WO1 Donald Frank Newcombe R/87343 RCAF



Donald was born on 22 December 1922 in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, the son of Frank Newcombe and Gertrude Newcombe nee Mason.

Educated at Caswell Public School and Saskatoon Technical Collegiate Institute, Horace was employed as a clerk when, in December 1940, he volunteered for service with the RCAF.

Called up in February 1941, Donald completed his aircrew training in Canada in November 1941 with the award of his WOp/AG badge, and embarked for the UK the following month.

Following advanced training at 42 OTU RAF Andover, Hampshire, in July 1942 Donald was posted to 614 Army Co-Operation Sqn, RAF Macmerry, Lothian, Scotland. In November 1942 the squadron moved to North Africa.

In May 1943 Horace was posted to 18 Sqn at Souk el Khemis, known as "Kings Cross", Tunisia. In June the squadron moved eastwards to Grombalia, near Tunis, then in August to Comiso, Sicily followed by a move to Gerbini No. 3 (Sigonella), Sicily as the front advanced in Italy.

On 27 August 1943 six 18 Sqn crews were tasked with attacking gun positions north of Reggio de Calabria, the first ops from the new base.

At 22:25 on 27 August 1943 Donald, operating as the Wireless Operator, and the crew departed Gerbini No. 3 in Boston III AL742 (H).

Donald's aircraft departed as normal and at a height of 500' was expected to turn on a reciprocal course to commence heading towards the target. The aircraft crashed 5 miles from the flare path, 3 miles NE of Gerbini, Sicily, flying on the planned reciprocal course, killing all on board. Although no definitive cause could be established as the aircraft was destroyed by fire, it was suspected that the pilot lost height in the dark and, as the aircraft was estimated to be at cruising speed, it was concluded to be an accidental flight into ground.

Also Killed: FO Kenneth Arthur (Pilot); FO John Patrick Custance RCAF (Nav); Sgt Peter Angelo Fricker (AG)

Originally buried in Catania Military Cemetery, Sicily, in August 1944 Donald was moved to the Agira Canadian War Cemetery, Enna, Sicily, Italy.

Donald is commemorated on Wall Panel NYE

Photo Source: veterans.gc.ca