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Handley Page Halifax BB214 – 103 Squadron – Sgt (Later Flight Lieutenant) Harold G Dryhurst RAFVR and crew - 1942.

Missing - 28/29th August 1942 - Handley Page Halifax II - BB214 - Op Nuremberg.



Sgt Harold G Dryhurst RAFVR

Sgt Dryhurst and crew were posted to 103 Squadron at Elsham Wolds late July 1942/early August 1942. Sgt Dryhurst flew his first operation on the 16/17th August 1942 as second pilot (second dickie) in the crew of Sgt Art Tilley RCAF to Dusseldorf. This was an early return due to severe electrical storms which rendered the compass unserviceable. According to his log book he also completed 2 other sorties as a second pilot - another with Tilley and one with John Rose.

Sgt Dryhurst then successfully completed an operation with his own crew on the 27/28th August 1942 to Kassel. The following night Sgt Dryhurst and crew were detailed for an operation to Nuremberg in Halifax BB214 which was attacked by a night fighter outbound and crashed in the Laacher See, near Koblenz.

Date	Target/Duty	S/N	Rank	Initials	Surname	Age	Hometown	Service	Missing	POW
28/08/1942	Nuremberg	BB214	Sgt	HG	Dryhurst					POW
28/08/1942	Nuremberg	BB214	Sgt	JW	Platt	25	Liverpool.	RAF	M	
28/08/1942	Nuremberg	BB214	Sgt	AA	Roberts			RAAF		POW
28/08/1942	Nuremberg	BB214	P/O	VMM	Morrison	19	Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.	RCAF	K	
28/08/1942	Nuremberg	BB214	F/S	JJ	Carey	22	Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.	RCAF	K	
28/08/1942	Nuremberg	BB214	Sgt	BF	Hughes			RNZAF		POW
28/08/1942	Nuremberg	BB214	Sgt	JL	MacLachlan	21		RAFVR	K	

The pilot later reported he had attempted to jettison the bomb load but was not sure that the load had actually left the aircraft.

2 crew members – Platt and Carey, were unaccounted for and their remains were thought to be still on the aircraft. After the war attempts were made to recover this aircraft which was resting on the lake bed close to the shore. These attempts were abandoned as they proved difficult and dangerous in view of the bomb load on board.

The wreck was left largely undisturbed for many years. Part of the tail fins were protruding above the water and were later cut off and removed by a scrap dealer.

The wreck has been investigated from time to time with a view to clearing the site. Nothing has come of this as it was considered too dangerous, complex and expensive to undertake. It is thought that divers and scavengers have explored the wreck over the years and some items may have been stripped off it.

The lake is now part of a National Park and diving and the use of power boats require official permission.

In the last 10 years there has been renewed interest in BB214 and a surveys and dives have been made. Some human remains have been recovered and these have been identified as Canadian Flight Sergeant **John Joseph Carey**. (See pic below)



To date no trace of the remains of the Flight Engineer Sgt Platt have been found but investigations are ongoing.

Harold "Jerry" Dryhurst.



Born on 7 January 1923 in Great Waltham Essex and later moved to Chelmsford. Eldest of 7 children with 4 sisters and 2 brothers. To family and friends he was always known as Jerry which he preferred.

His father and 4 of the children served during the war. Went to King Edward VI Grammar School in Chelmsford where he excelled at Modern Languages and Maths. He spoke fluent German which probably saved his life when he was captured. Before joining the RAF he worked for Hoffmans Manufacturing Co in Chelmsford as a Precision Inspector. Excellent sportsman enjoying football, cricket, fencing and bobsleigh.

He spent 3 years as a POW in Lamsdorf and Sagan. On return to the UK he married Kaye who he met whilst he was training before he joined 103 Squadron and continued his career in the RAF

On returning after the war he was at Bramcote, Dishforth, Drifffield and IANS Topcliffe. From Feb to June 46 he was with 657 Sqn. In 47 he was at Cosford and then in June 47 went on to CFS Little Rissington as a QFI followed by RAFC Cranwell where he was a QFI. From there he went back to CFS Little Rissington as a QFI and finally left the RAF in 52. The last entry in his log book is Jan 8th 1952 after 5 yrs and 302 days service. Of course this does not include his war years which would have added a further 5 years (3 as a POW at Lamsdorf/Sagan).

He would have been 29 yrs and 1 day when he left the service as a Flight Lieutenant. He was signed out of the RAF as an above the average QFI and an exceptional pilot navigator with a green rating in instrument flying.

He then joined BEA, BWIA, Maitland and Drewery and then became a Flight Examiner at CAFU Stansted Airport. He left a year before he died to join Autair as Jet Training Captain in readiness for them taking delivery of their BAC111 fleet.

Harold Dryhurst was tragically killed on the 23rd December 1967 when the HS 125 G-AVGW crashed half a mile west of the end of Runway 26 at Luton Airport. First Officer **David Boothman** was also killed. The aircraft was owned by the Beecham Group. It was being operated by Autair International on a crew training detail so that David Boothman could complete his conversion onto the 125. A series of flights had been made in the area, the final being a simulated engine failure on take off followed by an asymmetric approach and single engine landing. Witnesses saw the aircraft make a normal take off and climb to about 300 ft when engine noise ceased. The aircraft descended and crashed onto the roof of the Vauxhall Motors factory bursting into flames. Although the cause of the accident was known, almost total reduction of engine power, despite intensive investigations by the Board of Trade Accidents Investigation Branch no exact reason for the accident was ever determined.

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Mid upper gunner in this crew, Sgt **Bernie Hughes RNZAF** wrote an account of his last operation and his experiences as a POW which I published in the RAF Elsham Wolds Assn newsletter some years ago. I have added this to the [next page](#) for interest.

Item written by David Fell with much thanks to members of the Dryhurst family for their input and co-operation.

For people interested in **Sources and Books** these can be found on the [Sources and Books page - here](#).

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