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## PLANE CRASH AT CROSSMOLINA

Full account of how the townland of Killeen was the scene of a plane crash in 1942.

Cover image:

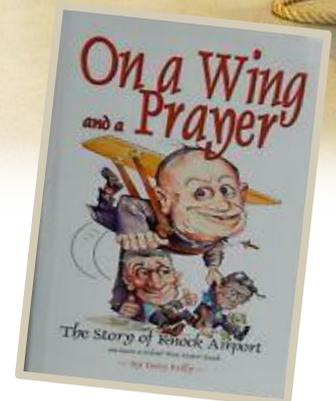
Bristol Blenheim Mark IV, typical of the type that crashed in Crossmolina in 1942.

On display at the Aviation Museum of Finland. (Wikipedia)

## Book of the Week

### ON A WING AND A PRAYER

The full history of a much ridiculed Airport in the West of Ireland, built in the 1980s by a 'simple country priest in a hurry'. The project was derided, called a 'white elephant' and kicked from pillar to post, but Monsignor James Horan's resilience overcame all obstacles, and he saw his dream become a reality just months before he died. His was the first coffin into the Airport which he built against incredible odds.



€15 (+postage)

PLANE CRASH AT CROSSMOLINA



An armed guard was appointed to guard the plane and its wreckage until it was removed ... such was the scene after the impact of the crash in the townland of Killeen, just a few miles south of Crossmolina town.

On Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> March 1942 a low flying aircraft was heard over Killeen, Castlehill and the nearby town of Crossmolina. During World War II it was not unusual for planes to be heard over Ireland but this plane, an RAF, Bristol Type 149, Blenheim IV, B6, had been on a training flight from the Isle of Man when the wireless radio failed and it ran low on fuel through a loss of bearings.<sup>1</sup>

As the plane flew over Crossmolina the pilot looked for places to land but during this time the flat fields had been spiked with wooden stakes by the Local Security Force to prevent enemy planes landing. The plane headed towards Killeen looking for a place to land. A local resident at the time gave his account of the event.

Michael O'Malley was sitting at home by the fire with his two daughters, Claire and Mary, when they heard the distant sound of an approaching aircraft. As the plane got nearer Michael realised, by the sound of the engine, that there was something wrong. The three of them rushed out into the yard. Michael O'Malley was a member of the Local Security Force and he knew that his experience was going to be called upon at this moment.

He knew that the pilot was going to have to land very quickly so as to avoid crashing which would possibly mean the loss of all those on board.

Michael grabbed a white cloth that was hanging on the clothes line and ran over to a stone wall that was bordering a field near the house. He realised that this was the only field where the pilot would have any chance of landing his plane successfully. The pilot had spotted the three people running out of the house. He saw one of them with a white flag and had no choice but to trust this man on the ground.

Michael stood on top of the stone wall waving his flag in the direction of the field behind him. The pilot was now really struggling to keep the plane airborne. He saw the field that he was being directed to and prepared to land.

Unfortunately, he misjudged the height of the stone wall and got his undercarriage caught in it. There was a loud bang as the plane hit the ground. Michael O'Malley and his two daughters ran up to the plane to help the crew.

Two of the officers were injured and the other was suffering from shock. The three men were taken from the plane as quickly as possible.

Claire O'Malley was a member of the Red Cross and now more than ever her skill and expertise were needed. The two injured officers lost a lot of blood. Claire administered first aid and made the men as comfortable as possible. It was not very long before help arrived in the form of the Irish army who took control of the situation. The three men were brought immediately to Castlebar Hospital for medical attention. An armed guard was appointed to guard the plane and its wreckage until it was removed.

The day after the accident the O'Malley family travelled to Castlebar to see the officers, but the three men were under armed guard at the hospital and nobody was allowed to visit them. The good wishes of the three men and their gratitude was expressed to the O'Malley family by an RAF senior officer.

A few years later, after the war, the O'Malleys were visited by Wing Commander Begg, who was the senior officer of the RAF pilot and his crew. He expressed his thanks for the bravery and kindness shown to the officers.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>www2irishaviation.com

<sup>2</sup>Plane Crash at Killeen by Vincent Callaghan.

A brief history of the townland of **KILLEEN/KILLINE** (*Cillín*, meaning little church)

Located in the south-east of the parish of Crossmolina. Bounded on the north by Kildavaroge and Prospect; on the east by Cabragh; on the south by Castlehill; and on the west by Sranalaghta South and Ballybrinoge. It contains 364 acres, 1 rood, 14 perches\*, including 1 acre, 2 roods, 14 perches\* of water. It is Bishop Land. The property of Lewis O'Donnell, Esq. Agent, Mr. Thomas Gallagher, Errew. Held by tenants at will at the yearly rent of 25 shillings per acre. Soil, gravelly clay, producing good crops of oats, potatoes, flax and rye. Houses are of stone, and the inhabitants are seemingly comfortable. In the south-east of the townland are two wells, Tober coghlan and Tober tiernaun. There are several portions of bog in the townland.

\* There are 40 perches in a rood, and 4 roods in an acre.

Extract from Ordnance Survey Namebooks of 1838

**Did you know:**  
St. Tiernan's well is located in the townland of Killeen.

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Sample of a hard-bound family history report