

Dannebrogsvalmuen – “The Danish flag” poppy

A symbol for the Danish-minded pows in Allied camps



Papaver Rhoëas

Many Danes were very supportive of the Danish-minded men from Schleswig and Holstein who had been conscripted into the German army and had been taken prisoner of war. For them and their families the whole conflict was made worse by the fact that they were open to be thought of as being traitors by the other German pows. As a result of this the Danish-minded pows were moved to special camps such as Aurillac in France and Feltham in England.

N.H. Rasmussen headed a committee sending letters, parcels etc. to the pows from South Jutland. In the spring of 1915 he had the idea of sending them poppy seeds so they could, with due permission given, sow a little bed of flowers. These Dannebrogsvalmuer – “Danish flag” poppies were red and white as the Danish flag is. A printed letter in Danish sent with the seeds explained the history of the poppy to the pows and included a specially written poem full of the symbolism they represented. Which indeed would have provoked German anger over misplaced loyalty!

We are sending you a few poppy seeds
Whose flowers are red and white
Sow them in the foreign soil where you are
And they will in time carry our message.
If you don't get to see the flowers
Because peace has been agreed
They will still represent this land in the future
When the colours are swaying in the wind.
"The flower of the Danes" just call them so
Their colours are red and white
And they may still be standing in a 100 years
When we all are dead;
And they may still be standing in a 100 years
And flower in field and garden
While wind blows the Dannebrog (The Danish flag)
Freely over our graves.



This is a rough translation of the end 1/3 of the poem. Written by Ahrent Otterstrøm

The letter and packet of seeds sent to the pows were accompanied by a note in either French or English which the pow should show to his guard. The note explained the significance of the planting of these particular flowers – Danskernes Blomster - the flower of the Danes.