PO Harry Alexander Edward Gordon Smith J/89425 RCAF



Harry was born on 2 September 1910 in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, the son of Alexander Gordon Smith and Delphia Mary Jane Smith nee Smith.

Educated at Victoria High School and Victoria College Harry was employed as an accountant by the Royal Bank of Canada, Vancouver, British Columbia when, in September 1941, he volunteered for service in the RCAF. Called up in December 1941, initially as a WOp/AG, in January 1942 Harry re-mustered as Observer.

Harry completed his flying training in Canada in October 1942 with the award of his Navigator badge and embarked for the UK the following month.

Following advanced training at 1 (O) Advanced Flying Unit, RAF Wigton, Dumfries, Scotland, 10 OTU, RAF Abingdon, Oxfordshire and 1663 Conversion Flt RAF Rufforth, Yorkshire, in December 1943 Harry was posted to the Middle East where he joined 624 Sqn, a Special Duties Squadron, at Tocra, near Benghazi, Libya. In February 1944 the squadron moved to Blida, near Algiers, to concentrate their efforts over Southern France.

On 4 March 1944 Harry, operating as the Navigator, and the crew were tasked with a Special Duties op and at 20:05 they departed Blida in Halifax II BB386.

The aircraft appeared to depart satisfactorily after a normal take-off run with all 4 engines functioning normally. A few minutes after take-off a heavy rainstorm developed.

Shortly later, the aircraft reappeared west of the airfield at 400 feet, travelling from a southerly direction towards the north. Eyewitnesses stated that the aircraft appeared to be losing height and was not making the familiar Halifax sound. A few minutes later, Harry's aircraft crashed 5 miles NW of Blida, killing all on board.

The aircraft was destroyed in the crash, but the subsequent inquiry suggested that the aircraft may have hit the storm and instrument failure ensued, together with a possible port inner engine failure.

Also Killed: FO Francis Ira Elliott RCAF (AG); FO Gordon Mundell RCAF (AB); WO George Thomas Jackson RCAF (Pilot); FS Roy Wesley Moller RCAF (AG); Sgt Donald Garforth Browne (WOp/AG); Sgt William Dennis Hazeldine (FE)

Harry is buried in Dely Ibrahim War Cemetery, Algeria

Harry is commemorated on Wall Panel – Not Yet Erected

Harry was posthumously commissioned.

Photo Source: findagrave