

Davies, William Edward

Age: 28
Nationality: Canadian
Rank: F/O
Unit: No. 11 Squadron
Occupation: Pilot
Service No: J/28139

Birth: 24 August 1916,
Toronto, Ontario,
Canada

Home Town: Toronto, Ontario,
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: All RCAF: F/O Robert Joseph Martello, 2nd 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.

Biography

William Davis made an excellent impression when he first presented himself to the RCAF and during his training; he was recognized as a careful controlled pilot.

He was born in Toronto, Ontario, on 24 August 1916, the only son of Herbert Davies, who died when William was 16, and Florence Moore, both of whom were born in Liverpool, England. There was already a five year old daughter, Florence May.

After completing Junior Matriculation at school, William worked for nine years as a clerk with an Insurance Company, a job he planned to return to after the war. On 19 July 1941 he married Mollie Winifred Browning. They had no children.

William enlisted on 19 May 1942, at the age of 25. Despite his wife's opposition to the idea he wanted to be a pilot and applied for flying duties. At ½" over 6 feet he was judged too tall for an air gunner.

The Medical Officer found him *"rather impressive, will make good effort, will improve with training, consider fit."*

The Interviewing Officer was no less impressed: *"Intelligent, alert, a little tense but controlled. Good motivation, sincerely anxious to succeed. Wants pilot, navigator second choice."*

William's training was primarily in Ontario. From August to October 1942, before training as a pilot began, he was at No. 4 Bombing and Gunnery School, Fingal, Ontario, following which, from October 1942 to January 1943, he went to No. 1 Initial Training School, Toronto. His instructor said of him:

"A very capable, cheerful, dependable airman, a real plugger, whose cautious thoroughgoing characteristics should be of great service value."

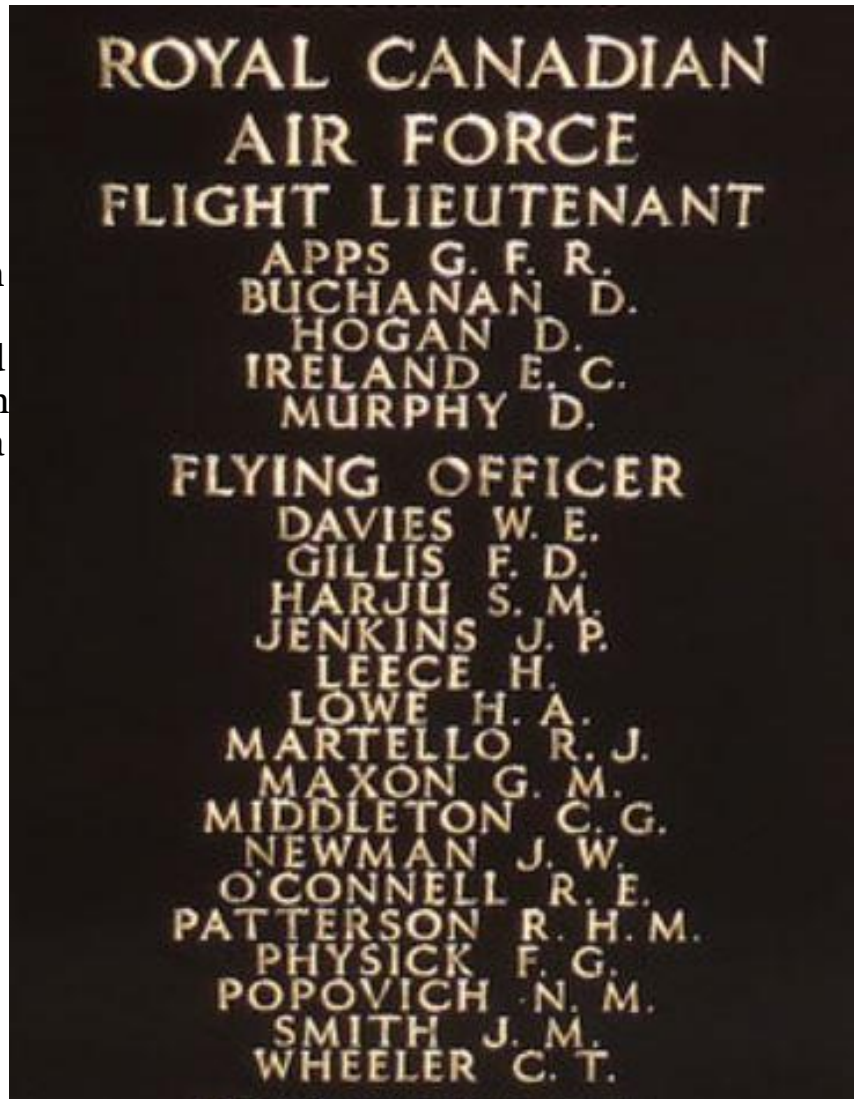
The next step was Elementary Flying Training at No. 2 EFTS, Oshawa, where his performance was average but he showed probability of improvement. He was sent on to No. 5 Service Flying Training School, Brantford, where he was quiet and hard working, showing the capability of good leadership. He was awarded his Pilot's wings and commissioned as P/O on 9 July 1943.

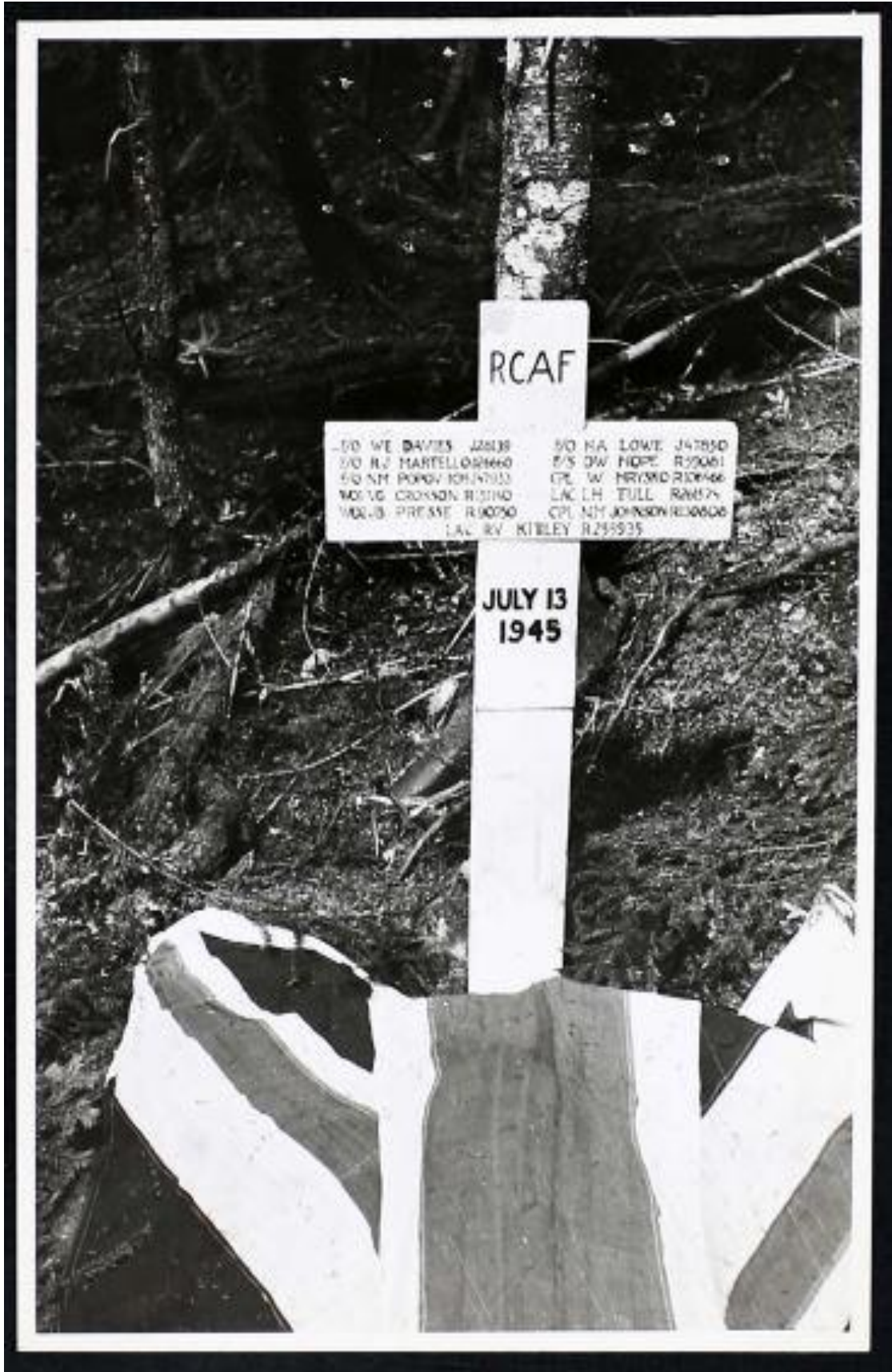
At this point, William was posted to the East Coast, first to No. 55 General Reconnaissance, Summerside, PEI, where he experienced some difficulties and was slow at absorbing the subject matter, and then to No. 31 OTU in Debert, NS. He was promoted to Flying Officer at the end of Operational Training on 9 January 1944.

Training completed, William joined No. 119 Squadron followed by No. 116, both in the Maritime Provinces. He was sent for training on Consolidated Liberators to USAAF base in Smyrna, Tennessee, from July to September 1944, and then joined No. 11 Squadron which was moved to Patricia Bay, BC, in 1945. William was posted to Patricia Bay on 24 May 1945.

On 13 July 1945, William was first pilot on Liberator 11121 on a Familiarization Exercise, flying around the coast of Vancouver Island, making stops in Comox and Tofino, where passengers boarded the aircraft. He had flown this route as second pilot but this was his first attempt as first pilot.

At Tofino there were fog banks over the coast to the south and shortly after take off, flying in cloud against instructions, William hit the side of a mountain seven miles ESE of Bamfield. There were no survivors. The Tofino Base was held to task for permitting him to take off in the weather conditions prevailing, but the accident was mainly blamed on William for pilot error.





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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 others; all members of RCAF No. 11 Squadron in Patricia Bay:

F/O Robert Joseph Martello	2 nd 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 certified 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. 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 were dug by the wreckage; one for men and one for women. 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