



A Guide for Conducting Historical Research: WWII Aircrew with No Known Grave

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This guide outlines the steps to consider when conducting historical research to tell the life story of a Canadian WWII aircrew with no known grave.

Who Should Use this Guide?

We invite individuals from all backgrounds—**educators, history enthusiasts, military personnel, family members of service members, social justice advocates, and members of the general public** to use this guide to conduct historical research to help write the life stories of Canadian aircrew members who served during World War II and have no known grave. Together, we can honour their service and preserve their memory.

Why Your Participation Matters

3,749 Canadian aircrew members from WWII have no known graves. Often, their life stories are missing from remembrance. By conducting historical research and writing their life story, you help honour their service and ensure their sacrifices are not forgotten.

Start a Personal Research Journal

- Keep a record of your research process, what is found, and from what source of information.
 - What did you do (steps taken, sources explored)?
 - What you found (key discoveries, important details).
 - What are your thoughts or ideas for the next steps?



Conduct the Research

These are the recommended steps for conducting historical research on service personnel from WWII with no known grave. The intention is to collect as much information as possible to tell the stories of these fallen heroes and remind us of the human cost of war. Some resources are specific for researching Royal Canadian Air Force members (aircrew).

Step 1: Pick a name from the WWII Canadian MIA Aircrew Database

The [WWII Canadian MIA Aircrew Database](#) is an online database supported by the Acadia University Recovery Program. This program focuses on developing and implementing an active recovery program in Canada that includes conducting historical and investigative research and contributing to the recovery, identification and repatriation/commemoration of missing-in-action (MIA) military service personnel from WWI, WWII and the Korean Conflict.

- **How to Use:**

- Visit the database.
- Pick a name. The names are organized by province and town.
- Click "Select" to register your choice.

- **Information Available:**

- Full name and service number.
- Rank and unit.
- Home town and province.
- Date of death and flight details.
- Memorial location.

Step 2: Consult the Canadian Virtual War Memorial (CVWM)

The [CVWM](#) is an online registry maintained by Veterans Affairs Canada. It commemorates Canadians and Newfoundlanders who served and gave their lives during the World Wars.

- **How to Use:**

- Visit the CVWM website.
- Enter the service member's name in the search field.
- Review the search results for matching records.

- **Information Available:**

- Full name and service number.
- Rank and unit.
- Date of death.
- Cemetery or memorial location.
- Biographical details and possibly photographs.

Step 3: Access Service Files of the Second World War – War Dead, 1939–1947

Library and Archives Canada (LAC) maintains the [Service Files of the Second World War – War Dead, 1939–1947](#) database, which contains records of individuals who died during or shortly after the war. Here is a resource that may help [Researching Canadian Military who died during WW2 - Canadians At Arms](#)

- **How to Access:**
 - Search the database by entering the individual's name.
 - Review the search results to locate the correct file.
- **Information Available:**
 - Enlistment details
 - Military service records
 - Medical records
 - Circumstances of death
- **Accessing Files:**
 - Some files are digitized and accessible online.
 - For non-digitized files, you can request copies from LAC.

Step 4: Explore the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Database

The [CWGC](#) commemorates Commonwealth military personnel who died during the World Wars.

- **How to Use:**
 - Visit the CWGC website.
 - Enter the service member's name in the "Find War Dead" search tool. Filter results by nationality, regiment, or unit if necessary.
- **Information Available:**
 - Service number.
 - Rank and regiment.
 - Date of death.
 - Cemetery or memorial details.



Step 5: Consult the Books of Remembrance

Canada's [Books of Remembrance](#) commemorate Canadians who have died in military service.

- **How to Access:**

- Visit the Books of Remembrance website.
- Search for the individual's name within the appropriate book.

- **Information Available:**

- Name and rank.
- Unit.
- Date of death.

Step 6: Utilize these Additional Resources

- ☐ **Military Medals, Honours, and Awards:** Search for any awards the individual may have received.
- ☐ **Local Archives and Museums:** Explore regional historical societies or museums for personal letters, photographs, or community records.
- ☐ **Genealogical Websites:** Platforms like Ancestry.ca or [Forces War Records - Historical military records - Forces War Records](#) may have relevant military records or family histories. However, there may be a fee to access the results.
- ☐ **War Diaries- Second World War:** Use this guide to identify relevant war diaries that may include information about the administration and operations of the mission or unit. They generally do not contain information about individual personnel. Available from www.crkn-rcdr.ca/en/reference-guide-war-diaries-second-world-war. The diaries are on microfilm, so you must visit Ottawa to look at them. However, you can request that they be sent to your local library, and you can review them there if they have a microfilm reader.
- ☐ **Newspapers:** Search newspaper archives. Library and Archives Canada offers a guide [Finding newspapers](#)
- ☐ **Books about the Second World War:** Numerous books have been written about the different battles during the war (e.g., Christie, C.A. & Hatch, F. (1995). Ocean Bridge: The History of RAF Ferry Command. University of Toronto Press. <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442677982>), as well as remembrance books (e.g., Allison, Les, et al. (1992). They Shall Grow Not Old: A Book of Remembrance. Commonwealth Air Training Plan Museum). Consider searching for a book on the name of the battle or the location of where the person died. Some books are available online or at your local library via interlibrary loan. Here is a link to a remembrance book that may offer more information if your person's name is listed. [Entries from They Shall Grow Not Old](#).
- ☐ **Daily Routine Orders:** These were posted daily for personnel to read so they knew what was happening and what they were supposed to do. There are two parts: Part 1 is administrative, outlining details for the day and who does what, and Part 2 focuses on personnel- first officers and then aircrew outlining movements of personnel (who is arriving and from where or leaving and where they are assigned to along with other personnel information. An Access to Information and Privacy form needs to be filled out. To learn more, visit [RCAF.Info](#).

Additional Resources

- ☐ **Social media:** Search for and join relevant social media groups, such as on Facebook the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan in Canada or the Royal Canadian Air Force Association.
- ☐ **Websites:** There are dedicated websites to this topic that may be helpful, such as [CASPIR: Canadian Aircraft Serials Personnel Information Resource \(Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum\)](#), [Bomber Command Museum of Canada Archives](#), [Aircrew Remembered](#) and [the Canadian Letters and Images Project](#).

Write and Submit A Report

- Use the headings below to organize the information found and structure a report. If available, add pictures and images.
- Include the sources of information for all sections. Often, the name of the source of information and the URL link are listed at the end of each section.
- Save the final report as a WORD document (.docx).
- Go to the [WWII Canadian MIA Aircrew Database](#) and upload your completed report. Your report will be reviewed to verify the information and a summary of the findings posted on the database, with your permission.

Suggested Title of Report	Historical Research Report on <insert name of person being researched>: A WWII Canadian Aircrew with No Known Grave
Authorship	Your first and last name and the date the report was completed
Section Headings	<p>Demographic and Military Information: Person's name, hometown, province, age, rank, service number, and squadron. If available, include a picture of the person.</p> <p>Civil Life: Describe the person's life before their military career. It may be helpful to include a historical perspective of the geographical, social, and/or cultural settings of the province the person was from. For example, in 1945, Newfoundland was not a Canadian province.</p> <p>Military Career: Describe their military career up until their final mission. Include awards, newspaper stories or other information relevant to this section.</p> <p>Final Mission and Death: Describe a brief background on the war during the final mission, the final mission and information related to the crash and death.</p> <p>Memorial Actions: Identify evidence to remember the person.</p>
Sources of Information	List the name and URL link of information sources used to write the report.



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