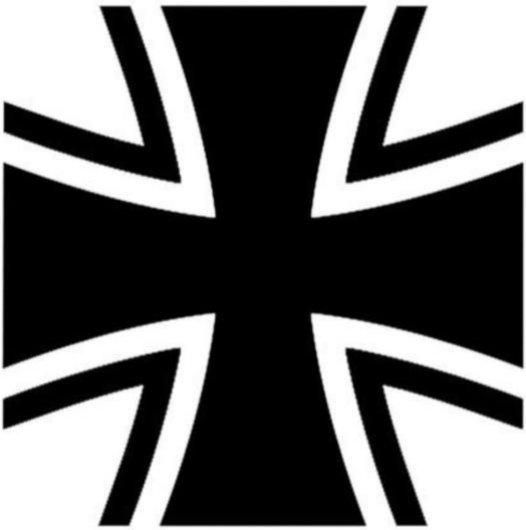
A Service of Commemoration and the Dedication of the Memorial to mark the 80th Anniversary of the crash of a Junkers Ju 88 A-14 of Kampfgeschwader 6 which crashed on the night of the 14th March 1944.



Friday 15th March 2024

All Cannings, Wiltshire

Order of Service

11.00 Welcome from the Chair of All Cannings Parish Council, Amethyst Gray

11.05 Address by the Air Attache to the German Embassy, London, Group Captain Dr Klaus Jüergen Haffner

11.10 Service of Dedication by the Reverend Richard Curtis, Team Rector, The Cannings and Redhorn Team, and Squadron Leader the Reverend Rebekah Cannon, MOD Boscombe Down.

11.20 Last Post played by Rifleman James Howard 7 RIFLES followed by two minutes of silence and Reveille.

11.22 Laying of wreaths by Amethyst Gray and Group Captain Dr Klaus Jürgen Haffner

11.30 Flypast by an A400M from 30 Squadron RAF Brize Norton piloted by Major David Fischer of the Luftwaffe, Flight Lieutenant Robert Hanson RAF (Co-Pilot), Flight Lieutenant Andy Williams RAF (Co-Pilot), Flight Sergeant Jim Rothwell RAF (Loadmaster)

11.35 Planting of commemorative oak tree by Group Captain Dr Klaus Jüergen Haffner and Flight Sergeant Timo Fiebelkorn.

History of the Crash

On the night of the 14th March 1944, as part of the Luftwaffe Operation Steinbeck, one of a series of bombing raids on London, a Junkers Ju-88 A-14 of Kampfgeschwader 6 found itself in difficulty on its return to base, with engine failure. The plane crashed in flames at 23.30 in the field to the south of the memorial, narrowly missing nearby houses on its descent. However, three of the crew had successfully bailed out, they were Obergefreiter H Baumgart, Obergefreiter A Harnisch, and Gefreiter Gerhard Grünwald, and they were all taken prisoner during the early hours of the morning of the 15th March. The Pilot Unteroffizier Hans Schönleitner died when his parachute failed to open, his body was found in a field near Patney by schoolchildren later on the afternoon of the 15th March.

The Wiltshire Constabulary Headquarters control room was notified at 23.45 by the Orderly Sergeant at RAF Alton Barnes that a plane had crashed between Alton Barnes and Devizes. Later at 0100 they received confirmation that the aircraft was German and that it had crashed in All Cannings close to the canal, and that it was being guarded by the Royal Air Force, All Cannings Home Guard, the ARP, the NFS and some American Army soldiers. There was an assumption that the crew had all perished in the crash, but a report came in at 0710 from a Major Hailey, US Army based in Tidworth, that he had a German Airman in custody who had supplied descriptions of the rest of the crew. According to the Wiltshire Gazette the two other surviving crew members soon ended up in Police custody. Unteroffizier Hans Schönleitner was laid to rest in Haycombe Cemetry in Bath.

In 2021 Charles and Sylvia Butcher who live in All Cannings and own the field where the aircraft crashed erected a memorial, with funding from 'Concert at the Kings' for the brass plaque.

Today, on the 80th anniversary of the morning after the crash, we are gathered together to remember the event, and especially the twenty three year old Pilot, Unteroffizier Hans Schönleitner, who died in a Wiltshire field far away from his home. We are honoured that the German Air Attache Group Captain Dr Klaus Jüergen Haffner and his Personal Assistant Flight Sergeant Timo Fiebelkorn have been able to join us today to represent the Luftwaffe.



Acknowledgements

All Cannings Parish Council would like to thank all those who have supported this event, including the German Embassy London, Army Headquarters South West, RAF Brize Norton, RAF Boscombe Down, Charles and Sylvia Butcher, Tim Daw, David Carson MBE, and The Kings Arms.