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PRESS RELEASE seven pages including illustrations

Some background as to the reason why the Parish Council are supporting the erection of a lasting monument to commemorate a significant event in the history of Tockwith village – an occurrence hitherto unrecognised until now.



STIRLING AIRCRASH TOCKWITH VILLAGE 9TH October 1945

At 1.34am Tuesday 9th 1945 October the tranquil street scene of Marston Road Tockwith was changed beyond recognition. A Stirling Bomber about to land on the nearby Marston Moor Airfield crashed in the main street killing the village postmaster, the six crew members and wrecking nineteen houses. There was a trail of damage stretching from the then Post Office to Ralph Garth.

There have been all sorts of theories as to why the plane crashed in the Main Street .

There was apparently only one witness to the crash Miss Bradley who lived in the thatched Cromwell House. She was in bed and saw the moving mass of flames but could not get out of the house in time. The cottage caught fire and Mrs Bradley had to be rescued.

Arthur William Carlill. Postmaster, shoemaker and church organist was sleeping in the attic room. He did not normally sleep in this room and the family were in different rooms to air the beds for the expected home coming of their only son Barry who was in the RAF. The funeral was held on 12th October and there was a large attendance of villagers. Unfortunately Barry was unable to make his way back from the Middle East where he was serving. This had a profound affect on Barry for the rest of his life. Barry never changed the frontage of the shop after the crash and it was not updated until after his death only a few years ago.

There is even a sad personal tale about one of the crew, Wireless Operator Sgt Albert Bonass was to have been a guest player with York City football team on the 14th October. His home was in York. A former member of York City football club Sgt Bonass later went to Hartlepool United and then to Chesterfield. He began his football career with Dringhouses, York.

One of the houses reduced in a flash to jagged pieces of wall was the Police House. The occupant was PC Harry Sagar. He and his wife and daughter Ruth who incidentally still lives in the village escaped injury but were left in nothing but their night clothes. Constable Sagar had no uniform but nothing daunted and with fires raging at intervals the whole length of the east end of the village without waiting to be given anything to cover his pyjamas, took charge of the grim situation.

The village grocer William Todd who also had his shop badly damaged said at the time, "Tockwith looks like an old shelled French village in the last war and the plane is strewn in pieces all along the main street. It crashed on top of the street and it's blazing wreckage ploughed its way along the row of shops and houses".

It is difficult to imagine just how much the everyday business of the village was disrupted. There is no doubting that were the same thing to happen

today all the might of the media would descend on the village. The two pubs would be full and people would come from all around to take a look.

The national papers did give the 1945 crash a fleeting mention but no way did they give it major prominence. It was almost as though it was some back water in the wilds of Yorkshire. This rather matter of fact approach symptomatic of the times may well be the reason why there is no memorial dedicated to those who died. A question of 'keep calm and carry on.'

The crash severed a water main and people had to draw water from a pump in the garden of The White Cottage which was the home of Mrs George Bishop who had been evacuated from London during the blitz four years earlier. She said at the time." I never thought I would have the blitz all over again. I went through some of the bombing in London but this was as bad an experience in its way as I ever remember."

Telephone lines were also cut.

The Air Ministry set up a headquarters in the main street to deal with the claims for damaged property and loss of personal belongings.

Awards for bravery displayed after the crash were later presented to a number of people, including the village policeman Police Constable Harry Sagar, Company Officer Leslie Matthews of Wetherby, and Leading Fireman John Utley also of Wetherby. Mr Matthews and Utley received the British Empire Medal and PC Sagar received the Kings Commendation for Brave Conduct.

"Company Officer Matthews and Leading Fireman Utley mounted a ladder and although the bedroom was blazing inferno without the slightest hesitation they entered the building" said the citation. "Utley located the occupant who was partially covered by debris; she was released and passed to Matthews who carried her to safety. Utley was so exhausted that he had to be assisted down the ladder. Both men displayed exceptional bravery"

PC Sargar's award was for his bravery in dealing with the consequences of the crash.

The Stirling bomber was returning to Marston Moor having been engaged in a cross country flight. The Stirling Serial No LJ622 was built by Short Brothers.

The Bomber was crewed by :-

Pilot -	P/O S.H. Bunting
Engineer	Sgt R.V. Viall
Navigator	Sgt R.A. Alexander
Bomb-Aimer	F/O H Griffiths
Wireless Op	Sgt A.E. Boness
Airgunner	F/O J Cantle-Jones

The aircraft crashed in Marston Road flying West to East and initially demolished the Post Office and the Police House. It then bounced over the Chapel and Northfield House and into Swires grocery shop and adjacent buildings. It then bounced again over Melbourne Stores and hit Cromwell Cottage and Nicholson's butchers shop. The post master Arthur Carlill who had been sleeping in the attic room at the Post Office was killed as was the entire crew.

The street scene of the village changed forever. One of the oldest houses in the village which was thatched and reputed to have been the house where Oliver Cromwell had a wound dressed during the Battle of Marston Moor in 1644 was destroyed.

An inquest was held by the H.M. Coroner because a civilian had been killed and evidence was given by Squadron Leader Kenneth Stammers, who was the officer in charge of night flying on the night in question. Flying Officer Bunting was an experienced pilot and the flight was the last of his training programme for that particular type of work. The aircraft reported at 1.18am that all was well. There was no possibility of the pilot

mistaking his route as had been widely reported before the inquest. Permission was not given to land, but to make a circuit of the airfield. The pilot should not have come in low over the village. The subsequent Air Ministry board of enquiry found that the aircraft had stalled at 2,000ft during a turn to port in bad visibility.

The only public memorial to those who died in the crash is on display in Tockwith Church but this is merely a piece of typed card.

This year marks the 70th Anniversary of the crash and the Parish Council are co-ordinating the building a lasting memorial to those who died on that fateful night.

A local company Stage One who operate from a Hangar on the old Marston Moor Airfield and built the famous caldron for the 2012 London Olympics have designed the memorial to commemorate the plane crash. A local builder has agreed to do the ground works.

The unveiling of the memorial and a commemorative service is expected to be held on Sunday 11th October 2015 which is the Sunday nearest the anniversary of the crash. 70 years a good round figure. The Bishop of Selby has agreed to attend.

Descendants of those killed in the crash are in the process of being contacted and the RAF, in particular RAF Linton on Ouse, the ATC, British Legion, Police and Fire Service are expected to play a significant role in commemorations.

The Chairman of the Parish Council Norman Waller who is co-ordinating the event would like any descendants of those killed to contact him on 01423 358588.

Commenting on the memorial he said “The site chosen for the monument is close to where the main impact of the crash was; in fact some of the nearby trees are reputed to have pieces of the crashed aircraft in them. It is felt that the monument is very striking and will have sufficient impact to remind people about the crash without impinging on any public safety”.



A visual of how the monument will look in Marston Road Tockwith



The aftermath after the crash Marston Road looking east



The aftermath of the Plane crash Marston Road looking West

For further information contact Norman Waller on – nr.waller@btinternet.com / 01423 358588 / 07702 058 430.