

The Royal British Legion - Harleston & District Branch

# Tragedy in the Skies Over Harleston

- Lest We Forget -

*A brief history of some military aircraft crashes  
in the area around our town*



Royal Flying Corps Maurice Farman  
Shorthorn Bi-plane



German Luftwaffe  
Dornier Aircraft



Royal Air Force  
Miles Master



Royal Air Force  
Wellington Bomber



Royal Air Force  
Hawker Hurricane



2 x USA Air Force  
B-24 Liberator Bombers



USA Air Force  
P-51D Mustang

The information in this leaflet has been compiled by  
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Lowestoft Aviation Society.





## Index

Pages 3 – 5	20 <sup>th</sup> July 1917 – Royal Flying Corps Maurice Farman Shorthorn Bi-plane
Pages 6 – 8	21 <sup>st</sup> August 1940 – German Luftwaffe Dornier Aircraft
Page 9	18 <sup>th</sup> February 1942 – Royal Air Force Miles Master
Pages 10 – 11	9 <sup>th</sup> March 1942 – Royal Air Force Wellington Bomber
Page 12	9 <sup>th</sup> March 1942 – Royal Air Force Hawker Hurricane
Pages 13 – 18	11 <sup>th</sup> April 1945 – 2 x USA Air Force B-24 Liberator Bombers
Page 19 – 20	21 <sup>st</sup> June 1945 – USA Air Force P-51D Mustang



20th July 1917 – Royal Flying Corps Maurice Farman Shorthorn Bi-plane  
Pilot: 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Joseph Leo Phillips – Royal Flying Corps



*Heroic Canadian airman Joseph Leo Phillips, who died when his plane crashed in a Norfolk cornfield during the First World War, was remembered in a poignant ceremony a century after his death. Canadian national flags were raised along the Thoroughfare through Harleston in tribute.*  
Photo: Ian Carstairs

Joseph Leo Phillips was born on April 17, 1896, in Hamilton, Ontario - the only son of Joseph and Helen Phillips. He worked as a rodman for the Welland Canal Company when he enlisted. He was placed with the Royal Flying Corps rather than the Naval Air Service for which he had applied, because it had stopped recruiting.

At about 4.50 am on July 20<sup>th</sup> 1917 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Phillips took off from Snarehill Aerodrome near Thetford in an obsolescent Maurice Farman Shorthorn biplane on his second solo flight, buzzing with excitement and full of confidence, he climbed away from the airfield and flew due east.



It seems that shortly after take-off 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Phillips lost sight of the airfield and disappeared from view. His instructor, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Russell went out to look for him at 6 am, 7 am and 9.30 am without success. At 11 am he received a telephone message that 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Phillips had landed near Harleston and was badly injured. By the time Russell arrived at the scene at Redenhall, Phillips had already been taken to hospital. The plane had come down in a field of standing corn and appeared to have turned over completely twice. The position of the controls indicated that the plane was on almost full power when it hit the ground. Fortunately, given the ignition was still on and sparking, the plane did not catch fire.

John Smith, a labourer, was the only witness to the crash. At about 5.30 am he heard an aircraft overhead and went outside in time to see it head towards a wheat field a few hundred yards away. He lost sight of it behind some trees and then heard a crash. When he got to the aircraft, he found 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Phillips had been thrown from the cockpit and was unconscious on the ground, moaning. After Dr Maidment had arrived, Phillips was taken to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital where he died later that day without regaining consciousness. He was 21 years old.

At his inquest on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, the Deputy Coroner Mr W N Ladell recorded a verdict of "Death caused accidentally by a fall from an aeroplane".

During 1917 the demand for trained pilots became critical following the Battle of Arras, known in the RFC as Bloody April, when new pilots' life expectancy was measured in weeks or even days. During April the RFC lost 245 aircraft, 211 pilots and observers killed or missing and 108 prisoners of war. Just as in the Battle of Britain, 23 years later, aircraft were easier to replace than pilots. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Phillips was one of those trainee pilots attached to 25 Training Squadron based at Snarehill Aerodrome near Thetford in Norfolk.

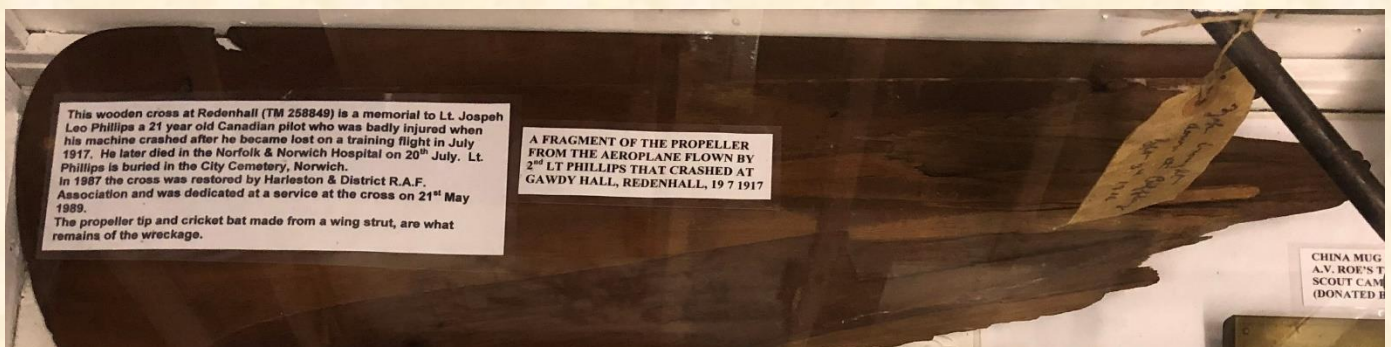
A sad story of a young man with no shortage of enthusiasm and confidence but a great lack of flying experience. In the aftermath of Bloody April in a desperate attempt to replace lost pilots and observers, the Royal Flying Corps repeatedly reduced the length of training for new recruits and Phillips was a victim of that reduction. He had been flying for less than three weeks and had logged less than three and a half hours dual control flying time. He had made his first 20-minute solo flight only that morning. Lacking training and ill-prepared, he found himself either lost or with a failing aircraft. It is heart breaking to imagine his last minutes; alone and frightened, desperately trying to find somewhere to land. Possibly misjudging the height of the standing wheat, he seems to have lost control of the aircraft and flown into the ground on full throttle.

The original wooden memorial to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Phillips is thought to have been erected by Mrs Sancroft Holmes of Gawdy Hall very near the site where his plane crashed, and over the years it had been repaired and renewed by the people of Harleston. The latest simple memorial, on Church Lane, the wooden cross a replica of the original which is in Harleston Museum, was dedicated on July 20<sup>th</sup> 2011 in the presence of members of the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Royal Air Force.



This simple wooden cross beside a quiet and little used country lane in South Norfolk is one of our overlooked commemorations of the Great War.

Small parts of the wreckage of his aircraft survive. A broken tip of the propeller is on display in the Norfolk and Suffolk Aviation Museum in Flixton. Also on display is a cricket bat and a walking stick which was made by Mr Palmer, the Gawdy Hall estate carpenter, using the wood from the wreckage.







2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Phillips is buried in Earlham Cemetery in Norwich. His plot, 24/147, is marked by a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. He is also remembered in the Canadian First World War Book of Remembrance on page 580 and on the St Catharine's War Memorial in Ottawa.



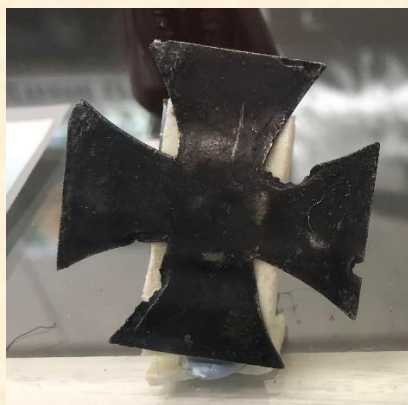
Photo: Ian Carstairs

## 21<sup>st</sup> August 1940 – German Luftwaffe Dornier 17 Z-3 Light Bomber Aircraft



The Dornier Bomber had just bombed Pulham Airship Station; at the time it was a Munitions Maintenance Unit. It was shot down on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1940 at Starston, becoming the only aircraft shot down in Norfolk during the Battle of Britain. The aircraft was chased and shot down by 3 hurricanes from 242 Squadron (RAF Coltishall). The aircraft crashed in the vicinity of Conifer Hill, Starston.

**Eyewitness** Arthur Goldsmith recalls as a 10 year old boy the Dornier D0-17 Bomber crashing at Starston. One beautiful summer's day, my friend Philip Chilvers and I were standing on top of some pig sties when we heard the drone of an aeroplane approaching. Suddenly a plane appeared from out of the cloud as plain as could be. We immediately recognised it as a German bomber by the large black and white crosses on the wings and fuselage and swastikas on its twin tails. Just as quickly as we saw it, it disappeared in some low cloud again but we both knew it was heading for Pulham Airfield which was only three miles away and was being used as a bomb dump and stores. While we stood there waiting to get another glimpse of the aircraft the air raid siren sounded and almost at once we heard the sounds of explosions. The German Dornier had dropped its bombs. When Philip and I heard the bombs exploding we took to our heels and ran as fast as our legs would carry us home. I had just got to the top of our yard when the sound of the bombers engines made me look up. It passed directly above me and as it went over I noticed its bomb doors were still open and inside it was on fire. It was very low and trailing black smoke and I was sure it was going to crash. It did crash, on the edge of a wood in Starston. Three Hurricanes from RAF Coltishall intercepted it at Pulham and shot it up so badly it had no chance of the return journey to Germany. The crew, except the pilot, baled out and were captured. The pilot, Lt Heinz Ermecke, stayed with his plane and died in the crash. A few days later the pilot was given a proper military funeral and was buried in Starston churchyard. A wooden cross was erected on his grave with his name and rank. A few days after this when the RAF had cleared the wreckage away a few of us kids went down to the crash site to see what we could find. There was one or two other people scratching about in the ashes and burnt undergrowth. We hadn't been there long when I uncovered a medal which as I rubbed the ash off I recognised as a German Iron Cross. A chap who was next to me (Russell Baldwin) saw it and took it from me saying "you can't have that, I'll hand it into the police". That was the last I saw of the Iron Cross. This eyewitness account was donated by Mr Roy Goldsmith in 2010.



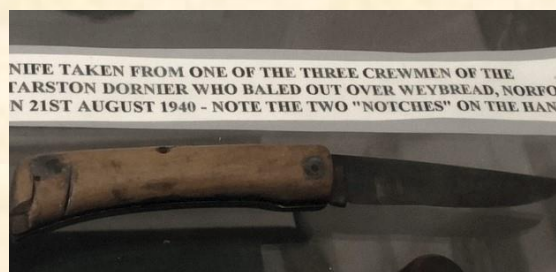
The charred Iron Cross which is one of Germany's highest military honours was obtained by bricklayer Russell Baldwin. He had been building a Pill Box nearby. The medal was donated by his wife, Mrs Dorothy Baldwin to The Norfolk and Suffolk Aviation Museum at Flixton on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1997. Lt Ermecke's family had made it known they did not want to keep the medal.





Heinz Mollenbrok who served with Lt Heinz Ermecke is pictured with Doris Baldwin and the Iron Cross belonging to Heinz Ermecke which was found at the crash site in Starston.

Also on display at the Flixton Museum is the aircraft identification plate, a knife taken from one of the crewmen and the main wheel hub



**Crew:**

Rank	Name	Remarks
Lieutenant	Heinz Ermecke (Pilot)	Killed in Action
Uffz	Gotz Dieter Wolf (Observer)	Survived (Prisoner of War)
Uffz	Heinz Hermesen (Radio Operator)	Survived (Prisoner of War)
Lieutenant	Kurt Rasche (War Correspondent)	Survived (Prisoner of War)

The pilots of the 3 hurricanes from 242 Squadron RAF Coltishall were:

Flight Lt George Powell-Shedden  
Sub Lt Richard Gardner (RN)  
Pilot Officer John Latta

“Extract from Diss Express August 1940”

**German Airman’s Funeral**

The pilot of a German Dornier bomber, which crashed in a wood after being brought down by Hurricanes last week was interred at a South-east Norfolk village Parish Church. Covered with a Swastika flag, the coffin was carried by a bearer party of the RAF behind the officers of which walked a local commander of the Home guard, whose house narrowly escaped being wrecked when the aircraft crashed.

An Archdeacon conducted the service and said that Christian charity and British chivalry were doing the last honour to one who had died in the village on active service for his own country. They were doing what all relatives would wish to be done for any of their own who had fallen in a foreign land.

After the RAF party had fired a volley over the grave, hundreds of spectators visited the grave and there were instances of grief among womenfolk who had lost relatives in this and the previous war.

The solitary wreath was from officers of the RAF.



On 16 October 1959, the governments of the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany made an agreement about the future care of the remains of German military personnel and German civilian internees of both world wars who at the time were interred in various cemeteries not already maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

It was agreed that the remains would be transferred to a single central cemetery established on Cannock Chase for this purpose. The pilot Lieutenant Heinz Ermecke was eventually exhumed from St Margarets Church in Starston and transferred to the German Military Cemetery at Cannock Chase in Staffordshire. He is laid to rest at the German Military Cemetery in Plot 5, Row 14, Grave 317.



### 18<sup>th</sup> February 1942 – Royal Air Force Miles Master



An RAF Miles Master force-landed at Hill Farm, Harleston on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1942 and hit a tree. One person was injured. There was no recorded serial number for this aircraft, so it is suspected that it was repaired.

The Miles Master was a British two-seat monoplane advanced trainer designed and built by aviation company Miles Aircraft Ltd. It was inducted in large numbers into both the Royal Air Force and Fleet Air Arm during the Second World War.

## 9th March 1942 – Royal Air Force Wellington Bomber

RAF Wellington Bomber Mk III X3643



The aircraft from 9 Squadron at RAF Honington was returning early from a raid against Essen in Germany and suffered engine trouble/fire. It then crashed in flames at 2122hrs near Green Lane in Harleston. All six crew were killed.

Rank	Name	Age	Home
Sergeant	James Cartwright	26	Stockport, Cheshire
Warrant Officer	Terence De Valera Dignan	21	West Derby, Liverpool
Sergeant	Thomas Hunter Errington	19	South Shields, Tyne and Wear
Sergeant	David Stanley Nicholas	27	Trealaw, Rhonda, Wales
Sergeant	John Andrew Rogers	26	Chopwell, Tyne and Wear
Sergeant	Albert Edward Singerton	21	Barking, East London

One witness described how the aircraft circled Harleston twice, on the first occasion with the engines "coughing and spluttering" and on the second, in flames. He related how the noise of the engines rose to a "high-pitch scream" as it dived into the ground and exploded, lighting up the area.

**Eyewitness** Roy Renaut and his family lived at Hill Farm Harleston - his nephew still farms there - which is just over the road from Briar Farm where the aircraft crashed. Roy and his parents had seen it and watched it crash. A man from the neighbouring Farm was also a fireman and several people raced over but not surprisingly, nothing could be done.

The accident report revealed that the aircraft was on fire in the air and dived vertically into the ground in a very boggy meadow near what was then Green Lane, Harleston. Farnborough's technical team were involved in the investigation into the crash as the RAF wanted to know the cause. According to their report the engines and much of the wreckage were buried in mud. The engines (Bristol Hercules XI) were eventually recovered and returned to Bristols for a stripdown examination which revealed that engine failure had indeed occurred due to mishandling.

The report also added that 9 Squadron had been experiencing a spate of problems resulting from pilots on the unit trying to make their aircraft more fuel-economical by poor use of the engine power-settings.

The late Dick Wickham of Beccles had very vivid (and amusing) recollections of the crash. So much wreckage was stolen from the site by schoolboys an RAF officer had to visit local schools appealing for its return. The pile which appeared in the playground of Dick's school as a result apparently warranted removal by a lorry.



During a dig at the crash-site in 1984-5 they were able to confirm X3643 had indeed gone in vertically, as both propeller bosses were found pointing straight down, the exact distance apart they were in 1942 and buried at a depth of about 4 ft.



Pictured in 1985 at the crash site is Bob Collis from the Lowestoft Aviation Society with Mrs Linda Holmes, whose father was Sgt "Rex" Singerton the Wireless Operator aboard the Wellington bomber X3643. She also visited the Flixton museum and was presented with a small piece of the propeller blade and two exploded .303 cartridge cases from her late father's aircraft, which were mounted on a polished board bearing a 9 Squadron badge. Linda's mother was 7 months pregnant with her when the crash occurred.

9th March 1942 – Royal Air Force Hawker Hurricane  
Pilot: Sergeant Horace Edward Dolman – Royal Australian Air Force



Tragically on the same day as the RAF Wellington bomber crashed near to Jays green in Harleston a Hawker Hurricane crashed near Redenhall and the pilot Sergeant Dolman was killed. The Hawker Hurricane was from No 56 OTU (Operational Training Unit) which was formed at RAF Sutton Bridge until 27<sup>th</sup> March 1942 when it relocated to RAF Tealing in Angus, Scotland. The Operational Training Unit was used to train fighter pilots for RAF Fighter Command.

The Hurricane crashed at Redenhall, (Ordnance Survey Map Reference: 241846). A search by the East Anglian Aircraft Research Group in 1995 revealed the rear view mirror and small pieces spread over a field but with no concentration or indication of buried wreckage of substance.

Service number: 403506 Sergeant Horace Edward Dolman was born 28<sup>th</sup> April 1914 in New South Wales Australia. He was the son of Herbert Henry and Phyllis Ann Dolman of West Maitland, New South Wales, Australia. He had a brother Norman McIlroy Dolman who was born on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1916 who got married on 6<sup>th</sup> Nov 1943 and had two children.



He is buried in the Earlham Road Cemetery, Norwich, Norfolk. Plot Section 54. Grave 676. Memorial ID 59972126.



## 11<sup>th</sup> April 1945 – 2 x USA Air Force B-24 Liberator Bombers



The two B-24 Liberator bomber planes from 446 Bomb Group (706 Squadron), collided in mid-air whilst preparing to land at their Flixton base after returning from a mission over Regensburg in Bavaria, South East Germany. 22 American crewmen died as a result of the mid-air collision over Redenhall, near to Jays Green in Harleston, Norfolk. There were no survivors.

Rank	Name	Age	State
First Lieutenant	John Randolph Barron <b>(Pilot)</b>	21	South Carolina
Technical Sergeant	Anthony Stephen Birkbeck	23	New Jersey
Second Lieutenant	William Carlson	22	New York
Staff Sergeant	Raymond George Carnahan	24	Pennsylvania
Staff Sergeant	Rogers Edgar	21	New Jersey
First Lieutenant	Robert Joseph (Bobby Joe) Free <b>(Pilot)</b>	21	California
Staff Sergeant	Wendell Eames Fuller	22	Virginia
Sergeant	Earl Graf	24	New York
Sergeant	August Haak	19	Illionis
Sergeant	Harold Granville Hackworth	20	Kentucky
First Lieutenant	James Haran, Jr	22	New York
Technical Sergeant	Donald Harris	29	Illionis
Sergeant	William Husted	21	New Jersey
First Lieutenant	Hulet Mack	22	Texas
Sergeant	Robert Edward Miller	19	Indiana
Second Lieutenant	Pasquale Pellicci	Not known	New York
Sergeant	Richard Petrus	19	Iowa
Flight Officer	Martin Rubin	20	New York
Sergeant	Samuel Salat	26	New York
Second Lieutenant	Harvey Lawrence Sexton	25	Kansas
Second Lieutenant	Harold Smith, Jr	21	California
Staff Sergeant	Henry Thaddeus Wrzesinski	25	Illionis



1<sup>st</sup> Lt John Barron



Sgt Anthony Birkbeck



1<sup>st</sup> Lt Hulet Mack



Sgt Robert Miller



2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Harvey Sexton

#### Some eyewitness accounts:

**Eyewitness** Rudolph Oakes was in Harleston near King Georges Hall and was watching the planes flying in formation. From what he remembers there were 9 planes in formation when the two B-24 Liberator planes collided in mid-air. He cycled up straight lane, through Jay's Green to the accident site near to the top of Cuckoo Hill. The tail section was on the right hand side and the main fuselage was a little further down Cuckoo Hill on the right hand side. He was the second person to arrive at the crash site at the top of Cuckoo Hill. Peter Renaut was the first person there. The other plane had come down on Mendham marsh on the Norfolk side of the river Waveney. Both sections of the plane were on fire and there was lots of smoke. We could not get too close because of exploding munitions. There were rumours that there was one of the aircrew missing but was later found after the tail section was removed and he was found underneath it.

**Eyewitness** Roy Renaut (who was 12 years old at the time) along with his brother Peter were playing on a field where they lived at Hill Farm Redenhall when the two B-24 Liberators collided in mid-air. It was quite common to see the planes circling around getting prepared to land at the Flixton Airbase. They along with Douglas & Clifford Harper were the first people to go to the accident site. There were bits still flying around and sections on fire. The site of the memorial is where the tail section of the plane was. There was one of the aircrew in this section.



It was a wartime tragedy that became etched in the memory of a young boy who witnessed a crash between two B-24 bombers. **Eyewitness** Peter Kent was finishing a day's lessons at school in Harleston when the two American aircraft collided in April 1945, causing the deaths of 22 airmen.

Mr Kent, who grew up in Harleston, said he was at school in Jays Green when the crash happened at about 3.45pm. "We were in school and we heard the bang and we tried to go and see what had happened, but the road had been closed and we were told to go away."

"Being 12, war was a great adventure to us and we tried to get bits of aluminium and perspex from the field. It was only when I joined the army that I learnt of the realities of war," he said. 66 years later Peter Kent pictured in American Uniform was instrumental in organising the Memorial on Green Lane in Redenhall.



The memorial to the American aircrews lost in a collision during the second world war in a field in Redenhall was the idea of a witness to the crash, Peter Kent. The memorial was dedicated in August 2011 and a new plaque presented to Mr Kent by James Duckworth III of the 446th Bomb Group.

#### A personal recollection from a relative of one of the Aircrew who perished:

In April of 1945 when soldiers from the War Department came to notify 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Pasquale "Pat" Pellicci's wife Angela of his death, it was their wedding anniversary. Their daughter was only two months old. An hour after they left, Angela received a dozen roses that Pat had made previous arrangements for her to receive. What a "class act".

Pictured below is a carburettor and nose wheel oleo from "Little King" that are on display at the Norfolk and Suffolk Aviation Museum at Flixton. These were recovered from the crash site in March 1974.



### The air accident report concluded:

On the 11<sup>th</sup> April 1945, B24 Liberators of the USAAF 446 Bomb Group were returning to their base at Flixton from a bombing mission over Regensburg in Germany. At 1650hrs two aircraft collided over Redenhall and both aircraft crashed. Twenty two crewmen were killed; there were no survivors.

The two aircraft concerned were from the Low Squadron (in the bombing formation): the lead, or No 1, Serial No 42-51909, captained by 1<sup>st</sup> Lt John Barron, and the No 3, Serial No 42-50790 (The Little King), captained by 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Robert J Free.



The Squadron was approaching Flixton from the west at a height of 1,000 feet, intending to make a left hand turn to line up with Runway 05 for a tight formation run over the airfield, followed by each aircraft peeling away in turn to land individually. The weather at the time was reported as visibility 7 miles, with nine tenths cloud at 3,500 feet.

The No 3 aircraft was flying behind and to the left of the No 1 aircraft. Witness statements are inconsistent as to what happened next, but the inquiry concluded that the sequence of events, born out by examination of the wreckage, was as follows:

1. During the turn the No 1 and No 3 aircraft drifted together;
2. The left vertical stabilizer (or fin) of No 1 (the B-24 had a twin tail configuration) contacted the underside of the right wing of No 3;
3. The left vertical stabilizer of No 1 detached from the aircraft;
4. The propeller of the right outer engine of No 3 cut into the fuselage of No 1 approximately halfway between the wing and the tail;
5. The horizontal stabilizer (or tailplane), together with the right vertical stabilizer detached from the No 1 aircraft;
6. The fuselage of No 1 broke in two where it had been weakened by No 3's propeller;
7. Wreckage from the No 1 aircraft fell to earth in four main sections;
8. The No 3 aircraft, still in one piece, went out of control and impacted the ground left wing first, cartwheeled and was totally destroyed.

The inquiry could not establish a definitive cause of the collision, but ruled the accident to be 50% pilot error, with blame apportioned equally between the two pilots, and 50% undetermined. The latter suggesting that some unknown factor might have caused one of the aircraft to move out of station without pilot input.

The accident report concluded with a recommendation that all crews be constantly rebriefed on the need to maintain separation distances and good lookout for accurate formation keeping.

Aircraft Accident Report Photographs – 11<sup>th</sup> April 1945  
B24 Liberators Airframe Numbers 42-50790 (Little King) & 42-51909



In this photograph you can clearly see the tail section with the number 51909.  
This was close to where the American Memorial is situated on Green Lane.



This photograph shows the remnants of the of the Aircraft 42-51909.  
This was spread over the field near Cuckoo Hill.





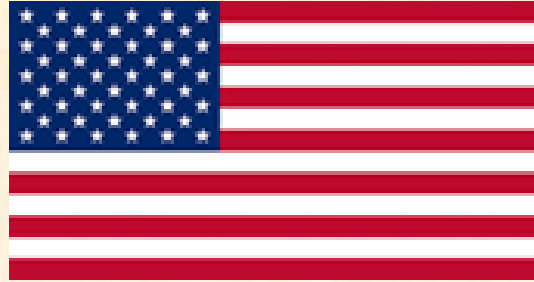
This photograph shows sections of aircraft 42-50790 (Little King).  
This aircraft came down on Mendham Marshes on the Norfolk side of the River Waveney.



These two photographs show the smouldering wreckage of 42-50790 (Little King) on Mendham Marshes



21<sup>st</sup> June 1945 – USA Air Force P-51D Mustang  
Fighter Pilot: 0-2056897 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Willmon Thomas Burnett USA Air Force



The USA Air Force P51D Mustang was from the 355<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group based at Steeple Morden in Cambridgeshire.

1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Willmon Burnett was assigned to the 357<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron which was part of the 355<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group and the Eighth Air Force. The accident was classed as KIFA (Killed in Flight Accident). This happened during “follow the leader” manoeuvres (training exercise).

His aircraft was a P-51D Mustang, aircraft serial number 44-14858 which was nicknamed “Debbie Lee”.

The airfield at Steeple Morden was originally used from 1940 as a small, grass airfield, satellite for nearby RAF Bassingbourn. Steeple Morden was allocated to the Eighth Air Force in August 1942.

#### **The Accident Report:**

On 21<sup>st</sup> June 1945, at approximately 1010, a P-51D-15, type aircraft, AF No 44-14858, piloted by 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Willmon T Burnett, 0-256897, crashed after going into a vertical dive. The accident proved fatal to the pilot.

Lt Burnett was one of a flight of four aircraft on a routine training flight, which had been up for approximately 45 minutes. At the time they were in Battle formation and the leader started a turn into his number two and three men and continued to orbit until they were in a string. They flew level for a few minutes and the leader did a barrel roll.

Lt Burnett rolled out and went into a steep dive. He seemed to have started to pull out but immediately went into a steeper dive which is believed to exceeded vertical. By this time, Lt Burnett was too low to pull out. The airplane crashed and exploded on contact.

The Aircraft Accident Committee feels that the cause of this accident cannot be determined.

Lt Burnett had approximately 150 hours of combat time out of a total of approximately 650 hours. He was a competent pilot and the committee was at a loss to explain the cause of the accident. He apparently was in good physical condition and had been in numerous “rat race” training missions before.

The only two conclusions that they could come to was that something went wrong with him physically as he started a normal pull out which could cause blackout or that there was a structural failure rendering his controls useless. However, in the latter he certainly should have had time to parachute out.



**Willmon Thomas Burnett**, was born on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1921 in Raymondville, Texas. He enlisted into the USA Air Force on 28<sup>th</sup> January 1943. He was killed in training when he crashed at Gawdy Hall Estate near Harleston on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1945. He had an older brother, Harlan Ivan Burnett who served at Guadalcanal, in the United States Navy. His sister-in-law, Mary Ballard Burnett served in the Women's Army Corps (WAC), from 1943-46.

1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Willmon Burnett was awarded the Purple Heart.



1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Willmon Thomas Burnett has a memorial stone at Raymondville Cemetery, Willacy County, Texas. Memorial ID 148164362