

70 years after the crash

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5th September 2013

Exactly 70 years after this tragic event, on 4th September 2013 a crowd of about 150 invited guests gathered in Stadil Marsh Memorial Grove, West Jutland, to observe an event, quite unique in Denmark, that of the posthumous award of medals to a crew member and the simultaneous memorial unveiling of a propeller blade from Lancaster EE138 and the crew of 8 (4 RAAF and 4 RAF).

Ole Kamp of Ringkøbing-Skjern County welcomed the guests and following the Danish National Anthem, "Der er et yndigt land", he then invited Wing Commander Anthony O'Leary RAAF, Defence Attaché, Embassy of Australia to give an address giving the background for the decision to make the posthumous award.

H.E. Ambassador of Australia to Denmark Damien Miller then spoke on behalf of the Australian Government and laid the medals, placed symbolically next to Flying Officer Sidney M Forrester's name, as inscribed on the original Memorial Stone.

RAF Sergeant Scott Cuthbertson, representing the UK Chief of Defence Staff, gave an account of the post-war recovery attempts in 1947 and 1948, which in difficult circumstances failed to free the deep-lying aircraft from marshy ground, with the crew remaining on board their Lancaster for posterity. They are therefore all commemorated on the RAF Missing in Action Runnymede Memorial in Surrey, England.

Anders Andersen and Erling Halkjær, both of Stadil, then spoke and unveiled the propeller blade Memorial, followed by wreath laying on behalf of the Australian and UK Governments and private wreaths laid by relatives. After the solemn and traditional "Last Post" and One Minute's Silence" the British National Anthem, "God Save the Queen" and the Australian, "Advance Australia Fair" ended the ceremonials.

Exactly on cue, two F16s of the Royal Danish Air Force flew twice over Stadil in salute, a poignant moment at the end of a very moving ceremony.

The driving forces behind this moving event were the people and Parish of Stadil, in particular Mr Erling Halkjær who has tended the original memorial for many years and Mr Peter Forrester of Adelaide, nephew to the medals recipient, Flying Officer Sidney M Forrester RAAF who has made 5 journeys from Australia to Denmark to achieve all this.

In all some 11 relatives attended from Australia and 4 from the UK. It is very fitting that the medals will now remain with the Forrester family as a permanent reminder to the bravery and courage of one of their ancestors.

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