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TO ..... HEADQUARTERS, FERRY COMMAND.

ACCIDENTS INVESTIGATION BRANCH.

Precis Number:	Date of Accident:	Aircraft:	Unit:
W-1086a.	15.8.41.	Liberator A.M.261.	R.A.F.Ferry Command.

Brief Description: The aircraft took off from Ayr with a crew of five and seventeen passengers for an E - W Atlantic crossing. Weather conditions were poor with moderate rain and low cloud to the west. The aircraft, which appeared to set off on a more northerly course than that usually taken, soon disappeared into the mist and about 15 minutes later flew into the top of Am Bhinnean (2,700 ft), one of the highest mountains in the Island of Arran. The hills on the island were, at the time, completely obscured by mist and rain. Am Bhinnean lies roughly 9½ miles north of the track given to the pilot in his flight plan. The aircraft was completely wrecked and all the occupants were killed.

Cause of Accident: The accident must be attributed to errors in navigation but from the available evidence it is impossible to deduce the factors which led to these errors.

Notes.

The aircraft was fit for the flight in question and the navigational instruments had been checked and adjusted to the satisfaction of another Liberator Captain. There was no evidence of sabotage.



(Sgd.) VERNON BROWN.

.....  
C.I. (Accidents).

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W 10869.

22



Aircraft Liberator A.M.261  
Engines Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasps. S3C4G  
Date 10th August, 1941  
Service R.A.F. Ferry Command  
Place Isle of Arran, Scotland  
Crew Master, First Officer, Radio Officer,  
 Flight Engineer and Supernumerary Captain  
Load 17 Passengers

1. Nature of Accident: Aircraft flew into top of mountain.
2. Nature of Enquiry: Investigation carried out by R.A.F. Ferry Command. The following details of the Court of Enquiry were made available to the Corporation by Air Ministry C.I. (Accidents):-
3. Summary of Evidence:

" The aircraft took off from Ayr with a crew of five and seventeen passengers for an E - W Atlantic crossing. Weather conditions were poor with moderate rain and low cloud to the west. The aircraft, which appeared to set off on a more northerly course than that usually taken, soon disappeared into the mist and about 15 minutes later flew into the top of An Bhinnean (2,700 ft.), one of the highest mountains in the Island of Arran. The hills on the island were, at the time completely obscured by mist and rain. An Bhinnean lies roughly  $9\frac{1}{2}$  miles north of the track given to the pilot in his flight plan.

The aircraft was completely wrecked and all the occupants were killed."

4. Conclusions:

" The accident must be attributed to errors in navigation but from the available evidence it is impossible to deduce the factors which led to these errors.

Notes:

The aircraft was fit for the flight in question and the navigational instruments had been checked and adjusted to the satisfaction of another Liberator Captain.

There was no evidence of sabotage.

(Signed) VERNON BROWN Air Cde.

C.I. (Accidents) "

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ATLANTIC FLIGHT

A.S.B

DATE

Aircraft No. AM 261 Commander Capt ERB White First Officer FD Bradbrooke Radio Operator

Actual Departure Airborne On Co Overhead Landed Stopped

Actual Duration - On Co In Air Tarmac to Tarmac

From - To	Climb	60	01 <sup>C</sup> -82	03 <sup>D</sup> -84	05 <sup>E</sup> -86	07 <sup>F</sup> -88	09 <sup>B</sup> -10	11	12	13					
Track True	273	273	274	268	267	259	259	252	251	243	243	255	255	255	253
Dist.	70	115	167	169	170	176	177	191	191	206	206				
A.S.I. mph	170	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180		
Pressure Height	107	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	9	10				
Temp. at Height	+06	00	00	-01	-01	-01	-01	-01	-02	00	+1	-01			
T.A.S. kts	170	159	183	183	183	183	183	183	183	184	180				
Wind at Height	270 / 18	270 / 25	270 / 25	290 / 24	290 / 24	280 / 24	280 / 22	270 / 24	210 / 25	260 / 34	240 / 35	240 / 34	350 / 24		
Co. T.	273	273	273	271	270	262	261 1/2	254	246	246	243				
Varn	15	16	19	22	25	27 1/2	29 1/2	31	32	33	33				
Co. M	288	289	292	293	295	290	291	285	278	279	276				
Dev.															
Co C															
G.S	142	158	158	160	160	160	162	160	164	150	148				
Interval	30	43	63	62	62	63	63	72	70	82	83	Total 11:33			
Time to Turn															
S.L. Press	1005	1005	1006	1008	1010	1013	1014	1012	1010	1010	1008				
S.L. Temp.	15	15	14	14	13	13	12	12	11	12	11				

\* NB: All within this circle almost illegible in original.

Where A = N W Pressure Height is altimeter reading when set at 1013-2 mbs. G.M.T.  
 C = N 4500 W Sunset at ..... N ..... W ..... G.M.T.  
 D = N 3500 W at ..... N ..... W ..... G.M.T.  
 E = N 2500 W Sunrise at ..... N ..... W ..... G.M.T.  
 F = N 1500 W at ..... N ..... W ..... G.M.T.  
 B = N W

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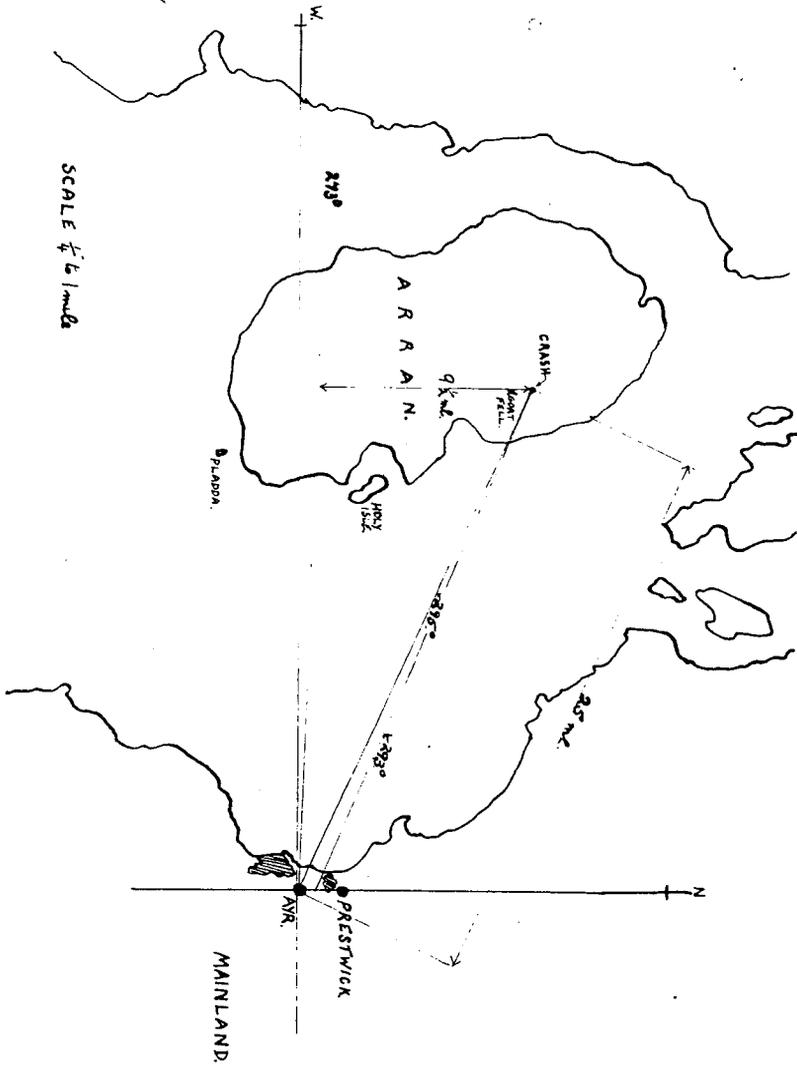
FORECAST FOR			TRACK BETWEEN		Ayr and 10 <sup>00</sup> W	G.M.T.
WIND	SURFACE	TEMP.	WSW	10 knots becoming variable	5 knots	1&2
	5000 feet	06	270 <sup>0</sup> 18	"	"	3&4
	10000 feet	00	270 <sup>0</sup> 25	"	"	5&6
	15000 feet	-07	270 <sup>0</sup> 30	"	"	7&8
	20000 feet	-18	270 <sup>0</sup> 35	"	"	9&10
WEATHER			Cloudy (02) becoming continuous slight rain (62)			11
LOW CLOUD	Type and Amount	Sc 7/10 becoming 10/10				12&13
	Height of Base	1500 feet becoming 800 feet.				14
	Height of Tops	5000 " " 7000 "				15
MEDIUM CLOUD	Type and Amount	Sc AC and As 7/10 becoming 10/10				16
	Height of Base	15000 feet becoming 12000 feet.				
	Height of Tops	18000 feet				
HIGH CLOUD			Ci			17
Surface VISIBILITY			20 miles becoming 4 miles in precipitation.			18
ICE FORMATION			Moderate in As 12000 feet to 18000 feet,			19
STATE OF SEA and SWELL						20
M.S.L. PRESSURE			1005 mbs.			21
REMARKS						22
DEGREE OF CONFIDENCE			Uncertain.			
FLIGHT DATA			Alt.	Wind Speed	Direction	

..... Duty Meteorological Officer

ZONE ..... 00 .....

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SECRET.

Service Accident Report No. W-1086A.

ACCIDENTS INVESTIGATION BRANCH.

AIRCRAFT: Consolidated LB.30A  
Liberator A.M.261.

ENGINES: Four Pratt and  
Whitney Twin Wasps.

UNIT: R.A.F. Ferry Command.

CREW:

Captain	Captain E.R.B. White	British.
First Officer	Captain F.D. Bradbrooke	"
Supernumery First Officer	Captain M. King	"
Radio Officer	Mr. H. Green	"
Flight Engineer	Mr. E.G. Reeves.	U.S.A.

PASSENGERS:

Radio Officer H. Rees.	British.
Captain G.T. Harris	U.S.A.
Radio Officer W. Kennedy	British
Captain J.J. Anderson	"
Radio Officer A.G. McIntosh	"
Captain D.J. Duggan	U.S.A.
Radio Officer G. Laing	British
Captain H.R. Judy	U.S.A.
Radio Officer A.A. Oliver	British
Captain J. Wixen	U.S.A.
Radio Officer R.B. Brammer	British
First Officer J.J. Roulstone	U.S.A.
Radio Officer G.H. Powell	British
Captain J.E. Price	"
Radio Officer W.K. Marks	"
Captain H.C.W. Smith	"
Radio Officer J.B. Drake	"

All Killed.

Near the summit of Am Bhinnean, 1 mile north of Goat Fell, Island of Arran at about 1935 hrs on 10th August, 1941.

Note: All times quoted are G.M.T.

1. NOTIFICATION.

By signal from Prestwick received at 0800 hrs on 13.8.41. The scene of the accident was visited on 15.8.41.

2. THE FACTS.(a) The Circumstances of the Accident.

The accident occurred soon after the start of an E. to W. Atlantic flight scheduled for the purpose of returning air crews to Canada. The aircraft took off from Ayr - chocks away at 1915 hrs - with a crew of five and seventeen passengers. Using the long runway (2450) the take off was almost directly into a wind of about 10 knots from the WSW and the aircraft climbed normally to about 800 ft. It then began a wide left hand circuit of the aerodrome - Captain White was the only pilot in the Ferry Service who invariably did a circuit before departure - and appeared to settle down on a westerly course at a height of about 1,000 ft. Several witnesses on the aerodrome got the impression that the aircraft flew off on a course appreciably north of that usually taken, but it was soon lost to view owing to the bad weather conditions prevailing at the time. Moderate rain was falling continuously and the cloud to the west was low and unbroken. About 10 minutes after the aircraft had left the vicinity of Ayr it was seen momentarily crossing the coast of Arran near Corrie and heading for Corrie Glen, the valley between the ridges of Goat Fell and Am Bhinnean. The

/weather

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weather locally was extremely bad with fairly heavy rain and mist down to sea level. Corrie Glen was full of thick mist and the hills themselves were completely obscured. After this the aircraft was not seen or heard again and there can be little doubt that the crash occurred almost immediately afterwards.

Five minutes after the take off and while the aeroplane must still have been close to the aerodrome one radio signal was received - 'Have you anything for me?' No further signals were received but this caused no undue concern at Prestwick as it is usual to maintain radio silence after the preliminary check.

The wreckage of the aircraft was discovered next morning by a shepherd near the summit of An Bhinnean and a subsequent search revealed the bodies of the 22 occupants, all badly mutilated. Medical evidence indicated that death had been instantaneous in all cases.

(b) The Scene of the Accident.

The aircraft had crashed into the southern slope of an Bhinnean about 75 ft. below the summit (approx. 2,700 ft above sea level) and near the western extremity of the ridge. This hill forms the north side of Corrie Glen, the south side being bounded by Goat Fell the highest mountain on the island. The valley between runs almost N.W. and S.E. and a line from the crash to Ayr runs diagonally across it, missing the peak of Goat Fell by a narrow margin.

The direct track from Ayr aerodrome to the crash is 295° and assuming that the aircraft was about 1 mile north of the aerodrome on its circuit the track would be 293°. The track to be made, as given in the 'Flight Plan' was 273°. A scale map of the area involved is attached showing the tracks mentioned.

Impact with the ground was made while the aircraft was in a climbing attitude and banked to port at an angle corresponding with the slope of the hill; this was consistent with the pilot having made a last minute attempt to avoid collision. The distribution of the wreckage suggested a violent explosion and the bursting fuel tanks had caused a fire covering an area of 200 yds x 150 yds. The speed of the crash and the rocky nature of the ground reduced the entire aircraft to very small completely shattered components. Most of the heavier parts, including the engines, had rolled or been thrown into the bed of the glen nearly 1,000 ft below. Some of the bodies were found as far away as 500 yds from the point of impact. As far as could be ascertained none of the occupants was wearing a parachute when their bodies were found. High winds during the days following the accident had further distributed the wreckage by picking up and hurling for fantastic distance the larger pieces of fuselage skin, doors, panels and removable equipment.

(c) Inspection of the wreckage.

The condition of the wreckage, a great part of which had been partially or completely destroyed by fire, rendered a detailed examination of all components impossible. Weather conditions subsequent to the accident and the activities of souvenir hunters also tended to increase the difficulty. The flying controls were checked as far as possible but the only part found of the control assembly from the cockpit was one rudder pedal. There was no trace of the aileron controls.

The elevator and rudder cables were intact in the after portion of the fuselage. No evidence could be obtained from the setting of trimmer tabs or their operating mechanisms as to the trim of the aircraft before the accident. There was no evidence of pre-wash failure in any of the control components examined.

All four airscrews had broken away from the engines and their blades were either broken off or very badly twisted, indicating that all engines were running under a considerable degree of power on impact.

The pilot's instrument panel was recovered more or less intact with the blind flying instruments still in position. It was embedded in a mass of twisted wreckage and had rolled over rough ground for about 200 yards. Both the artificial horizon and the directional gyro were found caged but on dismantling these instruments it was noted that the caging ring of the directional gyro was severely bruised in two places consistent with the adjusting pinion having been pushed home with a considerable degree of

/violence

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violence. The artificial horizon was broken up internally but the caging mechanism was found to be in the uncaged position. It is considered that both instruments were uncaged prior to impact. The pilot's altimeter was set for a barometric pressure of 29.62" and there is no reason to suppose that the setting could have altered in the crash.

Note: The barometric pressure at the time of take off was 29.64".

The pilot's compass was not found and the navigator's was too badly broken up to afford any evidence. The control box and servo mechanism of the automatic pilot was so badly broken up that it was impossible to come to any conclusion as to pre-crash settings. The master switch was not found but it is unlikely that the auto-pilot was being used at such an early stage of the flight.

(d) The Aircraft.

With the exception of some information extracted from the Journey Log Book, which was found in the wreckage, very little is known of the life of the aircraft, the remaining log books being in the possession of the operators in Canada. From the Journey Log Book it would appear that the aircraft had completed two W-E and one E-W crossings of the Atlantic with a total flying time for these flights of 44 $\frac{3}{4}$  hours. The aircraft was last flown to this country by Captain Cripps who reported on arrival at Prestwick that the pilot's compass was very inaccurate. A new instrument was fitted and swung by one of the B.C.A.C. inspectors. Both the pilot's and navigator's compasses were subsequently air tested by Captain Cripps and his navigator over the runways at Ayr. They expressed themselves as being perfectly satisfied with the accuracy of the instruments. A routine inspection of the aircraft was completed on the day of the accident by personnel of Scottish Aviation Ltd., who are under contract to carry out 'turn-round' inspection only on the Liberators. All major schedules are done at St. Huberts aerodrome, Montreal. It was not found necessary to carry out any work apart from the compass installation and check.

Immediately before the take off on the evening of 10.8.41 the Assistant Chief Engineer, co-operating with Mr. Reeves the Flight Engineer, supervised the final engine check and run up on the ground. All four engines behaved perfectly.

Note: Up to the time of the accident Prestwick was not being fully informed of the work done on the Liberators in Canada, in some cases the only information available being meagre verbal reports from Captains and Flight Engineers. To help overcome the disadvantage of working on aircraft, the flying hours etc. of which were not known, the Assistant Chief Engineer at Prestwick evolved a comprehensive inspection schedule, a copy of which was sent to Canada with each aircraft for the information of the personnel concerned at that end.

(e) The Crew.

Captain White began his flying career in the R.A.F. and had a service flying experience of over 1,000 hours when he joined Imperial Airways in 1931. Since then he had flown mainly the larger commercial types of landplanes and had a total flying experience of 7650 hours, 5635 of which he completed as 1st Pilot. He was approved by the Operations Director of British Airways as a Test Pilot of Landplanes. Captain White was a keen student of serial navigation and had qualified for his 2nd class navigators certificate in November, 1931 and for his 1st class certificate No. 140 in November, 1937. Particulars of his other licences are given below:

	No.	Date of Issue
Pilots "B" Licence	5392	24. 1.31
Master Pilots' Certificate	32	25.11.37
Ground Engineers Licence	1818	10. 3.31 (lapsed)

/The

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The pilots licence and the navigators licence had expired on 2.12.40 and 5.12.40 respectively and had not been renewed although Captain White had been assessed 'fit' by a medical board on 30.12.40. Between 10.5.41 and 6.8.41 Captain White had flown the Atlantic 9 times making 5 W-E trips and 3 E-W trips as captain. One was a passenger trip.

Captain Bradbrooke was another experienced pilot. He had completed 5 Atlantic crossings, 2 from W-E as Captain in Hudson aircraft and 3 from E-W as First Officer in Liberators.

R/O Green, F/E Reeves and Captain King had made 10, 5 and 7 crossings respectively.

No Navigator was carried but it is almost certain that the navigational duties were to be shared by Captains White and Bradbrooke.

(f) Loading.

The aircraft was loaded to within 12 lb. of the authorised 'All up' weight of 52,000 lb. 2,900 U.S. gallons of fuel and 144 U.S. gallons of oil were carried. Apart from the personal baggage of the crew and passengers no freight was carried nor was there any mail on board.

(g) Briefing.

In accordance with the usual practice the crew were supplied with a comprehensive 'Flight Forecast' to cover the whole Atlantic crossing. This was for an expected time of departure of 1900 hrs. A 'Flight Plan' was also issued and a copy of this is attached together with a copy of the first sheet of the 'Flight Corecast' covering the first zone of the crossing.

(h) Local weather conditions in Goat Fell area.

On the days following the accident extraordinary weather conditions were noted in the area of the crash by the officers who carried out the preliminary investigation. In spite of relatively calm conditions at sea level, very strong and violent winds which changed direction every few minutes were encountered in the head of Corrie Glen. This was also evidenced by the extraordinary way in which pieces of the wrecked aircraft had been hurled in all directions. From the behaviour of some light fleecy clouds drifting on a N.W. wind it was evident that very violent up and down gusts would be encountered over the Goat Fell area, even during fine weather conditions.

(i) Insobriety.

There was no evidence that any of the crew were anything but sober at the start of the flight. Captain White had of late been particularly abstemious and was perfectly normal in every way during the briefing and preparation for the take off.

Note: During the investigation observations were made of the accommodation and recreation facilities afforded to the ferry crews in 'Orangefield'. In this connection the sleeping accommodation appeared to be totally inadequate.

The amount of liquor consumed on the premises must have a detrimental effect on the efficiency of the crews and it was common talk that the passengers frequently boarded the aircraft while under the influence of alcohol.

Although the above has no bearing on the accident under review it is considered that this undesirable state of affairs should be brought to notice.

(j) Sabotage.

The possibility of sabotage was considered throughout the investigation but no evidence was obtained to substantiate this theory.

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3. CONCLUSIONS.

1. The crew were qualified to carry out their various duties.
2. The aircraft was fit for the flight in question and there was no evidence that it failed or developed any defect after departure.
3. Although the weather conditions were poor at the time of the take off they were not sufficiently bad to warrant cancellation of the flight.
4. Had the aircraft been flying on the given track, the usual direction of departure, it would easily have cleared the lower hills on the southern end of the island.
5. In the distance flown the aircraft could have climbed to a much greater altitude than that attained (2,700 ft).
6. It is possible that the extraordinary air currents, usually associated with bad weather in the Corrie Glen area, contributed to the actual crash.

4. OPINION.

The cause of the accident must be attributed to errors in navigation which resulted in the aircraft striking a mountain on Arran in conditions of bad visibility. This mountain is about 25 miles from Ayr and  $9\frac{1}{2}$  miles north of the prescribed track.

From the available evidence it is impossible to deduce the factors which led to these errors.

R. WILSON  
Flight Lieutenant.  
Inspector.

I agree with this report.

VERNON BROWN  
Group Captain  
Chief Inspector.

Accidents Investigation Branch,  
Air Ministry, Gloucester.

6th September, 1941.

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8. TNA will normally aim to provide 'research' quality copies, i.e. sufficient to convey written or graphic information in the original document. There can be no guarantee that it will be able to do so or that the copies will be suitable for any other purpose, e.g. if the original documents are of poor quality. Higher quality copies or copies suitable for other purposes can be supplied if requested when placing an order. Customers are advised to discuss their requirements with TNA staff to ensure the most suitable process can be recommended.
9. Image sizes:
  - a) Photocopies and digitally scanned images: TNA will normally produce copied images, which are approximately the same size as the originals. Photocopies will normally be printed onto sheets of paper of the appropriate size in the A2 to A3 range (within preservation guidelines and at the discretion of the operator) and charges will be based on the size of the paper. In the case of digitally scanned copies the images will normally be printed onto paper approximately the same size as the original and charges will be based on the size category into which the paper falls (i.e. AO to A1, A1 to A2, A2 to A3, A3 to A4. TNA can supply images of sheets of paper of different sizes if customers request it when they place their order.
  - b) Prints from microfilm: images will normally be printed onto A3 size paper and may be larger or smaller than the original documents.
  - c) Photographs or transparencies can be supplied in the specified dimensions. These will normally be required if a copy is for publication. The Image Library provides such images at the rates indicated in the appropriate leaflet.

## **Deemed Acceptance**

10. TNA will display these terms and conditions at all points of sale. Customers will be deemed to have accepted the terms and conditions in completing an order form, submitting a counter order or accepting documents by any means.