

The RAF Memorial at Tarm - Western Jutland.

Sources: Anders Bjørnvad. Faldne Allierede Flyvere. News Paper: Herning Folkeblad.

A Lancaster RAF bomber had March 13th 1945 been on a mine-laying mission over Kattegat. When the plane was returning towards home base in England, a German night fighter attacked it over western Jutland. The aircraft was damaged and a fire broke out onboard. Five members of the crew managed to bail out and with parachutes they landed safely.

The two last crewmembers, D. Morris and H.J. Potter, were not able to get out of the plane before it crashed in a huge fire in a field some way east of Tarm. Morris and Potter were killed at the same time. It had been difficult and impossible for them to bail out from the burning plane.

During the same night fire fighters managed to rescue the two perished airmen from the aeroplane wreck and took them to the hospital in Tarm.



British airmen's grave at Tarm, year 2003. Headstones and a laying tombstone between.

Next day's afternoon the German military came to the hospital and required the dead bodies. They were put into two big sacks and loaded onto a wagon. The owner of the wagon was forced to do the driving – even if he meant, that it was a rough manner treating dead enemies. In the late hours of the afternoon the Germans made the man drive out to a plantation a way east of Tarm. Out her the soldiers dug a hole in the ground in witch the corpses of the perished flyers were dumped. The hole was levelled with the ground, and the man with the wagon was told to shot up about this macabre funeral. But the event already had been noticed from different sides.

Exactly at the same time as the funeral took place, the church-bell in Tarm started ringing. The Germans considered the time for the ringing being unusually. At once the commanding officer drove over to the church to find out, what was going on? Here he met the sexton serviceman at the churchyard and gave him a proper reprimand and scold him for the ringing at an odd time. But the man clamed, he only was ringing the sun down as usually.

It was a few weeks before our liberation. After a short waiting finally the message about freedom came over BBC-radio in the evening of May 4th. During the same night a man from Tarm walked out

to the grave with the British airmen. Out of some gathered stones he made a square to mark the grave. In the middle of the square he planted two Danish flags and between RAF's colours. In this way the hidden grave was decorated – even before the church-bell in Tarm started ringing for peace in Denmark at five next morning.



British headstones. The RAF graves at Tarm.

Fl/Sgt. Harvey James Porter – Royal Australian Air Force. Sgt. Donald Morris – Royal Air Force.

On the 14th of June 1945 the town council in Tarm decided to give a decent and reasonable piece of land, where a memorial and a grave for the flyers could be established. At the same time the council made the decision and commitment on behalf of the town inhabitants about maintaining the graves in the future. The people in Tarm collected the means for establishing the memorial.

Sunday, August the 12th the two RAF flyers were buried after our Christian customs. About 800 people took part in the funeral and ceremony. Also a platoon of 60 British soldiers participated. Many flowers and wreaths were placed on the grave.

First a hymn was sung. Then the rural dean, P.G. Gadegaard, spoke. In his speech he said: ‘We are in debt of gratitude to the two young men, whom are buried here - also to their country. They are now resting a long way from their loved ones and their homes, but they are resting among friends, who will protect their memory. First the flyers were ‘buried on the spot’ by hands of enemy – without any Christian ceremony. Here we have wished that the young airmen were buried in consecrated soil.’

After the speech the rural dean was blessing the grave. He now declared and pronounced the place with the memorial for holy ground. (The grave is situated outside the local churchyard).

Later the town council chairman, H. Graversen, made a speech where he said: ‘ Our town has erected this memorial, and I shall here request people in Tarm to be the town council helpful in protecting the grave and memorial in the future and always decorate it just like today, such as it can remind with dignity for coming generations.’ Then Mr. Graversen placed a wreath in RAF colours on the grave. Finally Sqdn./Ld. Smart from Vandel Air Base stepped forward and saluted in front of grave and memorial.

The survivors.

The five survivors from the Lancaster crew were shortly after the crash and landing with parachutes taken care of by the local Resistance Movement. The pilot, S/Ldr. Stanley Slater, together with the navigator reached Sweden already on March the 23rd. This quick expedition and saving can tell something about the effective resistance work, escape routes and good connection over Oeresund towards Sweden. Others reached back home in middle of April.

RAF funerals during the war.

In the beginning of the war funerals were taken care of by the Germans. Ceremonies were held after common Christian manners committed by a military vicar. Five big central cemeteries around the country were normally used.

Later during the war the Germans changed the burial praxis after highest orders. Perished allied airmen should after July 1944 be 'buried on the spot', just where their plane had crashed. These orders were followed in Tarm at March 1945.



The tombstone with inscription in Danish.



F/S. Air Gnr. H.J. Porter.



Royal Air Force No. 103 Squadron.

Harvey James Porter * 2.3.1924. † 12.3. 1945.
Donald Morris * 24.11. 1924. † 12.3 1945.

*Royal Australian Air Force / Hands of the enemy laid
them into Danish soil / Friends erected this memorial
/ as thanks without words.*

Tombstone, inscription in English translation.



Sgt. Air Gnr. D. Morris.

In the following years.

In 1961 The British War Graves Commission wished to move the flyers buried in Tarm to 'Gravlunden' cemetery near Esbjerg. After protest from rural dean Gadegaard and Egvad Commune a move was never done.

The maintaining of the memorial and graves was for many years taken care of by the Commune. Later the council of Tarm church took over. It was considered, that a consecrated memorial on holy ground belonged under the church. Since then people from the church faithful have taken care of the place just in the outskirts of Tarm.

The survivors.



S/Ldr. Pilot, S. Slater.



Sgt. F. Eng., K. Foster.



W/Op. Sgt. T. Fairclough.



Air Bomber, M.H. Bertie.



Navigator, S. Mitchell.

Bertie and Mitchell managed to escape up through Jutland to Funder, and at a time they first came to Ikast and later to Herning, where they stayed some days at Mr. A. Balle Petersens house in Noerregade Nr. 54. From Herning the two airmen 2 April went to Ebeltoft, east coast Jutland, by car driven by J. Toldstrup, a well known Jutland resistance leader. For a couple of days they were protected by a Customs Officer named Svend Aa. Ballisager who worked for the Resistance. Then on the night of 5/6 April a fishing boat 'Freden' sailed the two airmen to Sweden. After arriving Goeteborg in Sweden they went to Stockholm by train. From Stockholm they went back to England on a plane at April 15th – were at home on April 16th. (Gail Michener from Canada told about her father S. Mitchell when she was visiting Denmark in June and October 2011).