

***Hvorfor
hedder
det sted
sådan ?***



poem about Englændergraven

the burial site of
Harvey J. Porter
and
Donald Morris

by
Børge Rasmussen

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English translation by Børge Rasmussen

Note by Gail Michener: Because words that rhyme in Danish do not rhyme when translated into English, Børge Rasmussen maintained the sense and poetic rhythm by using extra couplets or combining couplets in the English version. Thus the Danish and English versions have different numbers of couplets; blank space is used to keep couplets aligned.

*Original Danish by B. Rasmussen
Tarm Ugeblad 28 September 1977*

**Hvorfor hedder det sted sådan?
»ENGLÆNDERGRAVEN«**

af Børge Rasmussen

»Englændergraven«? Hvor er den?
Det gik endda. Man fandt derhen.

Nær ved et sving af Oddumvej,
hvor biler fløj med hu og hej!

Ved graven selv var ro og fred.
Jeg satte mig ved gærdet ned.

Der lå en gråsten, tung og stor,
med indskrift: »... tak der ej fandt ord.«

I skumringen endnu man så
to hvide sten ved graven stå.

Man sad og tænkte, blev lidt sær:
Hvem var mon de der ligger der?

Endnu en bil på Oddumvej. –
Så sænkede nattens stilhed sig.

Dagens lyde var helt forbi.
Og stilheden lå over skov og sti.

Nu hvisked kun vinden i busk og i krat;
dens stemme fik ord i den stille nat:

»Min ven, vi *ligger* ikke der.
Vi heller ikke *var*, men *er*.

*English translation by B. Rasmussen
archived in Tarm Bibliotek*

**Why is there such a place?
The English Grave in Tarm.**

by Børge Rasmussen

"An 'English Grave'? And here, you say?
I'm sorry, sir. Don't know the way."

Forgotten relics of the past.
Who cares? I found it, though, at last.

Close by a turn of "Oddumvej",
Where busy cars were rushing by.

The grave itself had calm and peace,
And near the stone one sat at ease.

It said (I wonder if I erred)
Something like, "... thanks that found no
word."

The twilight fell. But still one could
See that two upright stones there stood.

Thoughts came and went, a little queer:
Who were the two? What happened here?

Another car, another whirr.
Then nothing more was heard to stir.

Only a sougning, hardly a breeze,
A gentle breathing in the trees.

The last strokes of the evening bell –
And silence fell, -

A silence so deep one seemed to hear
It speak like a youthful voice in one's ear:

Hello, you asked. Let's answer you
We're *Donald* and *Harvey*, only us two

"But it isn't *us* that are lying there.
Besides, we *are*, you can't say *were*."

Vor krop forlængst er smuldret hen,
nu er der meget lidt igen.

Den blev til muldjord, blev til blæst.
I blomsten dér er der en rest.

Hinsides tid og rum vi er,
men holder lidt af stedet her.

Du spurgte før. Vi svarer nu.
Vi kan fortælle. Lytter du?

Vist så, vi er kun sølle to
blandt de millioner krigen slog.

Vi gav dog hvad vi *kunne* gi,
så du og dine lever fri.

Man *måtte* slås for det der du'r,
mod terror, tvang og diktatur,

gaskamre, racehad og skræk,
mod Lidice og Maidanek

(gå hjem og lær, hvis ikke du
véd lidt om fangelejrens gru!).

Det *skulle* gøres, *skulle* til.
Desværre, kroppen stod på spil.

En »heltedød?« åh pjatteri!
Vi ville heller været fri.

Vi fik en død (som man jo får).
Vor kom i krigens sidste ir.

Vi var i fly på vejen hjem;
opgaven havde været nem:

I Kullen Sund »kartofler sat«.
Men mørk og regnfuld var den nat.

Our *bodies* crumbled long ago;
A bit went into the soil below.

Some bits are leaves, and some are air,
A grain is found in the flower there.

Our *selves* are beyond both time and space.
But we have a fancy for the place.

You asked; and if you'll listen now,
We'll try and tell you 'why' and 'how'.

True, we're only two, no more,
of all the millions killed in war.

But still we gave what was ours to give
So that you and yours are free and live.

We *had* to defend our own old soil
And cut the festering cancerous boil:

A world getting cowed by dictatorship,
The broken word, the blood-stained whip;

Gas chambers, racism, finger screws,
The charred bones, the children's shoes;

Auschwitz and Oradour-sur-Glane,
and Lidice without a man.

(You never heard? If that is so,
Go home and read and get to know!)

One *had* to make war (not love!) and face
The "Superman" and the "Master Race"

In decency's name one fought the dirt;
True, a nasty job, and a risk to get hurt.

A 'hero's death'? Oh stuff and rot!
I tell you, we would rather not.

But death comes to all, that is the law,
And ours took place at the end of the war

Our Lancaster was homeward bound;
We'd only been on a trivial round:

'Vegetables planted' in Kullen Sound.
But night and rain were all around

Så skete det - et glimt - et stød.
Først var man levende, så død.

Det tog måske et halvt sekund,
fik ikke tid at gøre ondt.

Hjernen blæst ud. – Hjertet slut.
Det tog en hundreddel minut.

Det flammehav, der blussed op,
belyste vores døde krop.

Da flyet hvirvled imod jord,
blev *den* i ro og mag ombord!

På sygehus - men næste dag
blev uniformen pillet af.

De nøgne lig i asfaltsæk
kom på en vogn og blev kørt væk.

I hullet blev de væltet ned.
Men her er roligt, som du véd.

Og der kom fred i årets gang,
mens fyrren suste, fuglen sang,

mens der kom sol og regn og rusk,
og blæsten hviskede i en busk.

Mens tiden gik, og du blev grå,
vor ungdom kunne ej forgå.

Vi er dig fjernt, og dog så nær,
du »levende«, som sidder dér.

De lyse unge stemmer tav.
Man tænker ved den stille grav:

de stemmer lød som aftenens vind.
Var det dit eget hjernesvind?

Kan døde sige noget?
Men der blir stille rundt omkring.

Og blikket gir, som ført af En,
til linjen på den ene sten:

And then: a jolt - a flash of red.
One instant alive, the next one dead.

Half a second, no time for pain;
A riddled chest; a blown-out brain.

The blaze that made the cabin bright,
On two dead bodies threw its light.

While down the aircraft spun and roared,
They calmly kept their seats on board.

They went to hospital - next day
'The strangers' plucked the clothes away.

In asphalt bags the bodies bare
Were taken on a cart from there.

A pit was dug in this nearby wood,
The bodies dumped and left for good.

Now peacefully the years go by
While wood-pigeons coo and pine trees sigh,

And autumns are golden and summers bright
And cold and clear is Christmas Night.

We are not touched by age and decay,
While others grow old and bald and grey.

We are far from you, and yet so near,
You 'living person' sitting here."

The youthful voice was heard no more,
Only the whispering leaves as before.

I sat there so sceptical, 'clever' again.
Was it the wind or my own little brain?

Could dead people speak? I doubted they
could.

But there was silence so long in the wood.

And as if drawn by a hand unknown
The eyes make out on an upright stone

»In God's hand till we meet again.«
»I Guds hånd til vi ses igen.«

Og hjertets svar i tak og tro
er: Ja. De døde taler jo.

Imellem gærdets grove sten
ser man en blomst, en lille én,
der hvisker blegt og lyseblåt
et enkelt ord: »Forget-me-not.«

I vasen står en vild buket.
Et *barn* har gjort den, pænt og net.

Blåkløkke, hyben, margerit.
Der er jo blåt og rødt og hvidt:

frihed i markens simple dragt.
Der siges den »tak som vi aldrig fik sagt«.

B. R.

"We bless the years with you" and then,
"In the hand of God till we meet again."

And deep in the heart an answer says,
"Yes, it is true. Give thanks and praise.

They are kept and alive; like them we should
Work on for all that is sane and good."

And look, there's a bunch of flowers, wild
Picked in the wood and made by a *child*;

Bluebell, dog rose and daisy - right,
it's there, the blue and the red and white:

Liberty in simple country dress
The "thanks that words did never express."

B. R.





Flight Sergeant
H. J. Porter
 Royal Australian Air Force

He gave his all
 for the country
 he loved so well



Sergeant
D. Morris
 Royal Air Force

We bless the years
 we spent with you
 In God's own keeping
 until we meet again

Harvey James Porter
 23 - 3 - 1925 12 - 3 - 1945

Donald Morris
 24 - 11 - 1924 12 - 3 - 1945

**Fjendehaand dem lagde i Danmarks jord
 Venner satte dette minde som tak der ej fik ord**

**Enemies laid them in Denmark's ground
 Friends thank them here, for words were not found**

*English translation by Børge Rasmussen
 all photographs by Gail R. Michener, June 2011*