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Royal Air Force



Harold Royston Batten (Sgt)

Royal Air Force (RAF)

Service No. 1333486

World War II

Born: 1922

Died: 11 Nov 1943 (age 21)

Place of Birth: Bareneed, Conception Bay, Newfoundland

Parents: Gilbert and Jessie Winnifred (nee Palmer) Batten

Harold's father, Gilbert was a supervisor with the All-American Cable Company and travelled extensively as part of his job. He also served in the Royal Naval Reserve Newfoundland during World War I. He was demobilized in July 1919.

The 1930 U.S. Federal census for Cristobal, Cristobal District, Panama Canal Zone lists

the Batten family as follows; Gibert 33, Jessie, 30, Harold 9 and Arthur 5 (born in the canal zone).

Harold would enlist in the RAF (Royal Air Force) from Newfoundland early in the war.

The following is a recollection of the ill-fated flight that would claim seven of the eight crew of Harold's aircraft, flight EV129 in November 1943.

161 Squadron RAF

Aircraft: Halifax BV

Serial Number EB129

Radio Call Sign: MA-V

Based at RAF Tempsford, Bedfordshire.

Operation: Pennyfarthing/trainer 38 and Melpomene.

The aircraft took off at 19:50 hrs. on the 10th of November on a special mission over enemy territory, the first drop was Pennyfarthing an Office of Strategic Services target. Following engine failure, pilot lost control in cloud at 3,000 ft and crashed at 2.00 hrs. at Brunelles, 45 km west of Chartres, France.

Only one crew member survived the crash, Flight Officer/Air Bomber Jack G. Pilkington who would later be taken prisoner on 02 February 1944 when trying to rendezvous with a motor torpedo boat off the beach at Quimper.

Killed in the crash were:

1. Alfred Murray Line Captain/Pilot Officer, 26, RAAF (Royal Auxiliary Air Force)
2. Burton Gross Lt/2nd Pilot, 27, USAAF (United States Army Air Force)

3. Ernest Watts Flight Sgt/Navigator, 23, RAFVR (Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve)
4. Ronald Cotterill Flight Engineer, 23, RAFVR
5. Ernest Harrison Flight Sgt/Air Gunner, 32, RAAF
6. Wilfred Raymond Ross Shore Flight Sgt/Air Gunner, 22, RCAF (Royal Canadian Air Force).
7. Harold Royston Batten Flight Sgt w/Wireless Operator/Air Gunner, 22, RAFVR

Sergeant Harold Royston Batten, wireless operator /air gunner was killed in the crash. He was originally buried near Chartres, France but he was exhumed and reburied at the St. Desir War Cemetery Calvados, France.

Harold 's older brother Herbert also joined the RAF. Tragically both brothers would die in service just months apart. Herbert died on October 20th, 1943, in a raid over Berlin.

Both brothers are remembered on the Ipswich War Memorial, England. Click on the link to view.

<https://www.ipswichwarmemorial.co.uk/harold-royston-batten/>

Harold is commemorated on Page 145 of the *Newfoundland Book of Remembrance*.

See below or click on the underlined link to view.

TROOPER	Bartlett, John Frederick <i>The South Alberta Regiment</i>	February 27, 1945
PRIVATE	Bateman, Clifford <i>The North Nova Scotia Highlanders</i>	March 25, 1945
SERGEANT	Bates, Michael Joseph <i>31 Operational Training Unit, RCAF</i>	January 20, 1944
WARRANT OFFICER 2ND CLASS	Bates, William David <i>Royal Canadian Air Force, att. 287 (RAF) Squadron</i>	April 20, 1945
ABLE SEAMAN	Bath, Frederick Percy <i>HMS Forfar, Royal Navy</i>	December 2, 1940
SERGEANT	Batten, Harold Royston <i>161 Squadron, Royal Air Force</i>	November 11, 1945
ORDINARY SEAMAN	Beckett, Oscar <i>HMS Stanley, Royal Navy</i>	December 10, 1941
ORDINARY SEAMAN	Bennett, John Gerard <i>HM Trawler Orfasy, Royal Navy</i>	October 22, 1945
ORDINARY SEAMAN	Bennett, Stanley <i>HM Trawler Bedfordshire, Royal Navy</i>	May 11, 1942
ABLE SEAMAN	Bennett, Wallace Freeman <i>HMS Fleur de Lys, Royal Navy</i>	October 14, 1941
PRIVATE	Benson, Harold <i>Newfoundland Regiment</i>	December 12, 1942
FLYING OFFICER	Besso, Walter Edward <i>62 Squadron, Royal Air Force</i>	June 25, 1945
PRIVATE FIRST CLASS	Bindon, John Joseph <i>108 Infantry, United States Army</i>	July 25, 1944
ABLE SEAMAN	Bishop, Alexander <i>HMS Fencer, Royal Navy</i>	January 10, 1944
ORDINARY SEAMAN	Bishop, Eli Maxwell <i>HMS Asbury, Royal Navy</i>	October 14, 1942