

Junkers Crashes in Bines Road

by Geoff Merritt

These are a few tales told to me by my late mother, Mrs. Audrey Merritt, concerning the Junkers 88, which according to the report in the Southern Weekly News of Saturday 2nd August, 1941, crashed close to Bines Road in the early hours of the previous Monday, which would have been the 28th July.

My mother, together with a neighbour, Mrs. Florence Lucas, were "fire watchers", trained to deal with any small outbreaks, armed with their bucket of water and stirrup pump, items which were of no use to them on the night of this plane crash. According to my mother, most things were alight including the trees.

My mother's Aunt Alice, my grandmother's sister, decided to visit the family in this country, to get away from Sutton and the nightly air raids on London. She duly travelled by train to Partridge Green on Sunday 27th July, looking forward to a relaxing few days in the country. Who would have thought that the very same night a plane would crash close to the house she was staying in. As soon as she could the next day she packed her bags and went back to Sutton, declaring that it had been a far worse experience than any of the air raids.

A more gruesome tale concerned our next-door neighbour, Mr. William Darrington, who, awakened by the noise of the crash got up to investigate. On opening his front door he was startled when a leg complete with boot and sock fell onto the door mat: it had been propped against the outside of the door.

My mother also told me about another neighbour, whose name I have sadly forgotten, who found a rubber life raft in her front garden. When the soldiers were clearing up she asked them to inflate it, then climbed in, and sang "Red Sails in the Sunset". Talk about the wartime spirit!

There was a machine gun from the crashed plane which came to rest under a hedge, the authorities knew it was there, but it went missing. This caused a bit of a stir, word went round that there would be trouble if it was not found. It mysteriously reappeared under the hedge, and the matter was closed.

A propeller from one of the engines passed directly over our house, and landed in an orchard at the rear, which is now part of Mr. Peter Holt's garden. I wonder if that was when we lost our chimney pots?

My mother told me that the next day the pilot responsible for shooting down this Junkers came to survey the damage he had caused, and to apologise to everyone. He said he had tried to turn the Junkers back over the sea, but the German pilot was having none of it, so he had no alternative but to shoot it down, to avoid it reaching London.

Small fragments of metal can still be found in the field where the plane crashed, especially after the ground has been ploughed. I have a piece of bent aluminium with traces of grey paint on it that I picked up about 15 years ago. If you know where to look the mark left by a burning tyre on the end wall of Mrs. Ann Murray's house is still visible, faded with time now, but very distinct when I was younger.

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