My late husband, Kenneth Gordon Hook, had a career in the Royal Air Force spanning the ages from 18 until 55.

He served both as Aircrew and on Air Traffic Control duties after the War.

(During the War I was employed in the Operations Room on Bomber Command Stations. I later remained on the "Reserve" of the WRAF for ten years.) -FO.

At a time when there were so many incidents to recall I will tell the story of one in particular that, in spite of all the years remains imprinted in my memory...

On the 1st December 1943 at 2240 hours in a Stirling Aircraft EH880 from 75 Squadron based at MEPAL near Ely, Cambs. as a member of the Crew my husband was returning from an Operational Mission. The aircraft developed a problem & was diverted to R.A.F ACKLINGTON in Northumberland.

The "On Site" impression of a policeman serving in the Northern Constabulary was that it was far too low and needed another 30'-40' in height.

IBCC Digital Archive

P.2/ Unfortunately, this was not achieved, and the aircraft crashed on CLIFF HOUSE FARM NEAR AMBLE

Five children aged from one to eleven were killed, asleep in their beds in an upstairs bedroom.

Downstairs in the farm at this time the farmer and his wife Mr + Mrs Robson had been entertaining old friends Mr + Mrs Rowell a butcher from Amble (they had been rolling the bacon of a pig that had recently been slaughtered.

Fire broke out in the wreckage as the bomber hit the house, + split it in two. As the occupants escaped from the burning debris they noticed an airman in the field with his clothes ablaze

Mr Rowell, regardless of his own safety, succeeded in extinguishing the flames by rolling him in the ground.

One of the huge wheels of the aircraft was in the Sitting Room and the stairs had been blown away.

IBCC Digital Archive

p3/ Yet in a child's Cot a baby doll lay unscratched. The wreckage was open to the SKY.

It is very Sad indeed to report that the remaining Six members of the Crew were Killed.

Mr Romells received a commendation for Saving the airman's life, who was to be my future husband. (At that time he was 20 years of age.)

He suffered very severe burns and other injuries, and received dedicated treatment from the medical Staff at R.A.F. Halton.

He returned to operational flying three months later.

IBCC Digital Archive

p4/ It was then on the 13 March 1944 when all the pre-activity for "D Day" was under way that 16 Stirlings were sent from 75 Squadron to St. Nazaire, Lorient and La Rochelle in the Bay of Biscay. My husband's aircraft was forced to abandon the Operation, and returned early with a large bomb on board. It crashed on the edge of CASTLE COMBE the picturesque village in Wiltshire.

On abandoning the aircraft the C.O. was the only one injured in climbing over a fence during his escape. It was miraculous because shortly afterwards the aircraft blew up ...

As we pause for a while to reflect on these activities of so many years ago they are a timely reminder of the gratitude that the "survivors" owe to those Service Personnel and Civilians who were less fortunate.

IBCC Digital Archive