

Info on AE191 for Wings To Victory web site

http://www.wingstovictory.nl/database/database_detail.php?wtv_id=144



Below I have copied Tony Parsons' account of being shot down. As you will see they did not know where they were at the time.

Memories of Pilot Officer A L Parsons

On the return journey I asked the navigator to give me a course home, back to Scampton, direct. And he gave me a course to steer, which in those days he would give me an approximate course to steer which I would do so for about five minutes to get way from the target, then he would give me a correction when he'd worked it out carefully on his map to see exactly what our course should be from the target area. So we set course approximately, and did a correction, and off we went. But whether the wind had changed direction or increased in strength I do not know, probably both, but when we should have been over a certain area that I had, I always memorised the routes before we set off to see what towns we should go near, or avoid, or what have you, and after a certain amount of time flying I did not recognise anything underneath us when I should have done. So I asked Basevi to check his course, and when he was doing this there was a large amount of Ack Ack fire from down below. We were obviously over an area that was defended, and a few searchlights popped up. And we weren't very far from the coast, I wouldn't care to say where this was, in France somewhere.

But there was this thump under the port wing and the aeroplane yawed around a bit, and I noticed that the Mag. Reading on the port engine was dropping alarmingly, and the navigator, Basevi, who was down in the nose said "We've been hit Skipper!"

So I said "I know that, I think it's in the engine."

So it started, the engine the started to burn, there were flames coming out of the cowling, so I cut the throttle right back on that engine so that the propeller would stop and the fire extinguisher

would do its work. Well apparently it did because the fire didn't last very long, but at that point, because I was flying at about 17,000ft I suppose and at cruise speed, I wasn't belting along, with this very very strong westerly wind which as on the port beam really, the aircraft decided it would make up its mind and do what we call a stabilised yaw, which is a, alright a flat spin. And the Hampden is extremely difficult to get out of a flat spin because of the very thin fuselage behind the main body, it had very little side effect, side resistance to the wind. The tail fins were a long way from the main plane with this skinny little connection, and they had a habit of going into these stabilised yaws if they stalled or went into what would normally be a spin, due to lack of power on one engine or both engines, and the lack of speed, you see if you keep the aircraft at a higher speed it was easier to control. But the point was we did go into this flat spin and I knew from my training that a Hampden was very difficult to get out of a flat spin.

It was very very cold indeed, the atmosphere, it was probably up there at about 17,000ft, it was probably about minus fifteen centigrade. And I hadn't, the duff engine, I couldn't open up and so I couldn't get out of the stabilised yaw that way. So I thought, obviously fairly quickly that if I cut the starboard engine, the yaw would be decreased because it wouldn't be pulling it, the aircraft wouldn't be pulled round by the starboard engine. So I cut, throttled back the starboard engine and then proceeded to try and get it out of this by giving it opposite rudder and stick back right in my stomach but that didn't work, so I tried to centralise the rudder and put the stick forward to try and get the nose down. And I noticed that the engine temperatures were dropping, the starboard engine was dropping rapidly and I did get it out of the yaw. I was flying straight and level but in a glide. I opened the throttle on the starboard engine and it didn't fire at all, it had literally frozen on the way down because it had just been milling around instead of being driven.

So there was I with two dead engines, and a very strong wind, a very rough sea, and partial moonlight because there was about 8/10ths cloud. And having, we'd crossed the coast by then obviously, and I've never actually worked out exactly where it was but we think it was somewhere off Boulogne, somewhere there. But anyway, I decided as I think I said before that rather than follow the book and land in the troughs I decided to land on the crests of the waves to see if I could skim across the top, which I did. I think I've told you about that. But when the aircraft hit the water, the sea, I must have been clenching my jaw tightly and hanging on to the joy stick like nobody's business. And the terrific jolt forward, the whiplash forward, I didn't know it at that moment but it must have dislocated my jaw because for weeks afterwards I couldn't open my mouth more than about a ¼ of an inch clear between my top and bottom teeth. But that was that.

Hampden AE191 of 83 Squadron took off at 02.13 hours on 8th December 1941 from RAF Scampton, Lincolnshire to attack the headquarters of the local Nazi party in Aachen but the attack was hampered by bad weather. In Tony Parsons memoirs he recalled the target being the Post Office in Aachen, but the 5 Group records in the National Archives in Kew record the Nazi Party HQ as the target, The RAF AHB also records this as the target.

At 05.30 hours the aircraft requested a position fix which was calculated and given by RAF Heston as about 80 miles east of Southend. At 06.08 hours Hampden AE191 sent out an SOS call from a position approximately 9 miles NNE of Margate. As a result of this SOS the Air Sea Rescue Services

were alerted and a search for the aircraft and crew went on throughout 8th December but sadly nothing was found.

A straight line can be drawn on a map from Veere to the position given at 05.30 and on to the ditching position at 06.08. Although there are slight discrepancies in time between the various sources in the UK, the aircraft, Holland and various published sources, it can be assumed that this was the moment that AE191 was hit. There is of course a 1 hour time difference between the UK and the rest of Europe.

Timings:

Take off: 02.13

This time is listed in "Chorley 1941", RAF Air Historical Branch, 83 Squadron history by Low and Harper, Lost Bombers web site and Wings to Victory web site.

Tony Parsons' flying log book has no take off or crash time but has a listing of 4.15 hrs as duration of flight.

George Wiscombs' POW log book lists take off as 01.20 and struck water at 05.50. No time given in his flying log book

German battery report lists:

05.58 Battery opened fire

06.44 Aircraft hit

06.58 Wellington fired upon

07.70 Aircraft hit

Wings to Victory lists time of aircraft being hit as 06.40

RAF Air Historical Branch and Low & Harper both give time of fix as 05.30 and time of SOS as 06.08

German records confirm the location of the Flak Battery as Veere on the island of Walcheren.

0644 Aus Richtung 4 nach 10 wird eine rückfliegende Feindmaschine von Batterie Veere kurz beschossen worauf die Maschine sofort in die Wolken zieht.

A returning enemy plane was hit by battery fire from direction 4 towards 10 shortly before it disappeared in the clouds.

A returning enemy aircraft was briefly fired on by the Veere battery, and immediately disappeared into the clouds.

Source RM122 296 Bundesarchiv, Frieberg

Info from NIMH

Source: Collection De Haan

Date of crash: 8th December 1941

Time of Crash: 06:40

Aircraft: Hampden Mk I

Codes: AE191 OL-Z

Squadron: 83

Base: Scampton Lincolnshire

Crashed near/in : North Sea off the Island of Walcheren Netherlands (ditching)

Crash due to: Battle damage

Missing:

P/O Derek Jacobs, Wop, 23, 112160 RAF Runnymede Memorial Panel 33

Sgt Bernard Athelstan Basevi, Obs, 923222 RAF (VR) Runnymede Memorial Panel 39

Taken Prisoner:

P/O AL Parsons, Pilot, 87063 RAF

Sgt G Wiscombe, Ag, 922733 RAF (VR)

Take off : 02:13

Target Aachen

P/O Jacobs and Sgt Basevi died of exposure in the dinghy on respectively 10th and 11th December 1941. Their bodies were committed to the deep. The survivors were picked up by a vessel of the Kriegsmarine. P/O Parsons was in POW camp Stalag Luft III Sagan with POW number 39646. Sgt Wiscombe was in POW camp Stalag Luft III Sagan with POW number 24785.

Details collected by Mr JGJ de Haan

All the crew entered their dinghy uninjured but due to the extreme cold and bad weather Sgt Bernard Basevi died from exposure on 10/12/41. PO Derek Jacobs died the following day. At times the waves were up to 30ft high, and the open dinghy was constantly drenched. The RAF Air Sea Rescue Services were unable to find the dinghy which drifted back towards Holland.

On 12/12/41 at 13.45 hours (local time) PO Tony Parsons and Sgt George Wiscombe were rescued by V1305 "Wuppertal" of the 13 Vorpostenflottille near the island of Texel.

V1305 was one of four convoy escorts guarding five merchant ships from Rotterdam to Cuxhaven.

13:45 1 englisches Schlauchboot gesichtet. Polot Officer Parsons, Gunner Wiscombe, beide RAF lebend geborgen. Stamnten von am 7. Ds. Bei Ostende abgesturztem Flugzeug. Ubrige 2 Mann der Besatz. Am 2. Bzw. 4. Tage gestorben. Uberlebende Cuxhaven Mar. Laz. (schwere Beinerfrierungen) abgeliefert.

Source: RM72/145 Bundesarchiv Frieberg ; War Diary of the 13 Vorpostenflottille.

The two survivors were taken to a Naval Hospital at Cuxhaven and then into a variety of POW camps.

Anthony Leslie Parsons, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, Bomber Command, No.87063, and Prisoner of War, No.39646

George Wiscombe, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, Bomber Command, No.922733, and Prisoner of War, No.24785

Above information compiled by James Castle