



Norman Mervyn Kirkcaldie

401315

Pilot Officer

Family affairs

Norman Kirkcaldie was born in Wellington, New Zealand on the 2nd of February 1918 as the son of Norman Kirkcaldie (1879-1918) from Levin, New Zealand and Marjorie Grace Kirkcaldie-Kebbell (1889-1980) from Palmerston North, Manawatu, New Zealand.

Norman had two brothers, an older brother Keith Randall Kirkcaldie (1912-1969) and one that died within a month after birth Francis John Kirkcaldie (1917-1917).

He received his secondary education at the Wanganui Collegiate School and afterwards completed the examinations for both the New Zealand Society of Accountants, and the Bachelor of Commerce degree.

He played for two seasons in his school first rugby and athletics teams and in addition held four school athletic records. After leaving school he was employed for three years by Clarke, Menzies, Griffin & Co., Public Accountants of Wellington until proceeding to Sydney, Australia early in 1939 to engage in business there. He returned to New Zealand in order to enlist and applied for aircrew on the 25th October 1939.

Military affairs

Following his return from Australia, he was for a year member of the Wellington Territorial Squadron. Pilot Officer Kirkcaldie was enlisted at the Initial Training Wing, Levin on the 9th May 1940 and proceeded to No.2 Elementary Flying Training School, Blenheim, where on 22nd November 1940 he was awarded the flying badge and commissioned in the rank of Pilot Officer. He embarked early in December for the United Kingdom.

Norman Kirkcaldie arrived at No.1 Royal Air Force Depot, Uxbridge on the 15th January 1941 and on the 3rd February proceeded to No.20 Operational Training Unit, Lossiemouth, Scotland. Here he crewed up and completed his training on Wellington bomber aircraft before posting on the 26th April to No.214 Squadron at Stradishall, Suffolk. With this Squadron as 2nd pilot of a Wellington he took part in 3 operational flights to targets in enemy territory.

Pilot Officer Kirkcaldie was the 2nd pilot of Wellington Mark 1C bomber aircraft R1226 BU-L engaged on the night of 8/9th May 1941 in an attack on Hamburg in Germany. On 8 May 1941 at 22.10hr the Wellington bomber took off from Stradishall airfield in England. More than 300 bombers took off this evening with various missions over Germany. On the way back, the bomber was attacked by the night fighter of Flugzeugführer Oberleutnant Egmont Prinz zur Lippe-Weissenfeld and Unteroffizier Renette (4./NJG 1) over the north of Holland. It was an immediate hit and the Wellington immediately caught fire. A few minutes later, the aircraft crashed into a bulb field at 02:48 hours. All the crew including Pilot Officer Kirkcaldie were classified as missing. In due course his death was officially presumed to have occurred on the 9th May 1941.

A post war casualty search revealed that the aircraft crashed near Breezand, north west of Anna Paulowna, a town in the Dutch province Noord-Holland. Pilot Officer Kirkcaldie and his comrades were originally buried in the Communal Grave in the Huisduinen cemetery, approximately 5km southwest of Den Helder in the same province. Later the remains of Pilot Officer Kirkcaldie were interred in the Bergen-op-Zoom Military Cemetery.

To commemorate the Wellington R1226 crew a memorial was unveiled at the Breezand crash site on 02-07-2022.

Remarks

- Norman Mervyn Kebbell Kirkcaldie completed 235 flying hours as Pilot prior to his death.
- In Grave 32 C 02C his remains rest in a common grave with Cyril Paton, 904673 from South Willesborough, Ashford, Kent, UK (1918-1940) who was rear gunner in the Wellington R1226 on the same fatal mission.
- The other 3 crew members of Wellington R1226 that were killed in the crash are also buried on the Bergen-op-Zoom Military Cemetery:
 1. PO Frank Leslie Herbert Eddison, UK, 39377, Squadron Leader, 30 years, grave 32 C 02A
 2. Sgt. John Holt, UK, 749319, observer, 22 years, grave 32 C 02B
 3. Sgt. Arnot Flaws Wilson, UK, 935907, gunner, 19 years, grave 32 C 02F
 4. Sgt. Kennedy Tait, UK, 974125, radiotelegrapher, 20 years, grave 32 C 02E
- Two of his cousins from his father's side enlisted in the Air Forces too and both did not survive the War:
 1. Fl. Lt. John Allan Kirkcaldie (1905-1944) who died in an air accident in New Zealand on 02-12-1944.
 2. P.O. Kenneth Kirkcaldie (1912-1940), No 7252 RAF Volunteer Reserve who died on 08-06-1940 in combat in Northern France.

Sources:

1. Stichting Herdenkingspalen Hollands Kroon,
Herdenking Wellington R1226 crew – Breezand, NL

https://shhk.nl/crashinfo_r1226_en.html

2. On-line Cenotaph Norman Kirkcaldie

<https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/record/C28220>

3. Foto Norman Kirkcaldie

https://nl.findagrave.com/memorial/12727265/norman_mervyn_kebbell-kirkcaldie

<https://www.ww2cemeteries.com/bergen-op-zoom-war-cemetery.html>

4. Foto Kerstmenu 1940 214 Sq

https://214squadron.org.uk/Photos/Photo_album_2.htm

5. Foto van Norman's neven John Allan Kirkcaldie en Kenneth Kirkcaldie

<https://nl.findagrave.com/memorial/145331082/john-allan-kirkcaldie>

<https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/record/C28219>

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