

14/8/42 - No. 33

Air Ministry Bulletin No. 7806

Air Ministry News Service

PARACHUTE CLIPPED ON IN MID-AIR

A remarkable escape by parachute is described in a letter from a Squadron Leader now in a prison camp in Germany. The writer was captain of a Whitley which was shot down during the 1000 bomber raid on Cologne on the night of May 30. In his letter, written to an R.A.F. officer in this country he says:-

"We were set alight by fighters. I gave the word to jump and reduced speed to make things easier. The second pilot handed me my parachute, and at the same moment another attack carried away the port mainplane. We turned upside down and started spinning. I tried to stop the spin as we could none of us move, but I couldn't get at the rudders and was about passing out with smoke - also we were getting cooked."

"Suddenly there was a hell of a crash, and I found myself alone in space with my parachute in my hand. I clipped it on - a difficult and alarming experience - and it opened at what seemed hardly more than tree height, and I landed very heavily. It was still raining bits of aeroplane which must have come to pieces, as we were all of us flung out like this, except the tail gunner."

The Squadron Leader is recovering from leg injuries. His wireless operator also escaped by parachute and was taken prisoner. The rest of the crew were killed.

NOTE: In a bomber, each member of the crew wears his parachute harness, but the parachute itself is not attached as it is to the harness of a fighter pilot. It is kept in a separate pack, and when the order to bale out is given it is clipped on to two hooks in front of the harness.

To have clipped on his parachute while he was actually falling must have called for amazing coolness and presence of mind on the part of the Squadron Leader.

The writer of the letter, Captain J. C. G. [unclear] of the Royal Air Force, which he does not mention, was flying with his crew in a Whitley bomber over the North Sea when they were attacked by fighters. He was hit and fell into the water. He was able to take off again and land on a small island. He then turned his plane to land on the sea again, but it was too late. He had to bail out and was able to do so because he had his parachute harness on. He was able to land on the sea and was picked up by a boat. He was taken prisoner and is now in a prison camp in Germany.