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

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 to Warwick Museum. 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.

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