Cpl William Rodger Dickson R/87940 MiD RCAF

William was born on 19 June 1906 in Leith, Edinburgh, Scotland, the son of David Rodger Dickson and Rachel White Dickson nee Adams. The family emigrated to Canada when William was a child and settled in British Columbia.

Educated at Powell River Public School and King Edward High School, William was employed as a motor mechanic by Wildwood Motors, Powell Rivers when, in August 1940, he volunteered for service in the RCAF. Called up in February 1941, William completed his trade training as an Air Engine Mechanic 'C' in Canada and in October 1941 he embarked for the UK. On arrival in the UK, William was posted to 404 Sqn at RAF Sumburgh, Shetland Islands where he qualified as a Fitter IIE. In October 1943 William was posted to 432 Sqn at RAF East Moor, Yorkshire before transferring to 9432 Servicing Echelon in December also at RAF East Moor, and subsequently attached to 415 Sqn.

On the night of 10/11 August 1944 a 415 Sqn crew had flown Halifax MZ633 (QO-B) on an operational flight to bomb U-Boat pens at La Pallice, France. Just before reaching the target area, the aircraft's port outer engine caught fire. Fortunately, the fire went out after the propeller was feathered and the engine was shut down, and a precautionary landing was made at RAF Exeter, Devon. The damaged engine was replaced at Exeter, and the squadron planned the collection of the aircraft.

On the morning of 21 August 1944, 415 Sqn aircraft Halifax NA609 (QO-X) departed RAF East Moor with a crew of six, plus a second crew of six to fly MZ633 back to RAF East Moor. Arriving at RAF Exeter without incident, the repaired aircraft was signed over to them.

At 17:04 William and the crew departed RAF Exeter in Halifax III MZ633 flying in formation with Halifax III NA609 (QO-X). At 18:20 the two aircraft collided and then broke up in the air, crashing between the villages of West Haddlesey and Birkin, 5 miles SW of Selby, Yorkshire, west of the York to Doncaster Road, killing all 14 onboard the two aircraft.

The subsequent examination of the crash sites found that the starboard aileron of Halifax MZ633 was found on the ground with the Browning machine gun from the nose of Halifax NA609 sticking through it, indicating that the nose of NA609 had struck the rear portion of the starboard wing of MZ633. One suggestion for the collision occurring was put down to a propeller of Halifax NA609 breaking off, leading to the damaged aircraft then swinging into Halifax MZ633. This suggests that MZ633 was flying as the lead aircraft and NA609 was formated on it, so when the propeller dropped off NA609 a swing would initially occur, and with the two aircraft being so close together there was no time to avoid a collision with the lead aircraft. Most of the crew lost were squadron Section Leaders and this, combined with the loss of the Sqn Commanding Officer temporarily affected 415 Sqn's operational efficiency just 3 weeks after beginning operations in Bomber Command.

On 1 January 1945 William was posthumously Mentioned in Despatches. The citation read:

"Corporal Dickson's untiring efforts and high standard of work have added greatly to the proficiency of his station. The zealous manner in which he has carried out his duties has at all times been of great encouragement to those working under him".

Also Killed: Sqn Ldr Brian Edmund Wilmot RCAF DFC* (Pilot); FO Walter Reginald Eaglestone RCAF (WOp/AG); FO John Henry Hudson RCAF (Nav); PO Thomas Earl Wiltse RCAF (AB); Sgt Norman Martin Malpass (FE); Sgt James Walton Mitchell RCAF (AG)

William is buried in Harrogate (Stonefall) Cemetery, Yorkshire

William is commemorated on Wall Panel – 155