



George Travers, younger brother of Corporal Ernest Travers who was killed in the friendly fire accident, and his nephew Ernest Travers by the memorial plaque at Warminster.

Memorial to Army Personnel killed in Friendly Fire 1942

A memorial to Army personnel killed by a Hurricane fighter during a Second World War demo on Salisbury Plain in 1942 was unveiled on Friday.

The event marked the 70th anniversary of the 1942 tragedy, in which a pilot opened fire on spectators in Imber after mistaking them for targets, killing 25 and injuring 71.

Among those attending the ceremony in Warminster Garrison Church was George Travers, the younger brother of Corporal Ernest Travers, one of the men who was killed.

Wiltshire Historical Military Society funded the memorial, which was unveiled by The Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire Sarah Troughton, with local MP Andrew Murrison among the congregation.

Society secretary Rod Priddle said: "It was great that the family of one of the men who died could make it, and they came all the way from County Durham. The body was repatriated to them of course so he has a grave, but they said that until now there has been no real memorial commemorating this tragedy."

The tragedy occurred during a demonstration of fighter aircraft making low-level attacks on dummy soldiers and stationary Army vehicles.

The exercise was led by Spitfires of No. 234 Squadron, which made their pass without firing. They were followed by six Hurricanes of No. 175 Squadron.

The first five of these engaged the target area but the pilot of the sixth aircraft mistook the spectators for the target and opened fire on his approach.

On the day of the demo the weather over the target was fine but hazy, making visibility poor when looking into the sun.

An inquiry also found that the spectators' area had not been properly marked out with chalk boundaries, and that pilots had been told to fire blind if unable to locate the targets.

Three days after the tragedy Prime Minister Winston Churchill visited to witness a similar demonstration.

The inexperienced 20-year-old American pilot, Sergeant William McLachlan, was shot down over the Channel during a night-time raid only a few weeks later.

“We are very pleased we did it,” added Mr. Priddle.

“It is what the society was created to do, to find and remember Wiltshire’s many forgotten military sites and the things which happened there.

“This terrible incident resulted in considerable loss of life, and with this memorial they won’t be forgotten.”



Original article by Will Frampton

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