

**Cumming, Duncan Herbert**

**Flying Officer**

**Royal Canadian Air Force**

**440 Squadron**

**J25086**



Ka ganawaitak saguenay (Hij die de Saguenay beschermt)

Duncan Herbert Cumming was born on Tuesday, August 9, 1921, in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, the son of Henry Walter Stuart Cumming and Margaret Eleanor McBean. They were married on September 15, 1920, in Millbrook, Ontario. Father Henry Walter Stuart was a World War I veteran who was captured and spent some time as a German POW. Duncan had two brothers, Donald Walter and the youngest of the family, Kenneth Henry Cumming. As a creed, they belonged to the Church of England. They lived at 113 Bedford Road, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Duncan was educated at Allenby Public School from 1926 to 1933. This school was named after Lord Edmund Allenby, one of Britain's most successful generals. In 1933 Duncan entered the Northern Vocational School on Mount Pleasant Road, where he continued his education until 1941. In May 1941, Duncan started working at Anaconda American Brass, where he began working as an analytical chemist.

He had blue-grey eyes and curly red hair, was 1.75 m tall and weighed 66 kg. At age five, he suffered a fracture to his left knee; at age 12, Duncan broke his left wrist. He had two small scars under his chin. His sports were ice hockey, swimming, rugby, golf, tennis, basketball and baseball, and his hobby was reading.

He had a driver's license and had flown as a passenger on an airplane for an hour. Duncan smoked fifteen cigarettes a day and sometimes drank a glass of beer.

On February 13, 1942, he reported to the #11 Recruit Center at Toronto Manning Depot in Toronto. The medical examiners initially had some



.....*Duncan*.....  
(Signature of officer or man)

doubts about the examination. On March 22, 1942, Duncan was posted to Toronto at the #1 Manning Depot. There began his military career, where he learned to bathe, shave, shine boots, polish buttons, maintain his uniforms and behave in the required manner. Each day there were two hours of physical education and instruction in marching, rifle drills, saluting, and other routines. After the war, Duncan would like to go to university to study mechanical engineering and engineering.

On July 4, 1942, he was approved for flight training. They thought he was a suitable candidate as a pilot or an observer. The next day, he attended #6 Initial Training School in Toronto, Ontario. He was given the rank of Aircraftman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class.



Pilot and Air Observer candidates began their twenty-six or twenty-eight-weeks training program with four weeks at an Initial Training School (ITS). They studied theoretical subjects and were subjected to various tests. The theoretical studies included navigation, flight theory, meteorology, officer duties, air force administration, algebra, and trigonometry. They also got an interview with a psychiatrist, the four-hour M2 physical exam, a session in a decompression chamber, and a "test flight" in a Link Trainer (flight simulation). Placements would be announced at the end of the course. On September 27, 1942, Duncan entered #12 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Goderich, Ontario, for further training.

There he received fifty hours of basic flight instruction on a simple trainer, such as the Havilland Tiger Moth, Havilland Tiger Moth Fleet Finch, or Fairchild Cornell for eight weeks.



*Havilland Tiger Moth*

Photo: <https://www.canada.ca/en/air-force/services/aircraft>

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The North American NA-64 Yale was also used as a training aircraft. Duncan Cumming was a good candidate, but he needed to catch up due to illness.

On December 6, 1942, he continued his training for sixteen weeks at the # 6 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Dunville.

For the first eight weeks, Cumming was part of an average training squadron; for the next six weeks, he followed an advanced training squadron, and for the last two weeks training at a Bombing & Gunnery School.

Upon graduation, the new pilots were assigned various duties, possibly overseas with the Royal Air Force or a Royal Canadian Air Force squadron; in Canada as an instructor or staff pilot with the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, or for service in squadrons with the Royal Canadian Air Force Home Defence. On April 2, 1943, Duncan received his Pilot's Wings.

On 17 April 1943, he was assigned to the Eastern Air Command in Halifax and was part of the Home War Establishment of the Royal Canadian Air Force, responsible for air operations on Canada's Atlantic coast during World War II. Three



days later, on April 20, 1943, Cumming was assigned to the #1 Operational Training Unit in Bagotville, Quebec. On Saturday, May 29, 1943, he crashed during a training flight at around 5 p.m. He was missing for some time, and a search team was sent. On Sunday night, 30 May, they found him. The next day he was admitted to the hospital; he had scratches and cuts on his face and minor burns on his chest, shoulders,

and elbows. Duncan spent some time in the hospital, where he recovered from his injuries, and on July 19, 1943, he was found fit to fly again and left the hospital.

On October 25, he was posted to No. 130 Squadron in Goose Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador province. It operated along Canada's east coast, flying Hawker Hurricanes.

On January 15, 1944, Duncan received the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp. On May 31, 1944, he was assigned overseas to England. On June 16, 1944, Duncan left Canada and set foot in England on June 24, 1944. The next day he was assigned to the 246 Progress Review Committee. On 22 August 1944, Duncan was posted to the No 53 Operational Training Unit at Royal Air Force Base Kirton in Lindsey, twenty-four miles north of Lincoln, Lincolnshire.

Pilots initially trained in Miles Master aircraft and later in Spitfires. On 3 November, he was assigned to the No 3 T.E.U Tactical Exercise Unit at Aston Down, Gloucestershire, South West England. On December 9, 1944, Cumming was assigned to the 440 Squadron and was stationed in Eindhoven, the Netherlands. Together with the sister squadrons 438 and 439 Royal Canadian Airforce, the 440 Squadron was part of the 143 Wing at Eindhoven Air Base (code designation B.78). This Wing mainly came into action against ground targets in support of the Allied advance.



Bron : <https://canavbooks.files.wordpress.com/>

A day before Christmas, December 24, 1944, Duncan flew in the Typhoon 1B MN984, a so-called 'Fighter cover / Escort' on armed reconnaissance with four other Typhoons, to the Malmedy-Houffalize area in Belgium.

Cumming's Wingman, Flying Officer William Thomas Dunkeld of Pontiac, Michigan, USA, and Flying Officer Cumming were attacked and shot down by a German Messerschmitt 109 on their way back.

This was later confirmed by intelligence, and it was also said that a Spitfire shot down the Messerschmitt 109 immediately afterward.

Flying Officer William Thomas Dunkeld died at 23 after he crashed in Maarheeze and was buried at Jonkerbos War Cemetery in Nijmegen.

Flying Officer Duncan Herbert Cumming crashed with his Hawker Typhoon 1B MN 984 in the Broek in Waalre around 12.45 p.m.

He died at 23 and was found close to the plane. He probably tried to leave the aircraft, but the parachute did not have enough time to open fully.

On December 27, 1944, at 11:00 a.m., he was buried at the general cemetery in Woensel, grave SS.4, and reburied on November 12, 1945, at the Canadian War Cemetery in Groesbeek, grave reference **XV. F. 15.**



*The grave in those early days, in 1954 the crosses were replaced by tombstones.*



**F.O. DUNCAN H. CUMMING, 23,** son of Mr. and Mrs. H. W. S. Cumming, Bedford Rd., a Typhoon pilot, was shot down over Holland by enemy aircraft, December 24, and believed killed. "The plane was seen to crash and Duncan apparently had not bailed out," his father said. F.O. Cumming enlisted in March, 1942, and secured his wings and commission at Dunnville, April 2, 1943. While stationed at Bagotville, Que., for six months, he was reported missing for two days when lost over the wilds of Quebec. Later he was posted to Labrador before going overseas last July. Born in Toronto, he attended North Toronto collegiate and Meisterschaft college. A brother, P.O. Donald Cumming, got his wings last month.



*photo : : <http://lestweforget1945.org/>*



## **FACES TO GRAVES**

Stichting Faces to Canadian  
War Graves Groesbeek

Life story: Gijs Krist - Research Team Faces To Graves

Sources:

Commonwealth War Graves

Library and Archives Canada

WWW. Aircrewremembered.com

With courtesy of Anne Gafiuk / Typhoon Project

\* Do you have a photo of this soldier or additional information please contact [info@facestograves.nl](mailto:info@facestograves.nl)



Found at his grave, 11 November 2016

