

Lewknor / Stokenchurch Memorial to Halifax MkIII LW579

Wing Commander Jeff Jefford is Clerk to the Council of Lewknor Parish in Oxfordshire. He recently contacted Bill Tyack about the memorial to LW579 that stands in Cowleaze Wood in the parish of Lewknor (close to Stokenchurch). Apparently the Lewknor Parish Council was involved when the memorial was erected and Councillors had attended the annual ceremony on Remembrance Sunday, but this had lapsed. Then in 2008, the Council was once again invited to attend the ceremony, which included a contingent from High Wycombe led by the Station Commander. Following this, Jeff found a rather dilapidated framed photograph of the 51 Squadron badge in the back of a cupboard. He suspects that it was presented to the Council when the memorial was dedicated. He decided that Lewknor needed a permanent reminder of the memorial in Cowleaze Woods so he arranged for the framed Squadron badge and brass plaque pictured below to be displayed in the Village Hall.

The inscription on the brass plaque reads:

In Cowleaze Wood there stands a memorial to the crew of a bomber that crashed there, just one of the 95 aircraft lost in the disastrous raid on Nuremberg on the night of 30/31 March 1944.

The aircraft concerned was a Halifax Mk III (LW579) of No 51 Sqn based at RAF Snaith in Yorkshire.



The names of the crew are engraved on the memorial, a block of masonry that was originally a part of Lincoln Cathedral. They were:

Pilot Officer J Brooks – pilot
Sergeant T S Connell – flight engineer
Flight Sergeant D P McCormack – navigator
Flight Sergeant S Glass – air bomber
Flight Sergeant G W West – wireless operator
Flight Sergeant D A Churchill – air gunner
Sergeant R F Kelly – air gunner



Jeff is a former Canberra and Vulcan navigator. These days he is a highly regarded aviation historian and editor of the RAF Historical Society's Journal. I can personally recommend his "RAF Squadrons – a comprehensive record of the movement and equipment of all RAF squadrons and their antecedents since 1912" as a fascinating and invaluable reference book. His "Observers and Navigators and other non-pilot aircrew in the RFC, RNAS and RAF" is a very comprehensive history of the development of all non-pilot aircrew categories from the earliest days up to 2000. Both books are published by Airlife Publishing Ltd. I have written to Jeff on behalf of the Association to thank him for his initiative in arranging the display in Lewknor Village Hall. Incidentally a session on Google revealed that the memorial is mentioned on many websites.