

Airplane accidents and incidents in pre-1960 Gander

(by Robert G Pelley, 2015-04-28)
<http://bobsganderhistory.com>

Every airplane built in the world normally has a unique production and registration number that can be traced even if the airplane changes hands. These numbers help identifying accidents and incidents in the aviation world. For more detailed information, accident reports can often be bought for 15-25\$. Then again, one still needs some basic information to decide if the detailed report is useful in the first place.

In the case of Gander, there are reports of an accident here or a crash there and anyone having access to RCAF, RAF and USAAF operational records could trace a given airplane. But there is no quick reference available that gives an organized overview of all these aviation related events. I decided therefore to attempt to complete such a list.

The period covered corresponds basically the era before the building of the new terminal and new town-site. For this reason, crashes such as the locally well-known US Navy Constellation, the Czechoslovakian airliner and the Arrow accidents are absent.

The level of detail of the source information is variable. In some cases, the descriptions are fairly complete but in others, it might say simply that a given aircraft had an unidentified accident, without saying what happened to the plane later. Was it scrapped or was it repaired? Sometimes the only way to figure it out is to see if it could be found elsewhere later. For example, if a B-24 was damaged in Gander, perhaps we can find it flying later in Europe, which means obviously that it had been repaired.

From time to time a source will say that an aircraft was involved in an incident which seems probably minor, with no other detail. Even though some of these events may seem relatively inconsequential, they have been included for completeness and in case they become important later for research purposes for someone.

Another problem is that crash sites locations are often missing. Also I have been told recently by my father Calvin J Pelley (who started working in Gander at the start of the construction) that in the early 1950s, at the start of the Cold War, teams of Americans had possibly visited an unknown number of crash sites to cover them over. This was done in order to help Search and Rescue teams who then would not confuse any new sites with older WWII sites. Recording old crash sites may become therefore more difficult over time. Also in the 1950s, the RCAF's search and rescue unit at Torbay did visit old crash sites and mark them in paint to identify them as known crashes. It is possible that this work overlapped to some extent but given the status of Newfoundland as a province at that time, it would be safe to assume that this would have been essentially an RCAF operation.

It also happens from time to time that the information is simply incorrect, for example, when the serial number given for a B-17 is the same as given for a much smaller, single-engine plane. By definition, one of them is wrong. One must realize also that the information was put on record by humans who may have incorrectly observed the situation or incorrectly inscribed the data. And sometimes this information is added, based on hearsay or faded recollections, many years after the fact.

Based on the above and the fact that I have used and combined as best I could a variety of sources which would be difficult to document, the ***lists given below should be in no way considered for an official purposes.*** It is simply my best effort under the circumstances and I hope that feedback over time will help increase its accuracy.

The information below is divided into several sections, based on the relative "volume of traffic":

- United States Army Air Force (USAAF) B-17 Flying Fortress bombers
- USAAF B-24 Liberators
- USAAF aircraft of other types
- RCAF, RAF and other aircraft

USAAF B-17

revised 2013/11/20

	<i>Date y/m/d</i>	<i>Serial no/type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1	420109	41-2393 E	Crashed into a snow bank	Unsalvageable (some sources give this as Argentina)
2	421024	41-24530 F	Clipped a pillbox and crashed on its belly during an aborted night take-off	Salvaged
3	430604	42-3278 F	Maintenance crewmen left work uncompleted, but next day engineers Sgts Leon Galloway & Hartis Hamlin without checking status of the plane, started engine and it caught fire.	Damage classed as 4/5. Later flew in the US
4	430820	42-30799 F	Ground looped by ground crew, hit a fuel truck	Later shot down in the Bremen area. 3 dead, 7 taken prisoner
5	431129	42-37938 G	Minor taxi accident	Went on to Europe
6	431229	42-97493 G	Crashed 2 miles SW of Gander	Written off. Crash site now part of the Thomas Howe Demonstration Forest
7	440208	42-31890 G	During a pre-flight check, the landing gear collapsed, damage 4/5	Was repaired, later flew over Germany
8	440220	42-38194 G	Ground accident, 4/5	Flew in Europe, was interned in Sweden
9	440404	41-9106 E	Listed both as "crashed-landed" and "landing accident"	However flew in Europe and crashed in Spain
10	440429	41-9140 E	Listed as a "landing accident"	Seen in Walnut Ridge AFB, Arizona, 1945
12	440606	42-97908 G	Must have been minor	Flew with the 91 st Bomb Gp, 324 Bomb Squadron

				in Europe
13	440606	42-97904 G	Taxiing accident	"Lady Jeanette", later shot down by flak in Europe. Pilot and pilot got Medal of Honor posthumously
14	440627	43-27810 G	Ground looped on take-off. Undercarriage collapsed	Shot down Europe, May 1945
15	440804	44-6344 G	Crashed on take off	Crew killed, damaged beyond repair
16	440915	440915 G	Listed as "ground accident"	Crashed in Hungary Feb 1945
17	441014	44-6599 G	Two B-17s listed on this date collided with one another. Damage 2/5	Later flew in Europe
18	441014	44-8437 G	Two B-17s listed on this date collided with one another. damage 4/5	Lost in Europe 17 Feb 45
19	441219	44-6864 G	Listed as "landing accident", damage 4/5	
20	450103	44-6795 G	Crashed on take off, within minutes of leaving the ground,	Written off
21	450103	43-39080 G	Taxiing accident	"Girl with Towel" flew in Europe, scrapped in Arizona April 1946
22	450131	44-6978 G	Landing accident, damage 3/5	Repaired
23	450214	43-39247 G	Listed as "ground accident"	This airplane shows up both at Gander and Grenier Fd with the same pilot on the same date. However Gander USAAF base unit properly identified (1377AAFBU)
24	450222	44-83304 G	Taxiing accident after forced landing	Repaired
25	450223	43-29245 G	No info available	Number possibly incorrect, seems to be also the no. for a L-4H Grasshopper
26	450405	44-83427 G	Taxiing accident	Was involved in a ground accident with another airplane in Italy Sep 45

USAAF B-24

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	<i>Date y/m/d</i>	<i>Serial no/type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1	430509	42-40335 D	Listed as "landing accident", damage 4/5	Was returned to service & written off in Texas Jan 44
2	430621	42-40616 D	Listed as "ground accident", damage 4/5	Flew again later, condemned 1945
3	430820	42-40927 D	Listed as "landing accident", damage 4/5	
4	440925	42-52017 J	Listed as "landing accident", damage 4/5	
5	441015	42-51374 J	Crashed, 5 miles SW of Gander, other side Gander Lake	Written off
6	441212	44-49637 L	Crashed after take-off. 4 miles SW of Gander, other side Gander Lake	Written off,
7	450214	44-42169 M	Crashed 12 miles NE of Gander	See these addresses bottom of article **
8	450220	44-50427 M	Crashed on take off through power lines and two small buildings, leveling them to the ground. One was Gander Hobby Shop (unoccupied), other unoccupied building. Took roof and two walls off third building before landing 100 yds from barrack block occupied by women's division. One crew injured.	Written off

9	450301	44-50380 M	Landed short of runway due pilot error. Hit a snowbank and smashed undercarriage. Came to rest 1000 ft. off runway	Written off
10	450513	44-42503 M	Listed as "landing accident", damage 3/5	One source says it was sent to Chinese Nationalist AF at some time later

* <http://www.ganderbeacon.ca/Living/2007-06-18/article-1490710/On-site/1>

* <http://www.filmgander.com/LFOTE.wmv>

USAAF Other

revised 2013/11/20

	<i>Date y/m/d</i>	<i>Serial no/type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1	421209	42-5045 YC64 Norseman	Must have been minor, as the airplane was kept in service. Same aircraft ground looped at Gander on take-off on 430609	Later crashed on landing APO865 Airport located in New York on 09 Sep 43. Pilot was performing a postal flight from Newfoundland. Aircraft was destroyed and pilot was injured.
2	431027	v-5496 Hurricane	This was listed as USAAF, though Hurricanes in Gander were RCAF This aircraft collided in mid-air with the A020C below	See "RCAF/RAF/Other", item 3.6
3	431027	41-19224 A-20C Havoc	Collision w/ Hurricane above	Official crash report in my possession
4	441025	43-1532 C-47A Skytrain/Dakota	No info, may be wrong no	The s/n 43-1532 also applies to a single-engine L-C3 that crashed in Texas. Possible confusion?
5	441103	44-48999 C-109	Take off accident,	Lost Jul 30, 1945, Asia

		Tanker based on B-24	not necessarily a crash. Damage 3/5	
6	441219	43-5125 UC-64A Norseman	Reported destroyed by an act God on Gander Lake. Condemned 28 Dec	Sank off station dock as result of mooring rope breaking and a/c pounding against dock by rough water. Rear compartments of pontoon filled with water and a/c sank. Hauled from lake but irreparable
7	450212	42-72235 C-54A Skymaster/DC-4	Belly damage during take off.	Repaired
8	450214	43-3260 OA-10A PBY Catalina	Landing accident	Was seen in Goose Bay on 22 Sep 45
9	450329	41-37281 C-54A Skymaster/DC-4	Appears to be a "blade strike"	Flew after the war as a commercial operation
10	460406	44-9117 C-54E Skymaster/DC-4	Taxiing accident, 2/5	Flew after the war as a commercial operation
11	530718	43-30658 C-47A Skytrain/Dakota	No accident info	Flew after the war as a commercial operation

RCAF / RAF / Other

revised 2013/11/20

	<i>Date</i> y/m/d	<i>Serial</i> no	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1. <u>PBY, Catalina, Canso (RCAF)</u>				
1.1	42/01/30	9742	Force landed NW end Soulies Pond after using bomb range near Gander.	Repaired
1.2	42/12/15	9743	Crash category B	Sent to NS for repairs
1.3	43/01/02	9746	Crash category B	Sent to Torbay for repair
1.4	43/01/07	9737	Fully loaded, ran into	Written off

			turbulence and hit trees near Gander Lake, crashed and caught fire.	
1.5	43/02/19	9740	Crash category B	Sent to NS for repairs
1.6	43/05/05	9807	Crashed and burned on take-off at the end of runway 18.	
1.7	44/02/23	9774	Date shown is date sent for repairs, crash of unknown nature was some time prior	Scrapped
1.8	44/03/20	9745	Sent for repairs date shown, from earlier category A crash.	Props and some spares salvaged

2. B-24 Liberator (RCAF)

2.1	43/09/22	597	Damaged by AA fire during an attack on U-270, returned on 3 engines	
2.2	43/10/13	5499	Class C accident of unknown nature	Was stored as reserved and disposed of in 1945
2.3	43/02/19	3701	Disappeared on a flight from Gander to Mont Joli, Qc.	Wreckage found 1946
2.4	43/09/04	589	Squadron code "D". Crashed and sank in Gander Lake after take off	
2.5	44/06/04	590, 596, 3705, 3708	Destroyed in hangar fire	
2.6	45/04/17	3710	Swerved into snow bank when a tire burst on landing	Written off

3. Hawker Hurricane

3.1	42/07/13	1369	Undetermined damage Category B	Repaired
3.2	42/10/27	1379	Undetermined damage	Repaired

			Category C	
3.3	43/02/22	5497	Forced to land near Third Pond, Gander River. Fuselage mounted on two canoes and floated to Gander Bay. Wings floated down river first. Possible cause icing.	Was sent to Lewisporte by boat and by train to Gander for parts salvage
3.4	43/03/17	5430	Landed short of runway at Torbay, may have been from Gander	Repaired Gander
3.5	43/07/09	5459	Undetermined damage Category C	Repaired
3.6	43/11/02	5496	Category A crash	Scrapped by no 19 Sub-Repair Depot. See "US AAF other", no. 9
3.7	44/02/03	5668	Crashed approx. 50 kms S of Deer Pond	Salvaged beyond repair
3.8	44/02/20	5494	Category B crash on a runway.	Written off after inspection
3.9	44/02/25	5728	Undetermined damage Category B	Undetermined damage Category B
3.10	44/03/11	5714	Unspecified crash	Scrapped in Gander
3.11	44/03/13	5476	Crashed into Botwood Hbr	Pilot bailed out safely
3.12	44/05/01	5658	Crashed at sea. Was used at both Gander and Dartmouth but departure airfield not given	Was recuperated and sent to no. 4 Repair Depot, Scoubuc, NB
3.13	44/04/10	5709	Force landed wheels up on Soulies Pond. Salvaged	Possibly crashed during practise dogfight
3.14	44/07/20	5708	Undetermined crash damage Category A	Written off at Scoubuc
3.15	44/08/02	5653	Undetermined crash damage Category A	Written off at Scoubuc
3.16	44/08/19	5665	Crashed during practice dogfight due to camshaft failure. Crash site approx. 50 N of airport	Written off

4. Hudson/Ventura/Lodestar

4.1	41/02/25	RAF Hudson T9449	En route England, plane lost starboard engine over the ocean 50 miles from Gander and turned back. Then lost other engine and crashed near Musgravetown (Seven Mile Pond) Among the fatalities was Dr Frederick Banting	
4.2	42/01/28	RCAF Hudson 768	Reported bad weather, lost contact and crashed	Some main components salvaged
4.3	42/11/18	RAF Ventura AJ471	Crashed around Soulis Pond near Benton (approx. 15 miles E of Gander) enroute to UK	Some main components salvaged
4.4	42/12/06	RAF Hudson FK690	Took off at 0351 hours on a delivery flight to the UK. The aircraft stalled immediately after take off and crashed in flames just east of the runway near the cemetery	
4.5	43/05/08	RCAF Lodestar 557	This Lodestar crashed near Gander while trying to land. Crew killed	Belonged to 164(T) Squadron, Moncton in 1943.

5. Digby

5.1	41/07/26	742	Recalled from convoy escort due to bad weather. Arrived Gander after dark, ceiling 300ft. On 4 th try a wing struck the ground and it crashed.	6-man crew all fatalities. First RCAF casualties buried in Gander
5.2	41/11/11	754	Undetermined damage Category B while landing downwind	Apparently was the third crash by the same pilot!
5.3	41/12/20	744	Lost over the Atlantic	

5.4	42/03/28	753	Category A crash in Gander	Written off
5.5	42/07/14	739	Disappeared on patrol. Wreckage found August 1956 near Port Saunders	
6. <u>Other accidents/incidents</u>				
6.1	42/08/21	Norseman RCAF 2479	Crashed Ochre Pit Cove about 45 kms north of Carbonear, Conception Bay	Written off
6.2	42/10/15	RAF B-25 FR369	Confirmed as lost over the Atlantic and not near Gander	
6.3	42/11/30	RAF Boston BZ277	Crashed near Conche (Northern Peninsula) en route Greenland	Wreckage salvaged, shipped out on boat
6.4	43/02/08	BOAC Liberator AL591	Was returning from the UK, ran out of fuel and crash-landed under severe icing conditions 15 kms NE of Gander	Liberator LB-30A transport
6.5	43/02/23	RAF B-25 FR148	Confirmed as missing over the Atlantic.	Missing on a flight from Gander to Preswick
6.6	43/05/22	RAF B-25 FL209	Has been mentioned as a possible crash in the Gander area	However crashed near Ville Lasalle (Montreal) when it ran out of gas on a training flight
6.7	44/08/29	RAF B-25 KJ584	Crashed on take-off. Crew killed (Near Deadmans Pond)	
6.8	46/08/25	RAF Lancaster TW870	Airplane returned to Gander for technical reasons and killed three civilians on landing	see note 1* below
6.9	46/09/18	DC-4 Sabena	Crashed on approach 25nm SW of the airport,	

		Airlines OO-CBG	other side of Gander Lke	
6.10	46/09/27	DC-3 Dakota RCAF 967	Take-off for Canada with reporter and soundmen of CBC covering the Sabena crash. Tire burst, right prop hit ground and a/c crashed in wooded area 500 yards from runway and caught fire. No injuries	Eventually struck off strength early 1947
6.11	49/03/02	TWA C-54B	About 1,615 feet from the end of runway 09 the aircraft struck a power line and then hit the ground. Full power was applied, the aircraft became airborne and made a landing.	Caused by simultaneous use of GCA and visual cues in bad weather
6.12	53/08/21	Stratocruiser PAA V1035V	Taxiing accident, ground collision	Repaired
6.13	54/08/25	Air France L-749 Constellation F-BAZI	Overran the runway on landing and went into a 20 ft ditch.	Damaged beyond repair and shipped out by flatcar.

See the Lancaster TW870 full story here "
<http://bobsganderhistory.com/lanc.pdf>

There was one incident I had trouble putting in the table. In the early 50s work was being done in the US to develop a polio vaccine. To do so, they needed rhesus monkeys, which were bought in by plane by Seaboard and Western. I myself saw these planes close up on the ramp and I am sure ATC could smell these planes before they actually showed up on radar. One winter's evening a number of the monkeys escaped from their cages and headed for the warm terminal hanger where they could soon be seen hanging from the rafters, providing much work for staff.... and much more amusement for onlookers. Ah yes, the days when aviation was fun!

As mentioned above, this list should NOT be used for any official purposes or as an authoritative source. Any suggestions for modification or inclusion would be appreciated.