Billy Bishop Museum's 2026 Honouring Our Local Veterans

Flight Sergeant Harry Malcolm Robertson
No. 99 Squadron RAF

Family Life

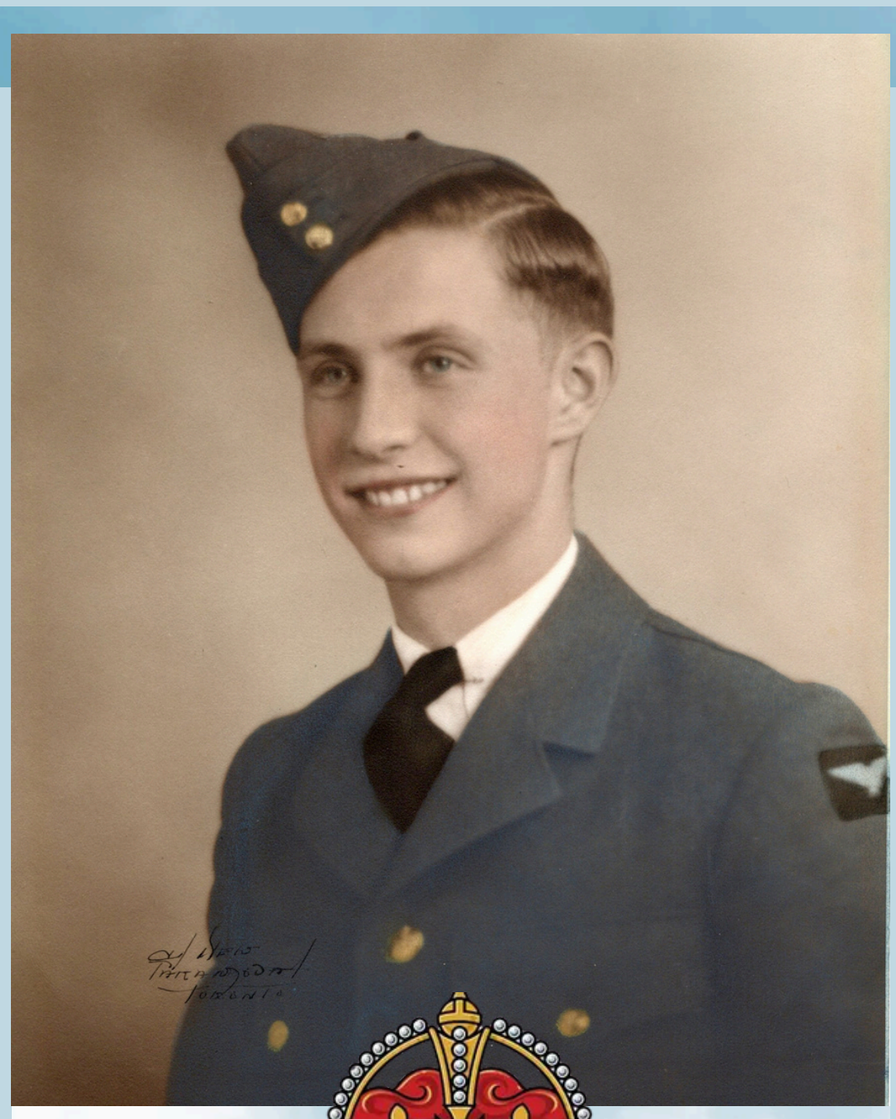
Harry Malcolm Robertson was born May 26, 1919, to Sarah Mae [nee Campbell] and George Robertson in Tara, Derby Township. He was the second of four sons, with older brother Jack and younger brothers Bob and Bruce. Harry attended school in Tara and later completed correspondence schoolwork on mechanics.

Following school, he worked on the family farm. He played hockey, rugby, softball, and football and listed reading, amateur photography and music as his interests. Harry was an active member of the youth activities at Knox Presbyterian Church in Tara, including as a singer and soloist in the choir.

Harry was a very well-liked member of the community, with over 100 people attending a farewell party thrown for him before he went overseas.

Military Service

In the fall of 1939, Harry enlisted in the RAF but following the creation of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan was called to service with the RCAF in May 1940. On his attestation paper, he wrote "I have always had a great desire to become a pilot and, if selected, I will let nothing stand before my duty to RCAF."



Decorations

- 1939-1945 Star
- Air Crew Europe Star
- Defence Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal
- War Medal 1939-1945
- Polish Home Army Cross

Military Service

Following initial training in Toronto, he moved through Wireless School in Montreal and Bombing and Gunnery School in Jarvis, Ontario before being posted to RCAF Station Rockcliffe. On February 7, 1941, he embarked overseas. He was assigned to No. 99 Squadron RAF based out of Waterbeach, outside of Cambridge.

After the fall of Denmark and Norway, No. 99 Squadron began to bomb industrial targets within Germany. As a Wireless Air Gunner, Robertson's duties were to operate both the radio and machine gun in the Vickers Wellington bombers.

On the night of July 4, 1941, Harry's Wellington aircraft was shot down over enemy-held territory, crashing near Molenbeersel in occupied Belgium. Three members of the aircrew who survived the crash were hospitalized in the Netherlands and later transferred as Prisoners of War to Eastern Germany. The remaining crew members perished in the crash.

As a captured airman, Harry was incarcerated in stalags or prisons managed by the Luftwaffe. While conditions were better than other camps, Harry still wrote home requesting friends and family to send food and other staples through the Red Cross. He writes that he had undergone a minor operation and is "being treated quite well."

At the end of April 1942, while being transferred by train between Internment Camp 5 and Internment Camp 3, Harry attempted to escape but was shot and killed. The exact details of the escape were not made public, but a fellow prisoner known only as "Mac" wrote letters to the Robertson family explaining what had happened to Harry.

After the war, Harry was reburied in the Old City Garrison Cemetery, Poznan, Poland, in 1948. Even after his death, a comrade continued to write to his family about the good he had done for fellow prisoners by petitioning for Red Cross parcels. He was 22 years old.

In 1996, Harry was awarded the Polish Home Army Cross. His younger brother Bob accepted the honour on his behalf.