Robert Elmer ATKINSON (1923 – 1943)





R/124949 Flight Sergeant
R.E.ATKINSON

Air Gunner
Royal Canadian Air Force

620 Squadron, RAF
2nd July 1943 Age 20

ALWAYS SMILING
HAPPY AND CONTENT
LOVED AND RESPECTED
WHEREVER HE WENT





Born on 11 April 1923, Robert Atkinson was the only son of Elmer Grant Atkinson and Edith Katie (Holloman) Atkinson, of Truro, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Robert's father, Elmer served with the 67th Battalion during WWI and was wounded on 28 October, 1916, at the Somme. He was hospitalized at Cirencester, Gloucestershire, England for eight months. He met and married milliner Edith Holloman from 1 Barton Terrace, Cirencester, and she returned to Canada with him on the SS Justitia on 26 May, 1917.

Robert attended the Willow Street School where he completed the Course of Study for Grade VIII in June 1939 and successfully passed into Grade IX. On leaving school he found employment as a Bell Hop at the Scotia Hotel before briefly becoming a Clerk at Howard's Accessories for a few weeks prior to his enlistment.

On his attestation papers dated October 1941 he stated that he enjoyed fishing, swimming and reading and played baseball, softball and hockey. He stated an interest in becoming a wireless operator. He was 5 feet 4 inches tall with blue eyes and light brown hair.

Robert completed his training at No. 1 Manning Depot in Toronto effective 22 October, 1941 and was then taken on strength at RCAF Yarmouth (113 Squadron) on 16 February, 1942 until 31 July, 1942. He was then assigned to Mont Joli, Quebec for further training and was awarded his Air Gunners Badge on 23 October, 1942.

As R/124949 Flight Sergeant he went overseas, arriving in England on 30 November, 1942 and on 17 June, 1943 was assigned to RAF 620 Squadron based at RAF Chedburgh, Suffolk which was formed on the same date.

620 Squadron was comprised of 10 Stirlings from each of 149 and 214 Squadrons, and two days later on 19/20 June, as a part of No. 3 Group of RAF Bomber Command, it began operations with an attack by eight Stirlings on the Schneider armament works at Le Creusot in France.

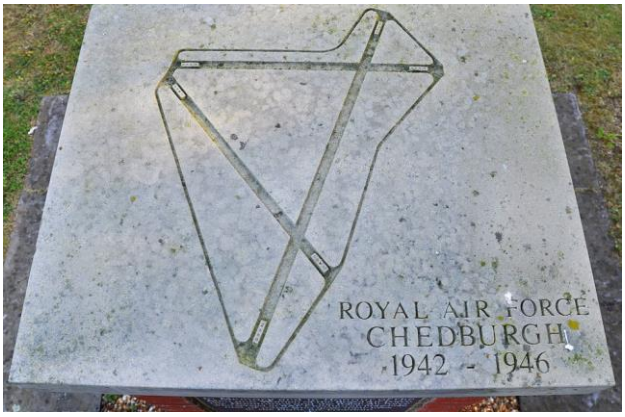
They lost their first aircraft just three days later with the loss of all crew. On 2 July 1943 two Stirling aircraft, EF394 (V) and DK724 (Y), collided whist flying in formation during a non-operational flight resulting in the deaths of ten aircrew personnel and five ground staff. Robert, aged 20 years, was one of the men who lost his life.

Robert Elmer Atkinson was buried at Haverhill cemetery, Suffolk, England, grave 148, section U. Four others who perished in the same accident are also buried in Haverhill Cemetery. They are Sgt D M Thomson, RAF, from Watford and Sgt R G Lancelott, RAF, from Birmingham, Sgt R C Young, RAF, from Enfield and Leading Aircraftman C S Forster, RAF, from Cleethorpes.

The memorial to those who lost their lives at RAF Chedburgh.







Chedburgh was one of the earliest operational wartime airfields in Suffolk. Built by John Laing and Co. it was a satellite bomber station for nearby RAF Stradishall.





