

# Wood, Richard

**Age:** 29

**Nationality:** Canadian

**Rank:** P/O

**Unit:** No. 13 OT

**Occupation:** Wireless Operator  
Air Gunner

**Service No:** R9131

**Birth:** 28 October 1911  
Glasgow, Scotland



**Home Town:** Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

**Death:** 15 December 1941  
Crash of Supermarine Stranraer 927  
Entrance to Nanoose Bay, BC, Canada

**Burial:** Elmwood Cemetery, Winnipeg

**Others:** AC1 Robert William Adams (crew); Sgt. Gordon Herbert Andrews (co-pilot); AC1 Robert Albert Blakely (crew); F/L Donald Clark MacDougall (pilot); Sgt. Russell Tremaine Mitchell (crew); LAC William Denis Riley (crew); P/O Richard Wood (crew); Sgt. John Cunningham Gunn (passenger).

## **Biography**

Richard Wood came to Canada from Scotland with his mother and brother David when he was nine years old. They travelled to Manitoba, where Richard lived until he enlisted in the RCAF.

He left school with a partial matriculation when he was 16, and continued his education with some night school classes; one year in shorthand and typing, and the next in chemistry and geometry. He found employment at Eaton's, ending as a Section Head in the Drug Department. True to his Scottish heritage, Richard's sports were golf and curling. He listed Music as his only hobby. He smoked a pipe.

Richard spent about nine months, from July 1940, as a rifleman in the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, Canadian Army Reserve. He was discharged in March 1941 in order to enlist in the RCAF. His medical at enlistment showed him to be slender, slightly below average height, and already having a complete set of dentures. He was an ordinary man, described as confident, neat and alert and recommended for training as a Wireless Operator/Gunner.

A week after enlisting Richard was sent to Brandon, and from there to Paulson, still in Manitoba, for training. He worked hard and did reasonably well in the courses. He received his Wireless Operators badge in November 1941 and his Air Gunners badge in December 1941, the same time he was promoted to Sergeant and Pilot Officer. Four days later he was posted to Patricia Bay, BC. This was to be his last posting; three days later Richard drowned, along with seven other men, in the hull of a submerged Supermarine Stranraer near Maude Island at the entrance to Nanoose Bay, BC

Richard was born in Glasgow, Scotland on 28 October 1911, to Richard Alexander Wood and Mary Anderson. He had one brother and two sisters. His father, who was a soldier, died before Richard enlisted. On 9 September 1939, Richard married Patricia Marion Waller and moved from his parents home in St. Vital to Norwood, both districts of Winnipeg, Manitoba. He had no children.



**Winnipeg Fliers Missing**




**FLT-LT. D. C. MACDOUGALL**

**SGT. R. WOOD**

*These Winnipeggers are two of a crew of seven missing from a patrol flight of an R.C.A.F. plane at the West coast. The plane is believed to have crashed into a heavy sea.*

## Details of Crash

On 15 December 1941, at 1:10 pm, Supermarine Stranraer 927 took off from Patricia Bay seaplane base on patrol. It carried a crew of seven:

AC1 Robert William Adams  
Sgt. Gordon Herbert Andrews  
AC1 Robert Albert Blakely  
F/L Donald Clark MacDougall  
Sgt. Russell Tremaine Mitchell  
LAC William Denis Riley  
P/ O Richard Wood.

F/L MacDougall was first pilot and Sergeant Andrews was second pilot. All the remaining men were described simply as crewmen.

Sgt. John Cunningham Gunn asked the captain if he could join the crew. Despite having been warned previously not to carry unauthorized passengers, F/L MacDougall agreed to take him. There were two authorized passengers, F/L Booth and Mr. Hobbins, who needed transportation to Vancouver.

The aircraft landed successfully at Jericho Beach, where the two legitimate passengers disembarked, and took off again at 1:55 pm. At 2:33 pm, with deteriorating weather conditions, all aircraft from Patricia Bay were instructed to return to base. Stranraer 927 did not respond and made no subsequent contact with base.

Around 3:00 pm, F/L Mac Dougall tried to land at Nanoose Bay, where conditions were poor with strong winds (40 mph) and very rough seas. With no survivors and no radio contact, his reasons for landing are obscure.

According to civilian witness statements, at about 3:00 pm, the aircraft circled once and then came in to land. It touched the surface, bounced twice and was struck by two waves about ten feet high. The left wing hit the water and the aircraft turned until it was almost vertical, nose down, and started to sink. Seeing the aircraft in trouble, civilian boatmen tried to reach it, but the aircraft sank before they could get there. They were able to pinpoint the location of the wreck when salvage attempts were made later. The witnesses did not think the aircraft had engine difficulties but some reported a 'flash' on the top of a wing as

it landed.

It was about 4:00 pm when Patricia Bay were notified of the crash and sent an officer to investigate. No salvage efforts were possible on that day due to the rough seas. Two naval boats dragged the area the following day with no success and the next two days, the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, weather was again too rough for further dragging.

On Friday the 19<sup>th</sup> Pacific Salvage dragged area for more than three hours and finally located the aircraft in 30 fathoms of water. They raised and towed it to shallow water where a diver was able to attach lines to hoist it onto a barge.

On Saturday the bodies of the crew were removed, brought to shore, and identified. They are recorded as having drowned. Only F/L MacDougall was missing. He was assumed to have escaped through the hatch above his seat and, unable to swim in his heavy flying gear, drowned. His body was never found.

The inquiry into the accident, which did not take place until seven months later, concluded that the cause of the accident was a heavy landing in rough water that damaged the left wing, collapsed the nose, and shattered all the windows, speeding the rate at which the aircraft sank. The damage to the aircraft with this, plus five days under water and the effects of the salvage, was severe.

No recommendations were made since it was impossible to determine why the captain chose to land in such challenging conditions.



# SEVEN DEAD IN TRAGEDY

## Complement of R.C.A.F. Flying Boat Lost When Craft Sinks

NANAIMO, Dec. 16.—The cause of the tragic death of seven men in the big Royal Canadian Air Force plane which dropped out of a storm, hovered above the waters of Nanoose Bay for a few minutes and then disappeared with a side slip into 240 feet of water, still remains unsolved tonight.

The big flying boat, which left Patricia Bay on Monday on a routine patrol in good weather, evidently had engine trouble at 3:20 p.m. while over Nanoose Bay and after circling twice around the angry waters off Maude Island, settled, hopped three times and then hit again, with one wing dipping into the water, slicing the way for the rest of the huge machine to slide to the bottom. The seven passengers, equipped with life belts, probably were unable to free themselves to obtain a chance to swim clear.

Four officers of the air force arrived in Nanaimo from Patricia Bay today and at noon interviewed eyewitnesses of the accident at Lantzville. They were trying to piece together the story of the crash. On

