

Walls, George

Age: 23

Nationality: Canadian

Rank: Pilot/Officer

Unit: No. 32 OTU

Occupation: Wireless Operator/
Air Gunner

Service No: J/39171



Birth: 11 February 1921
Fintona,
Tyrone, Ireland

Home Town: Banff, AB,
Canada

Death: 12 April 1944
Crash of Beechcraft C-45 Expeditor HB124,
Whidbey Island, WA, USA

Burial: Old Banff Cemetery, Banff,
Alberta, Canada

Others: F/L Victor Ruocco, Pilot; P/O George Walls, Navigator;
Passengers Mr. J. L. Blenkiron; LAC Samuel Hemphill.

Biography

George Walls lived in Banff, Alberta. He was an enthusiastic swimmer and skier and enjoyed rifle shooting and hunting. After he left Banff High School he found summer work as a game warden and then as a part-time lifeguard at Banff Springs Hotel.

When George was 19 in June 1940, he applied to the RCAF in Calgary. He was described as a *'short, muscular, active type, of good appearance, pleasing manner and personality'* and *'of average intelligence, very keen and mentally alert'*. He applied for flying duties and was recommended as a Wireless Operator/Air Gunner (WAG) and marked as suitable for a commission.

From July to October of 1940 George was at Initial Training School. He was described as having a yen for guns and as excellent gunner material.

George passed wireless training in February 1941, with average scores, and armament training in March 1941, again, not outstanding, but a good average. He was granted his Air Gunner Badge on 17 March 1941. In April he was posted overseas and in August to Middle Eastern Command, where he was promoted, in February 1942, to flight sergeant. George stayed in the Middle East for a year, returning to UK in August and to Canada in November of 1942. He was posted to No. 32 OTU in Patricia Bay in December 1942.

Throughout his short service, George was considered of very good character and satisfactory at his trade. He finally earned his commission in October 1943 when he became a Pilot Officer.

On 12 April 1944, George was the second crew member on Beechcraft C-45 Expeditor HB124. In the accident inquiry he is described as the navigator, although his trade was always WAG. The aircraft crashed on Whidbey Island, WA, killing the two crew members and two passengers. His body was recovered and buried in Banff.

George Walls was born 11 February 1921 in Finona, Tyrone, Ireland to Thomas James Walls, a plumber, and his wife Jane. They already had a three year old son Robert who, at the time of George's death, was a Pilot Officer serving at No.45 Air School in Cape Province, South Africa. Robert survived the war. The family emigrated to Canada some time between 1921 and 1927, when George started elementary school in Banff.




P/O George Walls, Banff, Is Killed

[By Herald Correspondent]

BANFF, April 14—Word was received here that P/O George Walls, 23 of the R.C.A.F., was killed Wednesday night in an accident on the Pacific coast.

A native of Banff, Pilot Officer Walls had served with the R.A.F. in the Egyptian campaign, with more than 600 operational hours to his credit. Upon receiving his promotion to pilot officer he was chosen for service in the transport division, and was taking instruction in that work when killed.

He leaves his mother and father and one brother, P/O "Bob" Walls, serving with the R.A.F. in South Africa.



Details of Crash

The flight of Beechcraft C-45 Expeditor HB124, on 12 April 1944, was arranged to transport Mr. J. L. Blenkiron, a factory representative of the Douglas Aircraft Company, to Sand Point, Seattle, Washington, in order to obtain aircraft spare parts. At the time, No. 32 OTU at Pat Bay was converting to Douglas C-47 Dakotas. The Expeditor carried three other men:

F/L Victor Ruocco	Pilot
P/O George Walls	Navigator
LAC Samuel Hemphill	A second passenger.

F/L Ruocco was an experienced and exceptionally capable pilot and flying instructor. He was also a qualified Radio Range [an early navigation system] instructor.

The aircraft took off from Patricia Bay station at 2:00 pm and the estimated time for the flight was 50 minutes. At about 3:00pm, civilian witnesses at Langley, Whidbey Island, WA, saw the aircraft crash to the ground, explode and burn. Evidence suggests that the aircraft went out of control in or above the overcast since it came into sight in a dive of from 30° to 45° and recovered level flight at a low altitude. Due to either a high speed stall or to it clipping the top of trees, the aircraft rolled about its longitudinal axis and crashed, more or less inverted, in a densely wooded area of 75 ft fir trees. All of the occupants were killed instantaneously and the aircraft was totally destroyed. Weather conditions at Sand Point, Bellingham and Patricia Bay permitted contact flying for the entire flight and any local, unfavourable weather could have been avoided. There was no radio contact during the flight.

When the site of the crash was examined it appeared that the aircraft had plunged vertically into the ground. Only one tree was clipped off and the wreckage was scattered about as if a great explosion had occurred. One body was recovered from 15 ft up in a tree. It was impossible to find any part of the aircraft that would give any indication as to the cause of the crash. The crash site was near the U.S. Naval Air Station and, after the bodies were recovered, it was left to the discretion of the U.S. Naval authorities to decide what to do with the remains.



