

Dobie, Albert Sidney David

Age: 20
Nationality: English
Rank: Sergeant
Unit: No. 32 OTU
Occupation: Navigator
Service No: 1324459 (RAFVR)

Birth: 23 December 1922
Edmonton, Oxfordshire,
England

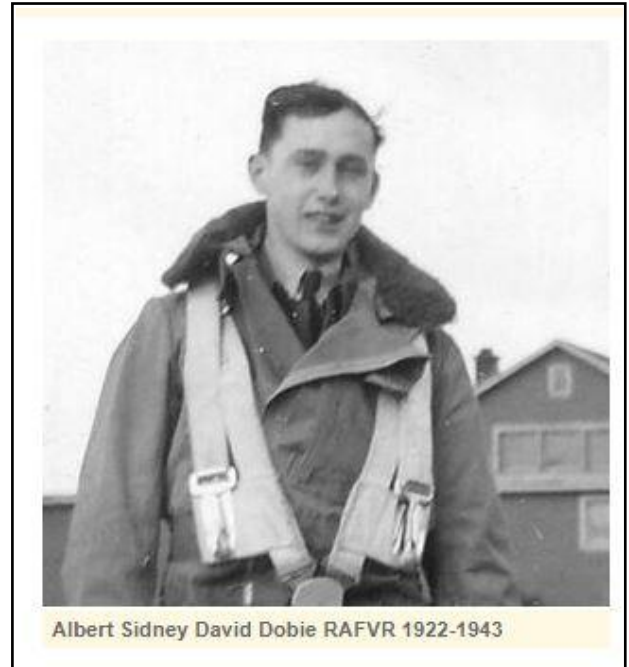
Home Town: Hornsey, Middlesex,
England

Death: 19 September 1943

Crash of Handley Page Hampden AJ993,
Cape Flattery, WA, USA

Burial: Commemorated on Ottawa Memorial,
Ontario, Canada

Burial: F/S John Hythorthwaite Bateman, WAG, RCAF;
F/S Albert France, WAG, RCAF; P/O Harry Haig Frost;
Pilot, RCAF



Biography

The following and the photograph on page 1 are extracted from “BBC WW2 People’s War” contribution by Robert Albert Jewell. The site of the accident as reported in this article is erroneous.

In memory of Albert Dobie, my Uncle, who died while undergoing aircrew training in Canada on September 19th 1943.

He was serving with 32 OTU R.A.F based at Patricia Bay, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada (now Victoria International Airport). He and his crew were flying on a navigational exercise in Handley Page Hampden AJ993. It was seen to dive into the sea in the Juan de Fuca Strait off Port Renfrew, Vancouver Is. by the navigator of another Hampden, P/O Carpenter. There were no survivors and while wreckage was found, no bodies were recovered.

The names of all the crew are inscribed on the Ottawa War Memorial.

They were :-

Sgt Albert Sidney David Dobie, Navigator , RAFVR

P/O Harry Haig Frost, Pilot, RCAF

WO2 John Haythorn-Thwaite (Jack) Bateman, WAG, RCAF

WO Albert France , WAG, RCAF

Ministry of Defence records show :-

“... that he was the Navigator aboard a Hampden Mark I aircraft of No.32 Operational Training Unit, Patricia Bay, British Columbia, Canada Command, which set out on a Navigation Exercise over the sea, near Vancouver Island, at a height of 500 feet. At 08.13 hours, during bad weather (fog and rain), the aircraft was observed to dive into the sea from a turn, whilst flying at approximately 400 feet. Sergeant Albert Dobie, along with three RCAF crew members, was reported missing and his death was presumed to have occurred on 19 September 1943.”

Albert and his pilot were almost certainly going to be posted to crew Bristol Beaufighters with 144 Squadron in one of the Coastal Command Strike Wings. One of Albert’s friends on 32 OTU, (Roland) George Cunningham, another navigator, was posted to 144 and later killed in January 1945.

Extract from "Wings for Victory" :-

No. 32 OTU was based at Patricia Bay, on Vancouver Island. A torpedo-bombing unit, it trained crews for 415 Squadron RCAF (which later became a heavy bomber unit), 144 Squadron RAF, and 455 Squadron RAAF. It operated a range of aircraft - Beauforts, Hampdens, Swordfish, and Ansons - and had a brief and largely uneventful history as an operational squadron at the time of Pearl Harbor."

Albert Dobie was born 23 December 1922, in Edmonton, Oxfordshire, England, to Sidney Herbert Dobie and Marie Morrissey. He had a half brother, Frederick David, born 1913, and a sister, Kathleen Marie, born 1921. Kathleen married Dennis Thomas Jewell and they can be presumed to be the parents of Robert Albert Jewell, cited above.

Details of Crash

On 19 September 1943, the pilots and crew of six Handley Page Hampdens were briefed for a navigational exercise taking them across Vancouver Island and down the coast to Washington. They were advised that they were flying toward bad weather but it was probable that they would have completed the exercise before the weather deteriorated. They were told not to fly in cloud and that in the event of encountering bad weather, they should return to base.

By 7:25 am the aircraft were taxiing out for take-off. The Meteorological Office called to warn that the bad weather was expected sooner than had been originally thought, but it would still probably be after the exercise was completed. Given that the pilots had been warned to turn back if there was a problem, it was decided that the exercise could continue.

At 8:45, it was reported that a Hampden was down in the sea. Information from Hampden AN131 indicated that Hampden AJ993 had crashed at 8:12 am at 48° 27'N 124° 48' W. A Lysander and a Supermarine Stranraer were immediately dispatched to the scene. Number 2 Group HQ were called and told the position so that they could contact Naval Patrol boats and effect a sea rescue. The search failed to find any sign of the four crew members. A dinghy and one wheel were recovered by an American Patrol boat.

Five Hampdens turned back at the first sign of bad weather and returned safely to base. The Navigator of Hampden AN131 had witnessed the crash of AN993. At the time 131 decided to turn back, 993 was about one mile ahead and had also turned back. 993 turned steeply to starboard, levelled out and began a shallow dive down from about 1,000 feet. The pilot tried to pull out of the dive, the nose came up steeply, the port wing dropped and the aircraft turned over onto its back and made a steep dive, about five degrees to the vertical, into the sea. Hampden 131 circled the spot but saw no wreckage.

A pilot flying AN993 the previous day had reported the gyro artificial horizon instrument in the aircraft had an intermittent fault. This was referred to the Instrument Section, who could find no error and the inspection of 993 before the fatal flight also found no problems.

The officer in charge of the Instrument Section stated that in his opinion the pilot making the complaint had not waited sufficient time for the gyro horizon to completely erect itself after completion of a normal turn. Makers of the instrument, the Sperry Gyroscope Company, warned that a turn error exists during and immediately after a manoeuvre involving turn and that the gyro horizon corrects its error within two

minutes of the turn. In a period of less than 24 hours, five gyro horizons had been reported as unserviceable by pupil pilots. On examination and testing by staff pilots, they were found to be in working order.

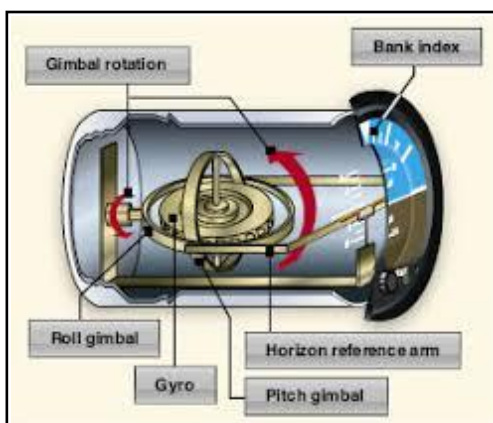
Hampden AN993 crew members were:

F/S John Hythorthwaite Bateman	WAG	RCAF
Sgt. Albert Sidney Dobie	Navigator	RAFVR
F/S Albert France	WAG	RCAF
P/O Harry Haig Frost	Pilot	RCAF

Pilot Officer Frost was deemed to be fully competent to fly this aircraft under the weather conditions encountered. Had the Meteorological Forecast predicted the bad weather reaching the route during the course of the exercise, the flight would have been cancelled.

All four crew members were killed in the accident and no bodies were ever recovered.





Artificial Horizon Instrument