

# Aircraft Crashes In and Around Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park



## Introduction

About twenty aircraft crashed in what is now Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park between 1938 and 1958. A number of factors have to be taken into consideration when attempting to explain this unusually high number of accidents. Human error invariably played a part, but bad weather, particularly heavy mist, was usually a contributory cause. Many of the stricken aircraft were travelling to or from Renfrew Airport, and in these cases the proximity of hills up to 1600 feet in height was a critical factor. Obviously the navigational equipment in use during this period was not as sophisticated as it is now. There is also the theory that the mineral deposits in the area affected the relatively primitive navigational equipment of the time.

## Summary of Crash Sites

Type	Date	Location	Type	Date	Location
Spartan Cruiser	1938	Hill of Stake	Hurricane	1943	Queenside Hill
Anson	1938	Lairdside Hill	Firefly	1944	Blaeloch Hill
Anson	1939	Dunrod Hill	Seafire	1947	Hill of Stake
Tiger Moth	1940	Ladyland Moor	Viking	1948	Irish Law
Shark	1940	Lochwinnoch	Douglas Dakota	1956	Greenside Hill
Shark	1940	Dalry	Devon	1958	Box Law
Wellington	1941	Box Law	Beech	1987	High Belltrees
Beaufort	1941	Lochwinnoch	Piper Arrow	1986	Skelmorie
Beaufort	1941	Knockside Hill	Typhoon	Undated	Beith
Swordfish	1942	Calder Dam	Blenheim or Botha	Undated	Inkerman
Hurricane	1942	Inverkip	Rapide	Undated	Misty Law Muir

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 tel 01505 842 803 [www.clydemuirshiel.co.uk](http://www.clydemuirshiel.co.uk)

These aircraft, and the stories surrounding their demise, are part of the history of the area, and the wrecks have become aviation archaeology. It may be possible to visit these sites to view the remains, but intending visitors should take note of the following:

1. A Ministry of Defence statement reads "Crashed U.K. military aircraft and their equipment remain the property of the Crown". Similarly civil aircraft wrecks remain the property of the original owners. Do not damage aircraft and do not take souvenirs. It is inadvisable to touch the heavy and sharp-edged debris.
2. Follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.
3. Make sure you are properly equipped for a trek across rough and boggy moorland. Please inform the Ranger Service of your intended route.

### **Spartan Cruiser, 1938**

Date: Crashed 14 January 1938  
Type: Spartan Cruiser G-ACYK  
Location: Hill of Stake  
Grid ref: Explorer 341 NS 268629  
Information: Flight was from Renfrew to Campbeltown, but bad weather made the pilot turn back 10 miles from Campbeltown. Altimeter readings were affected by bad weather and Captain McGeevor thought he was higher than he actually was. The crew escaped uninjured. The fuselage was recovered and is now on show at the Royal Scottish Museum of Flight in North Berwick.

### **Anson, 1938**

Date: Crashed 19 September 1938  
Type: Anson L 7949  
Location: Near Lairdside Hill, Calder Glen  
Grid ref: Explorer 341 NS 318606  
Information: Training flight by a pilot from the Elementary Flying Training School, crashed into the hill in cloud. Engine and some fragments found by Clyde Muirshiel Ranger Service in 1987, these are probably from the crashed aircraft. Flight from Prestwick to Newcastle. Pilot Lt. Cmdr. John Charsley RM; Crew – Messrs Hubert Jordon, Percival Davidson, William Nicol. All survived the crash. Lt. Cmdr. Charsley raised alarm at Muifauldhouse Farm.

### **Anson, 1939**

Date: Crashed 26 July 1939  
Type: Anson K 6255  
Location: Dunrod Hill  
Grid ref: Explorer 341 NS 237730  
Information: Part of 269 Squadron, crashed during a formation exercise. One of the Cheetah engines was recovered and can be seen at Cornalees Visitor Centre Car Park. Very few remains left on site.

### **Tiger Moth, 1940**

Date: Crashed 26 May 1940  
Type: Tiger Moth N 9202  
Location: Supposedly Ladyland Moor  
Information: A coastal flight which flew into a hill in cloud. Exact location of crash unknown. Based at no.2 Coastal Patrol, HMS Sanderling Abbotsinch Naval Base. Plane crashed in the same month that Tiger Moths were withdrawn from coastal patrols. It may have been a training flight.

### **Shark, 1940**

Date: Crashed 21 June 1940  
Type: Shark K 8901  
Location: Lochwinnoch Area  
Information: Crashed in a forced landing.

### **Shark, 1940**

Date: Crashed 3 December 1940  
Type: Shark K 8457  
Location: Dalry Area  
Information: A Torpedo Training Unit flight. Pilot was G H Bates, who was injured in the crash.

### **Wellington, 1941**

Date: Crashed 25 January 1941  
between 1500 to 1600 hours  
Type: Wellington Bomber R 1164  
Location: Box Law (fragments & large  
exposed area still visible)  
Grid ref: Explorer 341 NS 257609  
Information: Crashed during a ferry flight  
from Kirkbride to Lossiemouth. No record  
of casualties. Wreckage probably removed  
by R.A.F.. Pilot Flying Officer JFM Millar  
missing, presumed killed.

### **Beaufort, 1941**

Date: Crashed 30 June 1941  
Type: Beaufort W 6539  
Location: Near Lochwinnoch (Belltrees  
Muir NS 38-57)  
Information: Crashed in forced landing. 3  
crew killed – one rescued by local farmers.  
Dead thought to be American or Canadian.

### **Beaufort, 1941**

Date: Crashed 27 October 1941  
Type: Beaufort L 9817  
Location: Knockside Hill  
Information: Crashed while in a circuit for  
the Torpedo Range at Largs. Flight  
Sergeants Jannett and Jack were killed.  
Sergeant Walters was injured, Sergeant  
Bower escaped uninjured. No visible signs  
of the wreckage have been discovered.

### **Swordfish, 1942**

Date: Crashed 30 January 1942  
Type: Swordfish V 2554  
Location: Former Calder Dam area  
Information: Aircraft was one of four on a  
flight from Fraserburgh to Machrahanish.  
All four appear to have been given  
insufficient fuel for the journey and the  
other three crashed near Alexandria. This  
aircraft was heard flying over Windy Hill at  
low height and crashed shortly afterwards.  
It lay on the hillside for about twelve days  
before being discovered by a police  
recovery team and local helpers. The three  
dead airmen were American and were  
carried to Heathfield Farm, before being  
removed by the R.A.F. Some wreckage  
was removed by the R.A.F.; the rest may  
have sunk in marshy ground. Fragments  
located near old Calder Dam by Clyde  
Muirshiel Rangers in 1988.

### **Hurricane, 1942**

Date: Crashed 18 September 1942  
Type: Hurricane W 9187  
Location: Near Inverkip  
Information: Combined operations flight,  
crashed in forced landing.

### **Hurricane, 1943**

Date: Crashed 24 January 1943  
Type: Hurricane.  
Location: Queenside Hill  
Grid ref: Possible location 63 NS  
297642

Information: A local farmer heard this  
aircraft plough into the hillside in mist at  
great speed. The pilot was killed instantly.  
A few fragments were discovered by  
Muirshiel Ranger Service in 1986, but most  
of the wreckage was removed by the  
R.A.F. authorities. This aircraft was  
previously thought to be a Typhoon.  
Scotland West Aircraft Investigation Group  
say a typhoon **did** crash in Queenside  
area. They say if a Hurricane was involved  
there **may** have been a mid-air collision.

### **Firefly, 1944**

Date: Crashed 26 October 1944  
Type: Firefly DT 977  
Location: Blaeloch Hill  
Grid ref: Explorer 341 NS 239548  
Information: 1772 Squadron aircraft, no  
record of casualties. In 1987 the Griffon  
engine, tail section, some wing  
components, propeller hub, plus many  
scattered fragments could still be seen.

### **Seafire, 1947**

Date: Crashed 3 February 1947  
Type: Seafire PR432 (Mk. XV)  
Location: Hill of Stake  
Grid ref: Explorer 341 NS 273629  
Information: Aircraft crashed on a flight  
from Donibristle, Fife to Northern Ireland.  
The wreckage and dead pilot were  
discovered a week later. Engine, tail  
section and several scattered fragments  
have been removed, location unknown.  
S/Lt (A) J R Knight had six minor accidents  
prior to fatal crash.

### **Viking, 1948**

Date: Crashed 21 April 1948  
Type: B.E.A. Viking G-AIVE  
Location: Irish Law  
Grid re: Explorer 341 NS 260593  
Information: Captain John Ramsden failed to find the let-down beacon for Renfrew Airport. In attempting to regain the guiding beam the aircraft hit the hillside after encountering severe turbulence in low cloud. The four crew and sixteen passengers had a miraculous escape as the fuselage exploded shortly after aircraft came to rest. A full investigation was made and a report issued, as this was a civil aircraft. Two engines and some tail and wing sections are the principal remains on site.

### **Douglas Dakota, 1956**

Date: Crashed 28 March 1956 at 22.07 hours  
Type: Douglas Dakota DC 3 G-AMRB  
Location: Greenside Hill  
Grid ref: 63 NS 273578  
Information: Crashed while positioning to land at Renfrew Airport from Lourdes. One of the crew was killed. Wreckage was mainly cleared for scrap. Little, if anything to be seen on site.

### **Devon, 1958**

Date: Crashed 3 June 1958  
Type: Devon VP969 (45 Group R.A.F.). Personal aircraft of Air Marshal Sir Richard Jordan C-in C Maintenance Command.  
Location: Box Law  
Grid ref: Explorer 341 NS 258607  
Information: This aircraft flew onto Box Law but there was no record of casualties. Fuselage shattered, but substantial remains, including virtually undamaged wings, can be seen on site. Flying from Isle of Man to Renfrew to take passenger to Andover when it crashed in turbulent weather. Pilot Fl. Lt. Barney Barclay and his navigator survived.

### **Piper Arrow 1986**

Date: Crashed 19 December 1986  
Location: Skelmorlie Mains Farm  
Grid ref: Explorer 341 NS 1966  
Information: Two occupants uninjured in flight from Stornoway to Liverpool via Glasgow.

### **Beech 36, 1987**

Date: Crashed 4 June 1987  
Location: High Belltrees  
Grid ref: Explorer 341 NS 381584  
Information: Two occupants killed. Flight from Reykjavik to Glasgow.

### **Undated Crashes**

#### **Typhoon**

A Typhoon is reputed to have come down near Beith following a mid-air collision but no other details have emerged. This may have been linked to the Hurricane that crashed at Queenside Hill. Typhoons JR 218 and JR 373 in mid-air collision at Shotts Farm Beith. P/O D Melley and W.O.S.R. Shaw killed. 197 Squadron 24.1.42.

#### **Blenheim or Botha**

There are reports of a crash near Inkerman on an unknown date.

#### **Rapide**

A Rapide is believed to have come to grief on Misty Law Muir. Grid ref. Explorer 341 NS 303612 is quoted, but a search of the probable site has revealed nothing.

Rumour has it that in the area of Kilmacolm a HE 111 aircraft is thought to have come to grief – any details would be welcome.

*Original research and script by Derek Parker, updated by Len Howcutt 2005*