



Moving tribute to American airmen shot down over Kessingland

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American families have paid moving tribute to relatives who died on UK soil in the second world war.



The memorial stone at St Edmund's Church, Kessingland, pays tribute to US airmen killed in 1944

Ten US airmen were killed when their bomber crashed in fields at Kessingland, near Lowestoft, on April 22 1944. The servicemen had taken off from Seething airfield to bomb targets in Nazi Germany, but their B 24 Liberator 843 Repulser was hit as it returned to base.

Yesterday relatives of the men attended a low-key service at St Edmund's Church in Kessingland where a memorial stone was laid 12 months ago. The Americans had planned to attend a memorial service last year, but were forced to abandon their plans during the nationwide ban on flights caused by Icelandic volcano ash.

"We didn't realise it meant so much to the people here," said Cindy Kivett, niece of crew member James Hardin.

The 59-year-old from Franklin, Missouri, was joined by her sisters Carolyn Heilman, of New Franklin, Missouri, and Linda Wilson, of Springfield, Illinois. Mrs Wilson's daughter Shelly Vaughn, 36, who also attended, was born at RAF Lakenheath in Suffolk where the Wilson family was based in the 1970s.

It was the first time mother and daughter had been back to the region.

"There was a lot we didn't know about our uncle. We actually thought he was shot down over the English Channel. This has brought it all back for us."

"We obviously didn't know him, but we look at pictures and we see our father," added Mrs Heilman. "It's been very emotional."

Ted Kuhnen, nephew of navigator George Fahr, travelled with his wife Bonnie from Prospects Heights, Illinois, for the service which was led by rector canon Lindy Domoney and Reverend Joan Oddy.

Villager John Blowers was an 11-year-old boy when he saw the plane crash in fields near his home. He worked with Kessingland Parish Council and the St Edmund's parochial church council to raise money to pay for the memorial stone which is inscribed in memory of the airmen