FO Francis Ira Elliott J/17987 RCAF

Francis was born on 11 February 1917 in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada, the son of Robert James Elliott and Ada Grace Elliott nee Fogarty.

Educated at St Mary's Home School and St. Joseph's University, New Brunswick, where he was awarded a BA, Francis was employed as a time clerk by the Canadian National Railway at the Central Time Office, Moncton, New Brunswick when, in November 1940, he volunteered for service in the RCAF.

Called up in April 1941, Francis commenced Observer training; however, when his training was terminated in December 1941, he re-mustered as Air Gunner.

Following training at 1 Bombing & Gunnery School, RCAF Jarvis, Ontario, in January 1942 Francis was awarded his Air Gunner badge and embarked for the UK the following month.

Completing advanced training at 7 Air Gunnery School RAF Stormy Down, Bridgend, Wales, 24 OTU, RAF Honeybourne, Worcestershire and 1652 Conversion Flight RAF Marston Moor, Yorkshire, in May 1943 Francis was posted to 158 Sqn at RAF Lissett, Yorkshire.

Commissioned in June 1943, in September 1943 Francis was transferred to the Middle East and joined 624 Sqn, a Special Duties Squadron, at Blida, near Algiers. Moving between Africa and Italy, by February 1944 the squadron returned to Blida, near Algiers, to concentrate their efforts over Southern France.

On 4 March 1944 Francis, operating as one of the Air Gunners, 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, Francis'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 Gordon Mundell RCAF (AB); PO Harry Alexander Edward Gordon Smith RCAF (Nav); WO George Thomas Jackson RCAF (Pilot); FS Roy Wesley Moller RCAF (AG); Sgt Donald Garforth Browne (WOp/AG); Sgt William Dennis Hazeldine (FE)

Francis is buried in Dely Ibrahim War Cemetery, Algeria

Francis is commemorated on Wall Panel – Not Yet Erected