

Welcome to the Chronology *Canada's Air War*, a project of the *Ventura Memorial Flight Association*, a registered non-profit group dedicated to preserving and making airworthy a Lockheed Ventura maritime patrol aircraft, the one military aircraft of the Second World War that saw combat that was designed to meet the needs of the RCAF (see the file *Ventura Memorial Flight Association, Purposes and Donations* for more on our group).

Introduction

Canada and Newfoundland, during the Second World War, played a major part in the Allied Victory due to its location, its resources and industry, its standards of education and its historical ties to Europe.

That its role is not wider known is due in part to it being part of the Commonwealth forces, which often leads to our being mentioned in the summaries and histories as "British". Another factor is due to having as a neighbour a country with a much larger population whose need to tell their own story fulfills a cultural desire, and has become a very profitable and global business, referred to as "entertainment", which often obscures the historical facts not with malicious intent, but often because it doesn't "sell". And it might be because of our nature, in that having overcome a difficult task we acknowledged it and moved on without expecting lavish praise.

As a result much of what we as a country did in the War has been forgotten as time passes, especially as the men and women who accomplished these deeds have passed away.

This is especially true in the case of Canada's contribution to the war in the air, where most Canadian Airmen served in British units.

Prior to the beginning of the War, like most members of the Commonwealth, Canada's Air Force, as did its Navy and Army, based its policies, structures, equipment and training on those of Britain. This meant in practical terms that all the military forces of the Commonwealth were able to integrate their units at need to operate together without having to first establishing treaties, protocols, or multiple supply lines, giving them a great operational flexibility.

However, in the case of the RAF, it was an entirely new service, and during the period between the wars it had had to continually justify its existence to remain a viable and independent force. As a result its policy in that period was that other Commonwealth countries should support the offensive use

of air power by providing trained manpower only to RAF formations, and the creation of separate national units beyond those needed for local defence was opposed. This changed, but the effect remained, and thus most members of the RCAF who served in the War flew in RAF units where their successes and sacrifices remain, even today, largely unrecognized on a National level.

This *Chronology* is an attempt to change that by giving an account of the War in a compact, accurate and comprehensive format that can answer many obvious questions about what Canadian and Newfoundland airmen achieved while stimulating interest and understanding of the period and at the same time provide a basic guide to the resources available for further research for those who wish to pursue more detailed studies. At the same time it will indicate what war, and especially this War, cost in the loss of lives to achieve that final victory.

In short, the data presented here is intended to be a basic first step to encourage its readers to look up other, more complete information on the events it describes.

Files of the Chronology

This database includes the following files:

Canada's Air War - Introduction
Canada's Air War - A Guide to Searching Canada's Air War
Canada's Air War - Ranks and Abbreviations
Canada's Air War - Aircraft Development 1929 - 1947
Canada's Air War - References
Canada's Air War - Locations Referenced in Canada
Canada's Air War - Fatalities by Date
Canada's Air War - Fatalities and PoWs by Home Town
Canada's Air War - Casualties by Unit
Canada's Air War - 1929-38
Canada's Air War - 1939
Canada's Air War - 1940
Canada's Air War - 1941
Canada's Air War - 1942
Canada's Air War - 1943
Canada's Air War - 1944
Canada's Air War - 1945

Canada's Air War - Proposals for Projects
Canada's Air War - Commonwealth Losses in Canada by Date
Canada's Air War - PoW List
Ventura Memorial Flight Association, Purposes and Donations

Using the Chronology

This is a chronology, a listing of events ordered by date. The focus of this work is, by order, the Second World War, what Canada did in the war, and in particular the role of Canadian airmen in the war, and finally what it cost us in terms of those lost or injured. It begins in 1929 due to what was called the '*Ten Year Rule*'. It ends in 1947, the year that the RCAF stood down from a war posture, and the year the *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ended its record of fatalities from the war and its aftermath.

It is not intended that this provide a complete history of the War as many of the campaigns, such as most of the fighting in Russia, China and the Pacific, did not involve many Canadians, but these are referenced in a broad manner to place these campaigns in the context of the *Chronology* and to make the point that this was, indeed, a World War.

Prior to September 1939, and after 1945, daily events are in plain text while those that directly affect the RCAF are in **bold**, but after the war begins this is reversed, **daily events are in bold** and those that affect Canadian and Newfoundland airmen are in plain text. Airmen of other countries are identified by the Air Force they served but where known, **Canadians, Newfoundlanders, and members of the RCAF are highlighted in red** (those whose affiliations are unknown or might be RCAF members but are not yet confirmed have no national designation pending further information).

Dates are recorded by calendar day, but given the nature of the War events that occurred at night are noted under both dates (for example, the notation 5-6 would indicate an event happening on the night of the 5th and 6th of a given month). In the listing of fatalities by date, however, these are as they appear in the book *They Shall Grow Not Old*, which is in turn based on the records of the *Commonwealth War Grave Commission*, which gives only a single date. Where there is any discrepancy in the given date the *Commission* is used as the primary source and this is noted in the text.

Here it is worth noting the value of the *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, whose mission from the end of the First World War was to

identify and honourably inter as many of those who died in these wars, or create memorials to those who were missing, and maintain these memorials, cemeteries and single isolated graves so that those who fell would not be forgotten. That Canada is part of such a dedicated organization means that a project such as this one can be created and give a name to those who fell. For an example of how useful this is an attempt to remember those Canadians who served in the US air forces in this record is not nearly complete as there does not exist a comparable database of those who were killed or missing from their forces.

If an event recorded in this database had impact on another, later event, or a person was involved in other events, a reference to that later event can be found at the end of the first entry.

Events of significance and those that unfolded over a period of time have the key words underlined so they can be recognized and/or searched in the file to give a coherent unfolding of the event (for example the searching the term Spanish Civil War would give a short but useful account of that war and it's impact on the events in Europe that led to the Second World War).

Non-military events of the period, such as the introduction of common commercial products, the birth of famous people, or the openings of well known movies, are included to give readers points of reference in their own lives to the period of the *Chronology*. Other events such as tornados, floods and earthquakes, and local events like fires and train crashes, are included to remind us that even during the War the other events of the world did not end, and that the people of that time were much like us in not knowing what would happen to them or change their lives on a day to day basis. Modern events that are related or influenced by the historical events of these times are also mentioned, again to give the modern reader a reference point in their own memories to these past events and to remind them that this war was not a novel or a movie, that these events did occur, and that the lives we lead today are a direct result of the decisions and actions of our fore-bearers.

Whenever possible serial numbers of aircraft involved in the events are included to assist those seeking more information, especially with web searches, where a search for "F/O Smith AB123" would give better data than simply searching the name. Another source of useful identifiable numbers would be an airmen's personal serial number, but for those who died these can be easily found on the *Commonwealth War Grave Commissions* online database or the book *They Shall Grow Not Old* so are not included in this work to eliminate errors in transcription. However if you

are requesting information from other researchers and can provide a persons serial number to them please do so, it will save time and improve the results you get.

The world of the Second World War was very different from the world of today, especially in terms of the technology and societal relations. If you find an abbreviation or reference in these files you don't understand check the file *Ranks and Abbreviations* first. It might explain it quickly. If still puzzled by an event or reference, try the Internet. If you still don't have an answer, visit or contact a Museum, or ask a veteran. It's a vast difference between, for example, an AC (Aircraftsman) and an A/C (Air Commodore), but simple errors are easy to avoid with a little effort.

All the words used in these files are my own, except where quotations are noted and cited. But the information came from many hundreds of sources, all of whom deserve credit for the work they did. Beyond the primary sources (mentioned below) any further information is cited in the entry and are detailed in the *References* file, and I would ask that anyone researching an event with this *Chronology* to give credit to those researchers without whose work this database could not have been created. Better yet, go and get their books or open their websites, and read their words for yourself. You will not regret it.

For those writing essays merely cutting and pasting the information written here and passing it off as your own work will not teach you anything useful. At least do some simple research on, say, the location, squadron or aircraft type in a reference, and then write it up in your own words so you can answer a simple question about the matter if necessary.

While I do not mind my words being copied (if credited), those who create 'click-bait' on the internet by copying whole files of other peoples work and passing it off as their own are below contempt, and if any reader finds this has occurred please make it publicly known on whatever sites you have access to.

This project began as a simple cross-referencing of names and events for a Remembrance Day project for my Wolf Cub Pack in Yellowknife in 1994, but then turned into a written *Chronology* after reading the book, *Airmen Died in the Great War 1914-1918*, by C. Hobson (1995). The primary sources used to build this *Chronology* came from the book *They Shall Grow Not Old*, published by the Commonwealth Air Training Museum in Brandon in 1992. This was enhanced by the monumental 9 volume *Bomber Command Losses* work by W.R. Chorley, *Coastal Command*

Losses Vol.1 by R. McNeil, *Bomber Command Losses in the Middle East & Mediterranean* by Gunby and Temple, *Ocean Bridge* by C.A. Christie, *RCAF Personnel - Honours And Awards - 1939-1949*, the *Chronology of Canadian Military Aviation* and the many other works by the dedicated Canadian military aviation historian H.A. Halliday, *Bomber Command War Diaries* by Middlebrook and Everitt, the multivolume work *RAAF World War 2 Fatalities by Categories* by A. Storr, and *Fighter Command Losses* (use with caution) by N.L.R. Franks.

I wish to thank the Bomber Command Museum of Nanton, Alberta, for making this material available on it's website.

Any errors in this work are my own.

I can be contacted by those interested in this material at rcafventura@hotmail.com.

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www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca