

INVESTIGATION REPORT

From: A.M. & E.D.

TO: A.M. 12 Cas London

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DATE: 13th May 46

Your file or Folder Ref: CAN/P.420932-44/P.4 Cas.C.4B dated 25.10.45 & previously undated.

Your C.N. NO: G.36

Our Ref: AMREU/906/36

Name of Search Off: F/L W.J. Taylor

Target: Hamburg, Germany

Aircraft type & serial no: Lancaster LL.687

Date reported missing: Night of 28/29th Jul, 44

Place of crash, Map ref: Sprechens near Bremervorde L54/R94

Place of burial, Map ref: Sprechens Cemetery L54/R9124

Crew:	J.26857	A/F/L	Groucher, G.	W/Op A.G.
	J.21669	Ryan, D.T.	F/C	Pilot
	R.150903	W/OII	Whitson, R.D.	Nav.
	R.165962	F/Sgt	Truscott, H.H.	A/G
	J.85681	P/O	Durnin, A.H.	A/B
	R.190578	F/Sgt	Iarie, J.A.K.	A/G
	R.194239	F/Sgt	Blais, J.L.A.	A/G
	1061574	Sgt	Scott, D.	F/Eng.

RESULT OF INVESTIGATION AND FINDINGS:

As instructed, I visited SPRECHENS, situated 5 Km SOUTH of BREMERVORDE (Map ref. L.54/R.94) and interviewed HERR TRAPPENS, the Burgemeister. He stated that he was not present at the burial of the airmen but he did see the crash. He said that he was not able to see the bodies as the German police kept everyone away. He said that, to his knowledge, there were only five bodies found and that were all buried at SPRECHEN Cemetery. When asked if there could have been anyone still in the aircraft and never found, he answered "Yes, as the aircraft was burnt completely". He was not Burgermeister at the time of the crash.

I next interviewed HERR SCHRODER, farmer, who was Burgermeister at the time of the crash. He stated that there had only been five bodies found and they had all been buried at SPRECHEN Cemetery. He also stated that there could have been other airmen in the aircraft and no trace found of them as it was totally burnt out. I asked if anyone could be in the River OSTE, which was near to the scene of the crash and he took me to the river which is only a stream and not large enough to hide a body. He told me that all the identification that had been found on them had been sent to FLIEGERHOF (STADE). I had visited this station on a former enquiry and found that all German documents had been destroyed. He kept no records himself at all.

I next interviewed FRAU PINDEL, who lived in SPRECHENS at the time of the crash. She stated that there were only five bodies found. One was found by her husband, who is now dead, in their field. She did not see the body herself. She stated that the Germans did not take the bodies back to SANDBOSTEL as stated previously but buried them as they found them in SPRECHENS.

P.T.O.

On exhumation of the grave, I found only five bodies. Amongst the bodies was a F/Sgt. Air Gunner who had 4 fillings in his upper teeth, which was all there was as means of identification - he had a Canadian badge on his uniform. A W.O.II with an observer wing on his tunic, also with Canadian badge on his shoulder. Next there was a Sgt, who had been burnt quite badly. It was an R.A.F. battledress with no Canada on the shoulders. He had part of a wing on his tunic, which was of the Canadian type but was so burnt that I could not tell what trade of aircrew it was. His top left centre tooth was chipped a bit and it appeared to me that it had been like that for quite a few years. It might, however, have been broken in the crash. Next there was a F/O Pilot, also with Canada on his shoulder. Then a P/O Air Bomber. Also in the grave there were parts of a parachute with two parachute harness release boxes. They had the following numbers on them:

M.050520B

M.051746B

Your Can/P.420922/44/PA/Cas/C4B states that captured German documents show A/F/L G. Croucher to be buried at Sprechens.

It has been definitely established that F/Lt Croucher is not buried in this grave. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that the two F/Sgt are IRMIE and TRUSCOTT. As exhumation has definitely proved that one airman wearing a Sgt's tunic is buried in this grave, it would be appreciated if Sgt. Scott could be contacted with a view to finding out if he had actually been wearing his own tunic or one borrowed or one exchanged with one of the crew members.

F/L  
I/O

#### Remarks

The result of this investigation is by no means satisfactory as it does not solve the case completely, but it has established beyond doubt that A/F/L Croucher is not buried in this grave as first supposed (The reason for the grave markings as shown in the enclosed photographs is ~~XXXX~~ without any feasible explanation, unless Croucher's body was so badly smashed in the crash that only a small portion was found which bore his identity, which in turn was buried with one of the unknown Sergeants and may account for Croucher having the rank of Sgt. above his grave) This case will remain open in the hope that further information will come to hand which will enable us to solve the case.

H/C

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