

The Galloway News – Saturday, September 27, 1952.

Flying Tanker Crash Recalled

MEMORIAL TABLET UNVEILED

The distressing air tragedy of more than a year ago when a flying tanker of the American Air Force crashed among the hills near Carsphairn was recalled on Sunday afternoon with the unveiling and dedicating of a memorial tablet to the eleven American airmen who lost their lives in the crash.

Many American airmen, some of whom had flown up that morning from Lincoln Heath, the ill-fated flying tanker's base in this country, were present at the ceremony, and it was a squad of American airmen from Prestwick who fired a salute of three rounds after the unveiling.

In addition to the American Air Force contingent, headed by Major T Elliott, Lieut. John B Thomas, and Chaplain Major Raleigh A King, who conducted the first part of the service, the following organisations were represented – Boy's Brigade from Dalmellington and Ayr, Army Cadet Force, Dalmellington; Fire Service detachments from Dalmellington and New Galloway, Royal Observer Corps and St Johns's Ambulance Association. The praise was led by the Benwhat Band, the members of which had played a selection of hymns at the scene of the accident shortly after the crash.

After the reading of the Scripture lesson by Major King and the singing of the 23rd Psalm Mr Peter Campbell called upon Mrs T R MacMillan, Lamloch House, Carsphairn, to unveil the tablet.

Those of them who had witnessed the tragic crash of the American oil tanker just over a year ago, said Mrs MacMillan, had been deeply distressed, and their hearts went out in sympathy to the wives and mothers and friends living so far away. It was with this thought in mind that Miss Molly Campbell and Mr William Campbell of Brockloch Farm and some friends agreed to erect a simple memorial with the result that there would now be on that lonely Scottish hillside a place that was forever America.

They who lived there would always look upon it with respect and gratitude for these young men who had been willing to come to this country to train themselves in the fight for freedom and who had lost their lives serving God and their country.

As the Stars and Stripes and Union Jack were drawn back to reveal the memorial Mrs MacMillan read out the eleven names carved on the tablet.

After the dedication by the Rev W R Sievwright, M.B.E., Pipe-Major R Cunningham, Kilwinning, played a lament while the colour parties of the Boy's Brigade contingents stood with lowered flags. A salute was then fired by the Prestwick firing squad, and was followed by the Last Post, two minute's silence and peace-time Reveille.

Mr Sievewright then read a letter which had been received from the widow of one of the victims of the crash in which the writer made touching reference to sympathy and kindness shown by the people of Carsphairn at the time of the tragedy.

“In our darkest hour of despair and grief,” wrote Mrs Noel M Poppoff from America, “the people of your village gave us hope and a new outlook on life. Although you were strangers to all aboard the flying tanker you proved your friendship and loyalty to mankind. I am only one of the wives but I speak for us all when I say that although our hearts are still heavy from our loss we cherish the thought that in a foreign land – which is yet so dear to us – there are people with hearts of gold. The little speck which marks your village on the map will always shine as a star of remembrance and gratitude for all of us out here. You will never be forgotten, nor will your deed be in vain. God bless you all.”

The service concluded with the singing of the hymn, “How bright these glorious spirits shine” followed by the national anthems of the two countries.