

# Fear, Alec William Vernum

**Age:** 23

**Nationality:** English

**Rank:** Sergeant

**Unit:** No. 32 OTU

**Occupation:** Pilot

**Service No:** 1268737 (RAFVR)

**Birth:** 9 June 1920  
Bradfield, Hampshire,  
England

**Home Town:** Sewardstone, Sussex,  
England

**Death:** 17 September 1943

Crash of Handley Page Hampden AN146  
Patricia Bay, BC, Canada

**Burial:** Royal Oak Burial Park,  
Victoria, BC, Canada



# Biography

Alec Fear was one of the more than 20 RAF servicemen who were killed during training at Patricia Bay under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan and who were buried at Royal Oak Burial Park. Royal Oak Burial Park contains 89 Commonwealth War Graves. Most of these are of airmen, and are contained in a single plot. Some are scattered around the cemetery.

In September 1943 Alec was completing his pilot's training with No. 32 OTU. He had limited experience as a pilot and was lacking confidence. On September 17<sup>th</sup> with 249 hours flying and less than 15 hours experience on Handley Page Hampdens, he was practising low flying. On his final approach the port wing dropped and the aircraft flew vertically into the ground, where it was totally destroyed. Alec was killed instantly.

Alec William Vernum Fear was born on 9 June 1920 in Bradfield, Hampshire, England, to William H V Fear and Gertrude E Phillips. In 1939 the family were living in Waltham Cross, Essex. Alec was working as a bank clerk and his father was manager of a greyhound kennel. No other members of the family were living with them. There is no available information on Alec's education or service prior to his final flight.



*Commonwealth War Graves, Royal Oak Burial Park, Victoria*

## Details of Crash

Alec Fear was the sole occupant of Handley Page Hampden AN146, when he took off immediately after it had landed from a flight of 1:45 hrs. The engines were not stopped between the aircraft landing and Alec taking over the controls. At about 6:00 pm the aerodrome control pilot, at the leeward end of the runway being used, described the path of the aircraft:

*“ I saw a Hampden aircraft join the circuit and turn down the final approach for a landing. Just as he turned into the final approach, my assistant gave his green light. The aircraft then dropped its port wing and turned to the left and made a vertical dive into the ground. He made his turn at about 800 feet and as far as I could tell, his speed was normal. He had first straightened out from his turn when his port wing dropped and he went into the ground. I could hear the motors of the aircraft and they seemed to be quite normal. The undercarriage was down, the pilot having lowered it on the crosswind leg. I do not recall whether or not the flaps were down. The aircraft was totally destroyed and the pilot was killed. The pilot who flew the aircraft on its previous flight stated that the rudders kicked when the aircraft was flying at a speed of 105 knots. This is a peculiarity of the type of which pupils have been warned. They have also been warned not to make turns with wheels down at less than 115 knots. The wreckage of the aircraft was so complete that no evidence could be gained from its examination. The aircraft was fully serviceable before the subject flight.”*

The accident was attributed to loss of control by a pilot inexperienced and lacking in confidence.



