

Memory revived from ashes of

History: One man's effort to find out about old photos leads to poignant act of tribute

BY ANDREW YOUNGSON

The ultimate sacrifice of a Scots airman and his crew is to be commemorated in the Netherlands - thanks to the efforts of a retired London builder.

Tuesday, April 14, will mark 75 years since Aberdeen-born Sergeant John Rose Proctor and two comrades were shot down in a

"I just had the photos to go on with. As you get older, you feel the clock ticking away"

dogfight with a German fighter above the Dutch village of Babberich.

Today, the nephew of one of the crewmen is reaching out to any remaining relatives of Sgt Proctor to invite them to attend a special ceremony to rekindle his memories of him and his fellow crew.



FIRING PARTY: The 1940 funeral in Arnhem, Holland, when the air crew shot down 15 miles away received military honours but were buried in civilian graves



Retired builder Jim Shuttleworth, 68, has spent the past six months arranging the ceremony at Moscowva Cemetery in Arnhem - just 15 miles from where the crew crash landed in their Blenheim MK IV bomber.

It is at this particular cemetery where his uncle - aircraftman 1st class James Shuttleworth - Sgt Proctor and pilot officer HG Graham Hogg were buried in civil graves after a military funeral.

A piped procession of Mr Shuttleworth jun's family members will be joined by representatives of the Royal Dutch Airforce at 11am on April 14 at the Dutch cemetery where a Royal British Legion chaplain will lead the commemoration.

Local schoolchildren will lay wreaths at the three men's gravestones, and also lay wooden crosses on the graves of their fellow 34 World War II-era British and Polish servicemen.

Adding to the poignancy of the occasion, a former colonel of the Dutch airforce, who will be in attendance, has arranged for a military flypast.

Initially planned as a small family affair, the ceremony has developed considerably since it has garnered interest from the Royal Dutch Airforce, the Royal British Legion and the British Embassy.

The response, Mr Shuttleworth said, has been "brilliant".

He said: "You can imagine I'm quite emotional about it.

"It's nice how everybody has taken it on board. "I've really had super help with this from everyone, such as the cemetery people who couldn't have



Jim Shuttleworth

been nicer." The Londoner recently became aware that Sgt John Rose Proctor was from Aberdeen and that he was son of Alexander Wright Proctor and Jane Henderson, though no further details beyond that are known.

Mr Shuttleworth is now trying to make any remaining relatives aware



Dutch soldiers are led by slow drumbeat in funeral tribute to the lost air crew

lost Scot and his air crew



BROTHERS IN ARMS: James and his twin brother Reginald as boys and later in military uniform after joining up to play their part in World War II



of the event in the hope they will be there on the day too. "My kids will be coming with me, but I just think it would be so nice if we could get in touch with the relatives of the other guys to invite them along too," he said.

His journey to arranging April's ceremony has been a long and emotional one.

He was only four years old when his father, Reginald - Jim sen's twin brother - died, so he did not get the chance to ask him about his uncle or the sad story of his death.

He said: "I just had the photos to go on with. As you get older, you feel the clock ticking away and so you take more interest in things like this."

His reasons for making the event a reality have been clear from the outset. In a year when high-profile anniversaries such as that of the Dunkirk evacuation of June 1940 will be marked, Mr Shuttleworth fears that lesser-known sto-

"They got shot down and they're buried in a civil cemetery and haven't had a lot of recognition"

ries of bravery during WWII could be sidelined.

While by no means trying to detract from such events, he wants to do his bit to make sure this small but important tale

is not forgotten. He said: "Really, it's from the point of view that these three guys took off to do a simple reconnaissance mission, they got shot down and now they're buried in a civil cemetery and haven't had a lot of recognition.

"But they made the ultimate sacrifice, just like everyone else.

"It's coming up to the 75th anniversary, and there will be a lot going on this year about the Blitzkrieg and Dunkirk, and also the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz which are all important, but these three guys gave their lives just the same.

"I think my dad would have liked this event."

Time rewind: Brothers known as Heavenly Twins

James and his twin brother Reginald were born on February 25, 1919, but they would only meet for the first time when they were aged 17.

Conceived out of wedlock at the tail-end of WWI, the twins were fostered out separately soon after their birth.

A serendipitous encounter at Ilford baths

years later would provide the spark for a firm and fast friendship. "They were called the Heavenly Twins because apparently they were so mischievous," said Mr Shuttleworth.

"My dad certainly had a reputation for playing practical jokes."

On May 13, 1940, barely four weeks after his brother's death,

Reginald was shot down. He survived but spent the rest of the war in PoW camps, including Stalag Luft 3 at the time of the Great Escape.

He returned to Ilford in north-east London after the war, married and had two sons - the elder, James jun - but died from cancer in 1950.

Dutch honour young heroes as thousands line the streets

FUNERAL

When James Shuttleworth crash-landed near the Dutch-German border in April 1940, the Englishman was aged just 21.

He and his fellow RAF crewmen were on a simple photo-reconnaissance mission for 57 Squadron when, at around 4.15pm, they were chased by four lighter German planes.

The crew of the British Blenheim bomber were able to destroy three of the German aircraft before being shot down themselves, exploding in the air before crash-landing in Babberich village in a meadow next to the house of the Van Bindsbergen family.

All three crewmen were killed but were given a remarkable funeral with full

military honours by the people of Arnhem.

Thousands lined the route as their remains were carried in a hearse drawn by two white horses.

Senior diplomats from the British Embassy attended and the event was reported in the Ilford Recorder - James's local paper - and the London Times.

APPEAL

Are you a relative of Sgt John Rose Proctor? If you are, or know of someone who is, please contact andrewyoungson@ajl.co.uk

Pro-life campaigners to fight on

Christian pro-life campaigners have vowed to push on with the private prosecution of a doctor accused of planning an abortion based on the sex of an unborn child, after a judge at Manchester Crown Court failed to provide a summons for video evidence of the alleged offence.

The Christian Legal Centre is taking action after the Crown Prosecution Service decided against charging Dr Prabha Sivaraman.

Fifty Shades of success



Fifty Shades Of Grey looks set to be a box office hit with one cinema chain already boasting of taking in more than £1million in ticket sales a week before it opens. The film version of EL James' bestseller, which stars Jamie Dornan, pictured, as Christian Grey, is in cinemas from Friday.

Reporter 'a true legend'

The Sun's chief reporter John Kay, 71, was hailed a "true legend" as Fleet Street friends and colleagues flocked to his defence over allegations of paying corrupt officials for stories. The Sun royal photographer Arthur Edwards told an Old Bailey trial yesterday that the two-time British Press Awards Reporter of the Year was on a "pedestal" in the industry.

Great Train Robbery sale

A wristwatch and signet ring worn by Ronnie Biggs during the Great Train Robbery in 1963 are to be offered for sale at auction. Northamptonshire-based auctioneer JP Humbert said the items belonging to Biggs, who died in 2013, would go under the hammer on February 18.

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