

Bob Collis attended the Annual Meeting of the Parish in May to give a talk on Carlton Colville at war.

It should have been another routine mission but for an American crew from the 8th Air Force's 487th Bomb Group, it was one which was to end in disaster at the site of what was then a field at Grove Farm, or Hadenham's Farm as it was more widely known.

Robert Portsch was born in the Bronx, New York City in 1920 and he lived with his mother Lilian in Bloomfield, New Jersey.

He enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1943, trained as a pilot and was engaged to Jane Chadwell from Nashville, Tennessee. He died aged 24. He is buried in Ridgelawn Cemetery, New Jersey next to his parents.

One of the men who survived the crash, Lt William Ward, felt so strongly that Lt Portsch had saved his life by staying at the controls, he named his first born son in his honour.

Douglas Seavert was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1925 and on joining the Army Air Corps he trained as a radio operator.

He was 19 when the plane crashed in Carlton Colville and is buried at the American Military On March 14 1945, just weeks away from the end of the war in Europe, a formation of B-17 Flying Fortress bombers took off from Lavenham for a bombing mission to Hannover.

But one of the aircraft, piloted by 2nd Lieutenant Robert Portsch, suffered engine failure over Belgium. Unable to keep position in the formation, they had to abort the mission and return across the North Sea.

The crew were in sight of Suffolk coast, when smoke began to stream from the engine. Then, suddenly, it exploded. Lt Portsch gave the order to bail out but bravely stayed with the plane until the last minute. Tragically, he left it too late. He died along with Staff Sergeant Douglas Seavert the B-17's radio operator, whose parachute was torn apart on the tail as he jumped.

Two roads on the Carlton Colville Dales estate are named after the airmen.