Melbourne, Derbyshire is Bombed 11th July 1940



Print of the water colour painted by Jane Smith depicting the chaos and confusion in Melbourne after the bombing.

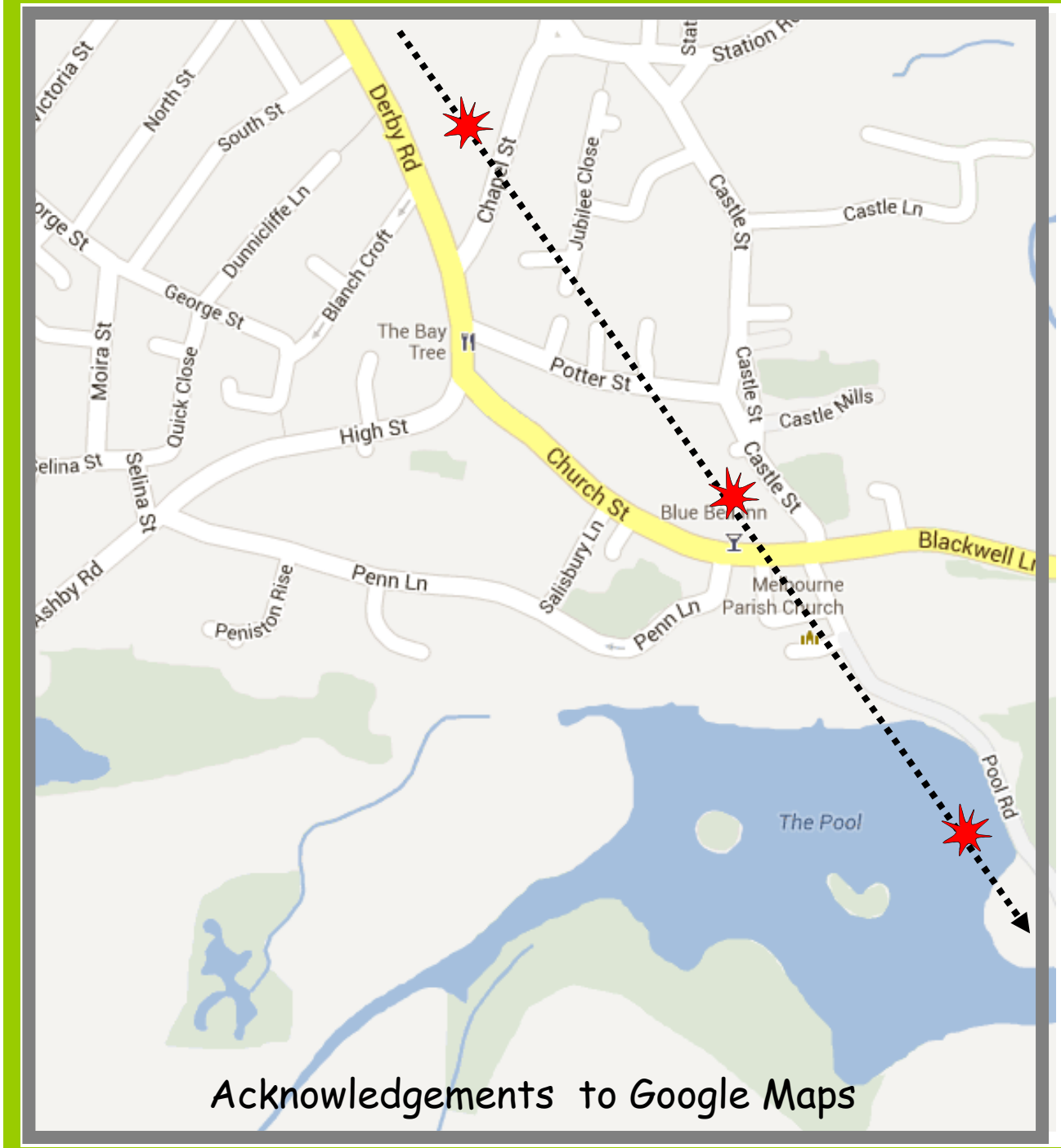
The Bombing of Melbourne

At approximately 7.45 am, 11th June 1940, a lone Nazi bomber approached Melbourne from the north-west and dropped three bombs.

My mother, her sister and a friend were walking to work along Derby Road and at the point where the old Chapel stands, they heard an aeroplane, a whistling sound and explosions. The force of one explosion knocked my mother's sister to the ground and both my mother and her friend lay down on the ground to take cover as the public had been advised in the case of air raids.

The first bomb fell on an old mill, the second hit a house and the encampment of some Royal Engineer soldiers and the third fell into Melbourne Pool.

There is little information detailing the event. The bomber was probably trying to find and bomb the Rolls Royce factory at Derby. It is not clear if the bomber was shot down. The RAF report attacking a German bomber crossing the Channel as it returned to France but are not sure if his was the same bomber that dropped its bombs on Melbourne.



Acknowledgements to Google Maps

Positions Hit by the Bombs

The first bomb struck an old mill just behind the 'One Off' on Derby Road.

The second bomb hit the soldiers' encampment near Castle Street.

The third bomb fell into Melbourne Pool



The first bomb hit the old mill behind what must have been the mill's boiler house and is now occupied by the 'One Off'.

Photograph courtesy of David Maynard



The second bomb struck a house and soldiers' encampment. It killed nine Royal Engineer soldiers that were camped near to the site that is now a bowling green.

Photograph courtesy of David Maynard



The third bomb fell into Melbourne Pool killing, I believe, some of the fish. The Rolls Royce tool-room had a huge glass roof that was camouflaged to look like Melbourne Pool, so perhaps, the pilot thought that he had hit this vitally important target.

Photograph courtesy of David Maynard



The graves of eight of eight of the soldiers can be seen in Melbourne cemetery. The ninth soldier was, I think, cremated in his home town.

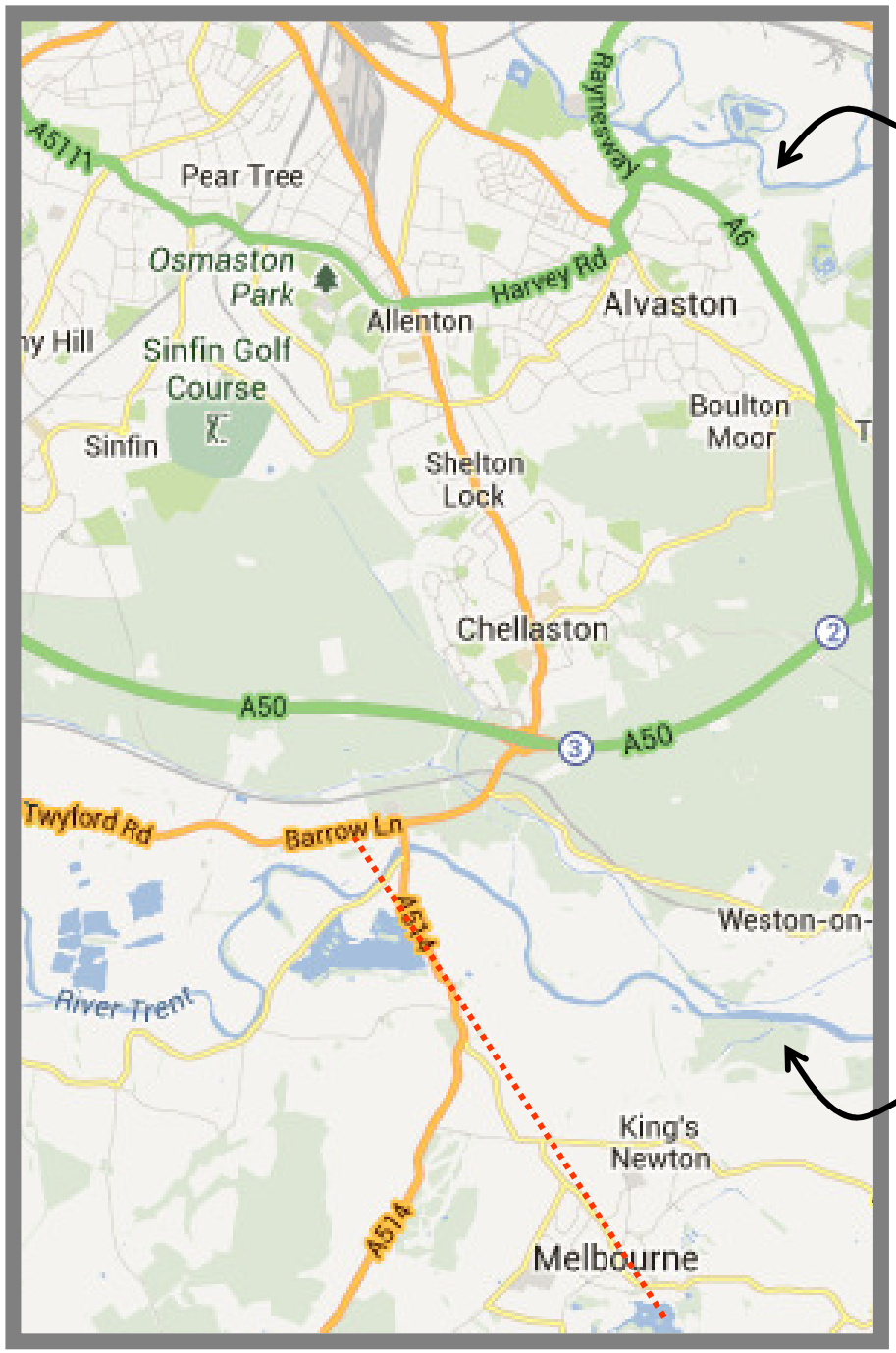
Speculation

There is little evidence to support any particular reason for the bombing. The Battle of Britain had not really started and the *Luftwaffe* did not begin to attack inland targets until August so what was the mission of this lone bomber flying over the East Midlands in daylight?

Most likely, it was hoping to find and bomb the Rolls Royce factory at Derby. If this was the case, then a good way to locate Derby would have been to follow the River Derwent which would have taken the bomber almost to Rolls Royce.

If the pilot had intended to do this and somehow confused the River Derwent with the River Trent then it's quite conceivable that the old mill might have been mistaken for Rolls Royce.

We do not know if the Germans knew that the Rolls Royce tool-room was camouflaged to look like Melbourne Pool. If they did, then the bomb that fell into the Pool would have been a direct hit had the bomber been in the right place.



River Derwent

Notice the similarity of the rivers. If the pilot was using the Derwent as a guide to reach Rolls Royce, it would be so easy to confuse it with the Trent and then think that the old mill chimney was perhaps Rolls Royce.

There is, however, no evidence to support this possibility.

River Trent

Acknowledgements to Google Maps