

7 Planes and 49 Aircrew from 77 Squadron

Contribution By Anders Straarup, Denmark.

It was a great pleasure to meet veterans and descendants of veterans at the 77 Squadron Association reunion 2017.

Among the 463 Allied planes and 3,088 Allied airmen shot down over Denmark or Danish waters are 7 planes with 49 airmen of 77 Squadron. 23 of the 49 airmen were buried in Denmark, 4 in Germany, 17 have no known grave, 1 became a prisoner of war, and 4 evaded to Sweden.

Of course names and dates on my website AirmenDK (www.airmen.dk) have to be correct, and I hope they are, but it is also rewarding to meet many kind people.

The **Braund brothers** are still remembered by at least two veterans of 77 Squadron. They were twins and pilots of Halifaxes of this Squadron. On 12th January 1945 **Flight Lieutenant Marwood Paul Braund** and his crew of **Halifax III MZ812** disappeared without trace on a minelaying operation to the Kattegat. They might have crashed into the North Sea west of Rømø, but it is quite uncertain. Then on 15th February 1945 **Flight Lieutenant John Prower Braund** and his crew crashed into the sea south of Zealand

The last of the 7 airmen was found more than 5 months later, and they were buried in 5 different churchyards. **J.P. Braund** was found after 3 months and buried in Skælskør Cemetery. A fine Danish monument from local associations of old soldiers to both of the brothers was unveiled in 1945. Then in 1989 a stone with the inscription Greta Emily Braund 1897-1989, William Powell Braund 1892-1984 was placed here between the headstone and the Danish monument.

On 25th September 2017 I visited the plot and took a photo of it. I visited the office and the parish register said that she had died in England, where she was cremated before her urn was interred in Skælskør on 26th August 1989 - and the stone was placed there. Her husband was not mentioned, so it is a gravestone to her and a memorial stone to him.

Only **Halifax II LW270** crashed on land when the crew had baled out on 24th April 1944. Sadly **Sgt W.H. Loverock** and **F/Sgt P.D. Sykes** landed at sea and drowned, and **Sgt Glyn Jones** had a parachute that failed to open. They are buried in Svinø Churchyard. Every year on 4th May there is a large ceremony here to honour the 62 Commonwealth airmen here, and the 46 American airmen who were taken away from Svinø in 1948 to be buried at home, but 13 of the USAAF airmen are still buried in Europe and the first Allied airman to reach Sweden, **Sgt Donald V. Smith** of the RCAF, was interred here after his death in 1998 according to his wish.

Together at last.

In 2009 the three daughters of **Flying Officer James H. Murray** from **Halifax II LW270** visited Denmark, particularly the farm that their father went to after he landed a few hundred yards from the shore and swam the best he could. Fortunately he was very well received and he and three others of the crew finally evaded to Sweden thanks to the Resistance Movement. **Murray** wrote five pages of memories from World War II. It was very moving to meet his daughters at Svinø.

On 23rd April 1944 **Halifax V LL235 KN-L** crashed into the sea about 200 metres off Tranerødde, the island of Als, Denmark. The rear gunner, **Sgt D.M.M. Harris** was the only one to escape from the burning plane that had been attacked by a German Messerschmitt Bf 110. Two Danes sailed out to **Harris** in a small boat and found him hanging on a pole. They got him up into the boat, but they hit a shoal of sand. One of them carried him ashore on his shoulders. An ambulance was called, but it was stopped by Germans who took him prisoner. He survived the war. The six perished airmen drifted quite far away from the plane. Two were never found and four were buried in three different churchyards.

A memorial stone at the shore was unveiled in 2005, and in 2017 a photo of it was added to the Gallery of 77 Squadron Association as a 77 Squadron Memorial. Every year, on the date of the crash, flowers are laid here by a number of associations and organizations, attended by 30-35 people! In this way we express our gratitude in Denmark.

On 16th February 1944, 891 bombers attacked Berlin. 42 of them were lost due to night fighters, flak-ships and flak-batteries. From **Halifax II LW341** only **Flight Sergeant N.M. Newell** of the RAAF was found washed ashore from the Baltic Sea more than 6 months later. A memorial plaque from the government of Australia was attached to the Danish memorial stone in 1997.

On 30th March 1943 329 planes attacked Berlin and due to difficult weather conditions and bad marking of the target the attack failed. 21 planes were lost. During the bombing on Berlin **Halifax II JB842 KN-E** was attacked by a German night fighter, and near the coast of North Germany.

The plane exploded in the air killing all on board. Four airmen were buried in Berlin and two were never found, but **Sgt J.M. Donald** of the RAF was found in Danish waters and buried in Svinø Churchyard

On Hitler's birthday, 20th April 1943, 339 bombers attacked Stettin and 86 attacked Rostock. 8 Halifaxes, 9 Stirlings and 13 Lancasters were lost, 20 of them over Denmark. **Halifax II HR 714 KN-K** crashed into the tidal area near Mandø. All on board perished. 37 allied airmen of the attack were buried in Esbjerg on 30th April 1943 at the greatest interment of allied airmen during the occupation of Denmark. A German army chaplain took part in the ceremony, and wreaths were laid from the German Wehrmacht and the Town Council of Esbjerg.