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

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STADIL MEMORIAL 4 SEP 13

Honoured guests, family members, ladies and gentlemen

First of all I appreciate the invite to attend the ceremony today for the unveiling of the propeller blade from Lancaster EE138 and I am here representing the UK Chief of Defence as the Assistant Defence Attaché based in Denmark.

Before I discuss the 2 failed attempts to recover the EE138 aircraft it is important to highlight how the attempts were started.

In 1944 the Royal Air Force created the Missing Research and Enquiry Service (MRES) with the purpose was to trace the 42,000 personnel who were listed as 'missing, believed killed' in action. The demand was so great that the department was expanded in 1945. These men had no special training and did not have the benefits that modern technology offers today. These men offered a strong desire to bring home those who had not returned. Despite the obstacles the Missing Research and Enquiry Service were able to account for over two thirds of the missing personnel which is a truly remarkable feat. Those found were identified and reinterred in Commonwealth War Graves Commission plots.

The first attempt of recovery was In June 1947 the Royal Air Force Missing Research and Enquiry Service sent the 3 Research and Enquiry Unit which was based at Esbjerg not far from here to attempt recovery of the crew of Lancaster EE138 at nearby Stadil. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 1947 the Investigation Team made an attempt to drain the water hole at the EE138 crash site and to raise the aircraft through the use of a large crane and attempt to recover the bodies of the air crew contained within the fuselage. However, it proved too difficult to extract the plane as it was stuck fast in the mud and the area was described by locals as being like quicksand and the crane began to sink and topple. A burnt torso from the site was exhumed which was then interred in Grave No. 97 in the Churchyard at Svinø and marked as an unknown airman.

In June 1947 the Royal Australian Air Force in London sent official notification to the RAAF Air Board in Melbourne following confirmation of the crash site and Investigation results; as well as information extracted from official German documents confirming the loss of EE138 due to a German Night Fighter attack. Official German documents also revealed that following the crash of EE138 **the Germans recovered two "Mae Wests", the pocket books of Kelaher and Forrester and an identity disc belonging to Walsh**. The pocket books and identity disc were eventually returned via the Red Cross to next of kin in Australia.

Following this failed attempt a second attempt was made in 1948, when the Danish Government gave permission to a scrap metal company from Aarhus to recover the metal from the crash site. Gunnar Jensen the scrap salvage contractor attempted to use a large crane to recover the salvage. According to the records referring back to the earlier attempt in 1947 the wreckage appeared to be located deep in the ground. Gunnar Jensen also found due to the conditions that it was not possible to remove the wreckage and it was not economically viable for him to continue. He did however manage to remove some loose parts closest to the

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aircraft fuselage and some landing parts. After 3 to 4 days work the attempt was cancelled. A report from the Danish police has indicated that a major excavation and simultaneous pumping of water could have improved the chances of extraction of EE138.

Historical records also indicated that the Germans had attempted to raise the remains of the crashed aircraft but they also apparently abandoned it because it was submerged at the crash site.

It is clear from the propeller today that the 2 notches in the blade are indications of the previous unsuccessful attempts in 1947 and 1948 to recover the aircraft. It is most likely these notches in the blade came from the crane's lifting harness but from which attempt we will never know.

I will hand you on to the next speakers on the actual recovery of the propeller but before I do, I am always taken aback with the pride, enthusiasm, dedication and commitment of individuals and organisations not just here for the EE138 memorial but whenever I attend other memorials and Liberation events in Denmark. The efforts of individuals in continuing and keeping the memory of those that have gone before us is so important. We must recognise and remember the individuals that paid the ultimate sacrifice for all of our freedom.

**We must remember them, Vi skal huske dem.**

Finally as an important ongoing focus Mr. Erling Halkjær is here for the unveiling as he is the son of Ingeman Halkjær who helped to arrange with other Stadil residents the installation of the original memorial stone which you will have seen here today.

Thank you and tusen tak.

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