

Kingswood, Gordon Thomas

Age: 20
Nationality: Canadian
Rank: Pilot/Officer
Unit: No. 3 OTU
Occupation: Navigator
Service No: J/48312



Birth: 7 November 1924,
Dartmouth, NS,
Canada

Home Town: Brantford, Ontario,
Canada

Death: 12 February 1945

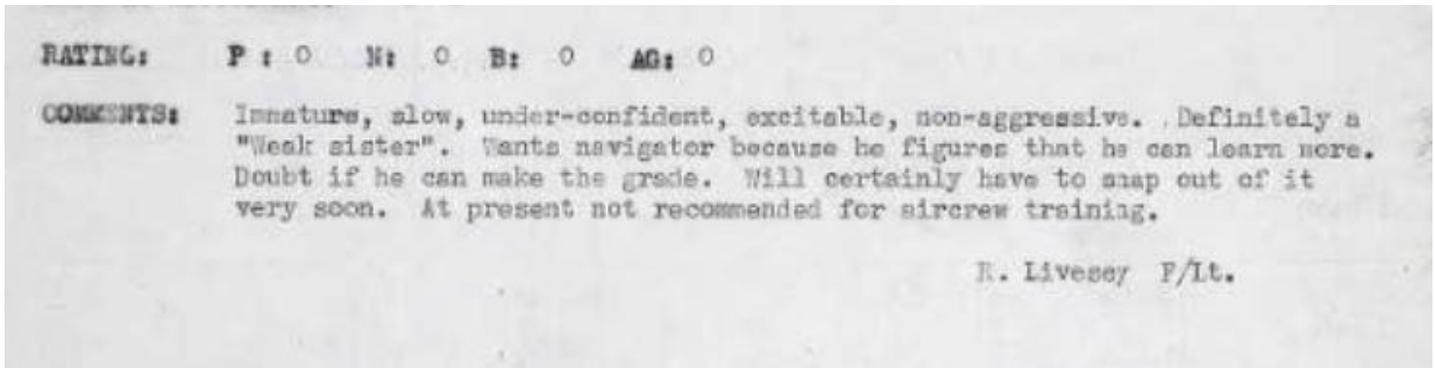
Crash of Consolidated Canso 9701
Saanich Inlet, BC, Canada

Burial: Greenwood Cemetery, Brantford,
Ontario, Canada.

Others: RCAF: P/O R.B. Fraser, Pilot; P/O A.B. Crawford, 2nd Pilot.

Biography

Gordon Kingswood, a lathe operator, enlisted in the RCAF in September 1943, hoping for flying duties. He had left school at 15 with a grade 10 education, which was inadequate for aircrew, and the Medical Officer who examined him was very dismissive:



The Medical Officer and the interviewing officer, who also rated Gordon as of low intelligence, were to be proved mistaken.

Gordon spent two months in Lachine, Quebec, upgrading his education before going to No. 3 ITS in Victoriaville, also in Quebec, where he was received more positively. Although he seemed to lack ambition, he was cooperative and had a good service spirit. He was selected for training as a Navigator or, alternatively, as an Air Bomber, and sent on to No. 6 BGS in Mountain View, Alberta, where he was keen and hard working; his performance was overall average but his bombing was above average.

Following Mountain View, on 22 April 1944, Gordon went to Air Observer School in Chatham, Ontario, and the following August he was awarded his Navigators Badge and received a commission. He then spent a couple of months at General Reconnaissance School in Summerside, PEI, before being posted to No. 3 OTU at Patricia Bay, BC on 2 December 1944.

Two months later, on 12 February 1945, Gordon was Navigator on Consolidated Canso 9701 when it crashed into Saanich Inlet. He was alive when rescued from the sea but died later in hospital of head injuries. Gordon was buried beside his mother's grave in Greenwood Cemetery, Brantford, Ontario.

Gordon was born in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, on 23 November 1924 to Arthur Henry Kingswood and Emma May Barkhouse. He was their seventh child of nine. An older brother Arthur, was born in 1916 and Frederick was born and died in 1920. He had seven sisters: Margaret b.1913, Lottie b.1918, June b.1921, Irene b.1923, Lorraine, b.1926, and Mary b.1929. The family moved to Brantford in 1928 and Gordon's mother died of a heart attack in 1943.

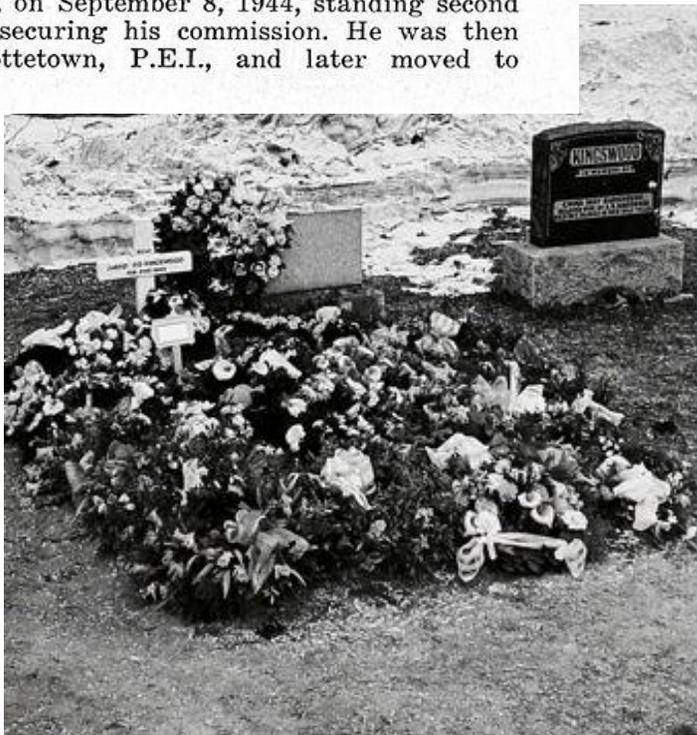
From Brantford, County of Brant, and Six Nations Virtual War Memorial



***P/O Gordon Thomas
Kingswood***

P/O Gordon Thomas Kingswood, son of Mr. Arthur Kingswood, 84 Gilkison St., and the late Mrs. Kingswood, was the victim of a flying accident at Patricia Bay, B.C., and lost his life on February 12, 1945. His body was escorted to Brantford and he was buried with full R. C. A. F. honors in Greenwood Cemetery. Born in Dartmouth, N.S., in November,

1924, and a resident of Brantford since 1928, the young flier had attended Riverview and Ryerson Schools and the Collegiate Institute and Vocational School. He was a member of St. John's Anglican Church. He was an active and enthusiastic athlete. After schooldays, he was employed at Robbins and Myers Company of Canada, Ltd., until his enlistment in the R.C.A.F. on September 16, 1943. After training in Lachine, Valleyfield, Que., and Mountain View, Ont., he graduated from No. 10 A.O.S. at Chatham, N.B., on September 8, 1944, standing second in his class and securing his commission. He was then posted to Charlottetown, P.E.I., and later moved to Patricia Bay.



Details of Crash

On 12 February 1945, Consolidated Canso 9701 carried a crew of eight:

P/O	R.B. Fraser	Pilot	Killed
P/O	A.B. Crawford	2 nd Pilot	Killed
P/O	G.T. Kingswood	Navigator	Killed
Sgt.	A.L. McClean	WAG	Seriously injured
Sgt.	W.B. Norris	WAG	“
Sgt.	H. Collis	WAG	“
Sgt.	F.E. Boalch	F/Eng.	Missing, later presumed dead
Sgt.	L. Desjardins	F/Eng.	Dangerously injured.

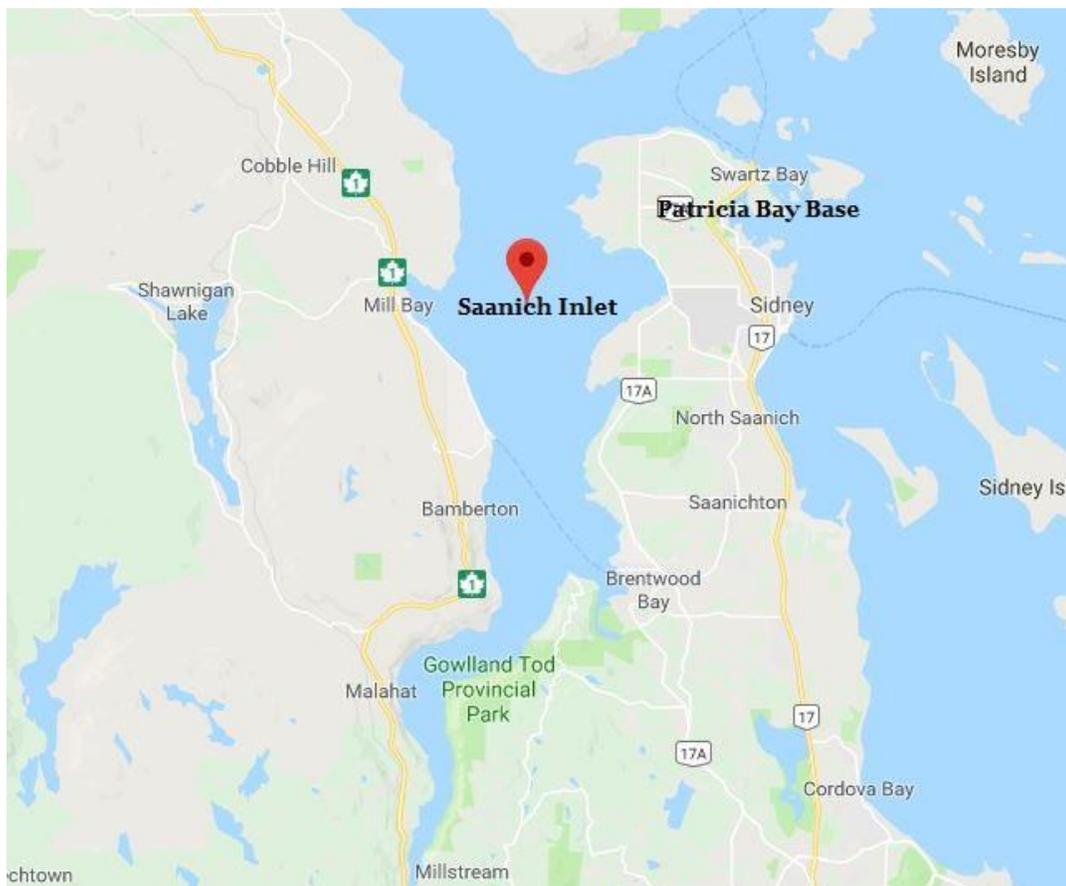
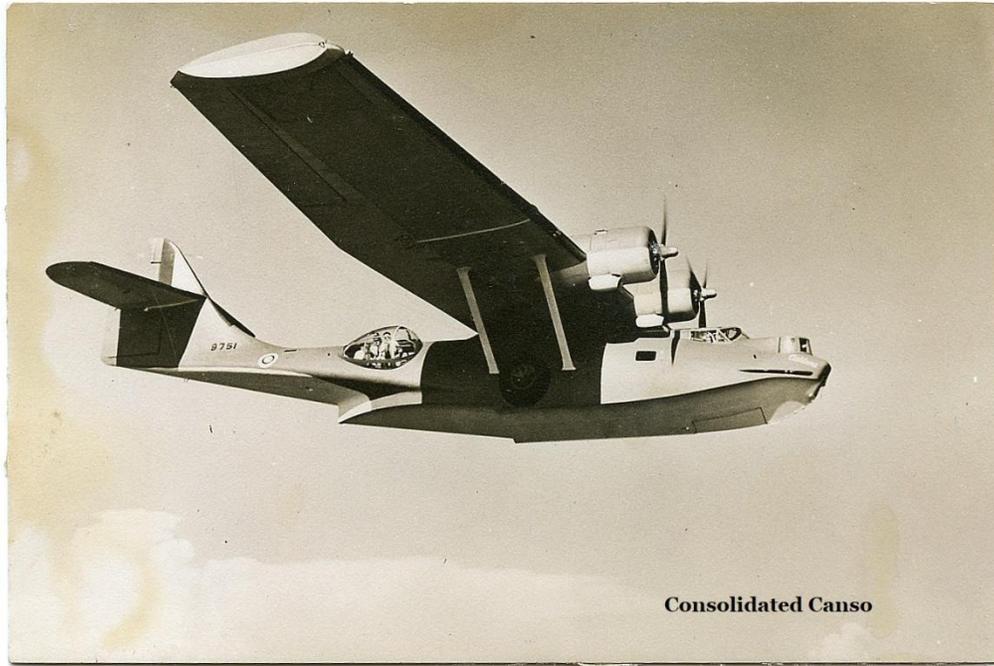
P/O Fraser, took off at 11:45 for a tow target bombing exercise. Flying Officer Long, a pilot instructor, captained the crew on their first bombing run in order to screen P/O Fraser, and disembarked when the aircraft landed to reload with bombs for the second run. On completion of the second bombing run, P/O Fraser changed places with the second pilot, P/O Crawford, in order to allow Crawford to land the aircraft from the first pilot's position. At 12:25 pm, coming in to land and approximately 20 feet above the water, the nose went down, striking the water at a very sharp angle. There was an explosion and the tail of the aircraft stood straight up for a moment before it fell back into the water. The whole area became enveloped in flame.

The Canso broke into two parts and seven of the crew of eight were either thrown or escaped from the aircraft. When the first standby boat arrived, there were five or six men floating, and three were picked up. The remainder were picked up by a second boat.

P/O Fraser and P/O Kingswood both died of their injuries soon after arriving at the hospital. P/O Crawford suffered severe injuries and shock. He had multiple infusions of plasma and blood. His left arm and leg were both mangled and the continuing blood loss made it imperative that they be amputated. The additional shock of the surgery was too much and he died soon after. Sgt. Boalch was assumed to have gone down with the aircraft. Sergeant Desjardins, who was in a dangerous condition, was transferred to Shaughnessy Military Hospital in Vancouver.

It was general practice in the unit that when an aircraft had a first and second

pilot, the second pilot did not take off or land because the first pilot needed the practice. The cause of the accident was determined to be pilot error when landing on a 'glassy' sea. The recommendation of the inquiry into the accident was that second pilots never be permitted to take off or land.



60 Years Later

The wreckage of Consolidated Canso 9701 was located by accident on June 23, 2005, by a privately owned submersible vehicle being towed by the coast guard ship John P. Tully.

The remotely operated vehicle was operated by the Canadian Scientific Submersible Facility.

Sandra McCulloch - Times Colonist

July 17, 2005

Freddy Boalch died the day he turned 21, when the Second World War Canso bomber he was in with seven other young men crashed into Saanich Inlet on approach to landing in Patricia Bay.

The body of the Calgary radio operator-air gunner sank with the wreckage into the depths of the inlet Feb. 12, 1945, just three months before victory in Europe was declared. Until a few weeks ago, Boalch's watery grave remained undetected and the wreckage uncharted.

It was the coast guard vessel John P. Tully, towing a remotely operated submersible equipped with a camera, that discovered the historic wreckage in 167 metres of water. It was a fluke; nobody was looking for the old plane, which remained where it came to rest on the sea bottom, four kilometres northwest of Victoria International Airport. Two pilots, a navigator and five wireless air-gunners were on the aircraft that day, returning to Patricia Bay from a training run at about lunchtime. The crash was later blamed on the glassy surface of the sun playing tricks on the pilot's eyes.

Pilot Rupert Brook Fraser of Victoria wasn't at the controls at the time. Records show a student pilot, Allan Bruce Crawford of Flint, Mich., was flying when the amphibious aircraft plunged into the sea, broke apart and sank. Fraser, Crawford, Boalch and navigator Gordon Thomas Kingswood of Brantford, Ont., all died that day or shortly afterward.

Four others survived. Two are alive today, including Hank Golis, who was 19 at the time of the crash, and was shocked Thursday to hear the old plane wreckage had been found.

"Freddy Boalch was sitting right in front of me and Kingswood was on my right-hand side -- that's how close we were, and to this day it haunts me how I survived and they didn't," said Golis, 79, who lives in a suburb of Winnipeg.

The other survivor, Albert Maclean, now 91, still remembers the crash well 60 years later.

"We were coming in for a landing and we were laughing about it," said the former radio operator-air gunner, who now lives in Cornwall, Ont.

"The second pilot had taken over and we were laughing and saying, 'Oh, here we go, and there we went.'"

Maclean remembers chatting with Kingswood, who was leaning on the back of his chair. "I was sitting in the wireless operator's seat and watching the pilots, who were directly ahead of me. Just before we crashed, I saw them look up at the controls above their heads. Just as they did that, I heard a crash."

Golis, the youngest of the crew members, remembers the men were planning to have a party to celebrate Freddy's birthday that evening.

Without warning, Golis said, everyone hit the deck. The impact, he said, "took us all by surprise."

The eight had been a crew for only three months but had grown close through hours of training in Pat Bay. "Freddy Boalch, now that's his grave," said Golis. "He was the only child in the family, the only child and it was his 21st birthday."

Those who got out of the plane alive had to fight through fire and the icy February sea to survive. Golis pushed upward and broke through the surface, where the water appeared to be on fire. "I was right smack dead centre of the fire -- it was all over me.

"I kept splashing my way out until I got into the open water."

Golis said he was "mad as the dickens" that he wasn't unconscious because he figured he'd never survive. "I was conscious all the way through and scared, of course, thinking what mother and father were going to think of when they got the word.

Maclean was knocked out momentarily when he went head first into the radio equipment. When he surfaced, he noticed a life belt floating at the end of a wing. "I didn't know Kingswood was in it. The poor guy was dead." The sea was burning as far as he could see, and he could hear Golis yelling for help. "But I knew they couldn't

come out for us because the flames were too high and they were burning for a 100-foot circle around the plane."

Air force rescuers who arrived in boats about a half-hour later were met by a grisly scene.

"They pulled Crawford into the same crash boat as me and I noticed his arm was ripped off," said Golis, adding the pilot lived until the middle of the following night."

Also pulled from the water were wireless air-gunners William Bertram (Shorty) Harris of Sydney, N.S., and Lloyd Desjardine of Edmonton. Harris died a hero in the mid-1980s after he tried to save three people from drowning near his home, said Golis.

Desjardine is also believed to be dead. "He had head injuries from the crash," said Golis. "I escorted him home to Edmonton because he couldn't do his laces up or anything."

Golis was in hospital for five or six months with a broken leg and burns. He returned to Winnipeg and worked for the railroad. He has five children and five grandchildren with wife Elsie, whom he married in 1950.

Macleane suffered two broken legs, burns and lacerations on his face that required 90 stitches. He returned to Ontario, where he worked as a medical therapist and then a federal civil servant before returning to the family farm on the St. Lawrence River. The last of seven brothers, he never married, and says he's never dwelled much on the crash. "It never bothered me at all. I considered it part of life. Those things happen."

It's too early to say whether the government plans to raise the wreckage or if the site will be left as is, an underwater memorial to the dead men.

As for Maclean, he doesn't care about the downed plane's fate. "The only thing that bothered me was the first pilot -- he was getting married three or four months after the crash. It must have been awful for his family."

Golis has had a harder time reconciling his survival with his buddies' deaths, and calls the plane's discovery the "final chapter" in his life. Hungry for information on the Canso, he's curious to see the wreckage. Golis has returned to Victoria only once since the war, in 1982. He stood at the old ramp overlooking Saanich Inlet and cried.

"I'm not heavily spiritual but I believe in God. Was I lucky? Was it fate? Maybe God was with me. Whatever it was, I'm here today talking to you."

The Wrecked Canso



