



Family members and local villagers pay tribute to the Australians who died in a plane crash at Fridaythorpe.

Remembrance ceremony for crew shot down near Fridaythorpe

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An emotional and poignant commemoration and remembrance ceremony has taken place in honour of the crew of a bomber plane which was shot down and crashed near Fridaythorpe during the Second World War.

Only three members of the predominantly Australian seven-man crew from the 466 Squadron RAAF survived the crash which happened on 4th March 1945.

The daughter and son-in-law of the navigator of the plane Pat Hogan, who survived the crash, travelled from Australia to lay a memorial plaque at Gill's Farm in Fridaythorpe, close to the site where the plane is believed to have crashed, as a lasting tribute to those who gave their lives.

Elizabeth Lusby from Wagga Wagga in New South Wales said it was important to keep alive the memory of the sacrifices made by people such as her dad and his friends on board the Halifax NR179.

She told the Wolds Weekly: "This is the completion of a journey. My dad survived and got home but he never got over the loss of his three best friends.

"This ceremony and memorial plaque is a way of honouring their memories and the sacrifices they made.

"These were young Australian boys who left their families and were never the same when they got home. It is so important we remember what they did for us."



Elizabeth Lusby with the memorial.

The crew of NR179 were part of 17 aircraft from the 466 Squadron RAAF of the Bomber Command who were stationed in Driffeld during the Second World War who took part in a mission to Kamen in Germany.

On return to their base at Driffeld, NR179 was not given clearance to land and lost its place in the landing queue. While waiting for clearance to land, the lights were extinguished at Driffeld because it was under attack from enemy fire.

The plane climbed to 4,000 feet looking for an alternative airfield and headed towards Elvington. Unable to find any nearby airfields, because all lights were out due to the

attack, and by now low on fuel, the pilot Alan Shelton headed towards the coast so the crew could bail out over the sea and avoid endangering any civilians.

It was then they were attacked from below by a German Junker JU 88 near Elvington.

Elizabeth said: "The pilot gave the orders to bail out. The gunners Roger Laing and Bill Bullen bailed out first and were close enough to talk to each other as they came down at Sutton upon Derwent, either side of the river.

"My father also bailed out and landed safely a little further away in a ploughed field.

"Willy Walsh, the flight

engineer and the only British member of the crew, was killed when his chute failed to open. He is buried near his family in Dorset.

"NR179, with pilot Alan Shelton, bomb aimer Roger Johnson and wireless operator Greg Dixon still on board, crashed at the site at Gill's Farm at 1.10am on 4th March 1945. They are all buried at Stonefall Cemetery at Harrogate.

"The only reason my dad survived is because he had left his parachute at the back of the plane and had to go back and get it, otherwise he would have been up at the front which was so badly damaged by the fire that the crew at the front were unable to get out."

Elizabeth's husband Warren added: "We have had so much co-operation and enthusiasm from Hilary Burton from Gill's Farm and from the local community of Fridaythorpe and from everyone who has been involved to make this commemoration service possible."

Elizabeth and Warren were also joined by relations of bomb aimer Roger Johnson, who travelled from London for the ceremony; Paul Knott, treasurer of the Friends of 466 and 462 Squadrons and John Dann, a 466 and 462 Squadron historian.

Elizabeth said: "This is an emotional time. The plaque is here in a peaceful place and I hope people from the local community will come here and visit the site and remember those who gave their lives for us."