FO Harry Nettleton Kirkland J/10427 RCAF



Harry was born on 19 September 1920 in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, the only son of Dalton Archibald Kirkland and Grace Kirkland nee Nettleton.

Educated at Oliver and Westmount Public School and Victoria and Westmount High School, Harry was in his 2nd year of his BSc degree at the University of Alberta when, in January 1941, he volunteered for service in the RCAF.

Called up in April 1941, Harry completed his aircrew training in Canada in January 1942 with the award of his Observer badge. Completing advanced Navigator training, in March 1942 Harry was granted a commission and immediately embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at 2(O) AFU RAF Millom, Cumbria, and Mosquito conversion at RAF Upwood, Huntingdonshire, in August 1942 Harry was posted to 105 Sqn at RAF Horsham St Faith, Norfolk. The squadron moved to RAF Marham, Norfolk in September 1942.

On 26 February 1943, ten 105 Sqn crews were tasked with an attack against the Naval Stores Depot at Rennes. This depot was a key location serving U-boat bases on the French Atlantic coast.

At 16:45 on 26 February Harry, operating as the Navigator, departed RAF Marham in Mosquito IV DZ413 (GB-K).

Seven of the aircraft were able to bomb the target from heights varying between 50 - 800 feet. At 18:44 the lead pilot, realising he was bearing down on a gun emplacement, turned sharply to avoid it and collided with Harry's aircraft. The lead aircraft was seen to crash out of control and Harry's aircraft was last seen losing height with an obvious glycol leak. Although Harry's aircraft appeared to be under control, the Mosquito crashed at La Jouaudière, Les Landes d'Apigné, Le Rheu, Ille-et-Vilaine, SW of Rennes, killing both crew. This was Harry's 11th op.

Also Killed: FO Spencer Griffith Kimmel RCAF (Pilot)

Harry is buried in Rennes Eastern Communal Cemetery, Ill-et-Vilaine, France.

Harry is commemorated on Wall Panel 194

Photo Source: IBCC