

PO Gordon Alexander Calder J/17246 RCAF

Gordon was born on 17 June 1917 in Watrous, Saskatchewan, Canada, the son of Murdoch Alexander Calder and Myrtle Kezia Calder nee Snell.

Educated at Freshwater School and Watrous High, Gordon was employed on the family farm when, in August 1940, he volunteered for service in the RCAF.

Called up in March 1941, Gordon completed his aircrew training in Canada in December 1941 with the award of his Wings, and he embarked for the UK the following month.

Following advanced training at 6(P) Advanced Flying Unit, RAF Little Rissington, Oxfordshire and 17 OTU RAF Upwood, Huntingdonshire, in August 1942 Gordon was posted to 98 Sqn on its reformation at RAF West Raynham, Norfolk, flying the Mitchell, moving to RAF Foulsham, Norfolk the following month. In March 1943 Gordon was granted his commission.



On 13 May 1943, six 98 Sqn Mitchells were tasked with an attack on the marshalling yards in Boulogne, Pas de Calais, France.

At 10:30 on 13 May Gordon and his crew departed RAF Foulsham in Mitchell II FL197 (VO-)

At 11:54, whilst on return from the target, Gordon's aircraft was hit by flak and, well alight, it crashed in the sea off Hardelet, south of Boulogne, Pas de Calais, France. Escorting fighters reported 4 parachutes leaving the aircraft -the report of the Wop/AG, one of the two crew who were taken POW, gives a fuller account:

"I and Sgt Frank Gower, AG in the rear section of the Mitchell, high over Boulogne, had not heard a bailout order when I saw the Nav/BA, take to his parachute. The intercom must be u/s..."Time to get out!" I called as I slapped the AG's arse to get him out of his turret seat in the smoke and melee of the stricken Mitchell. We jettisoned the rear crew door in preparation to bail out. Frank was not wearing his parachute harness -I was helping him on with it, kneeling in front of him to get the connecting strap and buckle between his knees when the aircraft went into a power dive. Our pilot put the plane into a steep dive in an attempt to extinguish the fire. We were thrown to the roof of the craft. Our pilot then put it into climb mode to put the fire out. When we pulled out of the dive the manoeuvre's centrifugal force hurled me, unscathed, through the open hatch. The AG must have collided with the aircraft floor. I was shot out at the end of the dive, the chute shot off my chest and was hanging at the end of the straps, vibrating; I just reached down and pulled the handle...it opened with a bang! I saw our aircraft, still on fire, climb after pulling out of the dive and then saw the pilot bail out. PO Calder's parachute was aflame; he didn't survive. The aircraft went into a spin; it would have been impossible for Frank to get out, even if he was conscious"

Also Killed: Sgt Frank Patrick Charles Gower (AG)

Gordon is buried in Boulogne Eastern Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France

Gordon is commemorated on Wall Panel 140

Photo Source: www.veterans.gc.ca