

Lynch, Alan Spencer

Age: 23

Nationality: Australian

Rank: Sergeant

Unit: No. 32 OTU

Occupation: Wireless Operator/
Air Gunner

Service No: 420751 (RAAF)

Birth: 24 August 1919,
Sydney, NSW.
Australia

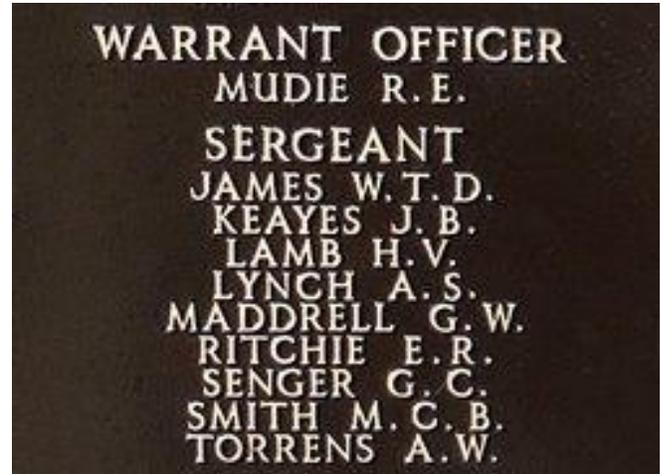
Home Town: Bexley, Rockdale,
NSW, Australia

Death: 14 June 1943

Crash of Handley Page Hampden AJ992,
West of Cape Flattery, WA, USA

Burial: Commemorated on Ottawa Memorial, Canada

Others: F/O George Douglas-Home, Pilot, RAFVR;
Sgt. Elton Roy Ritchie, WAG, RAAF;
P/O Charles Sugden, Navigator, RAFVR.



Biography

On the panel from the Commonwealth Air Forces Memorial, shown on the previous page, are the names of four young Australian sergeants who died in the same month while training at Patricia Bay, British Columbia, Canada. Alan Spencer Lynch and Elton Roy Ritchie were killed in an accident on 14 June 1943. Grant Charles Senger, who travelled with Alan Lynch to Canada on the SS Matsonia, arriving in San Francisco on 8 July 1942, was killed on 4 June 1943 together with George Webb Maddrell. All four Australians were Wireless Operator/ Air Gunners and both accidents involved Handley Page Hampden aircraft flying similar exercises and disappearing in similar circumstances off the coast of Washington, USA.

Alan Spencer Lynch was born in Sydney, NSW, Australia, on 24 August 1919. His father, Henry Spencer Lynch, was a tobacco worker and married his mother, Ellen Elizabeth Paillas, in 1914 in Sydney. Alan willed all his possessions to his mother.

Alan attended Junction Park State School, Greenslopes State School and Burranda State School. He is listed at Burranda in 1939, when he would have been 19. Before he enlisted in Sydney on 9 November 1941, Alan was working as a clerk.

Alan had been in the Royal Australian Air Force for about six months when he embarked for Canada. He was in Patricia Bay by 14 June 1943, when he died in a training accident.

The aircraft disappeared into the sea and Alan's body was never recovered. He, and the other crew members are memorialized on the Commonwealth Air Forces Memorial in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.



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 5:00am, flight duration of four 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.

