RAF Welford memorial service honours Second World War Lancaster crash victims

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A private memorial service paid tribute to eight Allied servicemen killed in an aircraft accident at RAF Welford 80 years ago.

Late on March 30, 1944, Special Operations Lancaster bomber DV290 (SR-X) of 101 Squadron left RAF Ludford Magna for a bombing raid on Nuremberg.

But when the aircraft reappeared over RAF Welford early the following morning, it crashed after a failed emergency landing.



RAF Welford Historical Society chairman Alan Bovingdon-Cox leading the service. Credit: USAF Staff Sgt Jessica Avallone

On March 27, RAF Welford Historical Society chairman Alan Bovingdon-Cox welcomed spectators and standard parties to the sports hall, where he began the service.

Attendees joined in prayer and recited the *Exhortation*.

The *Last Post* sounded and a two-minute silence was observed.

The *Reveille* then sounded, followed by the *Kohima Epitaph*.



RAF Sqn Ldr Jayne Robertson saluting during the service. Credit: USAF Staff Sgt Jessica Avallone



Base commander Major Preston Smith paying his respects during the service. Credit: USAF Staff Sgt Jessica Avallone

Wreaths were then laid by representatives of the Historical Society, 101 Squadron, Newbury Town Council, West Berkshire Council, RAF Welford, RAF Fairford, Royal British Legion, West Berkshire and Oxford Parachute Regimental Association, Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire, Australian Royal Air Force, Welford Parish Council and Chaddleworth Parish Council.



Standing to attention. Credit: USAF Staff Sgt Jessica Avallone

The service concluded with the Lord's Prayer, the British and US national anthems and a blessing.



Standing to attention. Credit: USAF Staff Sgt Jessica Avallone

Speaking at the service, mayor of Newbury Nigel Foot said: “It’s always a pleasure and an honour to come along and represent the town.

“The connection between RAF Welford and particularly Newbury is very strong.

“In the Second World War, the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment was based all around Newbury.

“Strangely, they didn’t fly off from Greenham Common.

“They were here [Welford] for about a week before D-Day and then they all flew off from here to be dropped into Normandy.”



Lowering the standards. Credit: USAF Staff Sgt Jessica Avallone



Family of deceased airmen at the memorial service. L to R: Sally Long, Keely Boulton and Bryn and Lynda Jones (representing Sgt Donald Addy); Keri and Ian Brunning (representing Sgt Richard Collier); and Jeannette Parker (representing Flt Sgt Hugo Traeger). Credit: Mirek Gosney

Family members of the deceased airmen also attended, including Lynda Jones, representing Sgt Donald Alfred Addy – who attended the first service at the base in 1990.



Welford memorial to NCO crew who were victims of Nuremburg raid

Some of the visitors who attended ceremony.

Colour parties from the RAF, USAF and RAFA.

Lancaster tribute

MORE than 150 people attended a ceremony at Welford, near Newbury in Berkshire, on March 31 to dedicate a memorial to the crew of a Lancaster which

Command, Aircrew and Air Gunner Associations.

The Standards of 101 Squadron, the RAF Fairford Honour Guard, the 101 Squadron

groundcrew. It was selected to carry out the top secret task of jamming German nightfighter radio frequencies from within the bomber stream using 'Airborne

A report about the first Lancaster crash service at RAF Welford in 'Royal Air Force News' in 1990. Credit: Mirek Gosney

Jeannette Parker, the great-niece of Flt Sgt Ernest Hugo Traeger – a specialist addition to the ill-fated Lancaster crew – told *newburytoday* at last year's commemoration that she intended to trace the descendants of each airman.

And after a year of scanning electoral registers, social media and sending letters internationally, she has succeeded.



Jeannette Parker posing with a photo of her great-uncle killed in the crash. Credit: Mirek Gosney



Jeannette Parker holding a squadron photo featuring her great-uncle who was killed in the crash. Credit: Mirek Gosney

Mrs Parker, attending with her husband Ian Parker from Kent, said: “We’ve managed to get in touch with a family member of everyone.

“We’re still trying to make some contacts. Some people are more interested than others.

“Some didn’t know anything about their relative, so were quite interested to find out more.

Flt Sgt Traeger came from a German family which had emigrated to south Australia.

As a fluent German speaker, his role was to jam and confuse German night fighter pilots on their radio frequencies.

Base commander Major Preston Smith said: “We love hosting this memorial each year, really to connect with our community members and to honour and pay our respects to the crew members and their families.”

Mr Smith’s two-year rotation at the base ends in June.

When asked whether his successor plans to continue supporting the historical society, he responded: “We haven’t spoken about that specifically, but they [his successor] will continue to support these events and the historical society.

“The work they do is an integral part of what we do out here; it helps us connect to the community.

“I don’t see any reason why that relationship won’t continue to get better.”



Major Preston Smith and Keri Brunning unveiling the model Lancaster bomber. Credit: Mirek Gosney



John Shepherd, Kevin Farrington and Mathew Burdett from the Medway Veteran’s Modelling Club in Kent.

Member Leigh Stanley was unable to attend. Credit: Mirek Gosney



Mathew Burdett, John Shepherd and Kevin Farrington from the Medway Veteran’s Modelling Club. Credit: USAF Staff Sgt Jessica Avallone

The Royal Engineers Association Medway Veteran’s Modelling Club unveiled a model of the Lancaster bomber after the ceremony, which took seven weeks to build.



Model Lancaster bomber unveiled after the memorial service. Credit: USAF Staff Sgt Jessica Avallone



Model Lancaster bomber. Credit: USAF Staff Sgt Jessica Avallone



Model Lancaster bomber. Credit: USAF Staff Sgt Jessica Avallone

Three trees were also planted down at the memorial grove before the event, including a maple tree for Canada, an oak tree for the UK and a eucalyptus azura for Australia.



Some brave souls ventured down to the memorial grove to lay wreaths once the rain subsided. Credit: USAF Staff Sgt Jessica Avallone

It is not fully understood whether the Lancaster which hit Welford had succumbed to battle damage or experienced a mechanical fault.



Wreaths laid at the memorial stone for the Lancaster crash. Credit: USAF Staff Sgt Jessica Avallone

The crew members had an average age of 24. Their names are as follows:

RAF: Flt Sgt Edwin Robert Thomas (pilot); Sgt Addy (flight engineer); Sgt Dennis Roland Billson (mid upper gunner); and Sgt Richard Alfred James Collier (rear gunner).

Royal Australian Air Force: Flt Sgt Traeger (special duty operations) and Flt Sgt Allen Howard Wilson (wireless air gunner).

Royal Canadian Air Force: WO2 Alan Norman Rice (navigator) and Flt Sgt Irvin Robert McNay (air bomber).