

My 7 Flying Heroes

PREFACE

The Second World War lasted 2,074 days and nights. During this period the Royal Air Force in England organized more than 387,000 bomb expeditions over hostile or occupied territories. More than 955,000 tons bombs were dropped at these expeditions at which 55,573 allied airmen were killed and 8,953 English bomber aircrafts were lost. In August 1944 one of these many bombers crashed on a field near Aastruplund in Eastern Jutland, Denmark.

During the Second World War this field belonged to my grandfather Svend Andersen; today the undersigned is the owner of the farm where the bomber crashed.

This plane crash got to take up a lot of space in my grandfather's life, as he after the War and further on to his death in 1995 had contact to the relatives of the airmen of the crashed bomber.

During many years I have listened to my grandfather when he told about this event, and I have inherited quite a lot of material as regards this matter, including many letters written to him by the relatives in order to get information of their sons and husbands.

Furthermore several other persons have had an unforgettable experience in connection with the crash of the bomber, e.g. those who came hurrying up to the crash early in the morning the 27th August and the gravedigger at churchyard in Gl. Rye. The relatives have also contributed much information. All this information I have gathered and written down in order to tell and save a chapter of our local history from the war years, but first of all I have done it in order not to forget the 7 airmen and honour them for their brave effort.



Lancaster PA474 above Bingley, England. Photographer: Graham Brewster

AUGUST 1944

We go back to the war year 1944, the year in which the Danish clergyman Kaj Munk was killed by the Germans. In June 8 members of the group of resisters, "Hvidstensgruppen", were executed in Ryvangen (Copenhagen), and in the summer time Anne Frank wrote the last lines in her diary. 1944 was also the year in which the war seriously shifted in the favour of the Allies.

During the summer 1944 Royal Air Force did a great effort before, during and after the D-Day in the Normandy the 6th June by bombing the German weapon industry, the German supply lines and military lines. See "Greeting from General Montgomery to Royal Air Force Airmen" [here](#).

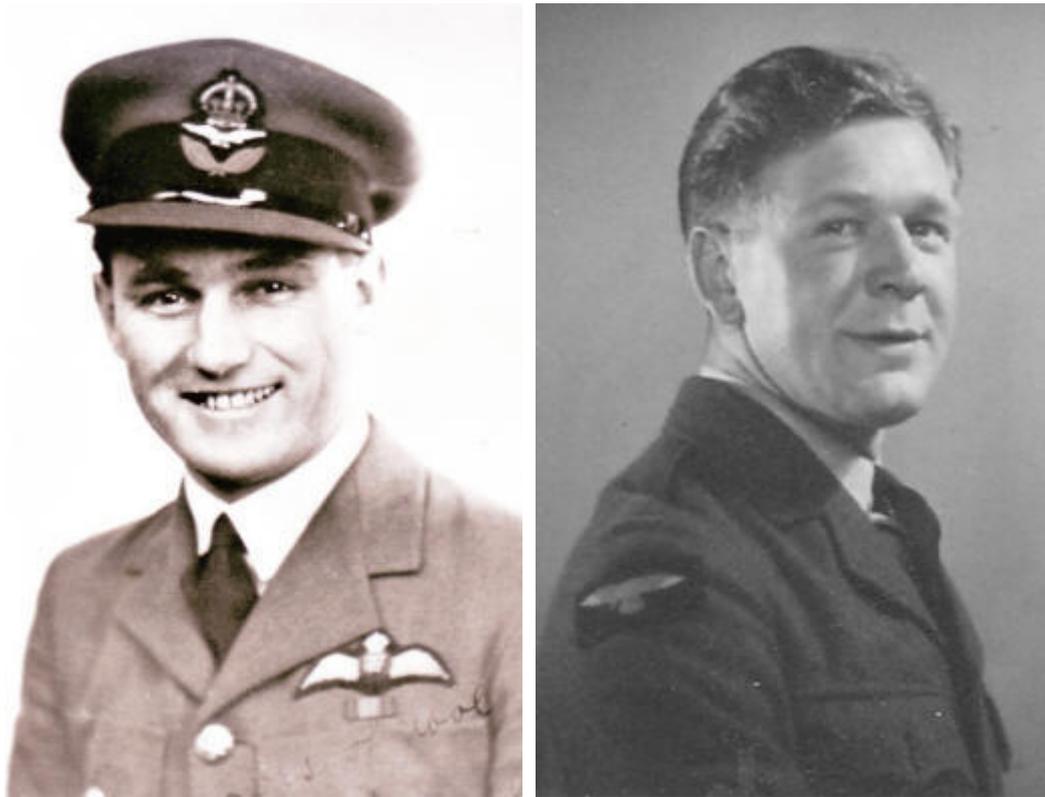
The air war was fought with a still more sophistic technology and growing cruelty by both the Allies and the German air forces. This air war is an exciting history of an extremely technological competition, tactical and strategic development.

In the night between the 26th and the 27th August 1944 the Bomber Command in England sent 531 bombers on missions. 327 bombers were sent to Kiel and 174 bombers to Königsberg. Furthermore 30 bombers were sent to Kiel and the Danzig Bay on a mine laying mission.

Out of the 327 bombers, 17 and their crew were lost. On the mission to Königsberg with 174 bombers, 4

bombers with crew were lost. The mine laying mission to the Danzig Bay with 30 participating bombers cost 5 bombers and their crew. Totally the loss of the latter night can be made up to 5 %.

Flak or anti-aircraft fire sending shells several kilometres up in the air before they exploded, and enemy fighters were the main cause of the great loss of bombers.



Pilot Frederick James Dee & Flight Engineer Jack White

THE CREW

The crew with which I am occupied, belonged to the Kirmington Air Base in North Lincolnshire where Squadron 166 had its domicile.

A Lancaster had a crew consisting of 7 men. LM694 had a mixed crew consisting of four Englishmen and 3 Canadians.

The pilot first: It was Frederick James Dee from Wales, 27 years old, married with Ann in 1943 and coming father as his wife was pregnant. Both the father and the brother of the pilot were active in war duty.

There is only one pilot to fly a Lancaster – it has only one set of flight controls. Normally aircrafts have two sets of flight controls, the second set for a co-pilot who often is present. During the war the co-pilot was abolished, due to the lack of pilots. As a substitute for the co-pilot, an engineer was introduced – a person with great technical knowledge.

Some times, passing peaceful territory e.g. over England, the pilot got assistance of "GEORGE", the autopilot. If the pilot should be eliminated, the rest of the crew was instructed keeping the aircraft flying, setting the course for England and finally jump in their parachutes arriving back in England again.

The engineer of LM694 was Jack White from England, 26 years old. The engineer was placed next to the pilot, he supervised that the engines and all the mechanisms work properly, and he should with lightning speed be able to stop an engine, turn off the fuel supply and feather the propeller in case of an engine fire. It was also his job all the time to take care of the right quantity and the right fuel/air mixture for the engines. If this was wrong, you would get a lower performance and thus a lower speed and maybe a descent. A wrong setting might also cause flames out of the exhaust pipes which would make the aircraft a luminous target for enemy fighters in the night sky. The flight instruments were constructed in such a way that everything was OK when all the pointers were in vertical position.

The bomb aimer was George William Palmer from England, 29 years old, married and father or stepfather to Sheila. Palmers' place was in the "nose" of the aircraft. Approaching the target area the bomb aimer took over the steering of the aircraft until the bomb cargo had been dropped, after which the pilot took over the steering again, setting the course for England. If the bomb sight was fed with the right numbers for altitude, speed, course, wind direction and speed, it was very accurate.

The bomb aimer was also the front gunner, in the nose above the bomb sight there were two Brownings 303 machine guns.



Air Bomber George William Palmer & Navigator James Balfour Russell

The navigator was James Balfour Russell from Canada, 30 years old. His place was behind the pilot at a little table. The navigator's work was very important. Most often they flew during the night in all kinds of weather, some times without seeing anything else but dark clouds or darkness – see "Newspaper Article with James Russel" [here](#).

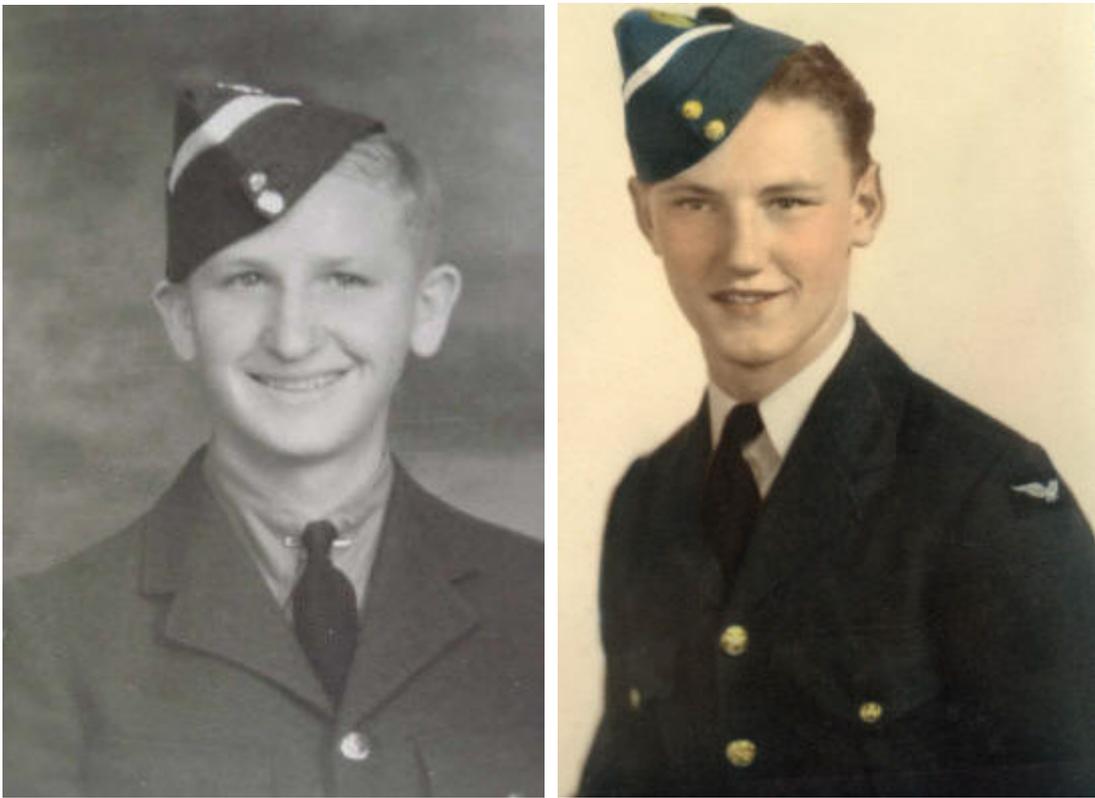
Before the war James Russel won the Canadian championship for single rowing. In 1939 he was engaged with Elizabeth Adams, whose family name after the war became Nock. In 1997 she was 80 years and probably single again. With the help of a younger woman friend they wrote to the Danish Embassy in Canada to get information about the existence of James Russel's grave, as they in that case would visit the grave in July 1997, 53 years after she lost her fiancé – in Denmark we have a proverb saying: Old love does not corrode.

The radio operator was William Alexander Holt from England, 20 years old. Besides having radio contact with England, with the other Lancasters and the master bomber, the job of the operator was also to locate both own and enemy aircrafts by means of different forms of electronic equipment.

William A. Holt was not the usual radio operator of this crew; it was sergeant Tyrrell who was written on the crew list to take part in this mission. Tyrrell had participated in all the missions, apart from this the last fatal one. Why Tyrrell did not go on this trip as planned, I have never found out. Several times I have tried to find him on the internet without success. He might have survived the Second World War, and in that case there are no longer records of him in the RAF. The day after this mission Tyrrell must have felt strange, as his fellow soldiers did not return – see "Crew List for the last Mission" [here](#).

The mid-upper turret gunner was Jacob R. Schafer from Canada, 19 years old. He sat in the turret on the top of the body over the bomb cargo compartment looking out through a transparent perspex cupola in which also two Brownings 303 machine guns were mounted. The mid-upper gunner could see all that went on above the Lancaster. Read more and see "Pictures of Jacob Schafer" [here](#).

All the bullets used for the machine guns in the Lancasters were not identical. Each 5th bullet was armour-piercing, and each 5th bullet was a fire bullet. Furthermore in another interval there were tracer bullets to make the gunner able to trace the bullets to the target. On day missions the composition of the bullets was different, here were used fewer tracer bullets.



Air Gunner Jacob Schafer & Air Gunner John Ernest Fitzgerald

The rear gunner was John Ernest Fitzgerald from Canada, 19 years old. The rear gunner was the eye in the neck of the crew. He was sitting with his bag towards the flight direction looking to the rear and operating his four Brownings 303 machine guns. The watchfulness of the rear gunner was very important, he had to be aware of attacking fighters coming sneaking from behind. It was also the rear gunner who could see if the bombs hit the target. The rear gunner sat alone far away from the rest of the crew in a little room with very limited freedom of movement. His place was perishing cold, -20 to -30 degrees centigrade (-68 to -86 degrees Fahrenheit), and it was often not getting warmer because the Perspex had been removed in order to be able better to see enemy fighters before they came too close. The mid-upper and the rear gunner were wearing electrical heated flying suits to keep them warm.

You can find more information of John Ernest Fitzgerald, e.g. letters telegrams and pictures, on the Canadian home page "The Canadian Letters and Images Project" [here](#).

It was mission number 21 from Kirmington of this crew; they arrived at the base on the 13th June 1944. According to a letter written to my grandfather in 1946 by the mother of the pilot, Frederick J. Dee, it was the mission number 27 of this crew. Furthermore the mother wrote that they all hoped to manage three missions more, thus having done a total of 30 missions, after which they would have got half a year's leave from active war duty. Thus one may conclude that this crew had flown 7 missions from another air base and squadron before Kirmington – see "Details regarding the Crew's Missions from Kirmington" [here](#).

Having made 30 missions, it was so that the airmen got half a year's leave, after which they had to make additional 20 missions. If an airman survived two such rounds which are 50 missions, RAF and the military could never more claim for anything of him. However, few airmen got so far. Beyond a good education, good equipment, exemplary interpersonal skills among the members of the crew, you should be extremely lucky to survive – usually many a crew had not the sufficient luck.

Having survived the first five missions, you were experienced. The greatest loss happened during the first missions – a new crew had not the necessary experience to avoid anti-aircraft artillery and enemy fighters. If a crew was getting on for 30 missions, you often saw heavy losses among these too, due to the fact that you in some cases overestimated yourself and underestimated the enemy. Another reason could be that you had frayed nerves and made silly mistakes.



THE LANCASTER BOMBER

The Lancaster bomber LM694 was brand-new and had not yet been on any mission. This aircraft had been delivered to Kirmington Airbase Monday the 22nd August and had only had 15 hours in the air before its last mission.

The Lancaster aircrafts were produced from September 1941 to February 1946, and they became one of the most famous and most successful bombers during the Second World War, only surpassed by the American B-17 bomber. At the time the Lancaster had extremely good flying properties, taking the size and the weight into consideration. You could operate this aircraft very quickly having an enemy fighter behind you. The aircraft was primarily used for night missions, but during the end of the war day missions could also happen.

A Lancaster is driven by four Rolls Royce Merlin 38 engines, each with 1,480 HP, in all 5,920 HP – corresponding to the power of 40 big tractors!

- Wing span: 102 ft 0 in. (31.10 m), wing area: 1,300 ft² (120.49 m²).
- Length: 69 ft 5 in. (21.1 m), height: 20 ft 0 in. (5.69 m).
- Weight: Empty 36,900 lbs. (16705 kg).
- Weight: Maximum Takeoff 68,000 lbs. (31750 kg).
- Bomb load: Maximum normal 14,000 lbs, modified 22,000 lbs (6350 / 9980 kg).
- Maximum speed: 240 knots (280 mph, 450 km/h) at 15,000 ft (5600 m). Time to climb to 15,000 ft: 60 minutes.
- Service ceiling 23,500 ft (8160 m)
- Armament, 0.303 in machine guns: Front turret 2 pcs., mid-upper turret 2 pcs., rear turret 4 pcs.

Service ceiling and maximum speed can not impress a pilot today, but during the Second World War it was quite a good performance.

During the active duty of this crew they have, besides LM694, flown six different Lancasters; all these aircrafts were lost during the war, and the crews flying them were killed all of them – see "Review of the Crew of the Lancaster Bombers" [here](#).



THE LAST MISSIONS

Frederick Dee and his crew were on a mission the 16th August, on which 8 bombers from Kirmington were on a mine laying mission to the Stettin Bay together with 10 more bombers from Kirmington to bomb installations in the city of Stettin. A total of 461 bombers took part in the bombing of the Stettin area that night. 5 bombers were lost on this mission.

The crew with Frederick Dee at the control column left at 9:15 pm for the Stettin Bay. The weather was good in the beginning, but became very cloudy or foggy having passed the German coast of the North Sea. At 1:18 am the load of six 1,500 pound mines were dropped from 11,000 feet in the target area. Up to this moment there had been no hostile resistance at all, but having just left the target area, Frederick Dee and his crew were attacked by a German night fighter, a "Junkers 88".

In 1944 the British had developed and installed a new electronic equipment, called "Fishpond" – a radar mounted on the belly of the aircraft warning of other aircrafts.

On a mission the crew of LM694 got an alarm from this radar, and 2-3 seconds later the rear gunner got visual contact with the enemy fighter about 500 ft away. The rear gunner, John Ernest Fitzgerald, immediately opened fire and at the same time instructing the pilot to make a corkscrew manoeuvre, meaning flying in a certain zigzag way which made it very difficult for chasing fighters to hit the target. The rear gunner, Fitzgerald, hit the fighter, and it went into the sea with two burning engines.

At five o'clock in the morning the crew was back in Kirmington whereupon it was time for a mug with a drop of rum before reporting, and after the reporting it was time to go to bed. The next day there was no fixed meeting time, and incidentally, there was no strict discipline. You yourself were responsible for being ready and keeping your equipment in order. That was the best life insurance you could get as an airman. Strict discipline happened only occasionally in periods when the weather had been bad for flying for a long time and the airmen got on the nerves of each other due to boredom.

After this mission the rear gunner Fitzgerald was recommend for a brave medal for his excellent shooting.

It was not the first time this crew had been in close contact with an enemy fighter. In the end of July this crew was on an expedition to Stuttgart. The mid-upper turret gunner, Schafer, observed an attacking fighter, and the rear gunner opened fire. The fighter was hit in its nose and dived away.

The young rear gunner Fitzgerald was proud of the shooting down, and the day after he wrote home to his mother and his sister, Ruth, telling about the events of the night. Fitzgerald thanked for the many letters which the mother had sent to him and apologized for having not written for a long time and told:

"It is because we fly all the time. If everything succeeds, I will soon have finished and come home on leave."

The young rear gunner also grumbles a little:

"Mother! – What is the idea telling that I am flying a Halifax bomber? I am flying a Lancaster bomber. It is an insult to us Lancaster boys to be called Halifax airmen. Do not do that again."

A good thing that the young man got written home.

The first time Frederick Dee and his crew went on mission in their new aircraft, LM694, was the 25th August, this time flying to Rüsselheim. Here they were attacked three times by a JU88 night fighter which at last had to retire, burning.



THE LAST MISSION

Saturday morning the 26th August 1944 the pilot, Frederick J. Dee and his 6 men crew could see that they together with 4 other bombers from Kirmington should take part in a bomb mission the coming night. During the morning they drove to their aircraft, LM694, to talk with the mechanic and the other ground crew. To each aircraft there were firmly attached a mechanic, a metalworker and an electrician. The ground crew could tell how much fuel there was filled on the plane and the type of the loaded bombs. The fuel quantity told them how far away they should, and the type of the bombs told them of the bomb target. Having got this information the airmen and the ground crew guessed the destination of the mission.

Later that day, after the ground crew had ended all their work with the aircraft, the airmen checked the aircraft to be sure that everything was correct adjusted and perfect functioning. During their preflight check, the army chaplain and the Wing Commander passed by, wishing them a good trip. At Kirmington airfield it was a tradition that the army chaplain and the chief of the airbase came and wished a good trip to everybody going on a mission the present day or the coming night.

Later in the afternoon, Saturday the 26th August, the 5 crews in Kirmington took part in a briefing of the upcoming bomb mission.

The code word for mine laying was "Gardening", and the code word for the area in which the mines should be dropped, was "Privet" which meant Danzig. The mission was consequently a mission to the Danzig Bay with mines.

The route was shown by means of a red thread on a big map of Europe. Flight altitude, altitude from which the

bombs had to be dropped, take off time etc., this information was given here, together with information of places with anti-aircraft fire and places where attacks from enemy night fighters might be expected.

Later, after the briefing, each man of the crew got his flight equipment and his escape parcel. Among other things the escape parcel contained photos for false passports and other documents, a razor and ointment to painful feet, pills to make ditch water drinkable, maps and a compass. Furthermore money to the over flown countries was distributed, apart from German money because one did not consider it to be possible to escape from Germany. The airmen's parcels contained also caffeine pills. Particularly the mid-upper and the rear turret gunner needed these to keep the concentration on long missions. It was also possible to get biscuits and coffee with them and that was real coffee. However, they could not have the coffee until they were back over England where the risk for enemy fighters was negligible and the flight altitude was low enough to take away the oxygen masks.

The airmen put on their flying suits which were most comprehensive for the gunners. They had several layers on, including electrical heated underwear and gloves because they were sitting in unheated surroundings in which the temperature was minus 20 to 30 degrees centigrade (-68 to -86 degrees Fahrenheit) flying in 20,000 feet.

This time the load was mines as earlier mentioned, five pieces in all, three Mk. VI and two Mk. IX. The mines had to be dropped from 14,000 feet.

Starting from the base the bombers took off at intervals of one minute, and they all joined a holding in a big triangle until all the bombers were airborne. When all the bombers were airborne, they set the course for the target of the current mission.

LM694 took off from Kirmington at 8:45 pm. The outward flight was uneventful and was carried through during good weather conditions. About 1:30 am they arrived at the target, and the mines were dropped from 14,000 ft as ordered.

Before the main body arrived at the target, a pathfinder squadron had already been there and dropped target indicator bombs in order to make the most possible precise bombing. In cloudy weather the indicator bombs were dropped in parachutes above and in the clouds to mark the bomb targets.

On their way home to England the weather had changed. There was a report of ice-formation and electrical storms why the bombers were redirected to the Lossiemouth Airbase on the north eastern coast of Scotland. An electrical storm is weather with lightning and discharges giving luminous rings of fire around the propellers and a border of fire on all edges of an aircraft. Many of the instruments of the aircraft did not work during these conditions, e.g. the compass, and this made it impossible to navigate resulting in losing one's way high in the airspace.



THE CRASH

On their way across Denmark the enemy night fighters were very active. Two of Kirmington's bombers were hit and crashed. LM652 from Kirmington crashed in the water in Begtrup Vig south of Mols. The bodies of the pilot and the turret gunner were found in October 1944, while the rest of the crew has never been found.

LM694 crashed burning on my grandfather's field by Aastruplund.

The other three bombers from Kirmington returned undamaged from 6:00 - 06:35 am after a mission of rather more than 9 hours.

The crew on the bombers had some difficulty in looking down from the aircraft. In the summer 1944 the Germans had found out mounting machine guns in their fighters tilting 70 degrees upwards. Then they could sneak up below the bombers and open fire. This method of attack was in German named Schräge Musik. The objectives preferred were the fuel tanks of the bombers. However, this method was only used by the German fighters when the bombers were on their way home having dropped their load of bombs. This kind of attack would be pure suicide for an attacking fighter pilot if an aircraft was loaded with bombs.

We will never find out if exactly this fate happened to LM694, but it is a possibility.

About half past three in the morning LM694 crashed burning to the ground and exploded. Some local people were witnesses to the crash. If they had got up early this morning because of a heavy thunderstorm or they had got up due to unusual great flying activity, one can not know. This night the Braedstrup area was passed by quite a lot of bombers returning to England, and it is said that there were violent aerial combats with German night fighters.



I have been told that the aircraft was seen passing overhead Nim close to the church, flying in direction towards Træden. Maybe the pilot on their way towards Træden had seen the long flat fields near Aastruplund and got the aircraft turned in direction towards Aastruplund hoping to be able to land the aircraft. Several people tell of a burning aircraft or fire ball coming from the north, passing the farm "Marienlyst" in low altitude and crashing to the ground south of the road "Sandvejen" resulting in a tremendous explosion. The 25th June 1946 my grandfather wrote a letter to England in which he wrote that it was assumed that the crew died in the fire before the crash.

Immediately after the crash some local people had hurried up to the place. Somebody was looking for weapons and ammunition, other people would like to have a parachute of which they could make new shirts for the children – you were short of everything during the last war years. Maybe somebody was just curious to see what had dropped down from the sky.

Ejvind Vinther, a haulage contractor in the village Aastruplund close to, and a driver named Henrik were first present. Ejvind found a parachute of which his wife, Hatla Frederikke Frederiksen, later made underwear for their daughters.

At home at the farm my grandparents were lying in their beds until the neighbour, Rasmus Rasmussen came from his farm, Aastrup Nygaard about four o'clock and began to knock at the window to their bedroom, shouting: "*Svend, wake up, it is burning down on your field*". My grandparents got up, and Rasmus told what he knew. My grandfather would go down there, but my grandmother thought he should stay at home, so of course he stayed at home with Ester and the children.

Rasmus Rasmussen had also phoned to the local police inspector Damgaard in Brædstrup and reported the crash. Subsequently Damgaard had informed the occupying power in Brædstrup and the Criminal Investigation Department in Horsens.

Quickly after the crash German soldiers from Brædstrup under the command of Hauptfeldwebel Hein were at the impact place, after which the area was closed off in a big circle. Nobody else but the German Wehrmacht had admittance, apart from the CID inspecting the crash place, making a comprehensive report. I have got a copy of this report, in which it is detailed described how it looked around the crater, and what else happened the early morning around the crash place. During the morning German soldiers went out to the nearest farms and to Aastruplund to ask for survivors; however, they did not make real search of the houses.



When it got light, my grandfather walked down to the cordon, and via a German soldier who talked a little Danish, he got him told that he was the owner of the field and that he would like to see how much damage the crash had caused on the crops on the field. The crop was lupines which had been mown, but not yet raked up. Then he was allowed to get nearer to the crash place, however, not nearer than 25 m. The sight that met him was horrible. Wreckage and bodies torn to pieces were lying scattered among one another over a big area. The biggest part of the airmen he saw, was a piece of chest. There was an unpleasant stench from the burnt body parts. Besides the main crater of 30 x 75 m there were four smaller ones coming from each engine. The tail wheel was intact, but had been hurled 200 m away. The big main landing wheels were burning for several hours, and ammunition went off for a long time after the crash.

The German soldiers, some of them with a potato fork, other of them with their bare hands, walked around gathering together and putting the body parts in four paper bags.

The German soldiers were not very careful with their clean-up. Several weeks after the Germans had left the place, you could find ghastly and evil-smelling things.

Afterwards my grandfather never disguised that he regretted having gone to the crash place. He never forgot the sight that met him that morning in August. That experience he could not get rid of again, and even as an old man, it disgusted him when we talked about it. Read more about "Farming during the Second World War" [here](#).

During the day many curious persons passed. One of them was Gunnar Viby Mogensen from Braedstrup who was 11 years old at that time. Gunnar biked down the road Aavej towards Bredstenbro and continued along the track that started at No. 39. He went a little bit on to a group of people, where he stopped and saw two black horrifying lumps lying on the ground. It was two halves of the same much burnt person. Now Gunnar quickly biked homewards again.

THE SAME NIGHT OVER THE WATER TOWER ON BROKHOEJ

Gunnar Viby Mogensen has written an article in a yearbook (in Danish), "Aarskrift 2008" publish by Braedstrupegnens Hjemstavnsforening in which you can read what a Braedstrup boy saw during the Second World War. It is very exciting reading which I can recommend.

Gunner writes that the water tower north of Braedstrup just had been equipped with an anti-aircraft gun, and this was frequently in use against the Lancaster bombers returning from their targets in Germany during the night between the 26th and the 27th August. The flak gun in the water tower had hit one of the aircrafts, and another bomber had turned around and had dropped some bombs in an attempt trying to hit the water tower. In stead of the water tower they hit a farm at which the blackout curtains were not so effective. It was not so unusual that the bombers saved a couple of bombs to their way home intended for the neutralizing of annoying flak making the life dangerous for the aircrafts. However, this was not allowed, in fact it was strictly forbidden why they never told their chiefs at home at the air base when they made their reports.

This incident about the water tower in Braedstrup described by Gunnar, matches well with some maps which I have received from Frederick Dee's nephew Stuart Matthews. At one of the maps you can see the crashes that happened in Denmark the night in question. At this map it is also shown that a bomber was attacked and hit north of Braedstrup, and it appears that the bomber did not crash but was able to continue the flight to England. See the map [here](#).

At another map you can see what the German night fighters have recorded. See Luftwaffe's recordings [here](#). LM694 was not shot into fire of a machine-gun nest in Braedstrup. LM694 was attacked and hit by a German night fighter. My guess is, that the German night fighter was flown by Major Horst Günther Höfele, staff III/NJG1.

THE FUNERAL

In the evening the 27th August an ambulance came and collected the paper bags with the airmen's bodies which maybe were driven to Gl. Rye where the Germans had an airfield.



Early in the morning the 30th August German soldiers closed off the churchyard in Gl. Rye. However, the gravedigger and gravedigger's wife sneaked up in the church tower from where they saw German soldiers kick some bags into a grave. There was no clergyman present. Few days after the funeral the Germans placed a white wooden cross with an inscription on the burial plot. After the German capitulation the burial plot was laid out at the expense of the parishioners.

As the RAF during the spring 1943 had made a number of violent attacks on many German cities, both Göbbels and many other Germans became indignant. The enemy aircrafts got the name "terror aircrafts". In July 1943

the German General Headquarters published new directives concerning funeral of allied airmen. Now you could omit clerical co-operation, salute of honour and wreath-laying ceremony.

In the summer 1944 after the allied invasion in France, a new German directive was published in which it appeared that the allied airmen now should be buried "at the place", i.e. in the crater where the aircraft crashed, in a wood or in a field, depending on what suited the Germans best. In that way the total war was carried through, also for dead persons.

A few days after the crash the families of the airmen received a telegram and later a letter from RAF telling that their sons and husbands were reported missing, having not returned after a bomb mission.

THE DEATH CERTIFICATE IN THE PARISH REGISTER

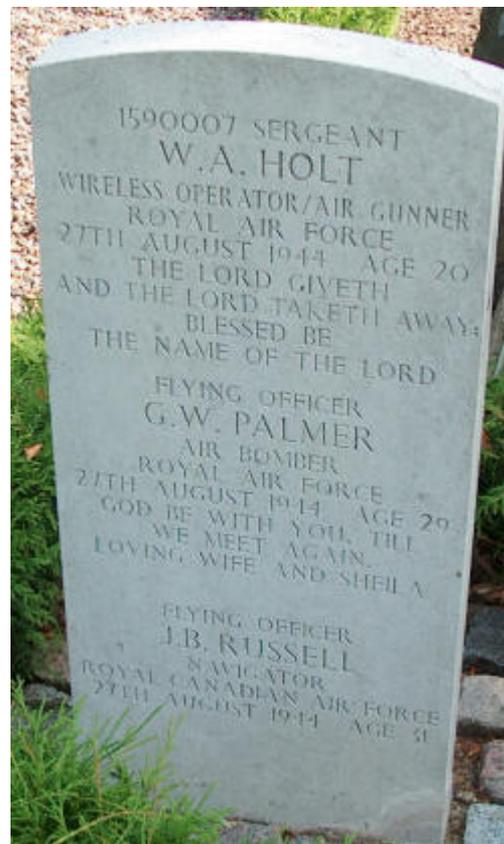
The German death certificate received by the vicar in Gl. Rye the 6th September reads thus, translated:

Death certificate for the English crew members from the crash in Traeden the 27th August 1944. The English bomber was shot down, the type of it has it not been able to establish, three unidentifiable bodies and some individual charred body rests have been saved. The identifiable bodies are:

<i>Body No. 1</i>	<i>Sergent Jack White</i>	<i>Strongly charred</i>
<i>Body No. 2</i>	<i>Sergent Jakob Schaper</i>	<i>Strongly charred</i>
<i>Body No. 3</i>	<i>Sergent F. B. Lewis</i>	<i>Strongly charred</i>

It has not been possible to identify the rest of the body parts. Cause of death was burn and injuries. See the Death Certificate [here](#).

How the name Sergent F. B. Lewis has come to light, will probably remain an unanswered question.



THE MEMORIAL CROSS

The place of the crash was closed off by the Germans for roughly 14 days. The soldiers had been accommodated at a farm down by the river, Gudenaen. They stayed in the barn at the address Aavej 44 by Magnus Petersen, and the officer of the Germans stayed at Bredstenbro Inn. Magnus Petersen had during his youth been in service in Germany and Poland and learned German why he could talk with the soldiers. The Germans gathered all the wreckage and brought the metal on trucks to the station in Braedstrup from where all of it was loaded on goods wagons and sent to Germany to be melt down and recycled.

At home at my grandfathers farm they daily got forage to the animals at the farm not so far away from the place of the crash. Outside the closing off, my grandfather had seen a long spar from the aircraft. He would very much like to get hold of this spar, so one day when the farmhand Rasmus Due Andersen was out to get

forage for the animals, he picked up the spar and placed it on the bottom of the carriage and placed the forage on top of that. Driving homewards with the forage, a German soldier followed Rasmus. In all probability it caused quite a lot of nervousness. Fortunately the soldier turned back again just before the load came back into the yard.

The spar was put away in the loft and covered with straw. There it was allowed to stay until the war was over.

After the Liberation my grandfather got master smith Ibsgaard in Traeden to make the memorial cross as it stands today. The smith fused some of the metal to a plate on which the names later were engraved. The engraving was made by watchmaker and goldsmith Jul Madsen in Braedstrup without charge.



MEDAL OF COURAGE TO THE REAR GUNNER

The 3rd October 1944, rather more than a month after the crash, the rear gunner or rather his family received a medal of courage for the shooting down of a German night fighter.

The recommendation sounds as follows:

*FITZGERALD, Sergeant John Ernest (R215210) - **Distinguished Flying Medal** - No.166 Squadron (missing) - Award effective 3 October 1944 as per **London Gazette** of that date and AFRO 2637/44 dated 8 December 1944. Born in New Westminster, 1925. Was in Army and Air Cadets before enlisting, Vancouver, 21 January 1943. Trained at No.3 BGS (graduated 12 November 1943). Killed in action with No.166 Squadron, 26/27 August 1944 (Lancaster LM694); buried in Denmark.*

This airman has participated in many sorties as a rear gunner. He has displayed the greatest keenness and has proved himself to be a most dependable member of aircraft crew. One night in August 1944, Sergeant Fitzgerald participated in a minelaying mission. Shortly after leaving the target area, this gunner sighted a Junkers 88. He opened fire and his first burst struck the enemy aircraft which went into a steep dive with both engines on fire. On more than one occasion his vigilance and good shooting have contributed materially to the safe return of his aircraft.

After the war the family in Canada got a mountain named after their son and brother as a memory of him. The mountain was named Mount Fitzgerald what was decided the 28th March 1967. This mountain is a volcanic height in the south-western British Columbia in Canada, 84 km east of Rivers Inlet and 4 km east of Mount Silverthorne. The co-ordinates for the mountain are 51° 31'01.9 N 126° 03'56.2 W.

Close to Mount Fitzgerald you find Mount Dolter and Mount Bradshaw. These two mountains are named after the childhood friends of the rear gunner, one of whom was RCAF Pilot Officer Frank Dolter, and the other was Arthur Ronald Bradshaw who was a cadet in the Canadian Navy. These three young men went together at the South Burnaby High School.



ENGLISH OFFICERS

The 5th February 1946 my grandparents had a visit of a Captain Adams and two other English officers from the RAF. They travelled around in Denmark in order to gather information of missing airmen. The visitors got all the information my grandfather could give, and the identity of the bomber and of the crew was cleared up.

The 27th June 1946 the families to the killed airmen got a letter from RAF, telling the fate of the crew. In the period from August 1944 to the spring of 1946 the only information RAF had been able to give the families to the airmen was that the Lancaster with their sons and husbands was reported missed, which was almost driving the surviving relatives mad.

After the solution to the identity of the crew now real gravestones were placed on the burial plot in Gl. Rye. The seven airmen got 3 gravestones on the churchyard.

In the spring of 1946 it came to my grandfather's ears that somebody, maybe one of those who came hurrying up at the night of the crash, had a "dog tag" from one of the airmen. This identification tag belonged to the airman Jack White. My grandfather got hold of the identification tag, and together with a photo of the memorial cross he sent it back to the mother Mrs. White in England with whom he had got contact.

Mrs. White returned information of the names of the other victims and the addresses of the surviving relatives to my grandfather. The metal plate of the memory cross was now supplied with the names of the victims, and the

photographer Jørgensen in Brædstrup took photos of the cross and sent them to all the surviving relatives. Throughout the years my grandfather has written and received many letters from the surviving relatives. Also the families of the surviving relatives, both from England and from Canada, have paid many visits here.

The visit making the greatest impression, a visit I will remember, was in June 1976 when Mrs. White and her daughter Marian, the mother and the sister to Jack White, visited my grand parents. The mother, Mrs. White was 82 years old, and her last wish was to see her son's grave. Throughout 30 years she had in the letters to my grandfather expressed a wish to see her son's last resting place. It was very emotional to see the 82 years old Mrs. White pause by her son's grave. This visit made a strong impact of my grandfather. The visit made also a strong impact of Mrs. White and the daughter, Marion. At the request of Mrs. White and the daughter, my grandfather received a RAF coat of arms as a thankyou for his work with the memorial cross. Today this coat of arms, received by him in 1976, is hinging at home in my best room.



POSTSCRIPT

We have still contact with four families to the airmen. One of these is the family of the mechanic Jack White, who every year since the Christmas 1946 has sent money to a wreath to be laid at the memorial cross. The first one to send this Christmas greeting was the mother, then the sister, and today the sister's son.

The second one is the pilot, Frederick Dee's nephew, Stuart Matthews. Stuart has investigated a lot of the Lancaster bombers, and he has sent me lots of exciting information. The third one is Carol Townsend from Canada, a niece to the turret gunner, Jacob R. Schafer, and the fourth ones are Margaret and Leo Palmer. Leo is the little brother of the bomb aimer, George William Palmer.

I myself am still gathering information of my 7 flying heroes, hoping some day to be able to show photos of all 7 of them.

My grandfather was not a resister or in any way active in the war. His war effort was the contact to the surviving relatives. Finally I will quote him for saying as follows (translated into English):

"We, having been most closely, will never forget it. They spent their lives so that we could live in a free country".

This is not an empty phrase, saying for fun – he really meant it!

Aastrupgaard the 5th May 2012

Anders Lund

See more information about the [Lancaster LM694](http://www.lancasterlm694.com) and the allied airmen on www.airmen.dk



Sources:

Svend Andersen (my grandfather)

Ole Kraul, Horsens

Povl Kastberg Krogh, Ry

Stuart Matthews, nephew to the pilot Frederick Dee

Carol Townsend, niece to the turret gunner Jacob Schafer

Police report 27th August 1944, Criminal Investigation Department in Horsens

Andreas Moldt "Natbomber" (Night bomber)

Henry Pedersen "Skidthøgen"

Gunnar Viby Mogensen

Battle Reports and Operations Record Book

Various press cuttings

Local witnesses to the crash