

Sgt Hugh Shearer 1174332 RAFVR

Hugh was born on 4 June 1922 in Chepstow, Monmouthshire, Wales, the youngest son of Hugh Shearer and Susan Kidd Shearer nee Miller.

Educated at Falmouth Grammar School, he briefly worked for Messrs Silley, Cox and Co Shipbuilders and Engineers before volunteering for aircrew when he was aged 18.

After training as a WOp/AG, Hugh was posted to 161 Sqn at RAF Tempsford, Bedfordshire in April 1942 from 19 OTU RAF Kinloss, Scotland.

At 19:57 on 14 March 1943 Hugh, operating as the WOp/AG, and the crew departed RAF Tempsford in Halifax V DG283 (MA-Y). The crew were tasked with Op Director 34 for France, a 1000 mile round trip to drop equipment, including 15 crates of carrier pigeons, to the French Resistance.

After 30 minutes flight, the Halifax suffered engine failure. The Captain ordered the crew to jettison the heavy canisters and then prepare for an emergency landing. As it descended, the Halifax smashed into a chicken house and cut its way through an orchard, the tree trunks ripping into the wings and fuselage.

The tail turret was torn clean off the plane and was thrown some distance, still with the gunner inside who miraculously escaped serious injury. The main part of the aircraft cut a deep furrow in the ground before coming to rest in the village of Fawley 3 miles NW of Henley on Thames, Oxfordshire.

Despite the Halifax being on fire the aircraft Captain, suffering from spinal injuries and burns to his hands and face, managed to pull four of the crew out of the wreckage - a deed that would earn him the George Medal for his bravery. Sadly, Hugh and the Air Gunner had suffered multiple injuries and significant burns and died in Battle Hospital, Reading, the next day.

Also killed : Sgt Barrie Lincoln Crane (Air Gunner)

Hugh is buried in Falmouth Cemetery, Cornwall

Hugh is commemorated on Wall Panel 240

Photo Source: www.specialforcesroh.com

