Harry Ashwell





Rank: - Sergeant (Flight Engineer)

Number: - 1594580

Regiment: - Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, 77 Squadron Code KN)

Died: - 14 July 1944

Cemetery: - Buried at Batley Cemetery, Section T, No 547.

Batley News, 22 Jul 1944 (photo)

Harry was born in Batley on 25 Mar 1912 the son of John William and Lily Ashwell nee Gill, who had married on 5 Feb 1910 at All Saints Church, Batley. Wilfred was born in 1914, Jack 1915 and Joseph in 1920. The family lived in the Healey area of Batley. Jack and Joseph were both at Stoke Park Colony, Bristol in 1939. Lily had died in 1933 and John William died in August 1952.

Harry was educated at Batley Parish Church School and attended the Parish Church, where as a boy he was a member of the choir. He was a member of Batley Working Men's Club. From leaving school he worked for Messrs. Milnes and Crabtree, building contractors, Healey Lane, Batley until he volunteered for the RAF in June 1943.

In 1938 he married Mabel Brown of Gomersal, and they lived at 132, Healey Lane, Batley.

At the time of his death No.77 Squadron was flying Halifax bombers from Full Sutton, near York, as part of 4 Group, Bomber Command. Harry was flight engineer in a Handley Page Halifax B Mk.111 - MZ768 when during a fighter affiliation exercise against a Spitfire while engaged in a corkscrew flying manoeuvre with a steep diving turn, a wing folded back causing the bomber to hit the ground making a large crater one mile from the church at Kirby- Underdale, Yorkshire. Perished with him were Canadians: -

R.C.A.F. Pilot Officer Daniel Francis Connolly – Navigator Age 22
R.C.A.F. Pilot Officer Nelson Hagey Groh- Pilot aged 28
R.C.A.F. Pilot Officer Francis Simon Marcellus- Wireless Operator/Air Gunner Age 26
R.C.A.F. Pilot Officer Joseph Trevor Yeomans- Air Bomber Age 22
R.C.A.F. Sergeant Daniel Webster MacKinnon- Mid-upper Air Gunner Age 30
R.C.A.F. Sergeant Glendon Arthur Smirl- Tail Gunner Age 21

Harry was awarded the 1939-45 Star and the 1939-45 War Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Panel 124, Phase 2, International Bomber Command Centre (IBCC) Memorial, Canwick Hill, Lincoln City, England; Royal Air Forces Association Club, Batley; Batley Working Men's Club and Batley War Memorial.



His wife, Mabel, served in the W.A.A.F. and was a member of the R.A.F. Association at Batley as was his brother, Wilfred.

Researched by members of
Batley History Group