The bomber crew from Swanton Morley who were buried with full military honours by the German navy

In October 2011, I told you about the first raid that was made on occupied Europe by the USAAF, and how this raid was a joint one with the RAF, which took off from RAF Swanton Morley on 4 July 1942. By a strange coincidence, Carolyn Heydon has recently passed on to me a cutting with a fascinating story about the outcome of another raid, also made by Boston aircraft from RAF Swanton Morley, which took off from Swanton Morley late on 26 July 1942, i.e. only three weeks later. The leader on this raid was Squadron Leader John Castle, who had led a flight of three RAF Bostons on the USAAF raid.

This raid, which was carried out by six Bostons of 226 Squadron, was a diversionary raid in support of a major raid on Hamburg. They flew together to a rendezvous point over the North Sea, where they separated into three pairs, each with a different target. The first two pairs, including the one led by Squadron Leader Castle, bombed their respective targets and returned safely to Swanton Morley in the early hours of 27 July. It was the third pair, whose target was Jever (which was further south) that met the stiffest resistance. They were led by Squadron Leader G.R. Magill and the second aircraft was piloted by a Canadian, Flight Sergeant Victor Salmon RCAF. On the way to their target, which was the airfield at Jever, both aircraft encountered "considerable" searchlight activity and the two rear gunners attempted to shoot out the searchlights while, at the same time, the German anti-aircraft batteries targeted them.

The aircraft piloted by Squadron Leader G.R. Magill (AL700), later reported that at 22.55 hours they saw Salmon's aircraft (AL746) slam into the ground on Spiekeroog Island (although some reports say that the Boston crashed on the eastern side of Langeoog, the next island to the east of Spiekeroog). You can see from the map that these two islands are part of the chain of Frisian Islands, which run along the German and Dutch coasts, so the crash must have taken place on their way to the target. Sadly, all the crew of AL746 were killed. This crew consisted of the pilot, Flight Sergeant Victor Salmon, his rear gunner, Sergeant Leslie Oxley, the observer, Pilot Officer Harold Deck, and the wireless operator/air gunner, Sergeant Sidney Duckworth. However, Magill in AL700 pressed on to Jever, bombed the target and also returned safely to Swanton Morley.



Strangely, AL746 is not listed in that part of the book *Low Level from Swanton Morley* that lists the losses of 226 Squadron in 1942. It does, however, show that another Boston, also piloted by Squadron Leader Magill, was among many that were lost on 19 August 1942, although he and his crew were unhurt. They were taking part in the notorious Dieppe operation, laying down smoke over the beachhead to protect the withdrawal of the naval forces.

The four airmen were buried with full military honours

In the aftermath of the crash, the authorities on Spiekeroog recovered the bodies of Salmon and his three comrades. As the island had only one small village, the four bodies were transferred to the adjacent island of Wanderooge. It was here, in the island's cemetery, that the four airmen were buried with full military honours. Members of the German navy acted as pall-bearers. A number of photographs of the ceremony were taken, and amazingly these have survived.



Two of the coffins being brought out from the small chapel immediately prior to interment Picture taken from *Britain at War*, Issue 73, May 2013

(One of several supplied to the magazine by Maurice Laarman)

The deaths of Harold Deck and his brothers

You will see from the above, that the observer who was killed in the Boston that crashed was Pilot Officer Harold Deck, and the cutting also shows a picture of a memorial to him in a stained glass window at St Peter's, Westleton, in Suffolk. In fact it commemorates both him and his two brothers. The three brothers had all returned from Uruguay to fight with the RAF and all had paid with their lives.

Pilot Officer James Frederick Deck was killed on 1 Nov 1941

Flying Officer Harold Frederick Deck was killed on 26 July 1942 (The article says that he was a Pilot Officer, but the window says Flying Officer)

Flight Lieutenant Charles George Deck was killed on 19 April 1945 (Just three weeks before VE Day)

If you want to see a picture of this window, log on to Simon Knott's 'Suffolk Churches' website, click on 'Index' and then on 'Westleton'.