



Facts and reflections about an aviation accident.

The facts:

- 1) Place of crash: Bellinacarriga Hill in the south-west of Ireland on the peninsula of Dursey about 180 m above sea level.
- 2) Time of crash:
07.25 hours local time
08.25 hours German summer time (DSZ)
Friday, July 23rd, 1943
- 3) Type of plane: JU 88 D-1; production-no. 430030
markings: D7+DK
- 4) Time of take off: 05.58 hours German summer time
on 23.7.1943.
- 5) Place of take off: air field of Nantes/France.
- 6) Crew:

Unteroffizier Hans Auschner (Pilot)
born 24.11.1920

Regierungsrat Bruno Noth
(Meteorological Officer)
born 19.12.1910

Gefreiter Gerhard Dümmler (Wireless Operator)
born 26.8.1923

Obergefreiter Johannes Kuschidlo
(Gunner/Air Mechanic)
born 30.4.1921
- 7) Weather situation:

cloud cover from about 200 m to 300 m (cloud base)
to about 800 m
(ceiling). Below about 200 m there was mist or fog
with the visibility between 2000 m to 5000 m.
The visibility over the cloud cover reached 25 km
due to the low atmospheric humidity and the small
amount of cloud.
Temperature at ground level: 15°C
on 800 m above ground: 9°C
on 1000 m above ground: 12°C

8) Weather situation at the place of crash:

See point 7. The visibility however decreased from 1000 m to 2000 m below the base line of the cloud cover in the area of the Irish coast and the base of the cloud cover decreased from 200 m to 50 m above sea level.

9) Further specifications of the accident:

The plane was shattered completely by the crash. Even though large parts of the wreckage were found such as the fuselage, wings and two engines, the cause of the crash could not be given or stated. The markings of the plane could not be identified either. Even confirmation of the plane's type was not possible on the spot. The bodies of the crew were nearly unmarked death being instantaneous from internal injuries. Obviously the men were thrown out of the plane in the flight direction due to the impact at the top of the hill.

Mention of sources used:

- To 1: Article of "Fly Past", March 1983
- To 2: Crash report of the Irish Ministry of Defence, Dublin.
Letter of the commander-in-chief from the 10.8.1943 despatched to the German commander of the air fleet 3 I C.
Air report no. 1039 from 23.7.1943
- To 3: Rough copy of the casualty list (casualty list of the units from 26.7.1943).
- To 4: Air report no. 1039
- To 5: Air report no. 1039 and personal report of the late members and pilots of the unit, Mr. H.J. Schulze, Bremen and G. Obermeier, Fischamend/Österreich and Herbert Körber, Bremen.

- To 6: Casualty list of the names of the weather reconnaissance squadron 2 of the air commander-in-chief (Wettererkundungsstaffel 2 des Oberbefehlshabers der Luftwaffe; Wekusta 2 Ob.d.L.).
- To 7: Weather reports of the meteorological offices of Offenbach/Main and Dublin/Ireland.
Wireless message of the concerned plane D7+DK drawn up by the meteorological officer Noth evident in the air report no. 1039.
- To 8: See point 7.
Additionally according to the written and personal report of the witness mr. Michael Murphy, Cahermore/Ire.
- To 9: See point 8.

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Reflections about the cause and the reason for the accident:

The plane as indicated in point 3 took off on July 23rd, 1943 at 05.58 hours (DSZ) from Nantes/France in order to fly weather reconnaissance over North-West Ireland. On 7° West at about 06.55 hours they descended below the base line of the cloud over the sea and they reported mist or fog.

Then the plane climbed and checked the ceiling of the cloud cover giving a position report for 48° 40' North/8° 45' West and then at 07.45 hours the atmospheric pressure was checked at a very low level over the sea.

The reading being recorded at 1023 mbar. This was at 49° North/9° West. The last report of the cloud picture was entered at 8 o'clock for 50° North/10° West whilst climbing to 1500 m which was above the cloud cover ceiling. The plane's course then was 51° 10' North/9° 40' West according to the air report and at 08.25 hours the plane crashed about 3 km west of 51° 30' North/10° West on the summit of the Bellinacarriga Hill. The place has the coordinates 51° 35' North/10° 10' West.

The reasons I believe in transmitting a report just at the time of the impact are:

1) The time of impact stated at Nantes for 08.25 hours (DSZ) corresponds exactly with the Irish records (07.25 hours local time).

2) At Nantes people confirmed that the plane did not respond after 08.29 hours.

3) The met. officer Noth reported in probably his last wireless message: "...until field 15W01 = 51° 30' North/ 10° West ...".

So during the transmission of this message that point had just been overflown or must have been overflown only minutes previously. From this position to the point of impact are only a few minutes of flight time. According to the files of the German met. office at Offenburg and according to the declaration of Mr. Schulze this was the fixed point at which the ground atmospheric pressure was checked. So this message must have been transmitted very near to the coast and only minutes prior to the impact or even during the impact.

After this transmission perhaps the crew requested the ground radio station's confirmation of the reception or transmitted an additional tactical report; this transmission being interrupted suddenly.

There is every indication to believe this as the contents of a letter received from the British Ministry of Defence dated 15.10.1984 confirmed that the war diary of the 23.7.1943 tells about a possible casualty of a German weather reconnaissance plane south of Ireland.

The English however first of all received and decoded tactical messages which were important for the events of the day. So the German radio messages were unfortunately not recorded and therefore a file does not exist with the text and the break point of the last message.

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But now to the general situation:

The most important persons are the pilot Hans Auschner and the met. officer Bruno Noth, the observer.

Hans Auschner's career is incomplete and relatively unimportant. What is important though is that Auschner belonged to the long range reconnaissance squadron 101 on the 5.4.1943 but was transferred to the I./long range reconnaissance group Rahmel in May 1943 and then he was ordered to the weather reconnaissance squadron 2 from the beginning of June 1943. The reconnaissance squadron 101 and the group Rahmel were exercise units where the young pilots made training flights. From here the young pilots were transferred to their operational units to meet the requirements of the squadron leaders. In this way Auschner joined the Wekusta 2 which was based at Nantes/France airport.

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The situation of Bruno Noth, the met. officer and observer is completely different. His comrades remember him still as a "tranquil, considerate man". He was 32 years old and was surely one of the old timers. From the view point of the average aged 20 years old crews perhaps he was an "old man" already.

The iron cross he wore when he died was awarded for 20 -30 sorties at least. So he must have had a great deal of experience.

There are so few facts in the files about the other two crew members Dümmler and Kuschidlo that little can be said about their careers.

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Returning to the pilot Hans Auschner.

The existing air reports reading we can see that he flew following raids prior to the crash:

Date Time of take off " " touch down	Flight trail/Destination	Crew
6.6.1943 06.20 hours 11.49 hours	Nantes, Biscay, about 15° West plane markings D7+BK	Pilot Auschner; Met. officer Beimgraben; Wireless operator Dümmler; Gunner Kuschidlo;
12.6.1943 06.12 hours 12.20 hours	dto., about 17° West, Nantes plane markings D7+GK	dto.
17.6.1943 05.59 hours 12.18 hours	Nantes, South-West tip of Ire, North-West Ire, Nantes, plane markings D7+GK	dto.
21.6.1943 06.02 hours 11.39 hours	dto. plane markings D7+GK	dto.
25.6.1943 05.50 hours 11.53 hours	dto. plane markings D7+DK	dto.

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3.7.1943 05.30 hours	Nantes, Biscay, about 16° West, Nantes	dto.
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11.32 hours	plane markings D7+FK	
8.7.1943	dto.	Pilot Auschner;
06.55 hours	plane markings D7+HK	Met. officer Noth
13.07 hours		Wireless operator Dümmmler; Gunner Kuschidlo;
12.7.1943	dto.	dto.
08.25 hours	plane markings D7+FK	
13.59 hours		
16.7.1943	dto.	dto.
05.30 hours	plane markings D7+FK	
11.32 hours		
20.7.1943	dto.	dto.
05.38 hours	plane markings D7+HK	
11.36 hours		
23.7.1943	Nantes, South-West tip	dto.
05.58 hours	of Ire, 51° 35' North/ 10° 10' West; plane markings D7+DK	

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Additional to these raids Auschner and Dümmmler flew the D7+DK over Nantes on 11.7.1943. This was a test flight following the plane's repair, probably after an engine change. The original flight order about this flight was found in the pockets of the dead Hans Auschner on Bellinacarriga Hill.

Probably he put the flight order in the pocket of his flight overall on the day of this test flight.

He then forgot to remove the order. Normally there was a strict order not to carry important papers in pockets during a raid.

However there is an additional point of interest. The original names of this flight order were changed to Auschner and to the wireless operator, Gerhard Dümmmler.

Unfortunately the man who changed the names 45 years ago is not able to remember today the reason of this alteration in particular as many orders were signed during this period.

None of the witnesses are able to remember today Hans Auschner but they remember very well Bruno Noth.

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This seems to me an indication that Auschner belonged to the unit for only a short period and this is confirmed in the files.

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The scheduled points for the checks of the atmospheric pressure were:

- 1) 49° North/9° West = some 300 km west of Brest.
- 2) 51,5° North/10,5° West = in sight of the Irish South-West coast
- 3) 54° North/12° West = some 150 km west of the North-West coast of Ireland,

from which point they headed home climbing to a flight level of 3000 m - 5000 m and checking the temperatures, the atmospheric pressure and air wetness.

Indeed the actual met points could be different from the above indicated points due to the weather situation or to the order of the weather office or due to the meteorological officer's decision.

On the way to the fix points for navigation purposes a bearing was taken on the rotating radio beacons of Brest, La Corunna and Stavanger and/or the radio stations of Rennes, Bordeaux, Droitwich or Cork. But despite this errors in a radius of 40 km were possible in a flight lasting up to 8 hours.

In order to eliminate this mistake they liked to fly to the light house "The Bull" near the coordinates 51,5° North/10,5° West from where the pilot could see the Irish coast and could demonstrate to the light house keeper the ability and courage of the german flyers as they waggled the wings of the plane or by raising and dipping the nose of the heavy plane just meters above the surface of the sea.

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On the 22.7.1943 one day prior to the crash they flew among other things to the same check point where the weather situation was practically the same as one day later 23.7.1943.

Perhaps the visibility on the 22.7.43 was a little bit better: in any case the plane descended to low level under the cloud base as shown on the cloud map of the 22.7.1943.

The pilot perhaps saw the "Bull" but he did make the weather checks and remained on a low level heading to the north of Ireland probably watching the Irish west coast.

Auschner must have known the weather situation as he certainly listened to the radio messages with the ground wireless operator at Nantes or he talked about the flight with the returning crew or even both.

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On 23.7.1943 Auschner took off in the JU 88 D-1, marked D7+DK at 05.58 hours

from the air field at Nantes in an uncomfortable 15°C for this summer month.

Together with him flew his regular crew since 8.7.1943:

the 32 years old met. officer Bruno Noth
the 19 years old wireless operator Gerhard Dümmler
the 22 years old gunner Johannes Kuschildlo with
Auschner himself being 22 years.

First of all Auschner climbed through the cloud cover to 1800 m into the bright sunshine having climbed through light cloud cover at this altitude. He then descended through the cloud cover to sea level. Around the 7th degree of longitude the stratocummulus clouds reached 1700 m - 1800 m.

After a second climb the cloud cover was overflowed at about 900 m - 1000 m and they recorded drizzle inside the cloud cover during the second descent.

Under the cloud cover they saw haze and fog. The atmospheric pressure ran up to 1023 mbar over sea level at 07.42 hours on a fix point 49° North/9° West.

The take off time at Nantes is shown as 06.30 hours on the cloud map but this must be a code mistake or a mistake of the radio transmission. The take off time 05.58 hours shown on the pilots report must be the correct one.

Apparently the results of the checks were transmitted to the ground radio station during the 3rd climb through the cloud cover to 1500 m. The last reported position was transmitted

on 50° North/10° West at about 8 o'clock ahead was the Irish coast according to the cloud map. This happened before or during the descent through the cloud cover.

Now Auschner must have turned the plane to a heading 10° to the right because at 8.20 hours the next point was reported east of the 10th degree of longitude.

Nantes reported this as a point of dead reckoning on 15W025 = 51° 10' North/9° 40' West.

Reg. Rat Noth reported in his following radio message the coordinates 10° West/ 51,5° North. Apparently these coordinates were flown over during the minutes between 8.20 hours and 8.25 hours while the weather report was transmitted.

To reach this point Auschner must have turned the plane to heading 335° to the left on the dead reckoning point 51° 10' North/9° 40' West.

But now the plane was approaching the coast line at about 8.22 hours. At a speed of 340 km/h the approaching time to the impact point would in fact take five minutes.

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Ahead of the Irish coast the visibility became poor with a distance of only 500 m - 2000 m mainly due to fog below the cloud cover which dropped to 50 m - 200 m. For a time the visibility was less than 500 m due to very dense clouds. Auschner now didn't like to do and couldn't make a new check of atmospheric pressure a little further away from the Irish

coast. So he had to find the light house "The Bull" as on the previous day. Auschner cut the speed headed to the north-west and watching the Irish coast flying at an altitude of about

150 m close to the coast line in order to find the well-known light house.

He could not descend to a lower level due to the 200 m height of the coastal hills.

He was'nt able to find the light house at the first attempt due to the poor visibility or perhaps a possible navigation inaccuracy of about 40 km radius.

Auschner was able to disturb his concentration and make the checks over the sea ahead of the coast line. However I think he did not wish to fail in finding "The Bull" as this was achieved the day before by a comrade and in addition to this fact he had missed the navigation check point "The Bull" if he would have made the checks away from the Irish coast.

On 08.22 hours he passed south-west of the Mizen Head at a distance of about 9 - 10 km. Of course, Auschner could not re-mark the Mizen Head due to the reported visibility of 1 - 2 km below the cloud cover.

About 1 minute later he passed the coordinates 10° West/ 51°30' North as Reg. Rat Noth reported this in his radio message which was transmitting at this time.

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The clock in the control column indicated 08.24 hours when Auschner and Noth saw the peninsulas, Black Ball Head and White Ball Head on the the right hand side at a distance of about 1000 m. Reg Rat Noth now had on his thigh the wooden knee board with the map of Southern Ireland which was made especially for the members of his unit at Nantes. Both the board and the map were found later almost undamaged at the crash location. Seconds later they realised the coast was only a distance of about 1000 m ahead, that was about 900 m east of the Horn Point but this they did not know.

Auschner managed to turn left in the nick of time to a heading 270° in order to fly parallel to the coast, which was logical, whilst Dümmler transmitted a report or a confirmation. Due to the relatively steep left turn, the right hand wing with its big engine cowling raised and blocked the view of Reg. Rat Noth on the right hand side of both peninsulas, therefore, it was impossible to carry out a check for orientation. Auschner finished the left turn and put the plane into level flight again and flew parallel to the coast at a distance of about 100 m on a westerly heading. Together with Reg. Rat Noth he tried to locate it by sight on the right hand side, but this was nearly impossible. In fact the visibility was limited by the fog and in addition to this waterdrops and water streaks on the outside of the cockpit glass caused by the fog's humidity marked the vista. Nobody in the plane knew where they were exactly at this point in time.

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The crew had to fly west parallel to the coast in order to find the light house "The Bull" which was the only reliable point of orientation; this was the only thing clear to all of the crew.

Seconds later after Auschner finished the turn and put the plane into the level flight,

he was convinced he would be flying parallel to the coast when the ridge of the Bellinacarriga Hill appeared out of the fog, directly in the flight path at a distance of between 500 - 1000 m.

Auschner's reaction was to pull the control column back and open fully the throttle to both engines. The ridge ahead seemed to be at the same level as the plane, so it should have been possible to climb over.

Both men, Auschner and Noth, obviously underestimated the size of the peninsulas which tower into the sea like the fingers of a hand, or, they simply overlooked this matter due to the difficult approach to the coast and the search for points of orientation.

So Auschner opened the throttle fully to both engines and the plane started to climb.

* * *

At 07.24 hours local time (08.24 hours German summer time) Michael Murphy heard the plane approaching.

Murphy, together with 2 comrades, daily watched the German planes from their look-out post on the top of the Bellinacarriga Hill. Then they reported to Dublin.

The look out post for these three men a short time earlier, was on the Dursey Island, but then moved to Bellinacarriga Hill on the mainland.

That morning the three men waited for the German plane to appear once again but there was nothing to see as the post was at a height of about 200 m on the highest point of the hill, above the base of the cloud cover. Also they could not see their hands in front of their faces due to the thick fog.

As mentioned above, at 07.24 hours the three men heard Auschner's plane coming through the fog and then suddenly heard the engines given full power as Auschner opened the throttle wide. At this moment Michael Murphy remembers thinking: "Be careful boys, beware of the fog."

But at about 180 m over sea level the right wing touched the top of the ridge, which rises to the right side and cut the sword about 20 cm deep breaking off the wing.

The plane then slewed to the right striking the ground and breaking off the left wing, at the same time throwing all of the crew out of the plane in the direction of flight.

The plane's fuselage then tumbled, exploding and burning in the flight's direction down the other side of the hillside where it came to rest about 20 m to the side of the four dead German flyers.

The fuselage was apparently stopped by a small stone crop.

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As already told, Micheal Murphy and his two comrades found the four Germans about 100 m down the slope lying within a 10 m diameter some 20 m away from the burning parts of the fuselage. When Michael Murphy collected the four men their hands were still warm. He will never forget the four good looking men in blue uniforms, with yellow neckties and clean white shirts.

Three of them were tall, very young with fair hair and one was a little man with dark hair and dark complexion -the met. officer Bruno Noth!

* * *

Aparently failure to remember a basic rule led to their disaster: the relation of speed to range to climbing rate.

If we were to calculate events today:

Auschner gave the speed as perhaps 320 km/h in a flighth level of about 150 m.

The visibility was some 1000 m which the plane flew in about 12 seconds.

So there remained 12 seconds of reaction and climbing time:

Time over all	12 sec.
./ . hill seen (reaction time)	<u>2 "</u>
remains	10 sec.
./ . to fully open the throttle	<u>2 "</u>
remains	8 sec.
./ . engines run up to full power and to pull the control column	<u>3 "</u>
remains	5 sec.
./ . elevators go into climbing position, compression builds up, plane starts to climb	<u>2 "</u>
remains	<u>3 seconds</u> =====

The plane had a climbing rate of about 3 m/sec, so had she only climbed 9 m before the range was flown through.

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Due to the weather conditions it was a hopeless undertaking for Auschner to find the light house by sight on the coast line, flying only 190 m over sea level and being close to the 200 m high hills.

The efforts could have been succesful despite this. During my visit I realised the plane only needed a maximum 3 m of air screw circle to clear the top of the hill

-only 1 or 2 seconds of climbing rate!!!

Due to the poor visibility Auschner saw the obstacle very late and probably underestimated the height of the ridge by some meters. His only escape was to fly a steep turn to the left but this he apparently did not consider.

He therefore tried to climb over the ridge, which to him seemed possible but failed with tragic consequences.

So, poor visibility, the underestimation of the ridge's height and a lot of bad luck led to this tragic accident which cost the lives of three young men and a meteorologist in the prime of life, plus the loss of one of many (easy replaceable) JU 88s of the Deutschem Reich.

Despite an extensive investigation relatives of the victims could not be found.

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