

F/Sgt. Robert Gordon Smith R/93318 RCAF

Robert was born on 17 February 1917 in Athenry, Co Galway, Ireland, the son of Robert Young Smith and Mary Helen Smith. In December 1941 he married Isabelle Rita MacPherson in Toronto. Following his father's death, the family emigrated to Canada in 1931 and settled in Toronto.

Educated at Malvern Collegiate, due to the death of his mother Robert was forced to leave full time education prematurely and take employment; however, he continued to study at Jarvis Collegiate night school. Robert was employed as a clerk and stock-keeper when, in October 1940, he volunteered for aircrew duties in the RCAF.

Called up in February 1941, Robert trained in Canada and was awarded his Air Observer badge in December 1941, and was posted to the UK in February 1942.

Following advanced training, in August 1942 Robert was posted to 101 Squadron at RAF Holme-on-Spalding-Moor, Yorkshire, from 29 OTU at RAF North Luffenham, Rutland.

On the night of 6/7 December 1942 Bomber Command was tasked with an attack on vital railway sidings near Mannheim, Germany. Of a combined force of 272 aircraft, 101 Squadron contributed five crews.

At 1739 hours on 6 December Robert and the crew departed RAF Holme-on-Spalding-Moor in Lancaster I ED322 (SR-T).

Returning from the mission in the early hours of 7 December 1942, Robert's aircraft was 300 miles off course from base over the Pembrokeshire Coast, Wales. Whilst attempting to land at RAF Carew Cheriton, 5 miles NW of Tenby, Pembrokeshire, the aircraft crashed into the sea in Camarthen Bay, off Tenby, killing all on board.

The raid was a dismal failure with the loss of 15 aircraft. The target area was completely covered in cloud and only 500 incendiary bombs and some leaflets were dropped. The only damage to the city was the destruction by fire of an old wooden building, whilst a local farmer lost 25 sheep, 4 lambs, some turnips and a hay barn. There were no casualties in Mannheim or the railway sidings but a total of 55 aircrew were killed, 3 were taken POW, and a further 10 injured.

Also Killed: P/O Howard Earl Dabbs DFC RCAF (Pilot); F/Sgt. Leonard Roy Anderson RCAF (Nav); F/Sgt. Stefan Franchuk RCAF (AG); F/Sgt. Robert John Middleton RCAF (WOp); Sgt. James Hughes (FE); Sgt. William Thomas Warren (AG).

On 8 December Robert was washed ashore at Cefn Sidan Beach, Pembrey, South Wales. He is buried in St Mary Churchyard, Carew, Pembrokeshire.

Robert is commemorated on Wall Panel 99.

Photo Source: www.veterans.gc.ca

