

**Royal Air Force, No. 37 Service Flying Training School,  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada, - Part One**

***CALGARY WINGS***



The British Royal Air Force members of No. 37 S.F.T.S. docked at Halifax, Nova Scotia, 14:30 hrs. 15 September 1941, with their first train arriving at Calgary, Alberta, five days later. Their new training school was still under construction, with the first 13 British officers and 444 other ranks moving in 30 September 1941. This RAF unit unofficially adopted an indigenous Thunderbird as their new Canadian training flying school insignia, and this image first appeared on stationary and the school newsletter "Wings" cover [above] in November 1941.

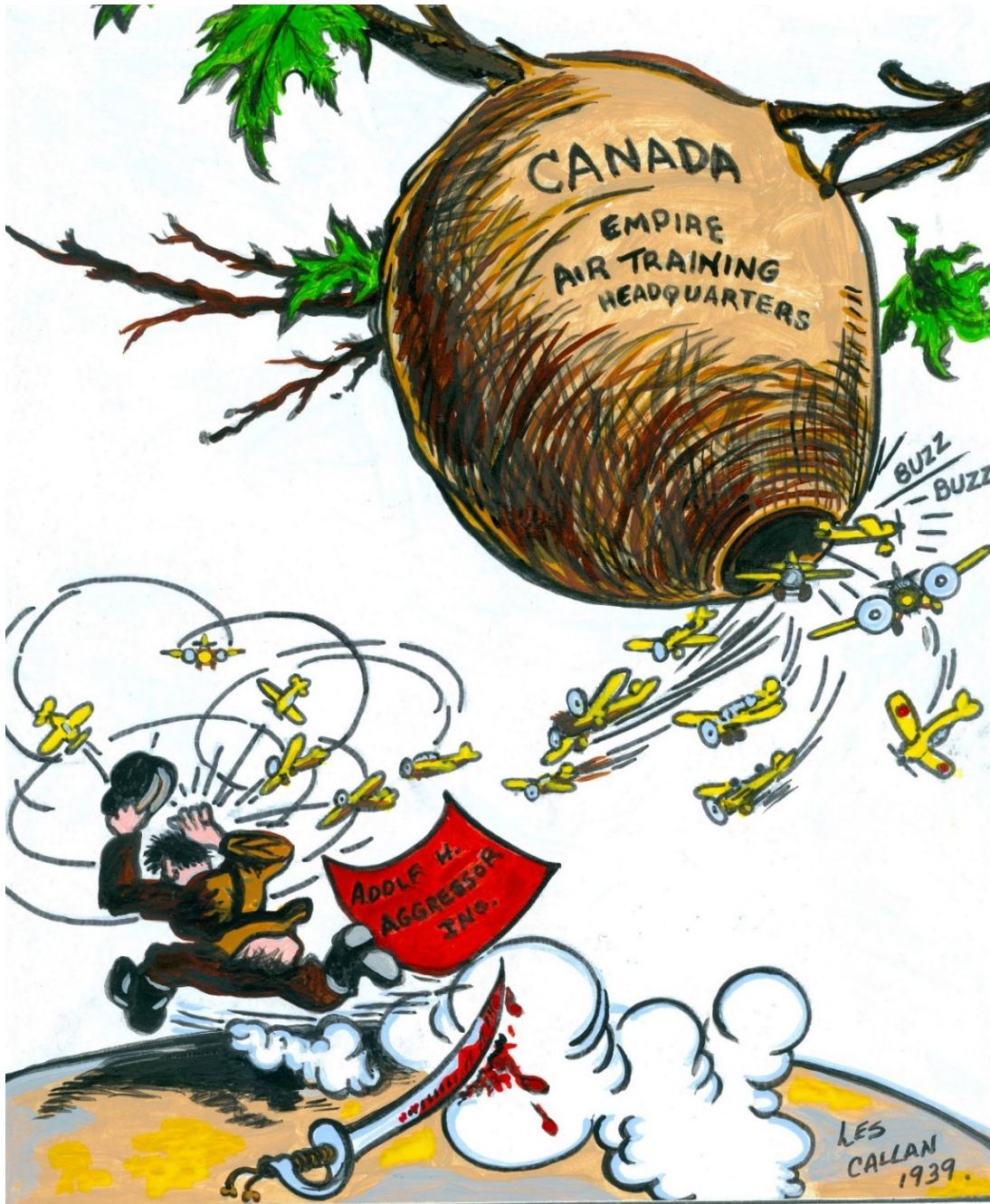
The large area surrounding present day Calgary, Alberta, was first inhabited by a prehistoric Paleo-Indian culture of peoples who have been radiocarbon dated [human remains] to 10,200 years ago. At the end of the last glacial period, Cordilleran Ice Sheet, 11,650 years ago, this culture began to manufacture distinctive bone and ivory tools with distinctive "Clovis points" and they became known as the Clovis culture. The Clovis people are considered [DNA testing] to be the first ancestors of today's indigenous cultures in most of North America, reaching to Mexico and South America. The First Nations of present day Alberta came under control of the Blackfoot Confederacy and this included the Blood, Peigan, Blackfoot and Tsuu T'ina indigenous peoples. The first recorded European appeared in 1787, when cartographer David Thompson made contact with the First Nations people and the early white settlers began to arrive in 1873. The North-West Mounted Police arrived in 1875, and the following year Fort Calgary was constructed, named after clear running water on the isle of Mull, Scotland. The Native Thunderbird symbol is a mythical creature still seen as a most powerful spirit which can change into a human form and was believed to be the dominating force of all natural activity, power, protection, and strength. It is clear some forgotten RAF historian carefully did his research long before the RAF selected their British Thunderbird insignia, possibly at RAF Station West Kirby, England, in July 1941.

In the early hours of 17 December 1939, the British and Canadian government representatives signed a document titled "Agreement Relating to the Training of Pilots and Aircraft Crews in Canada and their Subsequent Service." During the many hours of meetings [which began 5 November 1939] leading up to the signing the BCATP, the United Kingdom government had intimated the possible need to move complete RAF training schools to Canada, but nothing else was discussed. In the spring of 1940, the World War took a turn for



the worse and the British faced possible invasion from Nazi Germany. On 4 July 1940, the British High Commissioner in Ottawa ask Canadian Air Minister Hon. Charles Gavin Power if the RAF could move four complete flying training schools to Canada. The British High Commissioner was informed by Hon. Mr. Power the U.K. could move four schools to Canada, then added, "If the British wished to transfer more schools to Canada, room for them would be found, but it must be understood the full cost of these schools must be borne by the United Kingdom." On receiving this answer, the RAF revised their original request [four] to eight service flying training schools, two air observer schools, one bombing and gunnery school, one air navigational school, one general reconnaissance school and one torpedo bombing school.

The original estimated Canadian cash outlay for building "Part One" of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan came to 441 million dollars and to this total was now added the Canadian cost for construction of fourteen new Royal Air Force special training schools, with an estimate cost of another \$50 million.



Canadian cartoonist editorial drawing by Les Callan which was published after the signing of the 17 December 1939 agreement. Repainted and coloured by author. This cartoon in fact projected BCATP history, as the yellow peril [training aircraft] were like wild hornets attacking Nazi leader Hitler. The British also called the plan "Empire Air Training."

New sites were now selected for hurried construction of the fourteen new RAF schools, [located in Western Canada] to avoid confusion with RCAF training schools under construction in the BCATP. The movement of complete RAF training schools began in earnest in October 1940, and five schools had arrived by the end of the year. In March 1941, the British government again revised the number of RAF schools they would like to move to Canada, nine more service flying training schools [including Calgary No. 37 SFTS], fifteen elementary flying training schools, ten air observer schools and four operational training units. In 1941, Canada constructed and opened thirty-three RCAF training schools in the BCATP, plus constructed and opened seventeen special RAF schools which were operated by the RAF. The RAF schools in Canada were subject to RCAF administration and operational control, while the British had access to Canadian supply, medical, maintenance, and the same services as the RCAF. There was really very little difference between the British RAF special schools and the RCAF schools under construction for the BCATP. The one major division became the British preservation of their national identity in the RAF schools, which were commanded by their own officers and trained in the same custom and traditions as that in the United Kingdom. For administration control the numbering of RCAF training schools was reserved from #1 to #30 and the RAF training schools were allotted numbers #31 and above. During the war the RAF would operate twenty-eight British schools in Canada, twenty-six were for aircrew training, one Radio Direction Finding School #31 RDF at Clinton, Ontario, and the main RAF reception centre, #31 Personnel Depot at Moncton, New Brunswick. By 1942, it had become clear that air training in Canada [BCATP] had far outgrown the size, cost, and organization of the original plan due mostly to the arrival of twenty-eight new RAF special schools. On 5 June 1942, the British partners in the BCATP set down with Canada and deliberated a new agreement, [Part Two] and the plan was extended until 31 March 1945. Canada would bear half of the total cost of the new extended training program, which was estimated at 747.5 million dollars, for a total Canadian cash outlay of 1,188.5 billion. The British contributed 145 million in cash, and 360 million in aircraft and supplies, for a total of 466 million since the beginning of the plan.

The true financial cost of the BCATP will never be known due to the many claims and counter-claims between the various partners. In 1946, a group of accountants produced a balance sheet which seemed to satisfy all the parties involved and that is the best rounded number we have for historians. Canada contributed seventy-two per cent of the air training cost [\$1,617,955,108.79]. The United Kingdom paid \$54,206,318.22 in cash, and provided equipment to the value of \$162,260,787.89 or ten per cent of the overall cost. Australia payment was \$65,181,068.00 or three per cent and New Zealand \$48,025,393.00 or two per cent of the total cost.

By 30 June 1942, [end of Part One] Canada had spent \$212,280,010.00 on the construction of twenty-eight British RAF schools and purchase of additional aircraft for RAF training in Canada. On 13 October 1944, the Hon. C.G. Power released to the Canadian public the first reports, costs, and prospects of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, and these figures were staggering to the main stream Canadian taxpayer.



13 OCT. 1944.

# Air Training To Taper Off

## Hon. C. G. Power Reports on Results, Costs, Prospects

The Royal Canadian Air Force recently suspended recruiting; sharply cut back training plane manufacture; revealed that 4,200 basic trainees were being released to other forces.

To many it all added up to an early finish for the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. That this is not the whole story has been made clear by Air Minister Power, who recently outlined what is going on in the training plan, what has been accomplished, what it has cost.

### Flexibility Chief Aim

One of the most complex problems which had to be overcome in the efficient operation of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan was the provision of an adequate and uninterrupted flow of aircrew trainees. The success achieved has been possible only as the result of the most careful and imaginative planning. The Plan has a training sequence which from recruit to graduation stage requires roughly 12 months, and to this must be added the six or eight months post-graduate or advanced operation training. The period elapsed from beginning of initial training until the graduate is ready for action against the enemy is therefore from 18 to 20 months.

The reinforcement training stream was geared to advanced operational training units overseas which, in turn were synchronized with projected front line strategic commitments. These plans were made months, in fact years in advance and forecasts were subject to considerable fluctuation as a result of constantly changing operational needs. Flexibility of the plan was, therefore, essential and consequently adequate reserves had to be maintained in order to meet any unforeseen emergency.

### 24,000 New "In the Mill"

There are at present in the various stages of training, from Initial Training Schools to the final stage of training in Canada, something in the neighborhood of 14,000 pupils of the RCAF, be-

sides about 10,000 RAF and others. There are overseas several thousands others, who having completed training, such as A.F.U.'s, O.T.U.'s and Conversion Training Units, as well as awaiting posting to operational units, whether Fighter, Coastal, Bomber or other categories. The number of these men in Canada and overseas, trained or in

have expected to be well into aircrew training by this time have been kept back.

At this time there is little likelihood that a considerable number of these men now awaiting training will ever be required. It is therefore considered advisable to release them. They have all volunteered for active service in any theatre

## How BCAPT's \$2.2 Billions Costs Are Shared

(Millions of dollars—source RCAF)

	No. 1 plan (to July 1, 1942)	No. 2 plan (to Mar. 31, 1945)	Combined
Gross cost .....	697	1,495.0	2,192.0
Less: Canada's cash outlay .....	441	747.5	1,188.5
Australia's cash contribution .....	34	.....	.....
N. Z.'s cash contribution .....	28	.....	207.0
U. K.'s cash contribution .....	..	145.0	.....
U. K.'s contribution in kind .....	106	360.0	466.0
Total payments .....	609	1,252.5	1,861.5
Net amount due from U. K. ....	88	242.5	330.5
Add: Canada's outlay on Royal Air Force special schools....			104.0
Other miscellaneous debits from No. 1 plan period....			8.0
Total United Kingdom liability to Canada .....			442.5

training, will be ample to provide reinforcements and replacements to RCAF formations and to fill commitments for the German as well as the Japanese war.

### Shift Basic Trainees

In Canada, there are in the reserve of the BCATP some four thousand RCAF personnel who have gone through a certain basic military training, but have not embarked on any aircrew training properly so called. On the completion of this basic training they have been employed on other duties whilst awaiting their turn to be given aircrew training. Owing to the slowing down of the Plan inaugurated last February, some of these men who could reasonably

of war, and arrangements have been completed which will provide that those who transfer to the Army will receive all credits which they have earned by reason of their RCAF service, such as the \$1.50 per day rate of pay which Army personnel normally receive after six months service.

These releases and transfers follow closely on the pattern adopted by the United Kingdom and the United States, where large numbers of personnel designated for aircrew service in the Army Air Force have been placed at the disposal of other branches.

The Minister emphasized that the release of this large group does not in any way imply that there will be an immediate curtailment in the production of aircrew graduates. There are still many thousands of men actually in the various stages of aircrew training. This means that schools will continue to graduate fully trained aircrew personnel until well into 1945.

It is also probable that some re-mustering or transfer from one aircrew trade to another may be necessary, even for some of those who may be partially trained, in order to ensure that the best possible use is made of available trainees to meet

## Air Crew Graduated

	Total	—In RCAF—	
		No.	%
Pilots .....	43,268	23,115	54
Navigators and bombers .....	37,973	16,378	43
Wireless operator-air gunners .....	15,019	10,318	69
Gunners .....	12,230	10,445	86
Flight engineers and other .....	667	207	31
<b>Total aircrew .....</b>	<b>109,157</b>	<b>60,463</b>	<b>55</b>

POST

28 RAF.

FORGIVEN BY CANADA  
149 IN 1946  
WAR 7 MAY -  
EUROPEAN BILL #206  
1939 CANCELLING  
CANADA \$425 STILL  
AIR OWNING.  
FORCE  
POWER BOOKS  
CLOSED.



OCT 13 1944

POST 2

operational commitments overseas.

If the BCATP is obviously drawing to a close, it can look back on a most amazing record since the first trainees arrived in April, 1940.

The cumulative total of trainees from all sources entered on aircrew undergraduate training courses from the inception of the plan to August 25, 1944, was 152,925. This last figure does not include 5,296 RAF and Fleet Air Arm personnel graduated from RAF schools established in Canada prior to July 1, 1942, when these schools became part of the BCATP. These schools, however, were supervised and administered under the Plan so that the grand total of all entrants into training in Canada was 158,221.

Of the total of 152,925 trainees, there was graduated a total of 108,957 and 20,109 were unsuccessful in completing their difficult courses. Addition of the 5,296 graduated from the RAF transferred schools brings the total to 114,253. Of these, 60,503 were RCAF personnel, 34,361 RAF, 8,067 RAAF and 6,026 RNZAF.

**Present Strength 23,859**

There are 23,859 men at present in aircrew training. Of this total, 13,856 are RCAF personnel. It should be noted that personnel now commencing training remain in the Plan for an average of 12 months and after graduation they require a further period of post graduate and operational training and familiarization of from six to eight months. On the average a period of 18 to 20 months elapses between the time an airman commences aircrew training and the day he fires his first shot at the enemy. Statistics of present training production should therefore be considered in the light of the fact that the Plan is now operating in anticipation of what may be our requirements a year and a half hence.

**Third Plan May Come**

The financial history of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan has been divided into two phases. The original Air Training Plan, now designated as BCATP No. 1 operated under an agreement which was signed at Ottawa on December 17, 1939, and was intended to continue until March 31, 1943. On July 1, 1942, however, a new agreement came into effect covering a period of 33 months up to March 31, 1945. It is under the terms of this agreement that BCATP No. 2 now operates. On the expiration of the present agreement, if circumstances warrant such action, it is intended that a new one shall take effect as from April

1, 1945, covering what will be identified, no doubt, as BCATP No. 3.

How costs of Plan No. 1 and No. 2 have run is shown in the accompanying table, together with the amounts borne by each of the participating nations.

**Canada's Share 54%**

The 2½ year agreements—second one expires on March 31 next—will have meant the spending of an estimated \$2.19 billions. Of this sum the United Kingdom already has paid in cash or in kind \$611 millions and owes Canada \$330.5 millions. Britain thus will have contributed a total of \$941.5 millions or 43%. Australia and New Zealand together have paid \$62 millions cash, or 2.8%. Simple addition indicates a contribution from outside of \$1,003.5 millions or 45.8% and leaves the cost to Canada at \$1,185.5 millions or 54.2%, subject to a minor change in the U. K.-Canada balance when Britain meets an additional \$112 millions obligation for miscellaneous debits.

The accompanying table shows the way the chief participants in the BCATP have divided costs of the total program to March 31 next and of the first and second plans individually.

For practically all of the expenditures made in connection with air training activities under BCATP No. 1 and No. 2 Canada has advanced the money in the first instance. In other words in addition to meeting its own appropriate share of Training Plan costs the Canadian Government has played the role of creditor to its partners on a large scale. As already pointed out present indications are that the United Kingdom will emerge from BCATP No. 2 with a liability owing to Canada of some \$424 millions. Negotiations are now under way designed to provide to the United Kingdom Government the means of liquidating these accounts.

**Costs Declining**

As regards the period after March 31, 1945, at which date BCATP No. 2 expires, assuming that there will still be a need for carrying on Commonwealth training operations, a new agreement will be in effect. While details of this agreement are not yet completed, indications are that Canada will assume the full burden of financing the operations of the BCATP as it then exists and will claim reimbursement from the United Kingdom for all United Kingdom pupils trained here. While the amount of this reimbursement will be based on per capita charges for training given, the United Kingdom will probably be required to accept an over-all minimum obligation, which, as in the case of its present liability, may be discharged by contributions either in cash or in kind. Naturally it is not possible to assess at this time the period of operation of BCATP No. 3, as the future Air Training Plan will no doubt be designated, nor the costs which will result therefrom, but it is safe to say that the scope of training undertaken under BCATP No. 3 will be small compared with our previous activities.

149  
WAR  
EUROPEAN  
1939  
CANADA  
AIR  
FORCE  
POWER



Under the new BCATP agreement, [Part Two] which took effect on 1 July 1942, the RAF schools in Canada would continue in their present form of retaining British identity under the administration of the RCAF. The only change became the RAF and RCAF schools were now all merged with the Commonwealth Air Training Plan, and almost all RAF schools were enlarged to take in new trainees from Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Free French, Holland, Norway and Poland. These European Allies maintained national squadrons in the RAF and provided individual aircrew for British Squadrons. Now they would be trained in Canada beside the RAF in their operated schools, where a wide variety of English was being spoken in six foreign tongues. When I walk the small forgotten grave sites near No. 36 SFTS Penhold, No. 32 EFTS Bowden, or the largest grave site [43] at Calgary, Alberta, I can historically read the Allies names mixed with their British comrades as they fell from the sky and died during training.

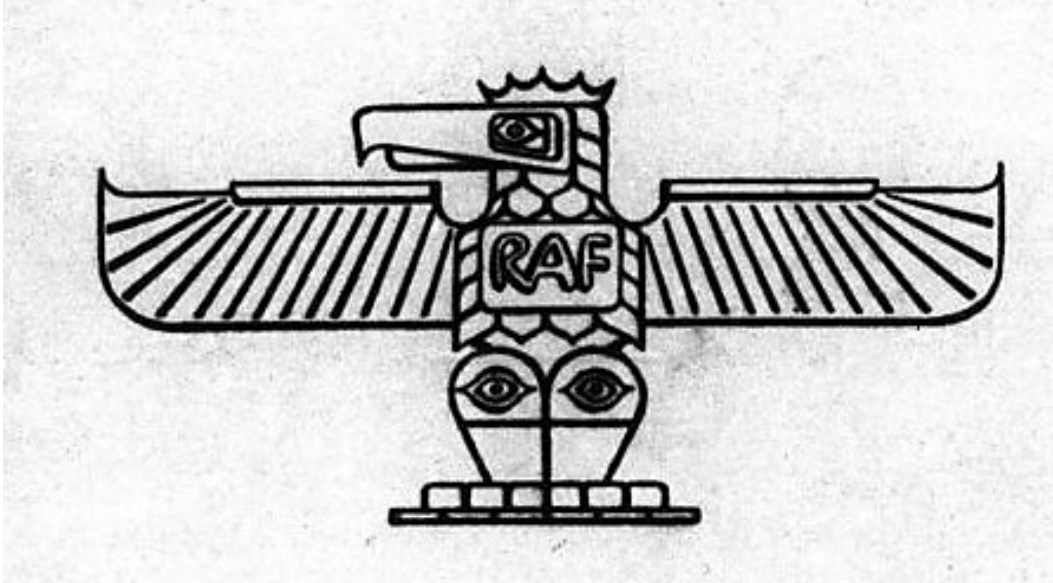


No. 36 SFTS Penhold, Alberta, was officially opened by Group Captain W.B. Farrington, DSO, on 23 August 1941. It was constructed by the Canadian government for the RAF with the purpose of training young British pilots to fly multi-engine Airspeed Oxford aircraft to “Wings” standard. These British pilot trainees had graduated from basic flying on light aircraft

at another RAF E.F.T.S. in Alberta, and now they would learn more advanced flying in the Airspeed Oxford twin-engine aircraft. Each course contained 35-55 students on average, and the course ran for twenty weeks. Today twenty casualties are buried in the Red Deer Cemetery and seventeen lost their lives training in the British Oxford aircraft. [above actual accident] Three were non-flying training deaths, 30 January 1942, Cpl. Stan Ryder, plowing snow RAF tractor tipped over killing driver. 24 September 1942, Flt. /Sgt. G.F. Jennings natural death in hospital. 23 July 1944, P/O D.J. Stewart, drown in swimming accident.

At the request of the British government, RAF schools in Canada were the first to close, and this began in January 1944. By November 1944, only two RAF schools remained with 3,800 RAF students in training. The Part Two agreement of the BCATP signed in June 1942 stated the total cost of the Plan would be divided equally between Canada and the United Kingdom. When the books were balanced in September 1945, the U.K. still owed Canada \$282,511,039.25 for Part two of the Plan. Counter-claims and dropping of figures reduced the final claim owed to Canada at \$425 million for Plans #1 and #2, including the cost of the twenty-eight British RAF schools. On 29 March 1946, the Canadian Minister of Finance introduced Bill No. 208 providing a loan to the British government in amount of \$1,250,000,000.00 for postwar Canadian food products. Included in this Bill was a special clause cancelling the \$425 million owed for the BCATP. The Bill passed on 7 May 1946, and the BCATP became history. As the Canadian Press reported – “In addition to meeting more than its own appropriate share of the Training Plan costs, the Canadian Government [taxpayer] had played the role of creditor to its British partners on a very large scale.”

Today modern Canadian and British aviation historians continue to state the total cost of the RAF schools moved to or formed in Canada during WWII were paid for in full by the United Kingdom. I believe that claim is false, and in fact the construction of twenty-eight RAF schools, special CN/CP train transportation, bombs, ammo, food, fuel, medical, ground equipment, and the purchase of extra aircraft for RAF training [\$104 million] was paid by the Canadian taxpayer, when the British \$425 million owed to Canada was cancelled in May 1946.



The second “unofficial” Royal Air Force Thunderbird insignia displayed and created at No. 37 SFTS [Calgary] beginning March 1942 and displayed until they closed 10 March 1944.

## **Calgary New Airport “McCall Field” and the Second World War**

**In 1935, Canadian voters defeated the Federal Conservatives and returned the Liberals of W.L Mackenzie King to power. This proved to be the most aviation minded government Canadians had ever seen and many historical changes took place. In 1936, the senior minister of Harbours and Railways, Hon. C.D. Howe, moved civil aviation from under the Department of Defence and placed it in a new formed Department of Transportation. Trans-Canada Airlines was then created by the Crown Corporation Canadian National Railway [CNR] with the first short flight in Lockheed 10 Electra CF-AZY launched Vancouver to Seattle on 1 September 1937. Next came construction of a Trans-Canada Airway, with airports and emergency landing fields spread across Canada, and by 1938 a framework of 94 airfields were nearing completion. Thanks to the creation of Trans-Canada Airlines, a new [fourth] civil airport for Calgary, Alberta, was developed on new farm land purchased for [\$31,126.00] located in the North-East of the city, with the first ever designed municipal constructed civilian airport TCA terminal and hangar. The new airport opened [two weeks after Canada declared war on Germany] 25 September 1939, titled McCall Field, for WWI ace and Vernon, B.C. born [Calgary raised] Frederick Robert Gordon “Freddy” McCall. [4 December 1896 - 22 January 1949]**





**Photo of Freddie McCall taken after 29 May 1918, when he became an “Ace” with five confirmed kills. His full record of 35 confirmed kills and history can be found on many websites including the Hangar Flight Museum of Calgary. His replica WWII aircraft can also be found in the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta. Image above taken from December 1932 Flying Aces pulp magazine containing the history of Capt. Fred McCall. Today this famous original TCA terminal and historical WWII hangar, named for Capt. McCall still stands, sadly, forgotten by the passage of time and proper historical background education. The first TCA passenger service in Canada began on 1 April 1939, while the Calgary municipal “McCall Field” terminal was still under construction.**

# Famous SKY FIGHTERS

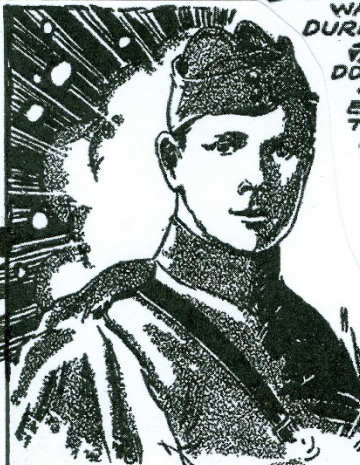


**COL. WILLIAM BISHOP** CANADA'S MOST NOTED AIRMAN, WAS CALLED "THE STUNT MERCHANT" DURING THE WORLD WAR YEARS.

THIS DARING SKY FIGHTER SHOT DOWN 72 PLANES. MOST OF HIS COMBATS WERE LONE-HAND ENCOUNTERS. ONCE HE DOWNED THREE BOCHE PLANES BEFORE BREAKFAST, ATTACKING THEM DIRECTLY OVER THEIR DROME, BISHOP WAS AWARDED THE VICTORIA CROSS.



**CAPT. F.R. McCALL** BECAME AN ACE AND SCORED SIX VICTORIES IN LESS THAN THREE MONTHS FLYING A 1916 TWO SEATER IN 1918.



**LT. ALAN McLEOD,** A CANADIAN, WAS THE FIRST AND ONLY BOMBER PILOT TO WIN THE V. C. DURING THE WAR.



## CAPTAIN ROY BROWN,

THE CANADIAN SKY FIGHTER OF SQUADRON 209, R.A.F.,



# Maclean's

5¢  
a copy

C. A. Simonson  
Box 78  
Airdrie, Alberta T0M 0A0

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**CANADA'S  
NATIONAL  
MAGAZINE**

TORONTO  
**MARCH 1**  
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In This Issue:

**BACKSTAGE  
AT OTTAWA**

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**Beverly Baxter's  
LONDON LETTER**

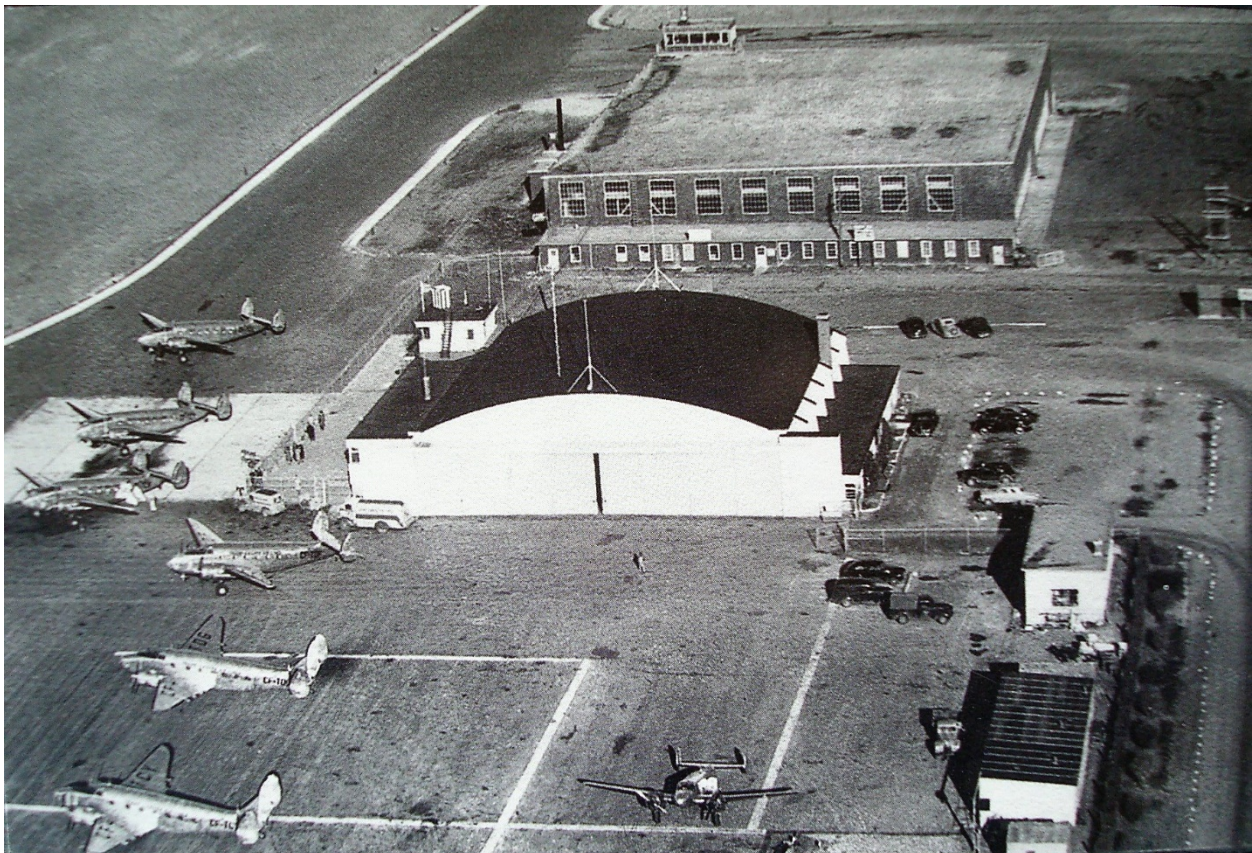
●  
Fiction by  
**Bruce Hutchison  
Albert Richard Wetjen  
Douglas Welch**

—  
Liner of the skies—Trans-Canada Airways plane. Natural color photograph taken for Maclean's by Scott Malcolm.



The cover of Maclean's 1 March 1940, featured a color photo of Lockheed Electra, believed to be CF-BAF, the TCA pilots are not identified. Most likely taken at Winnipeg, where this Lockheed 10 Electra was used as a trainer in 1938.

With the Canadian declaration of war on 10 September 1939, the Federal Department of Transport took over complete control of Calgary McCall Field, [Municipal Airport] which was now selected as a potential BCATP training base site. The Dept. of Transport completed surveys, blueprints, and cost estimates, which were submitted to the RCAF Aerodrome Development Committee for rejection or approval. The final construction site approval came from the Minister of National Defence, [sworn in 23 May 1940] Hon. Charles Gavin Power in Ottawa. Calgary's McCall Field was first selected to train British fighter pilots for the Royal Air Force, becoming No. 35 Service Flying Training School, with construction beginning in late November 1940. Construction continued during the bitter cold winter months when temperatures dropped to 35 below F and gravel had to be steam heated before it could be mixed for cement.





This image [postcard] was taken in spring of 1941, possibly around April or May, giving a clear air-shot of the original TCA 1938 wood constructed “McCall Field” terminal and hangar, which officially opened 25 September 1939. Seven Trans-Canada Airlines Loadstar aircraft can be seen on the ramp, possible delayed in Calgary due to bad weather over the Rocky Mountains. [TCA only had twelve model 14-08 on strength] The three bottom aircraft are CF-TCY, CF-TDG, and CF-TDF, with CF-TCY surviving today and being restored by the Canadian Museum of Flight in B.C., a rare Canadian historical civil aircraft. Calgary became a major cross-over for flights east-west and north-south.





From author collection of Maclean's magazine dated 1 June 1942, showing the first TCA air routes across Canada. This Lockheed construction Lodestar 18-10 [#18-2061] CF-TCV was delivered to TCA on 7 January 1941.

The postcard air image also captures the future Calgary RAF hangar #1 [under construction] with British control tower, first used by the RCAF. On 24 January 1941, RCAF Flying Squadron from No. 2 Wireless School [SAIT campus today] Calgary, moved from RCAF No. 3 SFTS [Currie Barracks] to TCA operations hangar for training. They would train at the municipal airport for just four months, then move back to Currie Barracks, today Mount Royal University of Calgary.



This important image was found and supplied by Karly Sawatzky, BA, SAIT Archives of Calgary.

These eight D.H. 82C-4 Menasco Moth II wireless trainer aircraft were the first WWII trainers to occupy the future RAF hangars, they arrived by rail at Calgary on 18 March 1941. The first Menasco Moth assembled was RCAF serial 4843, [first aircraft in line] and the first to fly at Calgary, [officially recorded by RCAF as Municipal Airport No. 35 SFTS] on 20 March 1941. Menasco T-Moth serial numbers were in production order - 4834-35-36-37-38-40-41 and 42. Eight more arrived on 20 March 1941, serial 4833-4839,4843-4844-4845-4846-4847 and 4848. No. 2 Wireless School Flying Squadron [formed 6 January 1941] became the first WWII Wireless Air Gunners Course 9X [46 trainees] to train and use Calgary Municipal TCA control tower at Calgary. The airport was now under control of the Dept. of Transport, and the British

control tower was not in operational order. The Wireless course began on 28 April 1941, with thirty-five aircraft on charge, 9 RCAF Norseman, 1 old Fairchild, 1 Moth 82C and 24 Moth 82C-4 trainers. These trainer aircraft also became the first to use the new constructed Relief Flying Field located at Airdrie, Alberta, however they would never graduate at No. 35 SFTS. On 12 May 1941, No. 2 Wireless School was ordered back to RCAF No. 3 SFTS at Currie Barracks, as the British government had requested the movement of many more Royal Air Force training schools to Western Canada, and training space for twelve schools had to be found in a short period of time. These future RAF training schools were still under construction as the British staff and trainees began to arrive by train, and they would have to double-bunk in H-huts which were still not fully constructed.

On 22 April 1941, RAF Senior Officers and other ranks of newly formed No. 31 SFTS boarded a train 09:30 hrs at Kirkham, England, arriving at Glasgow, Scotland at 13:00 hrs. They sailed on the S.S. "Royal Ulsterman" on 23 April and arrived at Iceland four days later. They departed Iceland on 29 April in the H.S. California and arrived Halifax, Nova Scotia, 6 May 1941. Next came a train ride to No. 31 Personnel Depot at Moncton, New Brunswick, where they were prepared for the train trip west, which took four days and three nights.

A special CPR train transported the entire staff to Calgary arriving on 10 May, where they were trucked from the train station to the Calgary Municipal airport and No. 35 SFTS, their temporary training school still under construction. Two days later RCAF No. 2 Wireless School Flying Squadron were ordered back to Currie Barracks, [their original base] to complete their wireless flight training, and make room for the arriving British. RAF No. 31 EFTS were never assigned aircraft for training and one RCAF D.H. Menasco Tiger-Moth Mk. II was loaned to them from No. 2 Wireless School on 15 May 1941. This allowed the pilot students to receive aircraft ground instruction until their new trainers were delivered from Toronto by rail. Their first Canadian built De Havilland Tiger-Moth arrived at Calgary, flown from Regina, Saskatchewan, 30 May, and twenty-one more would arrive by CPR rail from de Havilland in Toronto, by the end of June. The first RAF flying instruction at Calgary, Alberta, began on 18

June when Course #22 commenced their first elementary flying school training, containing 93 student pilots, with completion of course slated for 20 August 1941. The RAF staff of No. 31 EFTS at Calgary were 29 Officers, 24 NCO's and 425 airmen, including the first 93 student pilots. In June the course students flew an average of seven and one half hours, with six pupils flying solo, and six more ready to fly solo. In the month of July 1941, No. 31 EFTS student pilots had twelve Tiger Moth aircraft accidents, fortunately with no loss of life.

1. Date	2. Type of Aircraft.	3. Cause.	4. Location.	5. Damage.	6. Injury or otherwise Personnel.
July 1st.	Tiger Moth Gypsy Major.	(1) Failure of bolts attaching stay tubes brackets to longeron. (2) Undercarriage collapsed.	Calgary Airport.	Undercarriage collapsed after normal landing.	Nil.
July 1st.	do.	Do. do.	do.	Mass balance undercarriage.	Nil.
July 3rd.	do.	Do. do.	do.	Port aileron undercarriage.	Nil.
July 5th.	do.	(1) Aircraft swung while taking off. (2) Failure of bolts attaching the stay tube brackets to longerons.	do.	Port main and undercarriage.	Nil.
July 7th.	do.	(1) Pupil failed to check swing. (2) Failure of bolts attaching stay tube brackets to longeron.	do.	Wing tips and undercarriage.	Nil.
July 7th.	do.	(1) Heavy landing out of wind. (2) Inexperience.	do.	Port wings, tail unit, engine cowling.	Nil.
July 15th.	do.	(1) Undershooting. (2) Inexperience.	do.	Stbd main planes. Centre section, rudder fin, petrol tank.	Nil.
July 24th.	do.	(1) Switches left on contacts with throttle open. (2) Failure to check switches and throttle.	do.	Bottom of engine cowling.	Nil.
July 23rd.	do.	(1) Heavy landing. (2) Inexperience.	do.	Petrol tank u/s Damage to rudder, top main plane spar and rudder.	Nil.
July 26th.	do.	(1) Careless taxiing.	do.	Spar lower main plane.	Nil.
July 28th.	do.	(1) Failure of bolts attaching stay tube brackets to longerons. (2) Undercarriage collapsed.	do.	Lower port main plane, undercarriage.	Nil.
July 29th.	Tiger Moth Gypsy Major.	(1) Failure of bolts attaching stay tube brackets to longerons.	Calgary Airport.	Port aileron, undercarriage.	Nil.

RAF 31 EFTS *Handwritten signature*

The last collision between two Tiger-Moth trainers at Calgary occurred on 11 October 1941, and training was suspended the next day. The advance RAF party of S/L P. Jackson, P/O J.S. Robinson, and 84 other ranks began the move to their new base at De Winton, Alberta, on 13 October, and the main body of the school arrived three days later. Their new school was still under construction, no telephones, poor sanitation, temporary heating, but they had running 'cold' water. The British called this 'blue pencil' showers. Not one building at De Winton, Alberta, was 100% completed, including hangars, requiring all aircraft to were flown back and

forth to Calgary for normal maintenance and major overhauls. Base construction would not be completed until 13 July 1942.



The historic 1938 constructed first Calgary TCA terminal and hangar remains in use today, while her WWII past is largely unknown to the majority of citizens in Calgary. Author in hangar door under the impact point of the world famous WWII RAF Mosquito "F for Freddie." Believe it or not, the history of the tragic crash of "Freddie" is not even displayed in the Hangar Flight Museum, and the City of Calgary have never designated this historic aviation hangar as a protected heritage building, which is [2018] privately owned and operated by Condor Aircraft. In March 1941, the British once again revised the number of RAF schools they wished to move to Canada, adding nine more service flying training schools, fifteen elementary flying training schools, ten air observer schools and four operational training schools. This caused many additional construction problems for the Canadian government, RCAF reorganization, doubling the size of some schools under construction, and turning relief landing fields into full size training schools. In June 1941, the RAF Officers and ranks of No. 35 SFTS were reassigned from their intended base at Calgary to North Battleford, Saskatchewan, where they arrived on 21 July 1941.



**Their original designated RAF school under construction at Calgary, Alberta, now remained an un-numbered temporary training school of RAF No. 31 EFTS until 4 September 1941, then it was officially renumbered RAF No. 37 SFTS.**



**When this image was taken, 4 April 1941, [5,500 feet] the base was still designated as No. 35 S.F.T.S and the aircraft seen in front of Hangar #1 are four Menasco Moth Mk. II from No. 2 Wireless School. The RAF organization of British Officers and other ranks of new formed No. 37 S.F.T.S. Calgary, Alberta, Canada, came together at RAF West Kirby, England, on 18 August 1941. RAF West Kirby was constructed beginning in October 1939, a large camp designed to train new RAF recruits in education of the wartime RAF, learning air force parade ground drill,**



later with rifles, and intense physical fitness training. West Kirby was a basic training unit with no airfield, where discipline was much stricter than a normal RAF training school, which earned the nickname 'square bashing camp.'

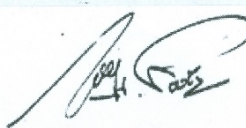
After eight weeks of basic training, the new recruit was posted for special trades training or directly to RAF operations. The new staff of No. 37 SFTS were recalled from leave on 2 September 1941, and it appears around 400 were new British airmen who would learn their air force trade at a far-off place called Calgary, Alberta, in Western Canada.

DAILY DIARY		
OF		
(UNIT OR FORMATION) <b>No 37 S.F.T.S.</b>		
DATE	<b>WEST KIRBY.</b>	SUMMARY OF EVENTS
18.8.41.		Group Captain W. H. POOLE (C. O.), Wing Commander W. B. EVERTON (Eng.), Squadron Leaders E. TURNBULL (Admin.) & E.B. BRIDGES (M.O.), Flight Lieutenants W. S. SMITH (Accts.) & P. YEOMAN (Admin.), and Pilot Officer R. B. HIRSCH (Admin.) reported on instructions received.
19.8.41.		Group Captain POOLE proceeded to Air Ministry, and Wing Cdr. EVERTON to the S.F.T.S. SHAWBURY ON DUTY.
20.8.41.		S/Ldr. E. TURNBULL proceeded to Air Ministry on duty.
24.8.41.		29 other officers reported and were sent on leave by P.D.C., West Kirby.
2.9.41.		All officers and other ranks, totalling 885 in all, recalled from leave and reported to P D.C. West Kirby.
3.9.41		885 officers and airmen of 37 S.F.T.S. left WEST KIRBY in special trains with other drafts-five train loads- at intervals commencing at 23.00 hours, and arriving at GOUROCK at stated intervals.
	<b>GOUROCK.</b>	
	4.9.41.	All ranks proceeded on board H.M.T. PASTEUR by tenders in p.m.
	5.9.41.	16.00 Ship sailed in p.m.
	6.9.41.	Ship returned to anchorage in the CLYDE.
	8.9.41.	18.00 H.M.T.PASTEUR sailed at 18.00 hrs. with 3 T.B.D.s.
	<b>AT SEA.</b>	
	8.9.41 to	Uneventful days at sea. "Boat Stations" held each morning at 10.00 hrs.
	15.9.41	
	<b>AT SEA OFF NOVA SCOTIA</b>	
	<b>HALIFAX.</b>	
15.9.41	11.30 hrs.	Sighted land.
"	13.30	Docked at HALIFAX, N S., and Group Captain POOLE left by air for OTTAWA.
"	14.30	Disembarkation commenced but owing to lack of organisation and information much unnecessary confusion took place.
16.9.41.	04.00	First special train with 10 officers and 403 other ranks left HALIFAX.
"	06.00	Second special train with 9 officers and 442 other ranks left HALIFAX. 16 officers (S.D.) and 4 Sgt. Pilots were left behind on attachment to R.A.F. Station DARTMOUTH, 45 other ranks also for assembly work.

Of all the new formed RAF training units in Canada the elementary flying training schools went through the most numerous changes in construction, location, and student size, due to their rapid expansion. This sudden acceleration of British student pilots also effected the service flying training schools in not only construction, or finding training aircraft but in finding proper accommodations, and Calgary became a perfect example.

When the first No. 37 SFTS RAF train arrived at Calgary on 20 September 1941, they found it occupied by No. 31 EFTS, and new arrival staff [458 all ranks] had no accommodation. The new arrivals had to double-up with the 478 staff members of No. 31 EFTS. The second train was halted at RAF No. 39 Swift Current, Saskatchewan, which was still under construction and would not open until 15 December 1941. The officers from the second train were taken to RAF No. 32 SFTS at Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, for accommodation. What a confusing greeting to Canada after five or six days at sea, and then four days on a train. The fact being RAF training staff and students were arriving in Canada faster than their training schools could be constructed by Canadians.

DATE	TIME	CALGARY.	SUMMARY OF EVENTS
20.9.41.	01.00 hrs.		First special train arrived CALGARY (having left Pilot Officers CONEY, DAVIES, & HOWSON, and Flying Officer STEWART behind at SWIFT CURRENT). Second special trainload were stopped at SWIFT CURRENT and all officers and other ranks accommodated at No 32 S.F.T.S. this being necessary on account of shortage of accommodation at CALGARY. All personnel on the train arriving at CALGARY proceeded to the station on the Edmonton Trail occupied by No 31 E.F.T.S. Group Captain POOLE rejoined the unit. Wing Commander E BATES reported for duty from AUSTRALIA, as C.F.I. Unit occupied in settling in, doubling up with No 31 E.F.T.S. and opening Orderly Room, Section offices etc.
21.9.41 21.9.41 to 30.9.41.			
30.9.41			Strength of unit - 37 officers, and 557 other ranks, i.e. 13 officers and 444 other ranks at CALGARY, 8 officers and 398 other ranks at SWIFT CURRENT and 16 officers and 45 other ranks at DARTMOUTH, N.S.



Group Captain, Commanding,  
No 37 S.F.T.S., Calgary.

On 30 September 1941, 13 officers and 444 other ranks moved into RAF No. 37 SFTS Calgary, Alberta, a very slow beginning, then came aircraft training changes. Calgary originally had been selected as a service flying training school, equipped with Harvard aircraft for RAF fighter pilot training. In 1940-41, Harvard aircraft in Canada were relatively plentiful and twin-engine Avro Anson and Airspeed Oxford bomber pilot trainers were scarce. The British Oxford twin-engine aircraft were being shipped from England and took weeks to deliver, thus more RAF pilots were being trained as fighter pilots and an imbalance was taking place. Fully trained RAF fighter pilots arriving back in United Kingdom had to be retrained as bomber pilots at a British operational training unit, and this wasted time and cost money.

On 22 September 1941, RAF Order #228 advised No. 37 SFTS Calgary, would train bomber pilots flying British built Airspeed Oxford trainers, being shipped across the sea from England. These aircraft would arrive three, four, or six a time depending on the ship size that transported them.



23  
COPY: 23  
FILE: 925-57-1 (D of O)  
925-26-1 (D of O)

ORGANIZATION ORDER NO. 228

DATE: 22-9-42.

RE-EQUIPMENT OF NOS. 37 & 39 S.F.T.S.'s - AIRCRAFT

INFORMATION

1. On the arrival of No. 37 Service Flying Training School in Canada, it was necessary, due to the progress of aerodrome and building construction, to locate this School on an aerodrome at which it was difficult to operate twin engine aircraft. Similarly, it was necessary to open No. 39 Service Flying Training School, a single engine school, in a location suitable for twin engine operation.

INTENTION

2. It is intended to exchange the types of aircraft with which Nos. 37 and 39 Service Flying Training Schools are equipped. In future No. 37 S.F.T.S. will be equipped with single engine types and No. 39 S.F.T.S. with twin engine types.

EXECUTION

Effective Date

3. The exchange of aircraft of No. 37 and 39 Service Flying Training Schools is to take place on September 25th, 1942.

Detail

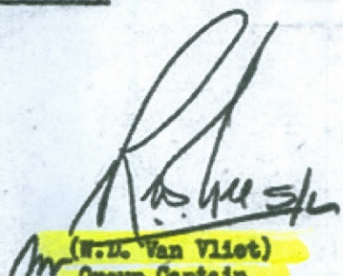
4. (a) The Air Officer Commanding, No. 4 Training Command is responsible for arranging the exchange of aircraft, engines, aircraft and engine spares on charge of the respective Schools.  
(b) A.M.P., in collaboration with A.M.T., will arrange with the Air Officer Commanding, No. 4 Training Command for the necessary exchange and any re-arrangement of instructional and maintenance personnel.

Equipment

5. A.M.S. is to ensure that sufficient aircraft and engine spares be supplied to these Units to permit a maximum number of serviceable aircraft on the effective date of the move.

INTERCOMMUNICATION

6. ACKNOWLEDGE.

  
(W.D. Van Vliet)  
Group Captain,  
for Chief of the Air Staff.

The prototype Oxford flew on 19 June 1937, with 8,586 manufactured by Airspeed, 4,441 at Portsmouth, 550 at Christchurch, 1,515 built by de Havilland at Hatfield, 1,356 by Percival at Luton, and 750 by Standard Motors at Coventry. The RCAF ordered twelve Mk. I and thirteen Mk. II trainers in 1938, the first serial 1501 [Mk. II] arrived at Trenton, Ontario, 8 May 1939. These first twenty-five aircraft were serial #1501 to #1525, serving at RCAF Camp Borden, Trenton, Picton, and Rockcliffe, Ontario.



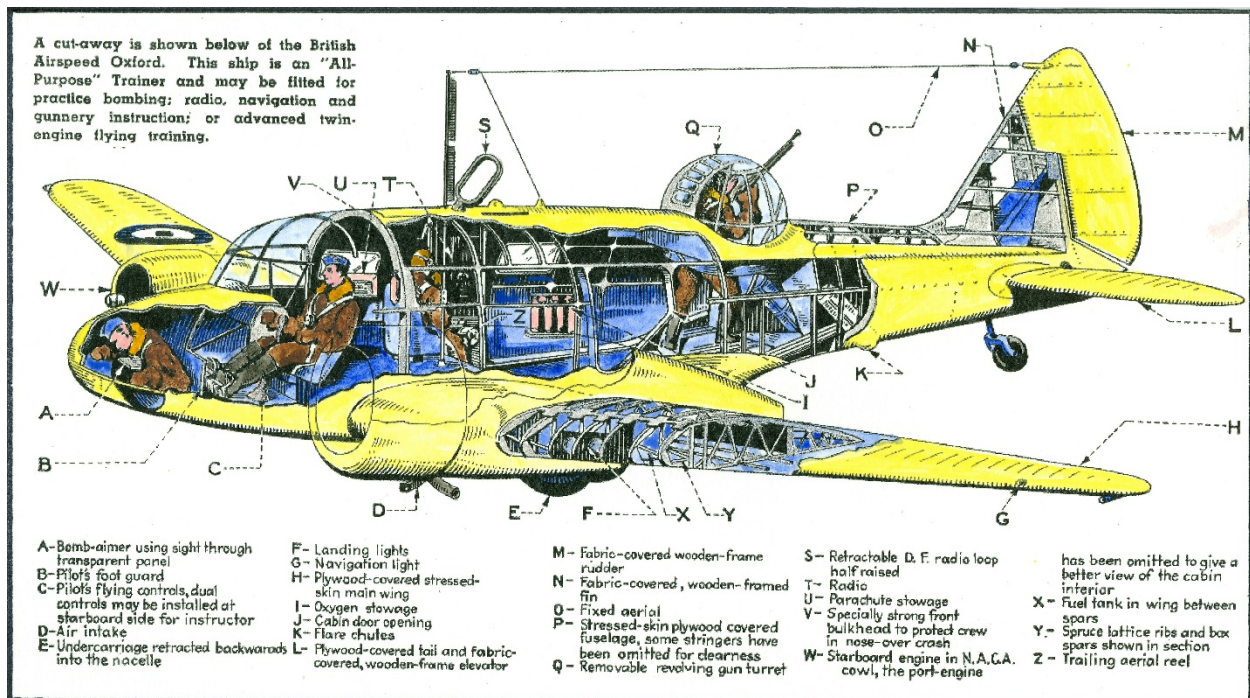
Oxford #1521 was taken on charge RCAF at Camp Borden 10 September 1939, had a Cat. C accident at RCAF Rockcliffe, Ontario, on 9 January 1942, off charge 19 February 1945.





The RCAF also purchased 188 Oxford AS46 Mk. V aircraft which trained in various parts of the BCATP in Canada. Oxford Mk. V, serial EB623 was taken on charge 19 March 1943, off charge by RCAF 21 August 1945. This aircraft never flew training and had only 10:10 hrs when sold by War Assets in 1946.

Due to RAF training school construction delays in Canada, combined with a shortage of RAF Bomber Pilots, No. 37 SFTS RAF Calgary will begin twin-engine Bomber pilot training with the British Airspeed Oxford "All Purpose" RAF trainer. The RAF Calgary airport was constructed at a high elevation of 3,606 ft. [1,099 metres] above sea level, which required a longer runway for take-off in twin engine aircraft and the Oxford was not suitable to operate in this high altitude of Western Canada.



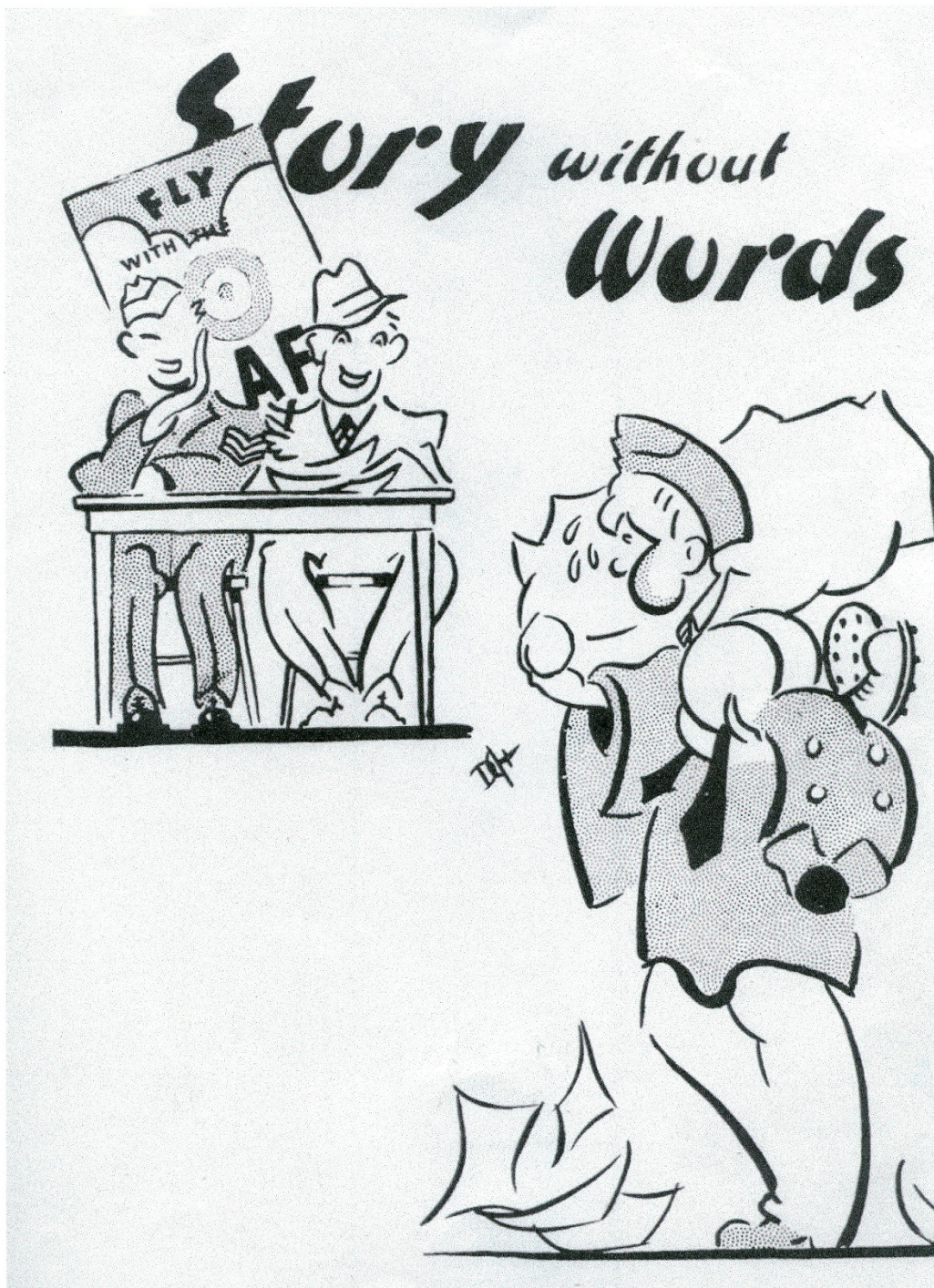
The most notable difference between twin-engine training schools in Canada became aircraft types. The RAF schools flew the Airspeed Oxford, 601 which were shipped from England, [March 1941 to November 1943] then arrived by rail at the assigned schools in Western Canada, while the RCAF schools flew the Avro Anson trainer. The higher the British Oxford trainer flew in Calgary the more power it lost due to thin air density, and the RAF knew this,



but they needed bomber pilots, so the decision was made to train bomber pilots at Calgary [for eleven months] until 25 September 1942. The first British Oxford AS276 arrived by rail on 7 August, followed by four T1184, V3426, V3434, and AS365 on 20 August 1941.

13.10.41. No 31 Course arrived at CALGARY, numbering 68 pilots under training.  
Flight Lieutenants R.G. MADDOX and M.T. MAW, Flying Officer J.E. BELLINGHAM and J.G. SYMONS and Pilot Officers F.E. FULLER and D.G. LAWRENCE arrived by air from Dartmouth, N.S. Flying Officers E.S. GILBERT and W.R. WARD reported for duty, F/O. GILBERT from Dartmouth and F/O WARD from SWIFT CURRENT.  
Flight Lieutenant F. MACNAUGHTAN, Flying Officer C.R. BARRETT and Pilot Officer A.G. HARMER and 68 other ranks arrived by special train from Eastern Canada, on posting from England.

The first 68 RAF EFTS pilot graduates arrived at Calgary on 13 October 41, and now these British lads came face to face with their first twin-engine Oxford and their new flying instructor. Keep in mind all British schools and many RAF course numbers in Canada began with number 31.



**JOIN THE R.A.F. - DECEMBER 1943, - BY F/SGT. D.C. HICKLING  
NO. 32 E.F.T.S. - BOWDEN, ALBERTA.**

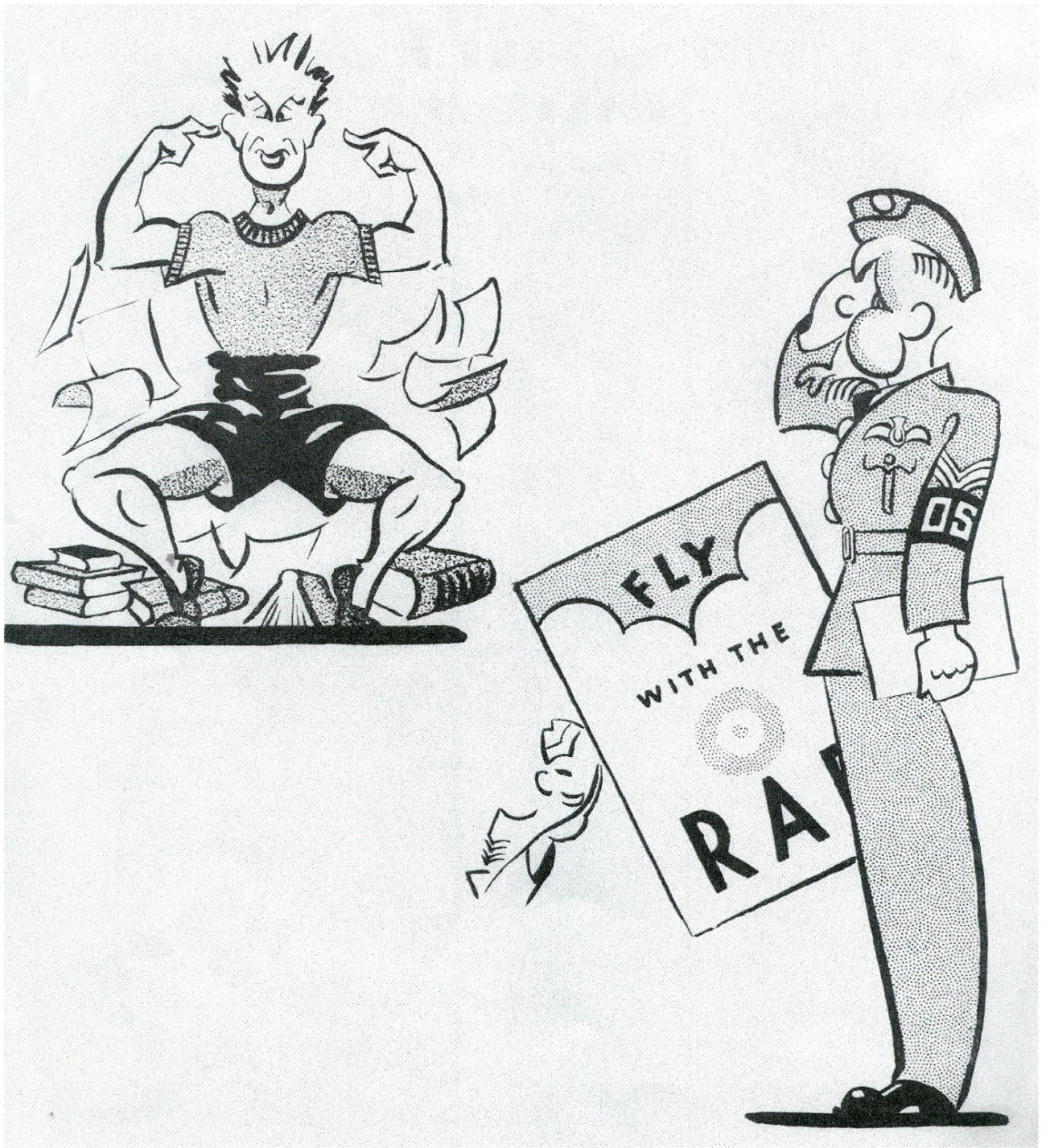


This four-page cartoon appeared in No. 32 EFTS magazine "Three Corners" but the humor would apply to any of the 26 RAF wartime training schools in Canada. Joining up and posted to RAF West Kirby, Cheshire [later Merseyside] England, "Fly with the RAF."



RAF parade ground drill, "square bashing" spit and polish, with strict discipline.





Intensive physical fitness training and weekends of book study, kitchen duty, or Orderly Sgt.





**Canadian RAF Flying Training washed-out, replaced by hours of cleaning duties.**

**On 21 October 1941, RAF ground school lectures and flying instruction began at Calgary, and the next day RAF No. 37 SFTS officially opened for Airspeed Oxford bomber pilot training,**



**Course #31. This first Course began with 68 students and graduated 53 Bomber Sgt./pilot flying badges, with 13 students granted officer commissions. The Wings parade flying badges were presented by Vice-Marshal G.N. Croil AFC, beginning 09:00 hrs 21 January 1942.**



**This is an actual RAF photo of a Wings Parade Badge presentation at the Drill Hall of No. 37 SFTS Calgary, Alberta. Today this 1940 constructed Drill Hall survives as the Hangar Flight Museum of Calgary. In 2017, the City of Calgary spent one-million dollars to renovate and**



make this historic old building fire proof, and you can now rent this very space for a birthday, wedding, funeral, or stag party evening, drinking and dancing around old airplanes. Sadly, you will not find one aircraft, photo, or fact sheet which tells the true history of this British WWII RAF pilot training site, or the 30 British lads who died here. One-thousand five hundred and thirty-five RAF trained pilots received their Wings in the Hangar Flight Museum of Calgary, and not one was RCAF or Canadian.



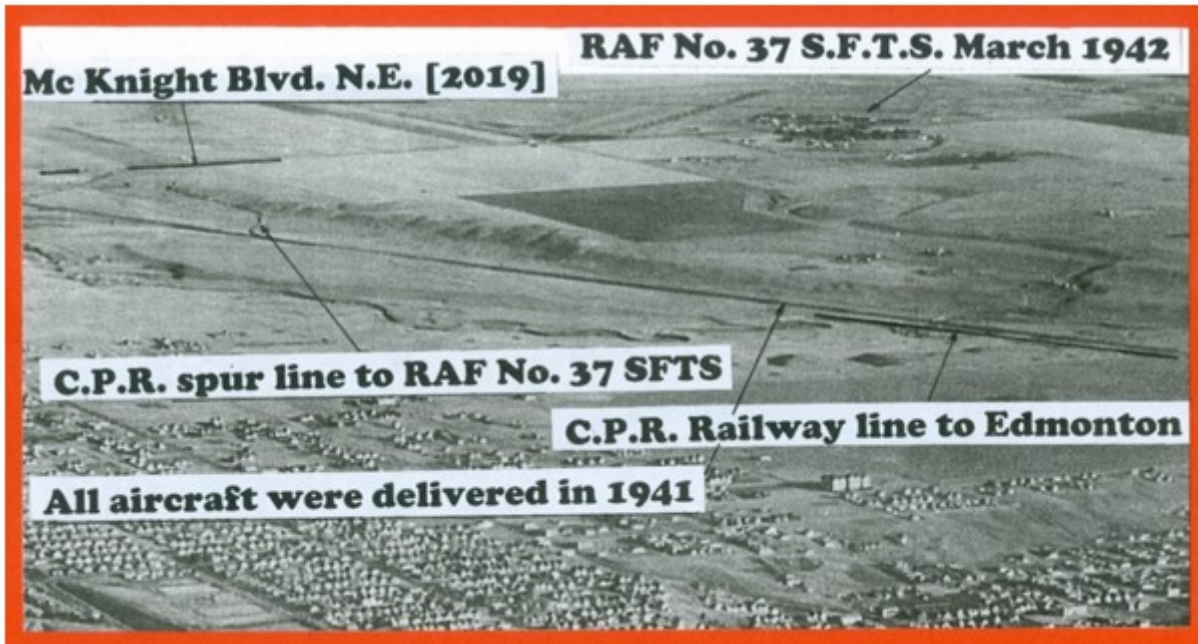


Image from RAF aircraft in March 1942, [looking North-East] showing downtown Calgary and the location of British No. 37 S.F.T.S. Forty-three Mk. I and forty-one Mk. II British Oxford aircraft were delivered directly to the base from Halifax, Nova Scotia, by C.P.R. Railway.

Airspeed Oxford Mk. I, serial number

Taken on strength

Taken off strength



T1180	2 Sept. 1941	17 Feb. 1945
T1184 [Mk. II]	20 Aug. 1941	17 May 1944
V3379	29 Aug. 1941	3 Oct. 1946
V3393	29 Aug. 1941	19 Feb. 1945
V3426	20 Aug. 1941	18 Aug. 1942
Cat "A" accident, 14 August 1943. Mid-air with AS666, LAC Nimmo and LAC Webb killed.		
V3434	20 Aug. 1941	19 Feb. 1945
V3439	12 Aug. 1941	19 Feb. 1945
V3463	19 Sept. 1941	11 Apr. 1944
V3479	3 Sept. 1941	28 Nov. 1942
Cat. "A" accident, 28 November 1942, No. 39 SFTS Swift current, Sask.		
X6539	26 Aug. 1941	23 Jan. 1945
X6544	4 Sept. 1941	19 Feb. 1945
X6549	4 Oct. 1941	18 May 1944
X6550	2 Sept. 1941	8 Sept. 1943
X6551	2 Sept. 1941	3 Oct. 1946
X6557	22 Oct. 1941	19 Feb. 1945



X6589	24 Sept. 1941	19 Feb. 1945
X6590	17 Sept. 1941	10 June 1943
X6593	25 Sept. 1941	11 May 1943
X6881	3 Nov. 1941	23 Jan. 1945
X6883	3 Nov. 1941	3 Oct. 1943
X6884 [Mk. II]	9 Oct. 1941	19 Feb. 1945
X6964 [Mk. II]	2 Feb. 1942	23 Jan. 1945
X6967 [Mk. II]	2 Feb. 1942	12 May 1943
X7143 [Mk. II]	24 Mar. 1942	3 Oct. 1945
X7156 [Mk. II]	14 May 1942	19 Feb. 1945
AP424 [Mk. II]	4 Mar. 1942	23 Jan. 1945
AR969 [Mk. II]	17 Sept. 1941	23 Jan. 1945
AS266 [Mk. II]	28 Aug. 1941	19 Feb. 1945
AS276 [Mk. II]	7 Aug. 1941	23 Jan. 1945
AS303 [Mk. II]	29 Aug. 1941	17 May 1944
AS321 [Mk. II]	18 Aug. 41	13 Apr. 1944
AS365 [Mk. II]	20 Aug. 1941	11 June 1943

Cat. "A" accident, 1<sup>st</sup> British bomber student pilot killed at Calgary 5 December 1941, LAC Ernest Thomson 1387318. Flying his first solo, the pilot attempted to land with only one wheel locked in down position, the aircraft stalled and crashed onto nose, killing LAC Thomson. Funeral on 8 December 41, attended by ten RAF officers, firing party, trumpeters and drummer.



1387318 L.A.C.  
ERNEST C. THOMSON  
R.A.F.  
5TH DEC. 1941



REST IN PEACE  
IN OUR THOUGHTS ALWAYS



**RAF crash photo Oxford AS10 Mk. II, serial AS365, 5 December 1941**

<b>AS373 [Mk. II]</b>	<b>17 Sept. 41</b>	<b>29 Oct. 1942</b>
<b>19 January 1942, forced landing Cat. "C" accident, extensive damage, LAC Crampton G.C.</b>		
<b>AS382 [Mk. II]</b>	<b>29 Aug. 1941</b>	<b>18 Aug. 1942</b>
<b>Cat. "A" accident, LAC E.C. Dunbavand #1218546 killed at Three Hills, Alberta. [1<sup>st</sup> Solo flight]</b>		
<b>Funeral 16 January 1942.</b>		





AS396 [Mk. II]	18 Sept. 1941	19 Feb. 1945
AS475	22 Oct. 1941	2 Oct. 1946
AS599	14 Nov. 1941	3 Oct. 1946
AS603	4 Sept. 1941	3 Oct. 1946
AS610	26 Aug. 1941	28 Nov. 1942
AS612	29 Aug. 1941	23 Jan. 1945
AS614	2 Sept. 1941	12 May 1943
Involved in collision 11 Dec. 1941, pilot 656537 LAC B. Williams.		
AS616	22 Oct. 1941	23 Jan. 1945
AS617	22 Oct. 1941	11 Nov. 1943
Cat. "A" accident at No. 29 SFTS Swift Current, Sask.		
AS619	2 Sept. 1941	28 28 Jan. 1945
AS625	18 Nov. 1941	27 Aug. 1943
Cat. "A" accident 8 July 1943, No. 39 SFTS Swift Current, Sask.		
AS629	25 Sept. 1941	19 Feb. 1945

AS666

17 Sept. 1941

12 Mar. 1943

Cat. "A" accident 14 Aug. 1942, LAC L.R. Nimmo 420814 mid-air.

(UNIT OR FORMATION) No. 37 Service Flying Training School.

14.8.42.

04.15. During night flying a minor taxiing accident occurred when LAC. SUNDERLAND, a Cadet on No. 56 Course, taxied one wheel just off the runway into a trench filled with soft earth left by the contractors' workmen. The aircraft tipped on its nose and the propellers were broken; Category "C".

20.00. Two cadets on No. 56 Course, LAC. NIMMO and LAC. WHEB, came into collision in mid air and crashed. They were both killed instantly. The accident occurred about four miles east of CONRIE and twelve miles east of the aerodrome. Both aircraft were totally wrecked. Night flying was cancelled owing to the aerodrome lighting system being u/s. The Chief Instructor returned from Medicine Hat by air during the evening. Maximum possible flying time - 24 hours.

AS691

12 Nov. 1941

23 Jan. 1945

AS699

10 Dec. 1941

23 Jan. 1945

AS701

3 Nov. 1941

19 Feb. 1945

AS790 [Mk. II]

4 Sept. 1941

22 Feb. 1943

Cat. "A" accident 12 December 1943, No. 39 SFTS, Swift Current, Sask.

AS798 [Mk. II]

17 Sept. 1941

23 Jan. 1945

AS802 [Mk. II]

4 Sept. 1941

19 Feb. 1945

AS834 [Mk. II]

18 Sept. 1942

25 May. 1945

AS837 [Mk. II]

18 Sept. 1941

23 Jan. 1945

AS838 [Mk. II]

18 Sept. 1941

3 Oct. 1946

AS848 [Mk. II]

18 Nov. 1941

17 Feb. 1945

AS853 [Mk. II]

17 Sept. 1941

23 Jan. 1945

AS859 [Mk. II]

9 Oct. 1941

12 Feb. 1945

AS860 [Mk. II]

9 Oct. 1941

23 Jan. 1945

AS862 [Mk. II]

22 Oct. 1941

22 Feb. 1945

AS927 [Mk. II]

8 Jan. 1942

19 Feb. 1945

AS931 [Mk. II]

6 Nov. 1941

19 Feb. 1945

AT442

3 Sept 1941

2 Oct. 1946

**Crashed in landing accident 17 April 1942, no injuries.**



**Cat. "C" accident 17 April 1942, Oxford AS10 Mk. I, serial AT442, repaired, continued training.**

<b>AT444</b>	<b>3 Sept. 1941</b>	<b>2 Oct. 1946</b>
<b>AT446</b>	<b>25 Sept. 1941</b>	<b>19 Feb. 1945</b>
<b>AT447</b>	<b>25 Sept 1941</b>	<b>14 Feb. 1945</b>
<b>AT452</b>	<b>25 Sept. 1941</b>	<b>20 May 1943</b>

**Night flying 8 January 1942, hit telephone wires. No injuries.**

<b>AT455</b>	<b>25 Sept. 1941</b>	<b>17 May 1944</b>
<b>AT457</b>	<b>3 Sept. 1941</b>	<b>12 Dec. 1942</b>

**Cat. "A" accident 10 Dec. 1942 LAC W.J. McCarthy 656512 killed 20:30 hrs second solo flight.**

**Crashed three miles north of aerodrome, pilot killed instantly. Funeral 13 Dec. 1941.**



DATE	TIME	
10.12.41.	20.30.	SUMMARY OF EVENTS

During the day 4½ hours for flying and at night, flying was cancelled after 4¼ hours owing to a fatal accident to 656512 LAC. McCARTHY, H.J. who was undergoing his second solo night flight in Oxford aircraft No. A.T.457. The machine crashed at 20.30 hours about 3 miles from the aerodrome and the pilot was killed instantly. An investigation into the cause of the accident is proceeding.



AT458

17 Sept. 1941

30 Oct. 1945

Cat. "A" accident 14 Sept. 1943, No. 39 SFTS Swift Current, Sask.

AT472	17 Sept. 1941	12 Mar. 1942
Cat. "A" accident 26 Aug. 1942		
BG303 [Mk. II]	12 Mar. 1942	23 Jan. 1945
BG328 [Mk. II]	12 Mar. 1942	13 Apr. 1944
BG354 [Mk. II]	4 Mar. 1942	1 Aug. 1943
Cat. "C" accident 1 June 1942.		
BG355 [Mk. II]	27 Feb. 1942	25 May 1945
BG363 [Mk. II]	27 Jan. 1942	19 Feb. 1945
BG503 [Mk. II]	14 May 1942	11 Apr. 1945
BM679[Mk. II]	4 Mar. 1942	8 Aug. 1944
BM701[Mk. II]	27 Jan. 1942	8 Sept. 1943
BM749[Mk. II]	22 Apr. 1942	19 Feb. 1945
BM752[Mk. II]	24 Mar. 1942	17 May 1942
BM807[Mk. II]	10 Apr. 1942	11 Apr. 1944
BM810[Mk. II]	10 Apr. 1942	28 Nov. 1942
Cat. "A" 14 August 1942, LAC W.J. Webb killed. Mid-air with Oxford AS666, LAC Nimmo.		

The British shipped 601 Airspeed Oxford AS. 10 and AS. 46 trainers to RCAF for training in Canada, five were lost at sea [ship torpedoed] serial - AR809, AR810, AR813, AR814, and AR819. Delivered Mk. I aircraft totalled 281, Mk. II, 318, and Mk. V, 2. Calgary received 43 Mk. I aircraft and 41 Mk. II aircraft which are listed above on date of arrival and date off charge by RCAF.

On 28 September 1942, seventy-eight of the above Airspeed Oxford aircraft were flown to RAF No. 39 SFTS at Swift Current, Saskatchewan, and one-hundred Harvard II trainers were flown to No. 37 SFTS in Calgary. Another five Oxford aircraft were transferred on 30 September, and only six remained on strength at Calgary.





Harvard Mk. II training began on 1 October 1942, [above] is AJ802 [#89] early October 42. Taken on charge by RCAF on 16 October 1941, flew with RAF until March 1944, transferred to RCAF. Crashed 29 September 1944, No. 2 Squadron, [Cat. C] off charge 9 March 1945.



**Burnsland Cemetery, Calgary, Alberta, was established in 1923, containing 22,061 burials of WWI and WWII Veterans from the City. The British Union Jack proudly flies over the hallowed ground which contains 43 WWII graves of RAF students and Flying Instructors who never left Calgary 1941-44. Thirty were RAF members killed while training at No. 37 SFTS, Calgary.**





The first British issue of "Calgary Wings" with original RAF [First Nations] Thunderbird on front cover, November 1941. This design changed to a new Thunderbird in March 1942.

# “CALGARY WINGS”

*A monthly magazine produced and published by personnel of No. 37 Service Flying Training School, Royal Air Force, Calgary, Alberta, Canada.*

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Officer In-charge:  
F-LIEUT. M. T. MAW

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NUMBER 1.

NOVEMBER, 1941.

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## INTRODUCING OURSELVES

**I**N entering the magazine market so soon after our arrival from Britain, we feel that some explanation is needed. The object of producing a monthly “Calgary Wings” is primarily to record in literary and art forms our lives in Calgary. That means that we must produce a magazine not only for our airmen, but also for our friends in Calgary. It is difficult to see how so many guests, permanent and temporary, can live, sleep, and have their being in so charming a city as this, without joining to the full in Calgary’s life—business, professional, educational, literary, musical, art, social, religious, and night.

**C**ALGARY has no weekly newspaper as we understand a weekly paper to be. At the moment we have not considered supplying that need. Both news and opinions are reflected accurately enough in the city’s two newspapers. We do not in any sense regard these two worthy contemporaries as our rivals (Heaven help them if we did!) but would rather regard ourselves as complimentary to them in holding the mirror up to Calgary’s culture.

This adventure of ours is and must remain solvent, or else die. We do not believe in the subsidizing of any vehicle of expression of so-called public opinion. If all goes well, this should be our worst effort.

**W**E shall say what we think and honest-minded citizens will not be offended. We shall always welcome suggestions, criticism, and contributions, although we shall not pay for the latter. We are serving the cause, and not ourselves. The whole of our organization is voluntary and the work is done secondarily to our efforts in the Empire Air Training plan. Any profits we may make will be firstly set aside to improve the quality and size of the magazine, and secondly to assist service charities.



# A MESSAGE TO CALGARY

FROM  
GROUP CAPTAIN W. H. POOLE, A.F.C., M.M.,  
Officer Commanding No. 37 S.F.T.S.

“WELCOME stranger” is the password given us by Calgarians. We are neither the last nor the first English, Scot, Irish, or Welshmen to invade the “brave new world” of Canada. This is an invasion. I make no bones about it. Influence infiltrates unconsciously and we are learning much from you and hope to contribute in return.

Thanks to your hospitality, public and private, we who have come so far from our families and familiar haunts are realizing the meaning of commonwealth, of a cousinship throughout the British Empire, strengthened by common danger and the personal acquaintance which has resulted.

We are indeed grateful to our hosts.

“Calgary Wings” will be a chronicle of our interests and activities here, intimate details of our present life staged in your beautiful city in the heart of Canada.

We do not forget that we came here (so unexpectedly for the majority) to carry out a job of work and our endeavour to do it well shall prove our appreciation for your welcome.

Here, taking advantage of your famous dry climate, undisturbed by the alarms of

air raids and the retarding influence of black-out, we plough steadily forward playing a small but important part in furthering and hastening the far-seeing Empire Air Training plan.

In this we must not and shall not slacken. To work and train to the highest pitch of efficiency is our only justification for being here in security, comfort, and plenty.

Many of you must have pondered over the seeming awkwardness of authorities in sending your sons to the east and abroad and in bringing our sons so far west as this. In thoughtful moments we dimly see a great conception in this movement of large numbers of men, a vision of resistless power of combined action—a sweeping flood of trained and trusted comrades—who knows?

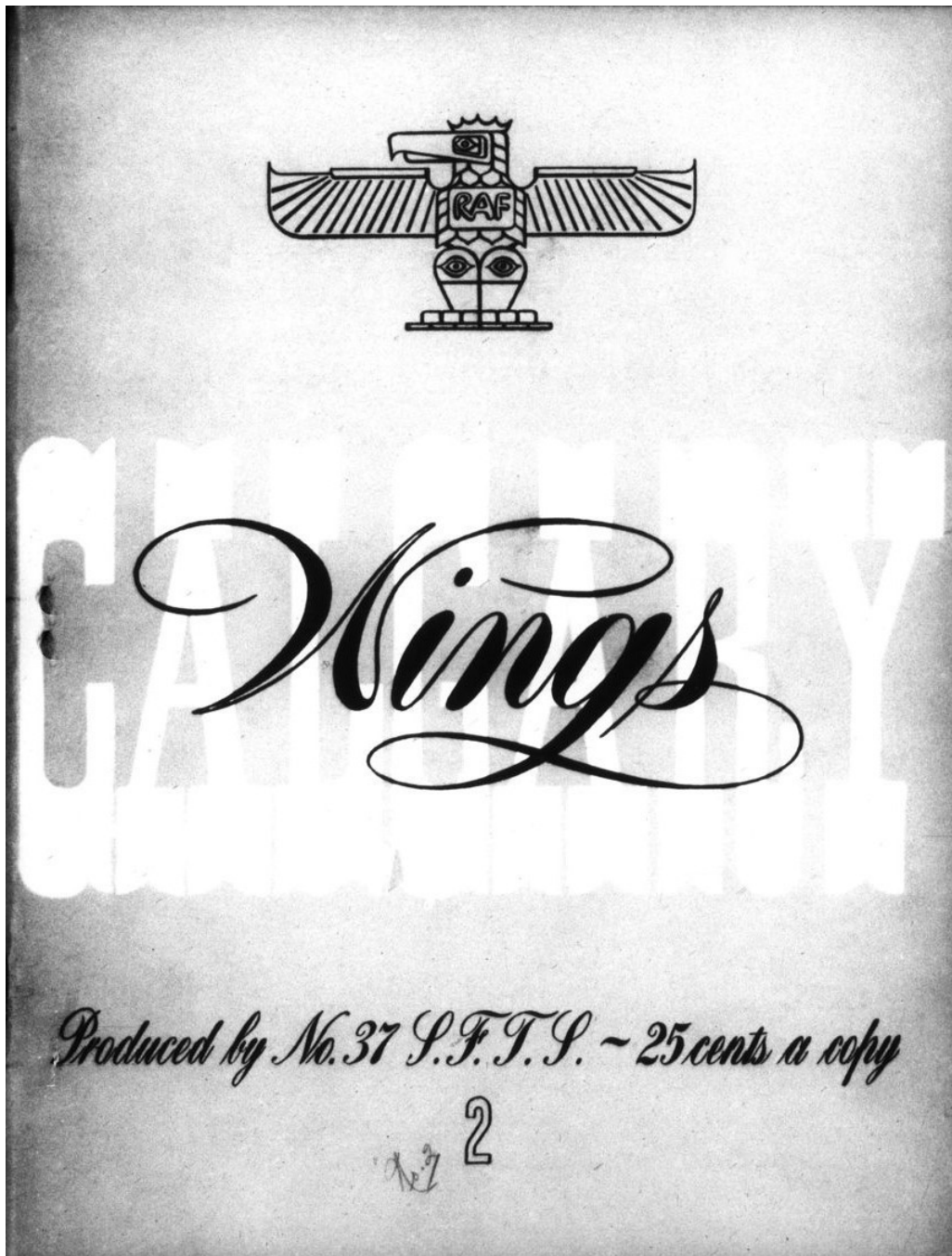
To Officers and men of No. 37 S.F.T.S.

BEST WISHES

A Cordial Welcome Awaits You At

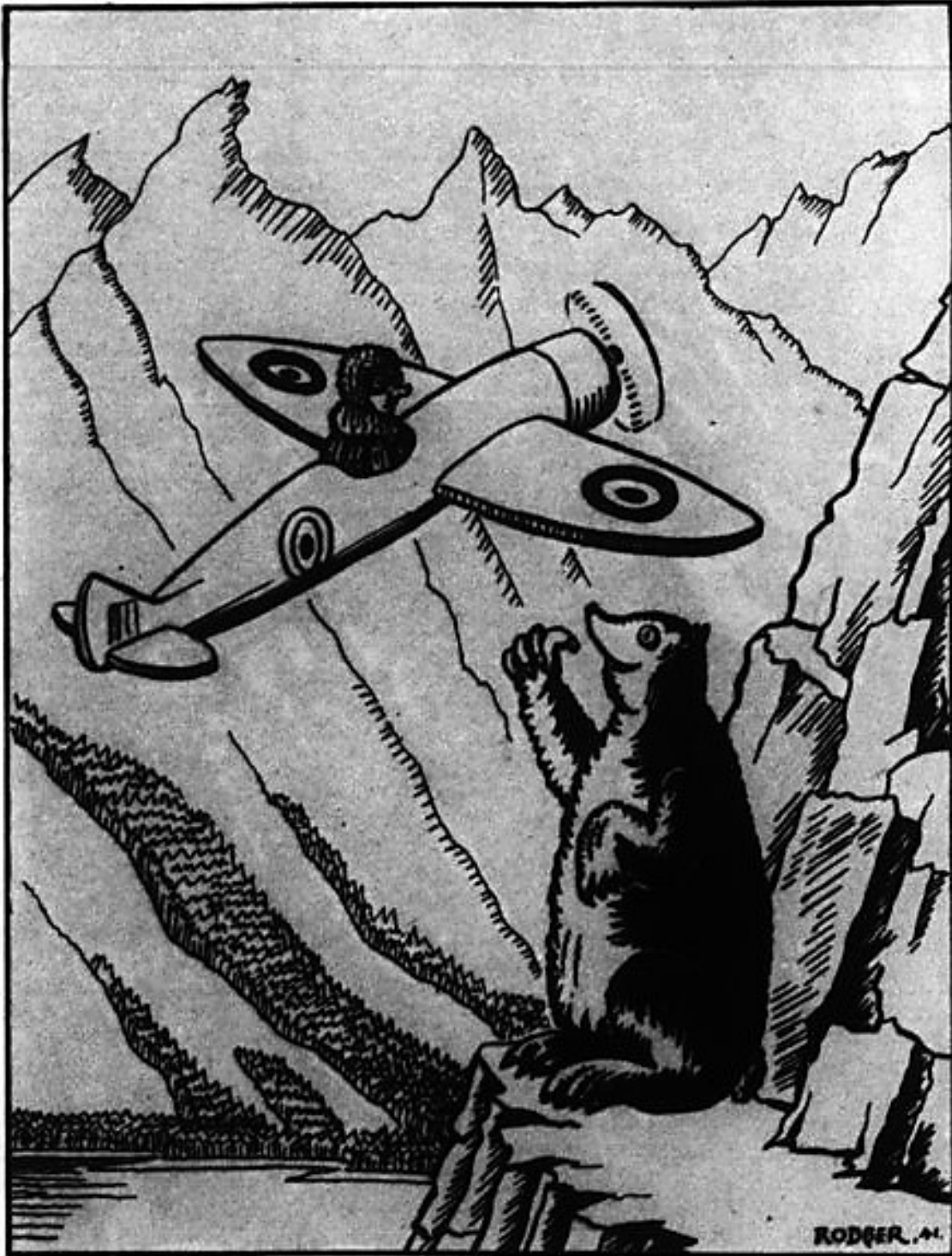
**PENLEY'S DANCING ACADEMY**

Let me take your Portrait. Lowest Rates, Highest Quality  
Films developed, printed, enlarged. Personal service at  
**CENTRAL PHOTO STUDIO**  
704 CENTRE ST., CALGARY R. A. HIRD (Prop.) PHONE M 5209



The second issue of Calgary Wings came out in March 1942, featuring a new designed [First Nations] Thunderbird which remained with the British school until closing 10 March 1944. It's possible this image was even painted on a few British flown aircraft.





The first RAF full page cartoon appeared in the March issue. The citizens of Banff would invite 100 RAF students for a weekend of entertainment every few months.



The British RAF feelings towards Wild West Calgary in March 1942.





**The first RAF Bomber pilot to solo at No. 37 SFTS Calgary, Sgt. Howard from Course No. 31, trained 21 October 1941 to 21 January 1942.**

The second RAF Oxford trained Bomber Pilot class of sixty to graduate at Calgary on 5 March 1942, became Course #33. Seventeen from original class were wastage [failed] posted back to No. 31 RAF Personnel Depot at Moncton, New Brunswick.



### **No. 33 COURSE**

**Back Row:** LACs A. G. Baker, G. P. Davies, B. H. Dennis, J. G. Crosswell, H. C. G. Creighton-Kelly, T. H. Claridge, A. O. Black, A. L. Chisholm, H. Clements, T. D. Carter, F. J. Bedford, E. Broadbent, D. H. Bentley.  
**3rd Row:** LACs R. N. Donaldson, R. Dalby, A. E. Davis, A. P. C. Dunlop, E. C. Dunbavand, R. O. Ellis, W. H. Etherton, G. F. Fletcher, K. Fillingham, A. F. Giles, G. W. C. Geall, G. R. Gunningham, J. Godfrey, W. H. Cook.  
**2nd Row:** LACs C. P. Newton, R. S. Nichol, J. A. R. MacDonald, H. J. Line, S. P. James, S. J. A. Jackson, R. Isaacs, H. J. Izatt, A. Hollingsworth, D. R. Hull, B. Hill, J. H. E. Howe, M. G. Gibbons, J. G. Howell, S. J. Vair-Turnbull.  
**Front Row:** LACs P. F. Powell, R. L. Parsons, C. J. Pike, E. A. Riseley, W. J. Rawlinson, C. Robinson, W. A. Robson, W. F. Spowage, C. K. Surgey, D. A. Sudul, R. Stoker, E. C. Stevens, F. S. Trotter, R. Walter, W. Walpole, A. L. Walters, J. A. Williamson, F. Williams.

**Back Row:** LACs E. J. Andrew, A. E. Allson, H. J. Austin, E. Bateson, D. A. Blackford, T. S. Buchan, W. H. Burnett, B. J. Buxton, J. Davidson, K. I. S. Drawe, & T. C. Foster.  
**3rd Row:** LACs J. W. Fox, K. Garvey, J. K. Grierson, P. S. Gumbrell, P. Hyden, N. L. Jefferson, S. Jennings, Cpl. A. G. Jones, LAC G. Kerr, Cpls. W. W. Kirk, J. B. Lamb, F. E. Lees, & Sgt. D. Lennox.  
**2nd Row:** LAC J. W. Lowe, Cpl H. O. Male, LACs A. S. Macpherson, H. B. Marshall, Cpl. M. N. Mitchell, LACs I. R. Macpherson, J. H. M. McNeil, D. B. McNeil-Watson, B. Moody, B. Morris, D. W. J. Odlam, L. F. Parraf, W. Pedlar, & J. T. Pooley.  
**Front Row:** LACs J. E. Pease, A. W. Pierce, J. T. Quirk, W. Richards, A. Settle, A. J. Steadman, R. W. Timberlake, J. G. Tinker, R. J. Turner, E. J. Waits, R. H. G. Webster, R. H. Welles, J. Wilson, & T. A. F. Wilson.

### **No. 35 COURSE**

Course #35 graduated 52 bomber pilots on 21 May 1942, with 13 wasted [failed]. The last bomber pilot graduation class became Course #57 on 24 September 1942. Sixty-eight pilots graduated and all flying training was suspended on 25 September 42. The next day 73 Oxford aircraft were flown to No. 39 SFTS at Swift Current, Saskatchewan, and exchanged for 100

Harvard trainers which arrived Calgary on 30 September. No. 37 SFTS Calgary had graduated eight Airspeed Oxford bomber pilot courses [#31, #33, #35, #47, #49, #51, #56, and #57] with a total of 385 bomber pilots returning to England. Now, RAF Calgary would begin training fighter pilots for the RAF, flying Harvard II trainers, a new era begins on 1 October 1942.

### **R.A.F. No. 37 SFTS Relief Field at Airdrie, Alberta**

On 10 October 1939, the Canadian government agreed that after the BCATP was signed [17 December 1939] the new Department of Transport would undertake the initial selection of airfield training sites, which must then be approved by the Aerodrome Committee of the RCAF. The erection of all buildings and training aids on each base was totally controlled by the Aerodrome Committee [RCAF]. Government survey crews from the D.O.T were aided by provincial highway survey parties and by 24 January 1940, a tentative selection of eighty schools for the BCATP was submitted to Supervisory Board in Ottawa. A good number of these early training sites originally constructed for the RCAF would now be turned over to the RAF as they arrived in Canada, however I'm sure these original records are long gone.





The RCAF training schools in the BCATP were distributed throughout the four Air Force Training Commands in Canada, while the RAF schools were mostly located in No. 4 Training Command, which took up the southern part of Saskatchewan and the complete provinces of Alberta, and British Columbia. The above map shows the locations of thirteen RAF Pilot training schools in No. 4 T.C. and three more located in No. 2 Training Command, with H.Q. at Winnipeg.

Twenty-six Royal Air Force training schools would train 42,110 British aircrew members from October 1941 until January 1945. Almost half [17,796] graduated from Canadian RAF flying training schools in western Canada as pilots. Another 81 RAF pilots were trained and graduated from RCAF schools in the BCATP. After 1 July 1942, these Canadian RAF schools also trained 2,000 Free French aircrews, 900 Czechoslovakian pilots, 677 Norwegian pilots, 450 Polish pilots and 400 Dutch and Belgian pilots. Each of the British run RAF schools had one Relief Landing Ground [some had two] which was used for day and night flying training.

These figures give a small account of the tremendous problems encountered and it is still hard for many historians to grasp that the RAF schools were training in the same air space as many other [five] RCAF schools south of Calgary, Alberta. Seventy-eight years later the RAF Relief landing fields are mostly gone, the buildings removed or torn down years ago, the runways over-grown with trees or just a faint outline in the earth seen from the air by passing aircraft.

Today [2019] it is a complete surprise to find a large percentage of No. 37 SFTS Relief Landing Ground at Airdrie, Alberta, still operates and survives like a war ghost from the past. My historical research of RAF in Canada began in 1985, and the hardest part was finding WWII images, and placing the history of this forgotten British training base in correct order. I know that hundreds of photos survive in England, forgotten in old photo albums, which are rarely looked at by today's generation. The author would really appreciate any British images or shared history from this past RAF history in Western Canada. The majority of my RAF Airdrie/Calgary history was obtained from four caring Canadians, all of whom are now deceased. Mr. Burt Sharp, an ex-RCAF airplane mechanic who was posted to RAF Relief Field in February 1943, Mr. Harry Cromwell, an Airdrie farmer who owned the land surrounding the RAF Bomb Range, Mr. Archie Penny, an original 1942 RAF pilot, who flew Harvard trainers from Calgary, training at Relief Field Airdrie, and Mrs. Gwen Conroy, an amazing lady who owned and lived on the Airdrie Airport, plus being a qualified Harvard aircraft female pilot. Some of these WWII photos are being published for the very first time, with limited information, corrections are always appreciated, to record and preserve the truth. Many WWII photos were copied and shared by other aircrew members, then passed on and later placed into photo albums. For this reason, a good part of Canadian training RAF history was just forgotten and lost.

In December 1940, the aerodrome Committee of the RCAF selected 640 acres of farm land situated almost 3 miles East of the Village of Airdrie, Alberta, for construction of a Relief Landing Ground for RAF No. 35 SFTS being constructed in North-East Calgary. The construction contract was awarded to the Dutton Bros. of Calgary, Alberta, with the airfield completed in May 1941. Airdrie first became a railway siding of the Calgary and Edmonton

Railway in 1889, named after a Scottish village, with the first farmhouse constructed in 1901. When the RAF airfield construction began in 1940, the Village of Airdrie had a population of 191 citizens. The runways at Airdrie were first used for training by RCAF No. 2 Wireless School Flying Squadron using D.H. 82C-4 Menasco Moth Mk. II trainers based in Calgary, 28 April until 12 May 1941

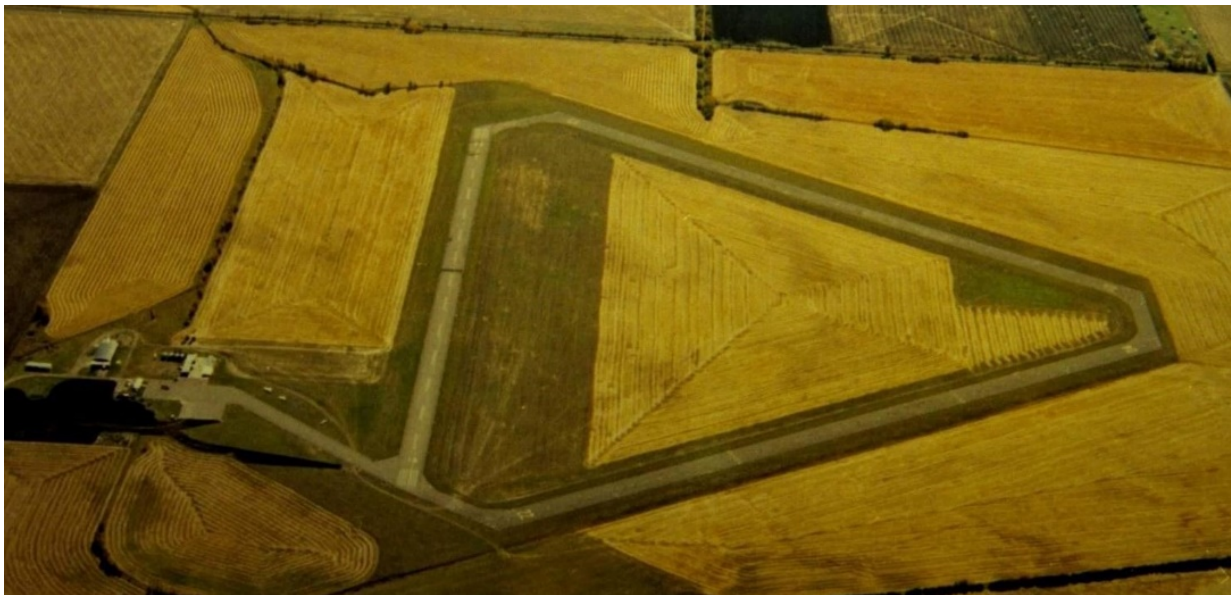
No. 31 EFTS RAF arrived next, flying Canadian built DH 82 Tiger-Moth training at Airdrie Landing Ground beginning 18 June 1941. No. 31 EFTS moved to De Winton, Alberta, beginning 13 October 1941, and the main party arrived officially three days later. Airdrie Relief Landing Ground officially became the training field of No. 37 SFTS Calgary on 4 September 1941, with British built Airspeed Oxford twin-engine pilot training beginning 22 October 1941, consisting of 68 RAF pilot students in Course #31.



This cold flying shot was taken on opening day of No. 37 SFTS at Calgary, 22 October 1941. The RAF student pilot [LAC Gafney who took image] was being flown by his RAF instructor



Reg Eastwood, in a DH 82 Tiger-Moth trainer aircraft from No. 31 EFTS at De Winton, Alberta, and they would be landing in a few minutes. Twenty-five British Twin-engine Airspeed Oxfords are parked on the first snow fall of the fast approaching Calgary winter. The Daily Diary records 8 hours flying time on 22 October, with RAF strength 51 Officers, 136 RAF Student bomber pilot trainees, and 1,044 other ranks of British training staff. RAF Officer's and Oxford aircraft are still arriving on a daily basis, with 50 aircraft on strength, and by the end of the month, they completed 444 hrs. 55 min. flying training hours. The Relief Landing Ground at Airdrie, Alberta, had suddenly become a busy WWII British airport.



This is the normal “three corner” design of a WWII Relief Landing Ground of the British and RCAF Commonwealth Air Training Plan. This 1991 image was taken by WWII pilot Ernie Thompson showing the RAF Relief L.G. at [Big Bend] Innisfail, Alberta, used by student pilots from RAF No. 32 EFTS at Bowden. Relief Landing Grounds received a fair share of training accidents and loss of life during WWII training in Canada.



**Crash image by Mr. George Frost, Chief RAF Aviation Engineer at No. 32 EFTS, Bowden, Alberta. This DH 82C Tiger Moth #5034 being flown by RAF student LAC Thomas Malan hit the power lines over the Town of Bowden on 27 May 1942, and the pilot survived. The man on right in white shirt with hands in pocket is the one and only Town Constable Ed Shenfield. Up to this point in his police career, he had only investigated, stolen horses, car accidents, and drunken Alberta farmers. That possibly explains the puzzled look on his face, what the hell should I do?**

32 E.F.T.S.  
EDMONTON FLYING

RAF

BOWDEN  
TRAINING SCHOOL



# THREE CORNERS

... 'come the three corners of the world in arms,  
And we shall shock them. Naught shall make us rue,  
If England to itself do rest but true' . . .

—*Shakespeare*,

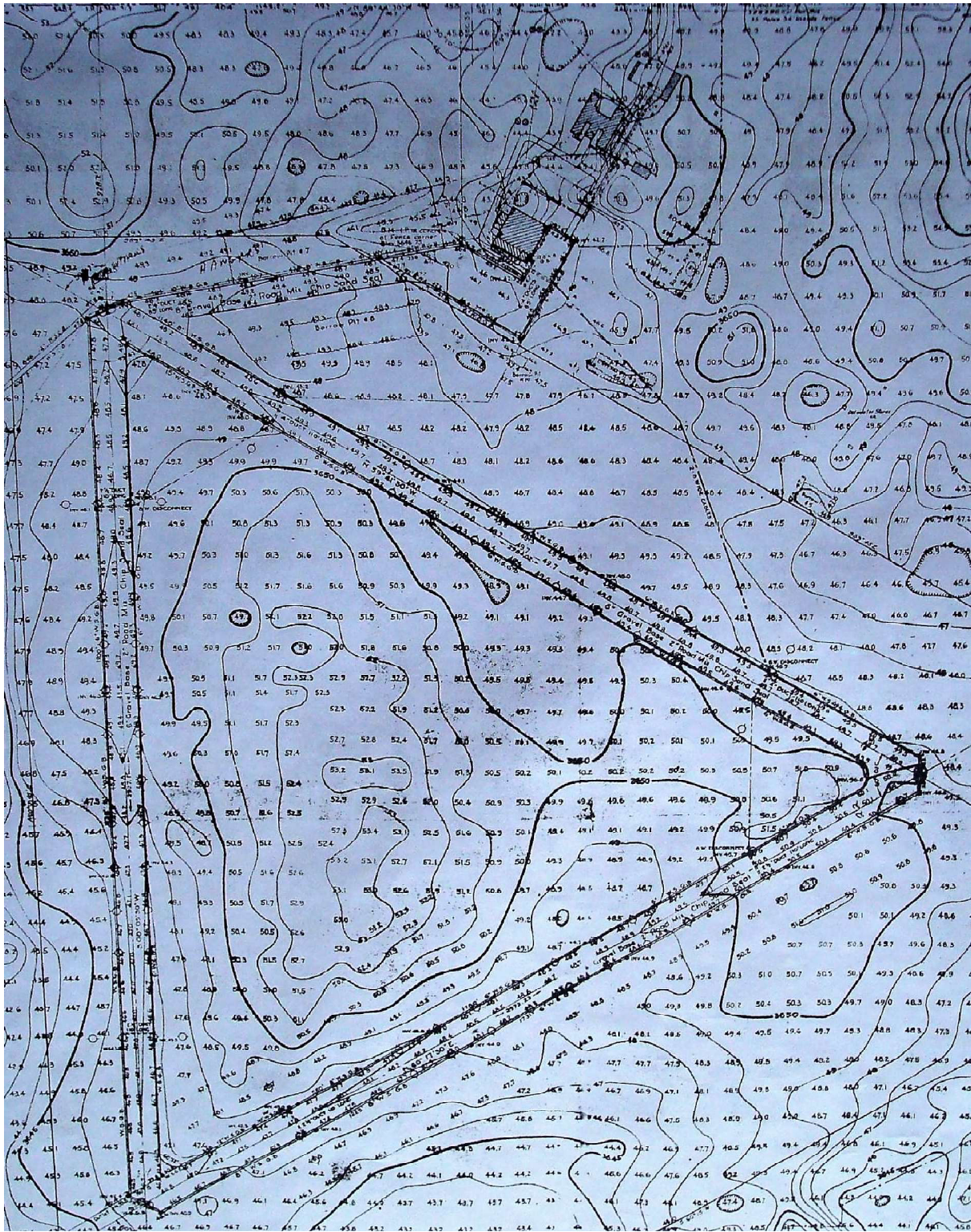
PUBLISHED ANNUALLY

FIFTY CENTS

The RAF at Bowden picked their news magazine publication cover from Shakespeare – “Come the three corners of the world in arms” a dark period in England, when King John has been

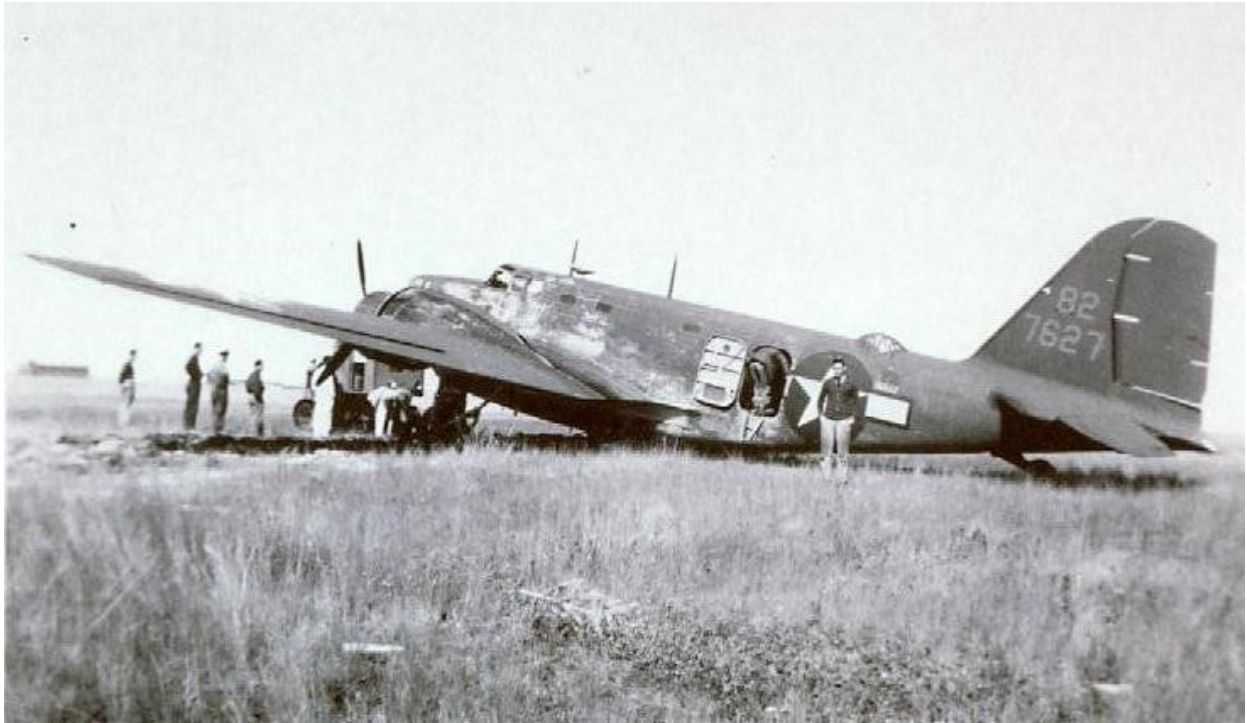


poisoned by a Monk. It also stood for the three corner runways of the training fields in Canada, very fitting.





**A copy of the original Dutton Bros, 'Three Corners' construction map created by the Department of Transportation in 1940. Obtained from Mrs. Gwen Conroy in 1991, at which time she was the property owner of the runway portion of the Airdrie Airport, and resided on her very own private airport.**



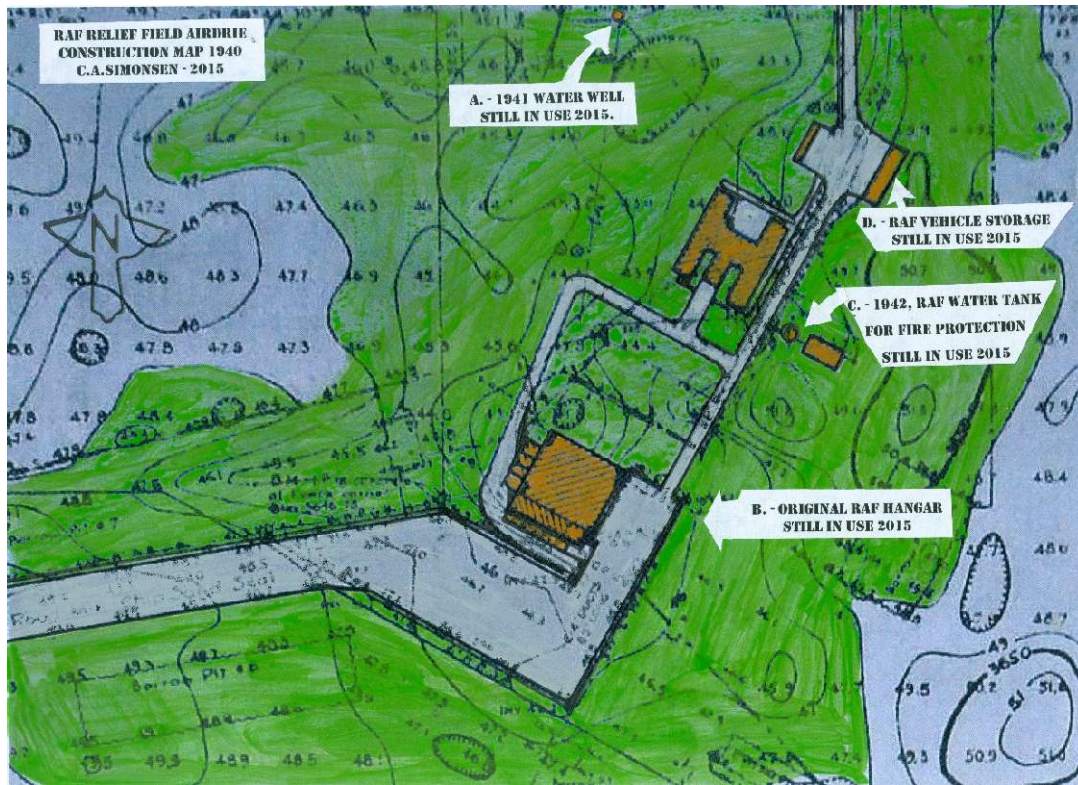
**In the spring of 1944, a south-bound American Douglas Digby lost an oil line over Olds, Alberta, then made a forced landing in the wet field just south-east of the Airdrie Relief Landing Ground. The RAF Airdrie Hangar can be seen on the left under the bomber wing. The American airmen [possibly pilot] in the bomber door has dropped his pants, and 'moons' the British camera.**



Towed from the soft-wet ground by an RAF Cat Tractor, [seen above] the oil line was repaired and the Digby took off south for the United States. The old USAAF bomber had been serving in Fairbanks, Alaska, and the three corners of Airdrie, Alberta, had saved her return flight home.







This original 1940 constructed RAF Hangar survives 2019 [minus WWII control tower] which is still in private use, owned by a German who immigrated to Calgary, Alberta, in the 1960's.

Airdrie Relief Landing Ground was constructed at elevation 3,602 ft. [1,098 m] and as you drive or fly directly east, the ground level slowly drops. Four miles directly east of the airport the ground suddenly drops 130 ft. and the lowest section contains a two to three-foot body of water which is one-half mile in length, running north to south. This body of water was never claimed by early western homesteaders, as no farmer wanted to pay taxes for a duck pond. Today it still remains Federal government property, [Crown Land] and for that reason the RAF in WWII decided this would make a very good bomb training range for low-flying aircraft.



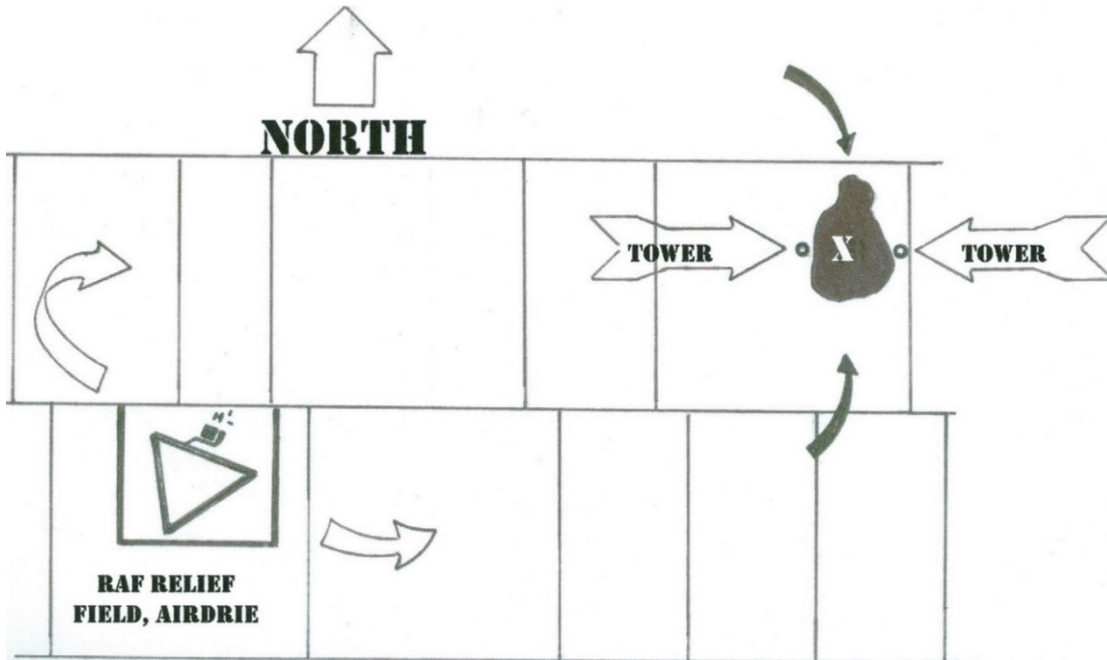


**This author image is looking directly east at the road located four miles east of the Airdrie airport, and this body of water marsh area contains tens-of-thousands of WWII British smoke bombs, some still unexploded ordnance. Farmer Harry Cromwell owned the surrounding farm land and lived on the far south section of land from the lake area. The lake had no official name, however the local Airdrie farmers called it Wood Lake, reason unknown. In January 1942, the RAF approached farmer Cromwell for permission to build two twenty-seven-foot bomb towers, which would be placed on the east and west side of Wood Lake, near the center of the body of water. In the center of the frozen lake they chipped rows of six holes in a square shape and then pile drove thirty-six half length telephone poles in each hole. Each telephone pole was then painted yellow and red in alternating colors, and this became the target for dropping training smoke bombs. On the assigned training day, the RAF placed one LAC student in each tower, and his duty was to point a gun sight device at the white smoke released where the bomb hit the water near the target. Then the number on a map were recorded and this was repeated again, and again, as each aircraft dropped its bombs. In the evening, the maps from were each tower were connected by drawing lines, which marked an "X" and the location each student bomb landed. A very simple, but effective way of giving each RAF student his bomb marks. The RAF called this training area "Wood Lake No. 1 Bombing Range" and it remained in use until 1946, used by the RCAF in the postwar era. The only known accident at the bomb range occurred on 26 October 1943, when RAF Harvard aircraft FE808 struck the centre of the target area with a wing, but made it safely back to**



base. Today this forgotten WWII bomb site is not even recorded as a government explosive ordnance site, so please use caution, if you are digging for war junk.

Author map showing location of RAF Wood Lake, No. 1 Bomb Range at Airdrie, Alberta.



Airdrie Relief L.G. bomb training is not recorded in the Daily Diary of No. 37 SFTS at Calgary, while farmer Cromwell believed it began in April 1942. RAF Calgary had a staff of 88 Officers, 1,168 airmen and 221 RAF bomber pilot trainees, with 98 Oxford aircraft on strength, 1 April 1942. Airspeed Oxford bomb training continued until 25 September 1942. By 28 September, 78 Oxford trainers had been flown to RAF No. 39 SFTS at Swift Current, Saskatchewan, and 100 Harvard trainers returned to Calgary by 30th of the month.

24.9.42. Flying Wing was engaged in packing up for the move to Swift Current. A Wings Parade was held for graduating cadets of No. 57 Course. Ten cadets received commissions. Maximum possible flying time - nil.

25.9.42. Flying Training on Oxford Aircraft had now ceased at No. 37 S.F.T.S., and the first detachment of officers and men arrived from No. 39 S.F.T.S., in connection with the change-over from Oxford aircraft to Harvards.

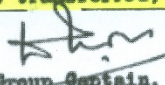
26.9.42.) 73 Oxford Aircraft were transferred by air between Friday, 25th September and Sunday, 27th  
 27.9.42.) September. On the latter date, W/Cdr. J.H. Slater, A.F.C., the new Chief Instructor, and the remaining personnel reported from Swift Current.

28.9.42. Five more Oxford Aircraft were transferred by air to Swift Current.

29.9.42. This day was given by the Commanding Officer as a holiday for the Station to celebrate our first anniversary in Canada.

30.9.42. There was no flying, as the transfer of all serviceable aircraft between Calgary and Swift Current had been completed. The new Flying Wing were busy settling in, and preparing for the commencement of Flying Training on Harvard aircraft on October 1st.

Posted strength of unit: Officers 108. Airmen 1162. Trainees 154.  
 Attached strength: Officers 64. Airmen 84. Trainees 236. 2 C.D.C. Officers and 3 C.D.C. other ranks.  
 Detached strength: Officers 74. Airmen 179. Trainees 154.  
 Strength of Aircraft - 100 Harvards & 30 Oxford (not yet transferred)  
 Total hours flown for month - 5,322.20.

  
 (D. IRON)  
 Group Captain, Commanding,  
 No. 37 S.F.T.S., CALGARY.

North American Aviation, Inc. [NAA] was a holding company for many aviation firms, which came together during the great depression, then General Motors obtained 29 percent of the shares in 1933, and decided to create General Aviation Corp. of NAA, located in the Curtiss-Caproni factory at Dundalk, Maryland. In 1934, General Aviation was renamed becoming the Aircraft Manufacturing Division of NAA, and from this came the prototype [future Harvard] aircraft, NA-16 the first of many. The first BT-9, flew on 15 April 1936, and a production line was set up in the new constructed plant at Inglewood, California. The first Harvard I, serial N7000 was built with British-specified equipment, and flew on 28 September 1938, wearing full British RAF markings. Witnessed by British representatives, the aircraft impressed and 200 aircraft were ordered for RAF training in U.K. Another 200 Harvard's were ordered in January 1939, which were shipped without engines, assembled at a shadow factory RAF Shawbury, England. In April 1939, Canada ordered 30 Harvard I's [NA-61] which were built for the RCAF, serial #1321 to #1350. The first three were delivered 20 July 1939, eleven in August, eight in November [Canada had declared war on Germany 10 September] and the last seven arrived at the Alberta border on 1 December 1939, serial #1344 to #1350.



This image appeared in the 11 December 1939 issue of American LIFE magazine, titled – **BRITISH WARPLANES ARE TOWED ACROSS CANADIAN BORDER AT MONTANA “PORT OF EXIT.”** This North American Harvard I is serial #1338, delivered to the RCAF in Alberta, [above] 21 November 1939. The aircraft flew at Camp Borden, Ontario, until 14 February 1945. Flying the last fifteen Harvard I’s to Canada proved to be a problem as the U.S. Neutrality Act prohibited the flying of aircraft to a Country at war. The Nov. & Dec. Harvard’s for the RCAF were flown to Sweetgrass, Montana, USA, landed at the border, and then pushed across to Alberta, [right side of fence wire in photo] then flown north to Calgary RCAF No. 3 SFTS at Currie Barracks.

From this point in time, [January 1940] the Harvard production line officially became the American AT-6 production line for the remainder of the war. Whatever you wish to call it – U.S. Navy J-Bird, Texan, AT-6, or British/Canadian Harvard, it soon earned the unofficial name “Pilot Maker” and the entire Allied war effort would depend on this single aircraft which produced tens of thousands of WWII combat pilots. The largest customer for the Harvard became the RCAF and the Royal Air Force training at their bases in western Canada. On 18 March 1941, the 1,000<sup>th</sup> Harvard II rolled off the production line in California, and it became



the 570<sup>th</sup> to be flown directly to Canada. The ridiculous process of flying to the Canadian border had been dropped by the U.S. State Department and now direct flights were made to Canadian RCAF bases. For model builders or aviation painters, it is interesting to see the new Harvard II was painted in full British RAF markings on the NAA final production line at Inglewood, California. For flying in the United States the trainers still required U.S. national insignia under the wings, an unusual mix of fuselage British Roundel with American Star National wing markings.



Jeff Ethell collection 1983.

Harvard AJ987 never made it to Canada, one of two aircraft which crashed in California before delivery to RCAF. In the background is AJ986, flown to RAF No. 39 SFTS [Swift Current, Saskatchewan] and taken on charge 3 February 1942. This trainer had a Cat. C-5 crash on 18 March 1942, was repaired and became one of the [100] delivered to RAF No. 37 SFTS at Calgary, Alberta, 30 September 1942. In the Royal Air Force, the American built AT-6C became known as the Harvard IIA. In January 1940, the Canadian government bought the rights to produce the AT-6A by Noorduyn Aviation Ltd. in Montreal, Quebec, and these Canadian constructed RAF Harvard's became the British Harvard IIB trainer. Noorduyn Aviation would build 2,610 Harvard IIB trainers in Montreal, Canada, 1,500 were lend-lease for the RAF.

**Uncle Sam paid Canadians in Montreal to build the AT-6, then gave them to the British [Lend-Lease] to train pilots in RAF bases in Canada.**

**On 30 September 1942, one-hundred RAF Harvard II "Pilot Makers" returned to Calgary, Alberta, where the very first RCAF Harvard I, #1321, touched down on 20 July 1939.**





Part Two R.A.F. No. 37 SFTS Harvard Training follows.



# No. 37 Service Flying Training School, Calgary, Alberta, - Part Two



RAF Flight of North American Harvard Mk. II trainers on delivery to No. 37 Service Flying Training School at Calgary, arriving over RAF No. 34 SFTS Medicine Hat, Alberta, where they landed for refueling. Date 25 to 27 September 1942. [RAF WWII Image]

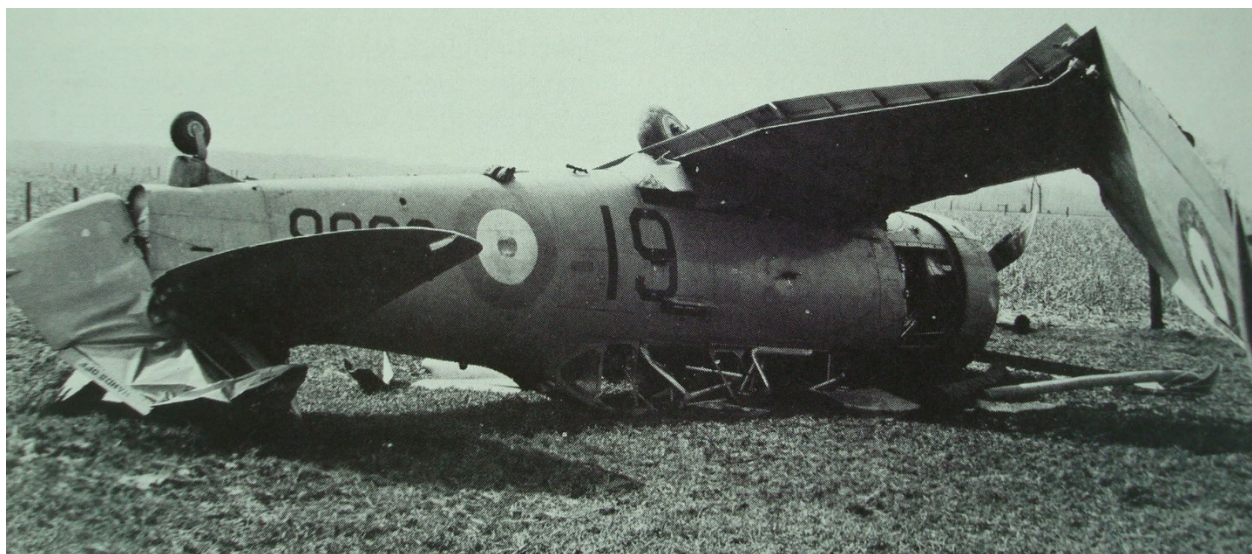
On 21 September 1942, all North American Harvard Mk. II aircraft flying training ceased at No. 39 Service Flying Training School, Swift Current, Saskatchewan. In the next five days, One-Hundred Harvard aircraft, thirty-four RAF Harvard Flying Instructors, and a large number of RAF Ground Staff would be transferred to No. 37 S.F.T.S. at Calgary, Alberta. This large base transfer included four Senior RAF Officers, 62 Junior Officers, and 313 other British ranks, mostly Harvard trained ground crews. The one-hundred Harvard Mk. II aircraft flew west from RAF No. 39 SFTS to RAF No. 34 SFTS [refuel] then north to RAF No. 37 SFTS at Calgary, Alberta. The refueling arrival over Medicine Hat was captured on rare color film by an RAF flight member.

DATE		DAILY DIARY	
1942 September,		No. 39 Service Flying Training School, SWIFT CURRENT, Saskatchewan. <small>(UNIT OR FORMATION)</small>	
SUMMARY OF EVENTS			
19th		Poor flying day.	Possible flying hours: 10.15
20th		Captain A.E. Chegwin, Canadian Dental Corps departed on posting and was replaced by Captain V.M. Jackman.	
		Weather improves.	Possible flying hours each day: 24.00
21st 22nd 23rd		No flying owing to change over with No. 37 S.F.T.S. During this period a complete change of Aircraft, instructors and certain of the Ground Staff was effected. 100 Harvards being replaced by 78 Oxfords.	
24th 30th		Proceeded to Calgary. W/Cdr J.H. Slater A.F.C. S/Ldr. W.C.S. Cooper S/Ldr. R.D. Adams S/Ldr. L.H. Gamble and 62 Junior Officers and 313 Other Ranks.	

The new RAF administration staff at Calgary Headquarters were:

G/C J. B. Stockbridge, [C.O.] S/L G.S. M. Warlow, [S. Adjutant] F/L E.T. Hawley, [Admin. Officer] W/O R. H. Evans, [S. Warrant Officer] Sgt. D. Abery, Cpl. E.A. Palmer, LAC G. Wishart, LAC K. Jennings, AC1 G. Meakes, LAC E. Dickinson, Cpl. E.W. Bryant, LAC E.D.G. Crowe, LAC W. Goodlett, AC1 J. Coppock, LAC V. Gould, LAC P.G. Ross and LAC L. Calver.

The 34 RAF Harvard Flying Instructors consisted of twenty-one officers, and thirteen NCO's. The Flying Instructors were composed of four squadrons commanded by F/O R.H. Saxton, F/O E.O. Jones, W/O R.H. Evans, and F/Lt. Peter F. Middleton. *[remember that last name]* On 1 October 1942, RAF Calgary began training of British Fighter pilots in North American Harvard Mk. II aircraft, using Airdrie Relief Landing Ground. Seven Cat. "A" fatal crashes took place.





The dates shown are for RCAF Harvard aircraft Taken on Strength and shortly after they were delivered to RAF No. 39 SFTS Swift Current, Sask., which opened on 5 December 1941. All of these one-hundred Harvard MK. II's were delivered to No. 37 SFTS at Calgary, Alberta, by 30 September 1942.

2566	23 Sept. 1940	18 Oct. 1960
2586	4 Oct. 40	15 Jan. 1947
2631	26 Oct. 40	1 Dec. 1943, Cat. "A" 21 Oct. 43
2698	2 Dec. 40	1 Oct. 1946
2726	20 Dec. 40	18 Oct. 1960
2937	5 Mar. 41	31 Aug. 1946
3274	2 Feb. 42	4 Dec. 1946
3278	9 Feb. 42	7 Nov. 1957
AJ582	29 July 41	14 Mar. 1945
AJ583 [#46]	29 July 41	21 Jun. 1960
AJ723	9 Sept. 41	21 Oct. 1957
AJ753	16 Sept. 41	21 Oct. 1957
AJ758	16 Oct. 41	1 Oct. 1946
AJ759	16 Oct. 41	2 Mar. 1943, Cat. "A" 10 Dec. 42

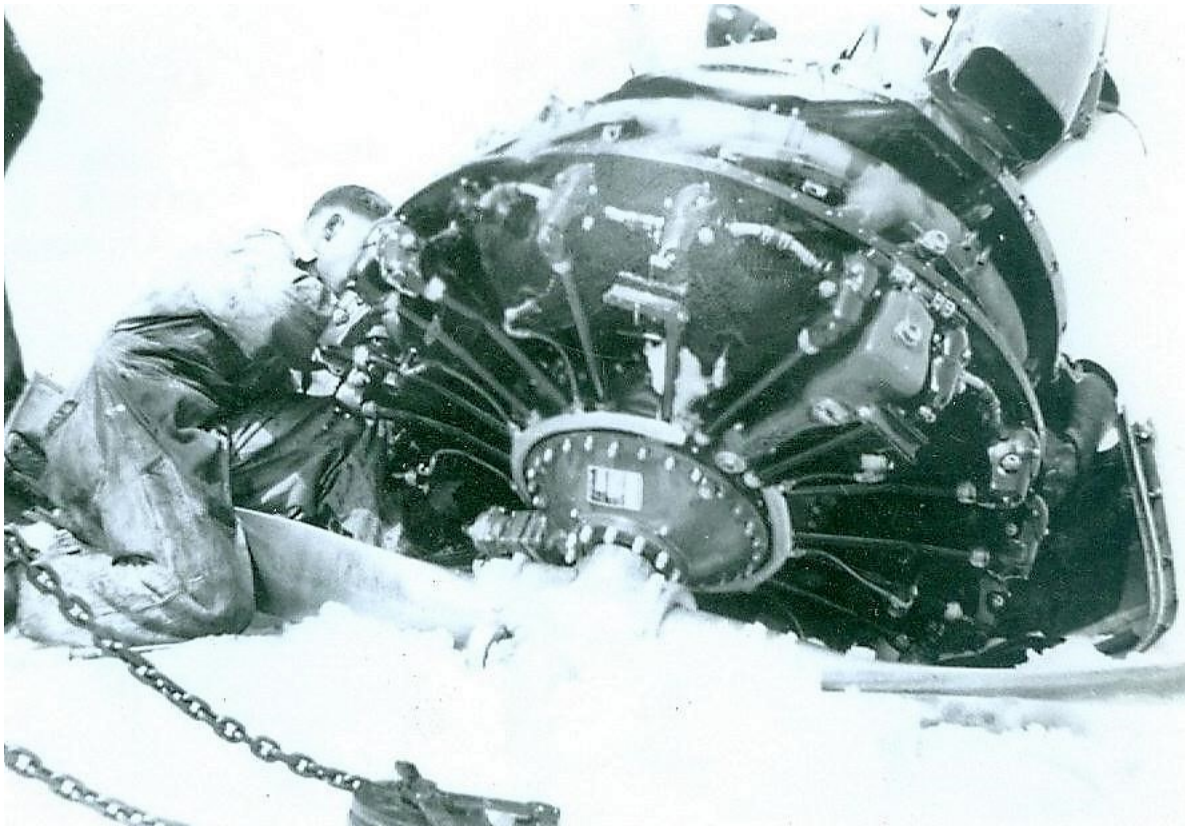
DAILY DIARY	
OF	
(UNIT OR FORMATION) No. 37 Service Flying Training School.	
DATE	SUMMARY OF EVENTS
1.12.42.	POSTED STRENGTH OF UNIT: R.C.A.F. Officers (Staff) 7; (11) R.C.A.F. Airmen (Staff) 57; (111) R.C.A.F. (Trainees) 2 (1v) Personnel other than R.C.A.F. - R.A.F. Officers (Staff) 32; R.N.Z.A.F. Officers (Staff) 1; C.D.C. Officers 2; R.A.F. Airmen (Staff) 903; R.N.Z.A.F. (Airmen-Staff) 1; Trainees - R.A.F. Airmen 111 & R.A.F. Officers 11. Civilians 28. No. 37 S.F.T.S. Miniature Rifle Club shot a match against the CALGARY RIFLE CLUB LADIES' TEAM who were the 1941 Dominion Champions, and lost by 4 points (2396 to 2392) GROUP CAPTAIN D. IRON, O.B.E. reassumed command of the station upon his return from sick leave. Flying was curtailed owing to low haze causing poor visibility. Maximum possible flying hours - 3.10.
2.12.42.	There was an accident on the main aerodrome when Harvard II 3274, piloted by F/SGT. WILSON, G.E. 98442, taxied into the propeller of Harvard II AJ901. The pilot was uninjured, but his aircraft sustained damage to the starboard mainplane. AJ901 was undamaged. Low clouds curtailed flying and the maximum possible flying hours were 3.55.
10.12.42.	F/LT. E.G. FORD (21636), a Flight Commander, and 1512542, LAC. HALL, H.N., a pupil of No.70 Course, were killed instantly when Harvard II AJ759 stalled after taking off from Airdrie R.L. and spun into the ground. Maximum possible flying hours - 24.

Airdrie Relief L. G. claimed the first qualified Flight Commander F/Lt. E.G. Ford #81636 and his pupil from No. 70 Course, when Harvard AJ759 stalled just after takeoff.





Recovery of RAF Harvard Mk. II serial AJ759, 10 December 1942.







AJ760	[#73]	16 Oct. 41	23 Oct. 1946
AJ762		16 Oct. 41	18 Oct. 1946
AJ766		16 Oct. 41	4 Feb. 1943
AJ793		16 Oct. 4	24 Apr. 1944
AJ795		16 Oct. 41	4 Dec. 1946
AJ796		16 Oct. 41	24 Sept. 43, Cat. "A" 28 Aug. 43

**Planes Collide,  
Drop on City**

**Three Airmen Killed; 1 Parachutes  
To Safety; Two Civilians Burned**

Two Air Force training planes collided in the air over Calgary this morning and crashed in the city about a mile apart, one near the race track in Victoria Park and the other on the front lawn of Mr. and Mrs. Hermon Stevens' home at 839 19th Ave. W.

Three fliers were killed and one slightly injured when he parachuted to the pavement on 19th Ave. beside the wrecked plane. In addition two civilians, a milk wagon driver and a five-year-old child were injured, presumably by flying debris from the 19th Ave. crash. The driver's horse was burned and bolted, but was soon stopped.



# DAILY DIARY

OF

(UNIT OR FORMATION) No 37 Service Flying Training School, R.A.F. Calgary, Alberta.

28.8.43

A beautiful summer day, which was marred by a fatal accident just before noon. Harvard II - AJ796 piloted by 1339948 LAC. MAJOR, J., collided in mid-air over Calgary with Cessna Crane No. 8127 from No. 3 S.F.T.S. Calgary. The Harvard aircraft crashed in Victoria Park, where a horse show was in progress, and burst into flames. LAC. MAJOR was killed instantly and the aircraft completely destroyed. The other plane fell about a mile away in a garden of a house in 19th Ave. West and was also burned out, the flames causing damage to the house concerned. Two of the occupants of this aeroplane AUS.420664 Sgt. HARDIMAN, J.V., and GS.1350866 LAC. HORNBERG, M.V., were killed instantly and some civilians in the vicinity suffered injury from flying debris. AUS.428036 LAC. ATTON, J.L., parachuted out of this plane and by an amazing coincidence landed by the side of the blazing wreckage, receiving slight injuries. LAC. MAJOR, J., a native of Stanton, England, was a pupil on No. 52 Course and had only just recommenced flying after a previous accident in which he had dislocated his spine.



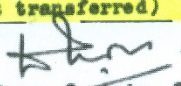


AJ798	16 Oct. 41	27 Nov. 1958
AJ799 [#87]	16 Oct. 41	4 Dec. 1946
AJ802 [#89]	16 Oct. 41	9 March 1945
AJ824	3 Nov. 41	1 Oct. 1946
AJ825	11 Nov. 41	24 Nov. 1946
AJ827	14 Oct. 41	23 Jan. 1946
AJ830	29 Oct. 41	16 Apr. 1945
AJ833	16 Oct. 41	1 Oct. 1945
AJ834	16 Oct. 41	9 Mar. 1945
AJ835 [#91]	16 Oct. 41	21 Oct. 1945
AJ836	16 Oct. 41	12 Mar. 1945
AJ847	3 Nov. 41	1 Oct. 1946
AJ848	3 Nov. 41	11 Mar. 1958
AJ849	3 Nov. 41	1 Oct. 1946
AJ850	11 Nov. 41	9 Jun. 1946
AJ851	3 Nov. 41	26 Nov. 1945
AJ852	4 Nov. 41	18 Oct. 1946
AJ853	3 Nov. 41	1 Oct. 1946
AJ854	3 Nov. 41	12 Mar. 43, Cat. "A" 15 Dec. 43
AJ893	30 Dec 41	5 Sept. 1946
AJ894	11 Nov. 41	29 Sept. 43, Cat. "A" 4 Aug. 43
AJ896	11 Nov. 41	10 Nov. 1945
AJ897	11 Nov. 41	21 Oct. 1945
AJ898	11 Nov. 41	2 Mar. 1943
AJ899	11 Nov. 41	16 Feb. 1944
AJ900 [#21]	11 Nov. 41	1 Oct. 1946
AJ901	11 Nov. 41	4 Dec. 1946
AJ902	11 Nov. 41	4 Dec. 1946
AJ903	26 Nov. 41	18 Oct. 1946
AJ905	26 Nov. 41	18 Oct. 1946
AJ906	26 Nov. 41	6 Nov. 1946
AJ908	26 Nov. 41	27 Oct. 1955
AJ909	26 Nov. 41	9 Mar. 1945
AJ910	27 Nov. 41	1 Oct. 1946
AJ912	26 Nov. 41	11 Mar. 1943, Cat. "C" 22 Jun. 42
AJ913	26 Mar. 42	1 Oct. 1946
AJ914	26 Nov. 41	22 Dec. 1954
AJ915	27 Nov. 41	1 Oct. 1945
AJ917	27 Nov. 41	18 Oct. 1946
AJ920	26 Nov. 41	1 Oct. 1946
AJ921	26 Nov. 41	4 Dec. 1946

AJ927	30 Dec. 41	29 may 1944
AJ930 [#39]	26 Mar. 42	4 Dec. 1946
AJ948	17 Jan. 42	22 Feb. 1945
AJ949	14 Jan. 42	1 Oct. 1946
AJ951 [#40]	19 Jan. 42	1 Oct. 1946
AJ954	9 Feb. 42	1 Nov. 1960
AJ955	21 Feb. 42	23 May 1945
AJ956	22 Jan. 42	20 Sept. 43, Cat. "A" 8 Aug. 43
AJ957	14 Jan. 42	1 Oct. 1946
AJ958	17 Jan. 42	1 Oct. 1946
AJ960	14 Jan. 42	1 Oct. 1946
AJ961	17 Jan. 42	4 Dec. 1946
AJ962	14 Jan. 42	22 Dec. 1954
AJ963	17 Jan. 42	18 Oct. 1960
AJ964	14 Jan. 42	4 Dec. 1960
AJ965	17 Jan. 42	7 Dec. 1950
AJ966	14 Jan. 42	16 Feb. 1944
AJ967	14 Jan. 42	9 Mar. 1945
AJ968	14 Jan. 42	1 Nov. 1946
AJ970	14 Jan. 42	7 Nov. 1957
AJ971	14 Jan. 42	25 May 1951
AJ973	14 Jan. 41	11 Mar. 1946
AJ974	17 Jan. 42	21 Jun. 1955
AJ975	17 Jan. 42	18 Sept. 1947
AJ976	17 Jan. 42	18 Oct. 1960
AJ977	17 Jan. 42	3 Nov. 1950
AJ978	17 Jan. 42	5 Aug. 1948
AJ979	17 Jan. 42	11 Mar. 1946
AJ980	17 Jan. 42	11 Mar. 1946
AJ983	6 Feb. 42	1 Oct. 1946
AJ984	9 Feb. 42	14 Dec. 1960
AJ986	3 Feb. 42	6 July 1955
BW204 [#100]	14 May 42	2 Feb. 1946
FE405	5 Aug. 42	2 Oct. 1946
FE406	5 Aug. 42	15 Jan. 1947
FE407	5 Aug. 42	12 Nov. 1946
FE408	5 Aug. 42	2 Oct. 1946
FE409	5 Aug. 42	2 Oct. 1946
FE411	5 Aug. 42	20 Aug 43, Cat. "A" 6 Jun. 43
FE808	7 Feb. 43	2 Oct. 1946
FE824	9 Feb. 42	2 Oct. 1946





- 24.9.42. Flying Wing was engaged in packing up for the move to Swift Current. A Wings Parade was held for graduating cadets of No. 57 Course. Ten cadets received commissions. Maximum possible flying time - nil.
- 25.9.42. Flying Training on Oxford Aircraft had now ceased at No. 37 S.F.T.S., and the first detachment of officers and men arrived from No. 39 S.F.T.S., in connection with the change-over from Oxford aircraft to Harvards.
- 26.9.42.) 73 Oxford Aircraft were transferred by air between Friday, 25th September and Sunday, 27th  
 27.9.42.) September. On the latter date, W/Odr. J.H.Slater, A.F.C., the new Chief Instructor, and the remaining personnel reported from Swift Current.
- 28.9.42. Five more Oxford Aircraft were transferred by air to Swift Current.
- 29.9.42. This day was given by the Commanding Officer as a holiday for the Station to celebrate our first anniversary in Canada.
- 30.9.42. There was no flying, as the transfer of all serviceable aircraft between Calgary and Swift Current had been completed. The new Flying Wing were busy settling in, and preparing for the commencement of Flying Training on Harvard aircraft on October 1st.
- Posted strength of unit: Officers 106. Airmen 1162. Trainees 154.  
 Attached strength: Officers 64. Airmen 84. Trainees 236. 2 C.D.C. Officers and 3 C.D.C. other ranks.  
 Detached strength: Officers 74. Airmen 179. Trainees 154.  
 Strength of Aircraft - 100 Harvards & 30 Oxford (not yet transferred)  
 Total hours flown for month - 5,322.20.
-   
 (D. IRON)  
 Group Captain, Commanding,  
 No. 37 S.F.T.S., CALGARY.

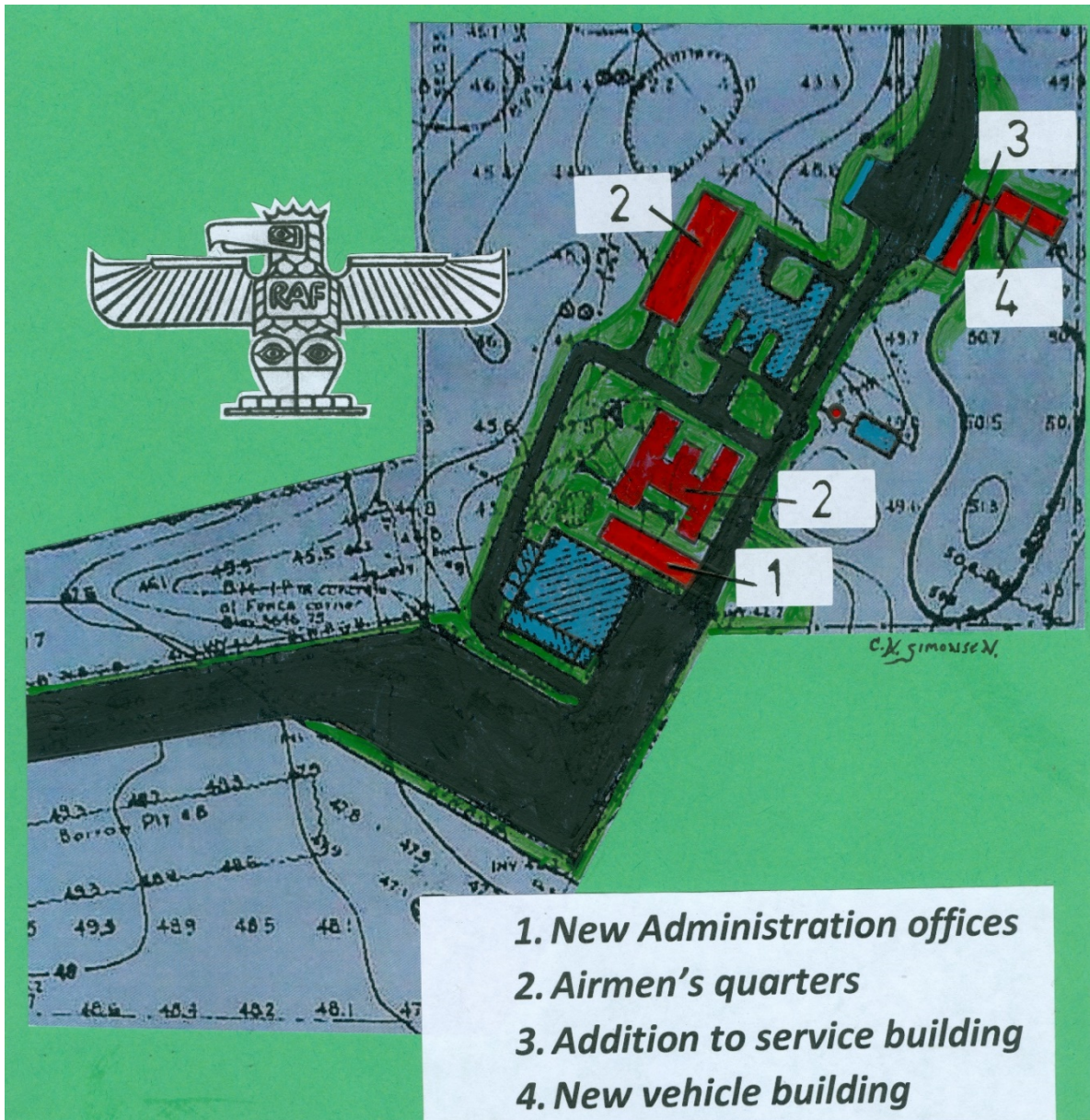
North American Harvard Mk. II pilot training began at Calgary/Airdrie on 1 October 1942. Today it is hard to believe this RAF training was done by hand signals, without the benefit of aircraft radios for air-to-air communications.



To the west of Calgary were the foothills and towering Rocky Mountains to explore, and to the east the flat prairie and desolate Red Deer River badlands to Drumheller.







On 30 June 1942, the original part one of the BCATP was terminated and phase two began dated 1 July 1942 until 31 March 1945. This became a turning point in the history of the BCATP with many major changes related to a large expansion for RAF's Bomber Command. In England, RCAF and RCAF squadrons were being equipped with four-engine Handley Page Halifax and Avro Lancaster bombers and aircrew training numbers must increase. In January 1943, total aircrew production in Canada was 39,354 compared to 19,423 in all other Dominions, Canada was training 45 per cent of all Commonwealth aircrew. This would increase as RAF schools were enlarged and began training students from Australia, New Zealand, Czechoslovakia, Free French, Holland, and Norway. In August 1942, five new buildings, [red] were constructed for increased training [including Wood Lake Bomb Range] at



**Relief Landing Ground RAF Airdrie. A large percentage of these graduating students became RAF Mosquito Fighter/Bomber pilots.**



**The original RAF administration building constructed in summer 1942 is still in use today, the left section in original WWII condition, used for storage.**



**Inside the original WWII RAF 1942 administration building, Airdrie, Alberta.**





**The location where the first [1940] RAF H-Hut building once stood.**



**This is the original 1940 constructed RAF Motor Transport building, located at the entrance to the main gate. This is where the 1941 Ford [Marmon-Herrington] 6X6 crash fire truck, medical ambulance, [RCAF 30-632] Dodge Station Wagon Transport vehicle [RCAF 31-162] Crash Tender Recovery Truck, [RCAF 33-741] RCAF Tractor [20-247 CL] refuelling tender [RCAF 34-276] and mobile radio control tower vehicle [RCAF 31-129] were parked and maintained for over three years. These emergency vehicles were on 24-hour standby during night and day flying training at Airdrie landing ground. The right side building addition was constructed in August 1942, for increased vehicle space.**



The RAF Airdrie Relief L.G. 1941 fire-crash truck, [Marmon-Herrington Ford 6X6] aircraft fire-rescue suit, and the mobile radio control tower truck, RCAF #31-129 with wind sock. The mobile radio tower vehicle was painted bright yellow, with complete top a bright red, with a large white letter "T" painted on roof for trainee pilots to see. Image taken in front of hangar doors, east side of building summer 1943.





**RAF Medical Officer “Doc” Al Walton beside ambulance and mobile radio control tower truck.**



**The RAF mobile control tower airmen sending lamp signals to the Harvard pilots, [no aircraft radios] with the Airdrie hangar and main control tower in the background. The bright red painted roof clearly shows in this image. RCAF and serial number 31-129 in black are stenciled on yellow driver/passenger doors.**



**RAF Doc Walton [left] and “Meathead” RAF Service Police Sgt. Crawford, south side of hangar, summer 1943. The Air Force Police Sgt. wears an RCAF Sweat-Shirt, lettered North Atlantic Squadron. The Airdrie L.G. Camp Commander was F/Lt. F.R. Britton.**





**14 November 1942, Harvard AJ758 nosed-over at Airdrie, pilot LAC F.S.T. Chesterfield. Night landings were made by coal oil goose-necked flare pots which were spaced beside the runways.**





Cartoons can become real, mopping hangar floor 1943. The same Airdrie hangar floor today.



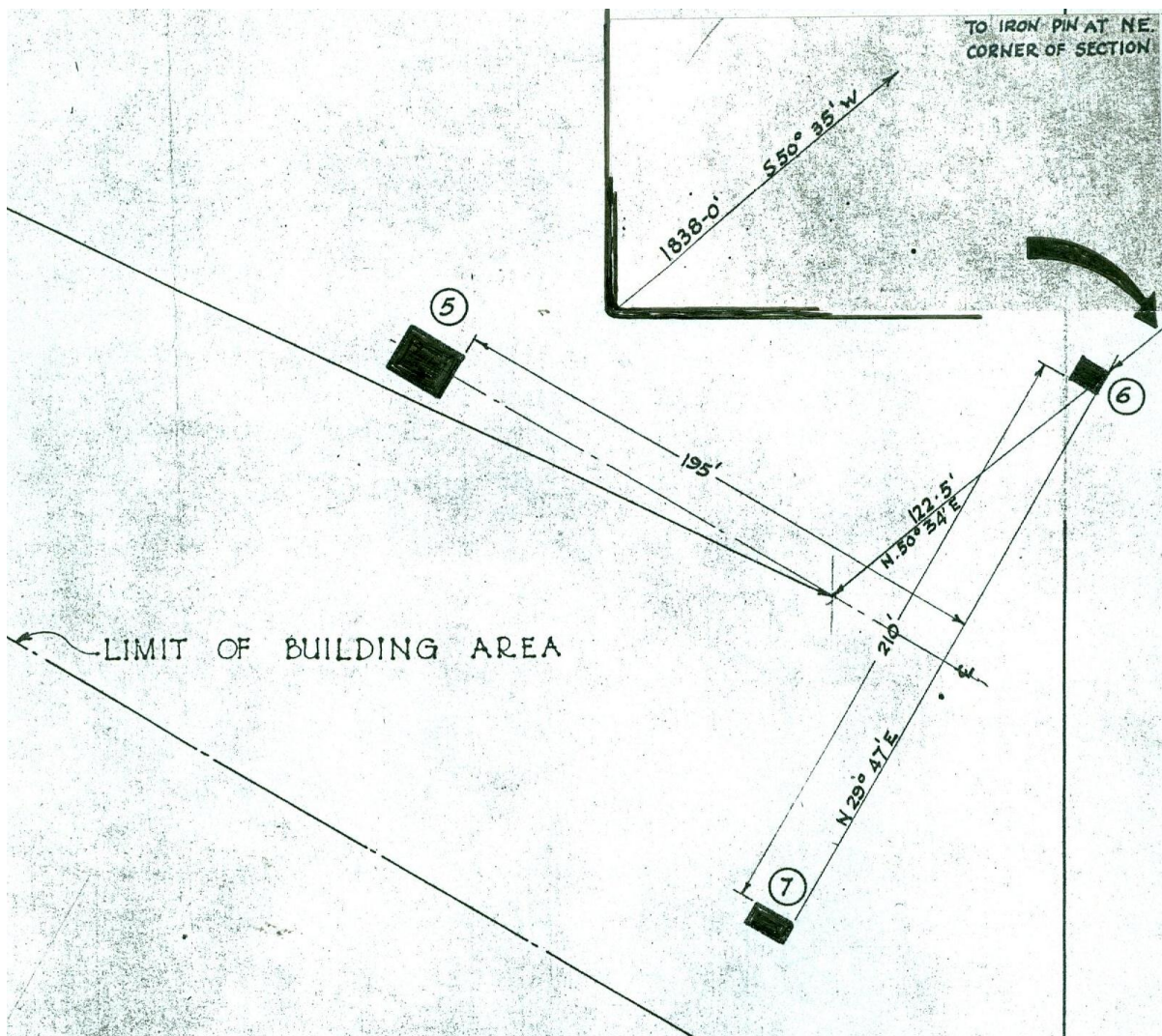
# 37

R.A.F.

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SERVICE FLYING TRAINING SCHOOL

## RAF 1942-44 Practice Smoke Bomb Loading Range Airdrie, Alberta.



In August 1942, the RAF began construction of three concrete buildings for the purpose of storage and arming of RCAF 25-pound white smoke practice bombs. This original construction bomb-assembly building blue-print copied from Mrs. Gwen Conroy collection 1991.





**Bomb building #6 contained the gun powder, building #7 contained the 25 lb unarmed smoke bombs, and the third building was where RAF ground crew members primed the smoke bombs, [seen above]. Four smoke bombs were then attached under each wing of the Harvard II trainer and the training could begin. I believe this bomb dropping course lasted one week but no records can be found. The RAF total inventory, unused bombs, and student records were ordered buried on the airport property in April 1944, by the British rear party before they departed for U.K. That's another story of time capsule war junk.**





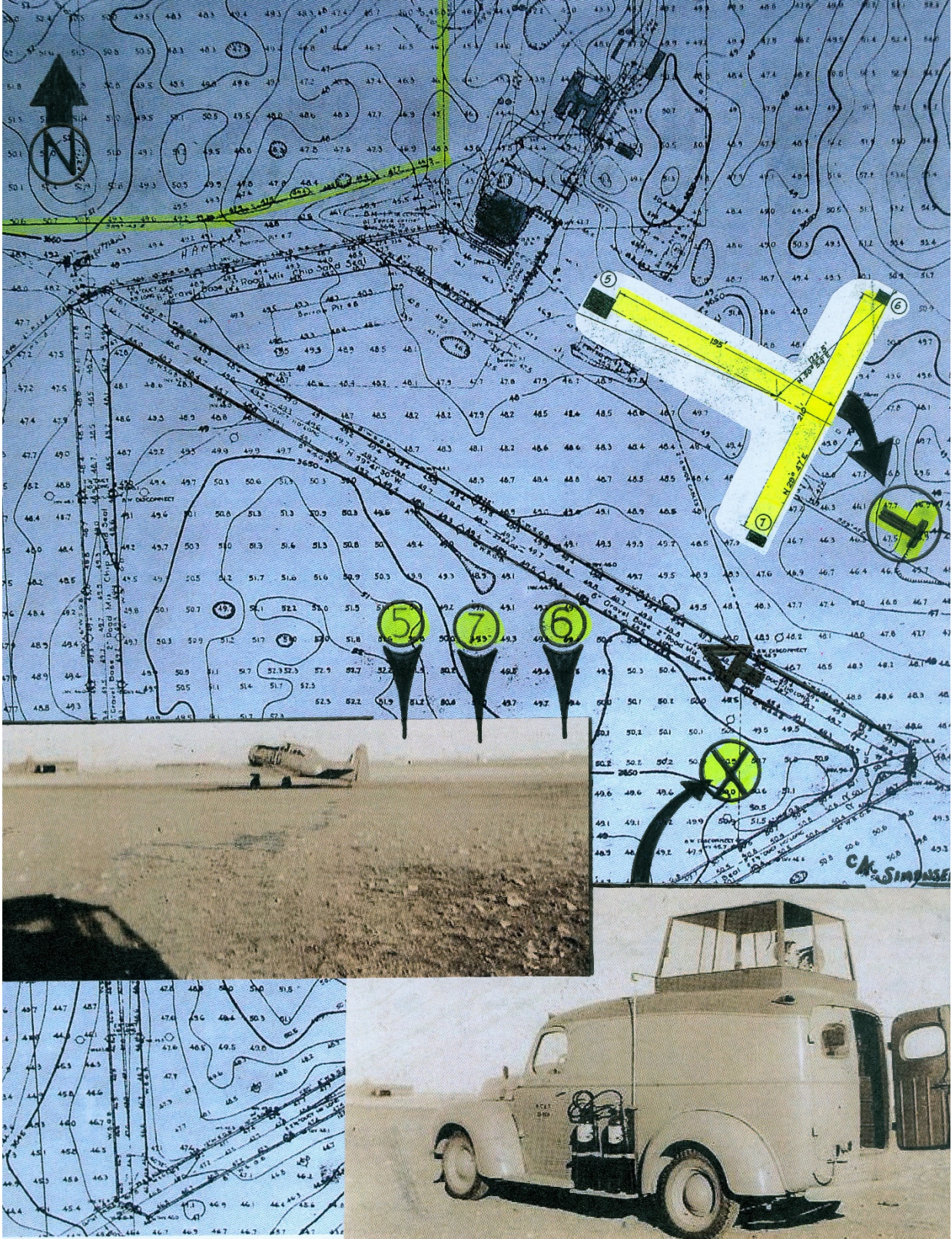
The author spent one day with a metal detector and above are the RAF smoke bombs which were used at Relief Field Airdrie, Alberta. Most bombs have the tail section broken off. The land on the airfield also contains a burial pit [location unknown] where hundreds of unused bombs were buried in March 1944. Image below shows bombs on Harvard wings.



When each No. 37 SFTS Course graduated and their new pilots received their wings, these pilots had also qualified in a one-week bomb training at Airdrie Wood Lake No. 1 Bombing Range. The RAF Harvard carried four 25 lb. smoke bombs under each wing, as seen in above photo taken at Airdrie in early January 1944. These are seven RAF members of Course #90 which began with 59 students on 20 September 1943, graduated 56 new fighter pilots on 14 January 1944. The Course had twenty-seven members of RAF, six from R.A.A.F. and twenty-three from R.N.Z.A.F. The course lasted 117 days in which 113 days permitted full pupil flying conditions, class rated Average, discipline Very Good. Thirty-four pilot cadets received over 70% in their final graduation marks. RAF cadet 51513 P/O J. Brown was killed in flying accident 26 November 1943. 1314739 LAC R.W.G. Sadler failed due to medical reasons. 1604059 LAC R.L. Mitchell failed due to being mentally unsuitable, bad temper. 1624942 LAC G. Bradley and 1582558 LAC D.B. Holland both failed due to lack of natural flying ability. Fourteen of the new pilots were granted officer commissions with all [except six] posted back to home country, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. Six students were selected for Flying Instructor Training [top course marks] and remained in Canada posted to No. 1 Flying Instructor School, Trenton, Ontario. Each student pilot made four flights over the Airdrie bomb range at Wood Lake, dropping two smoke bombs on each pass. That means this course dropped at least 448 smoke bombs in Wood Lake, where they remain today, beside a few unexploded ordnances.

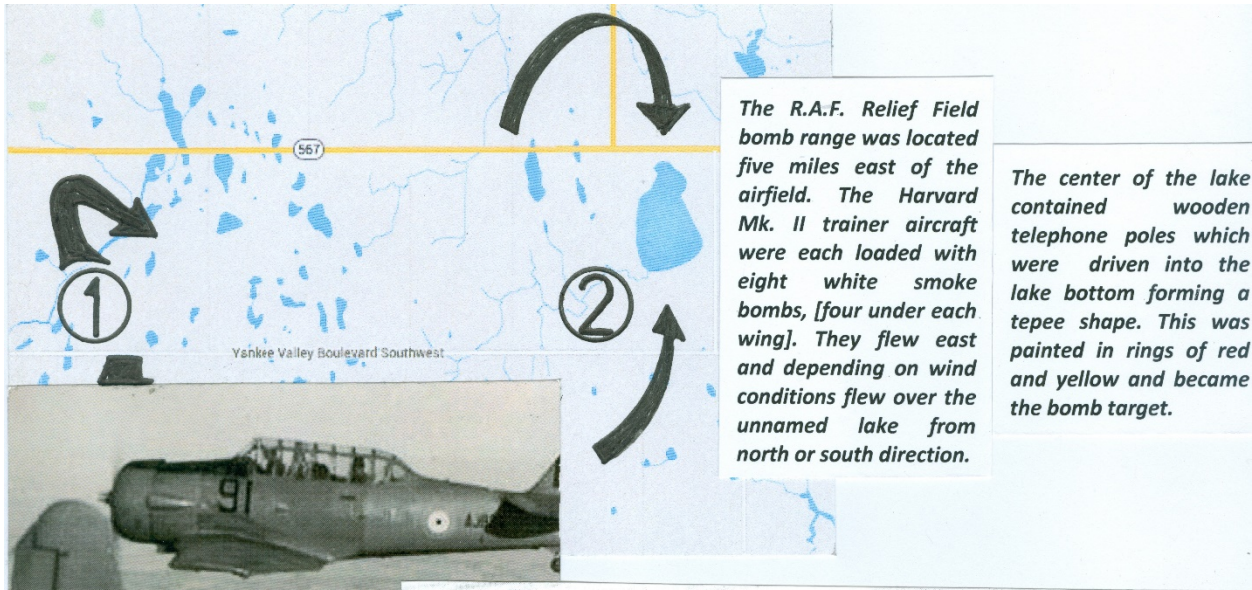






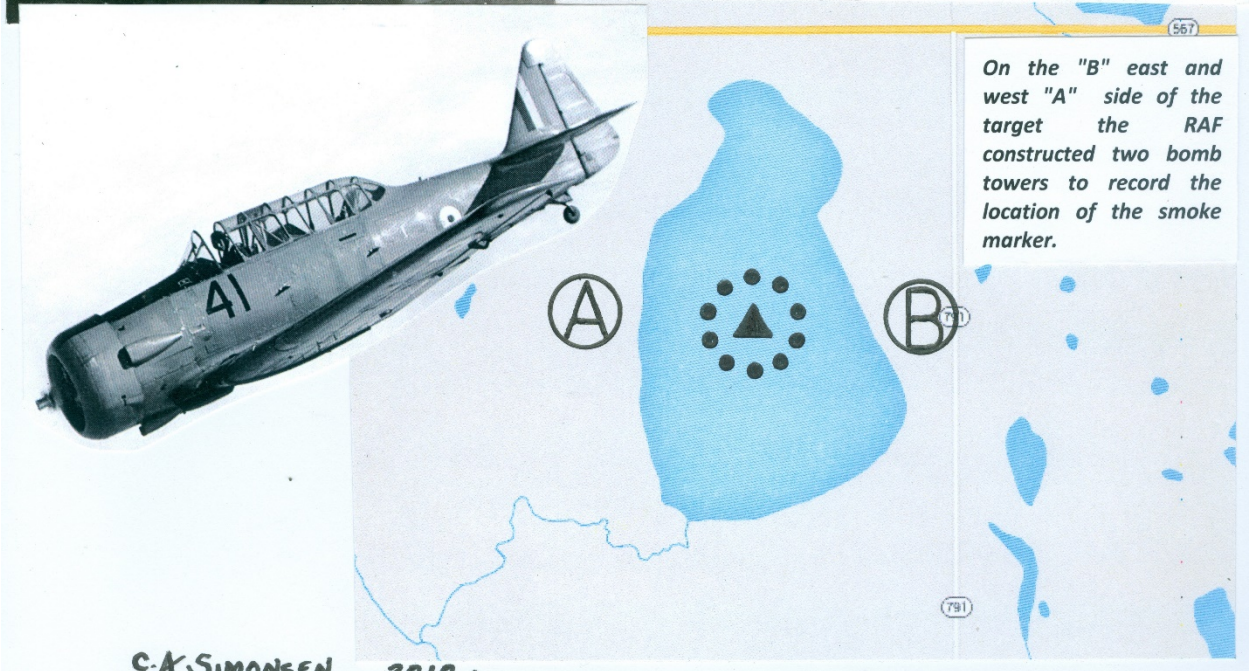
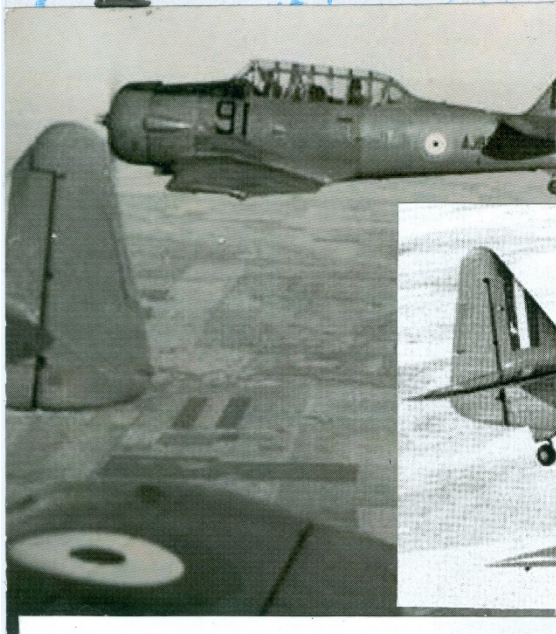
One rare photo taken from the mobile radio control tower vehicle showing a Harvard taking off and the three cement bomb storage/assembly buildings on the right of the aircraft.





The R.A.F. Relief Field bomb range was located five miles east of the airfield. The Harvard Mk. II trainer aircraft were each loaded with eight white smoke bombs, [four under each wing]. They flew east and depending on wind conditions flew over the unnamed lake from north or south direction.

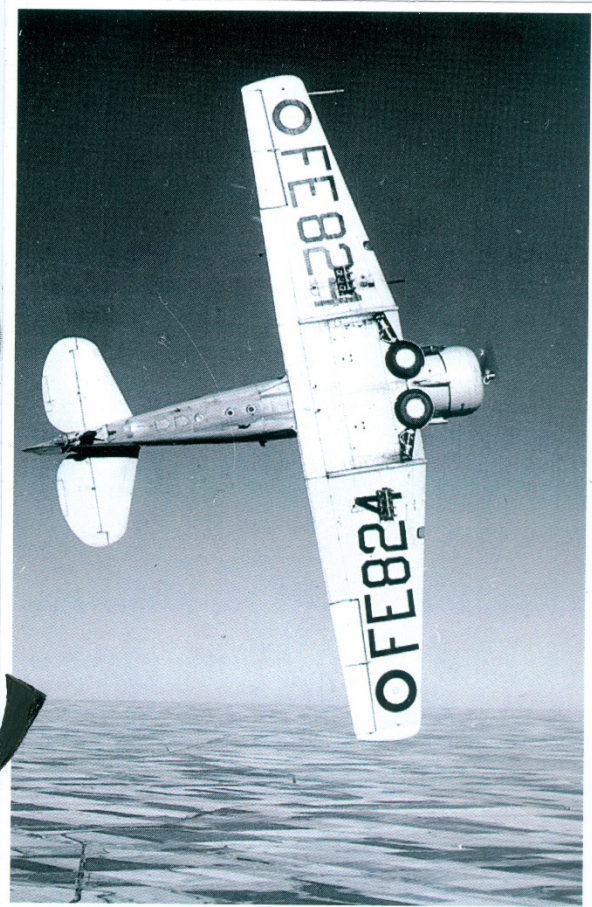
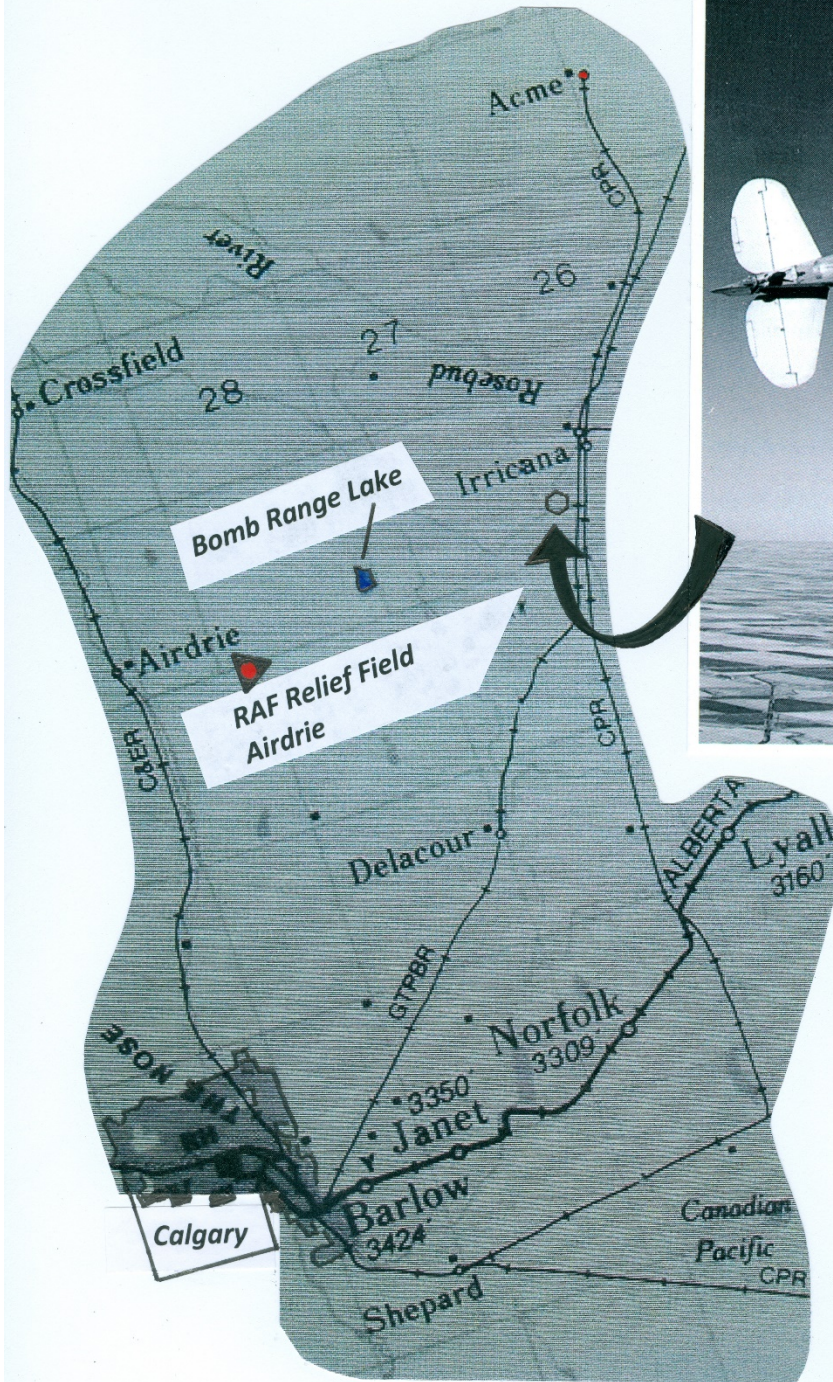
The center of the lake contained wooden telephone poles which were driven into the lake bottom forming a tepee shape. This was painted in rings of red and yellow and became the bomb target.



On the "B" east and west "A" side of the target the RAF constructed two bomb towers to record the location of the smoke marker.



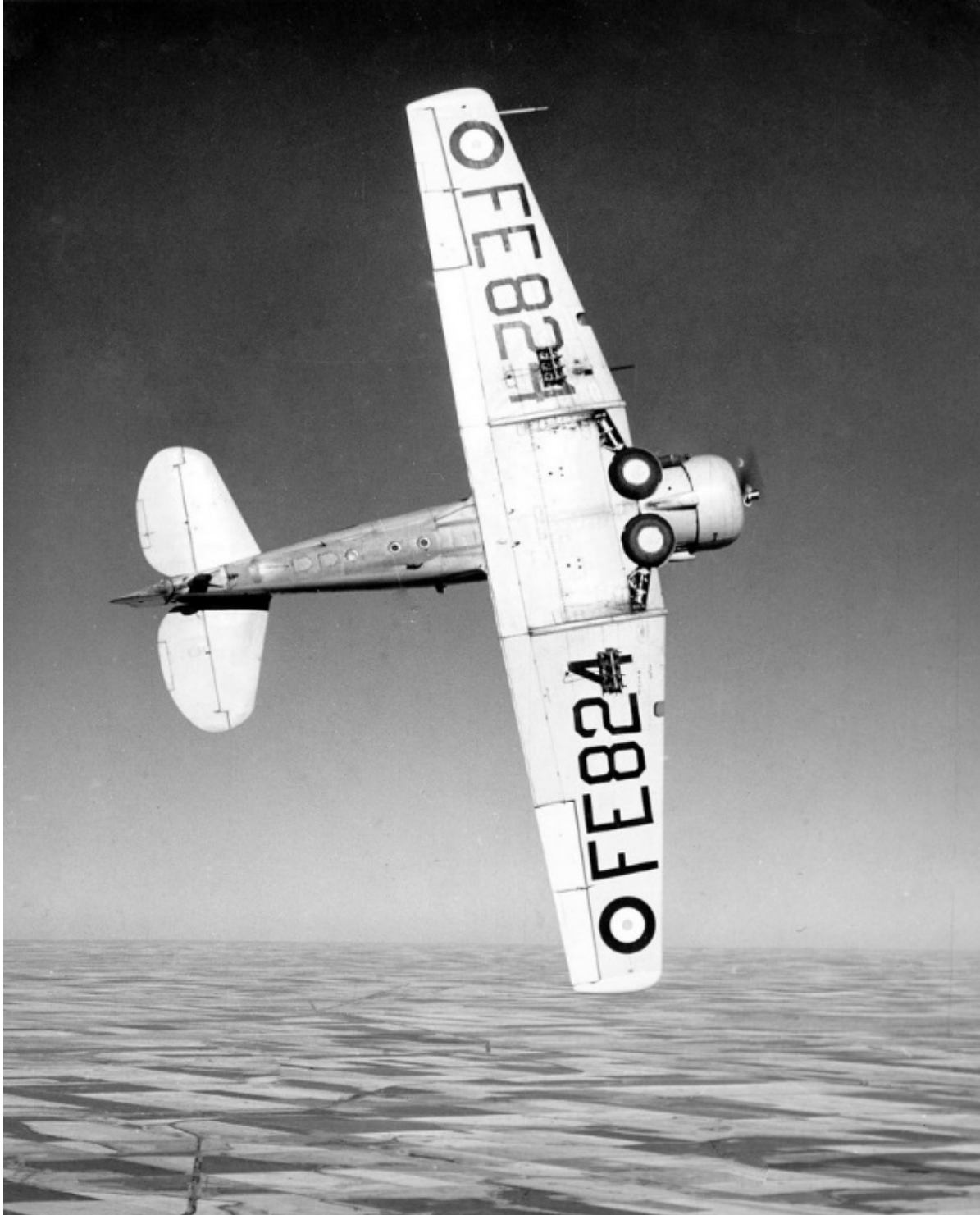
This very impressive image was taken in fall of 1943, approx. six miles east of the RAF bomb range on the lake east of Airdrie airfield. The Harvard Mk. IIB, serial FE824 was taken on charge by No. 37 SFTS at Calgary, Alberta, on 9 February 1943.



This aircraft has dropped all eight smoke bombs and before returning to base, decided to have an image recorded. The CPR railway rack leading to villages of Irricana and Acme is shown snaking northwards below the aircraft. The author was born on a farm at Acme, Alberta, on 24 March 1944.

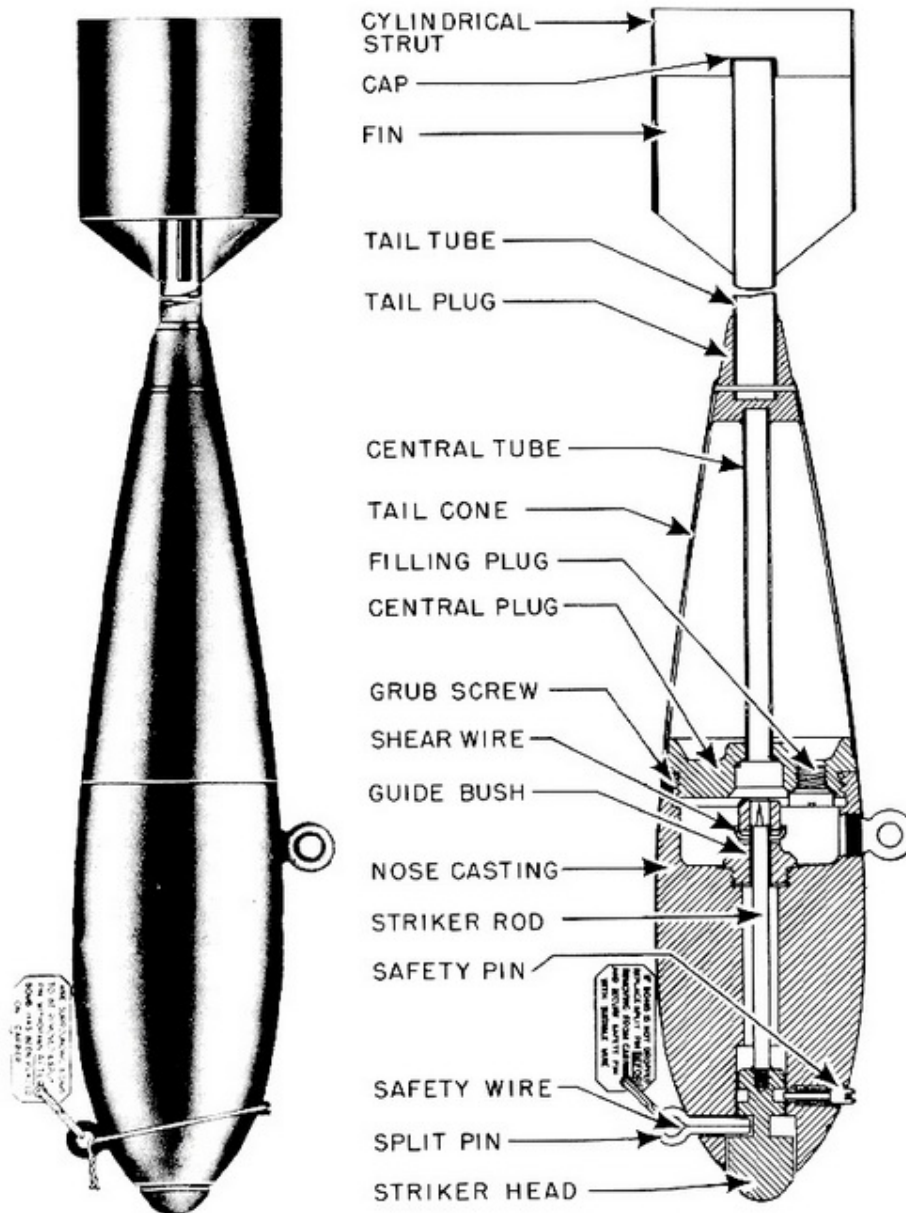
The RAF departed Calgary and Airdrie on 10 October 1944 and Harvard FE824 was transferred to the RCAF where it flew until 2 October 1946. Total hours were 2053:00.  
C. A. SIMONSEN.





**This unknown British/Australian/New Zealand RAF future fighter pilot has dropped all his eight smoke bombs and now for a little aviation fun. What an impressive photo that needs no words, taken in late 1943 or early January 1944, over Wood Lake No. 1 Bomb Range Airdrie, Alberta. Pilot graduates RAF 17,796 - RAAF 4,045 – RNZAF 2,220 and most earned their Wings over southern Alberta, and Saskatchewan.**





The WWII RCAF and RAF practice smoke bombs which were used at Wood Lake, Airdrie, Bombing Range, 1942-46. When the RAF left on 10 March 1944, the RCAF moved in and continued to use the bomb range until late 1946. After release from the Harvard aircraft the 25 lb. bomb striker head would hit the water or ground causing the striker rod to be driven back igniting the gun powder which gave off a large white smoke. The smoke travelled up the round tail tube showing the location the bomb landed. These bombs were painted solid white, and some had red rings painted on round shaped tail fin or rear section of the bomb casing. It is estimated over 10,000 of these smoke bombs remain in Wood Lake, Airdrie, today, some still armed and dangerous.

**R.A.F. Bomb  
Towers at Airdrie,  
1942-44**

*Each bomb tower "A"  
and "B" was aligned at  
the same equal distance  
from the bomb target in  
Airdrie lake.*

*One LAC was placed in  
each tower with a fixed  
instrument that could  
swing 360 degrees. This  
instrument had sighting  
like a rifle, with circle and  
cross hairs at rear and  
ball sight at front. This  
sight was aligned with  
the white smoke released  
by the dropped bomb.  
The numbers recorded on  
a 360 degree disk was  
then marked for each  
student bomb run.*

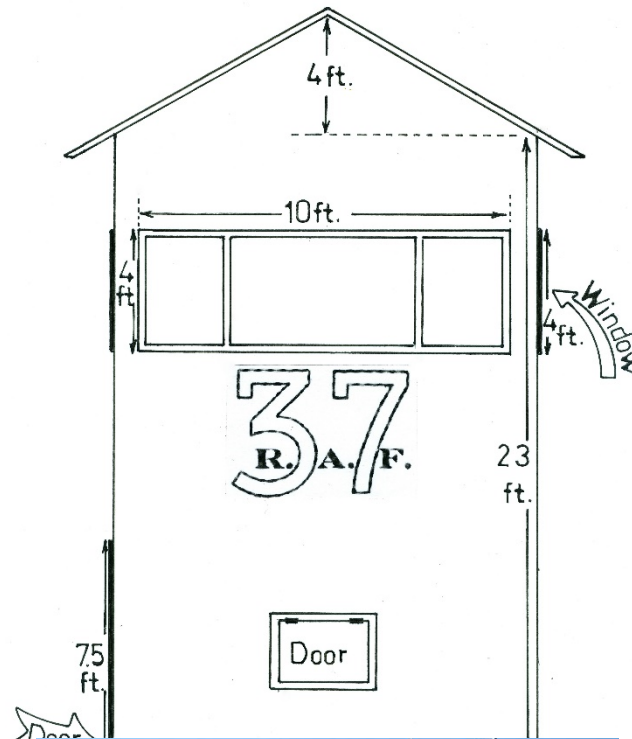


Each evening the RAF instructors aligned the recorded map numbers and drew two lines which made an X on the location the bomb was dropped. This very simple bomb record was the modern computer for the war years [1942-44] at Airdrie, Alberta, Wood Lake Bomb Range.

The two RAF constructed bomb towers base measured twelve feet wide at front and back, the sides measured thirteen feet in width. The structure was twenty-seven feet high in the middle with a roof that sloped down four feet on each side. The front side facing the lake contained three joined windows, ten feet width by four feet high, located on the second floor, which was reached by a single set of stairs running up the inside rear wall of the building. The two side walls each contained a four foot by five-foot window, on the second



floor, allowing the airmen to look left or right to observe the arriving Harvard aircraft. The right side on the main floor wall contained a single seven and one half-foot high door for entering the building. The front of the building main floor contained a small hatch door which only opened outwards, locked from the inside. The rear wall of the structure contained no openings, doors, or windows.



This RAF tower was used by the RCAF from April 1944 until the fall of 1946. Farmer Harry Cromwell then purchased the tower from the RCAF for \$125.00, pulling it by his tractor to his farm property, where it was placed over his water well. Seventy-three years later this WWII RAF Airdrie Bomb tower survives and it is still being occupied. The far right wall is today [2019] home to wild honey bees, who have taken over the space between the walls. This is possibly the only surviving original RAF WWII aircraft bombing range observation building in Canada. Nobody cares, and no Canadian Museum wishes to preserve RAF bomb range history.



By July 1942, the Canadian aviation industry still struggled to get the Avro Anson II into full production, with most of these new aircraft were assigned to pilot training schools, the navigator training schools continued to fly the ancient Mk. I, III, and IV aircraft. In early October 1942, No. 37 SFTS RAF Calgary received on strength six new RCAF Avro Anson Mk. II aircraft [three more arrived in November 42] for navigational student pilot training, and staff transportation.

Anson #11300	28 Dec. 1940	Calgary Oct. 42, accident 18 May 43. Off strength 17 Aug. 1946 - 406:15 Hrs. flying time.
Anson 7402	11 May 1942	Calgary Oct. 42, accident 13 Feb. 45, Off strength 10 May 1945.
Anson 7403	11 May 1942	Calgary 25 Sept. 42, Off strength 14 May 1947.



Anson 7404	11 May 1942 15 Jan. 1947.	Calgary Oct. 42, accident 20 May 43, Off strength
Anson 7405	11 May 1942 17 Aug. 1946.	Calgary Oct. 42, accident 1 June 43, Off strength
Anson 7407	11 May 1942	Calgary Oct. 42, accident Calgary 10 Dec. 42, crashed Vulcan 9 Jan. 45, 439:15 hrs. Off strength 22 Feb. 45.
Anson 7409	12 May 1942	Calgary Nov. 42, Night crash 30 Nov. 1943, Off strength 16 Aug. 1946.
Anson 7410	12 May 1942 27 Jan. 1947	Calgary Nov. 42, accident 10 June 43, Off strength
Anson 7411	12 May 1942	Calgary Nov. 42, accident burst tire 13 June 1943, Off strength 12 Nov. 1946.

## DAILY DIARY

OF

(UNIT OR FORMATION) No. 37 Service Flying Training School.

13.6.43.

Whilst travelling at 65 miles per hour, the port tire of aircraft (Anson II) 7411 burst during a take-off run, and inspite of the pilot's attempts to correct the subsequent swing, the aircraft struck the boundary light, and the undercarriage collapsed. Category "B" damage was caused. The pilot, 115169 F/O Mansfield, L.W., and the four passengers, 993165 Cpl Burton, K., 651680 LAC Foster, W., 645714 LAC Lang, D.O., and 573420 Cpl Stacey, H.L.W. were all uninjured.

The RCAF Anson II had cabin heating, a square astrodome fitted with heat jets, and two navigator desks with a complete set of instruments. This allowed for training of four students on each flight, as noted above in Daily Diary Anson serial 7411 crash report. Below is a nice flying shot of Avro Anson 7411 in the farm country around Airdrie, Alberta, fall of 1943. This also records the correct RAF roundel wing markings locations used at RAF Calgary, Alberta.



**Permanent RAF Staff Officers' and NCO's at No. 37 SFTS Calgary, Alberta, October 1942.**

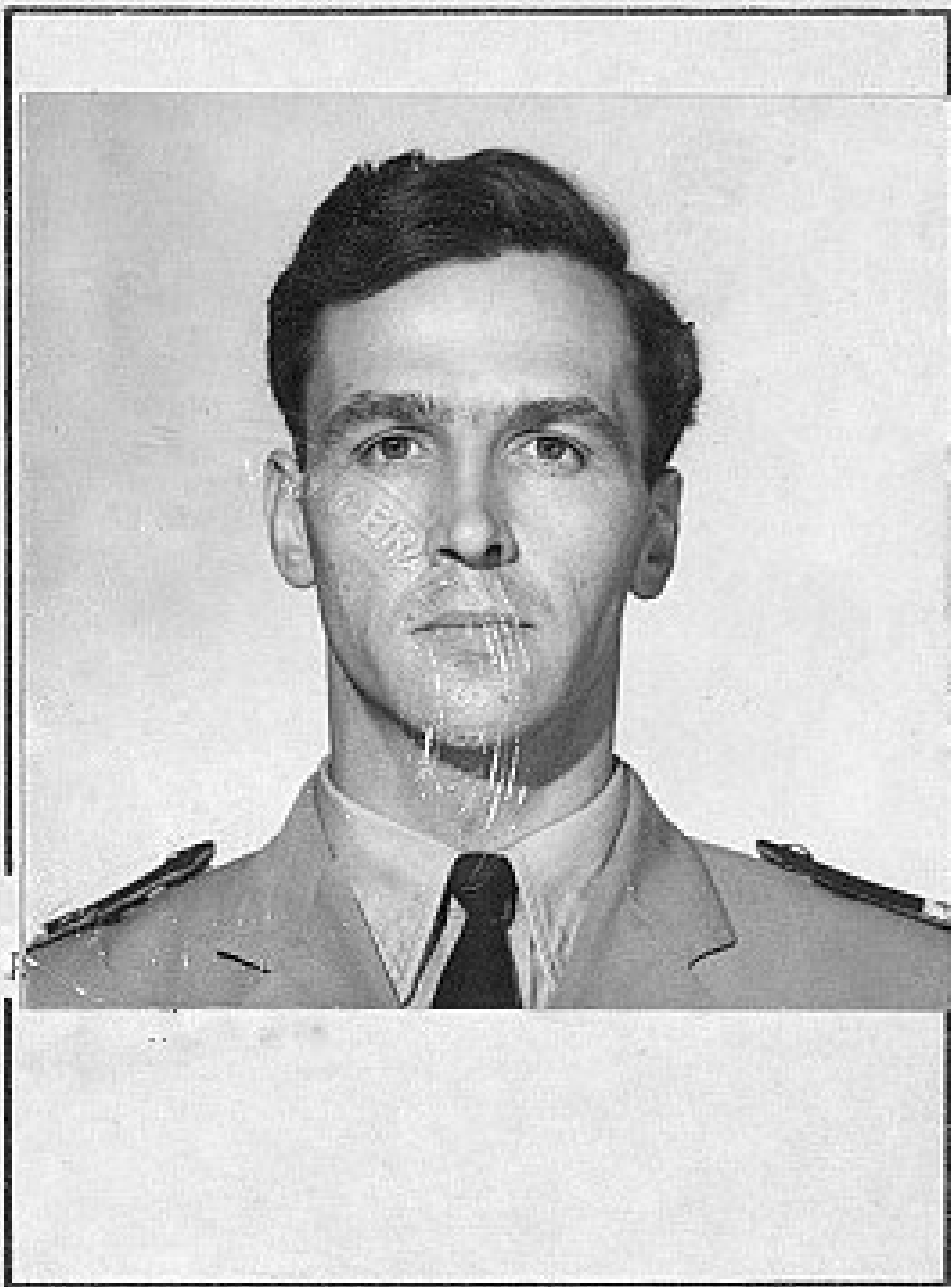
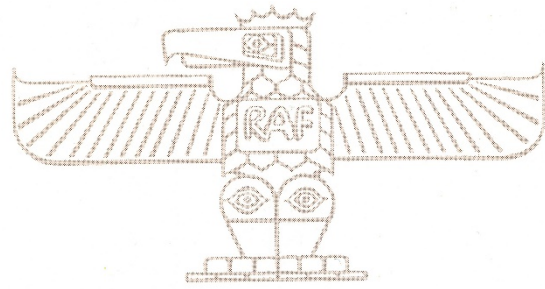
P/O Baker, F/O Bates, S/L Best, W/C Blake, F/O Booth, P/O Bower, Sgt. R.N.G. Bray, F/O Bromfield, P/O Brown, F/O John Brown [killed 24 Nov. 43] F/O Bryant, F/O Casley, F/O A. S. Carter, F/O O.S.D. Carter, F/O A. Chadwick, F/O F.F. Clarke, F/L Clelland, F/O Cooper, P/O P.D. Corlette [killed 7 Jan. 43] P/O Darke, S/L Davies, F/O Deane, F/O De Verteuil, F/Lt. E.G. Ford [killed 10 Dec. 42] F/O Gale, F/O Greig, P/O M.J. Gubbins, F/O Hames, W/C Hancock, F/O Hicks, S/L Jackson, F/O Jeffery, F/L E.O. Jones, F/L H. B. Jones, P/O Jackson, F/L Korner, P/O Lattin, F/O Leeming, F/L Luck, F/L Mason, F/O Maxwell, F/L McArdle, F/Lt. I.F. McDermott, F/O McKelvey, Sgt. G.F. Lambert, F/L Peter Middleton, F/L M. V. Morgan, F/O Morgan, F/O Muirhead, F/L North, F/O Norminton, P/O Offen, F/O Osborne, F/L Ossulston, P/O Passey, S/L Palmer, F/O A.I. Philips [killed 12 Oct. 42] P/O Potter, P/O Ray, S/L Reuss, P/O Ridgeway, F/Sgt. K.W. Rosewell [killed 8 Jan. 44] F/L Ross, F/L Samuel, F/O Saward, F/O Saxton, F/L Scott, F/O Seldon, P/O Severn, P/O Stephens, G/C J. B. Stockbridge, F/O Smalley, Sgt. S.D. Timms, P/O Walkden, S/L Warlow, F/L Werner, F/L Wheeler, F/O J.K. Williams, and F/L Wright. Thirty-four of these seventy-nine RAF officers and NCO's were Harvard II aircraft Flying Instructors.





**This image was taken at No. 37 SFTS RAF Calgary on Christmas 1943, showing eight RAF Flying Instructors. Correct names would be appreciated by the author.**

**The majority of these British Harvard II Flying Instructors remained at Calgary until closing 10 March 1944. The Flying Instructors of the BCATP [both RCAF and RAF], were the unsung heroes of the Second World War, chosen from the best pilots of their class and not always keen for their frustrating and often dangerous student training job. They received eight weeks special training and were rated in four main categories: A1, granted to only the most experienced instructor with exceptional flying ability. A2, was for a very good instructor, B1 and B2 was awarded to an outstanding or more capable flying instructor. On 10 March 1944, these Flying Instructors returned to England, and a large number became Mosquito pilots.**





**Peter Francis Middleton was born at West Yorkshire, England, 3 September 1920, joined the RAF in 1940, and became a flying Instructor the following May 1941. I do not know his rating, possibly one of the few A1 instructors. Posted to Canada RAF No. 39 SFTS, Swift Current, Saskatchewan, promoted to F/Lt. 9 March 1942. Arrived RAF No. 37 SFTS Calgary, Alberta, 28 September 1942. F/Lt. Peter Middleton led the RAF student/pilots from course No. 80 [60 students began 3 May 1943] and No. 82 [68 students began 1 June 1943] in the official 58<sup>th</sup> opening parade of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede, 5 July 1943. I feel he was selected by his Commanding Officer [Group/Captain D. Iron, O.B.E.] for his special Flying Instructor leadership abilities.**

58<sup>TH</sup> CALGARY 58<sup>TH</sup>  
**EXHIBITION**  
**AND STAMPEDE**  
**JULY 5-10**  
**1943**

ENTERTAINS ONE QUARTER MILLION PEOPLE ANNUALLY



"HITTING THE TRACK"

Photograph by Courtesy of Frank A. Halliday

A Scene From Calgary's Famous Chuck Wagon Race • The Most Thrilling Contest in the World • Staged Nightly in Front of the Grandstand



5. 7. 43.

This, the first day of Calgary Exhibition and Stampede, dawned in magnificent sunshine, which continued throughout the week of this annual event. In order that everyone possible should have an opportunity of seeing the famous Stampede Parade, the day was declared a general holiday, and only essential services were maintained on the station. Pupils of Nos. 80 and 82 Courses took part in the two-mile long procession, under the command of F/Lt. P.F. MIDDLETON, while F/O. R.H. SAXTON, F/O. E.C. JONES and W/O. R.H. EVANS also took part. Large numbers of personnel subsequently attended the afternoon and evening sessions of the Stampede thus embracing this rare opportunity of seeing the old west of Zane Grey and the Silent Pictures come to life.

S/Ldr. J.C.E. REUSS, arrived on the station from No. 39 S.F.T.S., SWIFT CURRENT, to take over the duties of Chaplain, vice S/Ldr. R.O. MOSSOP.

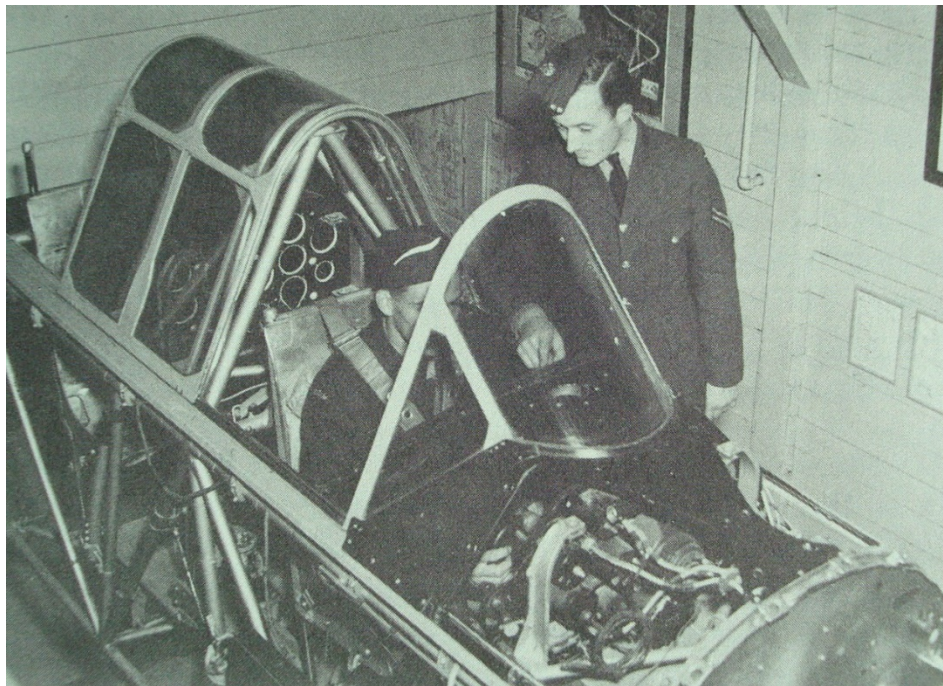
Maximum possible flying hours - 24, but no flying took place owing to the Stampede Holiday.

Many RAF WWII parade images are preserved in the archives of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede; however, the author cannot afford the cost for long-time usage on my free Preserving the Past Aviation Blog site.



Sixty-eight years passed before a small forgotten part of RAF history would repeat itself at the Calgary Stampede Parade, 8 July 2011. A most gorgeous Royal British [cow-girl] watched the Calgary Stampede Parade, seated beside her new RAF helicopter pilot husband Prince William, known as the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Catherine [Kate] Middleton was the granddaughter of F/Lt. Peter Francis Middleton. On this same spot in July 1943, a young RAF Flying Instructor Peter Middleton led 128 British student Harvard fighter pilots on their one and only appearance in the Calgary Stampede. Twenty-two Australians led the first RAF July 1942 Stampede parade. F/Lt. Middleton departed Calgary at 19:00 hrs, 10 March 1944, on a special CPR officers train headed for eastern Canada, and back to U.K., where he flew de Havilland Mosquito Mk. VI aircraft with No. 605 Squadron at Manston, Kent, England. Capt. Middleton flew postwar with British European Airways, and much more family history can be found on the internet. Capt. Middleton [90 years] passed away 2 November 2010.

In learning to fly the Harvard the RAF student pilot made a great jump from the RCAF Tiger Moth or American PT-27 Stearman [March to November 1942] aircraft they flew around 70 hours as an elementary trainer.



The RAF service flying schools were equipped with a Harvard cockpit drill trainer, such as above taken at RAF No. 34 SFTS Medicine Hat, Alberta, December 1943. [PMR 81-138 Ottawa] This was where the students began by making themselves familiar with the layout and many functions of instruments and controls in the new Harvard cockpit. Next came four hours of dual instruction and the pre-take-off drill which had to be memorized perfectly, H-Harness/Hatches, T-Trim, M-Mixture, P-Pitch [prop], F-Flaps, C-Carb/heat, G-Gas, and S-Switches. After three or four flights the Flying Instructor decided when the student was ready to make his first solo flight and take full control of the tremendous 600 h.p. Pratt and Whitney Wasp engine. A few good RAF students never returned from their first solo flight. Harvard manoeuvres were repeated again and again until the student obtained a degree of proficiency, then he was slowly given more freedom and encouraged to get the best performance out of the massive, heavy, rugged, Harvard II trainer. Cross-country flights by day and night raised the discomforting thought of engine failure and a forced landing in an inhospitable section of vast farm and ranch lands in Western Canada. As the weeks passed the RAF students gained confidence and experience and now two-hour sessions of aerobatics were introduced. The night landing flights were very primitive by today's standard, as simple coal oil goose necked flares lined the runway, smoking and flickering for the returning pilots. With all these hurdles and obstacles safely passed, graduation day arrived and the proud pilots received their coveted Wings. The American Harvard trainer aircraft truly earned the title "Pilot Maker."



The above history came from letters and phone calls received from Archie M. Pennie a British pilot who trained in Harvard's at No. 37 SFTS Calgary, beginning 7 December 1942. Archie took his basic RAF training at Heaton Park, Manchester, England, and sailed for Canada on the troopship H.M.T. Letitia, arriving at Halifax in early August 1942. He still had his RAF ship pass which read – "C" Deck, Mess #21, Hammock #86. At RAF No. 31 Personnel Depot, Moncton, New Brunswick, LAC A.M. Pennie was assigned training at No. 32 EFTS Bowden, Alberta, and after five days on a train, arrived at Bowden, which was in full prairie harvest mode. He joined 61 other students in Course #64, beginning 14 September 1942. At the elementary flying training school student pilots came face to face with their first aeroplane and the RAF instructor who would teach them how to fly it. Due to a shortage of Tiger-Moth Trainers, No. 32 EFTS at Bowden flew sixty-six American PT-27 Stearman biplane aircraft from April to 14 November 1942, and LAC Pennie was a member of the last RAF course to train in these freezing open cockpit biplane aircraft. RAF personnel had flown to the Stearman Aircraft Company, at Wichita, Kansas, on 17 October 1941, and ordered 300 American biplane trainers [lend-lease] which were designated PT-27 for the British. The first PT-27 arrived at No. 32 EFTS Bowden on 2 March 1942, and all of these aircraft would be modified to Canadian weather conditions in the following months. The pilot canopy modification and cockpit heating system never arrived from Wichita, and all open cockpit training was halted by the RAF on 14 November 1942. The 60 British pilots in Course #64 were issued with leather face masks, which they wore to complete their flying training in the freezing skies around Bowden. On 28 November 1942, the British RAF made the decision to return the remaining PT-27 open cockpit trainers [287 survived] to Great Falls, Montana, in the coldest months of Alberta winter weather. RAF Course #64 graduated 54 student pilots on 6 November 1942, one was killed in training, and seven failed the course. Thirty-five RAF students were posted to RAF No. 36 SFTS at Penhold, for bomber pilot training in Airspeed Oxfords, while the remaining nineteen were posted to No. 37 SFTS at Calgary for fighter pilot training in the Harvard II trainer. Archie Pennie was one of the nineteen students selected for pilot training at Calgary, and each of these student pilots were ordered to fly a Stearman PT-27 trainer from Bowden to No. 37 SFTS at Calgary on 6 December 1942.

NO. 32 E.F.T.S., R.A.F., BOWDEN, ALBERTA.		
Strength of Unit as at the First and Last days of NOVEMBER		
Course 64: 14.9.42	6.11.42 54 graduates	35 to 36 S.F.T.S. 19 to 37 S.F.T.S. – Calgary
Intake:	61	
Transfers to other courses	2	
	<u>59</u>	
Transfers from other courses	5	
	<u>64</u>	
Suspensions	7	
	<u>57</u>	
Killed	1	
Total number of hours flown during the month: 5797 hours 46 mins.		



**LAC Archie Pennie stands beside an American PT-27 at No. 32 EFTS Bowden, Alberta, 6 December 1942. In a few minutes [the engine is running] he will put on his leather face mask and fly this open cockpit trainer to No. 37 SFTS at Calgary, the outside air temperature is -50 degrees F. LAC Pennie will begin fighter pilot training in the Harvard II at Calgary, Alberta, the following day, Course #70, with 64 pupils, another twelve will be added during the training, two will be killed in flying training accidents.**



Flying Students at Calgary shared a small room with a double bunk bed, and Archie described his upper bunkmate as a nineteen-year-old, very keen, bright-eyed lad, quick to learn. On 7 January 1943, LAC A. Leder # 1397463 [Pennie's bunkmate] and his RAF flying instructor P/O P.D. Corlett were flying two-and one-half miles east of Conrich, Alberta, when they collided with another Harvard flown by a pupil from course #68, LAC D.A. McAuley. The two aircraft AJ912 and AJ953 were destroyed and three members of No. 37 SFTS were killed instantly.

## DAILY DIARY

OF

(UNIT OR FORMATION) No. 37 Service Flying Training School.

DATE	SUMMARY OF EVENTS	Page 1.
1.4.43.	<p>POSTED STRENGTH OF UNIT: R.C.A.F. Officers (Staff) 6, Airmen (Staff) 81, Trainees - Officers 3, Airmen 8. <u>PERSONNEL OTHER THAN R.C.A.F.</u> R.A.F. Officers (Staff) 88, R.A.F. Airmen (Staff) 1041, R.N.Z.A.F. Officers (Staff) 1. <u>TRAINEES.</u> R.A.F. Officers 9, R.A.F. Airmen 223, R.A.A.F. Officers 1, R.N.Z.A.F. Officers 1.</p> <p>GROUP CAPTAIN D.IRON, OBE., returned from leave to resume command of the Unit. Maximum possible flying hours - 24.</p>	
2.4.43.	<p>"Wings" were presented by GROUP CAPTAIN D.IRON, OBE. to 56 graduates of No. 70 Course, of whom 13 received commissions. The presentation took place in the Drill Shed, but perfect spring weather enabled the Commanding Officer to review the entire parade on the Square. Disposal of the graduates was as follows:- 6 to No. 77 Course at No. 3 F.I.S.; 8 to No. 77 Course at No. 1 F.I.S., 13 to No. 86 Course at No. 31 G.R.S., 7 to No. 11 Course at No. 1 O.T.U., 2 to No. 1 "Y" Depot and 20 to No. 31 P.D. <u>No. 70 Course had commenced training on 7th December, 1942 with 64 pupils, a further twelve being added during its duration. Of this total of 76, 13 were transferred to No. 72 Course, 2 were killed in flying accidents, 2 were discontinued training, 1 ceased training upon transfer to a twin-engined School and 2 were posted away in January upon completing a Refresher Course. During the evening a very enjoyable Airmens' Invitation and Hostesses Dance was held in the Recreation Hall.</u></p> <p>Group Captain G.L. <del>WEST</del> of No. 4 Training Command visited the Unit. Maximum possible flying hours - 24.</p>	

Archie Pennie graduated on 2 April 1943, received his wings, was promoted to F/Lt. and selected for Flying Instructor training in Canada. In April 2010, I donated all of my RAF Bowden research, photos, and letters from F/Lt. Archie Pennie to Dave O'Malley of Vintage Wings in Ottawa. Please go to Vintage Wings of Canada to read three excellent stories on this WWII RAF Flying Instructor [night] P/O Archie M. Pennie #157698, who flew 252 hrs, training RAF students in night flying, No. 34 EFTS, RAF Assiniboia, Saskatchewan. Canada provided a safe training site for the British students, an abundance of healthy food, bright lights for study and entertainment, and as would be expected, many fell in love with Canadian girls and married. The normal training time spent in Canada averaged around eighteen months and a staff posting lasted two years. Generally, most of the RAF student trainees looked forward to receiving their wings and then returning to the United Kingdom, where over half would be killed in flying accidents or WWII combat. A large number of RAF airman who survived the war returned to Canada, and I have interviewed a few in southern Alberta. Archie Pennie returned to eastern Canada after the war, married and resided in Ottawa, for the rest of his life.



No. 34 RAF Assiniboia, Sask., closed 30 January 1944, taken over by RCAF and re-designated No. 25 EFTS, closing for good 28 July 1944. In 1958, Archie Pennie returned to visit his old RAF base and it was totally gone. On 18 March 1959, he published his story "Assiniboia Revisited."

By A. M. PENNIE in the Magazine 'Flight'. - 18 MARCH 59.

TO the youth of today the name Assiniboia probably means nothing. Few could place it on the right continent and far fewer could spot it in the correct Province of Canada. Yet 15 years ago it was a thriving part of Britain, existing as No. 34 EFTS, Royal Air Force, on the prairies of south Saskatchewan. In its 2½ years of operation some 2,500 budding pilots made their homes there and learned the rudiments of flying.

Like most of the flying training stations of the Commonwealth Air Training Plan, it was situated miles from anywhere and seemed as if it had been planted on the bald prairie as a prefabricated unit. And that is literally what did happen; construction crews moved in to the wide, empty spaces practically overnight and rapidly transformed the prairie into the familiar triangular-runwayed airfield with its stereotyped but well-designed living and working quarters. The only inhabitants who suffered as a result of the metamorphosis were the gophers, the prairie chickens, and the coyotes.

Most pupils had but a passing knowledge of Assiniboia and their two months' posting passed perhaps all too quickly. But in that short time they came to look upon the station as their home and, like most early-training stations, it remained as a pleasant landmark in their careers.

TO those of us whose lot it was to instruct, Assiniboia meant a great deal more. For the majority it was our first permanent home in the Air Force. Ever since we had joined we had been continually on courses; here, at long last, we escaped from the stigma of being pupils and found somewhere to put away kitbags and hang up clothes in a wardrobe.

After barrack-room life, accommodation was princely and we were treated with the re-

spect one always thought a brand new pilot deserved! We had a job of work to do — a challenging job — and working conditions could not have been better. Companionship was ideal and some of our strongest and most lasting friendships were made on the prairies.

The mention of the name Assiniboia brings back a flood of memories and recollections — the beautiful prairie sunrises and sunsets; the early morning and late evening flights in the still, quiet air; the joy of aerobatics in the clear blue prairie sky; the welcome beer on the mess verandah at the end of a hot Summer's day; discussions of the finer points of flying as we watched the last stragglers coming in to land at dusk. Later in the evening, the sing-songs in the mess, the surreptitious raids on the kitchen for potatoes to roast in the open fireplace, and, of course, the feats of strength and acrobatics on the pipes and hot-air ducts suspended from the ceiling. And there were many more — the days off and visits to the town of Assiniboia with its unpaved streets and board-walks; the old El Prado beer parlor; the White Dove Cafe and Billy, its genial and friendly proprietor; and, of course, the many kind and hospitable inhabitants who made their homes ours.

ALL these and many other memories came to mind as I drove down from Moose Jaw to visit Assiniboia after an absence of 14 years. As the town of Congress was neared excitement increased, yet there was no sign of the airfield. The left turn on to the narrow gravelled road was made; but after a couple of miles still no field appeared. Then a passing farmer reassured me that I was on the right road but added that there was nothing left of the station.

I could scarcely believe his words and felt and hoped that he was exaggerating. A mile or so further on the remains of the old familiar wire fence appeared but beyond it there was literally nothing. My heart sank to my boots and I had

the strange feeling that something great had gone out of my life forever — something that could never be replaced. All the buildings had disappeared; grass and weeds had taken over and in some places had grown to a height of two or three feet. Caragana, that ubiquitous prairie shrub, had moved in and was now flourishing on roadways, open spaces, and on the remains of building foundations. The scene was one of complete desolation and my feelings were of loneliness, regret and sorrow.

I FOUND my way to my old quarters and from there to the mess, to stand where I had often stood by the fireplace, now overgrown by two or three caragana bushes, then down to the tarmac and the remains of the hangar area. I could pace out where the flight office, instructors' rooms, crew rooms and canteen used to be. I drove down each cracked and weed-grown runway, and without effort turned the clock back 14 years to re-live for a few quiet moments some of the halcyon days of 1942-44. How clearly I recalled the incessant rasping noise of aircraft engines, the sweet yet sickly smell of gasoline, the feeling of satisfaction and achievement on sending a pupil on his first solo flight and exhilaration of flying on a cold, frosty night!

Assiniboia's wartime inhabitants are now scattered throughout the four corners of the world, and the gophers, prairie chickens and coyotes have returned to the habitat from which they were evicted in 1941. In the town it is easier to see that all this was not a dream. The main street is almost unchanged but it is now paved and there are concrete sidewalks.

The buildings are little changed in character but the names have altered. Billy has departed and the White Dove is now the City Cafe. Joe the taximan is much older but still in business; and the El Prado, as a result of modernization, has changed its name to something more plebeian and less

romantic and thus has lost a great deal of its color and atmosphere. Many of our old friends still live in Assiniboia. Their hospitality is as generous and overwhelming as it ever was and their scrapbooks, fascinating in retrospect, are perhaps the only recorded histories of these memorable days. Round the town, scattered here and there, are many of the old buildings salvaged from the airfield, and parts of our old home are still recognizable despite modifications and coats of paint.

IT IS a pity, one feels, that the RAF did not erect some sort of permanent memorial — at Assiniboia and at other such places — indicating the part they played in the Second World War. Like many of the smaller towns in Canada that nurtured and fostered the Air Training Plan, Assiniboia has its plot of land that will forever be part of Britain.

There in that green and halcyon spot, just as we left them, are the 16 graves of those who never left the prairie. Time, Man, and Nature have erased the airfield but these well-tended graves still remain and are the sad but the only tangible evidence that there once was an RAF Station called Assiniboia.

## Assiniboia Revisited

No. 34 E.F.T.S.  
18 MARCH 1959.  
From - ARCHIE PENNIE  
C.A.D.



Archie was very proud to know his old training base at Airdrie, Alberta, had somehow survived the passage of time, also troubled by the fact WWII RAF history of Calgary, Alberta, was not being preserved.

**Nineteen single-engine Harvard II pilot training courses were held at No. 37 SFTS  
Calgary**

Course #60 [students were in Harvard II aircraft mid-training when they arrived at Calgary 25 September 1942] seven failed, graduated 57 pilots, 6 November 1942.

Course #62 [in training when they arrived Calgary] five killed in October 42, LAC Darling, LAC Buckley, F/O A.I. Philips, F/Sgt. R.F. Warner, and LAC H.C. Cormack, graduated 53 pilots, 5 December 42.

Course #64 graduated 51 pilots, seven failed, 30 December 1942.

Course #66 graduated 56 pilots, two failed, 5 February 1943.

Course #68 began 9 Nov. 42, graduated 54, six failed, 5 March 1943.

Course #70 began 7 Dec. 42, graduated 56, two ceased training, two killed, 2 April 1943.

Course #72 began graduated 60 pilots, six failed, one killed, 30 April 1943.

Course #74 began 8 Feb. 43, graduated 55 pilots, one ceased training, 28 May 1943.

Course #76 began 8 Mar. 43, 63 pupils, 34 failed medical reasons, 25 transferred to Course #78, six posted away, graduated 35 pilots, 25 June 1943.

Course #78 began 5 April 43, 31 transferred to Course #80, graduated 55 pilots, 23 July 1943.

Course #80 began 3 May 1943, one killed, five discontinued training, graduated 55 pilots [45 RAF], 20 Aug. 1943.

Course #82 began 1 June 1943, one killed, twelve discontinued training, graduated 53 pilots, [first class of all RAF Sergeants], 17 Sept. 1943.

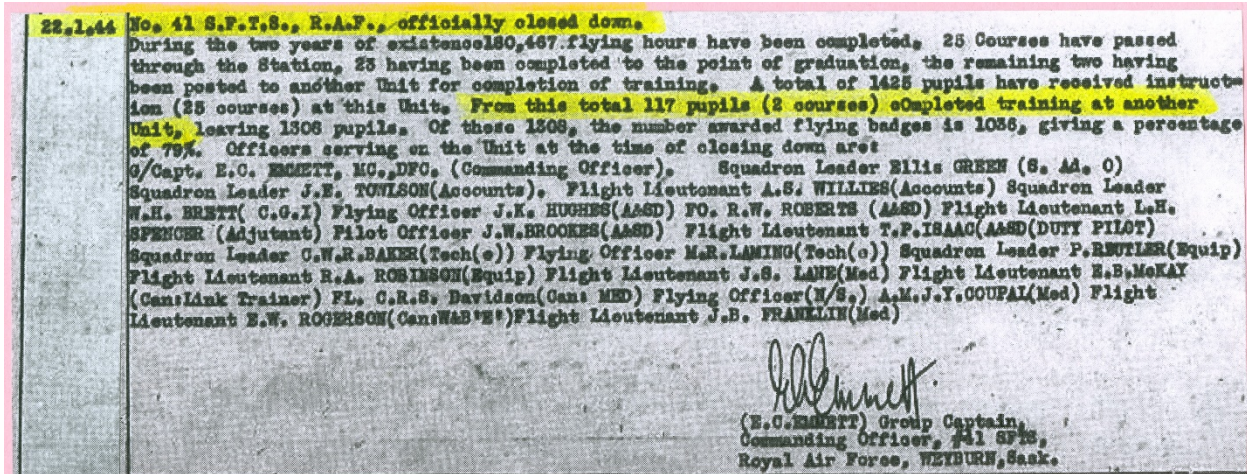
Course #84 began with 55 pupils 28 June 1943, one killed, three discontinued training, graduated 46 pilots, 15 October 1943.

Course #86 began 60 pupils 26 July 1943, graduated 60 pilots, 12 Nov. 1943.

Course #88 began 23 Aug. 1943, 62 trainees, one killed 51513 P/O John Brown 24 Nov. 43, four failed, graduated 56 pilots, 10 December 1943.

Course #90 graduated 56 pilots, 14 January 1944. This course consisted of twenty-seven RAF, six RAAF, and twenty-three RNZAF.

At the request of the British government, Canada allowed their RAF schools to be the first closed. This British closure began with RAF No. 41 SFTS Weyburn, Saskatchewan, which officially closed on 22 January 1944. Their last two courses totaling 117 students in training, were transferred to No. 37 SFTS at Calgary, where they graduated 105 pilots. No. 41 SFTS had received 1,425 students for instruction in twenty-five courses, graduating 1,036 Harvard II pilots, for return to wartime England. Over half will be killed in action.



Course #92 at No. 37 SFTS Calgary, [This course with 61 pupils was posted from No. 41 SFTS Weyburn, Saskatchewan, on 15 January 1944]. They graduated 52 pilots at Calgary, 11 February 1944.

Course #94 at Calgary contained two groups of students. Course #94A began 15 November 1943, with 69 students, 64 graduated on 10 March 1944, one RCAF, thirty-four RAF, one RAAF, and twenty-eight RNZAF, four students were wastage and transferred out, New Zealand student LAC W.D. Shaw was killed 31 December 1944. This became the last RAF fatal flying training accident at No. 37 SFTS, Calgary, Alberta, during WWII.

HARVARD II B FE 409 30th December 1943.	Aircraft swung on landing and although pupil attempted to correct this, aircraft ground looped.	MAIN AIRCRAFT, SERIAL NUMBER 12482	Category D.2. Airframe - Seriously damaged.	SERIAL NO. 12482 LAC DUNCAN, K.D. PUPIL PILOT. UNINJURED.
HARVARD II AF966 31st December 1943.	Aircraft crashed in woods and caught fire. Cause unknown. Investigation being held.	10 miles V.S.V. of Midnapore, Alberta.	Category "A" Aircraft burnt out.	SERIAL NO. 12482 LAC SHAW, W.D. PUPIL PILOT. KILLED.

No. 94B Course graduated the last 53 pilots from No. 41 SFTS Weyburn, Sask. 10 March 1944. This became the very last graduation course at No. 37 SFTS, Calgary, Alberta, and the last Wings Parade at the Drill Hall, today home of the new Flight Hangar Museum of Calgary. It is a pity, each new generation of Calgary citizens can party and dine on this space, where 1,535 pilots [Australian, New Zealand, and British] received their wings, yet there is no memorial to their sacrifice.



# LAST COURSE

No. 37 SFTS

## PARTICULARS OF GRADUATING COURSE FOR THE MONTH ENDING - 10. 3. 44.

Course No. 94 (Veyburn)

Disposition :-

Course began 15th November, 1943 No. 41 S.F.T.S.

Graduates

Number of Trainees starting No available.

7 R.A.F. posted to No. 1 O.T.U.

Course ended 10th March, 1944.

2 R.O.A.F. posted to No. 1 F.I.S.

Transfers in No available.

1 R.N.S.A.F. posted to No. 31 P.D.

Transfers out Not available.

5 R.A.F. posted to No. 1 F.I.S.

Reselection Not available.

38 R.A.F. posted to No. 31 P.D.  
(Includes 1 Netherlander in RAF)

Number of graduates 53 (96.4% of adjusted intake).

TOTAL - 53

Number granted commissions - 16.

Remarks - Winter syllabus only completed.  
Bad weather and time limit due to disbandment of Unit.  
Instructional Standard of Pupils - Very good.  
Discipline - Good.  
Difficulties causing delays in training - Nil.

No. 94 Course (Mr. Veyburn) consisted of :- 2 R.O.A.F., 49 R.A.F., 1 R.N.S.A.F., 1 Netherlander in R.A.F.

TOTAL - 53.

### Wastages.

SN1052441 LAC HIRST, H. Posted to No. 8 B & C.S. effective 26.1.44. (LACKS NATURAL FLYING ABILITY)

SN.1605079 LAC STEVENS, W.D. Posted to No. 8 B & C.S. effective 2.2.44. (FAILURE TO LEARN TO FLY)

SN1583735 LAC HOLMES, H.M. Posted to No. 8 B & C.S. effective 9.2.44. (FAILURE TO LEARN TO FLY)

Graduate flying time - 7252.10

Transfer flying time 646.40

Wastage flying time 366.10

8295.00

Nineteen RAF Harvard II [fighter] pilot courses were completed at No. 37 SFTS Calgary, Alberta, 1 October 1942 until 10 March 1944, with 1,150 RAF students receiving their Wings. Calgary averaged a graduation of 60 students per Harvard II course, plus first graduated a further 385 twin-engine Airspeed Oxford bomber pilots for England. That's 1,535 RAF pilots [including Australian and New Zealand students] who returned to United Kingdom to fight Nazi Germany.

On 10 March 1944, two special CPR trains departed Calgary for Halifax, Nova Scotia, the beginning of their return trip home across the sea. The first train with NCO's, ground crews, and airmen, departed Calgary at 19:00 hrs, the second train with RAF Officers, and Station Commander Group Capt. J.B. Stockbridge and family departed Calgary CPR main station at 20:00 hrs.



*That's all Folks!*

No. 37 SFTS

EXTRACT FROM NO. 37 S.F.T.S. D.R.O. Serial NO. 60 d/d  
10th March 1944, Part 1 (Administration)

FINAL ISSUE

\*1. A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMANDING OFFICER

This will be the final issue of Daily Routine Orders for No. 37 Service Flying Training School. Tonight, the School will cease to exist.

I wish to express to all ranks my appreciation for their co-operation, which has been so readily given at all times, and which has enabled the Unit to obtain for itself an enviable reputation among Units in Canada.

We are now breaking up this pleasant association to go to new labours, and I ask you all to accept my thanks for your past help my good wishes for your future welfare, and may you continue to do your share in bringing the present great conflict to a victorious and speedy conclusion.



**This forgotten plot of land in Calgary will forever be a part of RAF Britain.**



**Thirty members of RAF No. 37 SFTS were killed in southern Alberta, Canada, and they rest in Burnsland Cemetery, where the Union Jack flag flies. Twenty-seven were killed in aircraft training, [one student from New Zealand and twenty-six British], twenty were killed flying the Harvard II, while one walked into a spinning Harvard propeller.**

**LAC John Broadhurst #573151      Killed 8 January 1944, Harvard AJ889, Drumheller, AB.  
Last member killed at Calgary.**

**P/O J. A. Brown #51513              Killed 24 November 1943, Harvard 2739 mid-air with  
Harvard 2566.**

**LAC Cornelius C. Buckley 15396504      Killed 5 October 1942, Harvard AJ836.**

**F/O G.A. Clegg                          Killed 7 January 1943, Harvard AJ953.**

**P/O Peter D. Corlett                      Killed 7 January 1943, Harvard AJ953.**

**Cpl. C.A. Crapper                        Died natural causes, 11 March 1942.**

**LAC Hubert C. Cromack 1125880        Killed 12 October 1942, Harvard AJ854.**

**LAC John C. Darling 1560163          Killed 5 October 1942, walked into Harvard Propeller.**

**LAC Edward C. Dunbavard 1218546      Killed 14 January 1942, Oxford AS382.**

LAC Mosttn V. Eckert 1350866	Killed 28 August 1942, Harvard 8127.
F/Lt. E.G. Ford #81636	Killed 10 December 1942, Harvard AJ759.
LAC H.N. Hall #1512542	Killed 10 December 1942, Harvard AJ759.
AC1 L.A. Keeble #1426377	Fell out of boat, 17 July 43, in [ice cold] Bow River at Banff, body recovered 8 August 1943.
LAC A. Leder #1397463	Killed 7 January 1943, Course 70, Harvard AJ953.
Sgt. Charles A. Lockett #988641	Killed 12 October 1943, Harvard 2631.
LAC Jack Major #1339948	Killed 28 August 1943, Harvard AJ796.
AC1 N.J. Mann #1234015	Died from auto accident, Airdrie, blizzard 6 February 1943.
LAC Henry T. McCarthy 656512	Killed 10 December 1941, Oxford AT457.
LAC D.A. McAuley #1483473	Killed 7 January 1943, Harvard AJ953.
LAC James McNaught #1566353	Killed 5 March 1943, Harvard AJ986, mid-air, student bailed out. Too low, hit ground before parachute opened. The Flying Instructor safely landed the damaged Harvard back at base.
LAC Laurence R. Nimmo 1389540	Killed 14 August 1942, Oxford AS666.
F/O Anthony Phelps	Killed 12 October 1942, Harvard AJ898.
Sgt. Kenneth H. Rosewell #1586791	Killed 8 January 1944, Harvard AJ889, crashed Red Deer, River, Drumheller, Alberta. Second last member killed at Calgary.
LAC J.G. Rynn #1459936	Killed 12 October 1943, night flight Harvard 2631. Ex-Scottish Army Major who transferred to RAF.
LAC William D. Shaw NZ4216082	Killed 31 December 1943, Harvard AJ966.
F/O Iain A.L. Stewart #49623	Killed 1 August 1943, Harvard AJ894.
LAC W.I. Stonebridge 1331534	Killed 10 August 1942, Oxford AS610.
LAC Ernest C. Thomson #1387318	Killed 5 December 1941, Oxford AS365. First student pilot killed at Calgary.
F/Lt. Robert F. Warner	Killed 12 October 1942, Harvard AJ898.
LAC William J. Webb 1331223	Killed 14 August 1942, Oxford BM810.



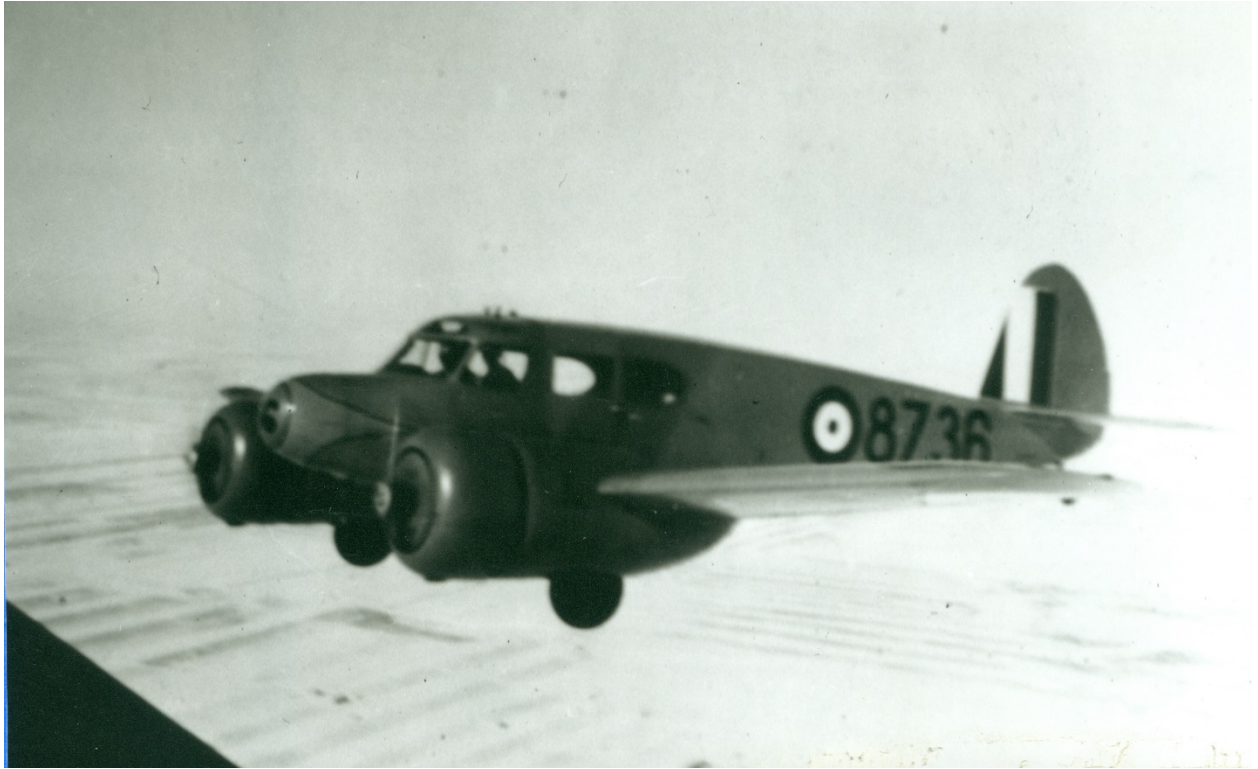


AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE  
SUN AND IN THE MORNING  
WE WILL REMEMBER HIM

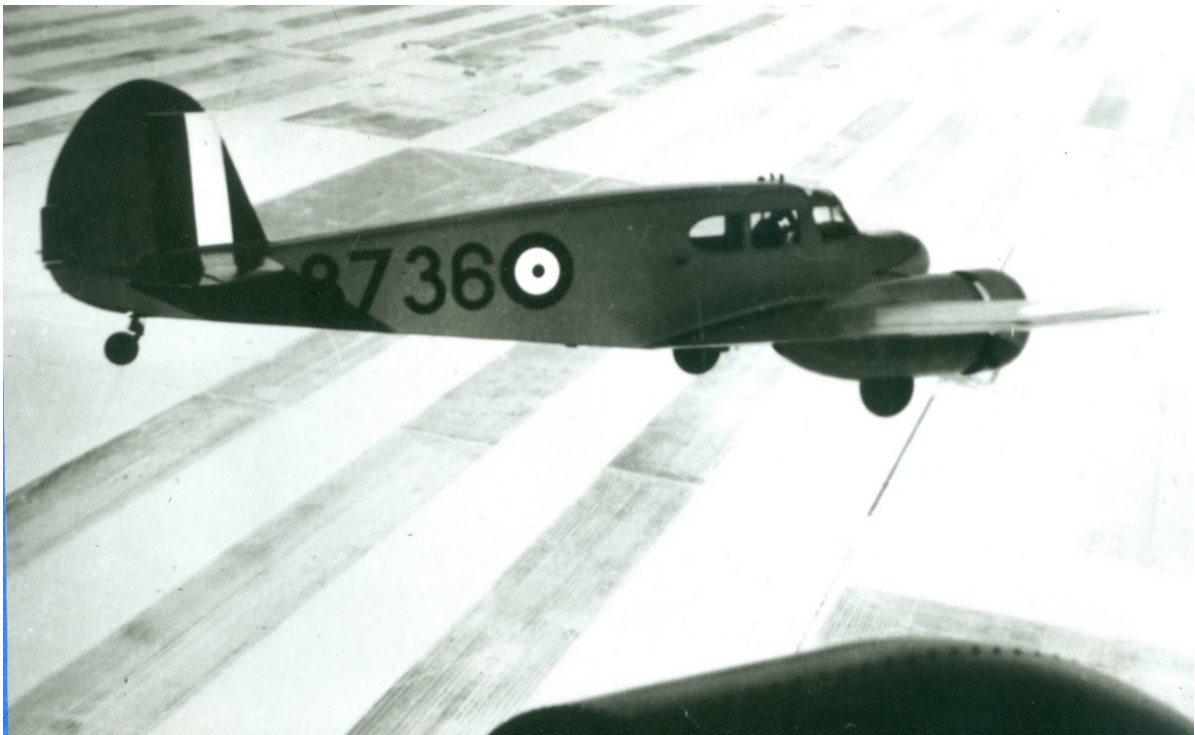


Relief Field Airdrie was taken over by the RCAF in March 1944 and used for pilot training in Cessna Cranes which were based at RCAF No. 3 SFTS Currie Barracks, Calgary. [Bert Sharp]





[Image Pat Ferber]



The RAF/RCAF base was closed in 1946, sold in 1948 and this postwar era history can be found on other websites.



**Thomas Conroy [top right] purchased the airfield in 1975, and flew three Harvard aircraft.**

**Above family photo taken in 1978, was given to me by Mrs. Gwen Conroy in 1993. Tom Conroy was killed in a tragic aircraft accident in 1979, and Mrs. Conroy remained in her airport residence until 1998. I would visit her three times and recorded this lost history.**





Above image from Mrs. Gwen Conroy 1978, showing all the original RAF buildings. Thanks to the Conroy family three Harvard's once again thundered over Airdrie, Alberta, and many



others were housed on the old base. A small forgotten part of our past Alberta Aviation History.





One of the Conroy Harvard aircraft is on loan at the Hangar Flight Museum of Calgary, while the other two are based in Airdrie. For many years Thomas P. Conroy [WestJet pilot] flew the Harvard's for special events in Alberta. Thanks to Thomas Conroy the Harvard's still fly over Airdrie and on a very cold Alberta afternoon, you can hear the engine start, as the sound is accentuated by the cold dry air, and soon the characteristic Wasp engine passes over my home in south Airdrie. When my wife asks, what was that thundering noise, I reply, just an RAF Thunderbird.

