

# Orrell, John

**Age:** 19

**Nationality:** British

**Rank:** Sergeant

**Unit:** No. 32 OTU

**Occupation:** Pilot

**Service No:** 1232301 RAFVR

**Birth:** About 1923

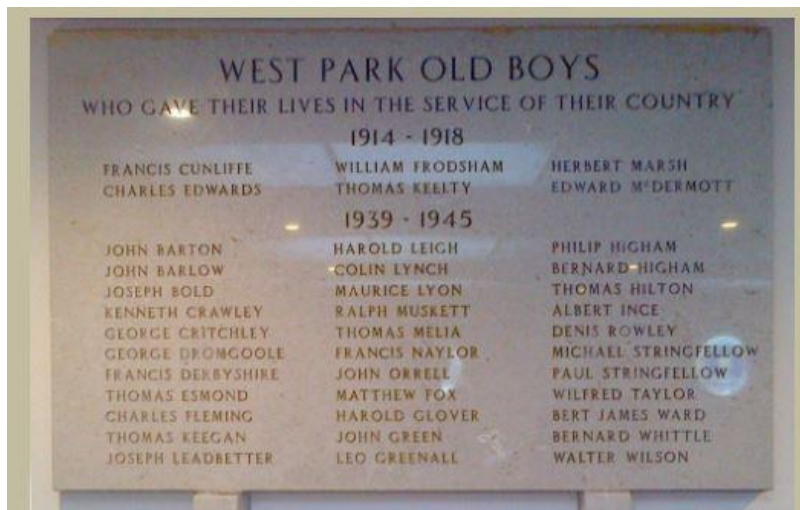
**Home Town:** Upholland, Lancashire, UK

**Death:** 25 October 1942

Crash of Handley Page Hampden AJ988  
Crashed into sea off Patricia Bay, BC, Canada

**Burial:** Commemorated on Ottawa Memorial

**Others:** Sgt. Henry James Thorn



# Biographical Details

John Orrell was born in Upholland, just west of Wigan in Greater Manchester, Lancashire, UK, late 1922 or 1923. His parents were Thomas and Mary Orrell and he had a sister born in 1931. He possibly had two other siblings. He attended West Park Grammar School in St. Helen's Lancashire and is commemorated on the West Park Old Boys Memorial (see above) as well as on St Helens Roll of honour.

John was trained as a RAFVR pilot and came to Canada to No. 32 OTU at Patricia Bay, BC to complete his training. He died there in a flying accident on 25 October 1942.

## St Helens Roll of Honour

**Sergeant 1232301 John Orrell**



<b>Unit/Regiment</b>	Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve		
<b>Date of Death</b>	25th of October 1942 (Sunday)	<b>Age at Death</b>	19
<b>Burial/Memorial &amp; Reference</b>	<u>Ottawa Memorial, Canada</u> Panel 1. Column 4.		
<b>Family Details (CWGC if shown)</b>	Son of Thomas and Mary Orrell, of Upholland, Lancashire, England.		
<b>Census Details</b>	1939 Register. Unfortunately John and two other members of the household are redacted. Father Thomas Orrell born 08/09/1891 a Wholesale Grocers Secretary, mother Mary Orrell born 05/11/1891 an Unpaid Domestic and sister Anne Orrell born 22/06/1931 At School are living at 45 Parliament Street, Upholland.		
<b>Where Born</b>	Lancashire		
<b>Resided</b>	Canada		
<b>How Died</b>	Died		
<b>Notes</b>	Remembered on the West Park Old Boys Memorial		



## **Crash Details**

On 25 October 1942, John Orrell was detailed to practice instrument flying cross country. He took off at 4:15 pm in Handley Page Hampden AJ988 with a safety pilot, Sergeant Henry James Thorn. The route they were to take was base to north of Galiano Island, to north of Saturna Island, to Elk Lake, to Duncan and back to base. They were to return to base if the weather deteriorated and were not authorized for any low flying. At around 5:15 pm the aircraft crashed into the sea with only a civilian fisherman as witness; Mr. C.L. Musclow. The Court of Inquiry believed him to be an intelligent and competent witness.

The witness was fishing just west of Mandarte Island when he saw a twin engine aeroplane flying towards him, quite low, over the trees at the south east end of Sidney Island. The aeroplane appeared to lose height and strike the water about a mile from where he was fishing. It became airborne again and began to climb. At about 25 ft. the witness reported there seemed to be an explosion in the sea beneath the aircraft, but the aircraft continued climbing to about 100 ft., passed over his boat, turned, came back and crashed into the water about 60 feet from his boat. Both engines sounded quite normal but he saw white smoke and flames coming from the starboard engine. After it entered the water the aircraft floated momentarily then exploded into quite small pieces. When the aircraft passed over him he could see no sign of the pilot.

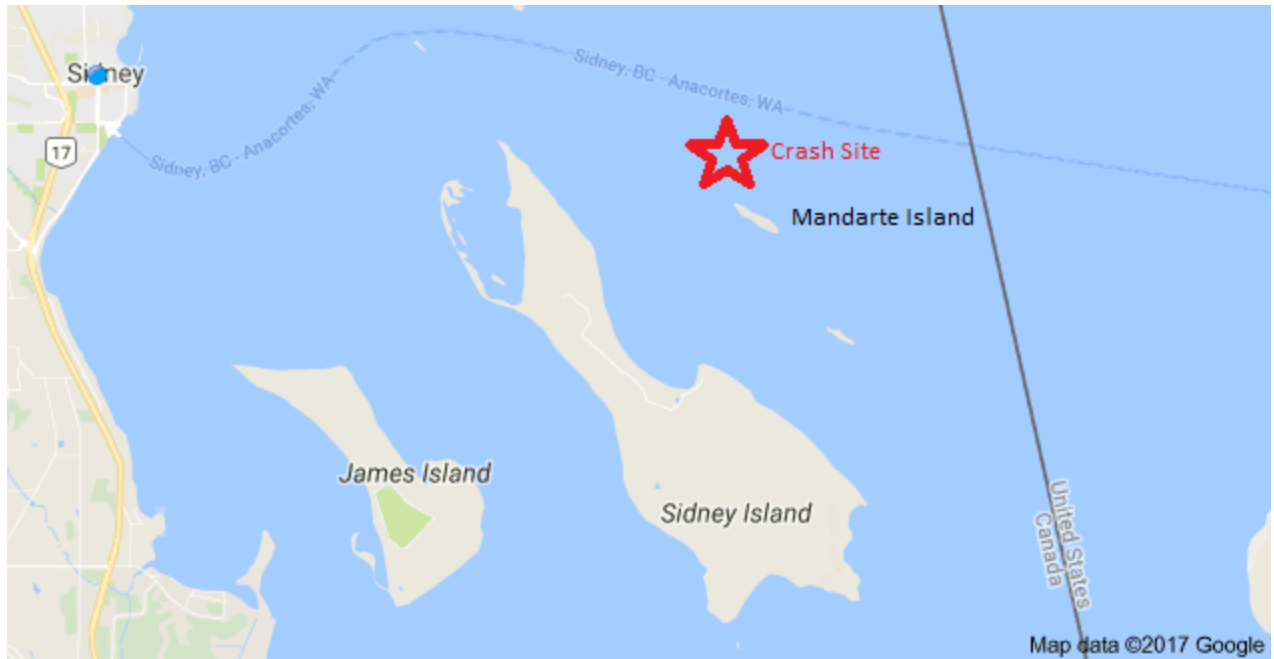
There were no bombs or torpedoes on the aircraft that could have caused the first reported explosion and the aircraft had been entirely serviceable when it was flown by another pilot immediately before this flight.

The accident was deemed to have been caused by disobedience of the order against flying low and an error of judgment resulting in either a wing or a propeller blade entering the water, and the subsequent crash.

A search party found a large oil slick off Mandarte Island with no sign of any survivors. No recovery efforts were made due to the total destruction caused by the explosion.

Hampden Aircraft





***Two Airmen  
Die in Crash***

Plunging into the sea off Sidney during a training flight, two Royal Air Force flyers were killed Sunday afternoon. They were flying a twin-engined medium bomber from the Patricia Bay air station.

Names of the victims, both sergeant pilots, are being withheld until next of kin are notified.

Wreckage of the aircraft was too widely scattered to permit recovery.

**From Victoria Times Colonist:**

