

# Ritchie, Elton Roy

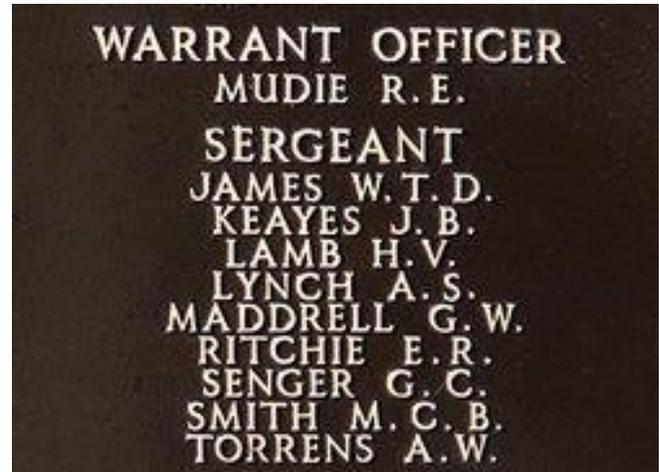
**Age:** 19  
**Nationality:** Australian  
**Rank:** Sergeant  
**Unit:** No. 32 OTU  
**Occupation:** Wireless Operator/  
Air Gunner  
**Service No:** 421626 (RAAF)  
**Birth:** 17 December 1923  
Marrickville, NSW.  
Australia

**Home Town:** Homebush, Sydney,  
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. Allen Spencer  
Lynch, WAG, RAAF; P/O Charles Sugden, Navigator, RAFVR



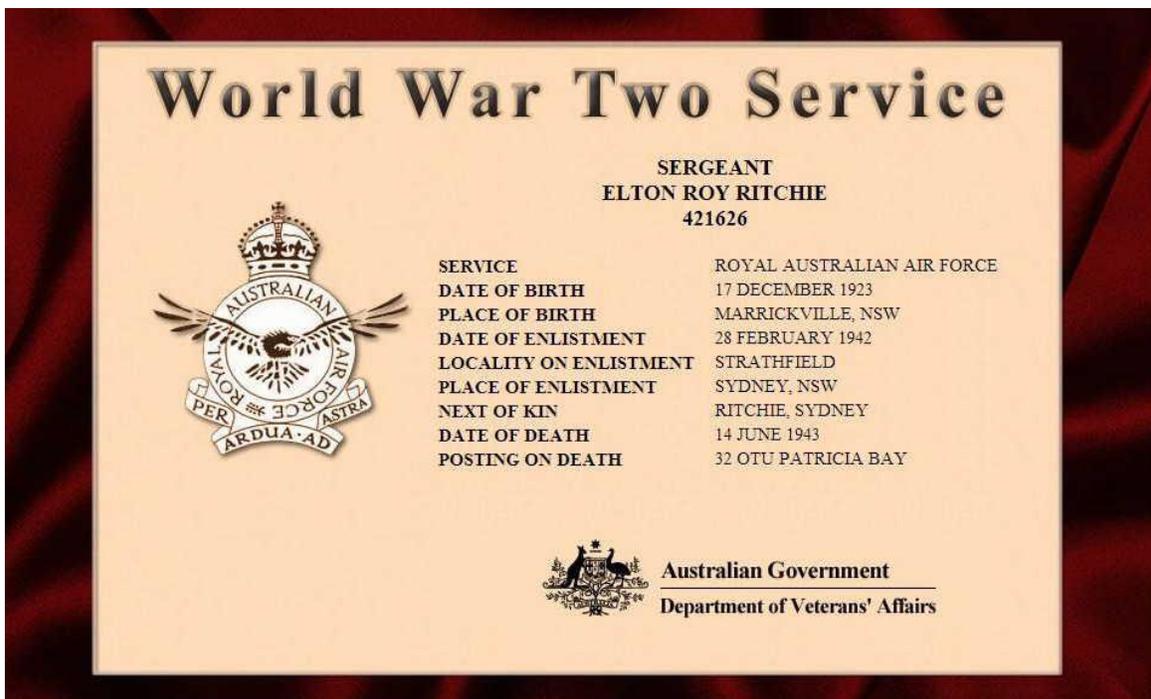
# Biography

Elton Roy Ritchie is listed on the June 1943 panel of the Commonwealth Air Force Memorial in Ottawa, Canada, with three other young Australians. Alan Spencer Lynch died in the same accident as Elton, George Webb Maddrell and Grant Charles Senger died together ten days earlier. All four men were wireless operators/air gunners training in No. 32 OTU, Patricia Bay, BC, Canada, and all four were killed in training accidents when their Handley Page Hampden aircraft disappeared in the sea off the coast of Washington USA. None of their bodies were recovered.

Elton was born on 17 December 1923 in Marrickville, a suburb of Sydney, NSW, Australia, to Sydney Johnstone Ritchie and Catherine (Kate) Langan. He had two older sisters Brenda Olive and Nancye Jeanne. An older brother, Leslie, had been born in 1914 and died in 1915.

Elton enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force, in Sydney, on 28 February 1942, soon after his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. By June 1943, he was training with No. 32 OTU in Canada at Patricia Bay, on Vancouver Island, BC.

On 14 June 1943, Elton and fellow Australian, Alan Lynch were on Hampden AJ992 when it disappeared on a training exercise.



## 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, with a 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 15<sup>th</sup> but at 11:00 pm on the 14<sup>th</sup> 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.

