

P/O Robert John Simpson
J/95493 RCAF

Robert Simpson enlisted in the 48th Highlanders in the Canadian Army on his 18th birthday in Toronto only to be discharged four months later on medical grounds. A few days later he volunteered to join the RCAF, was accepted and trained as an air gunner.

He became a rear gunner and was killed when he was just over 20, on his fourth operation in a Lancaster crew, shot down during Bomber Command's final attack to halt traffic on the Mittelland canal in northern Germany.



Robert's No. 49 Squadron Lancaster, NG327 EA-K, was attacked by a Ju88 fighter during the raid on the night of 21 February 1945. The wireless operator and rear gunner were both killed instantaneously while the flight engineer and bomb-aimer both managed to successfully bale out. However, the latter was killed in a 'friendly fire' incident involving RAF aircraft days before the war ended.

Robert and his crew had taken off from Fulbeck at 1717 hours, part of a relatively small 5 Group force of 165 Lancasters and nine Mosquitoes. Nine Lancasters were lost, including two from 49.

Robert was the son of Robert and Annie Simpson of Toronto. He had been educated in the city, at the Earl Gray public school and later the Danforth Technical College, and had worked in the Toronto Stock Exchange before enlisting. He is buried in Reichswald Forest War Cemetery (Coll. grave 19. C. 13-17).

The others who died were the pilot F/O Edward Smith RNZAF, navigator Flt. Sgt. Joe Newby, bomb-aimer F/O Edwin Hook (killed 4 April), wireless operator P/O Eric McCarthy and 19-year-old mid-upper gunner Sgt. Colin Burridge.

His name can be found on panel 097.

Sources: 49 Squadron Association/Canadian Veterans/Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook.