

McQueen, Howard John
Sergeant Flight Engineer
Royal Canadian Airforce
405 Squadron
R 10748



Howard John McQueen was born on 14 January 1922 in Quebec, Canada, the only son of Andrew and Agnes; there were two older sisters, Dorothy and Helen. In his free time, Howard liked to swim and sail; he also played tennis and built scale models. He went to the Herbert Symonds school in Quebec and then to the West Hill High School for two years.

After he left school he worked in the theatre. When the war broke out, he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in Montreal on 15 September 1939; he was seventeen years old.

His basis training took place in Canada and then he was sent to England in March 1941. Here, he followed a flight engineer's course on Halifax bombers and was promoted to the rank of Sergeant. He joined the 405 Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force which operated from Leeming in Yorkshire.

On 3 April 1943 at 19.58 local time, the Handley Page Halifax Mk II, start number DT808 LQ-V took off from Leeming, together with 112 other Halifax bombers, 225 Lancaster bombers and 10 Mosquito fighter bombers.. On board DT 808 were Fl. Lt. Murphy, Sergeant Bradley, Warrant Officer MacAlpine, Warrant Officer White, Fl. Lt. Luxford, Sergeant McQueen and Warrant Officer Halikowski. Their target that evening was the German city of Essen.



A Halifax II of the 405 squadron is supplied with 500 lbs bombs.

At 23.20 the Halifax was flying at a height of 5000 metres, over the Netherlands, when it was attacked by Major Werner Streib, commander of the Nachtjagdgeschwader 1. Major Streib fired his two 20m cannons obliquely upwards and hit the plane's fuel tanks. The Halifax crashed in flames at the village of Vierlingsbeek, North Brabant. The wreck, with the bomb load still on board, lay on the edge of a wood, close to Vierlingsbeek station; around 70 bombs lay close to the railway line.

Two of the crew were able to save their lives by parachuting from the plane. Fl. Lt. Wilfried Lawrence Murphy landed near Merselo in the municipality of Venray. With the help of the local resistance group, he was taken to Belgium. When he reached Brussels, he was betrayed and became a prisoner of war. The Germans took him to Paris where he was placed in the notorious Fresnes prison before going on to Stalag Luft III, a prisoner of war camp at Sagan, Lower Silesia. Sergeant W. Bradley, the other survivor, was made a prisoner of war shortly after landing and taken to Stalag 357 POW camp at Toruń, in Poland.

Four members of the crew did not survive: Warrant Officer William James MacAlpine, pilot; Warrant Officer John Day White, navigator; Fl. Lt. Floyd Edward Luxford, bomb aimer; Warrant Officer Joseph Walter Halikowski, radio operator and Sergeant Howard John McQueen, flight engineer, then 21 years old, were killed in the crash on 3 April and buried in Woensel cemetery, Eindhoven.

In autumn, 1945, the bodies were reburied in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **XVI. F. 7.**

The inscription on his tombstone reads:

REST IN PEACE



SGT. FLT. ENG. HOWARD JOHN McQUEEN, R.C.A.F., previously reported missing and now presumed killed according to word received by the International Red Cross via the German radio which stated he had been killed. Sgt. McQueen is the son of Mr. and Mrs. A. T. McQueen of 2341 Melrose avenue. He was born in Montreal and educated at the Herbert Symonds School, enlisting in the permanent force of the R.C.A.F. a week after the outbreak of war at the age of 17. He proceeded overseas in March, 1941, as a leading aircraftman and member of the ground crew forces. He was demobilized a year ago and took a course as a flight engineer for Halifax bombers, graduating in the first such class. Sgt. McQueen has a sister, a war nurse in South Africa, and another sister married to a captain in the Canadian army. He is an only son.

His comrades are buried close to him:

Warrant Officer William James MacAlpine, joint grave XVI. F. 9-10.

Warrant Officer John Day White, joint grave XVI. F. 10.

Flight Lieutenant Floyd Edward Luxford XVI. F. 13.

Warrant Officer Joseph Walter Halikowski XVI. F. 8.



FACES TO GRAVES

*Stichting Faces to Canadian
War Graves Groesbeek*

Life story: Theo van der Velden – Research Team Faces To Graves.

Sources:
Commonwealth War Graves Commission
Archives and Library Canada
<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/2232080>
Information with thanks to Ruud Wildekamp and his group 'Vliegtuigcrashes en noodlandingen WO II'.



16 May 2020 - photo Alice van Bekkum.

