

# Adams, Robert William

**Age:** 20  
**Nationality:** Canadian  
**Rank:** AC1  
**Unit:** No. 13 OT  
**Occupation:** Airframe  
Mechanic  
**Service No:** R/76740

**Birth:** 11 December 1921  
Coalhurst, Alberta, Canada

**Home Town:** Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

**Death:** 15 December 1941

Crash of Supermarine Stranraer 927  
Entrance to Nanoose Bay, BC, Canada

**Burial:** Royal Oak Cemetery, Victoria, BC, Canada

**Others:** Sgt. Gordon Herbert Andrews (co-pilot); AC1 Robert Albert Blakely (crew); F/L Donald Clark MacDougall (pilot); Sgt. Russell Tremaine Mitchell (crew); LAC William Denis Riley (crew); P/ O Richard Wood (crew); Sgt. John Cunningham Gunn (passenger).

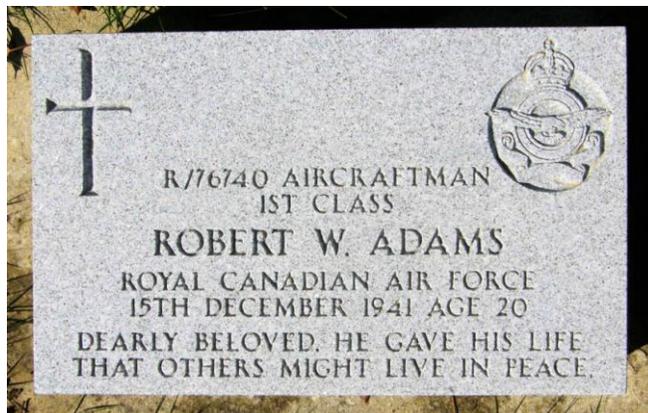


## Biography

Almost no record remains of the short life of AC1 Robert Adams. He was born in Coalhurst, Lethbridge, Alberta on 11 December 1921 to Richard Adams and Harriett Mary Hewitt.

Robert attended Calder Public School until he was 17, joined Special Reserve Youth Training to qualify as an Airframe Mechanic, and enlisted in the RCAF as AC2 on 18 November 1940, a month before his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. He was promoted to AC1 six months later.

Robert started his service in Brandon, Manitoba, was transferred to St. Thomas on 2 January 1941 and to Patricia Bay on 29 May 1941. Four days after his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, Robert was one of seven men trapped in the hull of Supermarine Stranraer 927 when it sank in Nanoose Bay. He had served in the RCAF for 393 days.



## Details of Crash

On 15 December 1941, at 1:10 pm, Supermarine Stranraer 927 took off from Patricia Bay seaplane base on patrol. It carried a crew of seven:

AC1 Robert William Adams  
Sgt. Gordon Herbert Andrews  
AC1 Robert Albert Blakely  
F/L Donald Clark MacDougall  
Sgt. Russell Tremaine Mitchell  
LAC William Denis Riley  
P/ O Richard Wood.

F/L MacDougall was first pilot and Sergeant Andrews was second pilot. All the remaining men were described simply as crewmen.

Sgt. John Cunningham Gunn asked the captain if he could join the crew. Despite having been warned previously not to carry unauthorized passengers, F/L MacDougall agreed to take him. There were two authorized passengers, F/L Booth and Mr. Hobbins, who needed transportation to Vancouver.

The aircraft landed successfully at Jericho Beach where the two legitimate passengers disembarked, and took off again at 1:55 pm. At 2:33 pm, with deteriorating weather conditions, all aircraft from Patricia Bay were instructed to return to base. Stranraer 927 did not respond and made no subsequent contact with base.

Around 3:00 pm, F/L Mac Dougall tried to land at Nanoose Bay, where conditions were poor with strong winds (40 mph) and very rough seas. With no survivors and no radio contact, his reasons for landing are obscure.

According to civilian witness statements, at about 3:00 pm the aircraft circled once and then came in to land. It touched the surface, bounced twice and was struck by two waves about 10 feet high. The left wing hit the water and the aircraft turned until it was almost vertical, nose down, and started to sink. Seeing the aircraft in trouble, civilian boatmen tried to reach the stricken craft, but it sank before they could get there. They were able to pinpoint the location of the wreck when salvage attempts were made later. The witnesses did not think the aircraft had engine difficulties but some reported a 'flash' on the top of a

wing as it landed.

It was about 4:00 pm when Patricia Bay were notified of the crash and sent an officer to investigate. No salvage efforts were possible on that day due to the rough seas. Two naval boats dragged the area the following day with no success and the next two days, the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, the weather was again too rough for further dragging.

On Friday the 19<sup>th</sup> Pacific Salvage dragged area for more than three hours finally and located the aircraft in 30 fathoms of water. They raised and towed it to shallow water where a diver was able to attach lines to hoist it onto a barge.

On Saturday, the bodies of the crew were removed, brought to shore and identified. They are recorded as having drowned. Only F/L MacDougall was missing. He was assumed to have escaped through the hatch above his seat and, unable to swim in his heavy flying gear, drowned. His body was never found.

The inquiry into the accident, which did not take place until seven months later, concluded that the cause of the accident was a heavy landing in rough water that damaged the left wing, collapsed the nose and shattered all the windows, speeding the rate at which the aircraft sank. The damage to the aircraft with this, plus five days under water and the effects of the salvage, was severe.

No recommendations were made since it was impossible to determine why the captain chose to land in such challenging conditions.



# SEVEN DEAD IN TRAGEDY

## Complement of R.C.A.F. Flying Boat Lost When Craft Sinks

NANAIMO, Dec. 16.—The cause of the tragic death of seven men in the big Royal Canadian Air Force plane which dropped out of a storm, hovered above the waters of Nanoose Bay for a few minutes and then disappeared with a side slip into 240 feet of water, still remains unsolved tonight.

The big flying boat, which left Patricia Bay on Monday on a routine patrol in good weather, evidently had engine trouble at 3:20 p.m. while over Nanoose Bay and after circling twice around the angry waters off Maude Island, settled, hopped three times and then hit again, with one wing dipping into the water, slicing the way for the rest of the huge machine to slide to the bottom. The seven passengers, equipped with life belts, probably were unable to free themselves to obtain a chance to swim clear.

Four officers of the air force arrived in Nanaimo from Patricia Bay today and at noon interviewed eyewitnesses of the accident at Lantzville. They were trying to piece together the story of the crash. On

