

Flying Officer James Downing

No. 12 Squadron R.A.F.

Family Life:

James was born in Owen Sound to Jennie and James Downing on October 7, 1920. He had two sisters and three brothers. James attended Strathcona Public School and the Owen Sound Collegiate and Vocational Institute for commercial studies. He took an accounting course at Assumption College in Windsor. James was working as a bookkeeper for Bryant Pattern and Manufacturing prior to enlistment. While stationed in the United Kingdom, James married Catherine Johnson and the couple had a child named Catherine Helen.

Service History:

Flying Officer James Downing enlisted for service with the Royal Canadian Air Force on October 18, 1941. The RCAF interviewing officer described him as “somewhat underweight, but fit. Temperament good... bit on the small side and quite boyish but should improve with training.”



Service History:

Flying Officer Downing piloted an Avro Lancaster that weighed 68,000 pounds when fully loaded on takeoff with a wingspan of 102 feet and powered by four Rolls Royce Merlin engines.

FO. Downing and his crew of LM107 of No. 12 Squadron Royal Air Force were “reported missing on the night of 28/29 July, 1944, as a result of air operations against Stuttgart, Germany.”

A later report found: “At about 01.00 on the 29.7.44, a 4 engine bomber crashed about 800 yds north of Diane-Capelle, [France]. The aircraft was on fire before the crash and it exploded on impact.”



Decorations:

- 1939 – 1945 Star
- Air Crew Europe Star
- Defence Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal
- War Medal 1939-1945

Service History:

A one-half square mile debris field surrounded the crash site of LM107 and it was in such a state of destruction that it was difficult to initially determine the make of the aircraft. The diminutive RCAF recruit, Downing had made good on the interviewing officer’s belief that ‘he would improve with training’ by becoming the pilot of a Lancaster bomber but sadly he left behind a spouse and newborn child. He is buried with his crew in a communal grave in Choloy War Cemetery in Meurthe-et-Moselle, France.