

**These notes will be incorporated into the 3rd edition
Probably a pdf online purchase.**

TRAGIC ACCIDENTS

Charlie Martin, the local Blacksmith, was killed in a road traffic accident on July 9th, 1944, by a USAAF Army lorry. He was looking in the window of Arthur Beaumont's radio shop on High Street when he inadvertently stepped back into the road, just as a truck came around the corner.

This vehicle was most probably returning from one of the USAAF Suffolk airfields after delivering munitions for their aircraft. This impact fatally wounded Charlie. The young inexperienced driver was exonerated from all aspects of this serious accident, but he was severely shaken by the incident.

Suffolk and Essex Free Press October 22nd 1942

A slaughterhouse was damaged in a hit and run air raid in East Anglia on Monday morning last week. Reginald Drury aged 34, succumbed to his injuries shortly afterwards.

Workmen, Walter Smith and Harold Webber were detained in Hospital.

Sidney Beadle, Harry Symonds, Gordon Drake and Cyril Wisbey all received Hospital outpatients treatment.

The newspaper reports this was an air raid, but it's generally accepted it was a rogue shell fired from an Artillery Battery in Colchester. Perhaps the Free Press was not inclined to admit the injuries were inflicted by our own Service Personnel

Local Report

The USAAF drivers drove so fast through the village, that on one occasion a jeep crashed into Mansfields, Newsagents in Bridge Street, killing an elderly gentleman inside.

LITTLE GIRL'S SAD DEATH

Halstead Gazette & Times, April 21st 1944 The original text has been reproduced here:-

Tragedy came to a group of five small children on a country road at Bures Hamlet, when one of them, Antoinette Patricia Verdon, aged eight years, was fatally injured by an American jeep, which was being driven by Pte H C Anderson, who was accompanied by three other privates. It appears that the jeep was rounding a left-hand bend on the Lamarsh Road as it entered Bures Hamlet when it came upon the five children walking in the middle of the road. On seeing the jeep, the three youngest, one of six years of age,



went to the near side, and the two elder girls, Antoinette and Shirley Smith, both aged ten years, went to the off-side, one of them wheeling a small doll's pram. The jeep collided with both girls, who were severely injured. They were immediately placed in the jeep and taken to Sudbury. Antoinette died soon after arriving at the Hospital, with Shirley Smith in a perilous condition.

Left: Essex & Suffolk Free Press, April 23rd 1944

Antoinette was the daughter of Mrs L Verdon of 5 Oakwood Close, Woodford Bridge, and she had been staying with relatives at Hill Farm Cottage, Bures Hamlet; and Shirley is the daughter of Mrs Hilda Smith, of the same address.

Later an inquest was held, in which Antoinette Patricia Verdon, aged 8, of Rose Cottage, Lamarsh, was killed. The Coroner was Mr Alan C Phillips.

When admitted to St Leonard's Hospital in the early afternoon, Dr F E Higgins said the child was already dead. There were considerable injuries to the head, and death was due to shock from injuries to the brain. The Coroner asked Inspector Billett of Halstead Police if he had had any communication concerning this matter?

The Inspector replied that he had received a letter from the United States Army Authorities, stated that Private Harold C Anderson, driver of the vehicle concerned in

the accident, was being charged before an American Court Martial "for involuntary manslaughter".

As far as the proceedings in that Court were concerned, the Coroner understood that according to the instructions from the Home

Office, he would not resume the inquest unless he was directed so to do by the Secretary of State for Home Affairs. He also understood that he was unlikely to receive any such direction unless the accused was acquitted of any responsibility for the girl's death by the American Court. He adjourned the inquest sine die.

A TWINSTEAD TRAGEDY

Four Brothers Dead

FOLLOWING AN EXPLOSION

Residents in Sudbury and district were shocked on Monday morning to hear of a tragedy at Twinstead involving four young brothers, two of whom were dead and two in St. Leonard's Hospital, Sudbury. These died on Monday afternoon and an inquest on the four was opened at Halstead yesterday (Wednesday) afternoon.

The boys are sons of Mr. and Mrs. Reuben Harrington, The Green, Twinstead: Dennis, aged 16, Gordon, aged 12, who were killed outright; Norman, aged 8 and Eric, aged 18, who died within a few hours of each other in Hospital.

The explosion occurred in their backyard on Sunday evening. Shortly before eight o'clock on Sunday evening Eric and Dennis Harrington were seen cycling from the direction of Bures carrying something. A few minutes afterwards they were observed, with their two brothers, sitting on tins near the back door of their cottage

with something between them. Later Dennis was seen hammering an object on the back doorstep. A terrific explosion was heard soon afterwards.

Neighbours saw Norman run on to the main road and collapse in a pool of blood at the entrance to Twinstead Post Office. Dennis and Gordon were found terribly mutilated near the back door, with Eric lying not far away.

Dr. R. W. Rix (Sudbury) attended and ordered the removal of the injured boys to hospital. P.-c. Wright (Bulmer) also went to the scene.

Later the hammer which Dennis had apparently been using was found in a garden sixty yards away. A chisel and piece of metal were also found some distance away.

The actual cause of the tragedy may never be ascertained under the circumstances, but the boys were probably playing with something of an explosive nature. Widespread sympathy is felt for the parents in this terrible occurrence.

"Essex Newsman Herald on September 8th 1944"

Suffolk and Essex Free Press

February 17th 1944

This Newspaper article is difficult to read due to the small print, which has been reproduced below with no corrections.

"TOOK BOMBS HOME and Dismantled Them"

Two Boys Before the Court

TOOK BOMBS HOME

And Dismantled Them

Two Boys Before the Court

During a recent raid over a rural part of East Anglia incendiary bombs were showered from an enemy plane over agricultural land. Assisting A.R.P. officials to collect them up were two local 15 years old lads who considered their job worthy of remembrance. So to their respective homes went five of the bombs as souvenirs of the occasion. One of the lads, a schoolboy with a mechanical turn of mind, regardless of the grave danger to which he was exposing his mother as well as himself, took his three bombs to pieces.

These two lads came before a Juvenile Court on Friday, when the seriousness of their action was not only brought home to them, but a grave warning was issued to all persons, especially children, not to interfere with suspicious looking objects, but to report them immediately to the police. It was on a charge of failing to do this that the boys were before the Justices.

properly trained to deal with the bombs and it was in the interests of everybody that they should not be touched only by such trained persons.

COMMONSENSE DUTY.

A solicitor who represented the two lads, endorsed the remarks of the superintendent and said it seemed to him the public had no real appreciation of their duty regarding objects which had been dropped from enemy aircraft. It was the clear duty of anyone finding any object not to remove or tamper with it but to report the finding forthwith to the police unless a member of H.M. Forces is at the spot. That did not appear to be known by the public, at least by the juvenile public. The boys did not seem to understand that they were under a legal obligation, in their own safety and interest, to inform the police. That was the only reason the boys were before the court. The offence had been

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they took after the raid to prevent just that sort of offence, being committed. These precautions included a talk to the youngsters at the school. It was, in fact, of what a police officer learned there that he hastened to the homes of the two lads. At first, he saw the father and recovered two bombs from the garden. Later the boy explained how he had found them on a field, took them home and put them in a washhouse.

When his father became aware of what he had done he buried them in the garden. The second boy was seen in the presence of his mother, who the police said was most straightforward and helpful in the matter, handing the sergeant the three bombs he had brought home. In a statement to the police, the boy said there were men and a woman in A.R.P. uniform in the vicinity when he picked up the bombs and he enquired if it would be all right for him to take them away and was told that it would be.

He described how he:-

DISMANTLED THE BOMBS

and how he acted on his mother's advice and put the "pink wax" from one of them into a bucket of water. The boy's statement added that he went to the scene with the sole idea of giving every assistance in clearing up the bombs.

TAKE WARNING.

The Police Superintendent said the A.R.P, Sub-Controller was in charge of the people collecting the bombs and his inquiries had failed to establish that any one of them had given the boy permission to take the bombs away. The superintendent went on to say that those proceedings had been brought as a warning to other people. While the ingenuity of the lad who dismantled the bombs could be appreciated in one sense, it must be emphasised most strongly that he might have blown the place to pieces and killed himself and his mother. A lot of money had been expended in having officers adequately trained to deal with the bombs and it was in the interests of everybody that they should not be touched only by such trained persons.

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The offence had been committed in ignorance of the law and commonsense duty. Both the boys had exemplary characters. one boy got up very early in the morning and rendered every assistance in putting out the fires round the farm buildings. It was not

suggested seriously that anyone gave him permission to take the bombs home but he said he took them quite openly, showed them to his mother, then dismantled them. The other boy actually found his two bombs in the course of his work, one in a rabbit warren and one in a ditch, he took them to his home and his father placed them in the garden until the police came along.

Fortunately, there had been no serious consequences, a. the police had pointed out, there might have been a very grave result from the boys' actions and one effect of the publicity given to the matter would be, he hoped, that no one in future would remove any strange looking-object but would carry out their obligations under the Regulations and report them immediately to the police" He said to the Justices not to register a conviction for what was after all a technical offence but to dismiss it under the Probation of Offenders Act. The Probation Officer speaking on the lads' behalf, said that one boy not only worked very hard after the raid but endangered his own life to save some calves. Undoubtedly both boys were out for souvenirs to remember the eventful occasion when they did rather marvellous; work.

The Justices decided to dismiss the cases under the Probation of Offenders Act.

The Chairman said he wanted to impress upon the boys not to play such fool tricks for not only were they endangering their own lives but were playing into the hands of the enemy. That was what the enemy dropped them for and any normal looking object might contain a booby trap which would blow up any foolish person who liked to pick it. up.

Such actions were against common sense. "Use commonsense in future and report such findings to the police" the Chairman added.

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CHAPTER UPDATES

CHAPTER 2

Revised text before Ted Willingham Interview

Boxted Airfield in 1944 was the home to the USAAF 56th Fighter Group. On the 2nd November, a P47 Thunderbolt took off from the airfield, piloted by Lt Wallace W. Knief. The aircraft was stripped of its armament and used as target towing practice. Flying with three other members of the Fighter Group, he was instructed by his leader to carry out evasive manoeuvres.

Soon afterwards, the P47 was seen spinning helplessly from a height of 11,000ft towards the ground. The pilot managed to escape from his cockpit at about 4,500 ft, stating he never saw his aircraft again after opening his parachute. The P47 subsequently crashed into a field at Mount Bures, narrowly missing the Thatchers Arms by only 140 yards. Local inhabitants thought it was a German `doodlebug`. The pilot landed safely and survived the war.

The subsequent investigation concluded that the accident was 100% pilot error due to poor handling. However, they added in mitigation that 19-year-old Lt Kief was a recent replacement and due to flying restrictions in the USA, he had never carried out such drastic manoeuvres before.

CHAPTER 21

Revised

(4) **Lt Cornard.** This unit had no relevance to Bures, but it is worth mentioning.

At first, this battery was operated by soldiers from a Territorial Army, Royal Engineers Unit, and later by specially trained conscripts who were unfit for overseas service. Three individual searchlights were in the Lt Cornard Battery, consisting of generators, listening devices and numerous lorries.

It was rumoured, in foggy weather when they couldn't track enemy aircraft; they shone their lights for our own aircraft towards the direction of the nearest airfield to assist our pilots in a safe return.

Initially, the men were billeted with the locals, but later accommodation huts were built near to the One Bell Pub

The lights were located as follows:- one near 'Warners Bungalow' Slough Lane, one behind the 'One Bell Pub' and the other nearer towards Newton Green. The searchlight in Slough Lane was probably the one hit by a German bomb in 1940, resulting in the loss of the light and three damaged lorries. It was later located in a field behind the Pub.

Courtesy of Lt Cornard Village Recorder.

CHAPTER 29

Add the end of Chapter

John Cowlin, in his childhood from Mount Bures recalls:

The Steam engines were 4x4s which means that they had only eight driving wheels, which considering the engine was pulling some 600 tons, meant that it would soon slip on the incline from Bures Station to Mount Bures, which was one in ninety gradient.

At times the engines would stop halfway up the incline, then shunt back the four miles to Cornard.

Then with a full head of steam, it would take another run at the incline.

Often the USA serviceman would stand at the crossing with us waving and cheering as it came towards us in full steam, belching smoke from its chimney.

Once it was on the crossing, it was then an easy run towards Chappel.

CHAPTER 32

Revised Introduction

After the USAAF pulled out of Bures on 9th November 1945, the RAF had the unenviable task of clearing up all the munitions left scattered around the countryside.

These RAF MU's were similarly involved with the clearance of the bomb storage sites at Earsham and Barnham.

Although the war had ended, bombs were still in place some three years later in 1948. Regular RAF jeep patrols were dispatched to the FAD to check on the status of these surplus munitions. The RAF's No. 95MU based at Ridgewell was (probably) tasked with clearing the abandoned ordnance around the local countryside. The recovered was eventually transported to Ridgewell Airfield for temporary storage.

RAF Ridgewell was used by the 95Maintenance Unit (MU) from 15 July 1945 to 31 March 1957.

When the clearance work was complete, the RAF airfield vacated the airfield

With the end of military control, the majority of the airfield was returned to agriculture; the MOD retained the hangars as an extra storage facility for the USAFE at Wethersfield and Alconbury until the early 1990s.

Ref:- The American Air Museum, Duxford

CHAPTER 32 Add to end of Chapter

NEW SCIENTIST FEBRUARY 2020

This article, originally published in November 1995, was updated on 10 February 2020.

In 1995 more than 4500 incendiary bombs from the Second World War have washed up on beaches around the west coast of Scotland. They are made of phosphorus, benzene and cellulose, and were designed to ignite on contact with air. During that year, a four-year-old received burns when he picked up a weapon containing phosphorous that washed up near Campbelltown, one of the Western Isles,

The implication, not yet confirmed by the MoD, is that the bombs had been sent for dumping in Beaufort's Dyke, an underwater trench 50 kilometres long, 5 kilometres wide and about 250 metres deep, which runs within 10 kilometres of the Scottish coast.

According to a letter sent by the MoD in June to researchers at the University of Liverpool, the MoD dispatched vast amounts of old weapons to Beaufort's Dyke. The ministry dumped some 14,500 tons of 5-inch artillery rockets filled with poisonous phosgene gas in the trench between July and October 1945. Over the following three years up to 1948, it consigned 135,000 tons of conventional munitions there

Sometimes the vessels did not reach the dyke, they dropped their bombs dumped overboard into shallower waters instead, in order to save time and fuel.

Detailed records were often destroyed at the time. . Extending the date to 1976, the MoD dropped about 1 million tons of munitions into and around the trench, making it by far the largest known British military dump