

Maiden, Francis Keith

Age: 20
Nationality: Australian
Rank: Sergeant
Unit: No. 32 OTU
Occupation: Wireless Operator
Air Gunner
Service No: 423799 (RAAF)
Birth: 27 August 1912
Cooma, NSW,
Australia
Home Town: Penrith, NSW,
Australia



Death: 9 October 1943
Crash of Handley Page Hampden AN101
near Stuart Island, Washington, USA
Burial: Royal Oak Burial Park, Victoria, BC, Canada.

Others: P/O Kenneth Shaw, Navigator, RAFVR; F/O Alan Warner,
Pilot, RAFVR; Sgt Neville Oswald Weekes, WAG, RAAF.

Biography

Francis Keith (Frank) Maiden was the youngest of seven children of James Scrimmes Maiden and Ellen Mary Feeney. When he was born in Cooma, NSW, on 27 September 1923, there were already two daughters, Jean and Enid, and four sons, James, Alfred, Kenneth and John.

Frank was educated to an intermediate level at Penrith Technical High School and at Parramatta High School. When he enlisted in the RAAF in Sydney, NSW, on 18 July 1942, he had been employed as a clerk at the Department of Valuers General since 11 May 1939. A slender 5 ft 8 ins, he was passed as medically fit for aircrew.

Training started in Australia at No. 2 E.D. Bradfield, after which, on 3 October 1942, he embarked in Brisbane for transfer to Canada. In Canada, Frank attended No. 2 Wireless School, Calgary, AB, from November 1942 to May 1943 and No. 8 B.A.G.S. in Lethbridge. He was regarded as a good student, though very young, and possible commission material with more experience. His time in Lethbridge matches that of fellow Australian Neville Weekes and they both received their WAG badges and were promoted to sergeant on 12 July 1943.

On 24 July 1943, Frank, along with Neville Oswald, was posted to No. 32 OTU, Patricia Bay, BC. On 9 October 1943, soon after Frank's 20th birthday, they were both WAG's on Handley Page Hampden AN101 when it crashed near Stuart Island, WA, USA, on exercises. The bodies of both Australians were recovered from the sea and buried at Royal Oak Burial Park, Victoria, BC, Canada.





MAIDEN.—In loving memory of our dear youngest son and brother, Sgt. W.A.G. Francis Keith Maiden, accidentally killed Patricia Bay, Canada, October 9, 1943. Always remembered by his mother, father, sisters, and brothers.
SLAPP.—Loving memories of Her-

'In Memorium' from Sydney Morning Herald, 9th October 1951.

Details of Crash

On 9 October 1943, at 1:25 pm, Avro Anson AN101 took off on exercises with a crew of four:

Sergeant	Francis Keith Maiden	423799 (RAAF)	WAG
P/O	Kenneth Shaw	152316 (RAFVR)	Navigator
F/O	Alan Warner	151705 (RAFVR)	Pilot
Sergeant	Neville Oswald Weekes	413700 (RAAF)	WAG.

The object of the flight was light attack exercises with camera on shipping. The crew was briefed before take-off and instructed to return to base if weather conditions became unfit for the exercise.

At take off, the ceiling was unlimited, visibility four miles, and wind S.E. 17 mph. At the place and time of crash, visibility was good in the immediate vicinity with light fog patches in the area. The wind was easterly and light.

F/O Warner, the pilot, had a total flying time of 303 hours; 72 of which were on Hampdens. He was considered a good average pilot and the crew were experienced on the exercise, having made four such flights totalling 4:30 hours.

The aircraft was spotted in Haro Strait by SS Princess Alice at 1:35 pm. It made three attacks on the ship without any untoward incident being observed. After completing the third attack run it flew away to port of the ship and made a normal turn to starboard climbing to 100 ft. It then went into a tight turn to port, and while in this turn the aircraft seemed to lose flying speed or stall and it dove into the sea. The ship put about and returned to the point where the aircraft had entered the sea. The bodies of two of the crew were found floating on the water along with a dinghy. These bodies were recovered and an unsuccessful effort made to revive one of them, who appeared to have some sign of life. The other crew members were never found.

The pilot who flew the aircraft on its last preceding flight stated that it had a tendency to slip inwards on steep port turns. The C.O. of the Flight testified that Hampdens lose height rapidly in turns due to slipping or skidding, particularly in steep port turns. He stated that pupils are constantly warned of this tendency and instructed in how to prevent it.

The recovered bodies, those of the Australian WAG's, were examined and found to have serious head wounds and not to have drowned. It was assumed that all four crew members had died on impact.

A Supermarine Stranraer, a Westland Lysander and a crash boat were dispatched to the scene by Flying Control but found nothing.

The cause of the crash was determined to be pilot error. The pilot failed to make a turn to port with sufficient care and accuracy and failed to take proper corrective action when the aircraft lost height.

The recommendations of the Court of Inquiry were for more adequate and frequent instructions be given to all student pilots at No. 32 OTU in the proper methods of making all types of turns in Hampden Aircraft. Particular reference should be made to steep turns to port, emphasizing the probable result if such instructions are not carried out accurately. It was also recommended that more adequate and repeated instructions be given students in the proper method of recovery when a Hampden aircraft started to lose altitude in a turn.



