

Lawrence, Anthony William (Tony)

Age: 21

Nationality: British

Rank: Pilot/Officer

Unit: No. 32 OTU

Occupation: Navigator

Service No: 129408

Birth: May 1921
Croydon, London, U.K.

Hometown: Worthing, Sussex, U.K.

Death: 30 October 1942
Crash of Avro Anson L7056
Port Renfrew, BC, Canada

Burial: Royal Oak Burial Park, Victoria, BC, Canada

Others: Sgt. W. Baird (Wireless Operator); P/O C.G. Fox
(1st Navigator); Sgt. R. Luckock (Pilot).



Biography

Tony Lawrence was born in Croydon, London, May 1921, the second son of William and Florence Lawrence. He was educated at Selhurst Grammar School for boys and worked as a bank clerk for The National Bank of New Zealand in Hindhead, Surrey. At school Tony played rugby and cricket and he was a keen cyclist and played the saxophone.

When he enlisted in the RAFVR in February 1941, Tony was immediately recommended for training as a pilot. He received his commission in August 1942 and his first posting as an officer was Patricia Bay, BC, Canada, where he was one of many RAFVR servicemen. On October 30, 1942, Tony was second navigator on Avro Anson L7056 when it engaged in joint naval exercises. The aircraft disappeared in bad weather, search parties failed to locate it, and the crew were posted first as missing and later as dead. On his death, his former manager at the bank wrote to his father:

‘Tony was the most popular person on our staff, always cheerful, and brightened everyone’s life.’

When L7056 was finally located in 2013, attempts were made to find surviving relatives of the missing airmen, and a documentary was made of the discovery.

The following is taken from ‘The DailyMail’

Trainee navigator Anthony Lawrence, was just 21 when he died.

He had his whole life ahead of him and had not yet married or had children. He was from a loving family and had a brother whose son, Paul, Anthony's nephew, was the surviving relative tracked down when his remains were uncovered.

Paul, 64, who lives in South Croydon, wasn't born when his uncle went missing.

But he said his father had always kept his brother's memory alive as the family believed he had been lost at sea.

Paul said: 'Uncle Tony was my dad's younger brother. He often talked about him when we were growing up and showed us photos of him.

'He thought his plane had crashed into the sea and so would never be recovered. There was always some sadness that our uncle wasn't around.

'My father died in 1998 so myself and my sister only know the truth about what happened to Uncle Tony. Knowing what happened to him would have given my father closure.

'I was shocked and amazed when I had a call about it. I turned to my wife and said "they've found Uncle Tony", it felt so weird.'

Paul said the discovery and subsequent documentary has helped him feel closer to the uncle he never met.

He said he feels proud and privileged that his uncle's story is now being told in the documentary.

He said: 'Uncle Tony now has an audience, people will now know how he was a war hero who volunteered for the RAF and died when he was just 21.'

Details of Crash

Anson Aircraft L7056 was delivered to Western Air Command on 5 November 1941 for use at No. 32 OTU in Patricia Bay. On 10 October 1942, the aircraft took part in joint navigational exercises with the navy, over Vancouver Island. It carried a crew of four:

Sergeant William Baird	Wireless Operator	RCAF
P/O Charles George Fox	First Navigator	RAFVR
P/O Anthony Lawrence	Second Navigator	RAFVR
Sergeant Robert Luckcock	Pilot	RAFVR

Sergeant Luckcock, the pilot, had 80 hours experience flying single engine aircraft and 238 hours experience on multi engine.

The forecast was for cloudy weather, 80% to 100% strato-cumulus at 3,000 feet, decreasing to 30% to 50% later in the day. During the briefing the crews taking part were warned about a front which was off the coast, but far enough away not to be expected to affect the exercise. However the front turned out to be considerably closer to the coast than thought and instead of the expected clearing during the afternoon, the weather became considerably worse. The crews had been instructed to return to base if bad weather was encountered.

Anson L7056 took off at 9:09 am. The route of the exercise was Base to Port San Juan (now Port Renfrew) to 48° N 126°W to Pachena Point and back to Base, a distance of 300 miles to be completed in 3 hours. No W/T contact was received from L7056 after the 'go' signal had been received one minute after take off. Several attempts were made to contact it by means of the usual W/T procedures with no success. A second aircraft engaged in the same exercise, which took off about 20 minutes after L7056, ran into bad weather at about 10:50 am and chose not to fly into the weather. It flew up and down the coast for about an hour and 50 minutes, when the call was received to return to base.

An hour after L7056 was due at base a search was initiated involving many aircraft and continuing until November 3rd. No trace of the aircraft or its occupants could be found. A patch of oil, which was found by a flying boat along the planned route, was picked up by a rescue boat and sent for analysis to determine whether it contained aero engine oil. No results of the analysis were available to the inquiry into the aircraft's disappearance.

With no wreckage and no witnesses it was impossible for the Court of Inquiry to come to any conclusions or make any recommendations. It was assumed that the cause of the accident was bad weather coupled with the pilot's inexperience on instruments.



On October 23rd 2013, 71 years later, the Anson and her crew were discovered by forestry engineers in a remote forested area near Port Renfrew, British Columbia. The recovery of the aircraft and crew and the military funeral that followed have been extensively covered, including in the documentary ‘Seventy One Years’.

The following article is from the Victoria Times Colonist October 17th 2014

The remains of four young air force men will be laid to rest in the Royal Oak Burial Park in November, more than 70 years after their plane disappeared on a training flight out of Victoria.

“It will be a full military honours [ceremony],” said Stephen Olson, executive director of the Royal Oak Burial Park.

The ceremony will take place Nov. 10 at 10 a.m. at the park’s Commonwealth War Graves area. Family and members from the Royal Air Force and Royal Canadian Air Force will attend. The public is also welcome.

The four airmen — one Canadian and three British — took off in an Avro Anson from the Royal Canadian Air Force Base, Patricia Bay on the morning of Oct. 30, 1942.

They were called back with other training planes in the area after a heavy fog rolled in, but never returned to base. A search party was sent out, but within a few days the men were presumed dead and their families notified.

On Oct. 25, 2013, loggers working in a remote area near Lake Cowichan came across the wreckage of a crashed Second World War plane.

A forensic anthropologist with National Defence visited the site and determined through remnants of personal belongings that this was the missing Avro Anson from 1942.

The crew included wireless operator Sgt. William Baird from Brooks, Alta., 25, and three Britons, pilot officers Charlie George Fox, 31, and Anthony William Lawrence, 21, and pilot Sgt. Robert Ernest Luckock, 21.

The families of Baird and Luckock were located and notified of the discovery. Baird is survived by two siblings and an extended family, who said they found peace knowing their loved one would be laid to rest with the honour and dignity he deserved.

“My understanding is that this is only the second time in 60 years that this type of ceremony has occurred, with multiple interments at once,” said Olson.

The four men will be interred in a single grave, with a marker bearing their names. He noted the Commonwealth War Graves area at the burial park includes mostly men who died around Vancouver Island from 1940 to 1945.

“A number of the fellas interred in that section died in training exercises. It’s a given they [the airmen] would have known the other guys,” said Olson, adding this is the burial park’s first interment of missing servicemen.

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Wreath hung at the crash site of Anson L7056





Image by: Brandon O'Connell, MARPAC Imaging Services.

