

I greet the Honourable Sous Prefect, Deputy, the Deputies of the department, the representatives of the Army of the Air, the ground, the police and the firemen, the standard bearer, the mayors, ladies and gentlemen.

Today we commemorate the crew members of the bomber Lancaster LL 836 of the 550th squadron of the Royal Air Force. On the way back from their mission at Aulnoy-Emery, they have been shot to the ground of Achièt-le-Petit by the German air defence in the night of the 11th of April 1944. The seven members of the crew will die during the crash. Their age would have allowed them to dream all the dreams, they came with their courage and insouciance of their youth, they gave their lives to guarantee our liberty.

Henri Valle, the mayor of Achièt-le-Petit at that time, claimed of the German authorities to bury the dead with dignity and in a coffin.

Wars are created by the stupidity of mankind, the haughtiness and the hunger of power of men. They create just sadness and desolation, they are the seed of great suffer and injustice.

After years of bloody wars the politicians have done what they could to reconcile the people and they started the creation of the European Community. Europe has brought us 70 years of peace. It is certainly not perfect, but it is up to us and each one at his place to continue and to ameliorate the work of peace started by our precursors.

Peace stays fragile, it is up to us to preserve, to maintain and to transfer it to future generations. The values of tolerance and respect of the next are the base for our peace. These values are essential for our families, our villages, the towns and our country. It is the seed for happiness everywhere. I wish you to be carrier of hope and worker for peace.

Before I introduce the members of the families of the flying crew buried in this communal cemetery I would like to thank especially those who have helped to prepare this day: The party committee of the village and the committee of the cemetery, the village council, the musicians, the translator, the tourist office and Michel Lespagnol who has found the Australian, Canadian and English families.

I apologize if I have forgotten somebody. Thank you to all of you.

We are happy about the presence of:

Norm Hrywkiw and his wife Joyce. She is the niece of second lieutenant William Essar, rear gunner of the bomber. They come only for this ceremony from Alberta in Canada.

John Logan, nephew of John James Logan, navigator of the bomber, and his wife Jan, come from England.

Lois Martin is the great cousin of Lieutenant John Foster Potter, bomber, she has come with her daughter, her son in law and two of her grandchildren.

Welcome.

Thank you to be so numerous to have assisted to this ceremony. We will continue at the festival room, where you can admire the motor of a Lancaster aircraft and see the film that retraces the last mission of our bomber. We have also the possibility to discuss with our friends from abroad at a drink. You are all welcome to assist. Thank you for listening!

Speech of the Sous-prefect

First at all I would like to thank our Australian, British and Canadian friends to be here at Achièt-le-Petit to honour the 7 members of the bomber crew with this ceremony.

I would also like to thank the Mayor who has initiated this ceremony, which shows the friendship between our nations who have paid so much for this bloody conflict of WWII.

British, Canadians, Australians and French have been brothers in arms during the war years of 1939 to 1945. This was already the second big shock of the 20th century.

It was on the 11th of April 1944 that the bomber Lancaster LL 836 of the 550th squadron of the Royal Air Force has been shot by a German airplane,

when it came back from its raid to bombard the railway at the station of Aulnoye.

After a low flyover over the village of Achièt-le-Petit it crashed at 2,5 km distance of the village. The bodies of the 7 crew members will be found in the debris of the bomber scattered around over 200 meters.

The crew members were:

- Captain Richard PICTON
- Sergeant Thomas GUEST
- Lieutenant John LOGAN
- Lieutenant John POTTER
- Sergeant Kenneth WILLIAMS
- Capitain William WAYCOTT
- Second Lieutenant William ESSAR

These men have given their lives for our freedom and they were also fathers, brothers, sons...

It is very emotional for me to honour them today during this ceremony in the name of the Prefect.

We don't forget all the soldiers of all the nations on the Western front that have fought during the two World Wars of the 20th century and the conflicts between brothers, before the era of peace started.

We are here to commemorate the courage of these men of all origins and all places in the world that died for the liberty.

Last I would thank all those who have participated to organise this ceremony of devotion and commemoration. Apart the idea to honour the fighters of yesterday, this ceremony shows us that the words of Peace, Democracy and Friendship are not just words.