

McAlpine, William James
Warrant Officer Class II (Pilot)
Royal Canadian Air Force
405 Squadron
R/93277



Ducimus ("We Lead")



William James McAlpine, known as Bill, was born in Bancroft, Ontario, Canada, on Wednesday, July 7, 1920. He was baptized at Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church in Bancroft. Son of Thomas "Tom" Ignatius and Sara Mabel Kennedy - McAlpine, both of Bancroft. They got married on September 9, 1919.

They ran a hotel in Bancroft, before moving to Elmira, Ontario, to operate a hotel there.



Bill had a younger brother, John Joseph "Jack", and two younger sisters, Callista Jean and Marie Teresa. The family was Roman Catholic. When his parents moved to Elmira, Bill stayed in Bancroft. Bancroft was a small town in eastern Ontario. The hills of the area were reminiscent of the landscape of Scotland or Ireland. There were many small lakes surrounded by summer cottages.

William James on his father's knee. Source: Mike McDonell.



The York River flew through the city. Logging and agriculture provided most of the employment in the area. Later, mining became important for the local economy.

Bill attended the Bancroft Public School from 1925 to 1932. He then attended the Bancroft Continuation School, graduating in 1936. He mastered French and Latin.

At the age of 11 he had appendicitis and was operated on.

He had blue eyes and light brown hair, weighed 158 lbs and was 5 ft.7 tall. William James, "Bill", played hockey, baseball and swam a lot. He smoked ten cigarettes a day, but did not drink alcohol.

After completing high school, like so many young men during the Great Depression, he was unemployed. He helped his parents with the hotel and spent time with friends and family. In July 1937 he joined a maintenance crew at the Ontario Department of Highways. This lasted until the end of the construction season in October, ahead of the harsh Canadian winter. In February 1938, Bill found employment as a ledger clerk for the Bank of Nova Scotia in Bancroft.

The bank's manager described him as having a "*rugged constitution*" and "*had no hesitation in recommending him*" for military service.

William James, "Bill", joined the famous Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment (The Hasty Pees, as they were called) as a soldier in July 1940.



On February 17, 1941, at the age of 20, he reported to the No 1 Manning Depot in Toronto. There he learned to bathe, shave, shine boots, polish buttons, maintain his uniforms and otherwise behave in the required manner.

Each day there were two hours of physical education and instruction in marching, rifle drills, saluting and other routines. William James, "Bill", was given the rank of Aircraftsman 2nd Class. At the time of his military service, he wanted to become a gunner. He was described by a recruiting officer as a "*good, tight guy. Alert and sharp.*" He was recommended for pilot or observer training.

On May 17, 1941, William James, "Bill", went to the No. 1 Initial Training School in Toronto for training. Pilot and Air Observer candidates began their six- or twenty-eight-week training program with four weeks at an Initial Training School (ITS). They studied theoretical subjects and were subjected to various tests. Theoretical studies included navigation, flight theory, meteorology, officer duties, air force administration, algebra, and trigonometry. The tests included an interview with a psychiatrist, the four-hour M2 physical exam, a session in a decompression chamber, and a "test flight" in a Link Trainer.

At the end of the ten-week process, the recruits would be selected to become pilots, or to be trained as navigators, bombers, wireless operators or air gunners.

William James "Bill" was selected to become a pilot and on June 22, 1941, he underwent training at the No. 12 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Goderich, Ontario. The school was part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP). An Elementary Flying Training School provided a candidate with eight weeks, fifty hours of basic flying instruction on a simple trainer such as the Havilland Tiger Moth, the Fleet Finch, or the Fairchild Cornell.



Fairchild Cornell Cockpit

Photo : Library and Archives Canada Photo



Class 10 of No 12 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Goderich, Ontario.

Source : Mike McDonell.

He was given the rank of Leading Aircraftsman (LAC). On August 9, 1941 he entered the No. 16 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Hagersville, Ontario. This in order to complete his training, and on November 7, William James, "Bill", received his Pilot's Wings. He was described by one of his trainers as a "*cheerful, alert, spirited pupil.*"

From November 7 to November 20, he enjoyed a fourteen-day leave. During this leave, on November 10, 1941, he married Anna Mary O'Shaunessy of Bancroft in Toronto, Ontario. Known as Mamie, she lived until 1971. Bill and Mamie spent ten days together. They never saw each other again thereafter. They had no children. Anna Mary O'Shaunessy later remarried.

William James, "Bill", departed from Halifax, Nova Scotia, for England on December 9, 1941. He safely completed the perilous journey across the North Atlantic and arrived in England on December 19, 1941. Over the following months, he completed more training in piloting different types of aircraft and flying using radar beams. He did this, among other things, via the No. 3 Personnel Reception Centre, and the No. 16 Operational Training Unit in April 1942 and in June 1942 at the No. 29 Operational Training Unit in North Luffenham, Rutland, England, in the East Midlands region.



Source : www.ukairfieldguide.net

During his training in specialized flying in England, another trainer said of him: *"He tries conscientiously to learn all he can and therefore has the qualities of a very good pilot"*.

William James, "Bill", was assigned to the 158 Squadron on 19 August 1942. He was later transferred to the 425 Squadron for one day before being transferred to the 158 Squadron. This squadron was attached to the No. 4 Bomber Group (Royal Air Force) and was initially equipped with Vickers Wellington Mk II aircraft.

On the night of October 14, 1942 at 00:50, Bill was seriously injured when an airplane he was piloting crashed.

He and his crew were flying a bombing mission to Kiel, Germany aboard the Handley Page Halifax W7766. The port inner engine was damaged by anti-aircraft fire over Lake Selenter east of Kiel. The bomb load was thrown overboard. Flying on only three engines, they headed back to England. While manoeuvring in poor weather conditions to attempt to land at RAF Base Linton-on-Ouse, far from their home base in East Moor in Yorkshire, the plane almost stalled. The plane nose-dived into the ground before skidding ninety feet. The port wing broke off while the starboard wing caught fire.



All seven men on board were injured. William James, "Bill", was flung into the instrument panel, breaking his right cheekbone, wounding the top of his head and cutting open the inside of his mouth. He had scratches and abrasions on both knees. For this he was treated at the York Military Hospital.

The bombardier, Sergeant James Sangster Anderson, died of his wounds three days later. Jimmie, as he was known, was 22 years old.

William James, "Bill", McAlpine was transferred to the 405 Squadron on 8 December 1942. The 405 Squadron was a Pathfinder Group that flew in command of bombing missions and dropped flares to mark targets. The men who flew in the Pathfinder Group were handpicked and specially trained. Royal Air Force Bomber Command flew night missions, making accurate bombing of identified targets challenging.

As technology continued to improve, these pilots could use radar to chart a course for more accurate attacks on strategic targets. At 7:58 p.m. local time on the evening of April 3, 1943, the Halifax Mk. II (DT808, LQ-V) took off from the Leeming Airfield in County Yorkshire.



The heavy bomber of the Canadian 405 (Vancouver) Squadron was one of 113 Halifaxes, which, together with two hundred and twenty-five AVRO Lancasters and ten Mosquitos, were heading for a bombing raid on the German city of Essen. It was the first time that more than two hundred AVRO Lancasters participated in one single attack.



Halifax

The Canadian crew of the Halifax Mk. II DT808, LQ-V consisted of:

- Pilot, Warrant Officer II, William James McAlpine
- Flight Engineer, Sergeant, Howard John McQueen
- Navigator, Warrant Officer Class II, John Day White
- Bomb Aimer, Flight Lieutenant, Floyd Edward Luxford
- Wireless Operator/Air Gunner, Warrant Officer, Joseph Walter Halikowski
- Air Gunner, Pilot Officer, Ernest Bradley
- Air Gunner, Flight Lieutenant, Wilfried Lawrence Murphy

Even before reaching the target, the Halifax was intercepted above the Peel area at an altitude of 15,000 ft. by Major Werner Streib, the commander of I./Nachtjagdgeschwader 1 (NJG 1). He flew in a Messerschmitt BF 110 G4 and took off from Venlo.

Streib used his "Schräge Musik", two slanting forward and upward firing 20 mm guns in the back of his night fighter.

The Halifax was hit in its wing tanks and at 11:20 p.m. crashed burning 110 yards south of the Overloonseweg, the road between Vierlingsbeek and Overloon, not far from De Lijnbraak farm and the Vierlingsbeek railway station.

The wreck with the bomb load still on board was close to the same farm and not far from the Vierlingsbeek railway station on a forest edge. About seventy incendiary bombs were also located next to the railway line. Only two crew members could rescue themselves by parachute. Flight Lieutenant Wilfried Lawrence Murphy ran aground near Merselo in the municipality of Venray. He left a note and his personal details with the Van Schijndel family there. From there he was transferred to a farm in Ysselsteyn. He also stayed for some time on the De Zwarte Plak farm of the Poels family near the village of America in Limburg.

Two inspectors from the crisis control service, Bob Bouwman and H. Lahey, transferred him from De Zwarte Plak to Neer van de Vin in the village of Neeritter. He ended up in Belgium through the regional resistance. Once in Brussels, he was caught by betrayal and made a prisoner of war after all. The Germans then moved him to Paris, where he remained in the infamous Fresnes prison before transferring him to the POW camp Stalag Luft III near Saga. This is now Polish town of Żagań.

The other survivor, Sergeant Ernest Bradley, was taken prisoner shortly after landing and ended up in POW camp Stalag 357 in Fallingbommel in Lower Saxony, Germany. Six percent of the attack force got lost; twelve Halifax aircraft and nine AVRO Lancasters. Two more Halifax planes crashed in England.

The remaining crew members did not survive the crash and were killed. They were all buried in the general cemetery in Woensel.



Pilot, Warrant Officer II, William James McAlpine, age 22, grave reference **JJ. B. 42.**

The temporary grave in Woensel

On November 21, 1945 he was reburied at the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **XVI. F. 9-10.**



The other crew members were reburied in the same row:

Flight Engineer, Sergeant, Howard John McQueen, age 21, grave reference **XVI. F.7.**

Navigator, W.O. Class II, John Day White, age 21, grave reference **XVI. F. 9-10.**

Bomb Aimer, Flight Lt. Floyd Edward Luxford, age 29, grave reference **XVI. F.13.**

Wireless Operator/Air Gunner, Warrant Officer, Joseph Walter Halikowski, age 21, grave reference **XVI. F.8.**

GRAVES CONCENTRATION REPORT FORM

The following ^{has}/_{have} been concentrated here: _____ Report No. _____
 1 070/DAGP/140

(Name of Cemetery) WILSON'S CAN. MILITARY CEMETERY, HOLLAND.
 (Full Map Reference) E 75572 Sh. 1E N.W. 1/25,000

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	Previous location of grave	
Serial No.	Regt. or Corps	Arms No.	Name & Station	Rank	Date of Death	MIA, POW or Det.	Plat	How	Grave	Date of Reburial	Place & Map Ref.	Map No.
1	R.C.A.F. <i>Schultz</i>	867738	WIALEY, _____	BSM	27-1-45	✓	16	F	14	21-11-45	SB. 4, Windsor 432806	
2	R.C.A.F.	79419	LEACH, _____		20-2-45		16	F	15	21-11-45	" "	
3	R.C.A.F. <i>Schultz</i>	710898	ORRISON, I. P.	P/O	26-2-45	✓	16	F	12	21-11-45	" "	
4	R.C.A.F.	R144150	BURDAS, J.	Sgt	12-6-45		16	F	11	21-11-45	" "	
5	R.C.A.F.	R70006	DUNLOP, R. O.	Sgt.	3-4-45		16	F	6	21-11-45	" "	
6	R.C.A.F.	71919	WHITE, J. D.	F/Sgt	3-6-45		16	F	13	21-11-45	" "	
7	R.C.A.F.	893277	MC ALPHINE, H.E.	F/Sgt	3-4-45		16	F	9	21-11-45	" "	
8	R.C.A.F.	715434	LUXFORD, F.E.	F/Sgt	3-4-45		16	F	10	21-11-45	" "	
9	R.C.A.F.	10748	MAC NEESE, H.E.	Sgt.	3-4-45		16	F	7	21-11-45	" "	
10	R.C.A.F.	895419	HALIKOWSKI, J.W.	Sgt	3-4-45		16	F	8	21-11-45	" "	
11	R.C.A.F.	R154679	VAN CAMPAN, R.H.		15-4-45		16	F	7	21-11-45	" "	

Date: 21 Nov. 45

(Signed) *[Signature]* Capt. D.A. J. Orben
 CC. 1 Sec. I C.G.C.V. 298 270

*If from a grave not already been registered, a Registration Report on AFM 2222 will be prepared, and attached to this FORM.



FACES TO GRAVES

Stichting Faces to Canadian
War Graves Groesbeek

Life Story: Gijs Krist - Research Team Faces to Graves.

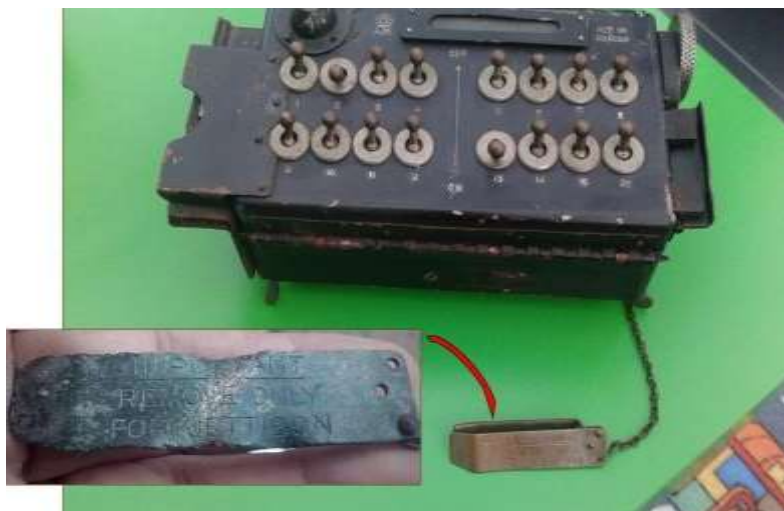
* If you have a photo of this soldier or additional information, please contact info@facestograves.nl

Sources:

Commonwealth War Graves
Library and Archives Canada
www.aircrewremembered.com
Air War WW2 Boxmeer
Leo Jansen
Mike McDonell

Cenotaph Bancroft

Source : Mike McDonell



Bombardier switch panel with metal key. The key was found at the crash site. (Coll. J. Hendrix)

Clip and buckle from the 'walk around' oxygen cylinder that secured it to the table. This also allowed the crew member to walk freely at a great height. (Coll. J. Hendrix)





Photos: Canadian Virtual War Memorial

