

Douglas-Home, George Cospatrick

Age: 20

Nationality: Scottish

Rank: Flight/Officer

Unit: No. 32 OTU

Occupation: Pilot

Service No: 126996 (RAFVR)

Birth: 21 September 1922,
UK

Home Town: Coldstream, Berwickshire
Scotland

Death: 14 June 1943

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

Burial: Commemorated on Ottawa Memorial, Canada

Burial: Sgt. Allen Spencer Lynch, WAG, RAAF, Sgt. Elton Roy Ritchie,
WAG, RAAF; P/O Charles Sugden, Navigator, RAFVR.



Biography

The Honourable George Cospatrik Douglas-Home was the youngest of seven children of Charles Cospatrik Archibald Douglas-Home, 13th Earl of Home and his wife, Lady Lillian Lambton. His place of birth is unknown but he would have been raised at the family seat of Hirsell, Coldstream, Berwickshire, Scotland.

Young George was a noted photographer of birds, plentiful on the family estate which, though still the home of the Earl of Home, opens its parkland to the public and is a popular dog walking area.



Hirsell, seat of the Earl of Home

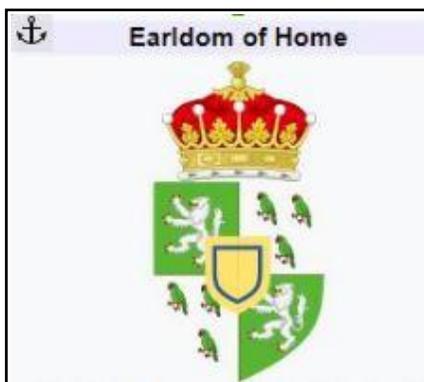
George's eldest brother was 19 years older than him and as the 14th Earl of Home, known generally as Sir Alec Douglas-Home, he became Prime Minister of Britain in 1963, after the resignation of Harold MacMillan. For the first time in over 60 years, the sitting Prime Minister was a member of the House of Lords rather than of the House of Commons. He disclaimed his peerage shortly after becoming Prime Minister to become member of the House of Commons

for Kinross and Western Perthshire.

Coldstream is where the Coldstream Guards originated in 1650. They are the oldest regiment in the British regular army in continuous active service.

George joined the RAF, probably in 1940, and trained as a pilot. With his background, he would have easily qualified for a commission. There are no generally available records of his service before he was posted to No. 32 OTU Patricia Bay as a service pilot.

On 14 June 1943, he was the pilot on Handley Page Hampden AJ992 when it went into the sea near Cape Flattery on the north west tip of the Olympic Peninsula, WA, USA. His body was not recovered.



DHGC2

Details of Crash

The crash of Handley Page Hampden AJ992 was a sad echo of the crash of Hampden AN100 10 days earlier. The aircraft were on a similar exercise over the same route with the same deterioration in the weather. Both aircraft crashed into the ocean off the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State, USA.

Following this second accident, a memo was sent from the C.I. Accidents to the A.N.T.(D.O.T.)

“I am attaching two files on two accidents, at No.32 OTU, in ten days, both due to bad weather over the sea. In neither case was the weather forecast accurate. In fact, on the forecast given the flights appeared to be justified but on the weather as experienced I think it was unnecessary risk to send pilots comparatively inexperienced on Hampden aircraft on such exercises. Would you please consider these two accidents and let me have your comments.”

On 14 June 1943, at 4:00 am, the crews of six aircraft were briefed for a Navigation Exercise. The crew of Hampden AJ992 were:

F/O George Douglas-Home	Pilot	RAFVR
Sgt. Allen Spencer Lynch	WAG	RAAF
Sgt. Elton Roy Ritchie	WAG	RAAF
P/O Charles Sugden	Navigator	RAFVR

The route to be followed was: Patricia Bay to Port San Juan to 48° 20 N 126° W to Tofino to 47° 40 N 126° 30 W to Pachena Point back to Patricia Bay. Take off at 5:00 am, flight duration of our hours.

The weather was judged fit for flying but the pilots were instructed to return to base if they encountered bad weather.

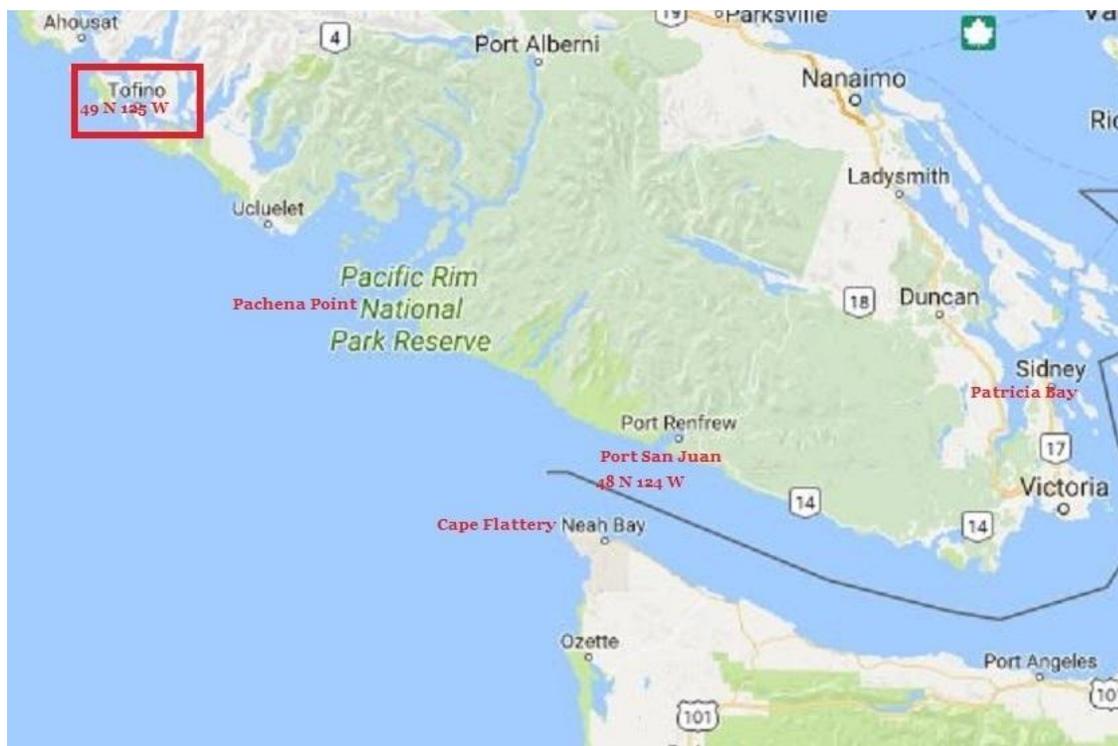
AJ992 was airborne at 5:05 am and all six aircraft were airborne by 6:00 am when they received the W/T “go”. By 6:45, five of the aircraft had returned to base reporting unfavourable weather. After a general broadcast to return to base there was no response from AJ992. The aircraft was called every five minutes until noon, with no effect.

The weather by this time did not permit an air search until the morning of June

15th but at 11:00 pm on the 14th a naval patrol boat reported seeing wreckage at 48° 20 N 125° 10 W. They found a starboard de-icing tank, emergency brake pressure bottle and some torn parts of a fuel tank. The subsequent air search concentrated around this point, but no further wreckage was found. The distance of the wreckage was 110 – 120 miles from base, approximately the distance the aircraft would have travelled by the time it sent its last communication.

F/O George Douglas-Home was considered competent to fly in the weather encountered and the aircraft had been inspected before take-off for air worthiness. He had 784 hours flying experience with 37 hours on Hampdens.

In the absence of any further evidence, cause of the crash was determined as loss of control when encountering bad weather over the sea. No bodies were recovered and the four crew members are commemorated on the Ottawa Memorial.



Handley Page Hampden