

Title: The day the LUFTWAFTE dropped in for tea

By Gordon Wiseman

It Was August the 29th 1940, a day I shall never forget. I was 7 years of age, and at that time we lived in a council house in New Road, Great Wakering in Essex. At the very bottom of our garden was a home made air raid shelter, at about 4 o'clock that afternoon my brother Norman and myself stood on the roof of this air raid shelter watching a dog-fight between som RAF Spitfires and German bombers, when to our amazement we suddenly realised that one of these bombers were heading straight for where we stood, it was only just a few feet above ground level, we stood there unable to move like a pair of rabbits hypnotized in a cars headlights. The plane flew between to trees taking both wing tips off both wings before hitting the ground in a potato field no more than a hundred yards from where we were standing. The first person to arrive upon the scene was a fellow who lived just along the road who was on leave from the RAF, he was quickly followed by some troops from the Highland Light Infantry who were encamped in Bell tents in a meadow down the bottom of our road. The crew of the aircraft were quickly rounded up and taken away in a lorry. I distinctly remember one of the crew, because he appeared to be so young, no mor than 13 or 14 years of age.

A follow up of this incident was that a squad of soldiers from the Essex Regiment were draughted in and posted at the end of the field where the plane had crashed to guard against souvenir hunters, they had a bell tent for sleeping accommodation and plenty of food, but no facilities for cooking! My mother took on the task of preparing their meals, one day when they were in our house eating their food, some of my elder brothers took advantage of their absence and stole some of the batteries and light fittings from the plane and rigged up a lighting system in our air raid shelter, (it was probably the only private air raid shelter in the village to have electric lighting, we didn't even have it in the house). On another accoasion I was sitting in the pilots seat, playing with all the knobs and buttons when there was a sudden very loud hissing noise which frightened the life out of me, I leapt out of the plane ran across the potato field up the garden path and indoors like a scalded cat, I thought I had set a bomb off, but thinking about many years later I think I must have opened a valve to the oxygen tank.

To me at that age the years of the Second World were very happy years, I did not know what the consequences of war were, I had no fears and no two days were ever the same, each day brought new excitements.



Heinkel He 111H-2. Crash-landed near Great Wakering 4.15 p.m. following attack by Pilot Officer Ellacombe of No. 151 Squadron during sortie over Hornchurch aerodrome. Oblt. Winter, Fw. Engelhardt and Uffz. Wieck captured unhurt. Uffz. Schmidt and Gefr. Mauer both wounded. Aircraft A1+L1 a write-off.

Attacked by fighters during a raid on Hornchurch aerodrome on August 24, this KG53 Heinkel crash-landed with two wounded crewmen near Samuels Corner, Landwick, Essex. Skimming low across a potato field, it crossed the main road bringing down power lines and striking a tree with its wing before slithering to a stop across another potato field. The spire of Great Wakering church lies in the background (Bill Gent).