

ERNEST R. DAVIS

On 14th August 1941 a Hampden AD935 aircraft, OL-U, belonging to 83 Squadron set off from R.A.F. Scampton near Lincoln on a training flight. It was flown by Pilot P/O Ernest R. Davis and his crew were Sergeants Gilbert Arthur Newbold and W. Wells. The air base was later to become famous as the home of the Dambuster Squadron.

Ernest Davis was 26 years old and, while he was in Lincolnshire, his wife was working as a nanny to two children of the Loehnis family, at Hodys Place, Wickhamford. Gilbert Newbold was in the Volunteer Reserve of the R.A.F. He was born in 1920 at Barrow-upon-Soar, Leics. and he had attended Humphrey Perkins School there.

Ernest Davis had told his wife that he would be flying that day and that he would bring the aircraft over from Lincolnshire to fly past Hodys Place. He attempted a low pass, approaching from the West, probably following the line of Wickhamford Lane towards the Manor and Church. As he came in to the village the plane clipped the tops of some trees, just missed hitting the houses and then crashed into an apple orchard that was alongside the Badsey to Willersey Road. The orchard belonged to Mr Ballard of Badsey.

Ernest Davis and Gilbert Newbold were killed in the crash, but Sgt Wells survived. Both deaths are listed in the Evesham Death Register but, due to war-time censorship, there was no report of this accident in the Evesham Journal. Davis is buried in the War graves section of Scampton Church cemetery and Newbold is buried in Sileby Cemetery, Leicestershire. Sgt Wells service record stops in 1941, so presumably he was unfit for further military duties.

Following the RAF plane crash at the Willersey Rd/Golden Lane junction in 1941 two locals were recommended for the Albert Medal as they had been involved in rescuing the sole survivor. However, the recommendation was turned down and no award was made. The two people concerned were Francis Robert Wheeler (57) a Badsey blacksmith and wheelwright and Doris May Haynes (26).

A description of the events was written at the time by a Badsey schoolgirl, Jean Salter, and her handwritten account, with some graphic details, is shown below.

Article by Tom Locke

<http://badseysociety.uk/>

BADSEYS FIRST PLANE CRASH.

On Thursday, August 14th 1941 there was a plane crash at 1.5.

We had just finished our dinner, ^{and} dad had gone out to weigh some beans, when we heard a terrible crash. We rushed outside to see, thick, black, smoke pouring into the sky. Dad and another man was out there watching it. Dad said he had seen the plane circling round when it lit something, turned over and crashed to the ground. Dad got out his bike and went down to help, (as he is a Special Constable) a little after he had gone we heard a big explosion (a petrol tank). Mather said I could go down so I jumped on my bike and went down.

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at their doors and children were
cycling as hard as they could
to the spot. It was in the middle
of an apple and plum plantation.
The people were out on the
road close to the hedge. When
I got there it was in flames
some of them were white hot.
The fire engine was there but
was not putting it out. At last
they fitted the pipes together
and they started putting
out the flames. The one part
they got out but the other took
longer as it was the petrol and
oil cans. It kept sending showers
of white hot sparks up as the
water swished down upon it.
When it was out there was



nothing to see except different things the constables found and were putting in a heap (hear about that later) all at once the crowd pushed to the gate at the end of the field. The police were just going to lift the dead man on the lorry. It was covered up but I saw one of his hands from underneath the cover. It was terrible. It was like five claws bloated from the fire. After that I went home with dad. Here are the facts which I heard from dad.

Facts

The plane was from Rivington. They think it was trying to land when its tail got caught in an elm tree.

It would have landed safely
only it landed in the plantation
as it went along its wings got
tore off then it burst into flame
It was a Tom Dox bomber there
should have been five men
in it but there was only 3 there
The one only had a his ankle
twisted right round and a
few cuts and bruises The other
was alive but unconscious. He was
terribly knocked about and Dad
thinks he would be dead before
they got him to Evesham.
The dead one was found in
different places. his body was
found in one with the head half
off Dad found his legs up
a tree, they were bare one
arm is still missing. This
was 20 yds away still down

