

### **RAF-grave at Tornby Churchyard. Weapon flyer.**

The night before 12 April 1945 became 'the biggest night' with receiving weapons during the occupation. There were carried out at least 35 missions to Denmark at that night, and there were dropped weapons at 26 places in Jutland, 1 at Funen and 8 on Sealand.

This night Squadron No. 299 lost a Stirling plane, PK229, on its flight from TABLEJAM 149, dropping place 'Jarl' at Holmene west of Fjerritslev. After dropping the weapons the plane must have crashed into the ocean. The whole crew was missed.

The pilot of the plane, F/Lt. William Richard Fortesque Curry, was found on the beach outside Tornby 7 June 1945. At the funeral for Curry local vicar Aksel Jakobsen held a memorial speech for 'the unknown soldier'. In the speech he was saying, that for God the flyer was not unknown. A British 'platoon of honour' under command by an officer was represented at the funeral.

The navigator of the plane, Fl./Sgt. F. Cairns, was also found (9 June). He was buried at Helligsoe churchyard 12 June 1945. The other crewmembers were not found.



Tornby church, August 2004.



Danish memorial stone over RAF weapon flyer. RAF No. 299 Squadron.

### **Burial at Tornby, June 9<sup>th</sup> 1945 — Speech held by the rector, Aksel Jakobsen,**

Grace be with you and peace from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. For the first time we have gathered at the church of Tornby for the burial of one of the victims of the Great War. A lieutenant from the Royal Air Force has met his death in the sea, after the aero plane probably fell down there.

The dead body of the soldier was found on the shore a few days ago and now to day we try to show him the honour and glory, which he certainly has deserved for his dead in the war-service. But we do not know - at least not yet - who the soldier is. An unknown man he is from the camp of our brave deliverers. Neither do we know anything of the disaster that must have happened, and which proved fatal to him. We do not know the sufferings; the soldier came through and has no information of the lot that was bestowed upon his comrades. We suppose that they too must have been lost in the sea. In thought we go back to the airbase from where the plane started. It may be long ago, probably before the armistice came about for our own country. Every time the men gathered to get on the wings, they had an apprehension that now perhaps they should never return more, for it was with their lives at stake that they performed their work to create peace and liberty in the world again, in their own country and in ours.

That realization may be a habit for somebody, but habit does not drive away fear. Any man indeed however courageously and cheerfully he goes to his work, knows the fear of the unknown that meets him, also the fear of death. It will meet all of us to be sure even if it never will meet us in the same way. Thus we think that this Unknown Soldier has felt it, many things bind every man to life, much we are glad of, and much we love. Relations and good friends, home and work, and if it comes to that, all the things that have some value to us. The soldier must fully realize that all of it is hanging by a thin thread and the will of protecting and defending all that we love, makes it a duty for him to join also where there is real danger. This soldier too has been ready to sacrifice everything, sacrifice his life, and if he loved life on earth together with his fellow-creatures, we think that he did it gladly. We have only the hours and years, which God grants us, to sacrifice for others. But in ordinary life it is rarely that everything is put in one lot. And we must be well aware that also the soldier loves his life, he wants too to live long like other people and live fully with the people, he was placed among. Therefore we must not think that it is easier for him to put his life at stake. It has become daily work for him to do so, to be sure; but do you think he can get on with it, if there was not an aim and an object to pursue. We believe that the unknown soldier had such an aim, an aim that was not only to kill other men in a foreign country and to spread death and destruction round about, as we know that every war involves. It may have been the purpose of the war criminals; but the aim of the allied soldier was not this: to destroy and to terrorize. If he realized it, he certainly understood that the fight was fought to make life decent again. A peaceful, free and happy life he fought to win for himself and others who needed his help. Therefore when we at this hour want to honour the soldier who lost his life, then we do not only thank *him* for the courage he displayed in doing his duty; but we thank the whole army of which he was only a small part. *We thank* The Royal Air Force for the contribution it has made! We know that the war should not have got the happy issue it had for the Danish country and people, if R.A.F. had not made its huge contribution. Our thought goes to the soldier's people in England or where in the world they live. We know that they expect to hear news from him and we understand that they will all be brought into mourning when they learn that his life was lost. We thank these people because they were ready to send their young soldier into war-service.

At Tornby there is now a possibility of raising a monument of gratitude on an English soldier's grave. I believe I can promise that such a monument will be raised, and we will do it gladly as a slight expression of all that we owe to our liberators.

But I cannot finish this speech, this speech of death, without reminding of the word of life. We do not refer to a particular providence to lead the course of the war by us. But yet we believe that what we sing in a song is true:

‘All that the fathers have fought, all that the mothers have wept, has the Lord arranged peacefully so that we won our right.’ (From the Norwegian National Hymn by B. Bjoernson.)

The Lord in whose strong hand every man is placed. For it is a true expression of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, that the soldier whom we call unknown and whom we are unable to help, he is *not* unknown by God. On the contrary he is so well known by him, as God knows every man who has going out and his coming in from this time forth and for evermore. He brings his help where we cannot. He gives his comfort, where we despair. He makes living, where we only see death and ruin. Therefore we pray our God and Father on high to rest also the soul of this unknown soldier in his heaven. Amen.

### **Ministry of Defense, London, 1976 (*At Museum of Freedom, Copenhagen*).**

‘Stirling PK 228 Special operation - dropping of containers in Denmark. Crashed in sea... F/Lt. Curry's body recovered from the sea and buried in Tornby Church Cemetery, Denmark. F/Sgt. Cairns (buried Helligsoe Churchyard), F/O Rigby, W/O Hunsdon, F/Sgt. Jones, F/Sgt. Sheen — nothing has been heard to these 4 crew members assumed they lost their lives at sea.’