



Danish Air Force Association

Program and speech by host

Welcome, by Peter Mathiesen, Chairman of the Danish Air Force Association in the border region

It is a great honor for me, as Chairman of the Danish Air Force Association in the border region , to extend a warm welcome to you all at this event.

Just after midnight—exactly 85 years ago, on the night leading into August 20, 1941—a Wellington bomber from the British Royal Air Force (No. 9 Squadron) crashed a few hundred meters southwest of this spot.

The aircraft was returning to its base at Honington in England following a bombing raid on Kiel. All crew members on board lost their lives.

The fallen airmen were:

- Pilot: Sergeant Cecil T. Everitt (23 years old)
- Co-pilot: Sergeant Patrick J. Brady (age unknown)
- Observer: Sergeant Henry B. Johnston (21 years old)
- Wireless Operator: Sergeant Thomas Whalley (21 years old)
- Gunner: Flight Sergeant Thomas Armstrong (20 years old)
- Gunner: Sergeant Herbert E. Temple (age unknown)

The burial of the fallen airmen was conducted by a German military chaplain on August 23, 1941, at Tønder Cemetery, where they still rest today.

A joint Danish-German detachment attended the ceremony, and the burial was conducted with full military honors, with the coffins draped in the Union Jack.

Who are we? The Danish Air Force Association is a fellowship and interest-based organization for all current and former personnel of the Air Force, the Air Force Home Guard, the Army and Navy aviation services, and all other "Air Force blue" units.

Among other things, we strive to ensure that the brave aircrews across Denmark who fought for our freedom are not forgotten—and to see that memorial plaques and stones are erected in locations where they are still missing.

The spot where we stand today is just one of approximately five locations in this border region alone that lack a memorial.

We in the Air Force Veterans' Association have fully funded this memorial plaque ourselves, and we are now seeking funding to erect memorial stones at the other sites in the area.

Some might ask: "Why spend time on this when it happened so long ago?" To that, we would answer that it still falls within living memory! My grandfather, who is 95 years old today, was 10 at the time. He lived here in Højer back then and remembers it vividly—as well as the trip the following day to see the large bomber lying upside down at the water's edge. My grandfather will share his experience in a moment, after which he will have the honor of unveiling the new memorial plaque as one of the very few eyewitnesses still among us today.

We also wish to extend a big thank you to Sluice Master Allan Elneff and Tønder Mayor Jørgen Popp Petersen for their permission and assistance in installing the memorial plaque here at the sluice.

Thank you to all the units and associations participating with their standards today, and a special thank you to the Air Force National Guard for their tremendous effort—without you, this would not have been possible. Thanks also to everyone from the local community for supporting this dedication ceremony to honor the fallen.

And thank you to our colleagues from Air Force Station Skrydstrup, who will later lay a wreath here on behalf of us and the Air Force.

I would like to extend a special thank you to you—and to you, Martin—from the *Reservistenverband der Bundeswehr* and to our neighbors south of the border.

Today, German soldiers from the Bundeswehr are among our closest allies. We collaborate across all sectors—including here in the local area—to support one another and practice for scenarios such as a potential attack on our infrastructure.

In this regard, we rely 100% on cross-border cooperation, just like the Danish-German fire services in the border region. The Reservistenverband was delighted to accept the invitation to participate today and honor the fallen with the same wholehearted commitment that we do. We also acknowledge the fact that the Allies liberated Germany from the Nazis, allowing democracy to return. So, once again: *Danke* for your participation today.

I would also like to highlight Anders Straarup, who runs the website Airmen.dk, where one can find information and stories regarding all Allied plane crashes and fallen airmen in Denmark. Anders and Airmen.dk have been—and will continue to be—an invaluable asset in this historical work.

On the memorial plaque, you will also find a QR code that links directly to the story of this specific crash on Airmen.dk.

Thank you, Kurt Odefey, for playing for us today. On a day like this, nothing could better embody the spirit of the fallen Britons than the sound of the bagpipes from their homeland.

I also bring warm greetings from the assistant British Defence Attaché in Copenhagen, Tom Maddock, as well as from the British Consulate and the Royal Air Force. Unfortunately, he was unable to attend today due to urgent duties related to the current security situation in Europe.

Program for the remainder of the event:

1. The floor is given to the Mayor:

"I will now give the floor to the Mayor of Tønder Municipality, Jørgen Popp Petersen."

2. The floor is given to my grandfather & the unveiling:

"I now give the floor to my grandfather, Hans Mathiesen, who will share his eyewitness account of the events from that time—and then unveil the memorial plaque."

3. Wreath-laying (Air Force and Air Force Veterans' Association)

4. Wreath-laying (Tønder Municipality) by Mayor Jørgen Popp Petersen

5. Bagpipe music (Kurt)

6. Closing:

"Thank you for today."