

Hedley Brown



Sergeant Air Gunner 643275, 9 Squadron Royal Air Force

Died February 15th 1942, aged 20

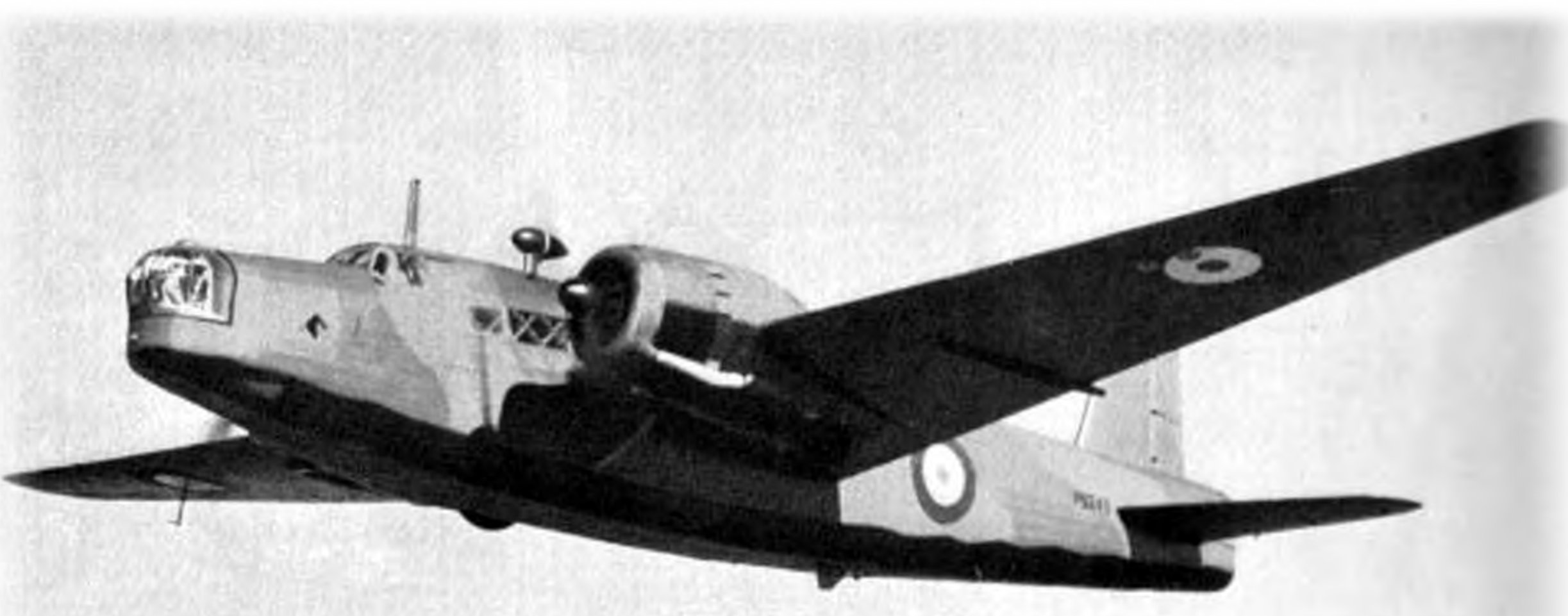
Memorial at St Endellion Churchyard

Son of Arthur and Doris Brown, of St Endellion

Hedley Brown was from a family of six and lived opposite St Endellion Church. He is the brother of Margery Sherratt, and an uncle to Nigel Sherratt.

Hedley Brown was in *Number 9 Squadron*, also known as *No IX (Bomber) Squadron*. At the start of the war it was equipped with modern Mk 1 Wellington Bombers flying out of RAF Honington in Suffolk. IX Squadron were possibly the first to shoot down an enemy aircraft in September 1939 and flew the first bombing raid of the Second World War against Kriegsmarine targets in the Baltic. IX Squadron took part in all the major raids of WW2, including sinking the Tirpitz with 12,000 pound 'Tallboy' bombs in 1944.

Wellington Bomber



The twin engine Wellington Bomber was designed by Barnes Wallis in 1936 and served the RAF from 1938 to 1953 and was the workhorse of bomber squadrons until 1942 when the more modern four engine Avro Lancaster was introduced. The fuselage was built of 1650 elements consisting of aluminium beams formed into a framework, with wooden battens screwed to the aluminium and the whole skin covered with Irish linen treated with dope. This structure enabled a Wellington with large areas of framework missing to return home when other planes would not have survived.

The job of an air gunner was to man the turret mounted machine guns in the very exposed nose of the Wellington aeroplane. Bomber Command crew suffered extremely high casualty rates, with over 55,000 killed out of 125,000 aircrew (44%). This was a worse chance of survival than an infantry officer in WW1.



This Wellington returned home despite all the damage



Best Wishes
for
Christmas and the New Year
from
Hed



RAF Honington Christmas Card from Hedley to his parents, showing a Wellington Bomber being prepared for a raid

Hedley was normally a rear gunner, but on his last mission, a raid on Holland, he swapped with the middle gunner. On the return, his plane was shot down to ditch over the North Sea. Only the rear gunner survived.

Sergeant Air Gunner Hedley Brown died February 15th 1942 and is buried at St Endellion Church.

These are the four members of IX Squadron who died that day:

- Sergeant Air Gunner Hedley Brown (20 years old)
- Sergeant Observer Frederick Ernest Coulson (21 years old)
- Sergeant Pilot John Wilson Dalglish (23 years old)
- Sergeant Wireless Operator/Air Gunner William Hutchinson (34 years old)



The grave of Sergeant Air Gunner Hedley Brown at St Endellion Church



The logo is the Air Gunner's badge with the RAF motto 'Per Ardua ad Astra' (Through adversity to the stars)

In Memory of
Sergeant Air Gnr.
Hedley Brown

643275, 9 Sqdn., Royal Air Force who died on 15 February 1942 Age 20

Son of Arthur and Doris Brown, of St. Endellion.

Remembered with Honour
St. Endellion (St. Endellienta) Churchyard

Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Sources:

- No. IX (Bomber) Squadron: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._9_Squadron_RAF
 - RAF Honington: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Honington
 - Wellington Bomber: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vickers_Wellington
 - Bomber Command casualties: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Bomber_Command#Casualties
 - Air Gunner: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Air_gunner
- We are grateful to Nigel Sherratt for the memento and information he provided.