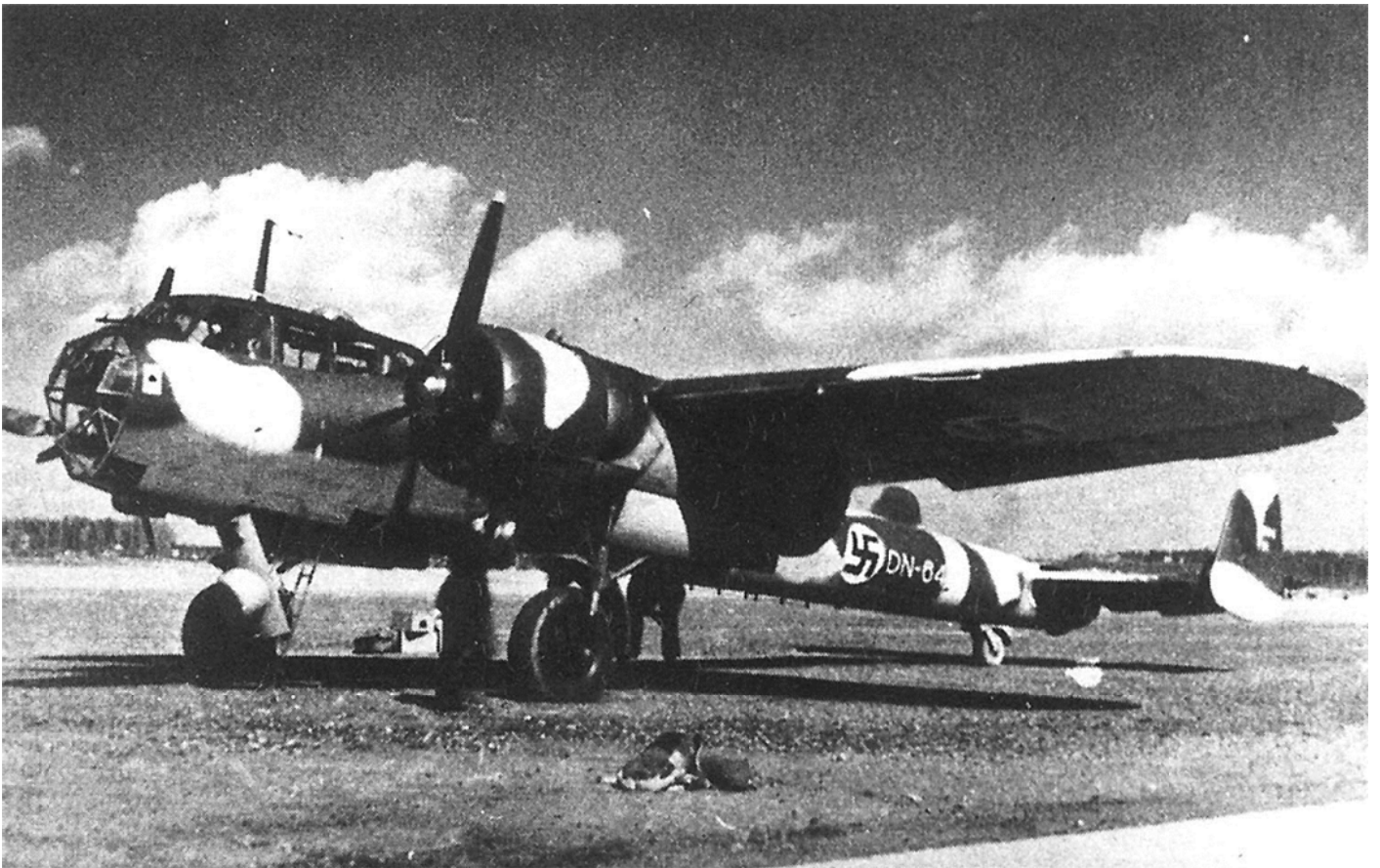




# Two Luftwaffe pilots are buried in Old Catton in 1940



A Dornier Do 17Z similar to the one shot down over the Norfolk coast in 1940

This is the little known account of two German pilots who were quietly buried in St Margaret's Church in Old Catton in the early days of the Second World War.



On the 21<sup>st</sup> August 1940, a Dornier Do 17Z-3 medium bomber from Number 6 Staffel (Squadron) of Kampfgeschwader (Bomber Group) 3 was one of a formation of three raiders which targetted East Anglia that day. The bombers were attacked by three Spitfires from 611 Squadron, RAF Digby in Lincolnshire. One of the Dorniers was shot down over Burnham Market, North Norfolk. It crashed into the sea off Scolt Head, Brancaster at 12.35.

The four-man crew of the Dornier were all killed in the crash. Heinrich Kascher (Air Gunner) was washed ashore at Brancaster two days later on the 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1940. He was buried on the 29<sup>th</sup> August 1940 in St Mary's Church, Great Bircham.

The other three crew men were found at varying points around the Norfolk coast. Oberfw. E. Kotulla was recovered from the shore and buried in the Holy Trinity Churchyard at West Runton. Pilot Oberfw. W. Stolle and Observer Lt. H. Kruger were washed ashore and buried in St Margaret's Churchyard in Old Catton.

It is not clear exactly when or where the last three pilots were recovered, but it is assumed that they were found some distance from the original crash site and at a later date. As such they would have been buried in the nearest cemetery with a service connection.



**The burial of Oberfw. W. Stolle and Lt. H. Kruger in St Margaret's Church, Old Catton**

Oberfw. W. Stolle and Lt. H. Kruger were buried in the Graveyard of St Margaret's Church, Old Catton, on the 27<sup>th</sup> August 1940.



**The burial of Oberfw. W. Stolle and Lt. H. Kruger in St Margaret's Church, Old Catton**

After the war, a policy was imposed that any graves of German servicemen buried in the UK should be moved to the Soldatenfriedhof German War Cemetery at Cannock Chase in Staffordshire, unless they had already been buried in a war graves plot under the control of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. This would ensure that German war graves could be looked after by the German government, who still pay the CWGC to do this work on their behalf today.

Oberfw. Stolle's and Lt. Kruger's remains were exhumed from Old Catton and reburied at Cannock Chase. The date they were moved from Old Catton is not known.

Our sincere thanks go to Mr Mike Godfrey for contacting us about this story and providing us with the burial photograph. His father was the Sergeant in the middle of the photograph on the previous page and he was in command of the Route Lining Party outside St Margaret's Church.

We are also very grateful to Mr Brian Hillman for his assistance in proving the background information to this account.