



73rd Anniversary - air crash at Karlsminde

Sunday 23rd April 2017 at 10:00

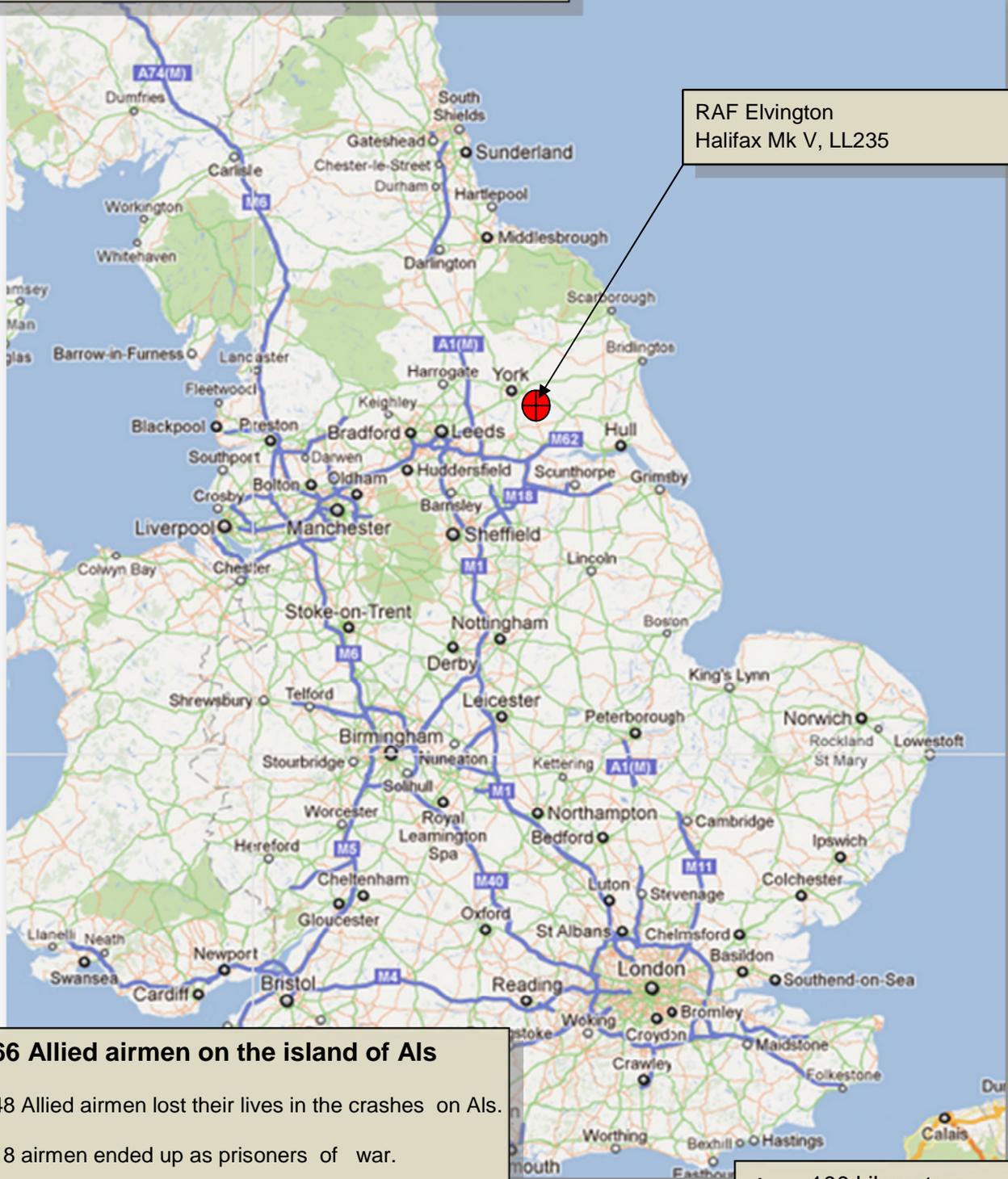


Hærhjemmeværnsdistrikt

Syd- og Sønderjylland

20-04-2017

The bomber came from here



RAF Elvington
Halifax Mk V, LL235

66 Allied airmen on the island of Als

48 Allied airmen lost their lives in the crashes on Als.
18 airmen ended up as prisoners of war.

|<---- 100 kilometres ---->|

Out of the app. 800 World War II airfields, 61 are still used today by the Royal Air Force.

RAF Elvington was very much enlarged after the war for the US Air Force, and it was used to 1992 when it was abandoned as an operational air base.

Programme of the day

Welcome :

By Mr Jørgen Valentin
The Society of Local History of the Parish of Svenstrup.

Speech at the memorial stone:

By First Lieutenant J.P. Rasmussen.
Hærhjemmeværnsdistrikt Syd- og Sønderjylland.

Bunchers of flowers are laid:

From the Army.

From The Society of Local History of the Parish of
Svenstrup.

From others.

Community singing:

Always dauntless

End of ceremony:

By Mr Jørgen Valentin
The Society of Local History of the Parish of Svenstrup.

The memorial ceremony is carried out in cooperation between
The Society of Local History of the Parish of Svenstrup, the Hounsgaard brothers, and
the Danish Home Guard.

Always dauntless when you tread
paths God has commended,
though you reach the goal ahead
when the world has ended!

Never fear the darkest hour:
stars your path will favour!
With the Lord's Prayer in Your pow'r
never shall you waver!

Fight for all that you hold dear,
die, if that be fitter!
Life is then not full of fear,
nor is death so bitter.

The crew

Pilot

Flight Lieutenant Edward N. Thompson, Distinguished Flying Cross

Navigator

Pilot Officer Gerald McClelland, Distinguished Flying Medal

Bomb Aimer

Flying Officer Alfred E. Robbins, Distinguished Flying Cross

Wireless Operator

Flight Sergeant Frederick W. Harvey

Flight Engineer

Sergeant J. Armstrong

Mid Upper Gunner

Sergeant Roy Redall

Rear Gunner

Sergeant D.M.M. Harris, survived the air crash and became a Prisoner of War



Halifax Mk. V, LL235, 77 Squadron, Royal Air Force, with crew and ground personnel in April 1944.

The bomber



The various versions of the Halifax bomber flew a total of 82,773 operations and dropped 224,207 tons of bombs. 1,833 aircraft were lost.

Next to its primary use as a bomber Halifax Mk.V dragged gliders and was used in electronic warfare. It also dropped weapons and agents over the occupied countries in Europe.

The Royal Air Force also used the aircraft to fight against U-boats, for reconnaissance and for meteorological tasks.

DATA

Role:	Heavy bomber
Manufacturer:	Handley Page
First flight:	25 October 1939
Introduction:	13 November 1940
Primary users:	Royal Air Force Royal Canadian Air Force Royal Australian Air Force
Number of engines:	Four engines 1,280 hk Merlin engines
Number of planes built:	6,178 (904 Mk. V)
Armament:.....	9 7,7 mm machine guns
Bombs:.....	Max. 5,897 kg

The accident

The time is 21:00 at RAF Elvington in Great Britain where 77 Squadron of the Royal Air Force is stationed. It is Sunday 23 April 1944. The experienced crew of Halifax LL235 takes off from the runway heading for the Baltic Sea to lay mines.

After having flown for 2½ hours they are now over Danish territory. A German Messerschmitt Bf 110 from Nachtjägergeschwader 3 spots the bomber and shoots at it. The plane is now over North Als and comes from the west over Broballe where the eye witness Gunnar Hounsgaard hears the plane, which is flying at a low altitude above the clouds in the direction of Svenstrup. At the same time Hounsgaard hears shooting in the air over Broballe. The time is now about 23:30 and the plane comes out of the clouds, burning, near Svenstrup. Presumably Pilot, Flight Lieutenant Edward N. Thompson tries to make a forced landing with the burning bomber near Karlsminde, but the plane goes on into the water and sinks some 200 metres off the coast.

The Rear Gunner has now escaped from the burning bomber and lies in the water hanging on to a pound net pole. Half an hour has passed, and fisherman Christian Hansen sails out to the crash site, but he does not dare to sail quite near to the burning wreckage. Hansen turns around and sails to the coast again. Here Erik Agergaard has arrived. He says to Christian Hansen, "Let's sail out again", as he can hear the Rear Gunner shouting for help.

They sail out and they succeed in getting close to Sergeant D.M.M. Harris. They get him up into the boat and sail towards land, but they take the ground when they hit a shoal of sand. Agergaard gets out of the boat, takes the Rear Gunner on his shoulders and carries him through the water and to Christian Hansen's house not far from the crash site. Here they give the Rear Gunner some dry clothes and a cognac to strengthen him, while they call an ambulance. The ambulance arrives and heads for the hospital in Sønderborg, but only gets to Bro near Augustenborg where the Germans stop it, and the injured airman ends up in the barracks in Sønderborg – and later as a prisoner of war in Germany.

The other 6 crew members do not get out of the wreckage and they drown. The Pilot is found in the water near the wreckage 4 days later on Thursday 27 April. After 4 more days Mid Upper Gunner, Sergeant Roy Redall is found on the beach near Himmark, and both of them are buried at Aabenraa Cemetery.

Later Navigator, Pilot Officer Gerald McClelland is washed ashore near Helnæs and he is buried in Assens. Wireless Operator, Flight Sergeant Frederick W. Harvey is washed ashore near Faaborg and he is buried in Faaborg New Cemetery. Flight Engineer, Sergeant J. Armstrong is not found. Neither is Bomb Aimer, Flying Officer Alfred E. Robbins, but there is evidence that he might be the airman who is washed ashore near Havnbjerg Wood. As he has no ID-tag he is buried as unknown at Aabenraa Cemetery.

Shortly after great parts of the sunken plane are lifted from the sea bed as well as the load of mines. However, many items are left on the bottom, and they are still there. On 9 April 1972 persistent sports divers manage to raise one of the four propellers of the plane which is now kept at the Archives of Local History of the Parish of Svenstrup.

The base



Many buildings remain and they are still painted in the colours from World War II.



Today the Elvington Airfield contains a completely restored Halifax bomber.

The runway was reported ready on 8 October 1941, and deals were made with the village of Elvington about accommodation for 2,800 men. In September 1942 the air base was transferred to Bomber Command, which had its headquarters two miles away at Heslington Hall.

The first operation from this base was a bombing raid on Lorient in France on 4 and 5 February 1943 with 11 Halifax bombers. Later 77 Squadron carried out bombing raids and mine laying operations with a force of 18 Halifax Mk. V planes. The sorties were carried out with an average loss of about 4 %, higher, however, when the target was Berlin.

In May 1944 there were enough Free French airmen in Bomber Command to form their own bomb Squadron. They were stationed at Elvington and 77 Squadron was moved to a new airfield at Full Sutton.

After the war Elvington was extended as a United States Air Force base for Supreme Allied Commander Europe with B-47 planes with a runway of more than 3,000 metres.

Today Elvington Air Base is a museum, containing nearly 100 planes on display and the history of 77 Squadron and more. You may visit The Yorkshire Air Museum.