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Poignant memorial for air crash victims of 1967

Pilgrimage: Relatives among those paying respects to 13 airmen killed



MOVING: Family members and former RAF personnel at the service at Lochailort for the dead airmen, led by padre Andrew Tucker

SUNSHINE

BY ALISTAIR MUNRO

A moving pilgrimage was held on a Highland mountain yesterday to commemorate 13 aircrew killed when an RAF Shackleton plane crashed half a century ago.

A group of around 23 – including family members and former RAF personnel – headed to a remote slope in Lochailort to pay their respects to the tragic crew, whose plane plunged into the hillside in icy conditions.

Organiser John Channon, who was a sergeant at RAF Kinloss with 206 Squadron when the tragedy happened, said the event was a fitting tribute to those

who died. He said: "It went really, really well.

"We were joined by members of the Fort William British Legion and the policeman who was first at the scene.

"We had a padre, Andrew Tucker, who did an absolutely first-class service in memory of the crew.

"There was a wreath laid and plaques unveiled by families of two of the airmen, Flight Sergeant David Harris and Pilot Officer Iain McLean.

"This episode was one of the most harrowing I experienced in my air force career.

"It seems unreal that 50 years has passed since the disaster happened, but

we must never forget those involved and pay our respects."

It was on December 21, 1967 – the shortest day of the year – when XF702, an RAF Avro Shackleton MR3 maritime reconnaissance aircraft of 206 Squadron, encountered severe icing conditions in cloud and subsequently crashed into the hillside below Creag Bhan, near Arieniskil, Lochailort.

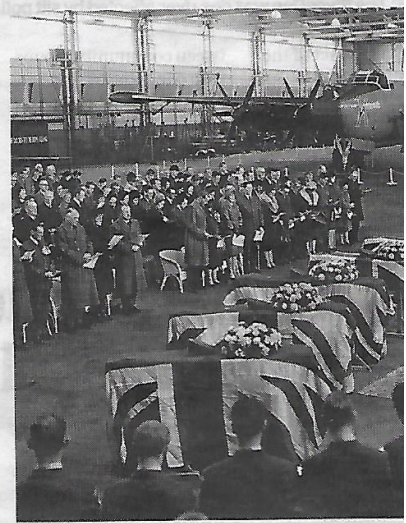
The impact scar is still visible on the hillside, a short way off the Right of Way from Arieniskil to Meoble, at a height of about 700 feet.

In 2007, as part of a project started by the Moidart History Group,

and in the presence of four children and one granddaughter of the crew, Derek Straw of the 206 Squadron Association fixed a commemorative cairn at the scene bearing the 206 Squadron motto – "Nihil Nos Effugit" – "Nothing escapes us".

When the accident happened, a roadman, Angus Cameron of Glenfinnan, had been working near Arieniskil when he heard the crash above him and saw the flash of the explosion through the low mist.

The Kinloss Mountain Rescue Team had to drive 120 miles to the location and it was dark when they arrived three hours later.



It has been 50 years since the Shackleton c