

Crash Reports

FIGHTER COMMAND ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BRANCH

Date of Accident	Precise Number	Aircraft	Unit
22 January 1943	W1437	Spitfire IX BR 141	64 Squadron

Accidents assistance was not requested in this case, but as fire in the air was involved, an investigation was carried out.

The aircraft was engaged in an operational sweep (*). It had climbed to 33,000 feet and had just descended to 15,000 feet on its return to base, when the pilot saw a white puff of smoke go over his windscreen. He then, noticed his engine was running rough. The engine instruments gave no indication of anything wrong except for a slight rise in oil temperature to 90°C. Shortly after the blind flying instruments ceased to operate. Nothing else was noticed until the aircraft landed at Base when the engine was found to be on fire. The fire went out when the engine was stopped.

Fire damage was confined to the following:-

- (i) HT leads on starboard side of A block and the port side of Nos 1, 2 and 3 cylinders of B block.
- (ii) Pesco air filter and pipes.
- (ii) Oil breather pipe and pressure valve.
- (iv) Wires to starter relay.
- (v) Cowling and cowling rails on starboard side of engine.

Cause of Accident.

The origin of the fire was a crack in the cylinder head between (either) the exhaust or starboard plug of No 2 cylinder A block and the base of the cylinder head allowing exhaust gases to escape inside cowling.

The rough running could be accounted for by the burnt plug leads. Fire damage to the Pesco air filter and pipes resulted in the complete failure of the blind flying instruments.

The rise in oil temperature would probably be due to the concentration of the fire in the neighbourhood of the oil tank and pipe lines.

(Transcribed from National Archives AVIA 5/22)

(*) Pilot Sgt Ledington (RCAF, but actually American) of 64 Squadron experienced problems whilst still over France and came home on six cylinders. (from 64 Squadron ORB).

Fighter pilot dodges houses

Lands in cabbage field

Several residents saw a fighter plane (**) in difficulties on Sunday evening and they were confident from the manner in which it was flying that it would come down onto a row of houses. The pilot, however, managed to steer the machine between a farmhouse and a tree and after narrowly missing a row of houses, he landed in a field, only a few yards from another lot of houses.

Mrs Daisy Camps, wife of a Flying Officer, of 31 Roy Gardens, Ilford, was sitting in her back garden when the plane dashed along behind the fence about 20 feet from the ground. "The pilot managed to bring it down in a cabbage field and how he did it I don't really know." She said later. "The plane bounced once at the edge of the ditch and when it turned over I thought the pilot would be trapped, but he stumbled out and waved away the people who were running towards him. There was no doubt that he saved many lives by the manner in which he dealt with the plane."

(From The Ilford Guardian 22 April 1943)



**Crash site:
Hawker Typhoon
Preservation Group**

(**) Typhoon 1B flown by F/O Lowey who forced landed and was slightly hurt.

FLYING ACCIDENT

**Precise of Proceedings of Court of Inquiry or Investigation opened
on 23 May 1943**

Date and Time	Unit	Place of Accident	Pilot	Injuries	Type of Aircraft	Damage to Aircraft
18.5.43 1545 hrs	247 Sqdn	Fairlop Airfield	F/O Burton	Fatal	Typhoon 1B EJ 917	Total

Short Account of the Accident

This accident occurred at the end of a flight authorised for the purpose of searchlight calibration over London at a height of 20,000 ft. F/O Burton took off at 1440 hrs and at 1542 hrs a Gun Laying Plot (RDF) gave his position over Hatfield village at a height of 19,900 ft. Further plots over the next 1½ minutes gave a course down to Barnet where the aircraft was lost. The height was about 13,400 ft. It crashed at 1545 hrs so that the distance from Barnet to Fairlop was roughly 12 miles, was covered in 1½ minutes, ie at a mean speed of 480 mph. Making allowance for the downhill distance and slight divergence to the north of the Airfield it is possible that a somewhat higher speed was attained during the last part of the descent.

Witnesses on the Airfield saw the aircraft approaching from the NE in level flight at a height variously estimated at between 400 ft and 3,000 ft. When about a mile away a gentle dive was started which steepened as the Airfield boundary was approached. Shortly afterwards the aircraft was pulled up fairly sharply and may have banked to port. As it began to climb the tail unit broke away and the Aircraft spiralled into the ground crashing on the intersection of the E. W. runway and the perimeter track. It struck the ground in the inverted position with a high vertical rate of descent, but with little forward speed and burst into flames. (***). The fire was under control in a few minutes, but not before the greater part of the cockpit section and the centre section were gutted. The Pilot's body was found in the remains of the cockpit.

Two witnesses who first saw the Aircraft after the tail had become detached, stated that smoke and flames were coming from it as it spiralled down. All the other witnesses, however, were emphatic in their denial the Aircraft was on fire in the air.

Finding of the Court President: S/Ldr Baird (23.5.43)

Due to the fact that the tail unit fell off in flight owing to the breakup of the monocoque. The reason for such breakup is not at present known. A.I.B. Investigation proceeding.

Remarks of the Officer Commanding.

Concurs with the findings.

Remarks of the Air Officer Commanding. (28.5.43)

Concurs.

Remarks of the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief. (1.6.43)

The report of the AIB is awaited.

Remarks of C.I. (Accidents)

The accident was investigated by this branch.

The primary structural failure is considered to have occurred in the fuselage between the transport joint and Frame H. The damage to the starboard tail plane appears to be secondary and due to a combination of impact in the air, high air loading and impact on the ground.

The evidence of eye witnesses suggested that the Aircraft was about to dive at high speed across the Airfield or pull up and carry out an aerobatic manoeuvre, but there was nothing to indicate that the Pilot had deliberately imposed undue stresses. The underlying cause of the accident remains obscure.

(Transcribed from National Archives AVIA 5/22)

(* From 247 Squadron ORB).**

18 May 1943.

Today brought tragedy.

F/O Burton was killed. He had been up to 20,000 feet on a search light calibration test, On coming down at about 2,000 feet his tailplane came off and he crashed at the end of the runway just missing the YMCA surrounded by customers.

The machine burst into flames. And the squadron lost one of its more cheeriest and likeable pilots. Full of fun, game for anything, bobbing about like a cheeky sparrow, one whom it will be difficult to forget at any party the Squadron might hold.

'Gonfra' will be missed.