

WINGS OVER CARLTON

Looking out over the fields from my back garden, I remembered standing in almost the same spot with Ron Meek during the war to watch the barrage balloons and the glow in the sky during the bombing of Coventry. On that night I thought my brother was stationed there, but it turned out he was not, having been transferred to Folkestone prior to joining the 8th Army in Egypt. During those years there were a number of aircraft landings and crashes around Carlton which are worth recording. I would like to hear from anyone with more information or other records.

There used to be an electricity line across the canal, and in about 1939 a Tiger Moth tried to fly under the wires, caught the top of the hedge, and flipped onto its back in the field crossed by the footpath from Carlton Road to Kings Bridge (SK 389 039). I was about seven years old at the time and we all went down to look. No-one had been hurt, and I remember there was snow on the ground at the time.

During the war a Defiant which had been shot up crash-landed in the triangular field to the west of Botany Spinney along the Wellsborough Road (SK 375 031).

In about 1940 an Avro Anson landed in the field across the road from Barton bungalows (SK 405 067), and took off again after being repaired.

Mr & Mrs Liddington and their son Ben lived at Northfield, but Ben joined the services and was away from home during the war. Mr & Mrs Diamond and their children Ray and Sylvia, who were Jewish refugees lodged with the Liddingtons at this time. Mr Diamond was a tailor and had a small shop upstairs in the part of the house nearest Nailstone Road. Ray, Sylvia and I were walking back from Carlton School at about half past three one day when we saw three Tiger Moths flying over Carlton towards Barton. The planes circled, and the left one dived towards the middle one in a mock attack, but misjudged and hit the middle plane. The middle plane finished up upside down in a field of wheat to the east of Bottle Neck Spinney (SK 397 044). The left plane circled round over Bosworth, but there was something wrong with it and the pilot parachuted out at the back of Carlton church. The plane crashed in a field behind where I live now (SK 396 048) and was just a ball of twisted metal. We started to run down the churchyard to the crash, but Bob Jesson who farmed Manor House Farm and was a special constable at that time shouted at us to come back while he went down first. The third plane circled round and then flew off towards Nuneaton - I think they were all Fleet Air Arm aircraft from Bramcote. No-one was seriously hurt and two of the planes were repaired, but the parachutist lost one of his flying boots.

During the war a Tiger Moth with engine trouble landed in the field to the east of Bank Farm (SK 3935 0465), and was repaired and flew off the next day.

One day in about 1943 a barrage balloon which had broken loose came drifting over the village. I was standing watching it with Norman Oldacres, Gordon Price and Bill Lowe when we heard a Spitfire start up at Desford, and then the Spitfire flew over and shot it down. The balloon burst into flames and came down in the fields near Barton in the Beans.

Also during the war a Flying Fortress crashed into the willow trees along the brook across the road from Nailstone Depot (SK 412 076). All the crew were killed and there was debris everywhere. I went into the field and collected all kinds of bits and pockets full of cannon shells. The cannon shells were about ten inches long and we used to wriggle them in the vice to get the bullets out. There would be sticks of cordite under the bullet and we would cut this through, put the lengths in empty 12-bore cartridge cases, and seal the tops with candle wax. We would then cut a small hole with a knife just above the brass casing at the bottom of the cartridge and light them through the hole to make our own fireworks. Looking back it's a miracle we didn't get our hands blown off.

Talking of fireworks, another trick was to buy carbide from the shop (sold for old carbide lamps), and put it in an empty treacle tin with a hole knocked in the bottom. We would then spit on the carbide, quickly put the lid on the tin, light the hole and stand back. The tin would explode with a very satisfying bang. We tried the same thing with lemonade bottles in the canal, hoping to stun the fish, but it didn't work.

A Wellington bomber crashed into a row of ash trees at Odstone (SK 395 081). I am not sure what happened, but think that some of the crew were killed. I think there was an instruction to farmers to leave farm trailers and equipment out in the bigger fields to stop enemy planes landing. I certainly remember the long field to the left of the Twycross Road at Bilstone with a hayloader, a horse rake and wooden hen pens scattered over it.

Dennis Bream (290825)

PS Mrs Zuger can recall being taken up to Corbetts field off the A444 past the zoo just before the war to see a Tiger Moth that had landed or crash landed there.

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