

Harold Lewis SEWARD RAFVR

Born: 1920

Parents: Son of Percy Harold and Francis Amelia Seward of Birdham Road
Chichester

School Years: 1932 – 1936 House - St. Wilfrid's – Chichester High School for Boys
Speech Day Prize – Spring Term – 1935
Oxford School Certificate – Passed – December 1936

Civilian Occupation: On the staff National Provincial Bank,
Palmerston Road, Southsea

Ft Sergeant - R.A.F. December 1939

Service Rank: Pilot Officer

Service Number: 84330

Service Record: 240 Squadron

Service Base: Lough Erne – Northern Ireland

Date of Death: 21 March 1941



Consolidated 'Catalina'

Background to The Donegal Corridor and Ireland's Benevolent Neutrality during the Second World War.

The British Diplomat Sir John Maffey was in Ireland and was given the responsibility for negotiating an air-corridor for use by British aircraft across Donegal through Irish airspace. This became known as the 'Donegal Corridor'. It enabled British aircraft based at Lough Erne a quick route out into the Atlantic Ocean thus allowing longer endurance when every mile of air cover that aircraft could provide over convoys was paramount. 'The Arrangement' provisos were that flights over Irish territory were to be at a good height, Finner Military Fort was not to be overflown and the agreement was to be kept 'as secret as possible'.

Extracts -

Initially, 240 Squadron were to operate with 'Stranraer' flying boats off Lough Erne in Northern Ireland delivered from bases in Scotland. Beginning in March 1941 there is mention of the new American 'Consolidated Catalina' flying boats being attached to the squadron. The ill-fated 'Cat' AM265 was observed at the advanced base at Lough Erne.

Old Boy Pilot Officer Harold Lewis SEWARD was recorded on the Squadron as having been posted in from the FBTS (Flying Boat Training School) on January 25th, 1941. He left for leave on 7th February 1941 but was back on the unit by 21st February when he is noted as proceeding to Lough Erne with "secret documents".

On 21st March 1941, seven airmen of the Royal Air Force and one from the Royal Canadian Air Force took off aboard Catalina AM265 for their very first patrol mission from their new base on Lough Erne in Northern Ireland. They had arrived on the Lough only the day before but sadly would never return to its waters.

Their new Catalina II Flying Boat AM265 crashed into a hillside in the Kinlough Valley at Leitrim killing all eight crew including the pilot Harold Lewis SEWARD. This was to become the first crash within the 'Corridor' and the first Catalina to crash in RAF colours.

Compiled by Dennis Burke, 2017, Dublin and Sligo -with thanks to the air crew's descendants.

The 'Donegal Corridor' was so secret that it was not until the following month that the Irish Army found out about the crash. Throughout the 2nd World War, there were to be many more potentially embarrassing flying incidents when diplomacy had to be 'stretched to keep the secret'. After the War when asked about this Eamon de Valera, President (later Taoiseach) of the Irish Executive Council declined to answer.

Harold Seward was buried at St Mary's Church, Appledram, near Chichester. He was twenty-one.

Commemorated at Chichester High School for Boys and the Chichester War Memorial