

# Sugden, Charles

**Age:** 23

**Nationality:** English

**Rank:** Pilot/Officer

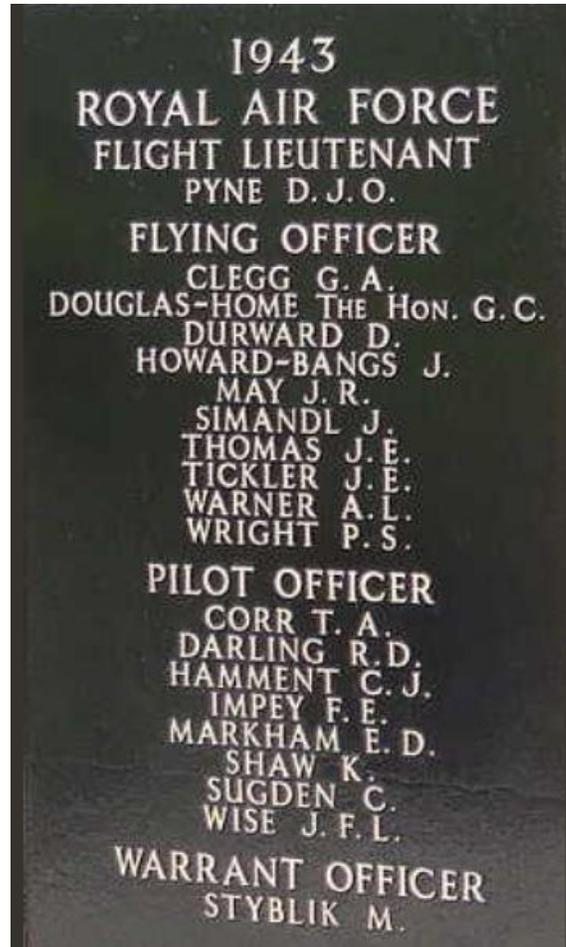
**Unit:** No. 32 OTU

**Occupation:** Navigator

**Service No:** 151391 (RAFVR)

**Birth:** 1919/1920  
UK

**Home Town:** Bradford, Yorkshire  
England



**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; Sgt. Elton Roy Ritchie, WAG, RAAF.

## **Biography**

Pilot Officer Charles Sugden left behind the faintest of footprints when the aircraft he was navigating disappeared into the sea near Cape Flattery in the early hours of 14 June 1943. He was British, in the RAF, but had been long enough in Canada to have a wife in Hamilton, Ontario, named as his next of kin.

His marriage in Hamilton would suggest that he was in training in Hamilton before he was posted to No. 32 OTU Patricia Bay. There was an Elementary Flying Training School in Hamilton and also an Air Navigation School.

His home town is shown either as Bradford, Yorkshire, or as Hamilton, Ontario. Likely he was born in Bradford, or at least living there when he joined the RAF. His body was never recovered so he has no grave and his only memorial other than the “Lost Airmen of the Empire” is the RAF 1943 commemoration on the Ottawa Memorial, which also includes the pilot of his plane, F/O Douglas-Home, and is shown on the previous page.



*Commonwealth Air Forces Memorial, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada*

## Details of Crash

The crash of Handley Page Hampden AJ992 was a sad echo of the crash of Hampden AN100; ten 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 Handley 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.

