

S/L Jackson

Survival report by

408672, Flight Sergeant A.C. DAWSON, of 75 Squadron, who ditched his P40C 200 yards from S.E. corner of MORIS ISLAND on 27 MAY 1944 whilst en route from WARDE to HOLLANDIA.

"I was Frolic Yellow 5, and took off 871150/k. to cover Beachhead at BIK. Yellow 4 went unserviceable over BIK and I was detailed by Flight Leader to escort Yellow 4 back to base. Half way between BIK and WARDE my engine began vibrating very badly. I landed at WARDE about 1510/k. My R/T communication with Yellow 4 was out and he continued to base. I had engine checked at WARDE, inspected engine mounts and ran engine up. As it seemed OK I took off for base at 1545/k. Plane was OK for about 10 minutes and then engine began vibrating again. I decided to test propeller governor to ascertain trouble. To do this I put the plane into a dive from 5000 feet. Half way down the dive the engine cut out so I pulled out at 2500 feet and zoomed up to about 4000 feet. Engine failed to pick up. I changed tanks and tried the priming pump. Latter gave some life to engine whilst being used. The engine cut out as soon as I stopped using the priming pump. I then called Gardenia and told him I was in trouble and asked him to stand by for position. Wrecker came back and I gave my position as just off FODEN ISLAND. As I was then at about 1200 ft. (too low to bail out) I decided to ditch the airplane and attempt to touch down on one of the beaches in the FODEN GROUP. Whilst approaching I saw that the beach selected was a little rocky and I remembered that there was a possibility of RIPS being there on the islands so I turned slightly out to sea. On way down I tried to jettison the hood. The jettisoning apparatus did not work properly and I then managed to push the hood out. I disconnected earphone plugs and mike throat mike. I had released bellytank before jettisoning hood. I was at 120 mph. with flaps and undercart up when approaching water which was very smooth with no appreciable wind. I landed in the water towards the SE. and 200 yards from SE. corner MORIS ISLAND. The water was about 20 feet in depth. Tail hit water first at about 95 to 100 mph.. landed smoothly and then nose came down causing plane to jerk, but not to bounce out of water. As soon as plane lost momentum I undid harness but kept parachute on. I did not undo parachute harness on way down as the American type harness had released several times during flight and I did not want to risk unfastening it again. I decided not to, waste time releasing parachute before getting out as aircraft was already sinking. I tripped over side of cockpit getting out and fell on to the wing and off it into the water. Wing was then about 18 inches under the water. I swam about three strokes from plane and looked round just in time to see the tail disappearing. I estimate plane floated about 10 seconds only from the time she stopped moving. I undid parachute partially inflated was west and started to get dinghy out. (harness) I then saw a native coming out from the island shore in a canoe, he tread water with parachute still attached to me west until the native picked me up. I had me west on all the time which though only partly inflated was sufficient to support me and the parachute. I had not removed any clothing and had water bottle, gun belt and gloves on but threw gloves off when trying to get dinghy out.

(2)

As soon as I got into the canoe I saw the Catalina circling the vicinity. I waved to him as he passed but he did not see me. Thinking there might be JAPS on the island I tried to make the native understand that I did not want to go ashore but to stay where we were. The native just nodded his head and kept paddling towards the shore. The Catalina was then circling FODENA ISLAND. I pulled out my CB and covered the native. I asked him in pidgin if there were any NIPS on the island, watching him very closely. He looked a little scared at the gun but shook his head. I think he understood what I meant. I decided to trust him and we went on to the island where there were about 16 natives who all saluted. They were very friendly and one who spoke fairly good pidgin interpreted for the Tul Tul. I opened my dinghy to get a mirror to signal the Catalina but it was not there. I found a tin of rations and gave it to the natives. Meantime three spotters from FODENA ISLAND (as I afterwards learnt) were heading for MOSES ISLAND, having seen me come down. The Catalina apparently saw them and they directed it to MOSES ISLAND. I saw the Catalina near by and waved and was seen. Catalina landed about half mile from the shore and I asked the natives to take me in the canoe which they did. Time was then about 1710/k. I was taken aboard the CAT. which took off and landed at SKIPPY HILL LAKE at about 1810/k. I then returned to my unit. I was not hurt at all in the landing and was only jolted a little.

Air Sea Rescue procedure was excellent as it was only about 20 to 25 minutes from the time I ditched until the time I was picked up. All my equipment functioned satisfactorily

RECOMMENDATION.

- (1) In view of likelihood of hood jettisoning apparatus sticking I think the practice ^{OF TAKING} off with hood closed is unwise.
- (2) I found the method of ditching, viz., approaching at about 150 mph., holding off and getting tail well down until it touches water first, hood having first been jettisoned, satisfactory for the conditions obtaining, but the short time the plane floated, (viz., 10 seconds) in a calm sea indicates in my opinion that the chance of getting out in a rough sea would not be good. Personally I would prefer to bail out if possible

A. O. Dawson
A. O. DAWSON, F/SGT.

*78 wing
to 78 + 80 class
75sqn have done
original sent to 78
4079
for X/5*

IAC

Narrative Report by

412081, Flight Sergeant G.C. MOGG, of 75 Squadron, who ditched his P40N 5 miles N.W. of Bam Island on 13th May, 1944, whilst en route from Cape Gloucester to Tadjil.

At approximately 0900 hours, I took off from Cape Gloucester as Frolic Green Four to fly to Tadjil.

At 1015 hrs, the engine gave its first sign of trouble when it gave two pronounced thumps. Then, about a minute later, it just cut out, although the prop. kept windmilling.

At this time I was 5 miles N.W. of Bam Island, at 4,000 feet. I immediately turned on the emergency I.F.F. and then called Frolic Green One and reported that I would have to bail out or ditch. I checked over my cockpit to try to find the trouble and rectify it, if possible; but as I was unable to start the motor again, I called up Frolic Green One and told him I would be ditching.

After dropping the belly tank, I disconnected my head phone and throat mike leads and checked that my harness was locked and tight. I approached the water in a series of slow S turns at 120 m.p.h., with wheels and flaps retracted and cooling gills in normal flying position. At about 30 feet I commenced a normal check and then held off just above the water, pulling the tail down until it hit the surface. At the moment of impact, I would estimate that I was doing 100 m.p.h. The tail bumped on the water three times before the cooling scoop hit, and then spray flew all over the windscreen and momentarily obscured my vision. I had the hood locked back at the time, as the jettison control refused to work. I landed 90deg. out of wind, along the direction of the swell.

As soon as the aircraft stopped moving, I undid my harness and stepped out of the cockpit on to the starboard mainplane, which was about a foot below water. After standing on the mainplane for a couple of seconds, I stepped off into the water, and then released my parachute harness. I kept my parachute on until I was in the water, because, previously, when one of our pilots had left his aircraft without his parachute attached, the cord connecting the dinghy to his Mae West had snapped.

From the time the aircraft stopped moving and commenced to sink until it finally disappeared, I would estimate as being from 30 to 45 seconds, which gave me ample time to get clear.

On the way down, I had partially inflated my Mae West, so that I had both my hands and legs free to get the dinghy out and inflate it. Whilst getting the dinghy out, I tried to hold the parachute between my legs, as I thought that the silk would probably be useful as a marker for searching aircraft. However, I lost the pack before I got the dinghy inflated. At first I only half inflated the dinghy, and then I found it easy to pull the dinghy underneath me and then complete the inflation after I was sitting in it. After inflating the dinghy, I pulled the dinghy on board, as it contained the paddles and medical equipment.

The aircraft of my Squadron circled over me for approximately 15 minutes before leaving. My No. 1 buzzed me twice until he saw I was safe, and he then headed for the East.

2.

After the aircraft left, I took off my boots, as the metal toe plates were loose and I thought they might puncture the rubber. Next, I checked over all the items I had in my wae west, dinghy pack and belt pack, and then I bailed the boat out. As water was occasionally coming into the dinghy, I unrolled the covers and fastened them.

During the first day I drifted to a point approximately half way between San Island and Kadover Island. Several aircraft passed me during the day, flying both east and west. Most of the aircraft were C.47's, and many of them flew within a quarter of a mile of me without sighting the dinghy. I attempted to signal them all with my mirror, but without any success.

About an hour before sunset I saw a P.B.Y., escorted by a single-engine fighter at approximately 300 feet, apparently searching for me. On its last run it passed within 600 yards of me and then gave up the search. About half an hour after the P.B.Y. left, two P.40's flew directly over me at approximately 1,000 feet, without sighting me.

I tried to sleep that night but found it impossible, as spray kept blowing over me and into the dinghy, and I was too cramped up. During the night I just let the dinghy drift, and by daybreak I was north-west of Kadover Island, drifting towards Wai Island.

During the night, approximately one hour before moonrise, I heard an aircraft and later sighted it flying west along the coast. Just after moonrise, I saw lights flashing in the direction of Newak. One appeared to be a white light on the land. It was signalling seawards and from out to sea it was being answered by a red light.

On the second morning, as I was drifting towards Wai Island, I got out the paddles and started to paddle so that I could get there by night time. About an hour after sunrise, four P.40's flew directly overhead, and as they had not seen the mirror, I attempted to signal them with the flap of the dinghy, which caused the dinghy to capsize me. I found the dinghy hard to enter again when fully inflated, and, after five attempts, succeeded in getting back into it. As a result of the spill, I lost my sunglasses mirror, bailing bucket and .38 revolver, which I had attached to the bucket. Fortunately, I did not lose my boots, which I used from then on to bail out the dinghy.

Several C.47's passed me during the day, but only one saw me. This was just before the P.B.Y. arrived to pick me up.

About midday, I had a mouthful of water from my water bottle. I was not hungry, so I did not open my rations. During the day I saw several schools of what I think were barracoutta, and on two occasions when they headed towards the dinghy I splashed the paddles, which frightened them.

About 1430 hours I was within a quarter of a mile of the eastern side of Wai Island, when two P.40's, GA-N and GA-S sighted me and circled for five minutes. They then left to get the P.B.Y.

To celebrate my rescue, I then took my second drink of water. I stopped paddling. About an hour later, a C.47 saw me and started to circle. Whilst it was still circling, the P.B.Y. arrived and picked me up at 1530 hrs, 1 1/2 miles east of Wai Island, and returned to Pinehaven at 1645 hrs.

3.

All the times given are approximate, except the time of ditching and rescue, as I lost my watch when getting into the dinghy. During the daytime I could hear bombing at Newak.

During all the time I was in the water I felt neither hungry nor thirsty, and I suffered no ill effects, except a sunburnt face and wrists. The paddles chafed my hands considerably and caused several blisters.

SUGGESTIONS:-

- (1) Land along the direction of the swell, and touch the water at the tail-down attitude at well above stalling speed.
- (2) Carry a length of string to securely fasten or loose objects to the dinghy.
- (3) The mirror supplied in the belt pack should at least have a hole in it, so that it can be attached to something, or, better still, the American-type mirror should be issued, as it incorporates a sighting device.
- (4) Gloves should be carried at all times, as they will prevent sunburnt wrists and chafing due to the paddles.
- (5) A packet of sea marker dye to be carried at all times.
- (6) The paddles could be improved. If they were of the canoe type O--O, I should imagine they could be made in sections and stowed in the same way as the paddles.
- (7) If possible, some type of pyrotechnic signal would be useful for attracting searching aircraft.

S.C. HOGG W/Ogt.

Interrogated by
S/Ldr I. McIvor,
Group Intelligence Officer,
NO. 10 [OPERATIONAL] GROUP.

NO. 406121

FLYING OFFICER G.H. WHITE.

NO. 78 S-UBRON. 14D

DATE OF DITCHING. 29/5/44.

P.40 N. 429-582.

NOESI ISLAND. (Approx. 15 miles South-East of BIAK.)

I was flying SMUTTY GREEN 1 on a patrol over BIAK Island, and took off at 291030 K. I reached the coast of BIAK at approx. 291210 K. On the way up, my engine seemed to be losing power, and at 16000 feet, began vibrating so badly that I decided to return to base, taking my No. 2 with me as escort. I dived down to about 7000 feet, to check performance at lower altitude, as I had had similar trouble on previous occasions, and had been able to clear it by adjustment of the mixture. At this altitude, the vibration diminished, but the engine lacked power, and started to cut occasionally. I had previously told Yellow 1 that I was returning, and he had acknowledged. GREEN 2 stayed with me. As I was then over PODARIDO ISLANDS, I decided to circle there at 6000 feet, to check the engine before setting out over the long stretch of water to the mainland. I had just started to turn, when the engine cut dead, and fuel sprayed into the cockpit, and over me, from underneath and behind the instrument panel. Fuel pressure was then at zero. Previous to this, all pressures and temperatures were O.K. I tried to get the engine going on all tanks, including trying to energise, with NIL result. I then dropped my belly tank, and opened and locked back my hood without difficulty. I was at about 5000 feet by this time. I called up GARDENIA 1 and 2, told them I was about to Salt Lake, and gave the position, giving distance and bearing from MOKMER; and stating how many islands I was East thereof. I could not give the Grid reference, as petrol in the cockpit was getting in my eyes badly. GARDENIA 1 or 2 did not acknowledge, but the ground station, LINGER, acknowledged the call, and I heard him pass it to GARDENIA 1. I was then heading in for a stretch of shallow water on the east side of NOESI Island. At about 500 feet, I gave up hope of getting the engine going, so I turned all switches off, detonated the I.F.F., checked and tightened my harness, and made another attempt to inflate my Mae West, not worrying when it failed to inflate due to the petrol fumes, as I realised from my own judgment of the depth of water, that I would not require it. I turned parallel to the island at about 120 I.A.S and crash-landed about 100 yards from shore in about 30 inches of water. I kept flaps and undercart retracted. The tail touched down first at about 90 I.A.S. The aircraft skidded along, keeping straight, and finally settled on the reef under the shallow water, and I was not thrown forward under the impact. As soon as the aircraft settled on the reef, I undid my harness, and climbed out onto the wing. I pulled all available equipment out of the cockpit, and put it on the plane. The water was just covering the seat of the cockpit. My No. 2 was still circling me, and I decided to get everything possible out of the aircraft. I had all the bolts of the instrument panel undone, and most of the wireless equipment unfastened, except the main leads, which I could not cut, and hoped to be able to get someone from the Catalina to cut for me. I could not get the reflector sight off. By this time, natives from the island were wading out. I beckoned them over to me, and the apparent leader came up and saluted me. He called some of his followers up with pineapple, pap-paw and coconuts, which they offered me. I tried to talk to them in Pidgin English, and established that there were no Japs on the island. From their conversation, I found that they were using some French words here and there. I then tried talking to them in French, and one seemed to understand me fairly well. He told me there were no Nips on any of the Islands, but by word and gesture, indicated that there were, as he said "7 milles Japan-man" pointing to BIAK. I gathered that he meant there were 7000 Japs on BIAK. From what he said, I gathered that most of the natives on the island were Papuan, and that the island was very rich in food and fish. There were many natives on the other side of the island fishing from canoes.


* with little attempt to nose over. I hardly felt any bump when hitting the water

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The Catalina landed about 1315 K, about 150 yards out from me, due to the coral shelf, so the natives brought an outrigger canoe, and took me, with all the gear I had salvaged, out to the Catalina. The Cat. could not wait while I got the rest of the gear out, due to a call from an A.20 which crashed into deep water about 3 miles out, 20 minutes after I had gone down. The Catalina picked up the A20 crew, and brought us all back to SENTANI LAKE. I was not injured in any way, except for a few coral cuts on the feet, received when I took my boots off while I was wading around the aircraft. The only visible damage to the aircraft was a bent propellor, and crushed airscoop.

SUGGESTIONS.

Having experienced both types of crash landings, I think a landing in known shallow water is preferable to crash-landing on land, as the impact is much more gentle, the possibility of nosing over seems more remote, and the danger of fire is lessened. I consider flaps should NOT be put down, that the tail should be touched first, and that the aircraft should be allowed to go onto the water before losing full flying speed.


.....F/O.
NO. 78 SQUADRON. R.A.A.F.

DATE OF CRASH. 26/3/44. P.40 N. A29-428.

PLACE. BORGEM BAY.

I was flying SMUTTY BLUE 4 on a strafing mission along the North coast of New Britain. Took off at 1400 K, completed mission, and on return made a low recce (about 50 feet) over Hoskins Strip. After pulling up from the run over the strip, I noticed that my temperature gauge was indicating 125 degrees. I called up RED 1 and told him I would have to return at minimum boost and revs. RED 1 instructed BLUE 3 to escort me, which the latter did. I decided not to land at TALASEA as it would mean a belly landing, and apart from the abnormal temperature indication, the engine appeared to be functioning O.K. I had opened the gills fully, and reduced revs to 1850 and boost to 23 inches, which gave me an I.A.S of 140 m.p.h., and enabled me to maintain height at 1500 feet. I had also dropped my belly tank. I continued to cruise at same height and speed for approximately one hour. The glycol ^{temperature} had gone off the clock about 5 minutes after passing TALASEA but the engine otherwise seemed normal. Oil temperature remained at 75. I decided that if I could not get home, I would have to ditch on account of my low altitude. I undid my parachute harness to facilitate quick exit, also undid dinghy lead and tightened Sutton Harness as much as possible, crouching down for this purpose. When within sight of BORGEM BAY, the engine began emitting black smoke and oil temperature, which had been at 75 throughout, began to rise very rapidly. I dived in an endeavour to gain speed to get close to land. I had been flying at about 20 miles from the coast previously, as I knew it was enemy-controlled. I tried to release the hood, but it stuck, even after I struck it with my elbows, so I locked it back. I was at about 200 feet when white smoke, followed by flames, belched out of the exhaust. The smoke and fire increased and I prepared to ditch immediately. I dived to about 50 feet, and checked it to a shallow dive, and approached the water at 110 m.p.h., with flaps and undercart retracted. Smoke made it hard to judge the height above the water. I touched down at about 100 m.p.h., with tail well down. The tail dragged and skidded some distance. The impact jerked me forward, and I was unable to see what actually then happened due to this, and spray. The aircraft lost momentum, and seemed to be floating so well up in the water that I thought I might have been on a reef. I undid my Sutton Harness, and stepped out onto the wing, taking only about 3 seconds to do this, but by that time the plane was sinking fast, nose first, and the wing was about 18 inches under water. I caught hold of the dinghy flap and wrenched it, but it did not open, so I pulled the whole dinghy hard but it did not come out of the cockpit. By this time the plane was sinking faster, and looked like diving, so to avoid the suction, I jumped off the wing, swam a few yards, and then saw the fin disappear under the water. I had my Mae West on, and had fully inflated it before actually ditching. I left the parachute in the cockpit. I had my water bottle, medical kit and rations, gumbelt and gun, heavy boots, and American type gaiters on, and the weight was too much for the Mae West to support me vertically, so I kept kicking, lying on my back and discarded my gumbelt and gun, boots, trousers, and all equipment except a tin of rations to enable me to swim to shore. The water bottle had apparently come loose, as I did not see it again. I still had my helmet and throat mike on. The yellow rubber cushion floated near me, and I put my legs through the strap, so that the yellow cushion would be seen by BLUE 3. This also helped to keep me afloat.

USS 3 circled me, then headed for shore, and kept flying between me and a Torpedo Boat, which was coming out from the shore. He had dropped his dinghy 2 or three hundred yards away, but it seemed to hit his tailplane, and broke in two or three pieces, so I did not try to reach it. I was about 5 miles from shore when I ditched, and did not drift appreciably any way during the 30 minutes I was in the water. I was then picked up by the P.T. Boat, and taken ashore. I was quite uninjured, and did not suffer any ill effects from the ditching and immersion. I was taken back to my unit by jeep as soon as I landed.

SUGGESTIONS.

1. The fact that I had pulled my straps extra tight, undoubtedly saved me from being flung forward and injured, on hitting the water. I consider this an essential precaution.
2. The existing hood jettisoning apparatus does not appear to work satisfactorily in an emergency.
3. In my opinion, the method of clipping the dinghy to the parachute makes it much too hard to unfasten, if this becomes necessary.
4. I think that a minimum of rations etc., if any at all, should be carried in the Mae West, as the extra weight affects its buoyancy.

.....*W. H. H.*.....P/O.
NO. 78 S. UADRON. H.M.A.F.