

# Bennett, Pamela Gladys

**Age:** 30  
**Nationality:** Canadian  
**Rank:** Sergeant  
**Unit:** No. 6 OTU  
**Occupation:** Dental Assistant  
**Service No:** W/316180 RCAF (WD)  
**Birth:** 16 May 1915,  
Darjeeling,  
India  
**Home Town:** Victoria, BC,  
Canada



**Death:** 13 July 1945  
Consolidated Liberator 11121  
hit mountain seven miles from  
Bamfield, BC, Canada

**Burial:** Commemorated Ottawa Memorial  
Buried near Bamfield, BC.

**Others:** F/O Robert Joseph Martello, 2<sup>nd</sup> Pilot; F/O Nicholas Maxwell Popovitch, Navigator; WO 1 Victor Gilbert Crosson, WAG; F/S Donald William Hope, F/E; F/O Harry Alexander Lowe, WO; WO 2 Joseph Bertrand Presse, WAG; Passengers (all RCAF): Corporal Nora Johnson, LAC Margaret Mann, LAC Lloyd Tull; Corporal Norman Johnson, LAC Raymond Kitley and Corporal William Hrysko.

## Biography

Pamela Bennett was born, 16 May 1915, in Darjeeling, India. Her father Henry Cecil Charlton Bennett, born in England, was a tea planter who served in the Calcutta Light Horse during the First World War. He married her mother, Gladys Compton Lundie, (also known as Gladys Amy Lundie), in England in 1911. Henry died in January 1942 in a mental hospital in Essondale, BC, where he had been a patient for six years. There were two other children; a brother, Henry Eric, who was a Flying Officer in the RCAF when Pamela died, and a sister Cecily.

The Indian Army recommended Vancouver Island or the North Island of New Zealand as the best places for retiring officers to move. Possibly it was this that prompted the Bennetts to move to Victoria, BC, although there is evidence of Henry having travelled to Victoria as a child in 1886. By 1921 Pamela was at St. Margaret's, an independent girl's school founded in Victoria in 1908, where she stayed until she completed Grade 10, in 1931. Pamela did not look for employment until 1936 when she became a student nurse at Queen Alexandra Solarium, Victoria. In 1940 she became a specialized nurse and in 1941 a dental nurse, which she remained until she enlisted in the RCAF.

Pamela waited to enlist in the RCAF until she knew there was the possibility of being a dental assistant. She enlisted in November 1943 with her first choice of trade being dental assistant and her second, wireless code and cipher. Her Interviewing Officer assessed her as a *“very fine type of applicant”*. Taller than average (over 5 ft 5) and slender (115lbs) with blue eyes, he described her as:

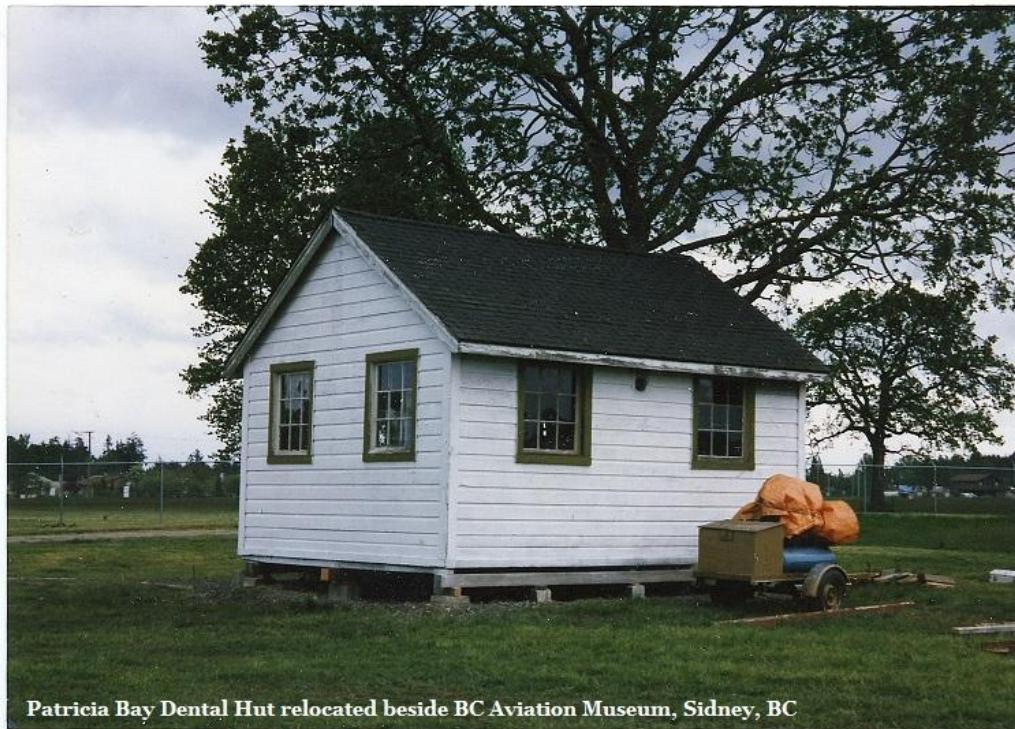
*“composed and attractive. Is keen on enlistment and has waited patiently for Dental Assistant vacancy. Should do well as N.C.O. in trade and discipline.”*

Pamela was sent for training in Toronto where she was the only female student in the Dental Assistant Course. The result of this course would determine her level of entry. She scored 60% overall and the instructor remarked of her:

Remarks: Shows average ability and interest in her work. Very quiet but should make a fair assistant after more experience.

She was initially graded as Dental Assistant “C”, was promoted to “B” in October 1944, when she was made Corporal, and to “A” in May 1945, when she became a sergeant.

Pamela was sent back to the west coast in January 1944, joined No. 32 OTU in Patricia Bay in March 1944, to Comox in May 1944 and joined No. 6 OTU, still in Comox, in June 1944.



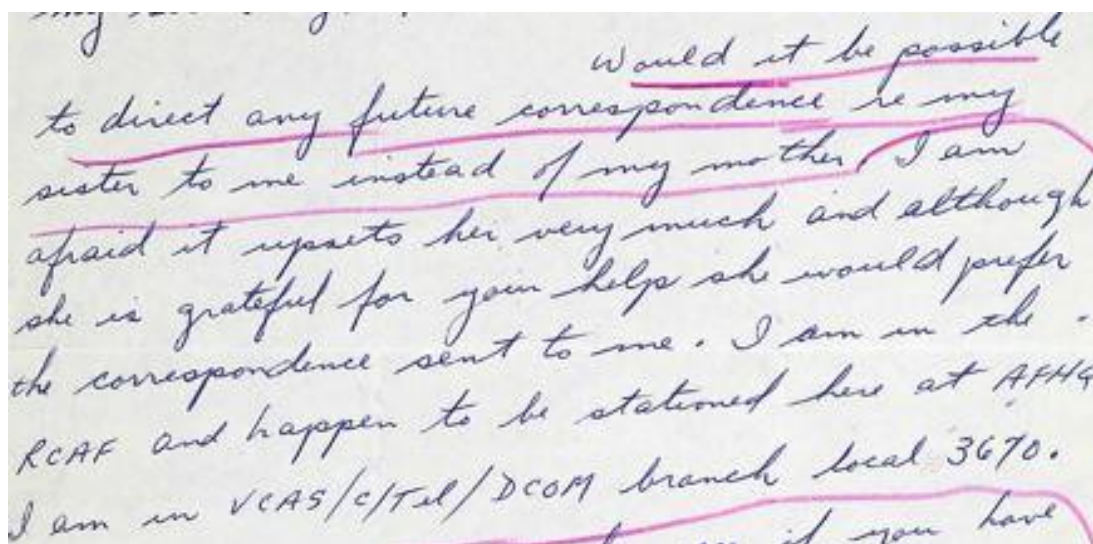
In July 1945, Pamela had a 48 hour pass and wanted to visit her mother in Victoria. Along with Corporal Nora Johnson and LAW Margaret Mann, she was allowed to fly from Comox to Patricia Bay station, near Victoria, on Consolidated Liberator 11121. The Commanding Officer wrote to her mother after she was posted missing:

On the afternoon of July 19th, 1945, your daughter was quite anxious to secure air transportation to Victoria in order that her visit at home might be for a longer period of time while on pass. As it has been the policy of this station to assist personnel in every way possible to obtain for them air transportation to their destinations, Pam was notified that a Liberator would be leaving the station for Patricia Bay, B.C., although it would stop off at Port Hardy and Tofino en route, for the purpose of performing Air Force commitments. Your daughter, along with two other members of the Women's Division and one airman from this station, accepted the transportation offered. The aircraft reached Port Hardy and Tofino safely, but after it left Tofino bound towards Patricia Bay, contact with the plane was lost.

Identical to the letter written to Corporal Nora Johnson's mother.

The wreckage of Liberator 11121 was found on a mountain about seven miles from Bamfield, BC. All of the occupants were killed and the bodies had suffered extensive trauma and burning. Some of the men were identified by items found on their bodies, but none of the women were identified. The bodies were all buried near the crash site.

Pamela's mother was understandably distraught at the loss of her daughter and the added stress of the time it took between her loss and confirmation of her death. Brother Henry Eric wrote to the RCAF:

A photograph of a handwritten letter on lined paper. The text is written in cursive and is partially underlined in pink. The visible text reads: "Would it be possible to direct any future correspondence re my sister to me instead of my mother. I am afraid it upsets her very much and although she is grateful for your help she would prefer the correspondence sent to me. I am in the RCAF and happen to be stationed here at AFHQ. I am in VCAS/c/Tel/DCOM branch local 3670. ... if you have".

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*Plaque from Commonwealth Air Forces Memorial, Ottawa, Ontario*



## Details of Crash

On Friday, 13 July 1945, F/O William Edward Davies took off from Patricia Bay station at 08:51 on a standard exercise. He was flying Consolidated Liberator 11121 with a crew of six, all members of RCAF No. 11 Squadron in Patricia Bay:

F/O Robert Joseph Martello	2 <sup>nd</sup> Pilot
F/O Nicholas Maxwell Popovitch	Navigator
WO 1 Victor Gilbert Crosson	WAG
F/S Donald William Hope	F/E
F/O Harry Alexander Lowe	WO
WO 2 Joseph Bertrand Presse	WAG

Davies had flown this exercise once as second pilot but this was his first time as first pilot. He was a qualified first pilot both day and night on Liberators. He had been trained at USAAF Field, Smyrna, Tennessee, had been with No. 11 squadron about a year, and was fully confident for instrument flight. The second pilot and remaining crew members were also fully qualified.

The exercise was an ordinary cross country flight used to familiarize pilots with the aerodromes in the immediate area, as well as giving Navigators a chance to familiarize themselves with the coast of Vancouver Island. The route was from Patricia Bay to Comox, via Abbotsford and Boundary Bay, followed by Comox to Tofino via Port Hardy, and ending with Tofino to Patricia Bay. Before leaving Patricia Bay, the pilot filed a flight plan to Comox. There were no passengers on this leg of the trip.

At Comox, three passengers were approved for the flight: Sergeant Pamela Bennett, Corporal Nora Johnson and LAC Margaret Mann. A fourth passenger, LAC Lloyd Tull, was reported to have boarded the flight just before departure off. Before leaving Comox, the pilot filed the flight plan to Tofino.

At Tofino it was arranged that three more passengers would be taken on board: Corporal Norman Johnson, LAC Raymond Kitely and Corporal William Hrysko. The weather report at Tofino showed extensive fog banks to the south and west. The aircraft took off at 4:43 pm and the pilot planned to be at 10,000 feet at Ucluelet, which indicated that he planned to cross the island at high altitude rather than follow the coast where the fog lay. At 4:46 pm the aircraft made contact reporting to be at 49°05N 125°45 W, still, after 13 minutes, within the vicinity of Tofino airfield.

This was the last contact made with 11121 and when it failed to arrive at Patricia Bay at its ETA, search procedures were instigated.

The wreckage of the aircraft was found four days later on 17 July 1945 about seven miles east south east of Bamfield, BC. It took ground searchers four days to reach the crash site where they confirmed there were no survivors.

At the inquiry into the crash, F/O W.G. Skerik, Air Search Rescue Officer at Tofino, gave the following information:

*“I was on the first rescue party to reach the crash of Liberator 11121. The position of same was 48°48N, 124°58.30W. I estimated the track of Liberator 11121 prior to the crash to be 77°T.*

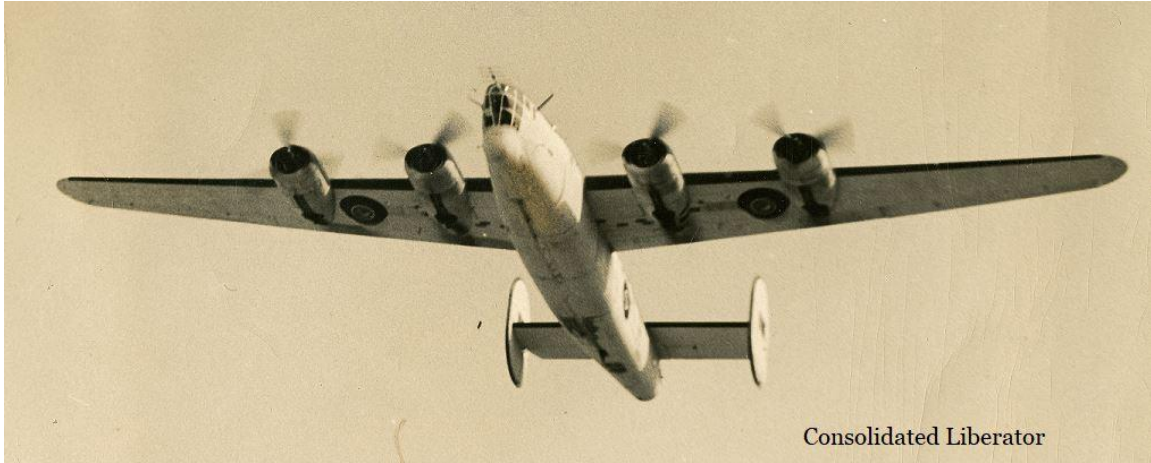
*I identified the body of Cpl. N.M Johnson by a wallet on his clothing, Cpl. Hrysko by his wallet, F/O Martello by his wallet, F/O Popovitch by his identity bracelet, F/O Davies by a belt buckle, initial ‘D’ and by a ring initialled ‘W.E.D.’, and an RCAF watch serial No. 1165702, F/S Hope by his identity discs. Seven bodies were found which could not be identified, one of which was definitely a woman and one probably a woman. The other five were definitely identified as men.*

*I searched the slope for about 300 yards below the point of impact for evidence of anyone jumping etc. But nothing was found.”*

Due to the difficulty in locating the crash site, the bodies could not be brought out for burial and two graves; one for men and one for women, were dug by the wreckage. The chaplain, accompanying the search party, conducted a funeral service and crosses were erected over the graves. Coinciding as closely as possible with the funeral service, a memorial service was held at Patricia Bay in front of a Station Liberator, conducted by the Station Chaplain and attended by all available officers and airmen of No. 11 Squadron.

In 1982 airmen from Comox Base erected a more permanent cairn and bronze plaque, which were dedicated in an official ceremony in 1983.

The conclusion of the inquiry into the crash blames the pilot, in that, contrary to orders he flew into cloud instead of finding a route through the breaks in the overcast to reach his planned altitude. While in the cloud he flew into the side of a mountain ESE of Bamfield. The Tofino Base was also found at fault for allowing the pilot to take off for Patricia Bay in the weather conditions that afternoon.



Consolidated Liberator







THOSE HONOURED HERE  
DIED IN THE SERVICE  
OF THEIR COUNTRY  
AND ARE BURIED NEARBY

13TH JULY 1945

SERGEANT P. G. BENNETT (WD)  
WARRANT OFFICER I V. G. CROSSON  
FLYING OFFICER W. E. DAVIES  
FLIGHT SERGEANT D. W. HOPE  
CORPORAL W. HRYSKO  
CORPORAL N. JOHNSON (WD)  
CORPORAL N. M. JOHNSON  
LDG. AIRCRAFTMAN R. V. KITELEY  
FLYING OFFICER H. A. LOWE  
LDG. AIRCRAFTWOMAN M. MANN (WD)  
FLYING OFFICER R. J. MARTELLO  
FLYING OFFICER N. M. POPOVICH  
WARRANT OFFICER II J. B. R. PRESSE  
LDG. AIRCRAFTMAN L. H. TULL

