

P/O Robert Elmer Ballentine, C/89728, Royal Canadian Air Force.



Robert (Bob) Ballentine was born on 10 December 1921 in Toronto, Canada, to parents Wilfred and Grace Ballentine. He had a brother Richard, a sister Margaret and the family lived at 102, Vesta Drive in Toronto.

He went to school at the Forest Hill Public School, followed by a 3-year course at the University of Toronto, from where he matriculated in the summer of 1941. He enlisted into the RCAF in September of that year at Queens University, Kingston, Ontario, and undertook his initial training there, and also at No. 3 Depot at Monkton. He achieved his qualification as Air Gunner at Monkton in July 1943. Posted abroad to England, he undertook further training at 21 OTU from whence he was posted to 434 Squadron.

434 (Bluenose) Squadron was, at the time, equipped with the Handley Page Halifax V bomber, and operated out of RAF Croft, in Yorkshire.

On 18 March 1944 Bob was an air gunner and part of the crew of eight, which took off at 1834 hours from RAF Croft, Yorkshire, in Halifax LL178, Code WL-R, (which bore the name "The old straw Hat"), to undertake a mine laying operation in the Heligoland area. This operation was a diversionary raid whilst Frankfurt was being bombed by 846 other aircraft. This aircraft was one of 98 which had taken off for this diversion.

All went well on the outward trip, with the mines being successfully dropped. Returning home the crew were advised that bad weather had developed over Croft. For reasons unknown, LL178 descended through cloud over the North Yorkshire Moors, something they and all crews were briefed not to do. The crew may have thought that they were over the last hill and in poor visibility began their descent to land. The aircraft struck the ground and crashed near Kepwick Bank Top, 7 miles ESE of Northallerton, at 2300 hours killing all on board. The crash report stated that the aircraft crashed whilst flying at a steep angle. Robert was 23 years old.

Robert Ballentine is buried in the Harrogate (Stonefall) Cemetery, Yorkshire.

He is commemorated on IBCC Panel 126.

Photo source: [www.veterans.gc.ca](http://www.veterans.gc.ca).