

75th Anniversary Ceremony, RAF 44 (Rhodesia) Squadron Lancaster ED305

The unfailing interest, passion and respect held by De Danske Forsvarsbrødre for Fredericia og Omegn (The Danish Defence Brotherhood for Fredericia and area) for the crew of RAF 44 (Rhodesia) Squadron Lancaster ED305 resulted in another major Memorial Ceremony by the Memorial Stone raised by the Brotherhood at Lyngsodde, near Fredericia, Denmark.

Five years to the day from the 70th anniversary on 10th March 2013, in a *déjà vu* of cold and wet conditions, a crowd of nearly 200 gathered to observe the 75th Anniversary Ceremony. The impressive monument carved in granite permanently commemorates the seven-man crew, shot down into adjoining coastal waters by the combined firepower of a German night fighter and flak vessel on 10th March 1943.

On 10th March 2018 the 75th Anniversary Ceremony was attended by leading representatives of the Danish Defence Brotherhood, from the British and Canadian Embassies, the RAF, the Mayor of Fredericia, CWGC and the Danish Army, Navy and Airforce. Most poignantly, following the formal laying of nine wreaths and three addresses, were the flowers placed by three family descendants travelling from the UK and by local interests.

One of the prime movers behind the Monument and supported by the generosity of many willing sponsors and helpers, a special mention must go to Peer Petersen, Vice Chairman of the Danish Brotherhood who once again organised the ceremony, with accommodation and four-day programme for the British guests.

Other ceremonial highlights included a low flypast in salute by aircraft following the known course of the Lancaster, a 40-round salute fired by the Home Guard Patrol Vessel "Speditøren" (named after a Danish Resistance Group) and "Last Post" played excellently (considering the cold weather) by a local trumpeter in full gala uniform.

In the very welcome warmth of the clubhouse provided by the local diving club there was a sandwich lunch with just 50 commemorative bottles of "Imperial Thunderbolts Stout", brewed and donated by Fortress Brewery of Fredericia. Not surprisingly, these excellent crafted beers went very quickly, so bottles were shared with full ones "liberated" as souvenirs.

Just to prove The Danish Brotherhood in Fredericia think of everything, each guest also received a specially minted boxed commemorative coin to mark the occasion.

Following the reception, a six-car convoy of selected guests left to board MHV 909 "Speditøren" for a very privileged cruise over the exact resting place of the

Lancaster. Under autopilot, the ship was powered but motionless in the strong current whilst the Danish Ensign was dipped in honour from the stern. The Captain ordered "caps off" and Laurence Binyon's immortal lines beginning "They shall grow not old...." preceded the casting of red roses over the watery grave.

It is to the great credit of all involved, not least the Mayor and people of Fredericia Town, that the area around the stone has been gifted, paved with granite sets and the whole area made into an attractive recreational area so that younger generations to come will remember these brave men in future.

Sadly the crew have "No Known Grave" and in these circumstances the Commonwealth War Graves Commission commemorate these brave men by name on the RAF Runnymede Memorial and www.cwgc.org

As always, their joint youthful responsibility for an aircraft at war and seven lives is very humbling.

They are:

Sgt Brian Thomas Campbell Smith (aged 21) Service Number 133504

Sgt Gordon Ronald Black RCAF (age not known) R/75540

Flying Officer Robert Henry Carr (age 22) 127260

Sgt Charles Henry David Cook (age 26) 1387411

Sgt Geoffrey Spencer Love (age 22) 1290988

Sgt Charles Victor Brown (age 22) 1192773

Sgt Alfred Healey (age 24) 1130063

Honoured be their names and deeds.

Bob Cobley

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