

Hutchinson, Bruce

Age: 20

Nationality: Irish/Canadian

Rank: Pilot/Officer

Unit: No. 13 OTU
assigned to No. 115(F)

Occupation: Wireless Operator/
Gunner

Service No: J/6845

Birth: 28 July 1921
Bellaghy, Co. Derry,
N. Ireland

Home Town: New Westminster, BC, Canada

Death: 21 February 1942

Crash of Lockheed Hudson 776
Tsehum Harbour**, BC

Burial: New West Cemetery, New Westminster, BC, Canada

Others: Sergeant W. M. Hatfield (pilot)



Biography

Bruce Hutchinson was a tall, rugged Irishman who came to British Columbia, Canada, in 1926 when he was four years old.

The family settled in New Westminster, where his two sisters were born and where he went to school. The last two years of his schooling were at a technical school studying wireless, which he planned to make his career.

Straight out of school, at 18, Bruce joined the 1st Battalion of Westminster Regiment as a signalman. He was their youngest member and won the silver bracelet as the best air gunner on a course in Paulson, Manitoba. Although music is nowhere mentioned as his hobby, he played bugle in their bugle band for most of the time he was with them.

At the end of January 1941, Bruce was discharged from the Westminster Regiment to apply to the RCAF. He made a good impression in his interview, being rated above average and described as *'smart man, morse 20 wpm, courteous, keen, qualified, refined in manner and very well suited for Wireless/Air Gunner.'*

Bruce quickly embarked on training. He came 2nd in his class in wireless training and 1st in air gunnery class. He earned his Wireless Operator's badge on 20 July 1941 and his Air Gunner's badge on 18 August 1941, when he was given the rank of Pilot/Officer.

Bruce was born on 28 July 1921 in Bellaghy, Co. Derry, N. Ireland to William James and Agnes Maria Hutchinson. He had a younger brother, Gilbert, and two younger sisters, Eileen and Doreen.

On 21 February 1942, Bruce was on a training flight piloted by Sergeant William Hatfield when their Lockheed Hudson 776 out of Patricia Bay station crashed at Tsehum Harbour** killing them both.

PLT.-OFF. BRUCE HUTCHINSON

was born in County Derry, Northern Ireland, on June 28th, 1921, and before his enlistment in the R.C.A.F. at Brandon, Man., in January, 1940, he resided in New Westminster, B.C., where his family now reside. He was educated at the Lister Kelvin and Technical High School at New Westminster, B.C., and then took a course for two years in wireless training at the King Edward High School of Commerce, in Vancouver. Before the declaration of war he joined the 1st Battalion of the Westminster Regiment when he was but seventeen, and was the youngest member of that Regiment. He won a Silver Identification Bracelet for best air gunner in course No. 12, 7 B.G. S. Paulson, Man. Plt.-Off. Hutchinson formerly resided at 650 Eighth St., New Westminster, B.C. He was reported on February 26th, 1942, as killed on active service in Canada.

Details of Crash

Lockheed Hudson 776 crashed at 2:10 in the afternoon of 21 February 1942, approximately 100 feet off Curtis Point**.

Sergeant Hatfield had made two practice circuits with his Instructor; in both cases taking off and landing successfully. The Instructor judged him competent and left the aircraft, leaving him to practice solo with only P/O Hutchinson accompanying him as wireless operator. Hatfield overshot the runway on landing and attempted to gain altitude for a second attempt.

The Flight Commander described the flight as it appeared to him from runway No. 3:

“The approach was normal in every way as far as I could establish except that the aircraft levelled off over the runway 5 or 6 feet too high. It maintained about the same position until it was about 200ft. before the intersection of No.2 and No.3 runways. At this time the aircraft was becoming quite slow, when the pilot opened the throttle for a take off, raising his wheels immediately, continuing in a normal manner, starting his climb about the time he passed over the edge of the field. The climb was normal, but at a height of about 400 ft. The nose of the aircraft dropped and continued in a straight steep dive until out of view.”

The finding of the inquiry was that the crash was caused by faulty manipulation of the controls by the pilot.

“The flap indicator shows that when the aircraft hit the water, the flaps were in full down position. The salvaged tail unit shows that the aircraft was trimmed full nose heavy. The Court has compared the angle of the trimming tabs on the crashed aircraft with those of another Hudson trimmed full nose heavy, and found the angle to be identical.

“In our opinion, the pilot made a normal recovery from overshooting and gained a height of approximately 400 feet. The pilot would then normally reduce the amount of flap and re-trim the elevators. After taking off a few degrees of flap, the flap control lever is returned to the neutral position and the pilot in this instance may have put the lever just below the neutral position thus causing the flaps to come down again. This would make the aircraft very nose heavy.

“It is the considered opinion of the Court that, that is exactly what happened, and that the pilot then, in attempting to trim the aircraft to counteract the nose heaviness, turned the trimming control the wrong way, thus considerably increasing the nose heaviness and causing the aircraft to assume a vertical nose down position. Under these circumstances it would be a physical impossibility to hold the nose up with the control column.”

The recommendation of the Court of Inquiry was:

“That a modification be installed on all Hudson aircraft that will limit the travel of the wing flap to 65% down.”



**Curtis Point is sometimes known as Aaron Point; Tsehum Harbour also called Shoal Harbour