

Hornbrook, Peter Francis

Age: 32

Nationality: American

Rank: Sergeant

Unit: No. 32 OTU

Occupation: WAG

Service No: 1586682 (RAFVR)

Birth: about 1911

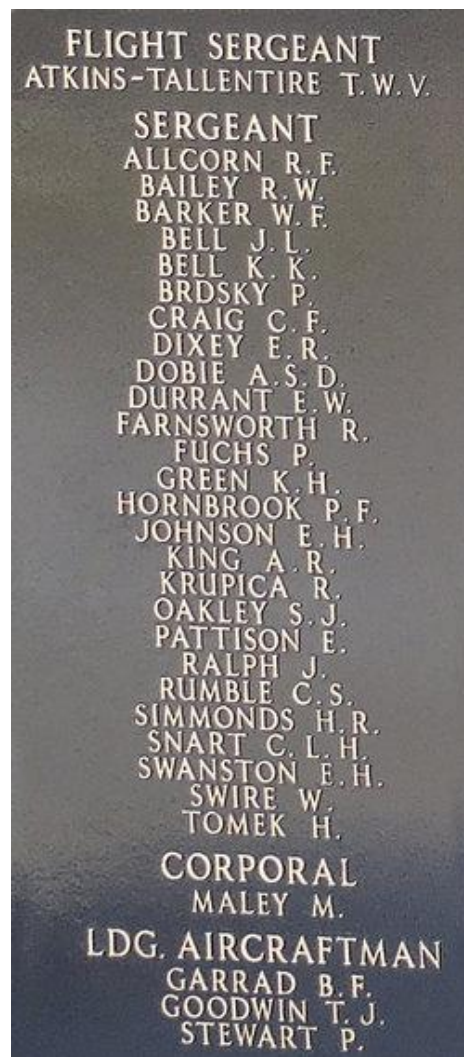
Home Town: Virdin, Illinois,
USA

Death: 16 October 1943

Crash of Handley Page Hampden AN132,
Maggie Lake, BC, Canada

Burial: Commemorated on Ottawa Memorial,
Ontario, Canada

Others: Sgt. Ronald Frank Allcorn, Pilot, RAFVR; P/O Raymond
Robert Porter, WAG, RAAF; Sgt. Mervyn Charles Smith,
WAG, RAAF



Biography

Peter Francis Hornbrook was a resident of the USA. His parents were Francis P. and Gladys Hornbrook who were living in Plymouth, England, in 1943. His wife was living in Virdin, Illinois, USA.

Peter joined the Royal Air Force, and, in 1943, was training as a navigator in Patricia Bay, BC, Canada.

On October 16th he was a crew member on Handley Page Hampden AN132 piloted by fellow RAFVR airman Ronald Allcorn. The aircraft failed to return to base after night exercises and subsequent searches could not locate it. In July 1945 it was found totally destroyed high on a hillside seven miles NE of Ucluelet, BC. The bodies of the crew were too damaged to identify individually and all were buried close by the wreckage and the grave marked with a white cross. Peter is commemorated on the Commonwealth Air Forces Memorial in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.



Commonwealth Air Forces Memorial, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Details of Crash

Handley Page Hampden AN132 carried a crew of four; two from the Royal Air Force and two from the Royal Australian Air Force.

Sgt. Ronald Frank Allcorn	Pilot	RAFVR
Sgt. Peter Francis Hornbrook	Navigator	RAFVR (resident of USA)
P/O Raymond Robert Porter	WAG	RAAF
Sgt. Mervyn Charles Smith	WAG	RAAF

On 16 October 1943, the crews of six aircraft were briefed for a night navigation exercise over the Pacific Ocean. The pilots were instructed that if they encountered a bank of cloud in the direction of the Malahat they should climb over it. The route to be taken was base to Amphritite Point to Catala Island to two positions over the sea to Pachema Point and back to base. The duration of the flight was approximately 3:30 hours at a height of 6,000 feet or 2,000 feet above any low cloud. If W/T contact could not be made on any of the given bases within one hour, the crew was to term this W/T failure and return to base.

AN132 took off at 18:55 and gave bearings at 19:27, 19:44, 19:47 and 19:49. Nothing was heard from the aircraft after this.

The pilot of AN144 returned to base at 19:25 with W/T trouble and reported that the weather was not good. There was considerable cloud about, near the station, and frequent showers. At 20:18, the weather was worsening and all aircraft were recalled to base. Every effort was made to contact AN132 with no success; the other four aircraft returned safely.

On October 16th a search for the missing aircraft started and continued for five days with no results. The aircraft was presumed lost with all crew.

The pilot, Allcorn, had 305 hours experience; 66 hours in the previous six months, mainly on Hampdens. He was rated as above average on night and instrument flying, and sound on single engine. Though mild mannered, he did not lack confidence. A flying instructor had flown AN132 immediately before the exercise and found it serviceable for what was required.

At the court of inquiry into the accident it was concluded that no decision on the cause of the crash could be made and that all crew members had died.

On 6 July 1945, a crashed Hampden was located on a hill near Maggie Lake, seven miles NE of Ucluelet.

When the inquiry was reopened, Sergeant A. Nobleman, an Armourer at RCAF station Tofino gave the following evidence:

“On 7th July 1945 I proceeded to the scene of the crash of a Hampden aircraft accompanied by W.G.Willie as a guide, a fisherman from Ucluelet, BC, Sergeant Rose, a hospital assistant, and L.A.C. Wilson.

At the time of impact, the aircraft appeared to have been flying from west to east, judging by the path cut through the trees by the aircraft. At the same time, the aircraft appeared to have hit fairly straight in, as few trees were broken. The aircraft appeared to have exploded and burned on impact. The wreckage was spread for a distance of 160 yards down the mountain.

Although every effort was made to identify the occupants of the aircraft, no identification was possible. It was not even possible to learn the number of occupants. The aircraft was identified as a Hampden by a metal tag found bearing the name and number 52333L17M-5201C1 1SS5/FAL/CA/6122. I was unable to find the number of the particular aircraft.”

An investigation was able to identify the aircraft based on the number given as Hampden AN132. Due to the difficulties in reaching the site the bodies could not be removed and on July 30th a funeral party with a chaplain was sent to bury the bodies by the wreckage and erect a white cross.

The total destruction of the aircraft made it impossible to reach any further insight into the cause of the crash and the original conclusions of the inquiry were upheld.



