

MacGillivray, Donald Duncan

Age: 29

Nationality: Canadian

Rank: Sergeant

Unit: No. 32 OTU

Occupation: Wireless Operator/
Air Gunner

Service No: R/139766



Birth: 15 October 1913
Gengarry, Ontario
Canada

Home Town: Silver Park, SK, Canada

Death: 13 April 1943
Crash of Handley Page Hampden AN121
Cowichan Head, B.C., Canada

Burial: Silver Park Cemetery, SK, Canada

Others: P/O J.S Peterkin, Pilot, RAFVR; Sgt. R.T. Barrow; Navigator, RAAF;
Sgt. D.D. MacGillivray, WAG, RCAF; Sgt. K.E. Thompson, WAG,
RCAF.

Biography

Duncan MacGillivray was a tall, skinny farm labourer from Saskatchewan. At 137 lbs and 5'11" he was 20 lbs below normal weight, but this was not unusual for his family. When he enlisted in the RCAF in November 1941, two of his six brothers were already in the service and a third had applied to join.

He was a well mannered, composed young man, not overburdened with intelligence or initiative, but alert and keen to serve. He wanted flying duties and applied to train as a wireless operator/air gunner.

Duncan was at wireless training school from July 1942 to January 1943 and at armament training from January to February 1943. His performance was 'good average' and he was expected to do well. For a time while at wireless training his leg was in calipers as a result of a fracture incurred by a fall on the ice.

On 6 March 1943, Duncan was posted to No. 32 OTU at Patricia Bay. The following month he was one of two WAG's on Handley Page Hampden AN121 performing navigational and low altitude bombing exercises. The aircraft plunged into the sea near Cowichan Head after completing the bombing runs, and three of the four crew members were killed. Duncan's body was recovered when the plane was salvaged on 19 April 1943.

Duncan MacGillivray was born 15 October 1913, in Glengarry, Ontario, Canada, to William Donald MacGillivray and Jessie Ann McLeod. He had one older sister and, after his birth came two younger sisters and six younger brothers. He left school at 16 with a grade 10 education and worked as a farm labourer until he joined the RCAF, an occupation he intended returning to after the war. He was not married.



Details of Crash

On 13 April 1943, Handley Page Hampden AN 121 took off at 1:15 pm with a crew of four:

P/O J.S Peterkin	Pilot (RAFVR)
Sgt. R.T. Barrow	Navigator (RAAF)
Sgt. D.D. MacGillivray	WAG (RCAF)
Sgt. K.E. Thompson	WAG (RCAF)

P/O Peterkin had 26 hours piloting Hampdens and 209 hours on other aircraft.

The flight was to perform Navigational exercises followed by bombing practice at the bombing range at Cowichan Head, B.C.

The bombing was to be at a height of 50' and aircrew were told to be careful of other aircraft when at a low height, where they did not have normal manoeuvrability.

At about 2:30 pm, after completing the navigational exercises the aircraft entered the Cowichan Head range. The pilot made two runs at 20' to 30' dropping two bombs on each run. Personnel of the Armament Section at the range reported that soon after passing over the target the aircraft went into a climbing turn to port, turned approximately 180° attaining a height of 100' and then went into a vertical bank, lost speed, stalled and plunged into the water nose down. There was no explosion but the aircraft sank leaving a dinghy floating. The safety boat pulled Sgt. Thompson, the only survivor, from the water, Sgt. Barrow who had been killed instantly, and P/O Peterkin who died later. The body of Sgt. MacGillivray was later recovered from the wreckage.

The Court of Inquiry concluded that this was a straightforward case of an inexperienced pilot doing a climbing turn and made no recommendations.



Handley Page Hampden

