

### **The RAF-grave at Skarrild churchyard.**

Saturday night on August the 27<sup>th</sup> 1944 a British Lancaster bombe plane crashed in a field at Sdr. Grene near the estate of 'Clasonsborg' two miles south west of Skarrild. The seven men crew was killed in the crash. After the flyers had laid in the aeroplane wreck a couple of days, they were taken to Skarrild churchyard to be buried. It was people from surroundings and Skarrild, who arranged the funeral. In August 1946 the well-known memorial monument was consecrated.



Skarrild, August 27th 1946.

Consecration of the Skarrild RAF Memorial.

In the middle of the photo are seen Mrs. and Mr. Lausen from Clasonsborg. Just behind saluting Wing Commander Brinsden and Group Captain Hawkins. Danish soldiers presenting arms – platoon, guard of honour standing in espalier. It is at the entrance to the church with village houses in the background. Union Jack and Dannebrog at half post.

Skarrild council had a meeting in April 1945. It was shortly before the liberation. At the meeting it was decided, that the council on behalf of the inhabitants in the parish would raise a memorial over the British airmen buried at the churchyard. Liberation and freedom came to us - and the people in Skarrild engaged architects, gardeners and a stonemason to the trusted project - to

establishing and raise a dignified memorial. The RAF memorial was build, and it became finish for consecrating on August the 27<sup>th</sup> 1946, two years after the crash.



**Wing Commander Brinsden - Skarrild 1946.**

Wing Commander Brinsden provided a propeller for the monument in Skarrild from RAF in Germany. In late 1945 at a visit in Skarrild Mr. Christian Alstrup from Esbjerg was accompanied by Squadron Leder Brinsden. He was leder of the RAF research office in Esbjerg. In 1946 Brinsden participated in consecration of the RAF monument in Skarrild as a RAF Wing Commander. Picture above from the ceremony August 27<sup>th</sup> 1946.

### **Memorial service - November 1971. British 'Remembrance Day' in Denmark**

The RAF chaplain, Colonel D.S. Wallace, from Royal Air Force HQ in Germany was preaching, and he characterised the propeller on the RAF-grave as '*The Skarrild-Cross*'. Like other types of known crosses in history the Skarrild-Cross was a reminder about men's courage and self-sacrifice, but it also reminded about bravery among those people in Skarrild, whom, in spite of German occupation powers prohibition, by strong initiative performed a Christian burial of the killed soldiers. And then the fight went on, until Denmark was free. 'The Skarrild-Cross' also spoke of the everlasting friendship between the British and the Danish people.

It was Remembrance Day, but it was also 25 years ago, since the RAF memorial at Skarrild had been consecrated.

### **The propeller on the grave in Skarrild.**

Where did the propeller on the airmen's grave come from? People will often ask about it. And in the past time several explanations have been given and heard.

We can see the propeller on the first pictures taken after the war. It was in August 1946, when the memorial at Skarrild was consecrated.

In different sources it does not say much about from where and when it came. Who stood behind the initiative to place a propeller on the grave? A memorial like this is not seen very often in Denmark. Only one allied grave beside the Skarrild grave has a four bladed propeller. (Nysted, isle of Lolland).

Time went on. Afterwards a lot of people were of that meaning about the propeller that it came from the crashed Lancaster. Others claimed that it was not a Lancaster propeller at all but from a 'Lincoln' the Lancaster successor. The Lincoln was equipped with a four bladed propeller.

Then lately this winter (2003) a letter from October 1945 suddenly showed up at Skarrild Museum. It is an old letter from Christian A. Alstrup living in Esbjerg (1945). He was a friend to Mr. Lausen at Clasonsborg, where our Lancaster had crashed nearby.

In 1945 Mr. Alstrup road a letter to Mrs. W.J. Fingland living in Toronto, Canada. She was widow to one of the killed airmen resting at Skarrild churchyard.

In the letter it says, that Mr. Lausen and the council of Skarrild village wanted to raise a memorial monument at the RAF flyers gravesite. And here the help came from RAF itself.

Squadron Leader Brinsden at the *British research Office* in Esbjerg already had produced a four bladed propeller from the RAF Headquarters in Germany. (From what plane did it come?).

The propeller therefore seemed to have arrived at Esbjerg already in October 1945. RAF officers from Esbjerg had been with Mr. Alstrup visiting Skarrild, where they saw the grave and met some people up here. Mr. Brinsden later became Wing Commander, and he took part in the consecration of the Skarrild Memorial in August 1946.



Finely Mr. Alstrup furthermore promised within short time to take the propeller up to Clasonsborg on one of his trucks. In the meantime after arriving the propeller probably was kept at Clasonsborg until sometimes in 1946 when it was placed on the grave as a part of the memorial. Therefore – from this old letter we now know when and from where the propeller came. And we also know that it was placed on the grave at August the 27<sup>th</sup> 1946.

**Sources:**

Articles, narratives and pictures which are telling about and showing burials, funerals, memorials in Denmark with connection to the world war. In the past a few people have written down memories from events about the airplane

crash at Sdr. Grene. Their conclusions may differ in some way - depending on age and how they remember. And especially – what connection did the person had to the event.

The most reliable report about the Lancaster crash comes from a former policeman in an interview of him in 1970-ties by V. V. Thomsen. His article in a magazine has been used as basic source together with information's from other known reliable reports concerning the Lancaster's last minute in the air, and what was going on in the next few days at Skarrild.

Our local newspapers every day brought news from the war. It was reports given free and under continuous control by the German censure. Only in case of civilian casualties the papers were allowed to write about where an aeroplane crash had happened. Allied attacks on targets in Denmark would be explained by the German press as a form of terror.



Sometimes when several planes had been shot down, the Germans gave further more information's to us. Then it more looked like a victory. But normally the newspaper notes would be: *'a number of allied planes shot down over Jutland. There were no survivors.'* Anyway, old papers still can give many usefully information's, if we want to know more about what was going on when and where.

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# 'The Skarrild Cross'

The Royal Air Force grave, Skarrild - Denmark.



At Skarrild churchyard in 1946 there was raised and consecrated a memorial monument where seven allied airmen from RAF Squadron No. 630 were buried in August 1944.



RAF Sqdn. No. 630.

**Dedication:**

**To the boys who have not been so lucky; who have given all they could give to their countries and for Freedom's sake. Let us never forget them.**



At a later memorial ceremony, November 1971, the propeller on the grave in Skarrild was compared with a cross and named as 'The Skarrild Cross'.