

# Dagbladet Ringkøbing-Skjern, September 5th 2013

## Danish local daily paper

English translation by Mrs Grete Møllerhøj, Stadil.

### Propeller blade turned back home to the grave in Stadil

**Memorial Service.** After 45 years in the possession of Anders N. Andersen the Lancaster propeller yesterday was placed at the fliers' grave in Stadil.

By Lars Kryger

**Stadil:** For 45 years it has been a 40 kilo heavy and 185 cm long souvenir for Anders N Andersen. He brought it from Stadil when he as a young man moved to Aarhus to study, and he took it further on to Aalborg when he was employed by the university there.

But two years ago the lecturer at university decided to let the propeller turn back to his childhood's Stadil. He contacted Helge Frederiksen, retired manager of the E. A. C., and suggested that they let the propeller blade put up as a memorial at the fliers' grave in Stadil. It was exactly here that in 1948 at the age of 15 Helge Frederiksen had salvaged the big plane part from the crash site at Stadiløvej. Here an allied Lancaster bomber had been shot down in 1943 and had taken its crew of eight men into the then forest of reeds. Helge Frederiksen had kept the propeller until he left Stadil, and his father, the vicar of Stadil, gave it to the son of the grocer Anders.

This is the story about the two Stadil boys who share a common fate due to a propeller, and Anders N. Andersen told it in English yesterday at the Commemoration day 70 years after the crash. Because of illness Helge Frederiksen could not attend, but his story was told in Danish by Erling Halkjær from Stadil, who has participated in the work of preparing the propeller for raising at the grave.

By his side Anders N. Andersen had his mother Maren Andersen who still lives in Stadil.

"From the living room window I could follow the luminous plane going south. It flew very low, and there was a great flame of light behind it. Suddenly the plane was gone and everything became silent," she told.

### Thank you to Stadil

The Commemoration yesterday was witnessed by up to 150 guests - among others the Australian Ambassador Mr. Damien Miller, Wing commander from the Australian Air Force Anthony O'Leary as well as Assistant Defence Attaché Royal Air Force Sergeant Scott Cuthbertson. In their speeches they expressed gratitude to people in Stadil for keeping the grave of the four Australian and four British airmen so beautiful.

Also parallels were drawn to Australia's, Great Britain's, and Denmark's common fight for freedom and western values to the fight against terrorism.

"These are three countries collectively doing the right thing," O'Leary said sending the thoughts of many people in the direction of Syria, where President Obama too talks about "doing the right thing".

Yesterday's commemoration in Stadil was the fourth since 2008 - and the commemoration with which the uniformed representatives of Australia and Great Britain laying their wreaths impress and move, each time also yesterday.

Attending was 90 years old Jessie Bowler who is the widow after the Lancaster's Top gunner Ernest Thirkettle. She too lay a wreath again on to which was attached the photo of her and Ernie.

Jessie Bowler visited Stadil for the third time. She has developed a friendship with Else and Erling Halkjær who visited her twice in Brighton.

Also new faces were to be seen yesterday in Stadil. Graham Longmore, vicar in Belfast in Northern Ireland, attended being the nephew of Ernest Thirkettle:

"My grandmother never recovered from the loss of her son Ernest. Therefore I long ago promised myself to go over here and visit the grave. And I hope that my children will carry on the tradition and visit Stadil. We are grateful the people in Stadil are still taking care of the site. My uncle and the others made a difference. If the Germans had not been defeated, what would the world have looked like?" Graham Longmore said.

Also Jeanie and Chris Woobey were for the first time in Denmark. Chris's mother's father is RAF Sergeant Arthur Rolfe who was 36 years old when he met death in Stadil, leaving his wife and three daughters at home in Leeds.

"My mother and we only knew that Grandfather had fallen on a field in Denmark. But where we did not know until we got in contact with Peter Forrester (from the Relatives group, editor)", Chris Woobey told, who commented the ceremony as being very emotional.

"My mother was the middle one of Arthur's daughters, and she surely remembers her father. She has told us that he sat back home with a deck of cards on which the lines of a plane were drawn. He was the rear gunner, you know, so he had to learn how to distinguish between the different types of planes - this is what he was practicing," Chris Woobey said.

Karen and Mark Forrester had travelled all the way to Stadil from their cattle station in Western Australia. Mark is the grand cousin of Pilot Sidney Forrester from the Lancaster - and is combining the visit to Stadil with a tour to Germany and England. Forrester's cattle station is 3.300.000 acres equivalent to one third of the area of Denmark. Here he has 7500 organic beef cattle meant for beef production for the home market.

"I shall combine the ceremony here at Sidney's grave with a visit to some Danish farms. And I can see that the soil here is very fertile," Mark Forrester said. He also thanked Stadil for the caring of the grave.

After the commemoration coffee was served in the Stadil hall where the Relatives group presented gifts to those helping out with the arrangement.

Anders N. Andersen too had a present and in his speech expressed his own special thanks to the fallen fliers on the field of Stadil:

"My mother stood watching the plane crash, and it flew low above the farm. If the pilots had not kept it in the air until it was free of the houses, I might not have been here today..."

Subtitles under the photos from left to right:

1. Two F-16 aircrafts from the Danish Air Force roared above the memorial site as a salute to the fallen fliers.
2. Chris and Jeanie Woobey at the memorial plaque which has now got a photo of Chris's mother's father RAF Sergeant Arthur Rolfe. When the plaque was raised in 2008, the Relatives group was not in possession of any photo.
3. Graham Longmore, middle, is the nephew of top gunner Ernest Thirkettle, who was married to Jessie, right. Left is Jessie's daughter Amanda.
4. Peter Forrester from Adelaide, Australia was handed over the service medals which his uncle RAAF Pilot Sidney Forrester were granted posthumously. RAAF Wing Commander Anthony O'Leary presented the medals.
5. Karen Forrester and Jo Forrester from Australia talking to Bent Anthonisen, Ringkøbing.
6. Anders N. Andersen told the story of the propeller, his mother Maren Andersen, Stadil, being at his side.

Big photo: Erling Halkjær and Anders N. Andersen having unveiled the propeller mounted on a granite pillar on the grave.