

MacDougall, Donald Clark

Age: 30

Nationality: Canadian

Rank: F/L

Unit: #13 OT

Occupation: Pilot

Service No: C/549

Birth: 11 November 1911
Essex, Ontario, Canada



Home Town: Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Death: 15 December 1941

Crash of Supermarine Stranraer 927
Entrance to Nanoose Bay, BC, Canada

Burial: Commemorated on Ottawa Memorial

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

Biography

Donald MacDougall was piloting Supermarine Stranraer 927 when it sank in Nanoose Bay in 1941. Of the eight crew members, he was the only man who escaped from the aircraft and the only one whose body was never found.

Before he enlisted in the RCAF Donald already had some military experience. When he was 17, he went on a Boys Training Course at Camp Borden, then for two years he was in the C.O.T.C. followed by service in the Winnipeg Light Infantry, where he took courses in gun, revolver and intelligence and an Instructors course. In the summer of 1931 he took part of the Provisional Pilot Officer course and had 36 hours flying time. He received good reports on his performance in these ventures being described as:

“...above average in character, common sense, reliability and leadership. Very keen on flying and will probably take up flying professionally.”

On 15 June 1939, Donald applied for a commission in the non Permanent Active Air Force. He came with very good recommendations as a candidate for a commission. During his first year in the RCAF, he failed to live up to those expectations. From April 8 to May 18 1940, Donald completed a course in advanced flying. He came 20th out of 25 with a mark of 70%. He is described as ‘*sloppy*’ in his flying, although expected to improve with experience. General remarks on his qualities as an officer are: ‘*A fair type, bearing only fair; gives in too easily; parties too much and would improve if he would realize that his work suffers as a result. General ability average, conduct fair, lacks interest, humorous and pleasant.*’ He is recommended for a commission but not recommended as a flying instructor. Donald completed instruction in seaplane flying and bomber reconnaissance from 30 August to 26 October 1940 and is assessed at 71% with the comment ‘*should have made a better showing, interest in the course fell off toward the latter part.*’

The following year Donald seems to have found his feet and renewed his interest in flying. In June 1941, at No. 10 B/R in Newfoundland he is still rated as average but the comment on him is: “*a conscientious officer who takes a keen interest in his work. Is progressing satisfactorily and should develop into a capable B/R pilot.*”

Donald was reported missing on 10 December 1941 but was not finally confirmed as dead until 16 July 1942. At the time of his death he was stationed

at Patricia Bay, BC.

He was born 11 November 1911 in Essex, Ontario, to John Wesley MacDougall and Sarah Effie Munger. He had a brother, John, two years older, and a sister, Margaret five years younger. He was not married.

Donald spent three years at the University of Manitoba studying Engineering but failed to graduate.

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 flying boat 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 17th and 18th, weather was again too rough for further dragging.

On Friday the 19th Pacific Salvage dragged area for more than three hours and finally located the aircraft in 30 fathoms of water. Once raised and towed to shallow water a diver was able to attach lines to it in order 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

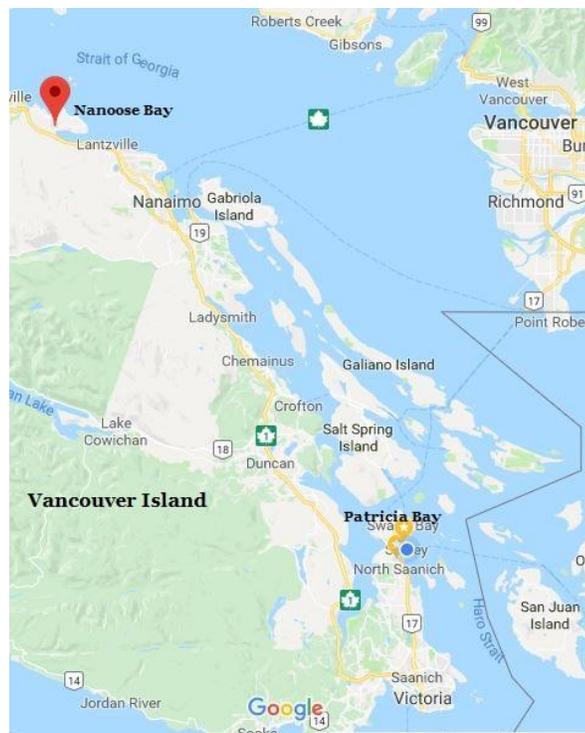
Complement of R.C.A.F. Flying Boat Lost When Craft Sinks

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

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"Air Force"

Patricia Bay, B.C., January 3rd

Mr. J.W. MacDougall,
214 Ethelbert Street,
Winnipeg, Man.

Dear Mr. MacDougall:

It is with much regret that I am unable to furnish you with any further information in connection with your missing son.

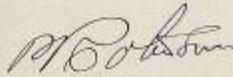
The R.C.M.P. have continuously searched the shoreline of the area adjacent to the scene of the crash but without result.

From accounts of eye witnesses, it has been established that the aircraft was attempting a landing,--the sea was very rough at the time, the waves being 10 to 12 feet, which caused the aircraft to bounce, nose over, and sink immediately.

After a short search the aircraft was located at a depth of 35 fathoms. When brought to shore, the aircraft contained the bodies of all of the crew with the exception of that of your son.

I wish to extend to you and your family my very deep sympathy and that of his comrades in your sad bereavement.

Yours very truly,



(P.D. Robertson) Group Captain,
Commanding Officer,
R.C.A.F. Station,
Patricia Bay, B.C.



FLT.-LT. D. C. MACDOUGALL

Mr. J.W. MacDougall,
4 Cambridge Apartments,
305 Furby Street,
Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Dear Mr. MacDougall:

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated July 2nd regarding your son, Flight Lieutenant Donald Clark MacDougall.

This further information has been received from the Officer Commanding, No. 13 Operational Training Squadron, Patricia Bay, British Columbia:

"At the time of the crash the water was extremely rough and there was a heavy tide flowing out to sea, and as this officer was missing from the aircraft it is assumed that he must have escaped through the hatch and his body washed out to sea. A thorough but unsuccessful search of the coast line and surrounding waters was carried out by the British Columbia Provincial Police and Royal Canadian Navy, as well as by our own Marine Section."

Your enquiry regarding your son's pay has been referred to the Accounting & Finance Division of the Royal Canadian Air Force from whom you will no doubt hear very shortly.

May I again express to you and Mrs. MacDougall my sincere sympathy.

Yours sincerely,


(I.D. Corcoran)
Flight Lieutenant,
R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer,
for Chief of the Air Staff.

/GL

