

WWII pilot finally gets a chance to farewell his brother

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By LYN HUMPHREYS

A NEW PLYMOUTH airman shot down over Germany during World War II is to receive a final farewell from his brother on the 53rd anniversary of his death next month.

On September 23, 1943, Flying Officer Arthur Douglas Howlett, known as Scotty, took off as part of the crew of a Stirling bomber amid a massive sortie of 628 Royal Air Force aircraft. Their target was Mannheim, Germany.

The New Zealand bomber and its eight crewmen from 75 Squadron never returned to their base at Mepal near Cambridge, England.

Their families were aware that remains of crewmen found after the crash had been moved from Dirmstein, Germany, where the bomber went down, and buried at Rheinberg after the war.

But the exact whereabouts of the bomber had remained a mystery to relatives until the crashed plane was excavated from a field near Dirmstein two years ago, along with more human remains.

The RAF's Air Secretary then tracked down the next of kin of the eight crewmen for a commemorative service at Rheinberg Military Cemetery.

Through New Plymouth's Jack West, the author of *Lest We Forget* — which outlines the former 227 New Plymouth Boys' High School students who died in the war — the Air Secretary was put in touch with Scotty Howlett's brother, Dave Howlett (76), of New Plymouth.

"I'm the only one from New Zealand who is going. I'm certainly the only one travelling so far," Mr Howlett said.

"It's been traumatic reminder of a lot of feelings buried a long time. It's excitement mixed with sorrow," Mr Howlett said.

The human remains recovered in the wreckage have been interred in Rheinberg Military Cemetery, along with the remains found after the crash.

Publicity on the find has resulted in a German man coming forward with Scotty Howlett's cigarette lighter he found after the crash.

Dave Howlett said he now hoped that



OVER THERE: Dave Howlett of New Plymouth will travel to a military cemetery in Germany next month for a commemoration service for his airman brother shot down during a bombing sortie 53 years ago.

Photo: DWAYNE SENIOR

during his visit to Germany he would be able to meet the man who had kept the lighter safe for 53 years. "I'm hoping the German will be there. I do want to take him something appropriate."

He will also take with him a 75 Squadron crest from Ohakea, where the squadron is now based.

Mr Howlett's daughter Ann

Macdonald of Auckland will accompany Mr Howlett.

● DAVE HOWLETT also served as a Flight Sergeant in the war. He was a Corsair fighter pilot of 19 Fighter Squadron Pacific. He spent 16 months in the burns unit in Christchurch after his plane burst into flames above Jaquinet Bay, New Britain.