

Robert Ian Hart (originally named Isaac Solomons) was born on 1st December 1922 at home in Bow. His parents were Moses Solomons (Jack Hart) and Sarah Solomons (nee Silver) and he had three younger brothers Lenny, Ralph and Alan.

As a young boy, Robert attended Stepney Jewish School and then Davenant Foundation School in Whitechapel. Growing up Robert enjoyed hobbies such as swimming and stamp collecting. The gallery has a photo of Robert's swimming certificate when he was aged 11 and 7 months. It is dated 1934 and he completed his 40-yard swim.

During the war, Robert's family home was destroyed by a German bombing air raid. Robert decided to stay in Bow whilst his mother and brothers moved to Banbury.

He was an engineer draftsman that meant he was exempt from the army. However, after witnessing a woman and child blown up by a bomb in Stepney Green, he decided that he must serve his country and join the air force.

He joined the air force at the age of 18 as a trainee pilot, where it took him 6 months to become a fully trained pilot. He completed his training in Moreton in the Marsh. He began flying Wellington Bombers and moved on to flying Lancaster Bombers when they were introduced.

He was in the first thousand bomber raids from England which was codenamed 'Operation Millennium'.

At 00:45, on 1st/ 2nd June 1942, Robert departed RAF Coningsby, flying a Lancaster Bomber and headed towards Essen, Germany to attack. Robert was confirmed missing in action along with 6 other crew members. Their names were Pilot Off John Allan Worswick, Warrant Officer George Robson, Pilot Officer Alfred George Bake, Sgt John Downie Brown, Sgt Thomas Ernest Hodgson and Sgt William Lewis Lambert.

He was originally buried on 4th June 1942 in the Hinderburg-Allee Cemetery near Duisber on Rhine. He was then moved and buried in the British Military Cemetery at Reichswald Forest (situated 3 miles South-West of Cleve alongside his six companions.

Today he is survived by his 93-year-old, spritely little brother Lenny :)

Robert's story is courtesy of Lucy Cohen, Robert's great niece.