

THOMAS SUTHERLAND BROTHERSTONE

Introduction

T S Brotherstone's great niece Traci Gaven contacted the school on the 12th April 2021, asking if someone could investigate the circumstances around the death of her great uncle. The enquiry was passed to the school historian, who offered to investigate. That enquiry arrived almost simultaneously with another, asking after a member of the winning RHS FP side at the 1934 Melrose sevens. T S Brotherstone coincidentally was a member of the same side, and that coincidence made the investigation unstoppable!

The following article is a composite of investigations by a number of individuals, including Traci, Ian R C Cowie and the historian.

While most WW2 casualties were in the theatre of active war, many died as a result of accidents. Squadron Leader 'Tommy' Brotherstone was one of the latter, killed while training a young bomber pilot at Prestwick Airport on December 29th 1944. Tommy was Captain of School, Rugby and Cricket in 1931.

His Great-great Niece is a pupil at School.

School Life

He entered RHS in 1st Senior form in 1926, and won his first honours certificate at the prize giving in 1927, winning the same prize each year until 1930 when he was proxime accessit to Dux. In the 1930/31 session he won a 6th form scholarship, and was Games Champion, very unusual for a fifth former. Sadly, we don't have the 1931 Annual Report to see what awards he won in his sixth form.

His entry in the WW2 Roll of Honour shows that he became Captain of Rugby, Cricket and School, and Games Champion for a second time.

As a young former pupil

In rugby, he was an International trialist in 1932 and 1933, played in the Inter-City (Edinburgh v Glasgow) matches in 1931-1934. While he must have played many games for the FP 1st XV, his number of games is not recorded in the 'Century Club' records, although our records show that by the end of the 1933/34 season, he had played 65 games (scoring seven tries that season), so very likely achieved the century. He was famously a member of the 1934 RHS FP Melrose sevens winners' team

RAF Service

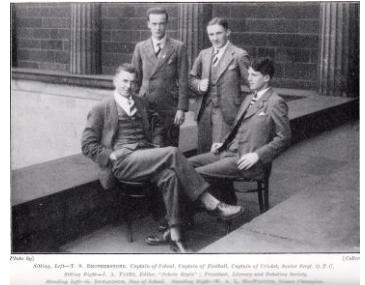
No. 612 (County of Aberdeen) Squadron. Thomas Sutherland BROTHERSTONE is granted a commission as Acting Pilot Officer. 22nd Mar. 1939.

He went to Canada in 1941 to train as a bomber pilot, then as a Pilot trainer. He returned to UK in 1942, based at Chivenor in January 1942 and moved to Turnberry in Scotland in May 1942.

1944 – Based at No 5 OTU (Operational Training Unit) at Turnberry Airfield. The airfield was created in 1917 for use in WWI, but was returned to golf course use until 1940 when it was once again converted to an airfield.

Death

The table below show the two RAF personnel in the plane at the time of the crash on 29th December 1944. Young trainee pilot Harry Holmes was killed at the site of the crash, while Thomas Brotherstone survived but died the next day. The report on the deaths includes a detailed account of the accident, also that Harry Holmes, the trainee pilot, was buried in Salford.



30-Dec	BROTHERSTONE, THOMAS SUTHERLAND (90673) age: 31 RAF	Squadron Leader	He was serving with No 5 (C) OTU and died in the County Hospital, Ayr, from shock and multiple injuries sustained the previous day, possibly whilst flying in Warwick I, BV340 which overshot and crashed into the south bank of Pow Burn at Prestwick following an engine failure. He was cremated at Edinburgh (Warriston) Crematorium.
29-Dec	HOLMES, HARRY (1458454) age: 22 RAFVR	Flight Sergeant	He died from injuries, sustained whilst flying in Warwick I, BV340 of No 5 (C) OTU, which overshot and crashed into the south bank of Pow Burn at Prestwick following an engine failure. He is buried in Salford (Agecroft) Cemetery.

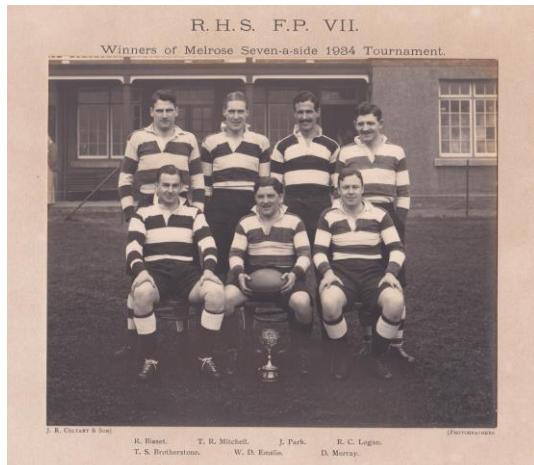
The Vickers Warwick

The plane they were flying, a Vickers Warwick, had an unenviable record during the war, with many crashes due to handling problems

Vickers Warwick - <https://www.baesystems.com/en/heritage/vickers-warwick>

Wikipedia on the Warwick's handling and power - Early testing showed the Warwick to be under-powered and with severe handling problems, especially when flown on a single engine. Accordingly, stability and control trials commenced with the third production Warwick, which yielded acceptable handling during single engine operations when outfitted with a new bulged rudder. The version of Double Wasp fitted to early models proved extremely unreliable with many in-flight failures; later versions fitted with the Centaurus engine had better performance but the handling problems were never solved.

Photographs



Thomas Brotherstone – (front row left) in the official 1934 Melrose Sevens photo, taken at Jocks Lodge



T S Brotherstone in the RHS FP 1st XV of 1933/34. He is at the extreme right in the seated row



Prestwick Airport, 1943 and 1944 images with text explaining the massive wartime development



NEARLY A YEAR LATER—IN APRIL 1944—PRESTWICK PRESENTED A
CONSIDERABLY CHANGED APPEARANCE: In the interim many
additional buildings had been erected and other improvements
carried out. This picture, too, was taken from a height of 5 miles.



Prestwick Airport, with the Pow Burn (where the plane crashed) at the upper right



A Vickers Warwick bomber, similar to the one which crashed



*The WW2 brass Roll of Honour tablet bearing Thomas S
Brotherstone's name in the first column*

An extract from the death certificate

BROTHERSTONE, THOMAS SUTHERLAND (1931).
Captain of School; XI (Capt.); XV (Capt.); O.T.C. (Senior Sgt.);
Games Champion—Record Cricket Throw. A/P/O., R.A.F., 1939;
F/O., 1941; Fl./Lieut. (A/Sqn/Ldr.) in Canada, 1942; Sqdn./Ldr.,
1943. *Killed on Active Service, December 1944.*

T S Brotherstone's entry in the WW2 Roll of Honour, showing his outstanding School record, along with his service record