
Earith Air to Air Collision

January 17th 1942

Bill Wade - 15 February 2020



On the afternoon of January 17, 1942, a Stirling MK1 bomber of No 7 Squadron from RAF Oakington was taking part in a training exercise. Returning from the Wash, following the line of the Bedford rivers towards Earith. The aircraft had only been delivered a few days earlier and had less than six flying hours on the airframe, when a chance encounter with a Hurricane MK 1 from 56 OTU based at Sutton Bridge resulted in some unplanned interaction which tragically resulted in an air to air collision.

Several eyewitnesses on the ground heard the noise of the engines, one eye witness, Special Constable George Clark from Sutton saw the two aircraft. The Hurricane swept down on Sterling and it appeared to have been caught up in the slipstream of the Stirling as it pulled up and the fighter slammed into the centre of the fuselage of the bomber from underneath. Both aircraft lost control and crashed into the ground, approximately 1 mile north of Earith Bridge with a loss of all eight crew of the Stirling and the pilot of the Hurricane.



Above - Scene of the crash site in Earith the day after the accident
Below - Fellow officers at the memorial service at the site



In 1999 a memorial was dedicated to the crews of both aircraft at Earith and funded as a joint-venture by the Parish Council and 7 Squadron Association.

On the anniversary of the accident flowers are placed on the memorial and each year during remembrance week a service takes part involving local clergy, members of the British Legion and the public. The following photo was taken after the service on the 11th of November 2019



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