

The Final Salute

“All that are with me salute thee” Titus 3:15



P/O Mynarski VC Memorial Avro Lancaster and The Final Salute

Middleton-St-George Memorial

At what is now Durham Tees Valley Airport stands a memorial to a Canadian airman^{1, 2} who flew from there in WW2 when Durham Tees Valley was RAF Middleton-St-George. That airman was Pilot Officer Andrew Mynarski VC RCAF Royal Canadian Air Force, from Winnipeg. Pilot Officer Mynarski won the VC Victoria Cross posthumously for valour during his last operational flight on June 13th 1944. He was 27 years old. This writer came to know of Pilot Officer Mynarski³ many years ago before getting saved but has since then seen parallels between Pilot Officer Mynarski's valour and that of the Lord Jesus Christ in implementing **“the gospel of the grace of God”** Acts 20:24. This work addresses those parallels to illustrate what Paul said of the Lord Jesus Christ **“And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again”** 2 Corinthians 5:15.

Last Operational Flight

Pilot Officer Mynarski's last operational flight of the night of June 13th was actually the last official operational flight for the entire crew. They were then to be transferred to training duties. Their Lancaster Bomber was part of a raid on Northern France in support of the D-Day Normandy landings but over Cambrai, Northern France, the Lancaster was attacked by a Junkers JU-88 enemy night fighter. Raked by cannon fire with major strikes on the port engines and centre fuselage, the Lancaster was engulfed in a hydraulic fluid fire. Losing both port engines, the pilot ordered the crew to bail out. Most were able to do so but not all.

Trapped

Pilot Officer Mynarski was the Lancaster's mid-upper turret gunner. His escape route was through the rear escape door but as Mynarski approached the door, he saw through the inferno in the rear fuselage, that tail gunner Flying Officer Pat Brophy^{4, 5} was trapped in his turret. The tail turret had been jammed part way through its rotation to the escape position.

Through the Flames and Final Salute

Without hesitation, Mynarski fought through the flames to Brophy's assistance. He tried using a fire axe to pry open the turret doors. When that didn't work, Mynarski resorted to beating at the doors with his hands. All his efforts were in vain and by now Mynarski's flight suit and parachute were on fire. Brophy shouted to the effect 'Get on out, Andy, I've had it!' and waved his friend away. Mynarski crawled back through the flames to the rear door. There, before he jumped, he paused and fixing his gaze on Brophy, Mynarski saluted him.

Falling to Earth

Mynarski deployed his parachute but it was too badly burnt to slow his descent properly so the drama reached its climax with the Lancaster plummeting down in flames, Brophy still trapped in the rear turret, Mynarski falling too quickly to earth, a human torch. Mynarski landed heavily with his clothes still on fire. French farmers got him to a German hospital but there soon afterwards Pilot Officer Mynarski, severely injured, died from his burns.

Resistance Fighter

The Lancaster crashed with such force that it broke apart. The rear turret was catapulted into a tree where it burst open and Flying Officer Brophy got out of it with only minor injuries. The other five members of the crew also survived and eventually got back to England. Flying Officer Brophy however was able to join the French Resistance. He thereby continued the fight against the enemy on the ground until the liberation of France. Brophy then returned to England in September 1944 where he was able to testify to Pilot Officer Mynarski's bravery. Brophy's testimony led to the posthumous award of the Victoria Cross to Pilot Officer Mynarski and thanks to the surviving members of the crew, one of the only two airworthy Lancasters in the world was named the Mynarski Memorial Lancaster. See graphic.

"He died for all, that they which live should...live...unto him" 2 Corinthians 5:15

Noting the parallels between Pilot Officer Mynarski VC, the Lord Jesus and ***"the gospel of the grace of God"*** Acts 20:24 Mynarski died to save his fellow airman trapped by fire. All men are trapped by sin indeed lost ***"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"*** Romans 3:23. The Lord Jesus died ***"to save that which was lost"*** Matthew 18:11.

Providentially, Brophy was saved and providentially all men may be saved in that ***"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"*** Romans 5:6 so ***"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved"*** Romans 10:9. Given therefore that ***"he died for all, that they which live should..live...unto him"*** 2 Corinthians 5:15 saved men should like Flying Officer Brophy join the resistance as Paul exhorts. ***"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand"*** Ephesians 6:13.

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"And having done all, to stand" "stedfast in the faith" 1 Peter 5:9 it will be "a great thing" 1 Corinthians 9:11 "at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints" 1 Thessalonians 3:13 to hear Him say "All that are with me salute thee" Titus 3:15.

References

¹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Mynarski

² www.nowandthenmagazine.co.uk/magazines/ No. 82 April/May 2013 pp 6-7 *The Final Salute* Peter Cook

³ *V.C.'s of the Air* John Frayn Turner pp 139-142

⁴ www.raf.mod.uk/news/archive/the-andrew-mynarski-memorial-lancaster-14082014

⁵ www.pbhistory.ca/Gr.%2010%20History%20CHC2D%20Web/C6-World%20War%20Two/2D-6.4%20Keeping%20Alive%20a%20Heros%20Death.pdf *Keeping alive a hero's death* Danylo Hawaleshka