

Son's tribute to aircrew heroes

by **Michael Alexander**

THE SON of a heroic Second World War RAF flying officer has just returned from an Armistice Day service in Lincolnshire where he commemorated the bravery of his father and aircrew colleagues who were killed in a Lancaster bombing mission over Germany.

Norval Black, of Wormit, travelled to North Killingholme near Grimsby where, during the Second World War, his father Henry was based with 550 Squadron.

Flying Officer Henry Black joined 550 Squadron as a bomb aimer in August 1944. Along with all of the crew, the 33-year-old was killed in action on a daylight raid on Duisburg on Saturday October 14 1944, flying in a Lancaster bomber.

All seven are buried in the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery at Venray in Holland. Henry Black was born in St Andrews in 1911, attended Waid Academy in Anstruther and served in Kirkcaldy Burgh Police force before enlisting in the RAF in 1941.

His name is commemorated on the war memorials of all these places.

Norval, who was four years old when his father died and has only the "haziest of recollections" of him, explained that, around four years ago, a man named Marc Hall from Sevenoaks in Kent was researching the Duisburg raid on which one of his relatives had been killed.

From RAF records he obtained the names of aircrew lost on the raid, and from a search of the internet found the name of a Henry Black on the Kirkcaldy Police War Memorial website.

"He wrote to the local newspaper asking if anyone had any information on him, and someone put him in touch with me," Norval said.

"Over this time we have stayed in communication and I have given him some photographs and information for his researches, which next year he will publish as a book."

Earlier this year Marc emailed Norval to say that, from a contact in Germany, he had learned that wreckage from a wartime aircraft had been found by a forester in woods north east of Krefeld near Duisburg, including a panel with the number 319.

From the location, but more definitively from the number, he immediately realised that this was from Norval's father's aircraft. Furthermore, he has now secured this panel and passed it on to him.

Norval added: "From the condition of the panel, it is clear that the aircraft suffered a catastrophic internal explosion, and this also explains why this wreckage was some distance from where the crew were found."

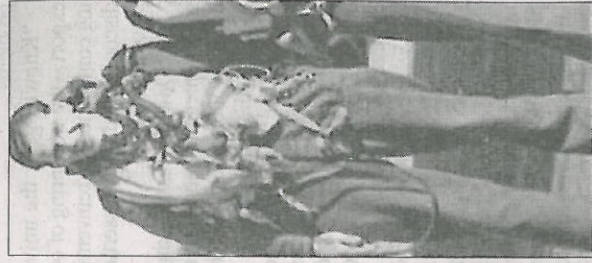
North Killingholme near Grimsby in Lincolnshire was the base for 550 Squadron.

There is a squadron association of surviving members and relatives.

In a room off the village hall in Killingholme is a museum dedicated to the squadron with some maps, photos, medals and memorabilia.

Norval has now had the serial panel mounted, and on Sunday, with his son Richard, he attended the Armistice Day Ceremony at North Killingholme church.

Afterwards at the association lunch, the



Above – Norval presents the panel to Lancaster veteran Sam Lipfield. Right – Henry Black.

panel was presented to the association to be displayed in the museum.

By a sad coincidence, Henry's father, also Henry Black, was killed in The Black Watch at the Battle of Aubers Ridge in 1915 in the First World War when Henry himself was just four years old.

Norval added: "I think it appropriate, but

also amazing, that this part of Lancaster PD319 should return after all this time to the base she left 68 years ago.

"In particular, I am glad to have been able to have the panel and some photographs placed in the squadron museum as a permanent memorial to my father and his crew."

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