

AIRCREWS FACED DEADLY PERIL IN DUNNVILLE SKIES

During the four years No. 6 Service Flying Training School operated in Dunnville, 47 persons died. Twenty-five of the casualties were pilot trainees, eighteen were pilots and four had other duties on the station.

There were thirty fatal accidents, in which twenty-six Harvards and six Yales were written off. Five involved mid-air collisions and eleven were the result of unauthorized low flying or aerobatics.

Here are the fatal crashes, in chronological order, involving personnel from the Dunnville station, along with a brief description of each (as taken from National Defense crash cards)

Some names and further details of the fatalities/crashes were provided from the Canadian Harvard Aircraft Association Dive Recovery Team records.

Information has also been obtained from the Copies of Coroner Reports of Casualties at No. 6 S.F.T.S. compiled by Dr. Robert Blott, Coroner. Donated to our Museum by his daughter Helen Coons.

Information also obtained from internet research of #6 S.F.T.S. Roll of Honour 1 & 2 by Tony Broadhurst, Author, and fellow researchers.

Further information obtained from the Dunnville Riverside Cemetery transcribed by the Haldimand Branch of the O.G.S. Section D1 stones in the Military Plot. Also from the Haldimand Branch OGS transcription of St. Michaels Cemetery in Dunnville.

1940

Dec. 14: Yale 3351, near Dunnville at 1350 hrs. Pupil pilot apparently went into an involuntary power spin and failed to recover before striking the ground. 1 fatality. LAC James Dalton Bilkey R/56212, Pilot Trainee, aged 24, killed. Burial took place in Hudson Heights (St. James) Cemetery, Hudson Heights, Quebec. Sec. C Lot 202. Son of Paul E. and Sarah E.D. Bilkey of Westmount, Quebec. Lake Bilkey in Northern Ontario was named after James in 1960.

1941

Jan. 23: Yale 3352, 9 miles west of Dunnville at 0900 hrs. Aircraft was on the point of recovering from a left hand spin when it struck the ground, nose first. 2 fatalities. Sgt. George Delos Pomeroy R63995, Pilot of Toronto and LAC John Saunders McMartin R68270, Pilot Trainee, of Thorndale, killed.

Mar. 21: Harvard 2768, 3 miles northwest of main aerodrome at 0330 hrs. Cause obscure 1 fatality. LAC Donald Edward Benniman R66132, Pilot Trainee, killed. Crashed into the ground on night flying exercise South Cayuga Lot 12 Concession 1 Dunn Township, Dunnville.

Mar. 27: Yale 3368, ½ mile north of Mount Hope aerodrome at 1530 hrs. Aerobatics at too low of an altitude. 2 fatalities. P/O Alexander David Angus J2930, Pilot, age 29, from Montreal, and LAC Charles James Gough R60370, Pilot Trainee, aged 21, from Calgary Alberta, killed. Burial for LAC Gough took place in Burnland Cemetery, Calgary.

1941 cont.

Apr. 18: As the result of smoke inhalation from a fire on the base Apr. 16/41 F/O Jesse Augustus Baldwin F/O C2292, Administration (Accounting) of Westmount, Quebec, aged 29, deceased. Records show that he had gotten out safely but had forgotten his kit and went back in to retrieve it. Burial took place in Mount Royal Cemetery, Montreal. Sec. A1 / 3A. Son of Maurice D. & Mary A.M. Baldwin.

May 26: Yale 3376, 2 miles southeast of Kohler at 1500 hrs. Pupil pilot of limited experience got into a spin, possibly from a steep turn, at a height from which he did not have the ability to recover. 1 fatality. LAC Frank Schwartz R77224, Pilot Trainee, killed. In Course 28, age 21, from Montreal, Quebec. On a training flight when his aircraft apparently dived into the ground one and one half miles south east of Kohler ON. on the Clarence, Howard & Wade King farm. Cause obscure. Burial took place in the Hebrew Sick Benefit Assoc. Cemetery, Montreal, Quebec.

June 21: Harvard 2825, 2 miles east of Kohler at 1000 hrs. While engaged in a dog fight the pupil lost control of his aircraft and dived into the ground. 1 fatality. LAC Robert Henry Stevens R74708, Pilot Trainee, age 21, from Vancouver BC, killed. Crashed into the ground 1 ½ miles south-east of Kohler field. Burial took place in Vancouver – from Dunnville Chronicle article.

July 11: Yale 3380, 1 mile west of Byng at 0915 hrs. Lack of experience in spinning service aircraft, slow reaction and failure to apply correct methods of recovery in time. 1 fatality. LAC Wilmot Ashley Tibbetis, Pilot Trainee, USA killed. Burial took place in Bethel, Maine, USA

Dec 15: Harvard 2763, near Port Maitland at 2355 hrs. Aircraft crashed turning to right on downwind leg and caught fire. Reason unknown. 1 fatality. LAC Alexander Collard Willis NZ411561, Pilot Trainee, killed. Burial took place in the Military Plot in Riverside Cemetery, Dunnville

1942

Feb 24: Harvard 2847, in collision with Aylmer Harvard 3072 near Otterville at 1015 hrs. Collision due to insufficient watch for other aircraft on part of both students. It appears possible that one pilot was using his radio and the other pinpointing himself at the time of the accident. 1 fatality. LAC Robert Davidson R10439, Pilot Trainee, killed. (Aylmer student also killed)

Apr. 17: Harvard 2839, 1 mile west of Hagersville at 1400 hrs. Aircraft on authorized exercise went out of control at low altitude and crashed. Fire occurred on impact. The probable cause of aircraft going out of control was structural failure, the exact nature of which is obscure. 2 fatalities. LAC Allison Spoir Guelich R117557, Pilot Trainee and LAC Alestair Logie Rankin NZ412526, Pilot Trainee, killed. Crash into the ground 4 miles north of Selkirk, Ont., Concession 5 Rainham Township, Haldimand County, Fisherville, Ont. Guelich burial took place in Hawthorne, New Jersey, USA. Rankin burial took place in the Military Plot in Riverside Cemetery, Dunnville

1942 cont.

June 21: Harvard 2555, near Bell airport, Tonawanda, N.Y. At 1545 hrs. Apparently while carrying out unauthorized aerobatics at low altitude, student lost control and aircraft struck the ground. 1 fatality. LAC Herbert Edwin Connors R120235, Pilot Trainee, from the Bronx NY, killed. Burial took place in New York, USA69+

June 30: Harvard 2969, in collision with Harvard 3335, just east of the aerodrome at 1620 hrs. Collision due to carelessness on the part of pupil in 2969 while jockeying for position to land. 2 fatalities. WO 1 Allan Marvin Herron R/70424, Pilot, age 24, from Waterford, killed and LAC George Edgar Postlethwaite, Pilot Trainee, killed.

Aug 6: AC 2 Lyall William Scharf, General Duties deceased

Sept. 10: Harvard 3193, in collision with Harvard FE336, 5 miles west of Dunnville at 1705 hrs. Harvard 3193 collided with Harvard FE336 while formation flying and spun in. Pilot of FE336 parachuted to safety. 1 fatality. P/O William Francis Roy, Pilot, age 29, from Ottawa, killed. Burial took place in Pinecrest Cemetery, Ottawa.

Sept. 14: Harvard 3170, 1 mile southwest of main aerodrome at 2215 hrs. Pupil was taking off normally and as aircraft continued to climb, it commenced turning to the left. It then went into a spiral dive and continued to descend until it struck the ground. Aircraft immediately caught fire and was totally destroyed. 1 fatality. LAC John Francis Tennian RAF907452, Pilot Trainee, killed. Also William Cooper, age 15, from Brantford, a labourer at No. 6 killed.

Sept. 23: Harvard 3180, 1 mile northeast of main aerodrome at 1120 hrs. Aircraft appeared to climb steeply on takeoff and stall, crashing into the Grand River and sinking. 2 fatalities. P/O James Ivan McIntyre, J/14026, Pilot, age 24, from Aberfoyle, killed and WO2 Norman Edward Kirk R75719, Pilot, age 22, from Hamilton, killed. Burial for WO2 Kirk took place in Woodland Cemetery in Hamilton.

Sept. 28: Harvard 3178, in collision with Harvard 2823, 1 mile south of Wainfleet at 1000 hrs. Harvard 3178 went out of control and spun into a small pond where it immediately caught fire and was totally destroyed. Instructor in Harvard 2823, P/O T.O. Fraser took control after collision and was able to make wheels up landing. Also in Harvard 2823 was student pilot Edward Roy Pearson #133425, Course 60. 1 fatality. LAC Frederick Charles Blair R/123683, Pilot Trainee, Course 62, of Kenora, killed.

Nov. 3: Harvard 2888, main aerodrome at 2130 hrs. When taking off, with P/O J.B. Hall J11333 Instructor and LAC N.J. MacLean R134368 Student the aircraft swerved striking control officer (Klintworth) and runner (Fleming) with the port wing at side of flare path killing them. Findings stated that Klintworth failed to stop all aircraft traffic on the runway whilst repairs were being made to the flare bath. 2 fatalities. P/O Richard Berthold Klintworth Pilot, age 23, from Otsego Michigan, killed and LAC Marshall Douglas Fleming, General Duties, killed.

1943

Jan. 1: WC1 Arthur William Francis Lawrence, Pilot, deceased

Mar. 3: Yale 3418, 4 miles southwest of Orillia at 1030 hrs. Aircraft on authorized navigation exercise, went into a spin following unauthorized aerobatics at low altitude. 2 fatalities. WO2 Lloyd Henry Dean R64483, Pilot age 27, from Hamilton and F/SGT John Alfred Paterson R129226, Pilot, age 24, from Markham, killed. Crash into the ground 4 miles east of Orillia, Ontario on the farm of William Anderson Lot 9 Concession 1 of Oro Township, Simcoe County.

June 17: F/L Arthur Meredith Dustan, Administration, deceased

June 19: Harvard 2963, crashed into Lake Erie near Buffalo, N.Y at 1507 hrs. Shooting up ferry boat, aircraft dove into the lake, exploded and sank. 1 fatality. LAC William Charles Smith (age 17) 1602627 killed. Burial took place in the Military Plot in Riverside Cemetery, Dunnville.

July 22: Harvard 3115, 1 mile south of Canfield at 1520 hrs. Aircraft seen flying low at very high speed and appeared to come out of a dive and turned steeply to port when starboard mainplane broke off and aircraft dived into the ground and exploded. 2 fatalities. F/O Ross William Naismith J13059, Pilot, age 24, from Orillia, killed and F/O Lloyd William Thomas Penn J21392, Pilot, age 22, from Winnipeg, killed.

Aug. 9: Harvard 2596, 1 mile east of Caistorville at 1400 hrs. Pupil pilot recovered from a voluntary spin at such low altitude that a crash was inevitable. 1 fatality. LAC Patrick Joseph O'Conner R189713, Pilot Trainee, killed. Crash into the ground 13 miles north of the base on Lot 18, Concession 1, farm of Sidney Mitchell in Lincoln County.

Sept. 30: Harvard 3128, 1 mile north of Campden at 1100 hrs. Cause obscure. This accident was almost certainly due to failure to recover from unauthorized aerobatics. Plane went into a steep dive at a terrific speed, unable to recover completely and entered low cloud line striking trees and crashing, killing both pilots. 2 fatalities. Sgt/P Clarence William Anderson R.A.A.F. 409880, Pilot, age 26, killed and F/Sgt Brian Patrick Evans, Pilot, R.A.A.F., age 20, killed. Anderson burial took place in the Military Plot in Riverside Cemetery, Dunnville. Evans burial took place in the Military Plot in St. Michaels Cemetery, Dunnville.

Nov. 17: Harvard 3781, 10 miles north of Burleigh Falls at 1045 hrs. Unauthorized low flying. 2 fatalities. P/O Sanford Bruce Schatz J27979, Pilot, age 23, from Hamilton, killed and LAC Sidney Murray Moore R176721, Pilot Trainee, killed. Crash into the ground 4 miles north of Hamilton and 7 ½ miles north of Burleigh. 150 yards east of Hwy 28.

Nov. 29: Harvard FE732, 7 miles northwest of main aerodrome at 1145 hrs. Aircraft crashed during recovery from a dive. Cause obscure. 2 fatalities. P/O Douglas Crawford Quin J29099, Pilot and LAC Peter Patrick Strickland R187521, pilot, age 20, from Windsor, killed. Crash into the ground at Lot 13 Concession 4, 2 miles north of South Cayuga. Burial for LAC Strickland took place in Assumption Roman Catholic Cemetery, Windsor

1944

Jan. 9: Harvard 2872, 5 miles northeast of Florence at 1215 hrs. Unauthorized low flying. 1 fatality. LAC William Mossop Taylor, Pilot, killed.

Jan. 17: Harvard 3322, in collision with Harvard 3149, 1 mile northwest of Dundalk at 1100 hrs. This accident was due to disobedience of orders. Each student was detailed for a solo exercise but apparently practiced either formation flying or some form of dog fighting. 2 fatalities. LAC Harold Charles Edward Stewart, Pilot Trainee and LAC Reginald Painting, Pilot Trainee, killed

*Feb. 16: Harvard 2870, main aerodrome at 2050 hrs. Inability of pupil pilot, on first solo of type at night, to maintain equilibrium on instruments. Pupil probably became confused when aerodrome control officer ordered him around again following failure to flash signal with landing lights on approach to land. 1 fatality. LAC Stanton James Green R.N.Z.A.F.431173, Pilot Trainee, aged 20, from Frankton Junction, Auckland, New Zealand, killed. Burial took place in the Military Plot in Riverside, Dunnville.
Son of Charles James and Charlotte Maine Green.*

Apr. 21: Harvard 3230, 4 miles west of Willow Grove at 0040 hrs. For some unknown reason student and instructor unable to maintain equilibrium by instruments or sensory aids, losing control and crashing. 2 fatalities. P/O Kenneth Edward Wright Leigh 422646, age 24, from Chatswood NSW, R.A.A.F., Pilot and Clyde Crosby Kendall R214213, Pilot Trainee, aged 24, from Toronto, killed. Burial for P/O Leigh took place in the Military Plot in Riverside Cemetery, Dunnville. Burial for LAC Kendall took place in Park Lawn Cemetery, Toronto.

May 26: LAC John Bruce William Haworth R.N.Z.A.F.435311, Pilot Trainee - result of above accident. Burial took place in the Military Plot in Riverside Cemetery, Dunnville.

Aug. 26: Harvard FE582, 2 miles east of Uxbridge at 1345 hrs. Deliberate unauthorized aerobatics at a low altitude. 1 fatality. LAC Noel Herbert Wood R.N.Z.A.F.437361, Pilot Trainee, killed. Burial took place in the Military Plot in Riverside Cemetery, Dunnville.

The loss of a pilot was deeply felt by all on the station as evidenced in Bruce F. Johnston's touching tribute to three fellow students who were killed while on Course 94. It was first printed on the "Wings Dinner" program which was held in the Sergeant's Mess at No. 6 on April 4, 1944 - two days prior to graduation.

REMEMBER

*A thought for those who gave their lives ----
And as we move along ---- a pause
In tribute to those pals of ours,
Who paid supremely for the cause.*

*To those swell fellows, and they were
The best of friends to all they met;
Respected, loved, and missed by all;
Those are three lads we'll ne'er forget.*

*And to their families and friends,
Now left behind to mourn their loss,
We send our deepest sympathies ----
They gave their best --- at highest cost.*