

## Lieutenant Bernard John Kennedy O-38300



Lieutenant Bernard John Kennedy.  
Cropped from a picture of the crew of  
Grumman Avenger JZ390 Photo credit:  
Peak District Air Accident Research

- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Oldham England, 19 April 1921**
- **Enlisted: HMCS *Star*, 8 November 1941**
- **Civilian Occupation: Machine Operator, National Steel Car Company**
- **Death: Accidental flying accident while serving in Royal Naval Air Squadron 763/HMS *Nightjar* on 16 January 1945**
- **Commemorated: Lytham St. Anne's (Park) Cemetery, Sec. D. Nonconformist. Grave 734; HMCS *Star* Memorial; and the Second World War Book of Remembrance, Page 530 at the Centre Block Houses of Parliament, Ottawa**

Acting Lieutenant Bernard John Kennedy was born in the United Kingdom on 19 April 1921 in the town of Oldham near the city of Manchester. The first child of his Roman Catholic English parents, John and Maggie Kennedy, Bernard had three siblings – Leonard, Kathleen, and Frances. After his family's immigration to Canada, Bernard was raised on Hamilton's Ferguson Avenue and attended Cathedral High School in the city. Unfortunately, little else is known of Bernard's early life growing up in Hamilton. While going to school, he worked at Quality Grocers, initially as a clerk, but eventually he was promoted to become an assistant manager. Later, he completed a drafting and pattern making course at Hamilton Technical School. Applying his education, Bernard followed in his father's professional footsteps, and he became a machine operator at the National Steel Car (NSC) corporation, an engineering and manufacturing company founded in 1912 that still exists in Hamilton today. Before his enlistment on 8 November 1941, Bernard likely worked on an assembly line at the factory that was converted to the manufacturing of shells and gun parts – one of the largest arms manufacturers in the British Empire. He was highly enthusiastic about sports, playing basketball, tennis, and baseball – even managing several local teams. He also had some interest in radio, taking a course on the subject at Toronto University. Bernard was also an avid stamp collector and fond of photography. Like many other NSC employees, Bernard proudly enlisted in Canada's war effort. In total, 38 former factory workers would go on to make the ultimate sacrifice.

Bernard joined the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) at HMCS *Star*, Hamilton's RCNVR Division, as an enlisted sailor, swearing to serve his country until the end of hostilities, whenever that might be. His attestation form states he was just over 6 feet tall with a slight build.

He had brown hair and hazel eyes. He was first recruited as a wireless coder. While undergoing training at HMCS *Cornwallis*' Anti-Submarine School, located in Halifax Nova Scotia, Ordinary Seaman Bernard was recommended as a candidate for the Officer selection board. In the Fall of 1942, the school's Commanding Officer described Bernard as displaying "well above average initiative and intelligence... neat in appearance, and dependable at all times." After the examination, the panel strongly recommended him for an Officer's Commission. The Board described Bernard as showing "excellent qualities of leadership" and being able to fulfill his responsibilities in a "exemplary manner." Promoted to the rank of Sub-Lieutenant, he went on to serve in HMCS *Calgary* (K231), a Flower-class corvette, as a Submarine Detector throughout 1942. As *Calgary* was assigned to the Western Local Escort Force, Bernard took part in the convoy protection operations that defined the Battle of the Atlantic. In November 1942, *Calgary* was supposed to deploy to assist in Operation TORCH, the amphibious invasion of French North Africa as part of the North African Campaign; however, due to severe mechanical problems the ship was instead put into an extensive refit.

At the start of 1943, after spending 128 days onboard *Calgary*, Bernard was detached from *Calgary* to attend HMCS *Kings* in Halifax. This facility was one of the primary officer training establishments for the RCNVR during the Second World War. This training was followed by a journey back across the Atlantic to receive naval aviation instruction in the United Kingdom. Bernard was loaned to the Royal Navy and was assigned to several training postings to Fleet Air Arm units in the British Isles. A newly promoted Lieutenant in 1944, Bernard became a member of the Royal Navy's 763 Naval Air Squadron based out of Royal Navy Air Stations.



On the evening of 16 January 1945, Bernard boarded a Grumman Avenger torpedo bomber on HMS *Nightjar* near Lancashire, along with his Navigator Midshipman Gordon Fell and Wireless Operator Leading Airman Phillip Mallorie, for an ill-fated training flight. On that Friday evening, Bernard and his flight crew charted a course between Preston and Blackpool. While flying south along the English west coast, the airplane evidently strayed inland and tragically flew into the rock face in the mountainous Great Gully region in Cumberland County. All three airman onboard were killed instantly. Lieutenant Kennedy was 23 years old.

The Mountain Rescue Team assigned to investigate the accident discovered airplane wreckage spread over a large area of the rock face and terrain below. Bernard was reported missing and presumed dead. The crash site is dangerously difficult to access and all that remains of the accident today are a few small groups of debris on the mountainous slope.

In his accommodations at the Naval Air Station, Bernard left behind his collection of stamps, photographic negatives and snapshots, as well as his 1939-1943 Star ribbons. The 23-year-old never married nor had any children. While his body was never recovered, he was given a burial at Lytham Park Cemetery in Lancashire. The inscription on his tombstone reads "We Shall Be Taken Up in The Clouds to Meet Christ; To Be Always with The Lord."

For his service Lieutenant Bernard John Kennedy was awarded: the 1939-45 Star, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, the Defence Medal, and the War Medal. These medals and the Memorial Cross were sent to his mother. He is commemorated at Grave 734, Lytham Park Cemetery, Lancashire; HMCS *Star's* Memorial to her lost sailors; and the Second World War Book of Remembrance, Page 530 at the Centre Block Houses of Parliament, Ottawa.

### Prepared By:

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### Sources:

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission Database – profile page for Bernard J. Kennedy
- Peak District Air Accident Research [http://www.peakdistrictaircrashes.co.uk/crash\\_sites/lake-district/grumman-avenger-iz390-great-gully/](http://www.peakdistrictaircrashes.co.uk/crash_sites/lake-district/grumman-avenger-iz390-great-gully/) Retrieved on 11 Apr 2022
- Canada, World War II Records and Service Files of War Dead, 1939-1947 – profile page for Bernard J. Kennedy
- Wikipedia (for ships' biographies)
- National Steel Car Website. <https://www.steelcar.com/timeline> Retrieved on 11 Apr 2022

### Additional photos:



**TWO HAMILTON, ONE DISTRICT OFFICER LOANED TO R.N.** — Recent graduates of King's College at Halifax, two Hamilton officers and one from Dundas have been loaned to the Royal Navy and will report for duty after spending brief leaves here. Left to right are: Sub-Lieut. Bernard J. Kennedy, 130 Ferguson avenue north, a graduate of Cathedral High School; Sub-Lieut. Peter Grady, Dundas, a graduate of Delta Collegiate Institute, and Sub-Lieut. Harvey E. Kelly, 13 Aikman avenue, a graduate of Central Collegiate Institute. The young officers will go to the fleet air arm of the R.N.





NSC Company manufacturing shells during the Second World War. Photo  
Credit: <https://www.steelcar.com/timeline>