

HAXEY HALIFAX MEMORIAL DEDICATION SERVICE

Friday 22nd SEPTEMBER 2023



During the Second World War, the County of Lincolnshire earned the name of “Bomber County” due to the large area and “flatness” of the land, which enabled many airfields to be established quickly to support the bombing campaign against Nazi Germany. A considerable number of Royal Air Force airfields located around the Isle of Axholme were active during WW2 and provided both training and front-line air support to the War effort by British and Multinational aircrews flying a myriad of aircraft types. RAF Sandtoft, north of Epworth, was one of these airfields established from 1942 as a bomber aircraft training station. As a consequence of this activity, a significant number of aircraft crashes occurred, resulting in substantial fatalities and injuries to aircrew. The Parishes of Haxey and neighbouring Owston Ferry experienced notable crashes within their boundaries. As was the custom at the time, to maintain the morale of the population and deny the enemy intelligence of losses, evidence of the crashes was quickly removed and there were no local memorials of the events.

In 2017, volunteers in the neighbouring Parish of Owston Ferry researched and memorialised the loss of a Lancaster Bomber, PB 565 and crew, which crashed at 3 Bridges Owston Ferry, close to the Haxey Parish boundary in 1945. Although delayed by the pandemic, a Memorial Dedication Day for the crew of this aircraft took place in 2021 and the site of the crash below is now a local attraction.



OWSTON FERRY LANCASTER PB 565 MEMORIAL

Haxey Parish Council realized that there was the high likelihood of similar accidents in Haxey Parish and also acknowledged that due to the close connection the Parish has with the Armed Services and in particular the RAF, there would be community interest in recognising the

ultimate cost paid by aircrews who ended their young lives in the Parish but had no memorial where they perished.

Following liaison and discussions with the Owston Ferry Lancaster Group, several Haxey Parish Councillors and local Residents carried out an initial period of investigation into local air accidents resulting in, May 2019, Haxey Parish Council resolving to form a Military Memorial (Working) Group (MMG) to carry out detailed research into any aircraft that crashed in the Parish. After a preliminary search of relevant military databases and visits to Sandtoft, the closest WW2 airfield to Haxey Parish, several major incidents were revealed and following further wider research with the RAF and the International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln, the MMG concluded that there were 2 major incidents of note, which resulted in 3 aircraft crashes in the Parish. As was the custom at the time, to maintain the morale of the population and deny the enemy intelligence of losses, evidence of the crashes was quickly removed and there are no local memorials of the events, although there are still some local recollections of the crashes. In total, 21 aircrew fatalities were caused by the 3 crashes; however, there were no casualties caused on the ground. Short details of the incidents follow:

7 February 1944 – Halifax Mk 2 V9983 of 1662 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU) – Lost control during evasive action to avoid a mid-air collision.



Halifax V9983 from 1662 HCU was based at RAF Blyton (Gainsborough) and flown by a UK crew with a Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) pilot. The aircraft lost control during evasive action to avoid a mid-air collision with another aircraft and crashed near the East Lound/Graizelound Rd Haxey. There were no survivors.

7 March 1944 - Halifax Mk 5 EB184 of 1602 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU) – based at RAF Sandtoft - Mid-Air Collision with HR 657 whilst on Night Flying/Bombing Practice.



Halifax EB184 from 1602 HCU was based at RAF Sandtoft and flown by a UK crew. The aircraft was involved in a bombing exercise over Misson Bombing Range, and it is evident that it collided with HR 667 and crashed between Graizelound and Haxey. There were no survivors.

7 March 1944 – Halifax Mk 2 HR657of 1667 HCU based at RAF Blyton – Mid-Air Collision with EB184 whilst on Night Flying/Bombing Practice.



Halifax HR 657from 1667 HCU based at RAF Blyton and flown by a Polish Crew attached from 300 (Polish) Sqn. The aircraft was involved in a bombing exercise over Misson Bombing Range. During the flight, the aircraft collided with EB 184 over the Bombing Range and crashed near Graizelound. There were no survivors.

The Parish Council initially resolved to consider a plan to provide a memorial to the 3 crashes and although severely delayed by the COVID regulations, work on the project continued by the MMG through 2020 and 2021. As part of the Council's requirement to give the project a local focus, North Lindsey College in Scunthorpe was approached and requested to come up with a suitable design for a memorial as a project for their students with a view to them providing the fabrication at a future date. The design of the proposed memorial was approved by the Parish Council in 2020. The fabrication was completed in early 2022 and the memorial was transported to Haxey Parish in April 22. Not only did the College provide the design and fabrication of the Memorial, but it also shared the cost of the materials with the Parish Council and the Staff and Students have remained firm supporters of the project.

Haxey Parish has a considerable heritage and local tradition history. A further project adopted by the Parish Council over recent years has been the re-establishment of the appointment of Townsman, who is responsible for the periodic “letting” of small parcels of community owned land, referred to as “meres” and is one such tradition which has been continued in the Villages of Westwoodside and Low Burnham for many years. Discussions with the Haxey Townsman resulted in agreement that the Haxey Pinfold, opposite the War Memorial at Burrells Corner in Haxey would be an appropriate location for the Halifax Memorial. The Tenancy of the Pinfold has been obtained by the Parish Council and the Memorial and Information Board are now located in the Pinfold.



Halifax Memorial and Information Board in Haxey Pinfold