

## FLYPAST TRIBUTE TO SPITFIRE PILOT

By Allan Phin

A short service at a simple memorial deep in the hills behind Carsphairn on Saturday, followed by a flypast by two Spitfires from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, paid tribute to the memory of a Spitfire pilot.

The memorial has been erected by members of the Dumfries Aviation Group at the site near Clenoch Bothy from where they recently recovered a crashed World War II Spitfire. Pilot 19 year old David Hunter- Blair died nearby from injuries shortly after bailing out of the stricken plane on June 23, 1942.

From a hill track on Green Hill overlooking the crash site in the valley between Cairnsmore of Carsphairn and Moorbroch the service and fly past was watched by a small group including the pilot's brother, James Hunter- Blair of Blairquhan Estate, Maybole.

Also watching from Greenhill was Jim McGarva from Patna who actually witnessed the plane crash and made the pilot as comfortable as he could before making a dash to Dalry on his motor bike to summon medical aid. He and Tom Gordon from Moniaive, Jim Bell from Kilmarnock, and Andrew Anderson, who were also present, had all helped the Dumfries Aviation group in their two- year search for the plane.

Because of the remoteness of the site only the wings had been salvaged at the time and the remainder buried nearby.

The successful end to the search was recorded in the 'News' in July when a Royal Navy Sea King helicopter from HMS Gannet at Prestwick recovered the fuselage and Rolls Royce engine which are now in the Dumfries Aviation group's workshop at Heathhall.

The short service at the memorial near Brockloch bothy was taken by Ralph Davidson, the chairman of the Scottish Region of the Spitfire Society, and attended by around two dozen people including Frank Hunter-Blair, a cousin of the pilot who farms Marbrack only a few miles from the crash site. After Mr Davidson made a short speech and read a poem, a lament was played by a piper.

A few minutes later the two Mark 19 Spitfires of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight made the first of three passes along the valley. The arrangements for the service and fly past had been deliberately kept low key because of the remoteness of the site and out of respect for the dead pilot's relatives. There was also an element of uncertainty about the fly past which was dependent on the weather conditions and other events the same day.

It was Mr Davidson, who lives in Glasgow, who enlisted the help of the Dumfries Aviation Group in the long search for the missing Spitfire at the instigation of the BBC's Blue Peter television programme.

The plane had been named Blue Peter after a famous race horse when it was presented by the town of Newmarket to the Royal Air Force during the early days of the war. The search and recovery of the plane was filmed and is likely to be screened by the BBC during the autumn.

### **Caption to accompanying image:**

The Royal Navy Sea King helicopter is pictured  
Recovering the Spitfire Rolls Royce Merlin  
Engine from its burial site near Brockloch Bothy  
In July