

Peterkin, James Smith

Age: 25

Nationality: English

Rank: Pilot/Officer

Unit: No. 32 OTU

Occupation: Pilot

Service No: 135517 (RAFVR)

Birth: 17 September 1917
Wigan, Lancashire.
England

Home Town: Wigan, Lancashire, England

Death: 13 April 1943

Crash of Handley Page Hampden AN121
Cowichan Head, B.C., Canada

Burial: Royal Oak Burial Park, Victoria, B.C., Canada

Others: Sgt. R.T. Barrow, Navigator; Sgt. D.D. MacGillivray, WAG;
Sgt. K.E. Thompson, WAG.



Biography

James Smith Peterkin was born 17 September 1917, in Wigan, Lancashire, UK, to James Roger Peterkin, a company director, and Annie Johnson. He had an older sister, Muriel Annie, born 1914. He did not marry, and left his effects to his parents and his sister, who was a spinster in 1943.

James joined the RAF for the duration at the outbreak of war. He trained as a pilot and travelled to Canada, where he was in Patricia Bay with No. 32 OTU, in 1943. On 13 April 1943, James was piloting Handley Page Hampden AN121 when he lost control on a low turn and plunged into the sea near Cowichan Head. He was picked up but subsequently died of his injuries. James was buried in the War Graves section of Royal Oak Burial Park, Victoria, BC, Canada.

Ten years after James was killed in British Columbia, his parents travelled by ship to Vancouver arriving on August 27th. Perhaps this was their first opportunity to see where their only son died and was buried. They made the journey again five years later.



Royal Oak Burial Park, War Graves Section.

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
Sgt.	R.T. Barrow	Navigator
Sgt.	D.D. MacGillivray	WAG
Sgt.	K.E. Thompson	WAG

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 feet, 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 three men from the water: the only survivor, Sgt. Thompson, 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

