Raymond Henry MURDOCK (1912 – 1943)





R/128432 Flight Sergeant

R.H.MURDOCK

Bomb Aimer

Royal Canadian Air Force

22nd July 1943

Age 31

No.1657 Heavy Conversion Unit

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN







Raymond Henry Murdock was born in Semans Saskatchewan on 9 July 1912 the son of John George and Edith Maud Murdock. He had three sisters, Bernice, Dorland and Violet and a brother, Donald.

Ray went to public school in Semans taking his high school grades in Punnichy, Saskatoon and Clair.

The family moved to Clair, Saskatchewan in about 1930 and after completing his education Ray farmed for nine years with his father.

At the start of the war, Ray enlisted in the RCAF in Saskatoon in October 1941 and was trained at No 2 Manning Depot, Brandon, Manitoba, No 2 Initial training school, Regina, Ontario and St Jeans Quebec. He received his wings at Montreal and was posted to England in December 1942 as a bombardier (bomb aimer).

In July 1943 Ray was at RAF Stradishall, Suffolk with No.1657 Heavy Conversion Unit. This Heavy Conversion Unit provided a 3-4 week long course for the purpose of training men to become a proficient heavy-bomber crew members. They were flying Short Stirling aircraft.

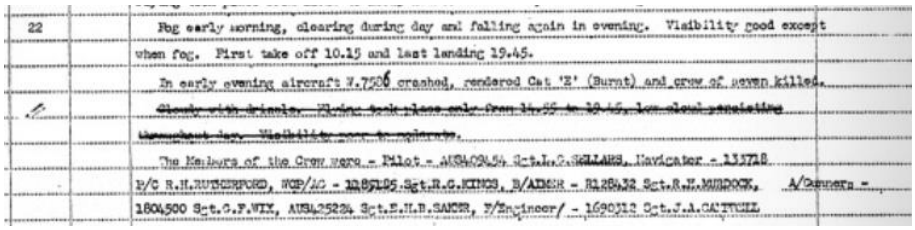


Short Stirling code XT-M of No. 1657 Heavy Conversion Unit at RAF Stradishall

The seven man crew comprised of 2 Australians, 1 Canadian and 4 British airmen:

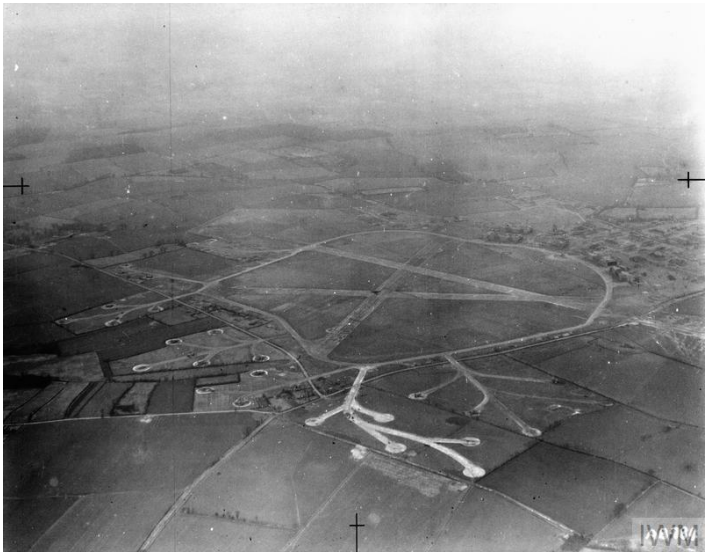
P/O (Pilot)Leonard Gerrard Sellars (Australian)
Sgt (Flt. Eng.) John Archibald Campbell
F/O (Nav.) Robert Henry Rutherford
F/S (Bomb Aimer) Raymond Henry Murdock (Canadian)
Sgt (W.Op./Air Gnr.) Richard George Kings
1804500 Sgt (Air Gnr.[MUG]) George Frank Albert Wix
AUS425224 F/S (Air Gnr.[Rear]) Ernest Henry Benjamin Saker (Australian)

On 22 July 1943, Stirling I W7586 of No.1657 Heavy Conversion Unit, with Ray's crew onboard, took off from RAF Stradishall detailed to carry out three engine flying practice circuit and landings.



22 Fog early morning, clearing during day and falling again in evening. Visibility good except when fog. First take off 10.15 and last landing 19.45.
In early evening aircraft W.7586 crashed, rendered Cat 'E' (Burnt) and crew of seven killed.
Clouds with drizzle. Flying took place only from 11.55 to 19.45, low cloud persisting throughout day. Visibility poor to moderate.
The Names of the Crew were - Pilot - AUS403454 Sgt.L.G.SELLARS, Navigator - 133748 P/O R.H.RUTHERFORD, WOP/AG - 1187185 Sgt.R.G.KINGS, B/ADGR - R126432 Sgt.R.H.MURDOCK, A/Gunners - 1804500 Sgt.G.F.WIX, AUS425224 Sgt.E.H.B.SAKER, F/Engineer - 1690318 Sgt.J.A.CAITTELL

The pilot, Sgt Sellars, was undertaking his second solo flight without an instructor. An entry from the log for the day records that there was fog early morning which cleared during the day, falling again in the evening. The first take off was at 1015 hrs and the last landing was at 195 hrs. In the early evening Ray's aircraft crashed with the loss of all crew members.



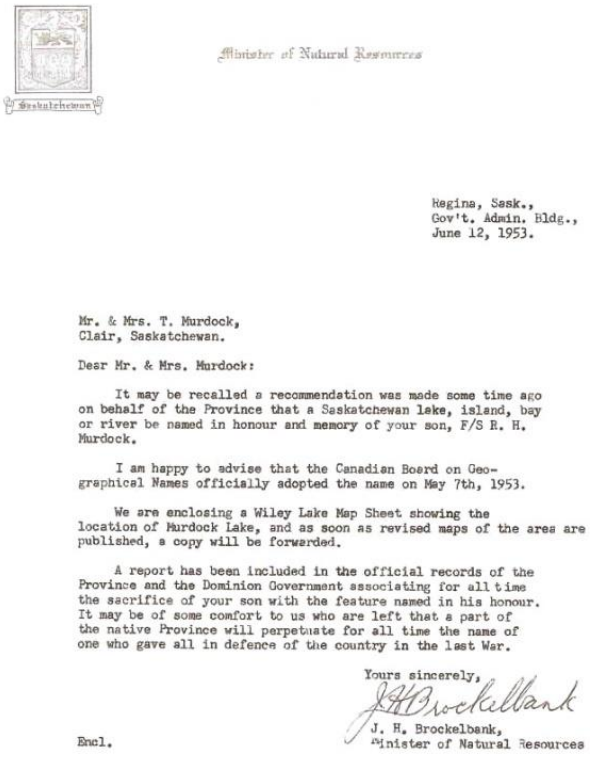
An enquiry into the crash concluded that during the course of the flight, engine trouble made it necessary for the pilot to feather the starboard outer engine and make a normal three-engined approach.

As the approach was made to the leaward side of the runway at 100 feet above the ground, the pilot realised that it would be necessary to go round again.

Control of the aircraft was lost and after a stall turn to starboard it crashed into the ground at 1746 hrs causing what must have been instant death to all crew members.

No reason could be given for the engine trouble as the aircraft was completely burnt out.

Ray Henry Murdock was buried at Haverhill cemetery, Suffolk, England, grave 200, section U. His funeral took place on 26 July, 1943 at 2.30pm, with full Service honours accorded. His coffin was draped by the Union Flag and was carried by men of his own unit, which also provided a firing party. Reverend W K Roberts, RCAF, conducted the service and the Last Post was sounded at the end.
In writing to the family, Wing Commander Cox described Ray as '*a very enthusiastic and able member of a crew who meant to do his utmost in the war. He was typical of the gallant fellows who hail from Canada and who are doing so much towards the war effort.*'.



Minister of Natural Resources

Regina, Sask.,
Gov't. Admin. Bldg.,
June 12, 1953.

Mr. & Mrs. T. Murdock,
Clair, Saskatchewan.

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Murdock:

It may be recalled a recommendation was made some time ago on behalf of the Province that a Saskatchewan lake, island, bay or river be named in honour and memory of your son, F/S R. H. Murdock.

I am happy to advise that the Canadian Board on Geographical Names officially adopted the name on May 7th, 1953.

We are enclosing a Wiley Lake Map Sheet showing the location of Murdock Lake, and as soon as revised maps of the area are published, a copy will be forwarded.

A report has been included in the official records of the Province and the Dominion Government associating for all time the sacrifice of your son with the feature named in his honour. It may be of some comfort to us who are left that a part of the native Province will perpetuate for all time the name of one who gave all in defence of the country in the last War.

Yours sincerely,

J. H. Brockelbank,
Minister of Natural Resources

Encl.

In 1953 the Canadian Board of Geographical names adopted the name Murdock Lack for a lake in Saskatchewan in his memory as part of the Saskatchewan Geo Memorial Project. He is also commemorated on the fieldstone cairn war memorial at Clair.



Letter – Submitted for the project, Operation Picture Me

Ray's sacrifice is commemorated on a cenotaph in the Clair Community Cemetery, Saskatchewan, Canada. (below right) His biography is included in the local history book "With Quill in Hand; Quill Lake and District, 1903 to 1983", Quill Lake Historical Society, 1984. (bio by Tracy Ann).





Flight Sergeant Raymond Henry Murdock is also commemorated in Nanton, Alberta.

Raymond Henry Murdock - The Canadian Virtual War Memorial - Veterans Affairs Canada