

Davis, Charles John

Age: 28

Nationality: Australian

Rank: Pilot Officer

Unit: No. 32 OTU

Occupation: Pilot

Service No: 420864 (RAAF)

Birth: 16 December 1914
Waverley, NSW,
Australia

Home Town: Bondi, NSW, Australia

Death: 23 May 1943

Crash of Handley Page Hampden
AN142 on landing at Patricia Bay

Burial: Navigator Royal Oak Burial Park, Victoria,
B.C., Canada

Others: Sgt. Colin L. Bishop, WAG, RAAF; P/O Charles J. Davis,
Pilot, RAAF; Sgt. Reginald J. Hughes, WAG, RAAF;
Sgt. Alan R. Marlow, Navigator, RAFVR.



Biography

Charles John Davis was born to John Charles Scroggy and Jessie May Davis on 16 December 1914. Jessie divorced John Scroggy in 1929 and married Leslie Joseph Lynch. Presumably at this time, Charles changed his name from 'Scroggy' to 'Davis'. On his 'circumstances of death' record, are listed his mother, then Jessie May Lynch, and his stepfather, Leslie Lynch. No mention is made of his father and Charles did not marry.

Before joining the RAAF in 1939 Charles was a motor bicycle mechanic and racer. His military records are not available so all that is known is that he was probably in Canada for training by 1942 and in March 1943 he had been commissioned and was pilot of Handley Page Hampden AN142 when it crashed on landing at Patricia Bay Station, BC. Charles was killed on impact and buried in Royal Oak Burial ground in Victoria, BC, Canada.





Charles with his mother Jessie May Lynch



Photograph probably taken in Canada after Charles qualified as a pilot



Grave of Charles' stepfather, Leslie J. Lynch and Jessie May Davis's parents, John and Jessie, where Charles is listed on the headstone. This is in Rockwood Cemetery, Sydney, NSW, Australia.

No other children of Jessie May Lynch are listed which suggests Charles was an only child. At the foot of the grave is engraved 'Les and Chick' for Leslie and Charles.

Details of Crash

On 23 May 1943, Handly Page Hampden AN142 took off from Patricia Bay station at 1:00 pm to carry out an authorized navigation exercise. It carried a crew of four airmen:

Sgt. Colin L. Bishop	RAAF	WAG
P/O Charles J. Davis	RAAF	Pilot
Sgt. Reginald J. Hughes	RAAF	WAG
Sgt. Alan R. Marlow	RAFVR	Navigator

The duration of the flight was to be 4 hours and 15 minutes. Routine messages were passed by R/T until 4:30 pm, when a message was received stating that the starboard engine was no longer serviceable and that the aircraft was returning to base.

At 5:10 pm the following message was received from the pilot and passed to Operational Room:

“Approaching Sidney, land at 400, unable to climb, runway to use, want to land immediately.”

The control tower told him to come in on runway No. 26, which was nearest to him. It was observed through binoculars that his wheels came partially down and then almost immediately the aircraft yawed to the right, stalled, crashed, and caught fire at approximately 5:12 pm. One WAG was seriously injured and died four days later; the other three crew were killed outright.

An examination of the wreckage disclosed that the aircraft crashed and burned on soft grassy land adjacent to the aerodrome. The nose of the aircraft, pilot’s cockpit, port engine and wing were destroyed by fire. Bending and marking of the propeller blades indicated that the port propeller had been under power when the aircraft struck. Complete examination of all controls not destroyed during the crash was made determining that the fuel valves to the outboard tanks for the starboard engine were closed. These tanks contained fuel at the time of the crash but the other tanks and fuel lines were dry, causing the engine to fail.

The Court of Inquiry into the accident concluded that the pilot allowed the

aircraft to stall when attempting to carry out a single engine landing after failure of the starboard engine. It was considered that the pilot's attention was distracted from his flying when the undercarriage did not lower when he selected the "down" position.

The Court recommended that all members of Hampden crews be thoroughly drilled, and competent in the manipulation of the main fuel valves in the rear portion of the fuselage so that on engine failure these can be checked as directed by the pilot. Also, that pilots be given more drill in single engine forced landing.

The A.C.C. concurred in the findings of the court and in his covering letter stated:

"The evidence definitely establishes that the accident was caused by failure to turn the starboard main fuel cocks to the outboard tank to the 'on' position."



