

R H Exon

CWGC FLIGHT SERGEANT

REGINALD HERBERT EXON

Service Number: 1601071

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

180 Sqdn.

Died 30 June 1944

Age 22 years old

Buried or commemorated at

KEYNSHAM CEMETERY Grave 1363.



Additional Info

Son of Herbert George and Mary Maude Exon, of Keynsham.

Notes -

Born in 1922, Reggie attended Bristol Grammar School, sang in the choir at St. John's Church and was a member of the Boy Scouts. He excelled at sport and after leaving school he joined the staff of Fry's Chocolate Factory at Somerdale and there, in 1939, he won the Boy's Cup at the Sports Day organised by the Fry's Club.

When the Air Training Corps was formed, Reggie was one of the first eager volunteers to join the No. 37F (1st City of Bristol) Squadron. On 18 November 1940, No. 270 Cadet Exon was transferred to 'A' Flight and he was still a member in February 1941 when he enrolled in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. Then on reaching his 18th birthday he was drafted directly into the R.A.F. in Canada. There he attended Course No. 9 for Air Gunners at No.34 Operational Training Unit, Pennfield Ridge, New Brunswick starting on 23 March. He then went on to receive his air gunner's badge at the bombing and gunnery school at Mont Joli in Quebec.

On his return to England in December 1943, he was posted to No.180 Squadron, which was based at R.A.F. Dunsford, part of No.139 Airfield under the command of the 2nd Tactical Air Force. Although initially under Bomber Command, the unit had been created to perform bombing missions in preparation for and after the D-Day invasion with night intruder raids over Normandy. No.180 Squadron was equipped with B25 (Mitchell II) light bombers manned by a 4/5-man crew, the RAF being the only force to use the B-25 on raids against Europe from bases in the United Kingdom.

Operations Log of No.180 squadron... 30 June 1944, Mitchell FW169 - Take off for Feuquerolles – Amaye - St. Andre – Fleury at 01.45. Hit trees just after take-off, crashing at Fisher Lane, Chiddingfold, Surrey. All the crew were killed. On that night a flight of

three B-25s (Mitchell Bomber Mark II) was detailed to take part in a bombing mission against an enemy tank concentration at Thury-Harcourt in Normandy.

Inexplicably the Mitchell began turning sharply below safety height and moments later clipped some 35-foot-high trees at the aptly named Butcher's Copse near Chiddingfold, 4 miles west of Dunsford in Sussex. Cart-wheeling into the ground, it burst into flames with a full tank of fuel and bomb load. Of the five-man international crew, Struthers, McLachlan and Rook were killed instantly. Haddock bailed out but he hit the ground before his parachute opened. When the ambulance reached the crash site only F/Sgt (Air Gnr.) Reginald Exon RAFVR was found to be still alive in the wreckage but terribly injured. Sadly, he died before reaching the hospital. His body was returned to Keynsham but the rest of the crew were buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery.