

## The Memorial renovated in 1995:

On Skarø there has been no tradition of going to the airman's grave with flowers on 5 May.

The sexton looks after the grave like any other grave and plants the flowers of the season. The Home Guard on Tåsinge puts a wreath on the grave almost every year. The tombstone was renovated in 1995 - in the 50th year of the end of the war. It is not known when the original RAF cross was removed. On the new stone the aeroplane has been replaced by RAF wings, and the inscription has a slightly different wording.

On the present stone the text is as follows:

PILOT OFFICER  
**J. M. ALEXANDER, CGM.**  
NAVIGATOR  
ROYAL AIR FORCE  
15th FEBRUARY 1944 AGE 23

R. 98864 WARRANT OFFICER 1  
**W. HAWKINS, DFC.**  
WIRELESS OPERATOR / AIR GUNNER  
ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE  
15th FEBRUARY 1944 AGE 25

AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN  
AND IN THE MORNING  
WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

ERECTED BY THE INHABITANTS OF SKARØ



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## The airman's grave on Skarø



### **Skarø Church and Churchyard**

In 1555 Skarø came under the living of Drejø; together with Hjortø and Birkholm the 4 islands constituted Drejø parish till 1964 when the islands came under Svendborg municipality. Birkholm then came under Marstal. All religious ceremonies took place in Drejø Church, and especially in winter in open boats it could be a dangerous journey. The inhabitants of Skarø therefore asked for and were granted permission to build a chapel, and the State paid for the building. The chapel was finished on 20 March 1900. In the 1920's the chapel was classified as a church.



## The story of 15 February 1944:

The 2 airmen who lie buried in Skarø churchyard are from the 8-strong crew of an English plane which was hit by the Germans on 15 February 1944 between Tåsinge and Skarø. That night the war came to Skarø.

The air war was being fought above the small island, and everybody was lying in the dark, tense and listening. When the bang was heard, people realised that one of the planes had been hit, and many went out into the night to see whether "the Englishman" escaped or not. He didn't.

There wasn't much left of the actual plane since most of it was scattered out over the sea between Østerhoved and Vornæs. The tail rudder fell down on Skarø where it hit Axel Eriksen's back building and slid down the roof. The motor and a bomb fell into Vornæs Wood. The bomb was blown up the following day. All people in the area had been told in advance to open all the windows of their houses to avoid having the window panes broken. There was an enormous bang.

From inhabitants of Skarø who still remember the event one hears that the crew of 8 managed to get out in their parachutes but that not all survived. One survivor fell down on Skarø where Edward Broholm found him severely injured in the field. Edward and Musse succeeded in hiding the airman on Musse's farm, but in the same night the Germans came and fetched him. His further destiny is not known.

Two killed airmen lay at the water's edge near Østerhoved from where they were pulled up on the beach and covered. A few people still remember them as they lay there on the beach, the young men who fought so bravely also for the sake of Denmark. Kresten Madsen, the grocer, was ordered by the Germans to drive the dead men to Skarø churchyard where they were buried "in the dead of night" by the German Wehrmacht - without the assistance of a clergyman.

## Collection for a memorial in 1949

The Commonwealth War Commission put the official RAF iron cross on the grave. After the war the inhabitants of Skarø made a collection for a proper tombstone with an inscription. The stone was unveiled in spring 1946, and among others 10 English soldiers were present. 2 Skarø girls, Herdis Rasmussen and Birte Nissen, unveiled the stone which was covered

by a flag. Pastor Mogens Blum, Drejø, and Carl Zangenberg, the teacher, made commemorative speeches, and it is said that especially Mr. Zangenberg was very moved.

## The original memorial:

On the first stone an aeroplane was engraved above the inscription, and the text of the inscription ran:

**Jam Alexander**

R.A.F. Conc. 745697

**Walter Hawkins**

W.R.C.F.A. Ce Canr.

98864

15-2-1944

Thank you because you gave your lives also for the sake of Denmark.

Erected by the inhabitants of Skarø

