

Murphy, John Benedict

Age: 26

Nationality: Irish

Rank: Pilot/Officer

Unit: No. 32 OTU

Occupation: Navigator

Service No: 55294 (RAFVR)



Birth: 1918
Ireland

Home Town: Erris, Co. Mayo
Ireland

Death: 17 March 1944

Crash of Douglas C-47 Dakota FL650,
Vanished during night Navigation Exercises

Burial: Commemorated on Ottawa Memorial.

Others: F/S Roy Hodge, W/O, RNZAF;
Sgt Douglas Oliver, Pilot, RAFVR.

Biography

P/O John Benedict Murphy was the son of Michael and Sarah Murphy of Erris, County Mayo, Republic of Ireland. He was a Navigator in the RAFVR training in No. 32 OTU, Patricia Bay, BC, Canada, when he went missing, one of the crew of Douglas C-47 Dakota FL650. Despite exhaustive searches, no trace of the missing aircraft or the crew was found and he was presumed dead. He is commemorated on the Commonwealth Air Memorial in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.



Details of Crash

On 17 March 1944, at 7:40 pm Douglas C-47 Dakota FL650 took off from Patricia Bay, on night navigational exercises with a crew of three:

F/S	Roy Hodge	W/O	RNZAF
P/O	John Murphy	Navigator	RAFVR
Sgt	Douglas Oliver	Pilot	RAFVR

Ten Dakotas were taking part in the exercise and the crews were briefed by S/L Geoffrey Thomas at 5:30 pm. They were to fly at 10,000 feet until they entered cloud, when they were to fix their position, and, estimating a speed of 40 mph, calculate what time the cloud would be over base. They were to adjust their route to make this their latest ETA.

The route they were given, known as 'K route' was base to Nanaimo, climbing to 10,000 feet; to sea position 40° 07' N 137° 45' W; to Tofino; across Vancouver Island to base. The pilots were to return to base immediately should they encounter more than 'light' icing or lose W/T contact for more than 45 minutes.

S/L Thomas could not comment on the ability of Sergeant Oliver as a pilot, but expressed the opinion that No. 3 Transport Course had not shown sufficient discipline to be trusted to obey orders implicitly. He had asked for the course to be extended to amend this but the request was denied.

At 1:30 am on March 18th, three of the Dakotas had been out of W/T contact for some time, causing some concern. Two of the aircraft returned by 3:00 am, at which time the weather had shut in unexpectedly, and the aircraft were diverted to Sea Island. The fuel left in the tanks of these two Dakotas suggested that FL650 could fly until 8:40 am.

The other nine Dakotas all returned to base and could shed no light on what had happened to FL650. One wireless operator had picked up a message that he thought was from the missing aircraft, reporting that it was returning to base.

The last contact with the aircraft was at 9:58 pm on March 17th. Weather condition on March 18th prevented a search on that day but over the next few days, 65 aircraft flew a total of 208 hours searching for FL650 and its

crew. The search was unsuccessful and the airmen were posted as missing, believed killed.

According to Aviation Safety Network, later, two oxygen cylinders of the type used by this aircraft were recovered in the Pearse Island Group, near Telegraph Cove, Northern Vancouver Island. These were the only possible trace of this aircraft to be found.

The airmen were all commemorated on the Ottawa War Memorial.



Douglas Dakota



