

ISLEHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Richard Liddington
The Beeches
32 Mill Street
Isleham

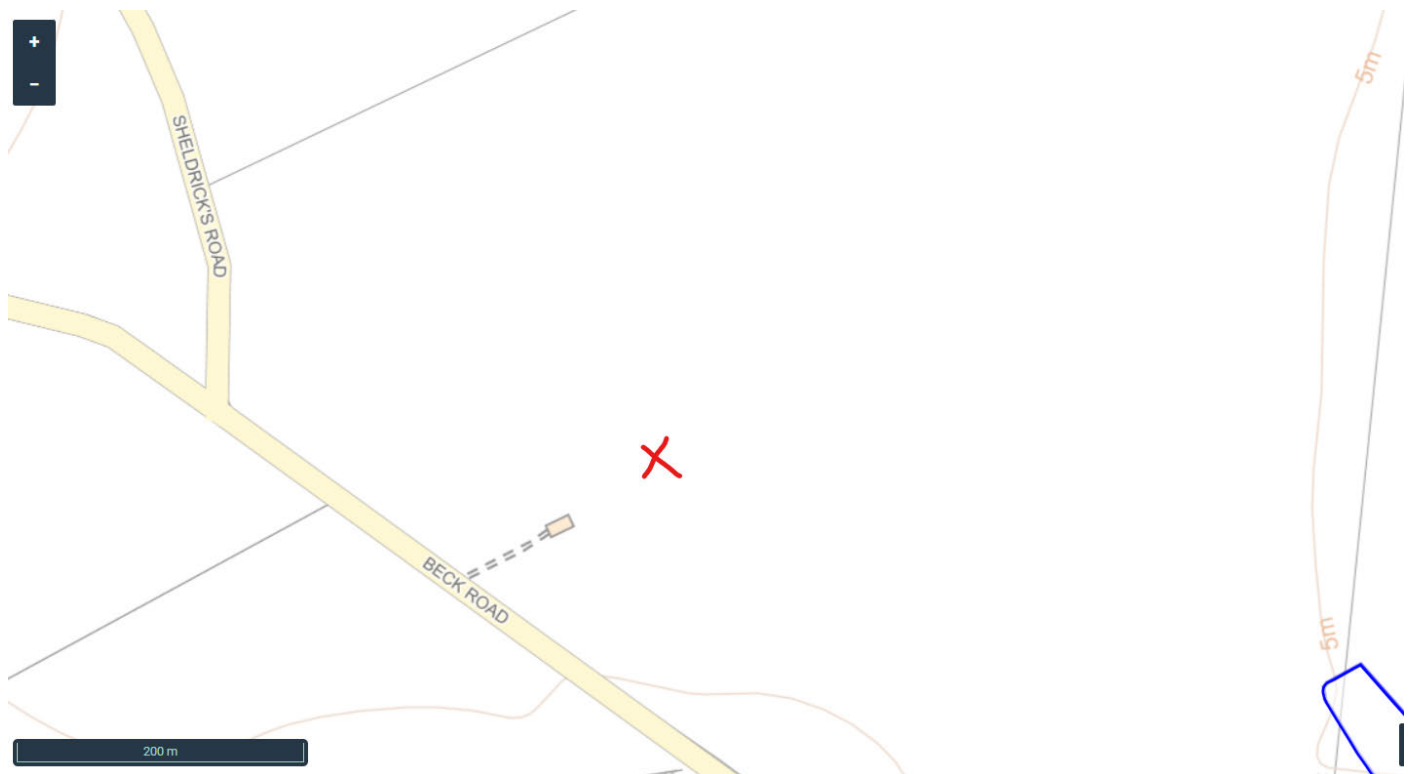


Sunnica Planning Application EXQ1 . Q 1.4.13 Plane crash site

Please supply a map detailing the location of the military plane crash site, along with a statement explaining the importance of the site to the Parish.

Dear Sirs/ Madam

I am pleased to provide the following information in response to the above question.



The edge of the crash site is approximately 50m north east of the abandoned barns on [REDACTED] Isleham. The closest post code is probably [REDACTED]

Please note that the site is on private (agricultural) land so it has not been possible to install a memorial stone at the crash site.

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A view of the crash site from The Ark Church (first floor)



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Historical Information

As you can see from the evidence provided in appendices 1- 5 (Historical information) and appendices 6 -7 (personal testimonies) the crash remains a significant event in the history of our village.

In summary, the event occurred at the start of the Cold War era in October 1949 and involved a USAF B-50 bomber which took off from RAF Skulthorpe in Norfolk carrying three tons of live bombs.

The plane was due to undertake a practice mission involving a flight over the North Sea and home counties but shortly after take-off from RAF Lakenheath where it had undertaken a brief stop, the plane experienced significant technical difficulties.

The pilot was unable to land at any of the local air force bases and rather than crashing into the village (which would have had a catastrophic consequences) the pilot managed to fly the plane to the edge of the village where it crashed, killing all twelve crew members.

The explosion was heard in towns and villages over 12 miles away and resulted in the formation was a huge crater in the field. The crew consisted of eleven members of the USAF and one RAF observer.

The crash:

- is commemorated in a Parish Council commissioned plaque located in The Beeches Community Centre Isleham (see appendix 6) This installation followed a campaign by members of the local community to honour the sacrifice made by these servicemen
- is distinctly remembered and regarded in the highest of appreciation by a large number of residents in the village. Over 30 individuals responded to our Facebook posting regarding the establishment of a memorial plaque (see appendix 7)
- is remembered and has been visited by several US based relatives of the victims (see appendix 8)
- is protected from development under our Neighbourhood Plan (see appendix 9)
- forms an integral part of Isleham Primary Schools KS2 Local History study unit “ a study of an aspect of history or a site dating from a period beyond 1066 that is significant in the locality” see appendix 10 and https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239035/PRIMARY_national_curriculum_-_History.pdf

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A Recognised Archaeological Military Grave?

This crash was of course, first and foremost an extremely tragic event.

From the crash site you can see the water towers of Mildenhall airbase, which borders RAF Lakenheath. It is therefore easy to get a real feel for the tragedy unfolding; the plane taking off, getting into trouble and eventually crashing into the field.

Sunnica's proposed mitigation planting would sever this connection forever.

The two water towers of RAF Mildenhall on the horizon



A military aircraft from RAF Mildenhall flying over the crash site



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Despite the national attention given to the crash at the time, the fact that this crash took place during the cold war period means that it has almost certainly not received the wider recognition that it deserves. Isleham Parish Council and many local residents would regard this site as a potential (Cold War) grave

The severity of the post-crash explosions meant that it was impossible to recover not just the many smaller parts of the plane but more significantly all of the human remains of the servicemen.

A local expert has stated that “you can still easily spot pieces of the aircraft by just walking over the field but that metal detection has been limited due to it being private land” and that it is not beyond the realms of possibility for human remains to still be uncovered. As such we believe that this site should be preserved and not developed upon

These various factors have resulted in a strong and growing move among both residents and historians that the site should be regarded as an official archaeological site under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and be protected in sacred memory of those who lost their lives.

As such, Isleham Parish Council have placed the land has been placed outside if the Development Envelope, published as part of The Isleham Neighbourhood Plan see appendix 10

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Appendices: The following articles, statements and photographs give a historical and personal perspective of the significance of this event and of the crash site:

Appendix 1 Article from the Isleham Informer, village magazine October 2011



Aerial view of the crash site to the north of Beck Road and east of Sheldrick's Road.

In view of its close proximity to the huge USAF airfields at Mildenhall and Lakenheath, Isleham is no stranger to the sound of aircraft flying overhead, a fact of village life for over 60 years. Today those aircraft sounds are of high powered jets such as the KC-135 Stratotankers from RAF Mildenhall and the F-15 Strike Eagle fighters from RAF Lakenheath. The aircraft sounds in the immediate post-war years, however, still included many piston-engined military aircraft.

On Thursday 13th October 1949, the 43rd Bomb Group was scheduled for a routine training mission that was to last for 10 hours. At briefing pilots had been told that there would be a formation take-off, assembly, climb to 25,000 feet, break up the formation then drop 16 500 lb high explosive bombs individually on the bombing target at Heligoland, then from there to the radar bombardment system (RBS) target at Heston, for RBS runs until the RBS site closed, and then return to Lakenheath in the evening. It was a typical autumn day in the United Kingdom. There was a low overcast, the base at a height of only 300 feet or so, which extended to height of around 1,100 feet, completely obscuring the sky from the ground. Visibility was restricted to only three quarters of a mile in fog, the temperature was a cool 54°F. The relative humidity was 100% with surface winds of 11 mph at 250°.

Instructor Major George H. Ingham, pilot of B-50 Superfortress 46-060 (6060), reported that everything was OK and acknowledged that he was taxiing into position for take-off at the end of 25 runway. 6060 lined up and contacted ground control unit (GCA) when in a take-off position. 6060 took off at 9.25am. Ingham reported that he was at 500 feet and that it was OK for the next aircraft, 6042, to take off. About a minute later Sgt. Ross in the GCA called to Ingham and

called and said, "60 should be on top 3 1/2 miles out." There was a few moments pause and the reply came in a normal voice "6 on top at 1100 feet indicated." He noted 6060's position at five miles out at the time of reply and "almost immediately heard an excited scream and some unintelligible chatter." Bacon in 6039 was in a much better position to understand the transmission as he was airborne and much nearer to 6060. Bacon had heard GCA call Lakenheath control tower that 6060 should be breaking clear on top. At this Bacon heard a voice, which he recognised as Major Ingham's "in a very jovial manner" report to GCA that he was 'still in the soup' (i.e. still in the overcast). About 30 seconds after this Bacon heard Major Ingham report that 6060 was 'on top, everything OK'

Another minute, to a minute and a half, elapsed. The transmissions were noted in the control tower by Lt Mattson - "Red hat leader to Red hat 3", and Major Ingham was then heard to start a normal transmission to Bacon, "6039 this is..." followed by a break of a few seconds after which Ingham's voice was again heard but was now agitated and very excited, "Look at that son-of-a-bitch..." he said, followed by another break of a few seconds then he transmitted, still in an excited voice, "Shut the damned thing off." During this time Bacon had turned 6039 to the right (180°) to come back over the homing beacon to join the formation.

The day in the village of Isleham had got off to a normal start and young Vernon Place was preparing to cycle to the bank, whilst others were already at work. In view of the limited visibility, Vernon could not see the aircraft but he did hear the engine noise and it did not sound normal. Elizabeth Brown was standing on the land at the rear of her home at Broad View, Beck Road Isleham at about 9.30am that day, talking with girls. She became aware of the sound of a multi-engined aircraft overhead and looked up in the direction of Mildenhall "Look! It's on fire", she said. "It looked like a ball of fire," she later recalled, describing the last moments of 6060. She turned and ran back towards the house and heard a loud explosion.

Two farming brothers, George and John Thornalley were working at the far end of the sugar beet field beside the back road of Isleham, when they heard the aircraft. They stood and looked for it. George said that he could see along the ground for about a half mile, but could see up no more than a hundred or fifty feet. From the sound of the engines he could tell that something was wrong. When he first saw the plane

come from the direction of Isleham. George could see fire but could not tell what part was on fire. However, John stated that the right wing was on fire before, realising the plane was going to crash, he fell on the ground and covered his head with his arms. To George the aircraft "appeared to be broken" but he thought that could be due to "the angle I was looking at it." He heard one explosion after it hit the ground followed by a "big blast of flame." The next thing he knew he was on the ground, then he and his brother "ran around the burning plane to the farm building", a shed where the farm implements were stored. He could see that there was no hope for anyone in the plane. John had heard "the engines throb a couple of times" and the aircraft came into his view just before it crashed. He noted that the bomber struck in a "near vertical position." A haystack very near the shed was on fire and rounds of ammunition were exploding for several minutes.

Local civilians were first on the crash scene, which was just southeast of Isleham in a field of stubble at Lee Farm, Beck Road, Isleham. The first Americans on the scene were crash truck personnel from RAF Mildenhall, the nearest airfield who arrived at 10.00am. The fire was extinguished by 10.30am. The aircraft had been carrying 6,000 gallons of fuel and sixteen 500 lb bombs. On arrival the fire crew found that the plane had exploded at the point of impact and was completely demolished. There were small individual fires burning over an area of five acres. The ground area at the crash site was flat terrain. The crash crew reported that on arrival the weather was foggy, temperature was 60°, the relative humidity was 90%, wind direction 240°, velocity 9 mph. The obvious cause of this crash was a fire in flight, although what caused the fire could not be determined in view of the total destruction of the aircraft and the entire crew being killed. This aircraft type had been plagued with oil leak and exhaust problems and it is likely that this was the cause of the fire.

News of the crash made the national newspapers on Friday 14th October 1949, the heading in The Times reading **12 KILLED IN U.S. BOMBER - EXPLOSION SHAKES A VILLAGE.** The U.S. 3rd Air Division headquarters at Ruislip, Middlesex, issued an official press statement - "A B 50 strato-bomber of the U.S.A.F. stationed at Lakenheath crashed and burned out about a mile south-east of Isleham at 9.25 a.m. to-day. According to officials of the 3rd Air Division, wreckage indicated that there were 12 people on board. So far 12 bodies have been recovered. Weather at Lakenheath was three-quarters of a mile visibility with fog. The forecast weather in the vicinity of the crash was one-eighth of a mile visibility." The report ended with the fact that "the aircraft had crashed in a field of stubble. Several stacks were set on fire. A crater about 30ft. long and 20ft. across and about 10ft. deep was formed. R.A.F. and U.S.A.F. salvage workers sorted out the wreckage, which was strewn over a wide area. American Army security police formed a cordon.

"Villagers said that the aircraft came from the direction of Lakenheath and as it flew low over the village it was a 'mass of roaring flames'.

operational heavy bombers in the U.S.A.F. The first of those now in Britain arrived in August for the 90-day training period which the American 43rd Bombardment Group is undertaking at United States air bases in England. The B 50 is an enlarged, more powerful version of the B 29. It has a 141ft. wing span and is 99ft. in length. Some details are still on the secret list, but it has been stated that it is powered by four 3,500 h.p. engines and is capable of a top speed of about 400 m.p.h. The B 50 is one of the aircraft selected to carry the atom bomb."

A brief report in The Times of Saturday 15th October 1949 followed up with the heading **R.A.F. MAN DIED IN U.S. BOMBER** and reported that R.A.F. signaller D.J. Garrett, stationed at Lakenheath, was among the crew of 12 who died in the crash. A provisional inquest of Garrett had been fixed for that afternoon.

Stewart Evan

Energy Meters

Got better things to spend your money on than electricity bills? Borrow an energy meter from any Cambridgeshire library free of charge and find out how you could cut your electricity bills by as much as 15%. The meters are easy and safe to use and show how much electricity is being used in your home at any one time. Using a meter can help you see just how much energy is used, for example, by lights in empty rooms, appliances on stand-by or boiling a kettle. Armed with this information, studies show that households can reduce their bills by 5-15% by making small changes to use less electricity. Ask to borrow a meter at your local library today and start planning what to do with your savings!

Green Tip: We all have an impact on the environment through our use of resources and burning fossil fuels for everyday activities such as driving cars and heating our homes. For various tips on how to reduce carbon emissions in the home, check out the Environment Agency website at the following address: <http://www.environmentagency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/climatechange>

Fiona Riggall, Direct line: 01223 71567;
Environment and Climate Change Office
Cambridgeshire County Council

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3-Ton Bomb Load's Blast Tears Craft Into Shreds

**Lost Plane Belonged to 65th Squadron of 43rd
Bombardment Group Stationed at D-M Field;
Was on Training Flight to Helgoland**

ISLEHAM, Eng., Oct. 13.—(P)—Twelve airmen bound from Britain to Helgoland on a practice mission were blasted to death today by the plunge of their U. S. Air Force B-50 bomber into a wheatfield with three tons of live bombs aboard. Eleven were AF crew members from Davis-Monthan field, Tucson, the 12th was an RAF observer.

CASUALTY LIST

The casualty list of the D-M based B-50 bomber which crashed near Isleham, England, with no survivors included 11 members of the U. S. Air Force. The announcement was made at Davis-Monthan.

The dead:

1st Lt. John A. Dryer, pilot, 3156 North Richey boulevard,

1st Lt. Robert H. Short, navigator, 632 Washington street, Allentown, Penna.

1st Lt. Robert M. Stannard, pilot, Rural Route No. 2, Richland, Iowa.

1st Lt. Robert W. Chatfield, pilot, 2007 South Norris avenue.

Maj. George H. Ingham, pilot and operations officer of the 65th bomb squadron, 3629 East Elida avenue.

Tech/Sgt. Harold S. Morin, flight engineer, 3733 East 33rd street.

Tech/Sgt. Delmas F. Bise, gunner, 591 South Wilson avenue.

Tech/Sgt. Paul P. Butler Jr., bombardier, 1354 12th street, Douglas.

Staff/Sgt. Arthur L. Gilbreath, radio operator, P.O. Box 933, Porterville, Calif.

Staff Sgt. Julius V. Odegard, gunner, 33 South 13th street, Minneapolis, Minn.

Staff/Sgt. Robert C. Williams, gunner, 1129 North Tyndall avenue.

One name was being withheld pending notification of next of kin. The RAF has not released the name of the staff officer that was flying with the crew of

The countryside for 12 miles around was jarred by the blast. None aboard escaped. Bodies of the men and parts of the plane were hurled over wide areas of the field. The main explosion gouged out a crater ten feet deep and 30 feet wide.

Hundreds of gallons of flaming high octane gasoline sprayed over the field, setting fire to nearby barns and several haystacks.

A-bomb Carrier

The B-50 is designed to carry the atom bomb. It is a larger version of the four-engined B-29 Superfort and ranks second among the American air force's bombers only to the controversial B-36.

The lost plane belonged to the 65th squadron of the 43rd Bombardment Group, which came to England Aug. 18, from its base at Tucson, for 90 days of operational training.

Crashed After Takeoff

The plane crashed a few minutes after taking off from its base at Sculthorpe, Norfolk county, with a load of twelve 500-pound practice bombs for the Allied bombing range on the island of Helgoland, former Nazi submarine base.

Headquarters of the U. S. Third Air Division, which controls the B-50 group and two groups of B-29s, in Britain, said visibility in the area was three-quarters of a mile. Witnesses said, however, that the plane came down through a light ground fog.

All 12 bodies were recovered two hours after the crash.

The day Isleham escaped mass destruction

Published in the Newmarket Journal 10:44 Thursday 22 October 2009

Sixty years ago this month, when the flaming fuselage of the world's heaviest bomber streaked across a foggy October sky, residents of Isleham had no idea just how close they had come to destruction or how much they owed to the "noble actions" of its American pilot. Every member of the 12-man crew of the B-50 Strato bomber which was out on a practice bombing mission and crashed in Beck Road, was killed, but the consequences could have been considerably worse for hundreds of others as the 16 500lb bombs it was carrying had been designed for mass destruction. The B-50 had taken off from RAF Lakenheath at 9.25am on October 13. It had been checked the day before and immediately before take off. It was carrying enough fuel for 10 hours in the air but had got into difficulties shortly after leaving the airfield. Knowing that he and all those aboard were doomed, the pilot, Major George Ingham managed to steer the burning plane away from the village below, knowing the explosive power of the weaponry would have spelt certain disaster for hundreds of residents below. At an inquest into the death of Signaller David Garrett, the only British crew member on board the doomed bomber, held two days after the crash, witnesses to the tragedy told their stories. One of the first at the scene was a reporter from the Newmarket Journal who had followed fire crews to the crash site. described the chaos which followed the crash. "It seemed unbelievable," he wrote, "that the biggest bomber in the world could be reduced to small pieces of debris in such a short space of time. "When I arrived a search was being made for bodies which still lay where they had been thrown. "Wherever you walked there was evidence of a terrific explosion, either the pieces of the bomber itself or the gruesome reminders of the mutilation of some of the crew." Farm worker Joseph Leonard, of Beck Road, Isleham, told the inquest he could not see the plane because of the thick low fog, but he had heard a "spluttering sort of noise". Turning round he saw the bomber emerge from the clouds with its fuselage on fire. James Goodchild, a farmer of the White Lion, East End, Isleham said he had seen a plane coming from the Mildenhall direction at a very low height. Flames were streaking from its fuselage, its tail was crumpled up and the plane nose-dived towards the ground. Mr Leonard fell off his tractor and lay flat on his face after hearing a large crack and seeing the engine of the mighty aircraft fall off. Housewife Vera Fenn of Croft Road, Isleham said she ran outside her house and saw the bomber, the starboard engines of which were on fire, losing height rapidly. She lost sight of it as it passed behind some houses and the next thing she saw was a brilliant yellow flash followed by a loud explosion. Another witness, police constable M Audley, said that when he arrived on the scene he found some villagers moving the body of an American to the edge of the field. He told the inquest that in a part of the plane which was not burning were two more bodies and in the fuselage, which was blazing fiercely, were a further four. Two messages had been initially received from the plane describing weather conditions, but the inquest heard of a third transmission received when the pilot was transmitting to another plane in his flight and unintentionally pressed the transmission button on his microphone, thus wirelessly back to base. The text of that message which stated that the bomber was in trouble was not disclosed but was written on a piece of paper and passed to the coroner. Recording a verdict of accidental death on behalf Signaller Garrett, Mr V Cade, the coroner paid his own tribute to the bravery of the pilot and his crew. "Although nothing has come out in this inquest, it would appear that the pilot took every step he could to avoid and save the damage to this village and we regard this as a noble action on his part. "If he had landed on this village, we do not know what the death toll and damage would have been but we do know it would have been colossal. "When we think of this tragedy in the future we should remember the gallant act of the pilot and the crew of this craft." And the villagers of Isleham remembered the crew and recorded their thanks in prayers when a large congregation gathered for a memorial service at St Andrew's Church on October 16 to pay tribute to all those aboard who had lost their lives.

Read more at 

November 28, 1949

Dear Jessie,

Occasionally we know people for whom we set aside a special place in our heart. Paul, or Percy, as we affectionately knew him, will always have that place in my memory. I don't know whether you ever heard of any friendship, but during our year and a half in prison camp I got to know Paul as well as any man gets to know another. Not only were we in the same room under conditions which no doubt have been described to you, but we had bunks next to each other. During those months I was so glad to have the companionship of Paul if we both had to be there, and since that time I have thought so often of how much easier he made life there.

Obviously the qualities most needed in that situation were a sense of humor and the ability to get along easily with others. I say sincerely I have never known another to possess both these qualities to the degree that Paul did. But what was almost ^{as} important was his unselfishness, loyalty, and courage. Again these are attributes that show up quickly if they exist in a person.

Paul was the only person from our prison days that I still corresponded with in any degree of regularity. Though we only wrote 2 or 3 times a year I still thought of him often and looked forward to his letters. His last letter was written August 16th just before he left for England. I am sending you a clipping he sent with it in the event you missed it and would like to keep it with his things. I had planned to write him in another week or two in case he was spending Christmas in England. He seemed to be particularly happy and contented in this letter since he had just signed on under the career plan in the Air Force and had found a girl he was sure would be good for him.

In a sense it makes it harder thinking of him leaving that way, but he had had so many ups and downs I'm sure he was happy and realized he had done a good job when he did go.

Appendix 5 Official crew list, released by USAF following the crash

Aircraft No. 46-060 B-50A-25-BO

Strategic Air Command 8 AF 43rd Bomb Wing (M) 43rd Bomb Gp (M) 65th
 Bomb Squadron Manufactured 6 Nov 1948 Total Hours 391:SO

Pilot INGHAM, George H. Major USAF ASN 10111A Age 27
 Attached Station RAF Lakenheath, SAC, 8AF, 43rd Wing, 43rd Gp (M), 65th Squadron.
 Assigned Station Davis-Monthan AFB Tucson, Arizona

Crew –

IP Ingham, George H.	P	10111A	Maj USAF	8 AF	43d Gp (M)	Fatal
P Dryer, John A. Jr.	P	A402061651	1 st Lt USAF	8 AF	43d Gp (M)	Fatal
CP Stannard, Roger M.	P	A0781696	1 st Lt USAF	8 AF	43d Gp (M)	Fatal
N Short, Robert H.	N	A0801399	1 st Lt USAF	8 AF	43d Gp (M)	Fatal
VO Chatfield, Robert W.	VO	A0698263	1 st Lt USAF	8 AF	43d Gp (M)	Fatal
B Butler, Paul P. Jr	B	AF20845317	T/Sgt USAF	8 AF	43d Gp (M)	Fatal
FE Morin, Harold S.	FE	AF11024154	T/Sgt USAF	8 AF	43d Gp (M)	Fatal
RO Gilbreath, Arthur L.	RO	AF38343744	S/Sgt USAF	8 AF	43d Gp (M)	Fatal
CFC Bise, Delmas F.	CFC	AF6996842	T/Sgt USAF	8 AF	43d Gp (M)	Fatal
LG Odegard, Julias	LG	AF17258608	S/Sgt USAF	8 AF	43d Gp (M)	Fatal
RG Williams, Robert C.	RG	AF14057570	S/Sgt USAF	8 AF	43d Gp (M)	Fatal
X Garrett, Davis J.		1579867	S-2 RAF	1 Sq	3 Gp	RAF Fatal

Weather – Indefinite, 300 feet, sky obscured, visibility 3/4 mile in fog, temperature 54, relative humidity 100%. Surface winds 250 degrees 11 miles per hour.

[Type here]

Appendix 6 Photograph of the unveiling of the plaque in the Beeches Community Centre
Isleham, commemorating the brave victims whose sacrifice saved the lives of
local residents – unveiled in January 2020



Suffolk News article on the unveiling of the memorial plaque

Villagers honour American air crew heroes seventy years on

Published: 11:48, 27 January 2020

| Updated: 11:49, 27 January 2020

The 12-man crew of a US bomber which crashed into a field near Isleham 70 years ago has been honoured with a memorial in the village's community centre.

A plaque bearing the names of the 11 American and one British [airmen](#), who died when their B-50A Superfortress hit the ground and exploded in a ball of fire on October 13, 1949, was unveiled on Thursday at the Beeches Centre by USAF chaplain Lt Col Kyle Hundley.

The aircraft, which was designed for long-distance bombing raids and was said to have been specially adapted to carry atom bombs, had been on a training flight but had got into difficulties shortly after leaving RAF Lakenheath.



The pilot, Major George [Ingham](#), had sent a wireless message to another plane in his flight just before the crash, the text of which was never revealed. But a transcription was handed to coroner Mr V Cade during an inquest into the death of RAF signaller David Garrett.

Paying his own tribute to the pilot and his crew, Mr Cade said: "Although nothing has come out in this inquest, it would appear that the pilot took every step he could to avoid and save the damage to this village and we regard this as a noble action on his part. If he had landed on Isleham, the death toll and damage would have been colossal."

Reports at the time said Newmarket and surrounding villages were shaken by the 'enormous explosion' as the giant bomber, the latest of its type, dived out of the clouds from about 500 feet hitting the ground almost vertically, its bombs and fuel bursting into flames which were visible for miles around.

The burning remains of the aircraft were scattered over an area of 500 square yards on the [Beck Row Road](#) where neighbouring farm buildings and haystacks were set on fire.

Although 70 years have passed, a campaign to remember the doomed aircraft and honour the crew members who died had gathered pace in Isleham and resulted in Thursday's ceremony which was attended by parish councillors and other villagers.

The 12 names on the brass plaque are: George [Ingham](#), John Dryer Jr, Roger Stannard, Robert Short, Robert Chatfield, Paul Butler Jr, Harold Morin, Arthur Gilbreath, Delmas Bise, Julius [Odegard](#), Robert Williams and David Garrett.

[Armed Forces Soham](#) [Alison Hayes](#)

Plane Crash Over Isleham

13th October 1949 9:30am

On 13th October 1949 at approximately 9:25am a Boeing B-50 Superfortress from the 65th BSqn /43d BGP United States Air Force, took off from RAF Lakenheath with 11 American and 1 British Airman on board, on a routine training mission to drop 16 x 500lb highly explosive bombs on a bombing target in Heligoland in the North Sea. As the B-50 climb through the clouds one of its engines caught fire. The pilot brought the plane down through the clouds and spotted the railway line round the back of Isleham, using this as his guide to avoid crashing the plane on the village and killing hundreds of people, the pilot aimed at the surrounding fields. The impact of the plane with its bombs and 6000 gallons of fuel was felt as far wide as Newmarket. Farm buildings and haystacks caught fire and the pieces of the plane was scattered across the neighbouring fields. All 12 on board died.

When I was growing up my parents would very often talk about how the pilot of a Boeing B-50 Superfortress who saved our village by flying his plane beside the railway line and crashing it into a farmer's field along Beck Road. My Mum lived in Croft Road at the time with her family and my brother as a small baby. She would always tell us how she feels the house shake when the plane hit the ground and shaking from the bomb that where on board exploding and seeing the smoke rising from the ground. My Auntie Vera, also spoke of seeing the plane come through the clouds with its engine on fire, before disappearing behind house, and waiting for the explosion. As for me I wasn't born till 1957 but I was brought up being told these account of the crash.

The 12 aircrew on board that day die instantly on impact, and in our villages, eyes is the last resting place of the 12 heroes that saved our village. In my eyes it is the graves of these brave young men.

I feel that over the years this story has been talked about more and more, by families, the village school and local groups. The families of the late crew come to visit the site of the crash to pay their respects. On the 70th Anniversary of the crash our village Church places a display inside its building in memory of the 12 heroes'. In January 2020 a brass plaque was placed on display in the Beeches community centre in the village as a reminder of the ultimate sacrifice the 12 aircrew gave to our village, each one of them with their name etched in the bronze forever for everyone to see. My Mum newspaper cutting from the local Newmarket Journal was used in the Churches display, she would have been so proud, especially to see the crew finally being honoured for the action that fatal day. I feel privilege that my Mum handed down the cutting to me to keep for the children of the future, and to tell the account of the 12 heroes' so it can be passed on to generation to generation and to keep those heroes names alive.

To now let anything be built on the fields where the crewman sacrificed their lives, including a solar farm is immorally wrong. Someone's son's, Grandson, nephew or cousin lost their lives to save our village and for it to be covered over and not be able to come to those fields and pay their respects is unforgiveable. In my eyes, it's their graves and you wouldn't think

twice about building on top of a grave yard, so why build on top of our 12 heroes' last resting place.

We as a village will always be in debit to these 12 men, who saved our village and enabled it to be the place it is today.

Mrs Brenda Downey Isleham resident

[Type here]

lections included in 2018 & 2022 Isleham News Facebook Page

I remember the large bang and the ceilings cracking in our classroom at Isleham school

3 y Like Reply

2

Yes there should be a memorial for these brave men

3 y Like Reply

1

So glad this is coming together for you and for all those men who lost their lives ❤️

3 y Like Reply

1

it would be lovely to have an article about this in the Informer too 👍

3 y Like Reply

I think a memorial plaque is definitely needed.

3 y Like Reply

1

is talking at the Isleham Society in April

3 y Like Reply

2



3 y Like Reply

1

[Type here]

Hi [redacted], thanks for raising this again. I agree that there needs to be something. I'm sure the Society and many others will support this. Can we arrange a meet up to discuss further?

4 y Like Reply

2

[redacted] tyi

4 y Like Reply

1

Remember running down the croft.

4 y Like Reply

1

The plane crashed on my third birthday 😞😞

4 y Like Reply

1 😞

I can remember this I was at Isleham school, we all ran down lane towards church.

4 y Like Reply

2 😞

i can remember sitting in school when the noise landed on my uncles field

4 y Like Reply

2 😞

[redacted] can remember this event I was in school in Freckenham when all the doors blew open it was a while before we found out the cause

4 y Like Reply

2

I have mums paper cutting...They also lived up croft road at the time...sorry I wasn't even a twinkle in dads eye..but they always spoke about it and now lucky isleham was that day...

4 y Like Reply

3

Like the sound of the church [redacted]..will p.m. you..

[Type here]

I was picked up off the bedroom floor So my Mum always told me! I was 14 Months old! Remember Mum telling me the plane was on fire as it went over the village!

4 y Like Reply

3   

We ought to fundraise for a memorial plaque to be on show up at The Beeches.

4 y Like Reply

1 

remembers this well ,was at school and said the noise was terrible ,never heard anything like it ,and it just missed his mothers house as it went over and landed up beck road

4 y Like Reply

1 

I guess it's because there are still large USAF planes flying over Isleham on a daily basis and they don't want people reminding of what might happen.

4 y Like Reply

1 

Amazing thing is that the inquest was held the day after the crash.....

4 y Like Reply

2  

My father has spoken about this ..

4 y Like Reply

1 

I don't remember my Father mentioning this.

4 y Like Reply

1 

Like many others I remember it well, when the aircraft hit the ground a lump of plaster fell onto my desk at school. People cycled up Beck Road in the evening to have a look and scavenge for pieces of wreckage. There was just one local policeman guarding the site; how things change.

4 y Like Reply

2  

I remember it well. We, the children in the school were terrified and it was also my little brothers birthday,

4 y Like Reply

2 

My mother in law saw and heard it go over part of the village, then heard the Big Bang.

4 y Like Reply

2 

I think alot of people still don't know about this...my mum always spoke about it....I have passed it on to my family..
Be good to have something for this brave team of men..Isleham could have been so different. ..

4 y Like Reply

2  



4 y Like Reply



Isleham misc history

4 y Like Reply



[Type here]

Having first posted about this in 2016....I'd like to publicly thank Richard Radcliffe, Chairman, and Councillors on Isleham Parish Council for agreeing to fund a Plaque to commemorate this "incident" which happened in 1949.

I'd been asking around for a while why there wasn't something in the Village marking the crash, but never got an answer. When I went to the Parish Council early in 2019 to ask if anyone on the Council had an answer, it was agreed that, within limits, they would be prepared to consider funding a Plaque.

Many thanks also, to Parish Clerk Richard Liddington who sorted things out, and to Stewart Evans whose presentation in 2016 drew my attention to the crash, and for his subsequent presentation to The Isleham Society in 2019.

Stewart has been provider of most, if not all, of the detailed information.

NOW, ON THURSDAY 16th JANUARY 2020 at 7pm
a Plaque was unveiled in The Community Centre Foyer.

Photo of which is now attached.

.....
.....

On 13th October 1949, Isleham was nearly wiped out but for the bravery of a pilot (Major George Ingham) who sacrificed his own life and those of his crew to steer the B50 Bomber, fully loaded with 500lb live bombs, away from the centre of the village before crashing in a field off Beck Road.

Yet there is still not a memorial to this - as far as I'm aware. Why?

THERE IS NOW!

[Type here]



Like Reply 2 d

Informer page16

Like Reply 1 w Edited

yes thank you, I have this.

Like Reply 1 w

page 16&17 thank you

Like Reply 1 w

My neighbo remembers the crash - her dad responded to it

Like Reply 1 w

I have my Mum's newspaper cutting..

Like Reply 1 w



[Type here]

Appendix 9

Personal testimony of a US relative of one of the crash victims

My grandfather gave his life in service to my country and sacrificed bailing out so as to save a village and the lives therein, the land should be respected for that and maintained as the farmland it was. I'm sure a better plot can be found.

Mr Brien Chatfield, (grandson of 1st Lt Robert W Chatfield) Los Angeles California

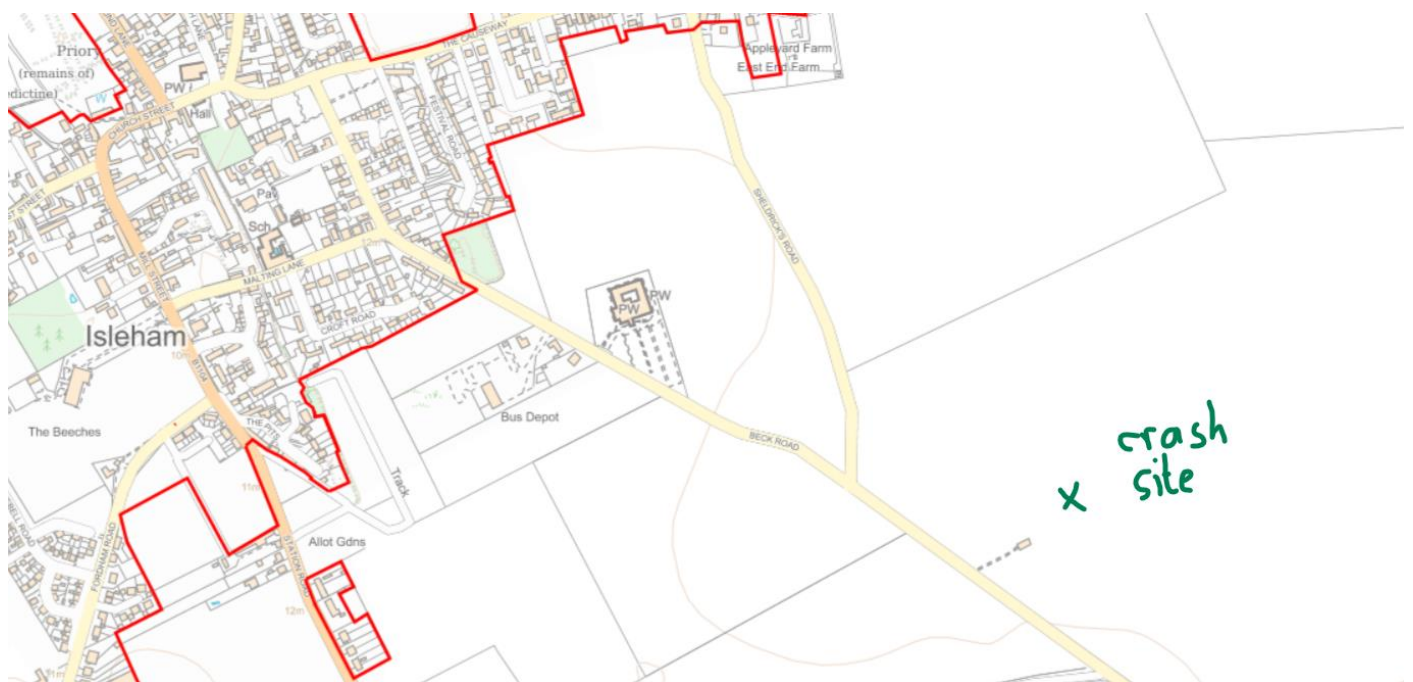
Map 10 Other sites of historical interest



Key:

1. Site of Roman villa
2. Site of Middle Age Canal Cut
3. Roman Earth Bank
4. Site of Middle Age Canal Cut
5. Site for former ferry.
6. Ley Brook chalk stream
7. Site of crashed USAF plane
8. Railway embankment

Isleham Development Envelope



Also see: [Neighbourhood Plan](#)