

Plane Crashes and a Lakenheath Hero.

Aeroplane Crashes in the Lakenheath Area 1942-44.

	TYPE & CRASH SITE	BASE
4 th Nov. '42.	Lockheed Ventura twin engine bomber. Stallode Fen. All crew killed	Feltwell
*3 rd Jan. '42	A Short Stirling four engine bomber from 149 Sqn. based at Lakenheath crashed on the corner of Eriswell Road and Undley Road where the playground is now. One crew member was killed and five were injured.	
	<i>*See 'A Lakenheath Hero' below.</i>	
2 nd Mar. '43	Lockheed Ventura Sharpe's Corner on Grime Fen. Three killed. Flying too low at night.	Methwold
5 th May. '43	Douglas Mk III Boston twin engine bomber. White Fen. Three killed, one injured.	Training Flight
13 th Aug.'43	Wellington bomber and Spitfire Mk II. Collision Stallode Drove. Possibly battle practice.	Not known
9 th Nov. '43	Stirling Mk III and Hurricane Mk IV. Nine killed from the Stirling. Hurricane pilot badly injured. Lodge Farm, Sedge Fen, and Sedge Fen. <i>Silverlock: Lakenheath History Topics. Vol 1.</i>	Air Fighting Development Unit
1944	American B17 bomber. Crash landed at Wangford. <i>Ken Turner.</i>	Not known.

The sound of aircraft was almost ever-present and the 'planes were of great interest, particularly to village boys who were keen to visit crash sites, racing out of school on their bikes to be first there to collect souvenirs even though they were in quite inaccessible places some distance from the village. Sometimes they saw some very grim sights indeed.

Ken Turner remembers:

"Another plane crash site I visited while still attending school was an American B17, a four engined bomber which had made a crash landing on what at the time was the road to Wangford. It had skidded up the road towards the village and come to rest on the road somewhere around where the little car park is today. (The car park at Maids Cross SSSI?). It was not damaged too much and the crew were not injured. A large number of kids went to see this and some came away with various souvenirs. The next day a policeman turned up at school and told these children to hand in their loot. I had a lovely black leather glove, which I did not think was very dangerous, but what's the use of one glove? I think this would have been late 1943."

In June 1946 Ken his friends

"were able to explore the inside of an American B24 bomber that had made an emergency landing at Lakenheath airfield after being damaged by German guns and fighter planes while on a daylight raid on Germany.....we had walked through scores of spent bullet cases, some of which were covered in bloodstains"

***A Lakenheath Hero. Fred Bullen. 1943.**

3rd Jan. '42 A Short Stirling four engine bomber from 149 Sqn. based at Lakenheath crashed on the corner of Eriswell Road and Undley Road where the playground is now. One crew member was killed and five were injured.

Fred Bullen, who lived nearby, arrived early at the scene of the crash and made heroic efforts to rescue the crew.



Fred Bullen. BEM.



Suffolk and Essex Free Press. June 3rd. 1943

Extracts for the Secretary of State for Air's recommendation for the award of a Commendation to Mr. Frederick Sharpe Bullen of 11 High Street, Lakenheath.

".....The aircraft was burning fiercely; ammunition was exploding in all directions and there was a danger that the petrol tanks might explode. Without regard for his personal safety, Mr. Bullen unhesitatingly went to the assistance of the injured crew. With difficulty he managed to open the escape hatch and assist a dazed and injured airman to safety. He returned to the burning wreckage to help another airman to get away who was dazed and in danger of being burnt. Mr. Bullen sustained slight burns. His brave action, which led to the saving of life, is worthy of high praise".

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In recognition of his bravery he was later awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM).

In 1955 Chief Observer Bullen was awarded the ROC long service medal for 12 years' service.