

STICHTING WINGS TO VICTORY

AIRWAR MUSEUM / AIRMEN MEMORIAL ZEELAND



Crash No 225

Spitfire XI

10-02-1943

Goes



10 februari 1943

Rodeo 167 voorzag in een raid van in totaal 23 Spitfires van Nos. 331 en 332 (Norwegian) squadrons naar Vlissingen en die zonder vermeldenswaardige actie werd uitgevoerd.

Niet uit te sluiten is dat deze raid een feint was voor een aanval met Ventura's van No.487 squadron op spoorwegdoelen nabij Caen.

Tevens werd een fotoverkenning naar Vlissingen uitgevoerd door een Spitfire van No.541 squadron (Coastal Command). Deze machine werd om 10.58 uur door Uffz. Rudolpf Rauhaus (6./JG 1) op circa 10 kilometer ten zuidwesten van Goes onderschept en neergeschoten waarna het toestel uiteindelijk neerstortte tussen Heinkenszand en Ovezande ter hoogte van de Oude – en Nieuwe Kamerpolder.

Sgt. Francis Evans kwam veilig op de grond terecht en slaagde erin om (tijdelijk) uit handen van de Duitsers te blijven.

War Diary No. 331 (Norwegian) squadron

--/-- Twelve aircraft, led by Major K. Birksted, took off at 11.25 hours together with No.332 squadron for rodeo 167. Visibility was 400 yards and less and squadrons became separated immediately after take off. So Major K. Birksted requested an order to return owing to bad weather, which was done from about mid-channel. The four remaining aircraft did not then return but carried on as top cover for No.332 squadron as they had not heard the order to return.

All No.331 pilots had landed at 12.20 and 12.55 hours respectively and the mission was uneventful but unfortunately Sgt. Watne had to bale out and was later picked up dead.

War Diary No. 332 (Norwegian) squadron

--/-- Pilots were briefed in the morning in connection with Rodeo 167 and eleven aircraft took off from North Weald, led by Capt. F. Thorsager at 11.20 hours. As the visibility at North Wealds was less than 500 yards, Nos. 332 and 331 squadrons became separated and an endeavour to reform over Bradwell was made but without success. Major K. Birksted, who had developed R/T trouble, being able to contact Controller on Button B only ordered return to base.

This squadron had reached the Flushing area when this order was received after which the squadron swept round the back of Flushing and set course for base.

Some 20 miles west of Noorderhoofd, Yellow 2 (Sgt. R.K. Watne) reported engine trouble. He was able to continue to within 15 miles of Manston descending gradually to 6.000 feet and then he baled out and landed in the sea. As Sgt. Watne had trouble in releasing his parachute, he was dragged for 25 yards under the water before finally releasing his parachute.

He was seen to make a few breast strokes but suddenly all movements ceased and his head fell backwards and remained under water. The main part of the squadron had been orbiting the spot whilst some pilots flew to the English coast to direct the H.S.L. but when picked up by the H.S.L. Sgt. R.K. Watne was dead.

The remainder of the squadron landed at base by 13.20 hours, having previously landed at Manston to refuel and nothing further is to report from this operation.

Statement by Wr.Off. F.J.Evans – 6 July 1945

I was on an operation and was shot down by German fighters in South-Beveland on 10 February 1943. I came down by parachute and about 20 minutes afterwards the first civilian, I met, a middle-aged sailor passing by an orchard on a bicycle, hailed me in English and he told me to wait for him in a small hut in the orchard. Incidentally the Germans had seen me come down and seen me on the ground also and I did not have time to hide my parachute.

I was fired upon and escaped by running over a dike (an earthen wall about 10 feet high with sloping sides). In the meantime a peasant and his son discovered me in the orchard independently of the sailor and they brought me food and my flying map, which he had picked up, and also a large-scale map of the island torn from a school atlas. That evening the sailor came back and brought food and a raincoat. He told me that it was pretty hopeless to get away, as all the little ports and also the causeway were guarded and about 300 Germans with dogs were scouring the place for me. The sailor could not do anymore for me and left, wishing me the best of luck.

At about 07.00 hours the next morning I made it off in an easterly direction for the causeway to the mainland but my compass was inaccurate and I landed at a place called Hoedekenskerke, a small port for Terneuzen! I was accosted by a young lad on a bicycle who told me his name was Pieter. He took me to a hut and told me to stay there which I did for the whole day.

In the meantime this lad and his friends had been going round the village collecting civilian clothing for me. That night he took me home and I dressed in civilian clothes. I was taken on the rearcarrier of a push-bike to a farm at Gravenpolder, where I stayed that night and the following day.

Word went round that the Germans were searching all farms, so I was taken into the village itself to an old lady who lived by herself. I do not know her name but I stayed with her until 25 February 1943.

When German vigilance subsided to normal I was helped over to the mainland and an English speaking steward on the ferryboat took care of me. I was taken to the chief steward's home where I stayed three days. I was introduced to a smuggler who took me by bus to the Belgian frontier at Sas van Gent.

He took me through some barbed wire across the frontier and we got on the train to Gent. He bought me a ticket for Coutrai and then he left me and I gave him the remainder of my Dutch and Belgian money.

From Courtrai I started to walk across the frontier, where I was challenged by a German sentry who searched me for arms but who made no comment whatsoever about my escape equipment.

I walked to within 9 kms. of Lille, where I was so exhausted that I entered a barn and fell asleep. Next morning I called at the farmhouse and asked for some food. The people were very frightened but asked me in and fed me. I was only there about half an hour.

I was beginning to suffer from sore feet and when I got to Lille I boarded a train to take me to the other side of the town. I thumbed a lorry and got a lift to the southside of Lille aerodrome. I called at a cottage to get my feet dressed and stayed about half an hour. I then went to Douai by bus and walked for 7 kms. to Cantin, where I stayed with peasants for the night.

They took me to the station and bought me a ticket to St.Quentin. The wife introduced me to a young Frenchman, who accompanied me to Chambrai. I walked from St.Quentin to La Fere and stayed the night with a peasant and family.

- Spitfire Mk.IX (BS176) van No.332 (Norwegian) squadron – North Weald Essex – stortte na een motorstoring ter hoogte van de Britse kust in de Noordzee. Sgt. Reidar Kluge Watne werd dood uit het water geborgen. Na de oorlog werden zijn stoffelijke resten naar een Noorse begraafplaats overgebracht.