

Lake Naming Competition

The Parish Council are delighted to announce the winning entry for the Charvil Country Park lake names as follows:

Northern Lakes Canberra

Orrell

Haupt

Southern Lake The Heronry

Mr John Baker made these suggestions and also provided the history behind this choice...

Bomber Crash in Charvil

On 27th January 1953 local residents had a narrow escape when a twin jet Canberra light bomber plunged into the side of White Bridge on the Old Bath Road opposite Goodey's Yard, killing the crew of two. The crash caused a crater 25 feet deep by 40 feet across and wreckage was spread up to a quarter of a mile away.

Mr Eric Goodey was standing at the entrance to his yard when he watched the aircraft 'corkscrew' into the ground. Mrs A Pearce, the licensee of the Waggon and Horses, heard the aircraft pass overhead then upon running outside saw the smoke from the crash site.

An inquest was convened at the Almshouses, Twyford on 4th February and one witness, PC Lovegrove who was off duty at the time reported hearing a 'boom' followed immediately by the noise of a jet travelling at speed. From out of the clouds he saw an aircraft in a vertical dive going very fast. Mr Sidney Moreland saw a similar sight and when the aircraft hit the ground he reported seeing a great flame shoot up and the plane blowing to pieces.

The aircraft concerned was a new English Electric Canberra B2 and was collected from the manufacturers just 11 days before the crash. It was based at Abingdon and on the fateful day the crew were Master Pilot Stuart Cardy Orrell, aged 32 and Navigator William Gordon Haupt aged 26. Orrell was an experienced pilot and on this flight there had been no communications to indicate the aircraft was in trouble. The coroner returned a verdict of accidental death due to the disintegration of the plane.

RAF documents give the cause of the accident as obscure; there was no evidence of technical failure and weather conditions good. The pilot was experienced and fit, and this left the Commander-in-Chief with insufficient information to establish a cause and the case closed.

During my research I have been told that this was not the only unexplained crash of a Canberra. Over the years a number of them 'fell out of the sky'. The cause was traced eventually to 'runaway trim' - where the aircraft would suddenly pitch nose down and dive at very high speed into the ground. With hindsight, this would appear to be the most probable cause of the accident in 1953 which could have easily devastated Charvil.

John A Baker

The Parish Council have made approaches to the RAF to see if it was possible to trace relatives of the crew but they are unable to provide information due to data protection laws. We all felt naming the lakes after these airmen and their aircraft was a fitting tribute.