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The Tragic Case of Flying Officer William Fortt, RCAF

Edward William Ronald Fortt was born on 28 June 1920 in Quebec, Canada. His father was Lt. Col. Robert Fortt of the Royal Canadian Artillery. He was living with his parents at 2320 Windsor Road in Victoria, B.C. when on 12 August 1939 he volunteered for service in the Royal Canadian Air Force. His initial medical assessment described him as "*a fine looking young man of the wiry athlete type*" with above average intelligence".

2320 Windsor Road



Fortt had a keen interest in flying and prior to enlistment he had clocked several hours in a Gypsy Moth and Avro Tutor as a student pilot. On 1 October he was promoted to Pilot Officer and commenced Flying and Ground Training, proceeding through Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS), Intermediate Training Squadron and Advanced Training Squadron, completing the latter on 12 August 1940. On 19 August he received his Pilot's Flying Badge and two months later he was promoted to Flying Officer. Fortt disembarked in the UK on 10 January 1942 and was assigned to No. 1 Photographic Reconnaissance Unit at RAF Detling.

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The SOCIETY

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The CMHS meets once every calendar month
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The 1st April Extra was written by Rory from the [Boer War Forum](#). We thank him for allowing us to publish his work.
It was forwarded to us by long time member Mike Clare

The 2nd April Extra article was researched, written and provided to us by Member Garrett Lapp

The 3rd April Extra paper was researched, and provided by Member Michael Clare

This 4th April Extra article was provided by Member Tim Popp

This May Extra #1 article was provided by Member Roy Akins



F/O William (Bill) Fortt



Fortt with his Spitfire Mk V

At 12:00 hours on 12 April 1942, while on his way to a photographic reconnaissance over enemy territory, Fortt's spitfire crashed at Halstead, Essex.

The investigative report included the following,

"Several eye-witnesses state that the aircraft was flying at a great height, barely visible, when for no apparent reason it nose-dived. On impact the aircraft exploded and burned for a considerable time. From indications of the wreckage the aircraft struck the ground in a vertical dive, the engine being buried some four or five feet. Owing to the complete destruction of the aircraft it was impossible to carry out an investigation but it is presumed the pilot, F/O FORTT, must have suffered from a black-out [due to lack of oxygen]".

Fortt's unredacted records however may shed more light on the situation. One month prior to his tragic flight he had suffered a severe hernia. In a letter home he writes,

"My stomach muscles can't even flex enough for me to blow my nose. I blow out as hard as I can and the result is just an ordinary exhale through the nose! Relatively, in four weeks they're be just as [un]useful to keep things in place in a dive". As you know this damn fool C.O. [Commanding Officer] is having me fly in a month from yesterday, even though the M.O. [Medical Officer] said that I could not do operational for six months! It was my wish to go to London to see the Principal Medical Officer to ask more about this, but I was absolutely deliberately blocked from seeing him".

In a second letter he writes,

Perhaps to understand all this you have to understand the C.O. he is not popular for his over ruling. Some of the chaps here told him what they think of him with the result that they were shot home - the latest left this morning, a Squadron Leader. Our Padre hopping mad and is seeing the P.M.O. in London and if that does not satisfy he will go to the H.Q."

Unfortunately for Fortt, these letters were intercepted by the censors. While it was not practice to take disciplinary action based on evidence contained in personal letters unless the remarks were prejudicial to national security, Fortt was "paraded", told he had a despicable nature and attempted to **"cover up his inadequacy"** by laying the blame on his commanding officer. An interesting comment given that Fortt **"flew on every operational job, and put in better than three times as much work as the average"**.

A very sad ending for a brave young pilot who gave his life for King and Country at the age of 21.

Flying Officer Fortt was laid to rest in Saffron Walden Cemetery in Essex.

Per Ardua Ad Astra.



F/O Fortt's RCAF Visor Cap









Gypsy Moth



Avro Tudor Training Aircraft