

## Short Sunderland DD846 of 422 Squadron Royal Canadian Air Force



In the early hours of the 25<sup>th</sup> May 1943, an aircraft was observed by members of the Irish Coast Watching Service (CWS) at Corraun Look Out Post near Achill Island and to the North East of Clare Island.

It was reported to have crashed into the sea after passing close to the island. Immediately the men of the CWS began to make arrangements to investigate and report the incident to higher command. About three hours after the crash, Cpl. Gallagher of Corraun LOP along with others arrived on the scene and met with two local men who had also rowed out. Sadly, all that was found were the floating remains of six airmen. The group then together took the bodies on board their boats and conveyed them to Clare Island where they were placed in an out building of an island resident. The Garda on the

mainland having been informed called out local Red Cross personnel and an ambulance from Castlebar in the hope that survivors might be treated. The six airmen were identified from belongings found on them and the sad task of preparing their bodies for transport began. They were taken by local boat to Roonagh Pier where an Irish military party awaited them with six coffins. From there, they were brought to Castlebar Barracks, and following issuing of death certificates, sent onwards with Captain Birthistle of the Armies G2 section to the border with Northern Ireland, passing through the towns of Swinford and Tubbercurry on way to Belleek. Of the six bodies, five could be identified by personal belongings as:

*E F Page; Robert Bruce Bryers; W G Hopps; Sherwood, Ronald; A D O'Dowd.*

The sixth body could not be identified by the Irish authorities. All six were afforded military honours by the Irish Army during the hand over.

On the day after the crash, a seventh body was washed up on Dukenella Strand, Achill, the larger island to the north of Clare Island. This was identified locally as J W Clarke and sent to the border on the 27<sup>th</sup> where the Irish Army 17<sup>th</sup> Battalion provided military honours for the handover of the remains.

Other items found in the water included a dingy and log book which identified the aircraft as a *Sunderland Mk III DD846*.

Those members of the Irish military reporting to higher command at the time made mention of the possibility that the aircraft struck a summit on Clare Island called Beetle Hill. However, the writers also point out that the airmen when found were wearing life preservers and had removed their flying boots. The suggestion being that they were in some form of bother and were preparing for a landing.

On the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup> May, at the RAF Flying boat base at Lough Erne, the men of 422 Squadron, Royal Canadian Air Force awaited the return of their comrades in Sunderland DD846 from a patrol mission. The eleven young men would never return and in the following days, members of the Squadron would have to attend the funerals of the Canadian members of the crew at the cemetery in Irvinestown.

**F/O. Ernest F. Paige J/6007 + RCAF (Captain / First Pilot) - Killed in Action, buried Irvinestown Cemetery**

**F/O James W. Clarke J/12829 + RCAF (2nd Pilot) - Killed in Action, buried Irvinestown Cemetery**

**Sgt. William G. Hopps R/133113 + RCAF (3rd Pilot) - Killed in Action, buried Irvinestown Cemetery**

**W/O. Wallace Roy Thompson R/76084 + RCAF (Navigator) - Missing, named on Runnymede Memorial**

**Sgt. James Hird 935914 + RAFVR (Flight Engineer) - Missing, named on Runnymede Memorial**

**Sgt. Donahan A. O'Dowd 527272 + RAF (Flight Engineer) - Killed in Action, buried Bandon Hill Cemetery, Surrey**

**Sgt. John Rowe 623554 + RAF (WOM/AG) - Missing, named on Runnymede Memorial**

**Sgt. David Purvis 1309732 + RAFVR (WOP/AG) - Missing, named on Runnymede Memorial**

**Sgt. Derek H. Richardson 1172574 + RAFVR (WOP/AG) - Killed in Action, buried Nottingham Northern Cemetery.**

**Sgt. Ronald Sherwood 1289040 + RAFVR (WOP/AG) - Killed in Action, buried Waterhouses Cemetery, Durham.**

**W/O II Robert B. Bryers R/125283 + RCAF (Air Gunner) - Killed in Action, buried Irvinestown Cemetery**

Sunderland DD846 Crash at Clare island, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1943

The following photos of the 11 airmen have been assembled by the kind assistance of families and from archive resources.



**Ernest F. Paige**



**James W. Clarke**



**William G. Hopps**



**Wallace Roy Thompson**



**James Hird**



**Donahan A. O'Dowd**



**John Rowe**



**David Purvis**



**Harold Richardson**



**Ronald Sherwood**



**Robert Bruce Bryers**

The following pages provide some individual profiles of the men. Some archive documents and letters provided by relatives are also provided.

**F/O. Ernest F. Paige J/6007 + RCAF (Pilot)**



Photo via James Stewart, Fermanagh. Aged 27, F/O Paige was son of Ernest B. Paige and Elva E. Paige, of Bridgeport, Ontario, Canada per the CWGC database. His remains were recovered from the sea and were interned in Irvinestown Cemetery, County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland. F/O Paige was the lead pilot and captain of the crew of Sunderland DD846.

F/O Paige had been decorated with the Distinguished Flying Cross in 1942 for his flying operations with 407 (RCAF) Squadron. The citation for his award was published in the London Gazette newspaper dated 5<sup>th</sup> June 1942.

**Pilot Officer Ernest Franklyn PAIGE (Can/J.6007), Royal Canadian Air Force, No. 407 (R.C.A.F.) Squadron.**

In May, 1942, this officer was the pilot of an aircraft which participated in an attack on a convoy off the enemy coast. Regardless of a fierce defensive barrage which, in the full light of the morning, was extremely accurate, Pilot Officer Paige pressed home his attack. Although he was seriously wounded by a splinter from a shell which smashed through the instrument panel, this officer courageously flew his aircraft back to base. Some few nights earlier, Pilot Officer Paige made a successful attack on a large enemy vessel from a height of only 75 feet.

**F/O James W. Clarke J/12829 + RCAF (Pilot)**



James Clark photographed with his sister Blanche in 1942 in Winnipeg. Received via the O'Dowd family.

**Sgt. William G. Hopps R/133113 + RCAF (Pilot)**



William was son of William F. Hopps and Emma E. Hopps, of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. He was 24 years of age. His remains were recovered from the sea and lie buried in Irvinestown Cemetery alongside his comrades.

Sgt. Hopps service record reveals that he had arrived in the UK in November 1942 and was assigned to 422 Squadron in December of that year. His record shows his attachments with the squadron to RAF station at Dyce and Oban. He had joined the Canadian Army in 1940 and was serving in Alberta with an Anti Aircraft Battery at the time of his enlistment with the Air Force.

William Hopps was the third pilot on the aircraft on this mission. Long range missions with the Sunderland used three pilots to allow relief on the long over water flights.

The photo attached comes from his RCAF service file in the Canadian National Archives.



**W/O II Wallace Roy Thompson R/76084 + RCAF (Navigator)**

Aged 23, Wallace was Son of Archibald and Sadie Hattie Thompson, of Eureka, Pictou Co., Nova Scotia, Canada. His remains were never recovered and his named is entered on the Runnymede Memorial.

Wallace's family were kind enough to reply to a letter published in the New Glasgow, nova Scotia newspaper in 2009. His niece Susan wrote: I live in the province next to Nova Scotia called Prince Edward Island and while I was not born until after Uncle Wally died, I know quite a bit about him. My grandparents, Archie and Sadie, as well as my father, aunts and uncles made sure that we all remembered him. In fact my husband and I have been to Clare island twice...once in fall of 2005, and

once in May of this year.

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When I became aware of the monument on Clare Island, I knew I had to go there....and my husband took me there as my 50th birthday gift. We saw the monument in the small cemetery and met some islanders who remembered the crash in great detail. By the way, there were 2 monuments. the first one was erected in 1993 by Garry Pentland, another war historian who lives in Northern Ireland. This was replaced by the current stone in 1996 by Garry Pentland and Chris O'Grady a leading figure on Clare Island. The family of the pilot, Ernest Franklin Paige, were present for that ceremony in 1996.

To my knowledge, the only family members to visit Clare Island other than us were the Paige Family. When we were there on our first visit in 2005, we were so moved by the remembrance of the crash by the Islanders that we decided to do what we could to thank them. We worked with the Canadian government to have some type of formal thank you delivered to the people of Clare Island. As a result of this effort, the Canadian Government made a formal presentation on Clare Island on May 9th, 2009. The Canadian Ambassador to Ireland, Patrick Binns, and Major General Joe Hincke from the Canadian Armed Forces, as well as my husband and I travelled to the Island to present a certificate of thanks and to lay wreaths at the monument.

### **Sgt. James Hird 935914 + RAFVR (Flight Engineer)**

Aged 23, son of Ernest James Hird and Alethea Hird, of West Hartlepool, Co. Durham. His body was not officially recovered and his name was entered on the Runnymede Memorial.

James's sister Olga in 2011 provided the attached photos and narrative about her late brother.

*James was a very sporty person and also used to go camping a lot with his pals. he lvoed to go motor bike scrambling and would often come hom covered in mud.*

*He also made model planes from balsa wood. He was also a good swimmer and once saved a young lad from drowning in Hartlepool Docks.*

*James went to Avenue Road and Church Square School in Hartlepool and left at 14 to start work at Duttons Garage as an apprentice mechanic. I presume he would have returned there after the war.*

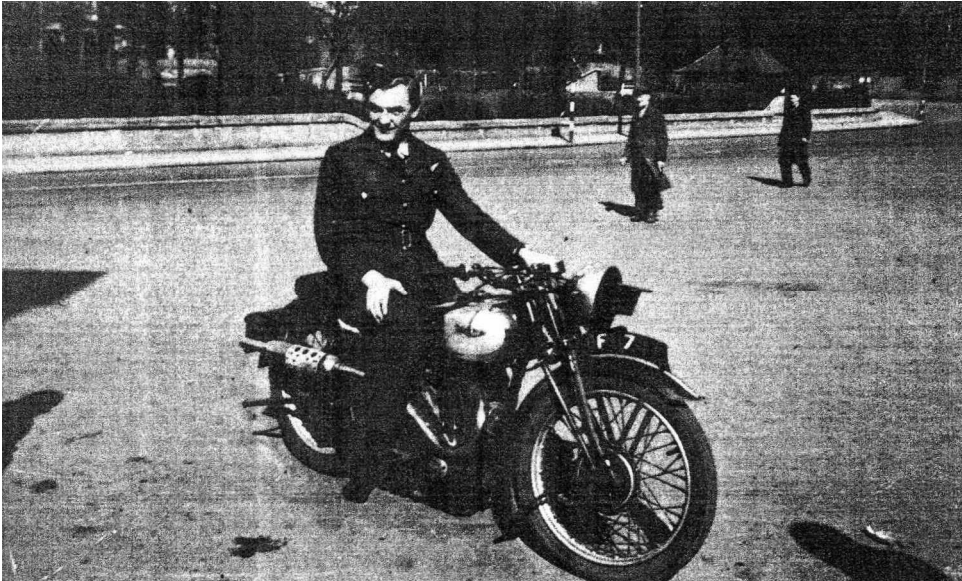
*Wallace Roy Thompson's family kept in touch for a while with my family and he spent a leave with my family at our home.*

*We also wrote to James Clarke's sister Blanche Clark, she wrote to my mother and family until they died.*

*I then wrote to her right up to the time of her death. I sent holiday snaps and xmas cards but received no reply so I presumed that she had died.*

*Please find enclosed photocopies of two photographs. One is a photo of James on his motherbike in Vicarage Gardens Hartlepool where we lived. The other photo is of him with Wallace Roy Thompson his friend and crewmate which may be useful as I notice you have not got a photo of him.*

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**Sgt. Donahan A. O'Dowd 527272 + RAFVR (Flight Engineer)**



Donahan Anthony pictured with his brothers during the war. His brother, Michael George O'Dowd, at left in the photo above, also died in service in 1944 and lies buried in Bone War Cemetery, Algeria. Donahan and his brothers were born in India. His remains were recovered from the sea and were returned to his family for burial. His mother Ellen Ivy O'Dowd died in 1939 and her husband Michael James O'Dowd died in 1941. Donahan is buried alongside them in Bandon Hill Cemetery, Surrey. Details of the family history came from his nephew Michael O'Dowd and great niece Lizzie Johnson. Lizzie's family still hold copies of a letters sent to Donahan's third brother John. Sgt Deely of the Irish police and Rev. Jennings the local Roman Catholic priest sent letters to John O'Dowd following the crash. These letters are presented later in this report. Lizzie was also able to supply copies of photographs that were sent to her family by the sister of Canadian James Clarke, Blanche.

**Sgt. John Rowe 623554 + RAFVR (Wireless Operator/Air Gunner (WOP/AG))**



John was one of the crew members from this crew listed on CWGC database with no family information and being Missing in Action, no burial location that might have hinted as to where he came from. Luckily his nephew Christopher Rowe in Canada remembers him on his family tree and hence provided the vital link.

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John was born in 1920 to Elizabeth Ann and George William Rowe. Christopher Rowe had this to say about him:

John was born in South Shields, Durham in 1920, son of a merchant seaman and the middle of six brothers and one sister. It was very much a working class family - father away at sea a lot, 4 boys sharing a bed in a small terrace house, etc. My father Francis Rowe was about two and a half years younger than John and as the closest in age of the family, the two were very close and apparently inseparable as children. My dad followed John into the RAF, serving in Bomber Command and demobilizing after the war as a F/Lt. (The other brothers served in the Army and Merchant Marine.) John was known to his brothers and friends as 'Mick' - why, I have no idea. Unfortunately my father died in 1967 and the rest of his family have all passed away since, meaning I don't have a great deal of detail of the family history.

### **Sgt. David Purvis 1309732 + RAFVR (Wireless Operator/Air Gunner (WOP/AG))**



David Purvis was another crew member with no family details on the CWGC database. His remains having not been recovered he is also recorded on the Runnymede Memorial.

Luckily David's grandson seen messages on the internet inquiring of David came from South Shields and was able to confirm that David actually came from Aberdeen. His name appears on the Roll of Honour in the Scottish National War Memorial, this stating that he was born in Dunfermline.

A family notice in December 1943 in the Aberdeen Weekly Journal states he was second son of Mr and Mrs A Purvis, Aberdeen, and the dearly beloved husband of Isabel Robertson, 19 Wallfield Place, Aberdeen (Late of 51 Middlefield Terrace)

### **Sgt. Derek Harold Richardson 1172574 + RAFVR (Wireless Operator/Air Gunner (WOP/AG))**



Derek's remains were recovered from the water and are recorded as being buried in Nottingham Northern Cemetery. No family details are given by the CWGC but it can be determined that his parents were Florrie and Harold Richardson. Sgt Richardson was born in 1920 in Nottingham. The Nottingham Evening Post of 28 May 1943 carried the news, 'Sgt. Derek Harold Richardson R.A.F., of 90 Garfield-road, Nottingham, has been killed in air operations'. The small image of Derek was included on the same page.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> May, the same paper carried this family announcement: *RICHARDSON. —In May, Sergt. Derek Harold, of 90 Garfield road, Radford, killed air operations, dearly beloved husband of Joan, and much loved son of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Richardson, 573*



*Wells-road. Mapperley.*

Derek had married in early 1942 in Nottingham to Joan Offiler. His brother in law Frank E Offiler, was a POW during the war, having served with the Sherwood Foresters Regiment.

**Sgt. Ronald Sherwood 1289040 + RAFVR (Wireless Operator/Air Gunner (WOP/AG))**



Aged 22, Sgt Sherwood was Son of Charles and Sarah Ann Sherwood, of Esh Winning. He is buried in Waterhouses Cemetery, Esh Winning, Durham. The grave has both a family memorial kerb and a CWGC headstone.

The England and Wales National Probate Calendars and The Newcastle Journal and North Mail of 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1943 listed a Sgt Ronald Sherwood as killed in action with an address at 47 Deerness Place, Waterhouses. His name is among those on the memorial in St Pauls church, Waterhouses.

It is believed he had one sister named Eva.



**W/O Robert Bruce Bryers R/125283 + RCAF (Air Gunner)**

Robert Bruce Bryers appears to have been born Bruce M Glasgow in Long Beach California on 21 May 1921. His father's name was Phillip Glasgow according to his enlistment papers or James Wendall Glasgow according to his Confirmation record in July 1930. His mother was Elizabeth McKnight, from Philadelphia. At enlistment W/O Bryers appears to have said that both his parents were dead but at the same token, his mother is still listed as his next of kin on other RCAF documents. His step father was John Henry Bryers. The 1930

census shows John and Elizabeth Bryers living in Philadelphia with child Robert Glasgow. No other siblings are in the house. His enlistment papers list a Miss Dorothy Pursley of Arizona as a sister. City directories do show addresses for a William A Pursley and what is assumed his wife, Dorothy.

Robert's service record is very confused as it lists his mother as being dead prior to his enlistment however there appear to be communications with her after his death and after the war. It also includes mention of Robert's birth father as having been killed at Dunkirk while serving with the 'Black Watch' however it has not been possible to identify such a casualty from the CWGC lists. This is given as a reason for Robert wanting to sign up to join the Canadian war effort.

Below is one of the photos sent by Blanch Clarke to the O'Dowd family.



Written on the back: Churchyard of Presbyterian Church, Irvinestown, County Fermanagh, Ulster – snapshot taken by George Clarke in Spring of 1946

In 1997, a memorial plaque was raised in the church yard on Clare Island in honour of the men of DD846. Relatives of the Paige family were in attendance at the unveiling. The Ex air gunners association reported the story in their 1997 magazine:

***Memorial Plaque Erected to Lost Airmen on Clare Island***

*Fifty three years after eleven airmen from 422 Sqdn. RCAF lost their lives after crashing into the sea just off Thormore Mountain on Clare Island, Ireland, a memorial plaque was at last erected in their memory. A group of ten relatives and friends of the eleven young men travelled from Canada and the USA especially to attend the ceremony. Mass was especially dedicated to the memory of the young men*

*and their families, and the local choir group sang beautifully, accompanied by flautist Margaret Duffy, who played hauntingly throughout. The unveiling ceremony was carried out by Robert and Nancy Paige, brother and sister of the Pilot, Ernest Franklin Paige. Robert and Nancy, until recently, were unsure where Ernest, Captain of a Sunderland Flying Boat, was killed. It is good to be here and get filled in on all the details," said Nancy. "Ernest and Bill (a brother in the army) were killed about a year apart; I was around 10 at the time.*

*Retired Island Postman, Michael James Moran, was one of those able to fill in the Paige's on the last minutes of the ill-fated Sunderland as it tried to return to Lough Erne from a U-boat hunting mission in the Atlantic. "She came in from the West about two in the morning on May 25, 1943", recalled Michael, "There was some fire leaving her. She went out by the corner of that big hill there before going down, but her tail was up for quite a while after that." Several bodies were recovered by Islanders in currachs but the remains of four of the crew were never found.*

*Islander Chris O'Grady recalled seven bodies lined up in the old fish store as shocked locals came to pay their last respects. Nancy said, "Now we have been to Fermanagh where Ernest is buried and Clare Island where he died, I feel a little happier. We feel that we have shared how he must have felt during his last few months."*

It is understood that this memorial was arranged by Tyrone man Garry Pentland along with local islanders. Garry has been active for many years in raising memorials to many of the young airmen who lost their lives in crashes in Ireland. Indeed, Garry had contacted many

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of the families of those onboard DD846 many years before the advent of computers and the internet.

These telegrams from the Canadian airmen's service records give in sparse detail the information being transmitted by 422 Squadron on the days after the crash. It contains the serial numbers of the four engines, in the hope that these at least might be used to identify the lost aircraft.

DS/A TELEGRAM EN CLAIR 6662

IMMEDIATE NOTWT

TO: AIR MINISTRY (ACCS) GLOS = AIR MINISTRY  
P.4. CAS. KINGSWAY = RECORDS OFFICE GLOUCESTER.  
= RCAF OVERSEAS H.Q. = H.Q.C.C. = H.Q. 15 GROUP  
= PORT ELLEN

FROM: No.422 SQDN RCAF.

RECEIVED. A.M.C.S. 0210 HRS. 26TH MAY 1943.

A25 25TH MAY F.B.

(A) (1) SUNDERLAND MK III D.D. 846 (2) PORT OUTER -  
349391/S1669 6F, PORT INNER - 349398/S16703F.  
STARBOARD INNER - 349419/S16716F. STARBOARD OUTER-  
349093/S16398F.

(B) No 422 SQUADRON (R.C.A.F.).

(C) NOT KNOWN BUT PRESUMED OVER ATLANTIC WEST OF  
IRELAND AT APPROXIMATELY 0100 HOURS - 25TH MAY 1943.

(D) (1) CAPTAIN CAN. J. 6007 F/O E.F. PAIGE.  
DFG. (RCAF) 2. 2ND PILOT CAN J.12829 P/O J.W. CLARKE  
(RCAF) (3) 3RD PILO CANR. 133113 SGT. HOPPS W.G.  
(RCAF) (4) NAVIGATOR "B" CAN R76084 W/O THOMPSON W.R.  
(RCAF) (5) FLIGHT ENGINEER RAF 935914 SGT. HIRD J. (6)  
FLIGHT ENGINEER RAF 527272 SGT. O'DOWD A. (7) WOM/AG  
RAF 623554 SGT. ROWE (8) WOP/AG RAF 1309732 SGT.  
PURVIS J. (9) WOP/AG RAF 1172574 SGT. RICHARDSON D.H.  
(10) WOP/AG RAF 1289040 SGT. SHERWOOD R. (11) AIR  
GUNNER CAN. R. 125283 SGT. BRYERS R.B. (RCAF) (11)

ALL MISSING: PARTICULARS UNKNOWN

(E) NOT KNOWN

(F) FOUR MK VIII TORPEX DEPTH CHARGES MK II H.S.V.  
MK IIN I.F.F. F. 24 CAMERA (8 INCH)

(G) NOT KNOWN - ACCIDENTS GLOUCESTER FURTHER SIGNAL  
FOLLOWS.

(H) NOT KNOWN

(J) N/A

(K) "KINFORMED" IN FOLLOWING CASES:- SGT. HIRD,  
SFT. O'DOWD, SGT. ROWE. SGT. PURVIS. SGT. RICHARDSON  
SGT. SHERWOOD. "KINNOT" IN FOLLOWING CASES:-  
(1) F/O PAIGE (MOTHER) MRS. ELVA E. PAIGE, Box 146,  
BRIDGEPORT, ONTARIO CANADA (FIANCEE) MISS HELEN C.  
HEXAMER, 58 HOMEWOOD AVENUE, KITCHENOR ONTARIO, CANADA  
(2) P/O CLARKE (FATHER) DR. J.W. CLARKE 855 CHALMERS  
PLACE CHICAGO ILLINOIS USA (3) SGT. HOPPS (FATHER)  
MR. W.F. HOPPS ROCKYFORD, ALBERTA CANADA (4) W/O  
THOMPSON (MOTHER) MRS. H. THOMPSON SUBBY BRAE, NOVA SCOTIA,  
CANADA. (5) SGT. BRYERS, R.D. (MOTHER) MRS. E.J BRYERS

/635 EAST

MPM/A

TELEGRAM EN CLAIR

7840

To:- AIR MINISTRY (ACCIDENTS) GLOUCESTER = AIR MINISTRY  
(P.4.CAS.) KINGSWAY = RECORDS OFFICE GLOUCESTER =  
RCAF OVERSEAS HEADQUARTERS = HQCC = HQ 15 GROUP =  
PORT ELLEN

From:- OC No. 422 RCAF SQUADRON

RECEIVED A.M.C.S. 0219 HOURS 27 MAY 1943.

IMMEDIATE NOTWT

A/26 26/MAY MY A/25 MAY 25TH. F.B.

FURTHER TO MY A/25 25/5/43 AMEND TO READ AS FOLLOWS.

SECTIONS INDICATED.

(C) CLARE ISLAND FIRE (53 DEGS 47'N 10 DEGS 00W) 0405 HOURS  
MAY 25TH 1943. DARK. AIRCRAFT PRESUMED SUNK.

(D) (1) 1 CAPTAIN CAN. J6007 F/O E.F. PAIGE DFC (RCAF) 11 2ND  
PILOT CAN. J12829 P/O J.W. CLARKE (RCAF) 111 3RD PILOT  
CAN. R133113 SGT. W.G. HOPPS (RCAF) IV FLIGHT ENGINEER  
RAF 527272 SGT. D.A. O'DOWD. V WOP/AG RAF 1289040 SGT. R.  
SHERWOOD VI WOP/AG RAF 1172574 SGT. RICHARDSON D.H. VII  
AIR GUNNER CAN. R125283 SGT. R.B. BRYERS (RCAF) (11) ALL  
KILLED. BODIES RECOVERED. (111) (1) "B" CAN. R76084  
W/O W.R. THOMPSON (RCAF) (11) FLIGHT ENGINEER RAF 935914  
SGT. J. HIRD (111) WOP/AG RAF 623554 SGT. J. ROWE (IV)  
WOP/AG RAF 1309732 SGT. PURVISED. (IV) ALL MISSING  
BELIEVED KILLED.

(E) ALL RECOVERED BODIES CONVEYED TO RAF STATION CASTLE  
ARCHDALE MAY 26TH PENDING FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS.

(K) KINFORMED OF RECOVERY OF BODIES IN CASES OF RAF PERSONNEL  
ONLY. KINNOT IN CASES OF RECOVERY OF BODIES OF RCAF  
PERSONNEL.

TIME OF ORIGIN 262045/B

COPIES TO:- P.4.CAS (ACTION) (14 COPIES)  
WAR ROOM (2 COPIES)  
O.F.2.  
S.4.STATS.  
S.7.B.  
P.4.CAS.CAN (5 COPIES)  
C.I. OF A.  
Z.A.

ADVANCE COPY TO:- P.4.CAS.

6662 25/5 REFERS.

Below is a copy of a letter sent by Father Jennings from Clare Island to John O'Dowd, brother of Donahan O'Dowd. It can be expected that Fr. Jennings wrote to some of the other men's families where addresses were available. A transcription of the letter is presented after the images.

The Rectory,  
Clare Island  
Desparr.

Nov. 18<sup>th</sup> 1944

Dear Mr. O'Dowd,

I was deeply touched and moved  
by Sgt. Deely's note with your request offering  
for a Mass for your brother & his comrades  
who met their death in such sad circumstances  
off this Island in May of last year. The  
Mass will have been offered long before  
this letter reaches you, I'm sure. Meantime  
it is my intention to acquaint my parishioners  
of the day it is to be said, & I have no doubt  
that many of them will be present to join  
in remembering their poor souls.

I do not know what details, such as we  
have them, it would be best for me to set  
out here. I think really it would be best  
that I would confine myself to the major  
ones - namely, that the crash occurred between  
3 or 4 A.M. & was <sup>absolutely</sup> taking place by two gentle  
men on the Island here, who immediately  
got a little party together <sup>who</sup> went to the scene  
in a curragh (a small boat). The six bodies  
they rescued were, when they arrived, all dead.  
The general opinion of those who went  
to the rescue, who saw them when they were  
taken ashore, & I was among the latter, was  
that death must have been instantaneous,

caused by the crash, such explanation as there was of the bodies recovered one was not identified, at least from his belongings. These who were included your brother, whose name was significant, also the following: W.S. Hopps, Robert Bruce Bryers, Ronald Sturges & Paige. All six bodies were removed by the military, & their destination & place of final rest I am sure you have already been acquainted of. Of this we have no information.

The sympathy that was felt by the local people for these fine young lads & for their people was profound. Personal items like photos - a letter from one of their mothers, & indication that one of them was v. recently married, & a little letter carried by one of them containing a few leaf streamers brought home were forcibly than words the brave & tragedy of war which is responsible for such sorrow & loss of life. I am not giving just my own reactions, but those of all who were present & saw the bodies of these fine young chaps.

At any future time you would care to write to me for any further details, or should you contact any of the people who would be relatives of your brother & comrades, they should care to communicate with me. It'd be only too pleased to write to them. Meantime I remain yours  
v. Sincerely (RWS) J. D. [unclear] of Adm.

"I was deeply touched on viewing Sgt. Deelys note with your request & offering for a mass for your brother & his comrades who met their deaths in such sad circumstances off this island in May of last year. The mass will have been offered long before this letter reaches you I'm sure. Meantime it is my intention to acquaint my parishioners of the day it is to be said, & I have no doubt that many of them will be present to join in remembering their poor souls.

I do not know what details, such as we have them, it would be ???? for me to set out here. I think really it would be best that I would confine myself to the major ones, namely that the crash occurred between 3 - 4a.m. & was observed taking place by to gentle men on the island here, who immediately got a little party

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together, who went to the scene in a curragh (a small boat). The six bodies they rescued were, when they arrived, all dead & the general opinion of those who went to the rescue, & who saw them when they were taken ashore, & I was among the latter, was that death must have been instantaneous, caused by the crash, & such explosions as there was. Of the bodies rescued one was not identified, at least from his belongings. Those who were included your brother, whose name itself was significant, & also the following -: W. S. Hopps, Robert Bruce Bryers, Ronald Sherwood, E. F. Paige. All six bodies were removed by the military, & their destination & place of final rest I am sure you have already been acquainted of. Of this we have no information.

The sympathy that was felt by the local people for those fine young men lads & for their people was profound. Personal items like photos - a letter from one of their mothers & indication tht one of them was v recently married, & a little pocket carried by one of them, containing a four leaf shamrock brought home more forcibly than words the havoc? & tragedy of war which is responsible for such sorrow and loss of life. I am not giving just my own reactions but those of all who were present. I saw the bodies of those fine young chaps.

At any future time you would care to write to me for any further details or should you contact any of the people who would be relatives of your brothers comrades, & they should care to communicate with me. I'll be only too pleased to write to them.

Meantime I remain yours

v. sincerely

(Revd)



The letter sent by Sgt Deely stationed in Louisburgh, County Mayo. This was the closest Garda Station on the mainland next to Clare Island.

Garda Siochana Station,  
Louisburgh,  
Co.Mayo,  
15th. Feb.1945.

No 58 O/Cadet O'Dowd, J.P.D.,  
No 8 Platoon, C Company,  
R.I.A.S.C. School,  
Kakul, N.W.F.P.,  
India Command.


Dear Sir, Reference your letter of the 8th. Oct.1944. I wish to inform you that at 3-10 a.m. on the 25/5/43 a plane crashed into the sea at a point  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles Northwest of Bee the Head and about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile from the shore at Clare Island, Co.Mayo. The cause of the disaster is unknown. A number of men from Clare-Island proceeded immediately to the scene of the crash. When they arrived, the plane was almost completely submerged. There was only the tip of one of the wings over the water. The dead bodies of six members of the crew were floating about in the vicinity of the wreckage. There was no sign of life in any of them. They were immediately conveyed to Clare Island.

From the contents of wallets and other articles found on the bodies, five of the victims were identified as follows;-

- 1) Officer E.F. Paige, J 6007, W.C.R.C.A.F.
- 2) I28940 C.E. Sherwood, Ronald, Height 5'9" born 13/2/21, Dark Brown Hair, Blue Eyes.
- 3) A.D. O'Dowd, Date of birth 6/3/1911, Hazel Eyes, 5'6". His number was not given.
- 4) Robert Bruce Byers, A.I.25283.
- 5) C.A.W. A.I.33113, Airman W.G. Hobbs, W.C.R.C.A.F.

The sixth victim was not identified. In a log book found floating near the scene of the crash were the following markings;- Sunderland III-<sup>6</sup>dd- 846. The bodies with all personal effects were taken in charge by the military authorities. I attach receipt for 10/- handed to Rev. J. Jennings, Clare Island, as an offering for Mass and also receipt for 10/- paid into Garda Benevolent Society in compliance with your request and for which I thank you sincerely,

Yours Faithfully,

  
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(L. Deely, Sgt.)