

# Butler, John David (Jack)

**Age:** 24

**Nationality:** Canadian

**Rank:** Flight/Lieutenant

**Unit:** No. 132 squadron

**Occupation:** Pilot

**Service No:** J/4245

**Birth:** 14 August 1918  
New Brunswick, Canada

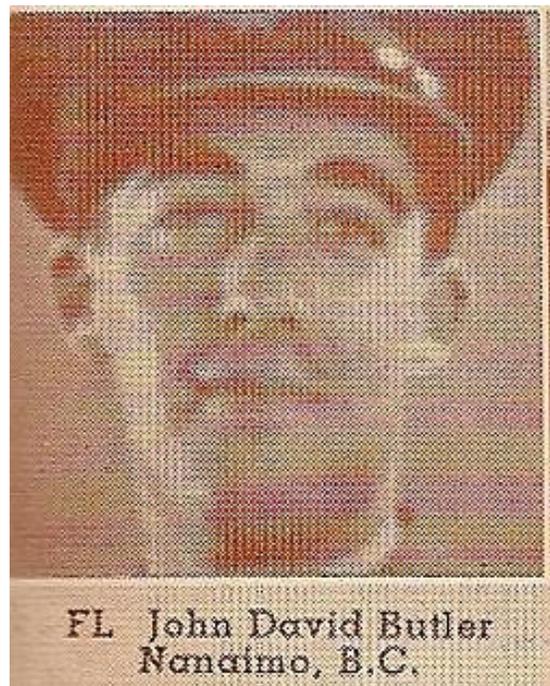
**Home Town:** Nanaimo, BC, Canada

**Death:** 6 October 1942

Collision of P-40 Curtiss Kittyhawks ET860 and AL216  
Pedder Inlet, BC, Canada

**Burial:** Nanaimo Public Cemetery, Nanaimo, BC, Canada

**Others:** F/O G. P. Johnson



## **Biography**

Jack Butler was a bright boy who was unable to complete his high school education due to a lack of money. He tried to improve his education by taking night school classes, one year taking book-keeping and typing and the following year taking photography. When Jack left school, he took what work he could find, starting as a clerk at a hotel and then securing a better job as a temporary assistant surveyor for a forestry company. In 1939 he was hired by Nanaimo and Duncan Utilities as a linesman and electrician and continued in this job until he enlisted in 1940.

Jack applied to the RCAF keen to become aircrew. His hobbies were photography and radio and though he would have preferred to be a pilot, he realized his interests and education may fit him better to be an observer. He was in excellent physical condition, his personal history was favourable, and he was rated as suitable for a commission.

September 1940, Jack completed his Initial Training and was described as a 'good type' and very keen. He was passed on to Elementary Flying Training, where his performance was very consistent and he progressed satisfactorily. His flying skills were no better than average. He was 'fair' at instrument flying and his aerobatics required attention but he tried very hard and was very eager. His conduct and appearance were above average and he was expected to grow into a capable officer and service pilot.

In Intermediate Flying Training Jack's aerobatics were still weak and his precautionary landings were poor. However, his discipline was excellent, he was punctual and smart in appearance and was granted his pilot's badge and promoted to Pilot/Officer at the end of the course. He must have passed advanced training and been recommended as a fighter pilot but there is no report on his performance.

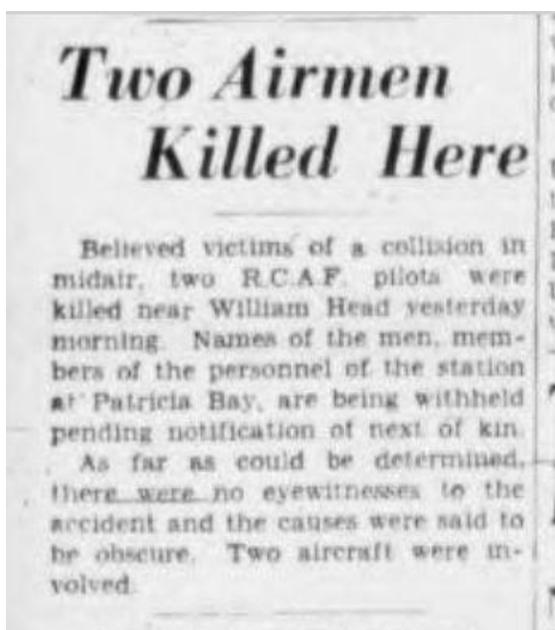
March 1941, Jack was attached to the RAF and sent to England where he flew 140 hours on Supermarine Spitfires. This tall, dark young Canadian was very successful as an officer in England, regarded as mature, responsible and enthusiastic; an excellent 'type'. He was given the rank of Flight Commander and was second in command of his squadron. In June 1942, Jack married a 22 year old W.A.A.F. Daphne Cruickshank. In August 1942, he was repatriated to Canada on medical grounds. He was suspected of having tuberculosis and

categorized as suitable for flying passengers and ground duties only. Back in Canada, he was examined again and classified as 'fit for full flying and ground duties anywhere and under any conditions'. Daphne travelled to New York on the Queen Mary and arrived in Ottawa on August 21<sup>st</sup>. She travelled from Ottawa to Vancouver by train and moved into Jack's mother's house in Nanaimo. Daphne was expecting a child in November and Jack, now a Flight/Lieutenant, was posted to Patricia Bay on compassionate grounds.

On October 6<sup>th</sup>, Jack led a group of three P-40 Kittyhawk pilots in formation flying. Visibility was variable and at times poor. Jack failed to instruct the pilots to break formation and in one patch of cloud, he and F/O G. P. Johnson collided in the air. Both planes crashed to the ground and burst into flame. Both pilots were killed.

Jack Butler was born to George Butler and Gladys Little on 14 August 1918, in New Brunswick. He had a younger brother, Gordon, who was on active service when Jack was killed.

After Jack's death, his wife returned to England where she remarried, probably Reginald Morley, in 1947. There is no record of the child she was carrying.





## **Details of Crash**

In October 1942, No. 132 squadron, Patricia Bay, was taking part in joint tactical exercise with the US Navy. On October 6<sup>th</sup>, at 10:15 am, three P-40 Curtiss Kittyhawk aircraft took off and entered formation. The pilots were: F/L J. D. Butler, F/O G. P. Johnson and P/O I. V. Kirsch; F/L Butler was the leader. When flying in poor visibility, pilots were instructed not to leave formation unless told to do so by the leader.

The surviving pilot, P/O Kirsch reported that the formation started to encounter patches of fog and when he could no longer see the leader he throttled back. He lost R/T contact with the other two planes, though he was always in contact with the ground. Although F/L Butler never gave the order to break formation, P/O Kirsch decided to do so. At his last sighting of the other two planes, their wings were overlapping 1 or 2 feet. He flew around for a while, keeping clear of the other two planes and returned to base.

At 10:18, the planes flown by F/L Butler and F/O Johnson were seen diving out of clouds in steep descent. They crashed into the ground, about half a mile apart, about a mile from the North end of Pedder Inlet. The pilots died on impact.

Both aircraft were severely damaged and an inspection could not ascertain the cause of the accident. It was possible that a portion of the port elevator on ET860 was 'chewed' which could have been done by the propeller of AL216. A witness to the fall of one of the planes reported it showed signs of damage as it fell.

The conclusion of the Court of Inquiry was that the cause of the crashes was a mid-air collision of the two planes and that F/L J. D. Butler made an error in judgment by continuing with the formation after poor visibility was encountered.

