

Sergeant ERIC H COOPER Air Gunner

&

214 (FEDERATED MALAY STATES) SQUADRON RAF

Sgt Eric Harold Cooper

Extracts from the 214 Sqn operational Log for just July 1942. From this log we can see that each aircraft departed at different times and had different bombing altitudes and so on.

DATE	AIRCRAFT TYPE & NUMBER	CREW	DUTY	TIME		DETAILS OF SORTIE or FLIGHT	REFERENCE	
				Up	Down			
7/8, 7.42	Stirling R. 9355	P/O. Peel, J.D.	Gardening	23.59	03.35	Planted 3 x assembly 22, 1 x assembly 14, and 1 x assembly 13, setting 5 at 5339 N 05413 E at 10 second intervals from 2000 ft. at 01.29 hours. Vegetables were planted in allotted positions according to T.R.1335. No results were observed.		
		P/O. Skene, A.E.	Nectarine I					
		Sgt. Withers, P.J.						
		Sgt. Dobson, D.F.						
		Sgt. Orr, H.E.						
		Sgt. Fleming, J.B.						
		Sgt. Thorne, P.A.						
		Sgt. Cooper, E.H.						
	N. 3757	F/Lt. Simich, G.R.	"	"	23.50	03.30	Planted 3 x assembly 22, 1 x assembly 14, and 1 x assembly 13, setting 11 at 01.38 hours from 900 ft. Owing to T.R.1335 failing a pinpoint was obtained on the believed East end of Terschelling. Later some doubt arose as to whether it might have been the E. end of Vlieland, with the result that the vegetables may possibly have been dropped at 53.29.30 N. 0506.30 E, instead of point detailed. Vegetables were dropped at 10 second intervals and the R/Gunner saw 5 splashes.	
			F/Sgt. Attwood, D.W.					
			F/Sgt. Temple, F.					
			Sgt. Knibb, D.L.					
			Sgt. de Freitas, G.					
8/9, 7.42	BF. 314	P/Lt. Allies, F.D.	Attack on	23.35	04.15	Attacked Wilhelmshaven at 01.30 hours from 47,000 ft. dropping 1620 x 4 lb. and 16 x 30 lb. incendiaries. Wilhelmshaven was identified by Jade Basin and by T.R.1335. It is thought that the bombs fell slightly to the W. of the point of aim and were seen to burst. Several large fires were observed in the town after the R/Gunner.		
		C/Lt. G.L. Whittingham	Wilhelmshaven					
		P/O. Pearce, R.S.						
		Sgt. Knight, H.W.						
		Sgt. Nightingale, F.						
		Sgt. Hudson, K.						
Sgt. Thornton, A.E.								

Night of 7/8th July 1942

We can see that on the 7/8th he is on R 9355 aircraft with some of the same crew plus a second pilot. Gardening is the term used for mine laying.

DATE	AIRCRAFT TYPE & NUMBER	CREW	DUTY	TIME		DETAILS OF SORTIE OR FLIGHT	REFERENCES
				Up	Down		
9.7.42	Stirling E.9335	P/O. Peel, J.D.	Attack on	23.50	04.30	Attacked Wilhelmshaven at 01.50 hours from 16,000 ft. dropping 3 x 2000 and 1 x 500. Identification was made by the light of flares and navigational aid. Bombs fell a little short of aiming point on dock buildings but were not seen to burst. Scattered fires of medium size were observed in the docks and town.	
		Sgt. Withers, P.J.	Wilhelmshaven				
		Sgt. Dobson, I.F.					
		Sgt. Orr, H.E.					
		Sgt. Fleming, J.B.					
		Sgt. Thorn, F.A.W.					
		Sgt. Cooper, E.H.					
	E.9356	F/Sgt. Johnson, L.A.	" "	23.48	04.08	Attacked Wilhelmshaven at 01.42 hours from 17,500 ft. dropping 1620 x 4 lb. and 16 x 30 lb. incendiaries. Bauhafen and the E. entrance to the harbour were clearly identified and also flares were illuminating the town. It is thought that the bombs fell on or near the point of aim but were not seen to burst. One or two small fires were seen as the A/c arrived.	
		F/O. Haworth, A.					
		Sgt. Lofthouse, F.					
		Sgt. Ball-Thompson, P.					
		Sgt. Agg, R.					
		Sgt. McGown, J.					
		Sgt. Rennie, C.A.					
	V.7577	Sgt. Griggs, F.M.	" "	23.30	04.20	Wilhelmshaven was attacked at 01.32 hours from 16,500 ft. dropping 1620 x 4 lb. and 16 x 30 lb. incendiaries. Identification was made by T.R. 1334. By the light of flares on leaving it was confirmed that the bombs dropped on Wilhelmshaven and were seen to burst. Some fires were started which were visible from the coast. The flares were dropped precisely over the target.	
		Sgt. O'Hara, C.					
		Sgt. Watson, R.					
		Sgt. Florence, R.					
		Sgt. Ward, R.K.					
		Sgt. Harris, W.E.					
		Sgt. Prosser, T.N.					

Night of 8/9th July 1942

On the 8/9th the same crew on the same airframe with Jack Peel the only pilot on board. Attacking Wilhelmshaven.

DATE	AIRCRAFT TYPE & NUMBER	CREW	DUTY	TIME		DETAILS OF SORTIE OR FLIGHT	REFERENCES
				Up	Down		
24/22.7.42	Stirling BF.314	P/O. Ellis-Brown, R.	Attack on	00.03	03.38	Attacked Duisburg at 01.35 hours from 11,000 ft. dropping 4 x 2000 and 1 x 500. Identification was made by the river and docks, which could be seen 7 miles away and also by flares and a built up area. Bombs fell W. of the centre of the city, just E. of the river. Four bursts were seen. Numerous fires were seen on arrival and also on leaving.	
		S/Ldr. English, R.G.	Duisburg				
		Sgt. O'Hara, C.					
		Sgt. Prosser, T.M.C.					
		Sgt. Watson, R.					
		Sgt. Florence, R.					
		F/Sgt. Johnson, L.A.	" "	24.00	03.30	Attacked Duisburg at 01.42 hours from 17,000 ft. dropping 4 x 2000 and 1 x 500. Duisburg was identified by a bend in the river and by a T.R. fix, also by flares and built up area. Bombs are believed to have fallen in the centre of the town. One bomb was seen to burst. Two good fires were seen burning on arrival.	
		F/O. Haworth, A.					
		Sgt. Rennie, C.A.					
		Sgt. Lofthouse, F.					
		Sgt. Ball-Thompson, P.					
		Sgt. Agg, R.					
		Sgt. McGown, J.					
	E.9356	P/O. Peel, J.D.	" "	00.20	03.50	Attacked Duisburg at 01.45 hours from 16,500 ft. dropping 4 x 2000 and 1 x 500. Identified Duisburg by means of flares, concentration of S/Ls, and built up area. Bombs fell in the centre of the city and one burst was seen. Numerous fires were seen on arrival and on leaving.	
		P/O. Dunkley, E.H.					
		Sgt. Dobson, D.F.					
		Sgt. Fleming, J.B.					
		Sgt. Fairhall, A.C.					
		Sgt. Thorne, F.A.W.					
		Sgt. Cooper, E.H.					

Night of 21/22nd July 1942

Now on airframe R9356 attacking Duisburg. Same crew plus an extra pilot.

The Duisburg raid on the night of 23/24th July involved 215 allied aircraft from numerous squadrons and bases in UK. I do not know how deconfliction between aircraft was managed but I would suspect that 'slot' (ToTs or the time when each aircraft was scheduled to be overhead target and releasing weapons) times were pretty much vital. Attack directions and target areas must play a part in the plan. Bombing altitudes are clearly a function to mitigate AAA (Flak). The German gunners would need to know the height of the bombers in order to set the correct fuze setting on the shells – alternating each bombers altitude mitigated some risk from Flak. It is likely that 2 or more bombers were over target at anyone time otherwise the whole raid at 1 minute 'slot' time intervals over the target would take 3 hours and 35 minutes to complete it is feasible though the risks of fratricide are increased.

It is interesting that the Bomber Command Diary suggests the weather on target was cloudy. My guess is that it probably was when the lead aircraft (Pathfinders?) dropped the flares as they were reported as 'scattered'.

Minor Operations: 8 Blenheim Intruders to St-Trond, Venlo and Vechta airfields, 9 aircraft minelaying off Texel and in the Frisians, 6 aircraft on leaflet flights to France. 1 Intruder lost.

22 July 1942

8 Bostons in pairs attacked various targets. 2 aircraft bombed Sluiskil power-station and then machine-gunned barges near Ghent and 2 aircraft bombed Langenbrugge power-station. 1 Wellington was sent to Essen and 1 Mosquito to Münster but these aircraft turned back because of lack of cloud. No aircraft lost.

23 July 1942

4 Mosquitoes on cloud-cover raids to Germany. 3 turned back but 1 aircraft bombed a factory in the area south of Grevenbroich. No aircraft lost.

23/24 July 1942

DUISBURG

215 aircraft – 93 Wellingtons, 45 Lancasters, 39 Stirlings, 38 Halifaxes. 7 aircraft – 3 Wellingtons, 2 Lancasters, 2 Stirlings – lost.

Much cloud was present over the target and the flares dropped by the leading aircraft were scattered. Those bombs which did fall in Duisburg again caused some housing damage and 65 people were killed.

Minor Operations: 8 Blenheim Intruders, 13 aircraft minelaying. 2 Intruders lost.

25 July 1942

12 Bostons were dispatched in low-level pairs but only 2 aircraft bombed Sluiskil power-station. Later in the day, 12 further Bostons were sent out in an attempt to bomb an open air 'Quisling meeting' at Lunteren in Holland but they had to turn back because of lack of cloud cover. 2 Mosquitoes were dispatched and both reached and bombed their targets, Frankfurt and Mannheim. No aircraft lost.

25/26 July 1942

DUISBURG

313 aircraft – 177 Wellingtons, 48 Stirlings, 41 Halifaxes, 33 Lancasters, 14 Hampdens. 12 aircraft – 7 Wellingtons, 2 Halifaxes, 2 Lancasters, 1 Stirling – lost.

Thick cloud covered the target area. Duisburg again reports property damage, though not as heavy as on the last two raids. 6 people were killed.

Minor Operations: 21 Blenheim Intruders, 8 aircraft minelaying off St-Nazaire and Verdon, 7 Halifaxes on leaflet flights. 3 Intruders and 1 Lancaster minelayer lost.

Total effort for the night: 349 sorties, 16 aircraft (4.9 per cent) lost.

The exact weather for the 23/24th is still unknown but the Sqn log for the aircraft that returned shows that it was a fairly clear night. See below 2 images for that fateful night. See the two images below -;

DETAIL OF WORK CARRIED OUT

By No. 24h (F.M.S.) Squadron.

SECRET Page No. _____

FOR THE MONTH OF July, 1942.

(472) Wt. 242257160. 180w. 2/60. P.L. 51-7211.

DATE	AIRCRAFT TYPE & NUMBER	CREW	DUTY	TIME		DETAILS OF SORTIE OR FLIGHT	REFERENCES
				Up	Down		
24.7.42	Stirling W.777	F/O. Smith, J.G.	Attack on Duisburg.	01.05	04.35	Attacked Duisburg at 02.35 hours from 16,500 ft. dropping 4 x 2000 and 1 x 500. Identification was made by Navigational aid and also a bend in the river S.W. of Duisburg was seen. It is thought that the bombs may have fallen N. of the centre of the city. No bursts were seen.	
		F/O. Hill, E.G.					
		F/O. Osborne, D.N.					
		Sgt. Meredith, E.					
		Sgt. Watt, W.E.					
		Sgt. Stewart, F.M.R.					
W.7650	W.7650	Sgt. Hooke, E.E.	" "	01.45	04.55	Attacked Duisburg at 02.38 hours from 17,000 ft. dropping 4 x 2000 and 1 x 500. The river Rhine was clearly seen and bombs are thought to have fallen in the S.W. portion of the city. Two bursts were seen. Fires were burning as the A/c arrived.	
		Sgt. Jarvis, R.L.					
		Sgt. Davidson, J.K.					
		Sgt. Corcoran, E.K.					
		Sgt. Green, E.S.					
		Sgt. Gibbs, R.P.					
W.7575	W.7575	F/Lt. Simich, G.R.	" "	01.10	04.00	Attacked Duisburg at 02.40 hours from 14,500 ft. dropping 4 x 2000 and 1 x 500. On run in Mars was clearly seen by light of flares and a glimpse of the river was also obtained. Bomb fell on the N.W. edge of the city area. 2 good fires were seen as the A/c arrived definitely to the N.W. of the town.	
		F/Sgt. Attwood, D.W.					
		Sgt. Knibby, D.L.					
		F/Sgt. Oatwright, R.G.					
		Sgt. Easton, C.					
		Sgt. Jackson, A.F.					
		F/O. Sheppard, B.M.					

23/24th July (page 1)

DATE	AIRCRAFT TYPE & NUMBER	CREW	DUTY	TIME		DETAILS OF SORTIE OR FLIGHT	REFERENCES
				Up	Down		
23/24.7.42	Stirling R.9355	P/O. Ince, C.D.	Attack on	01.00	04.45	Attacked Duisburg at 02.21 hours from 17,000 ft. dropping 1890 x 4 lb. incendiaries. Bombed by means of T.R.1335 and by the help of flares. It is believed that bombs fell in the town area, but no results were seen. The glow of fires could be seen beneath clouds.	
		Sgt. Honlin, A.R.	Duisburg.				
		Sgt. Fray, E.C. Sgt. Stokes, C.J. Sgt. Dempster, W.J. P/O. Arnold, A.F. Sgt. Johnson-Biggs, W.					
	R.9356	Sgt. Hodge, S.R. P/O. Williamson, N.A. Sgt. Newcomb, S. Sgt. Kent, J. P/Sgt. Colehar, R.A. Sgt. Bushelly, W.S. Sgt. Gray, R.F. Sgt. Iyle, A.	" "	00.55	04.20	Attacked Duisburg at 02.26 hours from 15,500 ft. dropping 192 x 30 lb. incendiaries. The river and docks were clearly seen, and bombs fell in the centre of built up area. Numerous scattered fires were seen on arrival and for about ten minutes after leaving.	
	R.9141	Sgt. Woods, C.W. Sgt. Handbury, J. Sgt. Beaumont, E. Sgt. O'Neill, J.W. Sgt. Wilson, E.L. Sgt. Callister, J.K. Sgt. Thompson, W.	" "	01.05	04.46	Attacked Duisburg at 02.33 hours from 14,000 ft. dropping 4 x 2000 and 1 x 500. The road bridge opposite Duisburg was clearly seen by the captain in the light of flares. Bombs fell in what was believed to be the S.W. portion of Duisburg. One burst was seen but no results were observed. Fires were burning on arrival.	

23/24th July (page 2)

The sun and moon state for that night is also significant given that it would appear the skies were reasonably clear (from the 214 Sqn log entries). Theoretically the moon would have set before 214 Sqn aircraft overflew the Dutch town of Oss. However morning twilight (astronomical twilight = 1.5 hours before sunrise, nautical twilight = 1 hour before sunrise and civil twilight about 30 minutes before sunrise) would be enough (?) to silhouette aircraft against the eastern sky or create glints from Perspex canopies – particularly an aircraft flying at 9,000 feet. The table reproduced below is for the 23rd July 1942 – but the slight change in timing for twilight would be more or less 3 minutes.

Oss Holland (Longitude E5° 31', Latitude N51° 46')

July 23, 1942

Universal Time

Sun	
Begin civil twilight	03:03
Sunrise	03:46
Sun transit	11:44
Sunset	19:41
End civil twilight	20:25
Moon	
Moonrise	15:02
Moon transit	19:49
Moonset	00:31 on following day

Closest Primary Moon Phase: First Quarter on July 21, 1942 at 05:13

Phase of the Moon on July 23, 1942: Waxing Gibbous with 75% of the Moon's visible disk illuminated.

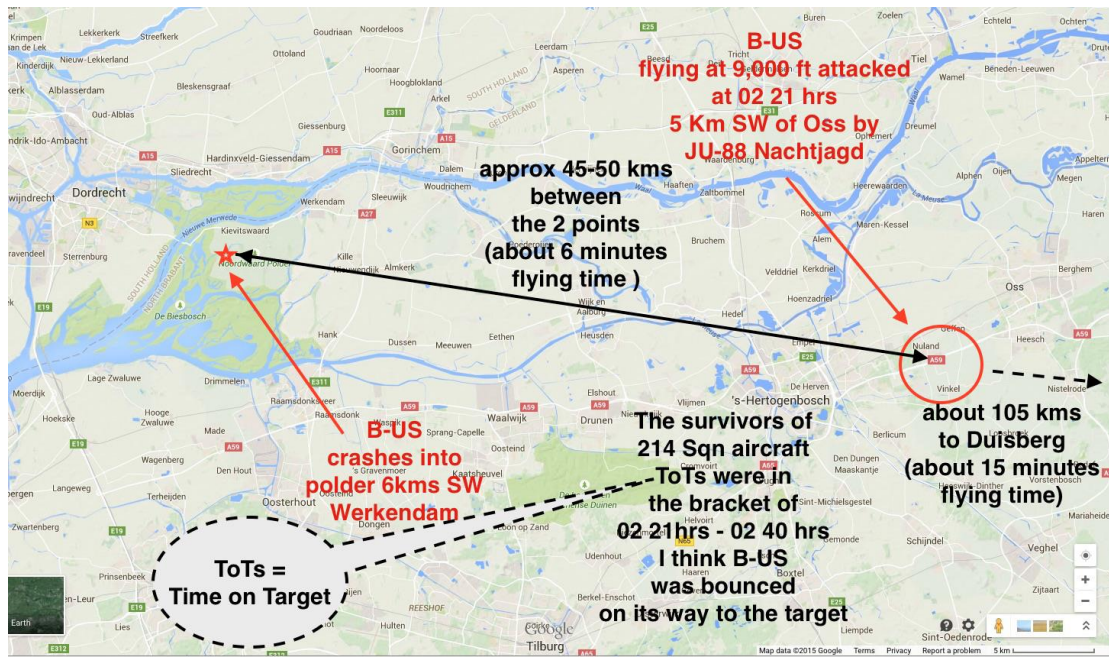
We know from an exert from Nacht-Jar diaries that Eric's aircraft was shot down by a JU-88 at 02:21 hrs at 3,000 metres (9,000 feet) 5 Km south west of the town of Oss. We know the unit and pilots name of that JU-88.

23-24 July 1942

215 aircraft were dispatched for another major raid against Duisburg. Seven aircraft were lost, plus two out of eight intruder Bler at supported the Main Force raid, four of which fell foul of Nachtjäger.

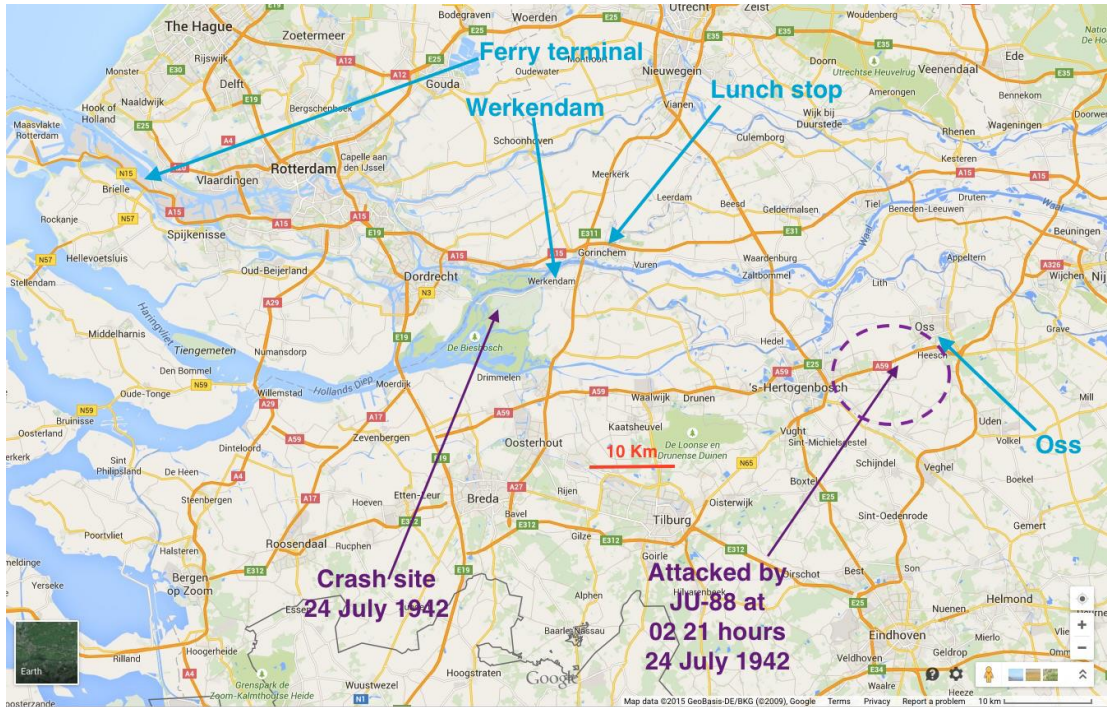
Hans-Joachim Witzleb: 1	I./NJG3	Blenheim	Goldenstedt, N.E. Vechta	01.46	18 Sqn Blenheim Z7428
ltm. Herbert Bönsch: 11	Stab III./NJG2	Stirling	5 km. S.W. Oss: 3.000 m.	02.21	214 Sqn Stirling W7567
ilt. Heinrich Prinz Sayn-Wittgenstein: 13	9./NJG2	Lancaster	North Sea 30 km. W. Scheveningen	03.10	207 Sqn Lancaster R56
lz. Heinz Oloff: 1	3./NJG1	B-17/Stirli	13 km. N.E. 's-Hertoaenbosch (5B)	03.25	149 Sqn Stirling W7580

Looking at the surviving aircraft ToT times it would appear that W7567 was attacked on the way to the target area. All 214 surviving aircraft ToTs were between 02:21 and 02:40 hrs.



I suspect that the JU-88 crippled W7567 and so Jack turned the aircraft around 180 degrees and headed back to UK. It may be that JU-88 followed the W7567 all the way to Werkendam – but unlikely. I do not know the operational box that this German was responsible for but he probably stayed in his patrol area seeking new targets.

The image below shows (for scale) in blue the Rotterdam P&O terminal, Werkendam and the place we had lunch on Wednesday 3rd June 2015. In purple is the area of the Junkers attack (circled) and the crash site south west of Werkendam. A scale in red is also marked.



Below is a Dutch map showing all the crash sites immediately south and south west of Werkendam. Each red outlined circle has a number and letter above it and a year below it. The number represents the chronological order of the crashes, the letter represents the nationality of the aircraft. A = American, B = British, C = Canadian, D = German, etc. The year marker is the year the crash happened.



The marker for **6B 1942** is the crash site for the aircraft that Eric was the rear gunner.

Below is the Dutch explanation for the '6' crash site.

6) 24 Juli 1942- Short Stirling. W7567, 214 squ

Crash op de polder van landbouwer Salomon Glerum. In de nacht van 23 op 24 juli 1942, om 02.00 uur stortte een Brits vliegtuig neer nabij de boerderij van Sal Glerum nabij de polder Kroon en Zalm. Alleen de gewonde marconist Chyriel Fairhall overleefde de crash en kreeg medische hulp van dokter Schols in Werkendam. Daarna werd hij gevangen genomen door de Duitsers.

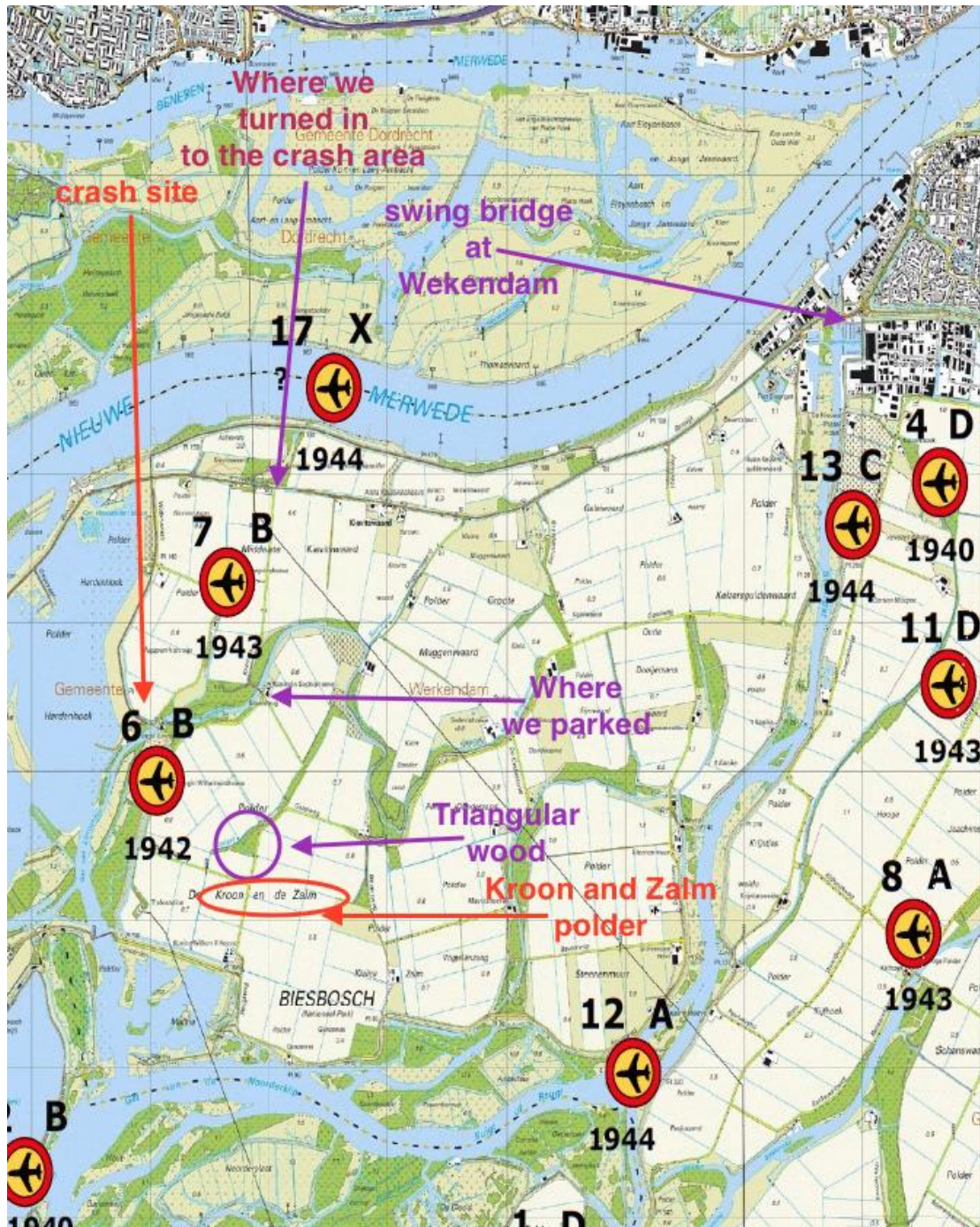
My niece Kitty Hallam translated the text for us and is as follows -;

6) 24 July 1942 – Short Stirling, W7567 of 214 Sqn.

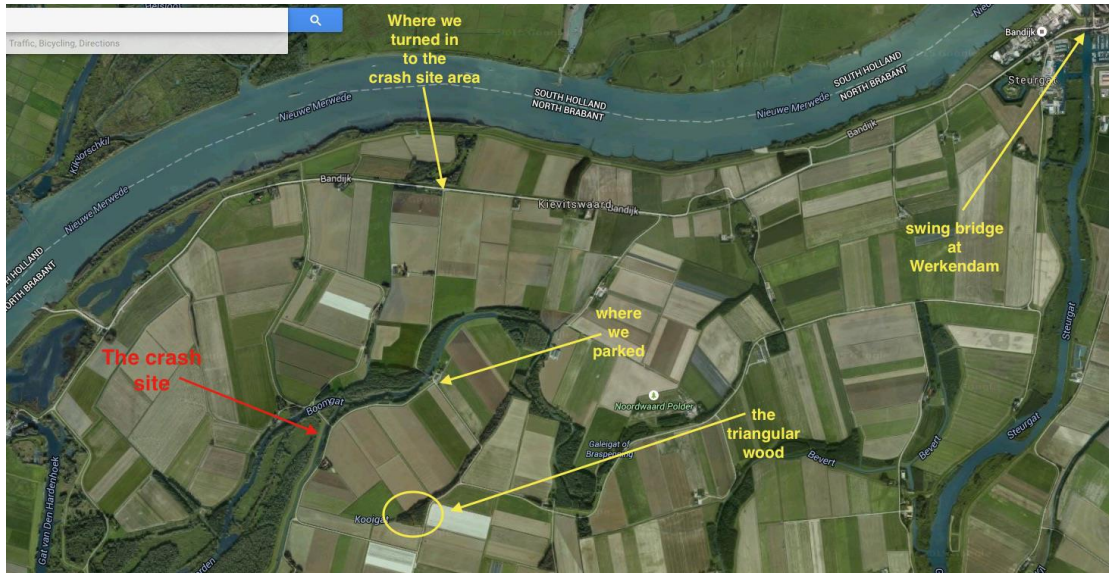
Crashed on the polders of the farmer Salomon Glerum during the night of the 23rd / 24th of July 1942. A British aircraft crashed near the farm of Sal Glerum near the polder (called) Kroon and Zalm. Only the injured wireless operator Cyril Fairhall survived the crash and he received treatment from Dr. Schols in Werkendam. After treatment he was taken prisoner by the Germans.

3rd June 2015

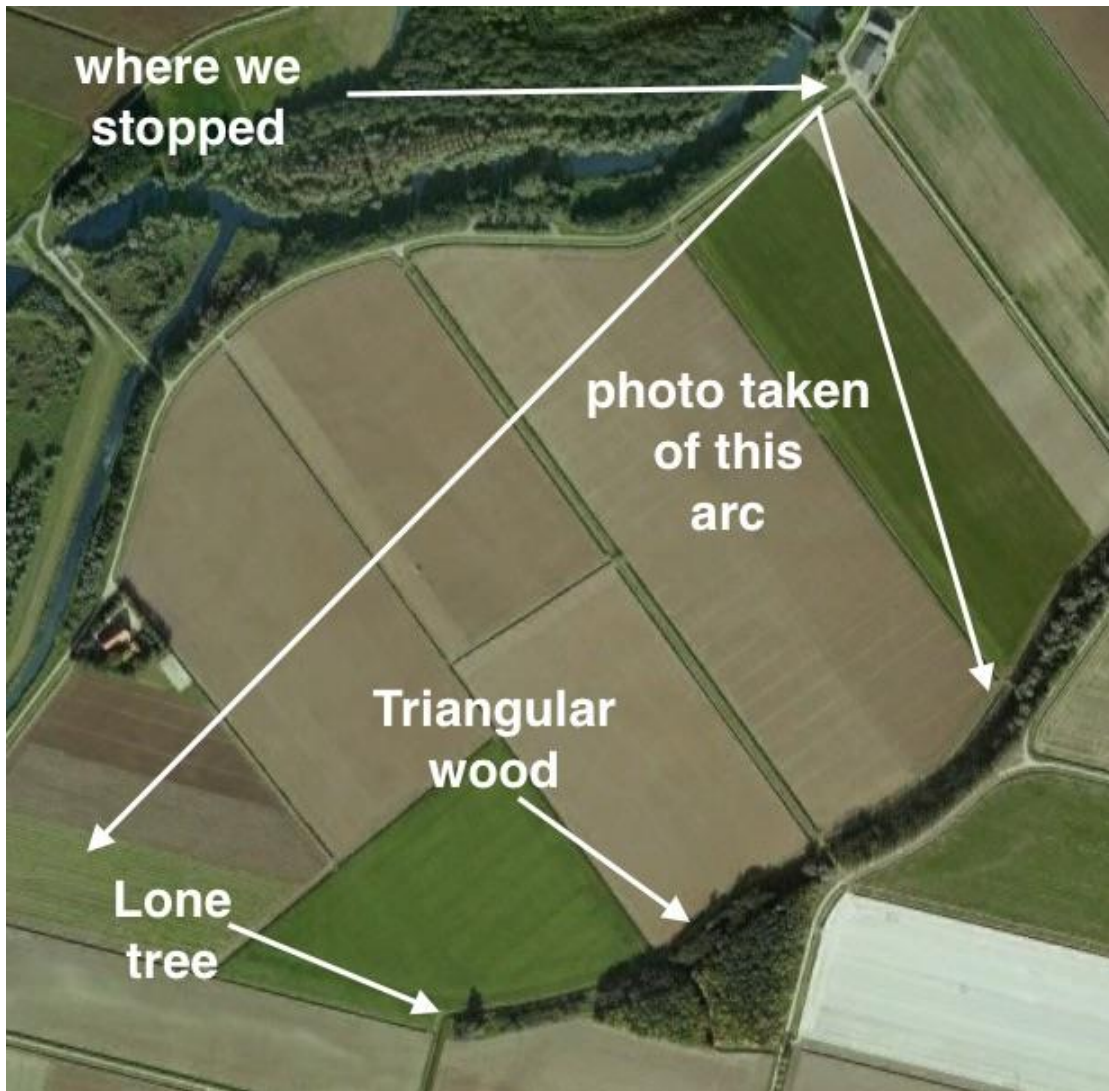
When we drove out to the crash site we ended up about 400 - 450 meters from the position shown on the Dutch map – not within the 200 meters I had told everyone.



There has been a substantial amount of land reclaimed since the Dutch map was printed and the Google image was taken. None the less the navigation error was mine we were just a few hundred meters from the indicated crash site.



above - Present day birds eye view



from Google maps with the arc of the photo below drawn on top

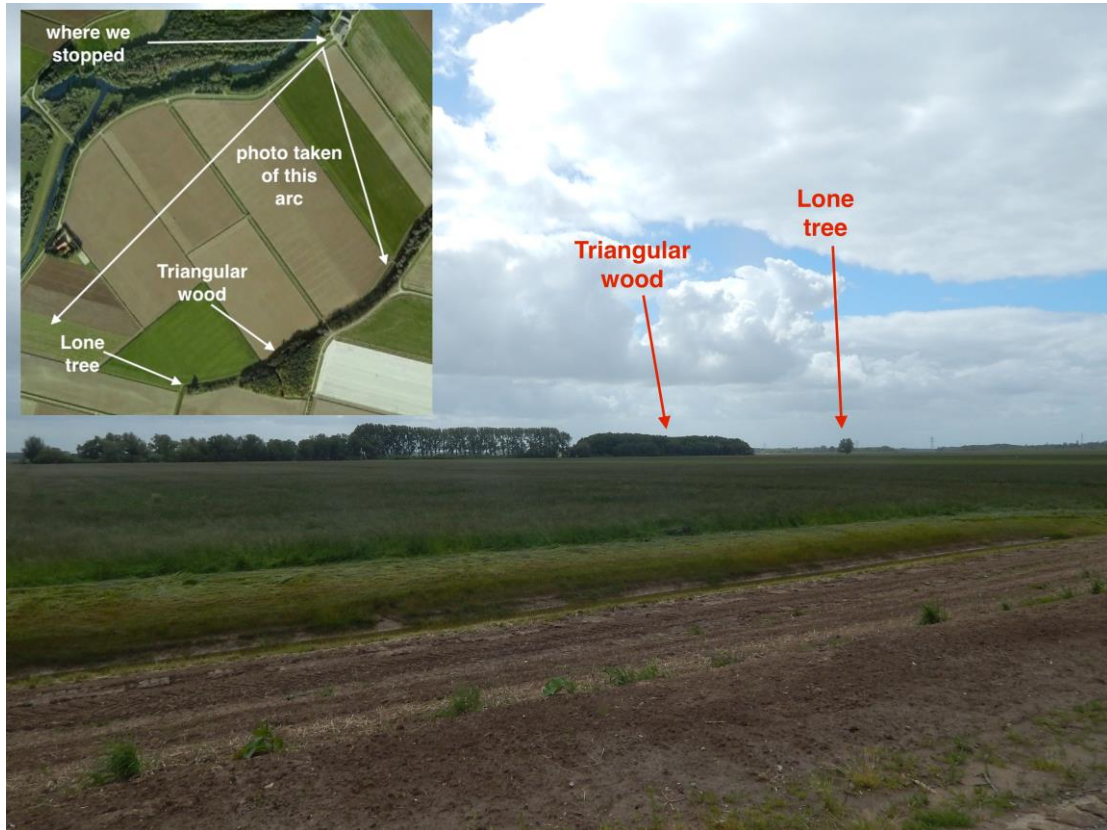


photo taken 3rd July

The Crew of W7567

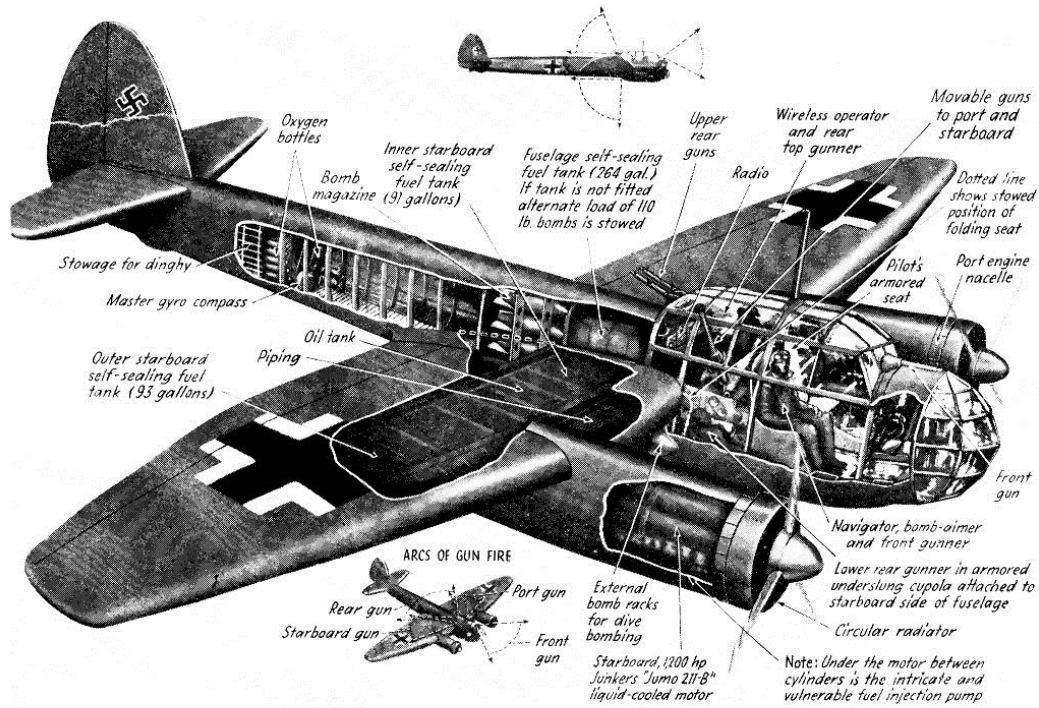
We know quite a lot about Eric Harold Cooper – but at this time we know so little about the men he flew with.



this is a photograph sent to Eric Coopers sisters by the mother of Sgt Dobson.

There is an article from the 214 Sqn web page about the pilot. Who in my opinion fought so bravely to keep the aircraft flying after the attack. If I am right in thinking that his aircraft was attacked on the way in to the target (the surviving aircraft stated 'slot' times on the 214 Sqn log strongly suggest this was the case), and therefore I think that his aircraft was damaged in the attack so that he turned the aircraft around and tried to fly back to base. The wireless operator survived the crash – in my opinion it was a crash resulting from an attempt to land not a catastrophic crash from altitude that no one could have survived. There are not too many Americans that have won my admiration but Jack Peel is one of them.

GERMAN AIRCRAFT JU-88c



The JU 88 three-place bomber has up to six guns as follows: one or two 7.9 mm. machine guns or one 20 mm. cannon forward in the fuselage; two 7.9 mm. guns at top rear; a 7.9 mm. firing to the left; and one or two 7.9's which fire to the right.



Ju 88C series heavy fighter in flight

The Ju 88C was originally intended as a fighter-bomber and heavy fighter by adding fixed, forward-firing guns to the nose while

retaining some bomb carrying ability of the A-series bomber. The C-series had a solid metal nose, and retained the A-series style vertical tail, as well as the ventral *Bola* gondola under the crew compartment, although this was sometimes removed at unit level in order to reduce weight and drag and thus enhance aircraft performance. The Ju-88C was later used as a night fighter and this became its main role.

The first night fighter version of the Ju 88 was the **C-2**, based on the A-1 and armed with one 20 mm MG FF cannon and three 7.92 mm (.312 in) MG 17 machine guns placed in a new metal nose. These examples entered service in *Zerstörerstaffel* of KG 30 and the unit was renamed II./NJG 1 in July 1940.

We know what became of the German and his crew -:

An email from a Dutch researcher explains the fate of the Germans.

Hi Dick,

Many thanks for contacting me, I,m always willing to help people or relative how lost a soldier in WWII,

Sgt. Eric Harold Cooper, was the reargunner on Striling W7567 214 Squadron who lost on July 24th 1942.

The plane crashed at 2.21 Hrs (pm) on a Polder of the S. Glerum at Werkendam Holland.

The plane was shot down by a nightfighter, Hptm. Herbert Bönsch stab III./NJG2 is was his 11th victory...

Hauptmann Herbert Bonsch of III./NJG 2, On the night of 31 Jul/1 Aug he was patrolling in his 'personal' JU-88, with two ME-109s of his squadron. They spotted a lone Halifax bomber making landfall over the Dutch coast. One of the ME-109s stood off whilst the other two aircraft attacked. The Halifax was raked stern to nose and wingtip to wingtip; the mid-upper gun turret took a direct hit, killing gunner Mac McAuley. The rear gunner, US citizen PO Sam Glasgow of Wallace NC shouted for the pilot, PO Ron Waite to dive to port - who responded sufficiently quickly for the JU-88, attacking from the rear, to enter his field range. Glasgow scored a direct hit on Hauptmann Bonsch's aircraft which was seen to plunge to earth. The attacking ME-109 was damaged by Mac McAuley before he died. This aircraft returned to base and reported the

circumstances of the death of Hauptmann's crew at the hands of a Halifax rear gunner. They believed the Halifax sufficiently damaged to have crashed into the North Sea - but although all instruments (inc. the ASI) were lost, and flying controls badly damaged, the Halifax remained airborne and the surviving crew returned to England and baled out successfully. Navigator Canadian Bob Poole had been injured in the battle - shrapnel had opened his wrist to the bone; he rejected morphine so that he could better plot a dead-reckoned route back across the North Sea. At debrief, their story was treated with incredulity - RAF intelligence at the time was that Luftwaffe fighter pilots were forbidden to attack lone aircraft in pairs or more. It beggars belief that despite their incredulity, the debriefing hierarchy released the story to the press - and all daily papers & the radio carried the story the next day. Eventually, in 1981, Dutch author/historian Hans Onderwater, reconciled the crew's version of the events with the Luftwaffe's record of the battle. Later, in the last week of 1994, Hauptmann Bonsch, his crew and aircraft were discovered in new building foundation excavations (this, despite German authorities in 1942, telling the crew's families that the bodies had been recovered from the aircraft and buried). This story was widely covered in the British National Press on New Year's Eve, 1994.

Source: Nachtjagd War Diaries Dr. Theo Boiten. Mr. Tex Waite.

Regards Michel Beckers