

Barker, William Frederick

Age: 27

Nationality: English

Rank: Sergeant

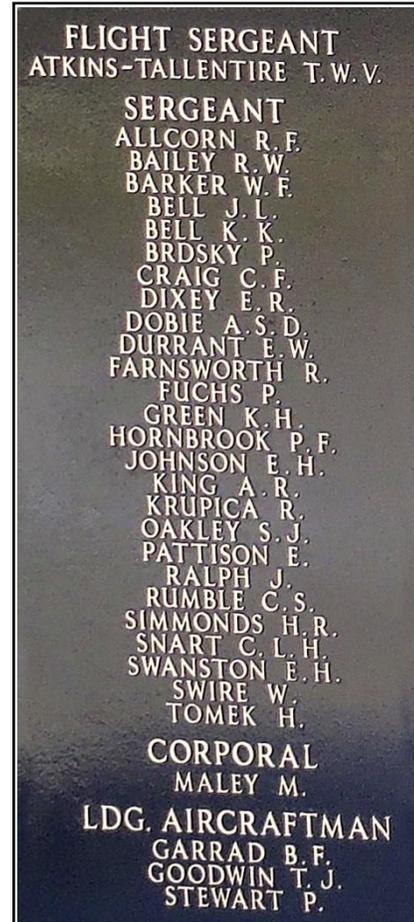
Unit: No. 32 OTU

Occupation: Pilot

Service No: 961519 (RAFVR)

Birth: 18 May 1916,
Tendring, Essex,
England

Home Town: Little Clacton, Essex,
England



Ottawa Memorial

Death: 4 June 1943

Crash of Handley-Page Hampden AN10
near Grays Harbour, Washington, USA

Burial: Commemorated on Ottawa Memorial, Canada

Others: Sergeant George Webb Maddrell, WAG, RAAF; Sergeant Jack Ralph, Navigator, RAFVR; Sergeant Grant Charles Senger, WAG, RAAF.

Biography

William Frederick Barker was born in the district of Tendring, Essex, England, on 18 May 1916, to Frederick W. Barker and Mary Laitt. Frederick and Mary were married in 1915 and in 1921 Mary married John Lawrence. It is unknown whether Mary was widowed or divorced at this time. In 1939 William was living in a household consisting of Julie Lawrence then aged about 48, married and a Public Works labourer, Mary Lawrence, married, aged about 55 and an unpaid domestic, and another unrelated 16 year-old. William, who was single, was employed as an Insurance Agent. William willed his assets to Mary Lawrence, who was widowed by the time of his death.

William joined the RAF where he trained as a pilot. In 1943 he was with No. 32 OTU at Patricia Bay Station in British Columbia, Canada.

On 4 June 1943, William was the pilot of Handley Page Hampden AN100. He only had 3.25 hours experience on Hampdens and this was his first attempt to fly over water. Although the weather forecast had been good, off the coast of Washington State it had deteriorated into low cloud and poor visibility. The aircraft went into the sea with the crew aboard. Partial wreckage that indicated the site of the accident suggested it had hit the sea with some force and the crew would have died on impact.



Tendring

Shire district

Details of Crash

On 4 June 1943, Handley Page Hampden AN100 took off at 11:40 am carrying a crew of four:

Sergeant William Frederick Barker	Pilot	RAFVR
Sergeant George Webb Maddrell	WAG	RAAF
Sergeant Jack Ralph	Navigator	RAFVR
Sergeant Grant Charles Senger	WAG	RAAF

The aircraft was authorized to carry out a navigation flight. Prior to take off, the pilot and crew were briefed with instructions as to route, exercise, heights and duration. The route was Base to Port San Juan to 48.10 N 128.07 W to 46.51N 128.07W to Pachena Point and back to Base. The first and last legs are over land and the middle three over the sea flying west of Vancouver Island and Washington State. Heights over the sea were to be: the first leg at 500 feet, second leg at 1,000 feet and the third leg at 1,500 feet. Duration of the flight was to be 4 to 4:15 hours. The Instructions were to not fly into cloud; either climb over it or fly under.

The flight was to be treated as a fully operational sortie. The aircraft would carry out a shipping patrol from Port San Juan over the prescribed route and return to base.

W/T position reports were to be given every hour and if W/T could not be given after the first hour the crew were instructed to return to base or to a point where W/T could be re-established. After W/T "go", no communication was received. The WAG on Hampden 104 on an over-sea navigational exercise picked up a W/T message from Hampden AN100 at 14:35. The message checked with the time from take-off as regards one hour signals but the signal strength was very weak. The part of the message referring to position was understood, but the rest was not.

At the time of take-off the weather forecast was good. However, weather conditions over the sea on the route to be followed by the aircraft were not good. One pilot stated that the average base of cloud was 500 feet while another stated that there was a low ceiling (300 feet) with a visibility of about 3 miles. After 14:35 hours no message of any kind was received from AN100 and the crew failed to return to base.

It was concluded that the accident was probably caused by the weather conditions and inexperience on the part of the pilot, who had only 3:25 hours on Hampdens before this exercise. No information was given as to the wireless operator's experience.

The finding of the Court of Inquiry into the accident concluded:

“the pilot in this case probably lost control either while turning at a low altitude, or attempting to climb through cloud. The Hampden is somewhat tricky for an inexperienced pilot to fly by instrument as her trim changes with speed and requires constant watching by the pilot. It was bad luck that he should here meet with such bad conditions on his first trip over the sea.”

On June 14th a second Hampden, AJ992, hit the sea - this time 20 km west of Cape Flattery.

Following this second accident, a memo was sent from the C.I. Accidents to the A.N.T.(D.O.T.)

“I am attaching two files on two accidents, at No.32 OTU, in ten days, both due to bad weather over the sea. In neither case was the weather forecast accurate. In fact, on the forecast given the flights appeared to be justified but on the weather as experienced I think it was unnecessary risk to send pilots comparatively inexperienced on Hampden aircraft on such exercises. Would you please consider these two accidents and let me have your comments.”

After the inquiry, aircraft parts, identified as those of AN 100, were found near Grays Harbor, WA, near the southernmost part of the route AN 100 followed.



Handley Page Hampden



