

Lowe, Harry Alexander

Age: 20
Nationality: Canadian
Rank: Flying/Officer
Unit: No. 11 Squadron
Occupation: Wireless Operator
Air Gunner
Service No: J/47850

Birth: 15 March 1925,
Hamilton, Ontario,
Canada

Home Town: Hamilton, Ontario,
Canada

Death: 13 July 1945
Consolidated B-24 Liberator 11121,
hit mountain seven miles from
Bamfield, BC, Canada

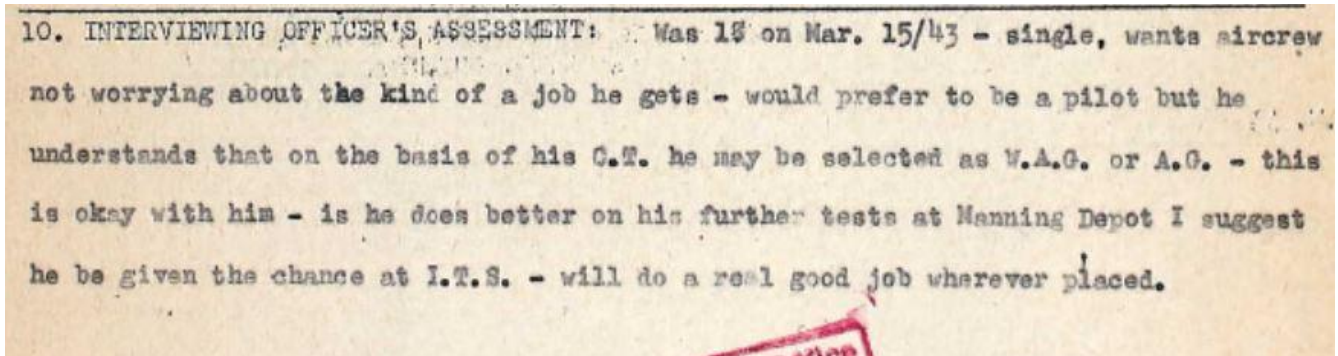
Burial: Commemorated Ottawa Memorial
Buried near Bamfield, BC.

Others: All RCAF: F/O William Edward Davies, pilot;
F/O Robert Joseph Martello, 2nd Pilot; F/O Nicholas
Maxwell Popovitch, Navigator; WO 1 Victor Gilbert
Crosson, WAG; F/S Donald William Hope, F/E;
F/O Harry Alexander Lowe, WO; WO 2 Joseph
Bertrand Presse, WAG; Sgt Pamela Bennett, Corporal
Nora Johnson, LAC Margaret Mann, LAC Lloyd Tull,
Corporal Norman Johnson, LAC Raymond Kitley,
Corporal William Hrysko



Biography

Harry Lowe was a slight (5 ft 6 ins and 130lbs) eighteen year old when he presented himself to the RCAF, hoping to be accepted for flying duties. He would have liked to be a pilot, but was happy to train in any trade. The medical officer found him physically fit, emotionally stable, and average material for aircrew. His interviewing officer wrote:



10. INTERVIEWING OFFICER'S ASSESSMENT: Was 18 on Mar. 15/43 - single, wants aircrew not worrying about the kind of a job he gets - would prefer to be a pilot but he understands that on the basis of his C.T. he may be selected as V.A.G. or A.G. - this is okay with him - if he does better on his further tests at Manning Depot I suggest he be given the chance at I.T.S. - will do a real good job wherever placed.

Harry who spent his entire life in Hamilton, Ontario, had left school at 15½ and had worked first as a delivery boy and later as a pasteurizer in a dairy. He did extremely well in pre-aircrew education, earning 94% overall. Leaving school early was clearly not due to academic problems.

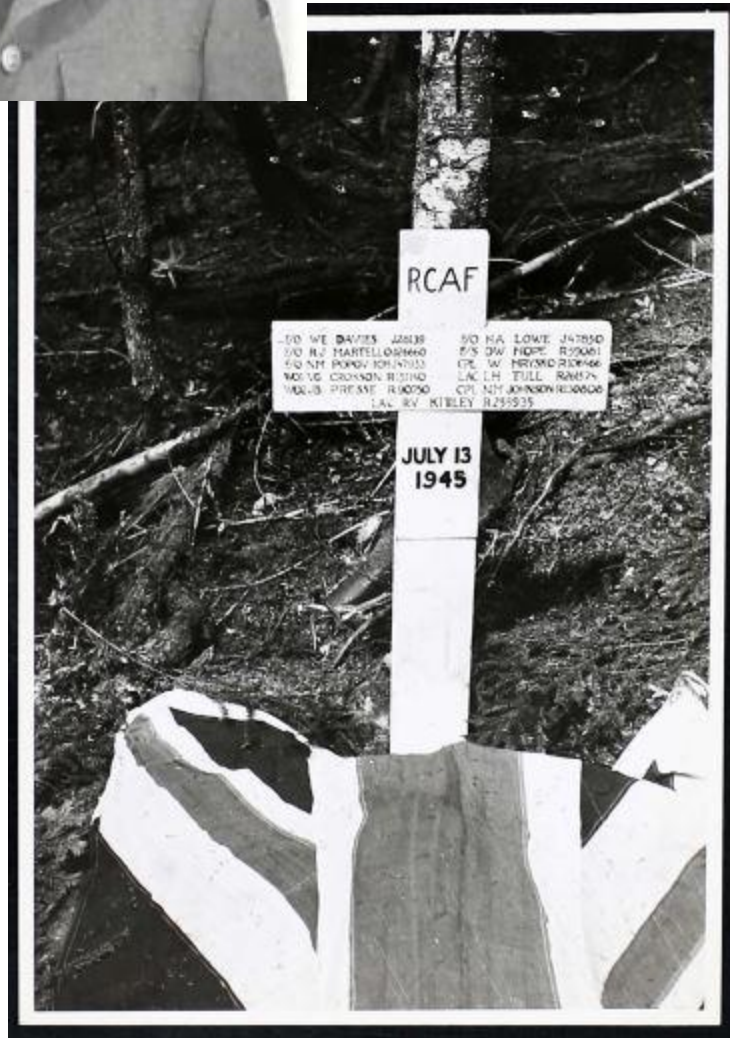
At wireless school in Guelph, Ontario, November 1943 to June 1944, Harry was placed 2nd out of 133 students. He earned 95% in ground training, 79% in air training and was reportedly very suitable for a signals instructor. From wireless school, Harry went to Bombing and Gunnery School for July and August, where he earned his WAG badge and was commissioned as Pilot Officer in August 1944.

Harry's training was completed at No. 5 OTU in Dartmouth, NS, and Moncton, NB. He was promoted to Flying Officer in February 1945 and posted to No. 11 squadron, Patricia Bay, BC, on 24 May 1945.

On 13 July 1945, Harry was wireless operator on Consolidated Liberator 11121 on a cross country familiarization exercise. The aircraft hit a mountain seven miles SE of Bamfield, on the west coast of British Columbia and all the occupants were killed. He was buried with his fellow crew members and the aircraft's passengers beside the wreckage.

Born in Hamilton, Ontario, on 15 March 1925, Harry was one of four sons of

Alexander Lowe, born in London, UK, and Mary Cecilia Wilkinson, born in Scotland. His brothers were Robert, Ronald and Brian.



Details of Crash

On Friday, 13 July 1945, F/O William Edward Davies took off from Patricia Bay station at 08:51 on a standard exercise. He was flying Consolidated B-24 Liberator 11121 with a crew of six, all members of RCAF #11 Squadron in Patricia Bay:

F/O Robert Joseph Martello	2 nd Pilot
F/O Nicholas Maxwell Popovitch	Navigator
WO 1 Victor Gilbert Crosson	WAG
F/S Donald William Hope	F/E
F/O Harry Alexander Lowe	WO
WO 2 Joseph Bertrand Presse	WAG

Davies had flown this exercise once as second pilot but this was his first time as first pilot. He was a qualified first pilot both day and night on Liberators. He had been trained at USAAF Field, Smyrna, Tennessee, had been with No. 11 squadron about a year, and was fully rated for instrument flight. The second pilot and remaining crew members were also fully qualified.

The exercise was an ordinary cross country flight used to familiarize pilots with the aerodromes in the immediate area, as well as giving Navigators a chance to familiarize themselves with the coast of Vancouver Island. The route was from Patricia Bay to Comox, via Abbotsford and Boundary Bay, followed by Comox to Tofino via Port Hardy, and ending with Tofino to Patricia Bay. Before leaving Patricia Bay the pilot filed a flight plan to Comox. There were no passengers on this leg of the trip.

At Comox three passengers were approved for the flight: Sergeant Pamela Bennett, Corporal Nora Johnson and LAC Margaret Mann. A fourth passenger, LAC Lloyd Tull, was reported to have boarded the flight just before departure. Before leaving Comox the pilot filed the flight plan to Tofino.

At Tofino, it was arranged that three more passengers would be taken on board: Corporal Norman Johnson, LAC Raymond Kitely and Corporal William Hrysko. The weather report at Tofino showed extensive fog banks to the south and west. The aircraft took off at 4:43 pm and the pilot planned to be at 10,000 feet at Ucluelet, which indicated that he planned to cross the island at high altitude rather than follow the coast where the fog lay. At 4:46 pm the aircraft made

contact reporting to be at 49°05N 125°45 W, still, after 13 minutes, within the vicinity of Tofino airfield.

This was the last contact made with 11121 and when it failed to arrive at Patricia Bay at its ETA, search procedures were instigated.

The wreckage of the aircraft was found four days later on 17 July 1945, about seven miles east south east of Bamfield, BC. It took ground searchers four days to reach the crash site where they confirmed there were no survivors.

At the inquiry into the crash, F/O W.G. Skerik, Air Search Rescue Officer at Tofino, gave the following information:

“I was on the first rescue party to reach the crash of Liberator 11121. The position of same was 48°48N, 124°58.30W. I estimated the track of Liberator 11121 prior to the crash to be 77°T.

I identified the body of Cpl. N.M Johnson by a wallet on his clothing, Cpl. Hrysko by his wallet, F/O Martello by his wallet, F/O Popovitch by his identity bracelet, F/O Davies by a belt buckle, initial ‘D’ and by a ring initialled ‘W.E.D.’, and an RCAF watch serial No. 1165702, F/S Hope by his identity discs. Seven bodies were found which could not be identified, one of which was definitely a woman and one probably a woman. The other five were definitely identified as men.

I searched the slope for about 300 yards below the point of impact for evidence of anyone jumping etc. But nothing was found.”

Due to the difficulty in locating the crash site, the bodies could not be brought out for burial and two graves were dug by the wreckage, one for men and one for women. The chaplain accompanying the search party conducted a funeral service and crosses were erected over the graves. Coinciding as closely as possible with the funeral service, a memorial service was held at Patricia Bay in front of a Station Liberator, conducted by the Station Chaplain and attended by all available officers and airmen of No.11 Squadron.

In 1982, airmen from Comox Base erected a more permanent cairn and bronze plaque, which were dedicated in an official ceremony in 1983.

The conclusion of the inquiry into the crash blames the pilot, in that, contrary to orders, he flew into cloud instead of finding a route through the breaks in the overcast to reach his planned altitude. While in the cloud he flew into the side of a mountain ESE of Bamfield. The Tofino Base was also found at fault for allowing the pilot to take off for Patricia Bay in the weather conditions that afternoon.





