

Speech given on September 4th 2013 at Lancaster EE138 crash site Stadil, Denmark by:

Mr. Erling Halkjær

This speech is the English translation of the story told in Danish by Mr. Erling Halkjær of the recovery of the propeller blade from Lancaster EE138 by Mr. Helge Frederiksen.

Helge Frederiksen's story of the propeller blade found in 1948

"When my father a couple of years after the Liberation acquired the position as Vicar for the Stadil Parish I was a boy of 15 years who already twice during the war had had the experience of watching RAF planes being shot down.

When I therefore heard about the Lancaster which had been shot down just few miles from the place where we lived in Stadil, I was keen to see the place which was located at a very wet area close to Farmer Ingemann Halkjaer.

At the time when I first visited the crash area still a lot of smaller parts from the airplane could be seen spread over the area while a few bigger items buried in the ground, but partly visible could be observed. Everything else had disappeared in the very muddy area and oil was noticeable on the water surrounding the place. A typical oil/fuel smell was noticed when small bubbles reached the water surface.

Of course it was a strong and sad experience to stand there knowing that several brave air-men had lost their lives here in their fight to liberate Europe from the Germans and to be left here so far away from their loved ones and Home Countries.

I was a keen angler and used my long Waders when investigating the very wet area to see if I could find other items from the plane. During one of these excursions I discovered the end tip of a propeller blade and I decided that I would try to have it recovered if at all possible. .

However, shortly after the area was fenced in, and some people, who obviously had been engaged with the aim to recover the wreck started working. A Crane was put up and they tried to lift the visible parts of the plane. But only few smaller items were recovered as the crane was sinking down in the wet area as soon as they tried to pull up and eventually they gave up without result.

Not knowing if other people would come to continue the job of recovering I decided to do my own modest recovering job, and after difficult digging and pulling I finally got the propeller blade up and with the permission of Ingemann Halkjaer I transported the blade to my home on top of my new bicycle which unfortunately got some bad scratches in the process. It was about 3 Miles across difficult field area but finally I reached home.

The Blade was then placed in my room nicely decorated by a RAF flag I had received from one of the Royal Air Force soldiers who came to Denmark after the Liberation.

Time went by and I was now working in West Africa for a Danish Company and when my father reached the time to go on pension my parents presented the blade to Anders Andersen who had shown much interest in the blade when visiting my parents."

Two or three years ago Anders N. Andersen called me, Erling, and told that he was the man having the propeller blade. We found Helge Frederiksen who lives North of Copenhagen. Anders never met him, and I had not seen him since 1947 or 1948.

Anders thought that the propeller should be placed at the Memorial site. Very soon Helge agreed with us that this was a good idea. So this we have been preparing during the last two years in cooperation with Peter Forrester from Australia who was very enthusiastic about this. Unfortunately Helge will not be coming for the unveiling as he is no longer quite well.

At the end Helge writes:

It is to be remembered that it was Ingemann Halkjær who took the initiative to raising a Memorial stone, and he formed a committee together with my father, who was vicar in Stadil, and Aksel Kolby being the head of the parish council.

They started a local collection in Stadil. They were young girls from Stadil who went to collect for the monument.

On May 5th 1950 a Memorial stone was unveiled in honour of the fallen fliers and to great pleasure and gratitude of the relatives in Australia and England.

Among the relatives we have met some very lovely people.