

Flt Lt Robert Barnsley Smith DFC 402757 RAAF

Robert was born on 11 September 1917 in Thirlmere, New South Wales, Australia, the son of Robert Smallwood Smith and Ethel Minnie Smith nee Barnsley.

Robert was employed as a hardware store assistant when, in April 1940, he volunteered for service with the RAAF. Called up in October 1940, following basic pilot training in Australia, in February 1941 Robert was sent to Canada to train under the Empire Air Training Scheme.

In May 1941 Robert was awarded his Wings, granted a commission, and immediately embarked for the UK. Following advanced training at 42 OTU RAF Andover, Hampshire, Robert was posted with his crew to ops; however, the urgent requirement for tug pilots immediately changed his posting. In July 1942 Robert commenced flying as a General Duties pilot on 296 Sqn and the Heavy Glider Conversion Unit, RAF Netheravon, Wiltshire.

In February 1943 Robert completed Mosquito conversion at 1665 MTU and was posted to 105 Sqn at RAF Marham, Norfolk and the squadron moved to RAF Bourn, Cambridgeshire in March 1944.

On 9 April 1944 Robert was tasked with conducting an Air Test.

At 14:53 Robert and his Navigator departed RAF Bourn in Mosquito IX ML921 (BB-X).

On the take-off run, the aircraft swung out of control and crashed into an obstruction. It was considered that the accident was due to considerable loss of power from the starboard engine or propeller, this loss occurring at or just before flying speed was reached. Robert was killed in the crash, his Navigator succumbed to his injuries the following day.

Also killed: Flt Lt Peter Eric Cadman DFC (Nav)

Robert is buried in Cambridge City Cemetery, Cambridgeshire

Robert is commemorated on Wall Panel 244

On 19 May 1944 Robert was posthumously awarded the DFC. His citation read:

"Flt Lt Smith has completed many successful operations against the enemy in which he has displayed high skill, fortitude and devotion to duty".

Photo Source: www.awm.gov.au

