

INVESTIGATION REPORT



Investigation Site	Cockayne Hatley, Potton Wood
Investigation Date	23 rd February 2013
Report By	Bill King
Team Members	Bill, Steph, Andy F, Sarah, Dee

Background

At 1500 on 18th September 1945 an RAF Lockheed Liberator Mk.VIII, KN736, took off from Bassingbourn in Hertfordshire with a crew of seven and a Scottish terrier puppy, Bitsa, on board. The Liberator was an American designed long range heavy bomber that was intended as a replacement for the Halifax by the RAF. KN736 had been recently delivered, flown over from the USA and had only done delivery mileage. On that day the plane was being flown by Flight Lieutenant Patrick (Pat) Joseph McNulty DFC, RAAF (Captain, age 22) who had flown several operational flights in the Halifax, a very similar aircraft. His instructor was Flight Lieutenant John Spiller, DFC, RAF (Pilot Instructor), a pilot from 59 Squadron based at Waterbeach.

After a morning of doing take-offs, circuits and landings the afternoon was allocated to training and testing of the planes ability to survive engine failure. The flights started with a normal take-off using all four engines followed by an initial climb using only three engines. This initial phase was successful as the plane climbed away smoothly and safely from the airfield. Normally the plane would then return to the airfield and land before the next phase of training would take place, flying the plane on just two of the four engines. That day the instructor decided to dispense with the landing and to go straight into the next scenario.

The plane was designed to be flown on just two engines but only just, as the pilot found when the second of the four engines were shut down. At the start of the exercise the plane was at 1,200 feet and now, on just two engines, the height was slowly decreasing and full left rudder had to be used to maintain a straight flight line. The latter was a problem as any use of right rudder would have resulted in a spin and consequent crash and there was no more left rudder control for a left turn. As the plane approached the Greensand Ridge at Potton from the southeast, the plane was descending whilst the land was rising.

Control was becoming impossible so restarting of at least one of the engines became vital. When an engine is shut down the propeller blades are set so that the engine windmills and causes minimum drag so as not to slow the plane, to restart the engine in flight the blades have to be adjusted so that they are forced to rotated by the air passing over them which turns the engine over. This, unfortunately, leads to increased drag which slows the plane. When the crew attempted to start the engine nothing happened. By now the speed of the plane and the height were becoming critical so an attempt was made to start the second engine but again without success. At this point the plane had slowed so much that the right wing stalled (lost lift) and the plane dived towards the ground from a height that was insufficient to build up speed to counteract the stall. The plane crashed into the southern boundary of Potton Wood, broke up and burst into flames.

Flight Lieutenants Pat McNulty and John Spiller were killed outright along with Warrant Officer James Raymond Potter, RAAF (Wireless Operator, age 22). Flight Sergeant Roy Turner, RAF (Flight Engineer) survived the crash but was trapped and died that evening in hospital from burns and a fractured skull. Three of the crew survived, Flight Sergeant R. V. Carling, RAF (Instructing Flight Engineer), Flying Officer Frank Doak, RAAF (Co-Pilot) and Section Officer Noel P. Gilmour, DFC, RAAF. Gilmour was found an hour after the crash in the wood with Pat's puppy between his legs. Despite broken ribs and a broken ankle he had got himself out of the plane but had no idea how.

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The crash was put down as human error as it was unlikely that two engines would both have suffered mechanical problems thus preventing them from being started and instead it was more likely that the instructor had failed to turn the fuel to the engines back on after they had been shut down. Many people feel the latter was unlikely as the instructor was an experienced pilot but, none-the-less, the decision to go straight into the two engine shutdown test and to have done it at low altitude was a bad decision.

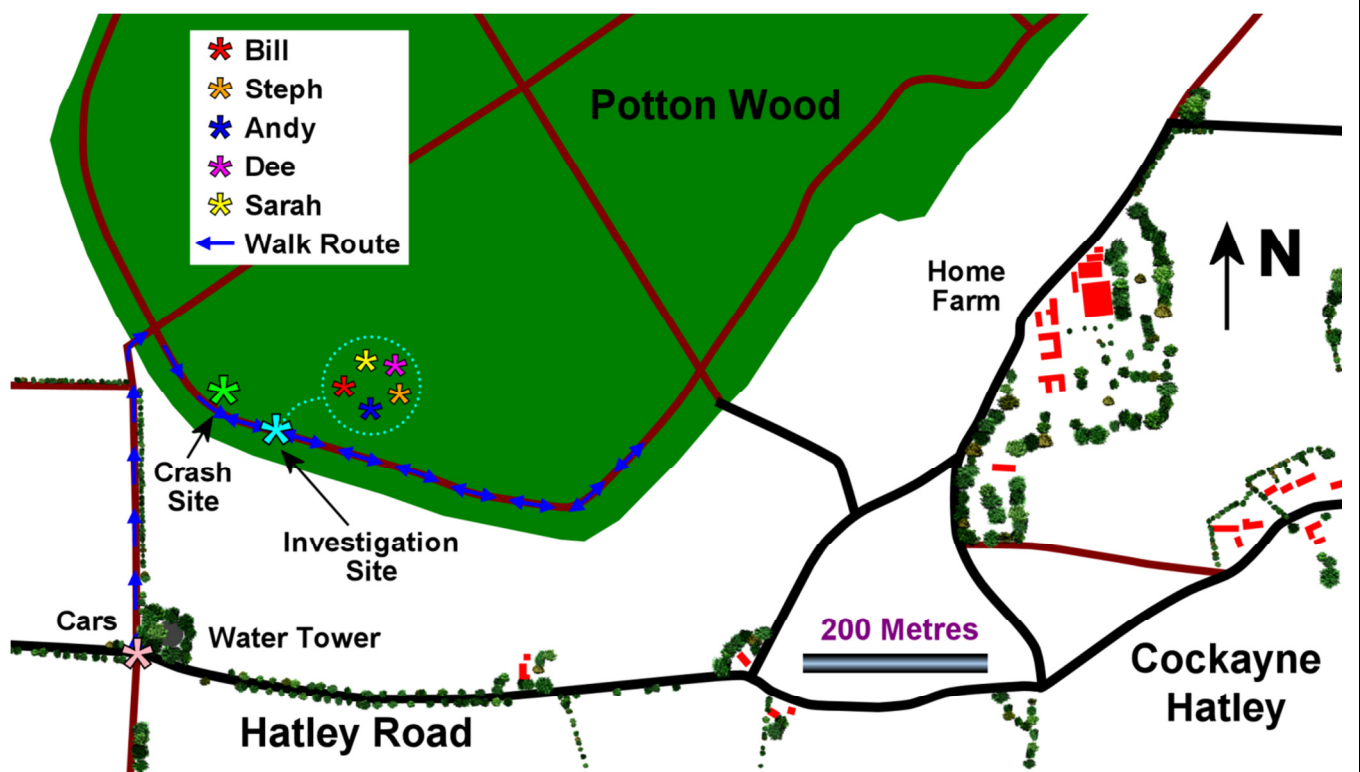
Later searching of the internet revealed the grid reference for the crash site which was given as TL 24767 49696 (N52 °07':53" W0° 10' 43").

General

The evening was a cold one with moderately clear sky and a ground frost when we first arrived. Later it became overcast and the ground warmed slightly so it was only frozen in places. Initially there was very little breeze but this did pick up later corresponding to the increase in cloud. The area is a dark one but was lit by a moon that was 95% full, so it was fairly light. The air was very damp with patches of mist and intermittent snow. Locally there was very little noise and almost none within the wood apart from very occasional cars going by on the Hatley Road.

Initial Walk: 20:50 to 21:40

For the first part of the investigation the team walked along the path which ran from the parking area by the water tower (shown by the pink star on the drawing below) heading north to the entrance to the wood. Once in the wood Bill briefly explained how the first part of the investigation would be run, this involved a walk along the southern edge of the wood to see if any of the members could pick anything up. This was the area where the plane crashed but the exact location was not known at the time. Reports say that in the area of the wood where the crash occurred there are blackened trees and trees are younger, so as part of the investigation Bill kept an eye open for these features (but he would not



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inform the rest of the team if he did find them as he wanted to see if anyone could detect the area by 'other' means).

We walked slowly along the southern edge of the wood along a path which lies just 10 to 20 metres within the wood from the southern boundary. Team members noted anything unusual during the walk which ended at a point approximately 50 metres beyond the point where the path took a sharp turn to the northeast. When the team had reassembled members were asked if there were any specific areas where they had picked anything up and general consensus indicated an area close to the start of the path through the wood. Bill then explained why they had followed the path, this is contrary to how we normally undertake an investigation as we like members to be ignorant of the alleged haunting but, in this case, only one member had not been present at the last investigation of Potton Wood and was therefore the only one unaware of the reason for being there. During the walk Bill noted that there was an area which had a lot of large tree chunks but they did not look old enough to be related to the crash. Another area had old tree trunks which appeared black in colour but on closer examination the colour was found to continue underneath existing bark and the trees again should have rotted away by now if they had been killed nearly 70 years ago.

The team then retraced their steps up to the point where the path turns northwest 70 metres from the entrance to the wood. A quick review of what was picked up on both journeys pointed to a site about 30 metres east along the path so it was to this point that the team returned. This is shown by the cyan star on the drawing. It was later found that we should have stayed where we had stopped (by the bend) and not walked 30 metres east as can be seen on the plan on the last page, as the stopping point was very close to the reported crash site (and also in the area where most of the team picked things up).

Upon entering the wood, just the other side of the gateway, Sarah felt like she was knocked sideways - the sensation coming from the left of her, as she looked to the right of the entrance where the small path into the wood began.

Dee has never visited this location before and has no knowledge of why the LPS is investigating the area. She also has not read the previous investigation report, having fallen grossly behind with visiting the LPS website!

On arrival at the rendezvous point near a large water tower, Dee immediately begins to feel a strange energy and it makes her feel edgy. On entering the woods on a main pathway, Dee is immediately aware that the energy to her right feels different to that anywhere else around her and she is drawn to go into the woods to the right; luckily, that is where Bill leads the team for the investigation.

Andy did not experience anything during the walk on the path.

20:55 Sarah heard a dog barking (heard by Dee and Steph) also this was caught on camera sound.

As Steph is walking through the woods along the path she can hear what sounds like people talking in the woods to her left. She looks all around but cannot see anything. Her video is recording but she can't see anything on the night vision.

A short distance along the path into the woods, Dee hears male voices and a dog barking, which seems to be coming from behind to her left somewhere in the woods. Other team members also hear this. Dee then switches on her digital voice recorder to record the investigation, as it is not practical for her to make written notes. She holds the recorder firmly in her left hand as the investigation proceeds. Unfortunately, while moving through the woods, the recording is tainted by the unavoidable sounds of walking, clothing noises and other team members. However,

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when movement is minimal, the quality is very good. The following notes have been made using the recording as time reference and memory aid.

20.58 Dee mentions that she can smell fire/smoke. She wonders if it is maybe a misidentification of forest smells or mist.

21:00 Sarah heard a dog barking which didn't come out on camera sound.

21:00 A constant drone of an aircraft begins, which lasts for 4 minutes and 38 seconds.

Dee stops when she senses strongly that “something happened around here – a fire or something...”

21.01 Dee senses that whatever happened was ‘big’. She keeps thinking it’s a fire. She also keeps hearing the word “Lockheed” in her mind. Her father worked for Lockheed when Dee was small and she remembers going with her mother to pick him up from work one day and seeing the most enormous plane fly over the car; the sound was deafening and had made her want to duck and hide from it!

21.04 Dee cannot pinpoint exactly what she is sensing, but it is definitely “something weird; not something usual.” She says: “Something big happened like a fire. It’s all around, quite a big area. Something big...”

21.05 Dee says: “This is going to sound weird, but every time I hear a plane going over, I want to duck; I want to run!” Then:

Voices are heard again. Dee hears a male voice and it is clear enough for her to be convinced that someone else is in the woods. She cannot pinpoint where the voice(s) came from.

21.06 Dee is feeling a bit nervous and doesn’t know why.

21.08 Dee experiences a sudden, sharp pain in her forehead.

21.09 Dee’s torch starts dimming, then after a few seconds it recovers.

21:10 Sarah commented on hearing a child’s voice/shout, which is heard on camera sound.

Dee states that she just got an image of “koala bears in the trees”!

21:11 Steph hears more talking to her left and it sounds like 3 or 4 men. She still cannot see anyone. She then has a vivid impression of a man running up to her right side saying *excuse me! excuse me!*

Dee mentions that she is definitely experiencing “a funny head”. Within seconds of this, Steph (a couple of paces behind Dee) mentions that she felt like a man had come rushing up to her saying, “Excuse me, excuse me.”

21:12 Sarah felt like she was touched on the head, even though she was wearing a woolly hat.

Dee mentions that this doesn’t feel like any other woods that we’ve investigated before. She also notes aloud that this end of the path feels different to her in that she doesn’t sense as much as she did earlier. Also, the smoky smell has gone off.

21.14 Everyone stops to regroup. Bill decides to reveal the nature of the reason for our investigation and just as he is about to say it, Dee suddenly hears “plane crash, plane crash” in her right ear.

21:15 We stopped as we were past the location of the haunting.

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- 21.19 The team turns around and sets off back along the path the way we had come.
- 21:22 On walking back along the path toward the entrance again Sarah had a brief buzzing sound in her right ear. We were all walking slowly and stopping to listen and feel where to perform a séance. Sarah heard a dog again.
- Dee hears knocking, but Bill said it could be his equipment as he is walking.
- 21.26 Dee notes that, to her, the air seems to be getting thicker.
- 21:27 Steph hears two male voices to the left but still cannot see anyone.
- 21.29 Bill stops to investigate a wooden post that he had noticed earlier. It is actually part of a ruined fence; other posts are found along with some old fence wire.
- 21.33 After walking a bit further, Dee mentions that the atmosphere feels different to her. The energy seems to be heightened.
- 21.36 Dee begins to sweat and feels physically hot. This is unusual, as the weather is very cold (and on the verge of snowing) and Dee is not running a fever.
- 21.37 A dog is heard barking in the distance, but it is not coming from the same direction as the barking heard near the beginning of the investigation. This barking is constant.
- 21.38 Dee feels very hot and uncomfortable approximately 200 metres from where the investigation started. She walks along the path back into the woods approximately 50 metres where the feeling is most intense. She also notes that the air feels really thick and she can't breathe properly.
- 21.40 Dee says that she can definitely smell wood smoke, but no one else admits to being able to smell it.
- 21.43 Dee suddenly hears what sounds like someone walking around a short distance from her and Steph, but this could not be confirmed.
- 21.44 Dee hears a dog barking – but this is not the same sound as the barking initially heard on the investigation.
- 21.48 Dee is absolutely sweating; she wipes her brow and shows Steph the wetness on her fingers! Steph mentions that everyone else is freezing!
- 21.49 Dee confirms that the area in which she is standing is where the 'energy' feels the most intense. She says: "This whole bit...weird...something big."

Whilst the team assembled at the investigation site Bill took a walk through the trees, over a fence and across a ditch to reach the field to the south of the wood. From there he was able to see some way east and west along the boundary of the wood but there was no discernible difference to any part of the boundary to give any clue as to where the crash may have happened.

Séance: 22:05 to 22:30

For the séance the team sat in a circle around the path near the southern edge of the wood holding hands. For the positions of the team members see the plan on page 2 of this document. Bill and Andy videoed the séance with Bill's camera being placed 5 metres away from the circle to the west and

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Andy's 3 metres away to the southeast. Most team members used their sound recorders during the séance and Bill placed his TriField meter on the ground in the middle of the circle.

Dee positions herself with her back to the path, facing the outer boundary of the woods. Steph is to her left and Sarah C to her right. While Bill and Andy set up their equipment, Dee and the other members are chatting. She has cooled down and is beginning to feel the cold again!

Sarah did not take times down, but a blue flash was seen on the path by Sarah and Dee, movement behind Andy, and a whitish mist back along the path we had been on.

21.56 Dee is startled by a sudden feeling of something warm touching the underside of her left hand, which is dangling over the space between her and Steph in preparation for linking hands for the séance. Dee is still holding her voice recorder in that hand. Dee immediately asks Steph to feel if there is actually something warm and Steph confirms that she feels a definite warm spot between them. We also determined that there was no warmth being given off by the voice recorder Dee is holding in her left hand, and that her hand itself is not warm. Then Steph suddenly feels something warm come up under her fingers, and describes exactly the sensation that Dee had experienced – like something warm curling around the hand.

21:57 After Dee feels a warm patch around her hand, Steph puts her hand in the same place and feels warmth underneath her fingers, in exactly the same place as Dee (hand was in a cupped position so the palms were facing up).

21.58 Dee's warm spot has dissipated by this time.

22.00 Dee is adamant that she hears something walking up the path from her left (quite some distance away).

22:28 Sarah had her middle finger on her left hand pushed down. She was holding hands with Dee at the time.

The following is taken from Bill's sound recording of the séance.

22:02:51 Sarah sees a flash along the path to the east. Dee reports having seen something similar earlier on.

22:02:59 Sarah again sees a flash along the path. She reported that it was beyond a branch which curved over the track making it about 30 to 40 metres away.

22:07:08 Steph reports feeling tingly all over. She said that she first felt it when Dee started talking 30 to 45 seconds ago.

Dee says that she had heard footsteps coming along the path before we even started the séance.

22:09:16 An odd sounding and quite loud click is heard on the recording.

22:10:12 Dee suddenly has the 'heebie-jeebies' down her back (cold shivers). She feels as if it has gone really cold all of a sudden.

22:10:56 Sarah's camera beeps (end of the recording period) and she restarts it.

22:11:12 Sarah reports that she has 'got a hurt in my head'.

22:12:01 Sarah reports that the path to the east no longer looks dark but whitish, like white smoke.

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- 22:12:47 Dee reports that it has gone really cold.
- 22:13:40 Dee asks if anyone had been breathing loudly as she heard what almost sounded like talking.
- 22:15:14 Dee asks what the significance of koala bears is.
- 22:18:17 Bill sees a bright patch about 50 to 60 metres away on the left side of the track to the east. There were no cars around at the time and no visible source of the light. What he saw was in the grass. This was also seen by Dee.
- 22:19:24 The team discuss a walker on the nearby road (noticed because of their torch).
- 22:20:28 Dee asks if the nearby house (The Bungalow) was involved in the crash as she is getting a feeling.
- 22:21:05 Sarah's camera beeps.
- 22:21:14 Andy says that he heard a sound like a car door closing.
- 22:21:31 Dee reports hearing a creaking noise.
- 22:22:05 Dee asks if there is running water in the gully behind her. Bill says that there is water in the ditches to the east but that it looked static.
- 22:23:28 Dee asks Bill if he had heard a sound as he looked round but he hadn't. She had heard a sound and said it sounded like sticks being gently banged together.
- 22:26:02 Dee has a sensation as if someone is touching her head but is unsure whether it might not just be the breeze (she is the only one hatless).
- 22:29:16 Sarah asks Dee if she felt anything on her fingers as something had just pushed down on Sarah's finger (of the hand Dee was holding). Dee said that she had only felt Sarah react.
- 22:29:46 Sarah feels as if someone had just walked round the back behind her.
- 22:29:52 Séance ends.

During the séance Bill's TriField meter did not respond.

Andy did not experience anything during the séance

EVP: 22:33 to 22:45

For the EVP session the team sat in the same positions as they had done for the séance. Most team members used their sound recorders during the EVP session and Bill left his TriField meter in the centre of the circle.

22:35 EVP session began. Unfortunately Sarah's camera batteries had both run out, so she was unable to see if any questions were answered on her equipment!

The following is taken from Bill's sound recording of the EVP session.

22:34:13 *Andy: Is your name John?*

Response..... None.

22:34:26 Andy reports that he heard a click on his headphones. He repeats his question but there is still no response.

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22:35:07 Dee hears a 'snapping' noise. Steph heard the same but thought it came from a different direction. Nothing appears on the sound recording.

22:35:37 Bill..... *Did you die in the wood?*

Response..... None.

22:36:26 Sarah *Was the year 1942?*

Response..... None.

22:36:44 Dee *What kind of plane was it?*

Response..... None.

22:37:08 Steph..... *What was your position on the plane?*

Response..... None.

22:37:26 Andy..... *What was the name of the dog?*

Response..... None.

22:37:51 Bill..... *Are we sitting near where the plane crashed?*

Response..... None.

22:38:14 Sarah *Are you linked to the nearby church?*

Response..... None.

22:38:32 Dee *How many of you are there with us now?*

Response..... None.

22:38:58 Steph..... *Was it pilot error that caused the plane to crash?*

Response..... None.

22:39:23 Andy..... *Are there any other spirits, not connected with the crash, here?*

Response..... None.

22:39:42 Bill reports that a few seconds after Steph asked her question he saw a large patch of red light on her bag near her right arm.

22:40:00 Bill..... *Could you give us your name and your rank?*

Response..... None.

22:40:31 Sarah *Did the crash happen in the early morning?*

Response..... None.

22:40:48 Dee *Who came to help you?*

Response..... None.

22:41:25 Steph..... *We've heard people talking in the woods tonight. Was that you?*

Response..... None.

22:41:47 Andy..... *Would you like us to leave?*

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Response..... None.

22:42:08 Bill..... *In what year were you born?*

Response..... None.

22:42:30 Sarah..... *Did you fly from a Lincolnshire RAF base?*

Response..... None.

22:42:50 Dee..... *Have you been touching the top of my head?*

Response..... None.

22:43:09 Steph..... *Is there anybody still alive that you would like to speak to. If there is, could you give us their name?*

Response..... None.

22:43:30 Steph reports that the front of both her legs, from the knee to her boots, feel very warm.

22:43:46 Andy..... *What colour was the plane?*

Response..... None.

22:44:16 Bill..... *If you were involved in the plane crash, what was the serial number of the plane? It began with KN and 3 numbers, could you tell us what the 3 numbers were?*

Response..... None.

22:44:39 Sarah..... *Where were you flying to?*

Response..... None.

22:44:54 Dee..... *Where were you born?*

Response..... None.

22:45:15 Steph..... *Could you give us the name of somebody who survived the crash?*

Response..... None.

22:45:45 EVP session ends.

During the session Bill's TriField meter did not respond.

Post-Investigation

Dee will be reviewing a couple of possible anomalies on her recording – one from around 22.08 (during the séance) and another from around 22.45 (during the EVP session). These need to be heard on different equipment and through finer quality software.

During the EVP experiment Andy has recorded an EVP where Andy has asked if there is a spirit called "John" this is followed by a loud click sound.

Andy has a few other sound clips that he will submit for review.

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Equipment List

Andy Digital Camcorder: Sony DCR-DVD306E
 Digital Infrared Thermometer: IR-102
 Digital Voice Recorder: Olympus WS-560M
 EMF meter: K-II
 Notepad, pen, torch and watch

Ann Digital Camcorder
 Pen and note book

Bill Digital Camcorder: Sony DCR-SR90E
 Digital Voice Recorder: Olympus WS-560M
 EMF Detector: TriField natural EM Meter
 Infrared Light 48 LED
 Li-ion Battery: Mingtongda T-1248A
 Video IR Light: Sony HVL-IRM
 Notepad, pen, torch and watch

Dee Digital Voice Recorder: Olympus VN-5500PC
 Notepad, pen, torch and watch

Sarah C Digital Camera: Sony DSC-H50
 Notepad, pen, torch and watch