

They paid the highest price

By Warrant Officer RDAF (Rtd) later 1. Lieutenant RDAF Home Guard (Rtd.) N.M. Schaiffel-Nielsen



Pilot Officer Keith George Tennent, born in Rockhampton, Queensland, 22. May 1922, not married. He did 22 tours over occupied Europe before being killed by a German night fighter near Hoegsholt in the morning of the 27. August 1944.

In August 1944 the Bomber Command had decided to launch an attack on the capital of East Prussia, Königsberg. In the afternoon of the 26th of August there were briefings of the crews of the Lancaster bombers in the briefing rooms of Wad-

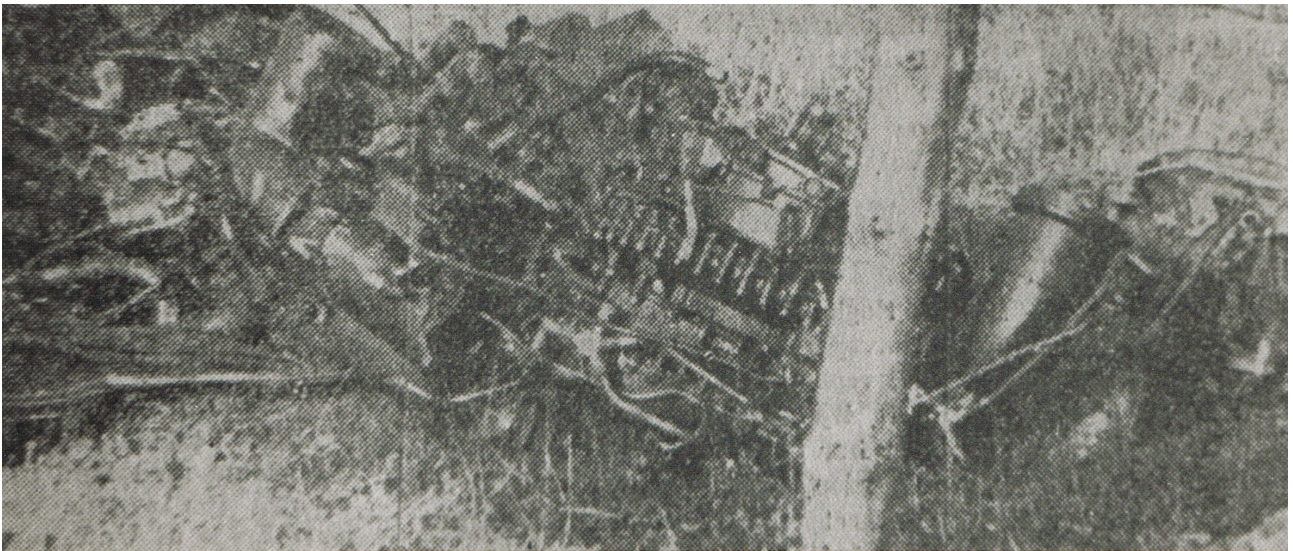
dington, Conningsby and other airfields.

The Pathfinders of the 97. Squadron of Waddington should to go in first and mark the target with their T.I.'s. 105 Avro Lancaster's took part in the attack. Between 5 and 6

p.m. the Merlin engines of the bombers came alive. One by one they took off and formed the armada which set course for the west coast of Jutland in very low level to avoid the German radar. Just before reaching the coast they climbed to about 10.000 ft, flow to avoid the German Anti-aircraft artillery. By Hvide Sande they sat course for Ystad in Sweden and from here directly against Königsberg. The Pathfinders had hit up the target with their T.I. s. The aircrafts dropped their bombs. Happy to be through, the crew of Lancaster PB 292 manned with Squadron Leader A.S. Perkins, DFC, Flight Lieutenant W.E. Few, DFC, Flight Lieutenant J.V. Overran, Pilot Officer K.G. Tenant, Flight Sergeant Y.E. Page, Flight Sergeant B. Smith and Flight Sergeant A. Howard, set course to follow the same route back to England.

Over the east coast of Jutland PB 292 was attacked by a Luftwaffe Messerschmitt Bf 110 and shot down. The Squadron Leader Jim Verran and the bomb aimer R. Page managed to bail out. The other five were killed by the fire from the Messerschmitt.

The five bodies were collected by the Germans in a field which belonged to Svend Guldborg who owned the farm "Hoegsholtgaard". He told that the Germans left them there from the Sunday morning they were shot down until Friday afternoon which caused a great harm among the Danish popu-



Part of one of the four Merlin Engines after the crash.

lation in the area. They wanted to bury the dead in the Hover cemetery. Instead colonel E. Kauss decided that they were to be buried in the soil of the air-

field at Vandel near farm number 33 in unconsecrated ground and with no cross. After the war the German surrender they were forced to set a

cross on the grave. This was changed by the Danes shortly after. When the graves were found again after the war, the Vicar of Randboel Immanuel



Crew of a Lancaster: From left, navigator Terry Higgins, wireless operator Tony Hallett, flight engineer Tom Pitt, pilot Thomas "Tom" William Noon, mid upper gunner Eric Douglas and tail gunner Pat Harvey.



This photograph of the intire crew of No. 83 Squadron was taken before 26. August 1944. The picture was given to me by Tom during one of his visits to Randboeldal in the 1980's.



A blow up of the upper picture showing in the upper row, as number three from the left, Pilot Of- ficer Keith Tennent. In the first row as number two from the right Squadron Leader Jim Verran.



Two Danish soldiers of the Army standing as guard of Honor at the first remembrance service on the 4. og May 1946. The total strength of soldiers of the Air Station in those days was only six.



Two of the local societies was represented by the flags.



On the 4. May 1946 the first memorial service was held at Air Station Vandel with and the population from all the local villages were present.



After the German surrender on the 5. May 1945 the Germans was forced to put this black cross with the inscription "Here rests five unknown British Airmen fallen on th 27.8.44" on the grave. The grave was placed near to an air cover near the farm with the German number 33.

Thisted together with sports clubs, retired soldiers union, the 2., 10. and 27. Battalions together with the 1. and 3. regiment together with many others raised 7.183,08 Danish Crowns, a fortune in those days, for a headstone for the fallen on the Randboel cemetery.

The funeral

On the 6th. of September 1946 they were moved from the grave at RDAF Vandel to the cemetery of Randboel. On the 9th. they were reburied. Reverent Emanuel Thisted preach over the words in the bible, Belief until death, and I will give you the wreath of victory.

13 clubs and unions were present with their flags. More than 300 guests were invited.



The local population lead by the Reverent Father Emanuel Thisted did not like the black German cross and it was replaced by a white cross with a Danish text.

As it can be seen on the following pages a lot of dignitaries from RAF and the Danish Forces and the civilian community attended the funeral represented with their flags. More than 300 guests took part in the ceremony. A squad from RDAF Vandel under command of senior lieutenant J.G. Bergh stood guard of honor. RAF and the British Army were represented by Wing Commander Brindsen, Squadron leader



Reverent Emanuel Thisted at the funeral at the Randboel Cemetery.



Map of the operation in the night btw. 26. and 27. of August 1944. The night Keith was on what should be his last mission. I have learn learnt 175 bombers took part in the raid against Königsberg that night and not as assumed at first 105. The total losses that night were 15 bombers.



Chief Constable of the Vejle Police District, Mr. Schmidt

will give you the victory garland of life.

On Sunday the 31st. of August 1947, three years after they were shot down, the headstone was unveiled. Many relatives of the fallen were here together with the two survivors and again 300 invited guests. Since the end of World War II service of remembrance of the fallen is held in the church of Randboel in the evening on the 4th. of May.

Low and Captain Hardinges. Local dignitaries such as, Chief Constable of the city of Vejle, Smith, Commanding Officer of Air Station Vandel, Captain of Horse, C.T. Zeilau, Squadron Leader Low, Mayor of the Vejle County P. Herschend, the Mayor of Vejle Villy Soerensen, the Mayor of Randboel Johannes Bennetsen and many other representatives of the local society.

The Vicar delivered a sermon over the text: Be faithful until death and I



Squadron Leader Low of the Royal Air Force saluting



One of the five been carried to his last resting place.



The two pictures shown gives an idea of the local populations commitment and feeling for the five fallen airmen.



Reference :-
83S/601/313/P.1.

No.83 Squadron
Royal Air Force
COHLINGSBY.
Lincolnshire.

30th. August 1944.

Dear Mr.Tennent,

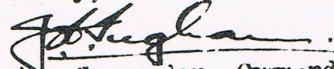
May I express my sympathy and that of my Squadron over the news that your son, Pilot Officer Keith George Tennent has failed to return from an operational flight. He was the Air Gunner of an aircraft detailed to carry out an attack on Konigsberg on the night of 26/27th. August 1944 and from the time of leaving base nothing further has been heard from them.

It is hoped that they may have had an opportunity of baling out or that the aircraft may have force landed in enemy territory. If such is the case, any further news must come from the British Red Cross Society. Should you wish to communicate with them, your son's service number which is AUS.426763, should be quoted.

Since your son came to my Squadron in January of this year he had shown a marked keenness to fight the enemy and on the operational flights which he had completed had shown a coolness and courage that was commendable.

Again please accept my sincere sympathy in your great loss and should there be any further information received I promise to let you know immediately.

Yours sincerely,


Wing Commander, Commanding
No.83 Squadron, R.A.F.

Mr. W.J.Tennent,
Mansfield Street,
Range.
ROCKHAMPTON,
Queensland.
Australia.



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

TELEPHONES:
~~COMMONWEALTH~~ MU.9981

TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS:
"AIRFORCE MELBOURNE."

IN REPLY QUOTE RAAF.166/39/346(16A)

AIR MAIL

Casualty Section,
DEPARTMENT OF AIR,
391 Lit. Collins St.,

MELBOURNE, C.I.

235339

NOV 25 1944

Dear Sir,

I refer to your son, Pilot Officer Keith George Tennent, who is reported missing as a result of air operations on the 27th August, 1944.

Information has now been received from the German authorities through the International Red Cross Committee, Geneva, which states that five unknown members of your son's crew lost their lives, and two members, Flight Lieutenant J.V. Verran and Flight Sergeant Y.E. Page, both of the Royal Air Force are prisoners of war.

As the crew consisted of seven members, I deeply regret that it is probable that your son is one of the five unknown members who have not yet been identified. This fact cannot be established, however, until further information is released by the German authorities and your son will remain classified missing pending receipt of further confirmation of his fate.

In the meantime, I desire to express the sincere sympathy of this Department in the anxiety you are suffering.

Yours faithfully,


(M.C. Langston)
SECRETARY

Mr. W.J. Tennent,
Mansfield Street,
ROCKHAMPTON, Q'ld.



The two pictures from the unveiling of the headstone on the 31. August 1947.

Once again the dignitaries of the Danish Forces and the Vejle County was present in total more than 1.000 persons. This together with the families of the British and the one Scotsman, and The Tennent family



To the left. Captain of the Horse K.C. Zeilau salutes after laying his wreath.



To the right. Group Captain Sadtler laying his wreath in front of the headstone



The parents of Flight Sergeant Bert Smith at the unveiling occasion at the crash site in Hoegsholt near Vejle .



Upper right and the picture above shows members of the community of Hoegsholt and Vejle taking part in the unveiling of the of the memorial stone placed near the field where the Avro Lancaster og No. 97 Squadron crashed in the morning of the 27. of August 1944.



First Lieutenant of he RDAF Home Guard N.M. Schaiffel/Nielsen giving a speech of remembrance of the five killed at Hoegsholt in 1944



Unfortunately we don't know the name of the woman carrying the Australian flag

The memorial service in Randboel and Vandel

The memorial service in remembrance of the five fallen airmen from Australia, Great Britain and Scotland is planned and carried out by the 4th. Of May committee.

The committee meets every year in the night of the last Thursday of October.

The agenda is the same every four year.

The members of the committee are to decide who they will ask to preach, who they want to make the speech, who is responsible for the trumpeter and who is responsible to order the wreathes.

Every fifth year the agenda is different why we invite a representative from the British Embassy, see the letter next page, and all members of the committee is represented by their flags with Lieutenants of the colour and escort to the colour.

The RDAF is represented by the CO of the RDAF Flying School at Helicopter Wing Karup, or his representative..

Guards with torches will guard the graveside, and as the end of the wreath laying a trumpeter will play the Last Post, followed by the command, Lower the flag! Which end the ceremony on the cemetery.

Afterwards all who wants to participate drive to the continuation school at Vandel.

After a song coffee is served, and a speaker speak of a subject which is one way or another relates to the occasion.

The evening ends by singing the national hymn, Der er et yndigt land / There is a beautiful country. The translation is not correct, but the best I can come up with.

Every year we enjoy to have a congregation of a hundred to a hundred and thirty taking part in the remembrance service.

We have often been asked, How long can this continue? My answer is, We were badly beaten in 1864 war against the Germans, and we still remember our fallen soldiers, so the answer is, it will last at least another 147 years.



On perfect time, 7.00 p.m. the formation Baby Blue from the RDAF Flying School overflies the graves of the five fallen airmen. The formation is named, Missing man. The number two aircraft from the left is forming a cross against the blue sky.



At the graveside on the 4. May 2011. From left, chairman of the 4. of May Committee, Captain of the RDAF Home guard, Steen Anneberg, retired First Lieutenant of the RDAF Home Guard, and secretary of the 4. of May Committee, Niels M. Schaiffel-Nielsen., the rural dean of the RDAF, Leif Holmstroem followed by the representative of the RDAF Flying School, the society of Brothers in Arms, the society of former members of the Queens Lifeguard, the society of former artillerymen, the society of former member of RDAF, and at last a representative the Home Guard of the Navy and the Army.

Secretary of the 4th. of May Committee
N.M. Schaiffel-Nielsen
Ahornvej 2
7183 Randbøl
75 88 35 53
E-mail nmsn@amil.dk

18. January 2005

To The British Embassy
Kastelvej 36-40
2100 København Ø.

Dear Sir.

On behalf of the 4th.of May Committee, this since 1947 has organized a service of remembrance of the four British and one Australian crewmember buried in the Randbøl cemetery? I hereby invite a representative of the RAF to be present at the service of their remembrance on the 4th of May 2005 at 7:30 p.m.

The crewmembers were killed in the night of 27th. of August 1944, when their Lancaster bomber, returning from a raid against Konigsberg in East Prussia, was shot down by a German night fighter above Høgsholt near Vejle.

Two of the seven crewmembers managed to bail out and survived. After laying in the field for five days the bodies of the five killed crewmembers were taken to Air Station Vandel, and buried without any Christian ceremony.

Their last resting place was re-found the day after the German capitulation in 1945.

Money was collected to raise them a headstone as our thanks and honor to them who paid the capital price for our freedom.

On the 9th. of September 1946 they were reburied in the Randbøl cemetery with full military honor, and with members of their families from Great Britain and Australia attending the ceremony together with more than 3 Danes, invited and not invited..

Ever since, on the 4th of May a service of remembrance has taken place.

As mentioned before, the service at remembrance begins at 7:30 p.m. After the service wreaths is laid on the graves by the CO of the RDAF Flying School at RDAF Karup, CO's of the Home Guard and chairmen at different retired soldiers organizations.

Normally more than 100 peoples take part in the service and the following gathering in the village hall in Nørup, where we ask you or your representative to say a few words.

Sincerely

N.M. Schaiffel-Nielsen
First Lieutenant/RDAF Home Guard



Eight colors of the retired soldiers societies in the choir of the church of Randboel. Year 2010.



In the first row to the right, the chairman of the 4. of May committee, captain of the RDAF Home Guard, Steen Anneberg . The representative of Great Britain , Commander Martin Smith, and far right the honorary member of the committee, Arne Mortensen. He was chairman in nearly 40 years.



The color of No. 281. RDAF Home Guard Squadron leaving the church.



Lining up the procession with the colors in front followed by the personnel who is the lay the wreathes.



Leading the procession to the graveside. Year 2010.



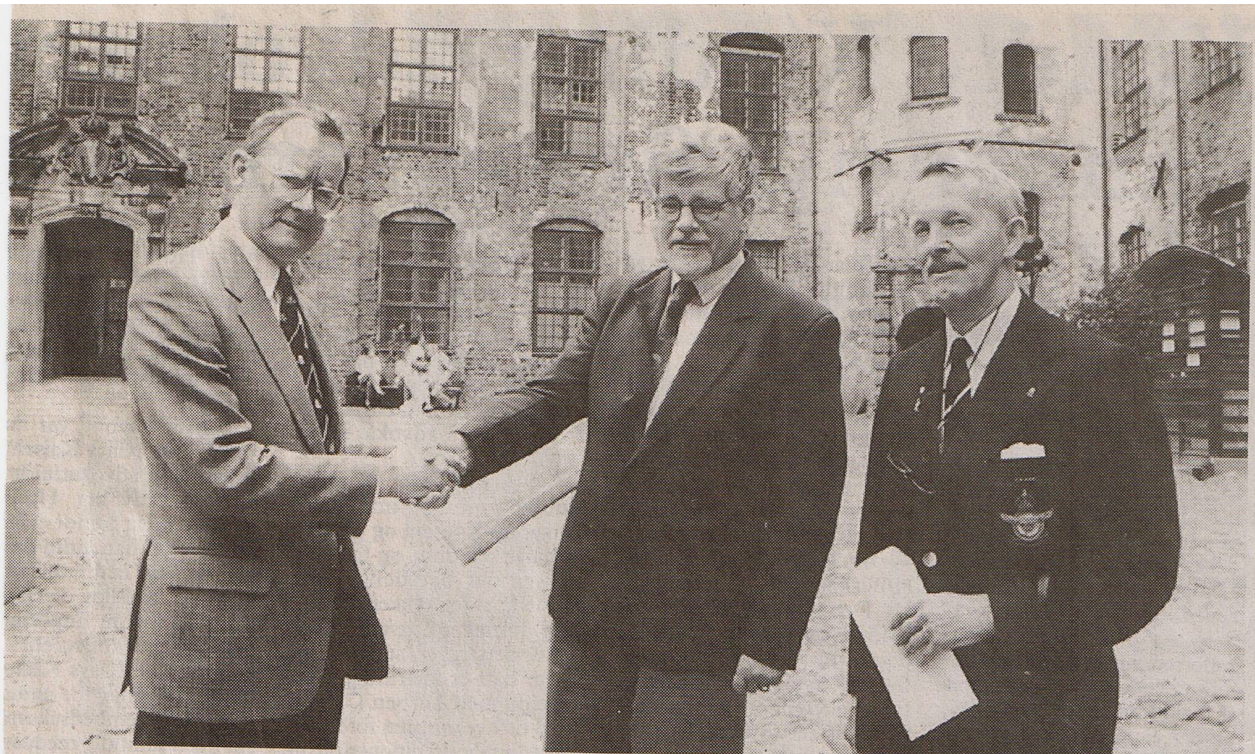
To the left. Commander and British military attaché in Denmark, Martin Smith salutes after laying his countries wreath.

To the right. First Lieutenant of the Army, Steen Moeller Nielsen standing guard at the graveside with his torch.





Upper picture. After the ceremony, the headstone with all the wreaths. Upper left. Retired major RDAF Preben Pete Lauridsen, Commander Smith, the listening audience and in the bottom my wife Sine and me.



*Den australske ambassadør i Danmark, John Burgess, (til venstre) modtager her på Koldinghus et brev, der indeholder den australske krigs-
 hers sidste hilsen. Det overrækkes af journalist Lars Gregers Hansen, mens Ole Kraul (til højre), der sporede flyverens familie i Austr-
 alien, ser til.
 Foto: Jørgen Hjort)*

On the 31. of August 1994 the Australian ambassador, John Burges, visited us here in Randboeldal. He wanted to visit the grave of Keith George Tennent at the Randboel Cemetery. Afterwards we were invited to his reception when he was to leave Denmark.



In the middle of September 1990 a boys dream came true. It is me sitting in the cockpit of one of the two Lancaster's still flying. One in Canada and this one at RAF Conningsby. More than 7.374 Lancasters were built.



The Avro Lancaster III has just landed at Billund Airport. It was planned to overfly the cemetery of Randboel which it never did. It left nearly 200 spectators deeply disappointed.



I had a serious talk with the pilot and his navigator. The reason why they did not overfly Randboel was that OPS at Conningsby had deleted Randboel from the list of targets. They promised me to overfly the church on the next day when leaving Denmark. And as you see, they did, and very low.

Lancaster saluting the fallen warriors buried in the Cemetery of Randboel Denmark

