be happy if I can do so in any way.

Yours very sincerely,

Brian Thomas