

Sgt. Thomas Smith
McStay 1375108
RAFVR



Londoner Tom Smith was a navigator whose aircraft was the first of eight Halifaxes lost from 77 Squadron at Elvington in April 1943.

His aircraft, Halifax II JB847 KN-V, was shot down over France by a night-fighter during an attack on Duisburg on the night of 8/9 April as Bomber Command's 'Battle of the Ruhr' gathering momentum.

JB847 had taken off from Elvington at 2141 hours as part of a force of 392 Bomber Command aircraft. The Halifax was homebound when it was attacked by a night-fighter at 15,000 feet and shot down, crashing near the town of St Quentin. The pilot had ordered his crew to bale out but only the bomb-aimer, P/O R Wilson, managed to get clear before the bomber went out of control and crashed. The other seven men on board were killed, including a second pilot from a nearby heavy conversion unit.

Tom came from Lee in south-east London and was the 29 year old son of William and Rachel McStay.

Then others who died were the pilot Flt. Lt. Julian Balley, second pilot Sgt. Louis Samson RAAF, flight engineer Sgt. James Woodley, wireless operator Flt. Sgt. Peter Greene, mid-upper gunner Sgt. Ronald Hedicker and rear gunner Sgt. Tom Crossland. All are buried in Creil Community Cemetery.

His name can be found on panel 210.

Sources: Harry Shinkfield/Ted Church/77 Squadron Association.