

Hughes, Reginald John

Age: 24

Nationality: Australian

Rank: Sergeant

Unit: No. 32 OTU

Occupation: Wireless Operator/
Air Gunner

Service No: 422565 (RAAF)

Birth: 7 September 1918
Forbes, NSW,
Australia

Home Town: Sydney, NSW, Australia

Death: 23, May, 1943

Crash of Handley Page Hampden AN142
on landing at Patricia Bay

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

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



Biography

Reginald John Hughes was born on 7 September 1918 in Forbes, New South Wales, to Arthur Edward Hughes and Hilda May Breen. He had one sister, Ellen Irene. Arthur was a shopkeeper and Reginald worked for his father as a shop assistant after leaving Marist Brothers College, Forbes, where he received what was described as an intermediate level of education.

Before enlisting in the Royal Australian Air Force in May 1942, Reginald had served ten months as a Lance Corporal in the 54th Battalion AMF. His hope, on enlisting in the RAAF, was to become aircrew. In October 1942, he married Nerida Marie Brown. There is no evidence that they had any children.

Reginald was first tested for 'Aviation Aptitude'. On the whole, he was rated as average, doing a little worse in his ability to perform more than one task at a time. He was described as "*Rather heavy, unimpressive type – good trier with average ability. Association with keen, determined, aggressive types should bring him out of the 'average' class*".

Training began in Australia. At Initial Training School he was, again, average although he did well at armament, scoring 92%. At No. 2 WAG School, he was, predictably average but considered methodical and '*a good reasonable type*' who tried hard. He earned his Air Gunner Badge on February 3rd but was found unsuitable for a commission. A month later, on 6 March 1943, Reginald embarked at Melbourne for the journey to Canada where he would continue his training.

Three week later Reginald was at No. 17 SFTS in Manitoba and just over a week later, 3 April 1943, at No. 32 OTU at Patricia Bay in British Columbia.

Little more than two months after he left Australia Reginald was one of two Australian Wireless Operator/Air Gunners on Handley Page Hampden AN142 when it crashed on landing on 23 May 1943. His body was recovered and he was buried at Royal Oak Burial Ground in Victoria, British Columbia.



Details of Crash

On 23 May 1943, Handey 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 had 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, it was recommended 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."



