

McLeod, Herbert David

Age: 23
Nationality: New Zealand

Rank: Sergeant

Unit: No. OTU

Occupation: Pilot

Service No: 405556 (RNZAF)

Birth: 19 February 1920,
Dunedin, Otago, NZ

Home Town: Dunedin, Otago,
New Zealand

Death: 28 September 1943

Crash of Handley Page Hampden AJ994,
Galiano Island, BC

Burial: Royal Oak Burial Park, Victoria, BC, Canada



Biography

Herbert David McLeod was born on 19 February 1920, in Dunedin, Otago, New Zealand, to Herbert David Smalley and Christina McLeod. His father was a butcher who had served as a rifleman in the machine gun section of the New Zealand army from May, 1915, to October, 1919. He died in 1949.

Herbert's records give his father as next of kin and there is no indication he was married.

Herbert left New Zealand, bound for Canada, on 24 July 1942. He sailed on the Mauritania. By 14 May 1943, he had completed Service Flying Training at No. 7 SFTS, MacLeod, AB. Next, Herbert was posted first to No. 31 Ground Reconnaissance School, Charlottetown, PEI, and then to No. 32 OTU, Patricia Bay, BC.

At the time of his death, Herbert was rated as an advanced student. His flying was a bit inaccurate, but he was safe in the air and was considered a steady type, intelligent, confident and unlikely to disregard flying instructions. He had 253 hours total flying time: 80.55 hours on de Havilland TigerMoths, 152 hours on Avro Ansons, 9.30 hours on Airspeed Oxfords and 11.05 hours on Handley Page Hampdens. All but the time on Tiger Moths and 91 hours on Ansons had been within the previous six months. On graduation from Elementary Flying Training School and Service Flying training School he was rated as an average pilot.

On 24 September 1943, Herbert was given a demonstration of steep turns and low flying. On September 28th, along with other advanced student pilots, he was practising steep turns and single engine flying. He lost control of his aircraft and it spun to the ground, killing him instantly. His mangled and burnt body was recovered and is buried in Royal Oak Burial Park, Victoria, BC, Canada.



Details of Crash

On 28 September 1943, the weather forecast was good, with unlimited ceiling, high overcast with scattered clouds at 4,500 ft. and visibility of five miles. Several advanced student pilots, including Herbert McLeod, were to take part in a solo practice for 1:30 hours of steep turns and single engine flying. The minimum altitude was to be 3,000 feet.

Sergeant McLeod took off at 1:30 pm in Handley Page Hampden AJ994. In his case, glide landings and precautionary landings had been omitted as he had not had demonstrations on either of these.

At about 2:20 pm, an aircraft was seen flying north-west at about 1,000 – 1,200 feet. Suddenly, the nose went down and it began to spin. The engine stopped as it dropped behind the trees and plumes of smoke were seen rising. The crashed aircraft was located on the side of a 600 ft hill near Retreat Cove, Galiano Island. It was identified as AJ994 and the pilot, whose body was mangled, had died instantly on impact. The aircraft was totally destroyed.

The accident was attributed to either the pilot's inexperience or rough air conditions, and to the aircraft having insufficient height to recover from the spin.

The recommendation of the court of inquiry was that pilots should be compelled to conform more closely to regulations for their exercises.



