



Robert Foster Christie

J88365

Personal Affairs

Robert was born on 24-12-1921 in Bruce Mines, Canada and was the son of Jemima Christie-MacDonald and George Arthur Christie. He had 4 brothers (George, Harry, Bruce and James) and 3 sisters (Dorothy, Melba and Lillian). Robert was the youngest. He later moved to Toronto.

On 6-7-1943 he married Helen Lennox and on 9-7-1943 he left for Europe. She also worked in the ammunition factory. After Public School in Toronto he attended Eastern High School for 2 years (until 1937). He worked as a shop assistant, miner and as a production worker in a munitions factory. He did the latter until 11-9-1942 when he joined the RCAF and was trained as an airgunner. He was 1.70 meters, had brown hair and hazel (different shades of brown) eyes. He had a scar on his forehead from a hockey accident. His hobbies and sports were hunting, hockey, baseball and lacrosse.

Military affairs

See the story on https://wikimiddenbrabant.nl/Christie,_Robert_Foster. On 11 September 1942 Robert enlisted in the R.C.A.F. After his basic training it soon became clear that he was not suitable to play a role as a pilot or navigator and Robert was trained as a gunner. Robert completed his training as an airgunner on 25 May 1943 and was then promoted to sergeant. Robert made the crossing to England in July 1943, after which he was further trained with his future crew to form a close-knit team in an Operational Training Unit and to fly a Halifax bomber. From 28 September 1943 Robert's crew was added to No. 429 Squadron at Leeming air base. He first saw action on 18 November 1943 during a

bombing raid on Mannheim. In total, the crew flew 28 operational missions over enemy territory. Robert was promoted to Flight Sergeant on 25 March 1944.

On 25-5-1944, his plane was shot at by a German night fighter and crashed on the Dongenseweg between Tilburg and Dongen. Robert was killed, as were 3 other crew members. They had come from a bombing raid to Aachen. They were temporarily buried in the municipal cemetery in Tilburg (grave 41) and reburied on 27-6-1945 in the Canadian War Cemetery in Bergen op Zoom. Robert at no. 8 row H plot 5.

The Commonwealth War Grave Commission says he was 21 years old when he died, which should be 22 years old. Details

- His gravestone reads: "Sleep on, beloved Take thy rest We loved thee well Jesus loves thee best". This is a comforting hymn that assures us of Jesus' love and promises of eternal rest. With tender words and beautiful imagery, it invites us to find solace and peace in His embrace, knowing that one day all sorrow will be overcome. As we navigate life's challenges, this hymn encourages us to trust Jesus and find renewal in His presence.

- He was awarded the Air Gunners Badge, Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and posthumously Operational Wings and Certificate.

- The aircraft, operated by 429 (Bison) Sqn. RCAF, took off from RAF Leeming, North Yorkshire at 22:59 with a mixed British-Canadian crew. The Handley Page Halifax Mk III bomber with registration number LW124 and call sign AL-N is flown by the Canadian pilot Mario Alfred Fernandez de Leon, born in Guatemala on 12 December 1917. After completing the mission, the aircraft is shot at on the return flight at 01:22 by a German fighter with the Belgian Sint Truiden as its home base. The aircraft comes down burning in a forest plot north of the Dongenseweg near the tram switch and diagonally opposite the Vesseur farm, Dongenseweg 150 (farm 'Erica'). The forest was caught fire.

Crew:

- R Rudd (survivor)
- L. Shetler (survivor)
- H. Dawson (survivor)
- M. Fernandez de Leon (killed)
- R. Christie (killed)
- W. Stewart (killed)
- K. Jackson (killed).

Rudd and Dawson were taken prisoner near the crash site, Shetler went into hiding but was arrested in Antwerp on 15 June. All three survived their captivity in Poland. A memorial was erected at Runnymede Memorial, Surrey (GB) for the Briton Kenneth Hawley Jackson who was never found. Runnymede Memorial is a memorial to British airmen who were killed during the Second World War on operations from bases in the UK and Northern and Western Europe and who have no known grave.

Arms 429 Bison squadron. Motto: Fortunae Nihil (meaning Nothing to chance)



Sources:

- <https://wikimiddenbrabant.nl/Christie, Robert Foster>
- Here is an extensive description by Robert and photos. <https://wikimiddenbrabant.nl/Vliegtuigcrash Dongenseweg, 25 mei 1944>
here is the description of the crash and its consequences.
- <https://asn.flightsafety.org/wikibase/50455>
Engelse site met gegevens over het vliegtuig, bemanning en oorzaak crash.
- <https://www.rcfassociation.ca/heritage/history/rcf-and-the-crucible-of-war/429-squadron/>
Here is information about the 429th squadron.

Written by Conny en Hans de Graaf, Faces to Graves Bergen op Zoom.