

British Commonwealth Air Training Plan - 1940 to 1945 - Calgary and Vicinity



Seventy Years ago – in late 1940 and into 1941, in the early years of the Second World War; the Government of Canada established *five (5) Flying Training Bases* of the BCATP in the immediate vicinity of the City of Calgary – or within a 25 mile radius of the City. In addition, the RCAF built an Aircraft Repair Depot within City limits.

Each of the five BCATP *Flying Training Bases* had an inventory of 40 to 50 aircraft; and on any clear summer day in 1942 or 1943, there may have been as many as 200 or more, bright yellow training planes, buzzing about the skies - over, or very near to Calgary City. The variety of aircraft at those five Flying Training Bases had quite different performance characteristics – from elementary bi-plane trainers, like the De Havilland ‘Tiger Moth’, with airspeed of around 100 mph – to the high-performance North American ‘Harvard’, advanced training aircraft.

The five *Flying Training Bases* provided local visual control of the aircraft operating from each airfield – for takeoffs and landings; but there was no Area Air Traffic Control, and Flying Instructors and Students had to keep a sharp lookout for other aircraft, while carrying out training activities in the air around the City. Flying activities varied at each base – with most aircraft doing ‘circuits and bumps’; others on ‘cross-country flights; and some practicing ‘low flying’ and instrument flying, in an area to the west of the City.

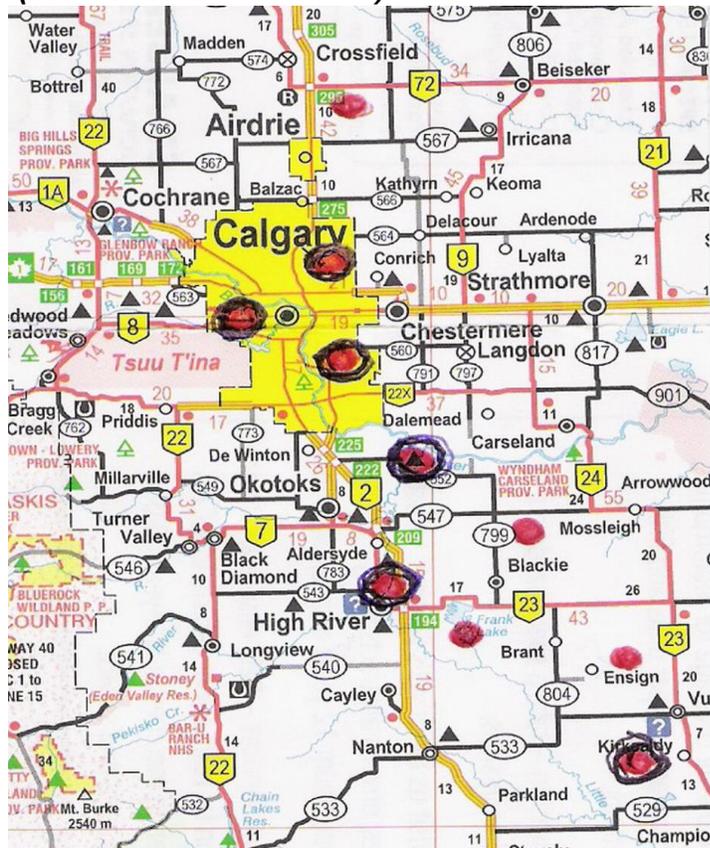
During the term of the BCATP, from 1940 to 1945 – there were Sixteen (16) Flying Training Schools located in the Province of Alberta: Five (5) Elementary Flying Training Schools; Seven (7) Service Flying Training Schools; One (1) Bombing & Gunnery School; Two (2) Air Observer Schools; One (1) Flying Instructor School (at 2 airbases)

It is interesting to note that *one-third* of the Flying Training Schools in the Province were concentrated in a small area; in and around the City of Calgary, AB. Although there were more Flying Training Schools in the Province of Ontario, there was no comparable concentration of flying activity in any particular part of that Province – or indeed, in any other Province in Canada.

William J. Cameron – April 7th, 2018.

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2010 Map of Calgary area, showing location of five operational BCATP bases (red - circled in blue ink)



No. 37 SFTS Calgary; No. 3 SFTS Calgary, RCAF Detachment Shepard; No. 31 EFTS De Winton, No. 5 EFTS High River; and four 'Relief' fields – RCAF Detachments, Airdrie, Gladys, Frank Lake, Ensign (for No. 19 SFTS Vulcan), and No. 19 SFTS Vulcan (at lower right).

Visit all the sites of the former BCATP bases shown on this map in an easy, one-day trip.

- Start in the North at Airdrie Airport (RCAF Detachment Airdrie); then south on Highway 2 to McKnight Blvd – and No. 37 SFTS at the south end of Calgary Airport (visit the AeroSpace Museum Gift Shop – and have a coffee at Tim Horton's). Then south on Deerfoot Trail to Glenmore Trail – north a short distance on Crowchild Trail to No. 10 RD, and No. 3 SFTS at Currie Barracks, and Mount Royal University.

- Retrace the route to Deerfoot Trail; go south to Barlow Trail, then north to 114th Avenue S., then east two blocks – RCAF Detachment Shepard, the No. 2 Wireless School, Airborne Training airfield was just there, to the south of 114th Avenue.

- Return to Barlow Trail and Deerfoot Trail; go south on Highway No. 2 to 'Dunbow Road' (Township Road 220) at *Heritage Point* community– turn left (east), and go 10 km until the road turns south as Township Road 284. No. 31 EFTS was located just to the east (left) of the road. (Gate may be open for a look at the runways).

- Return to No. 2 Highway – go south to 298 Avenue – 3 km north of overpass at Highway No. 23. Turn right (west), as the one remaining hangar of No. 5 EFTS will be seen a short distance along on the left. Proceed to the west, into the Town of High River – to the TELUS Building on 3rd, Avenue – site of the wall murals by Doug Dreidiger, and the Memorial monument to No. 5 EFTS.

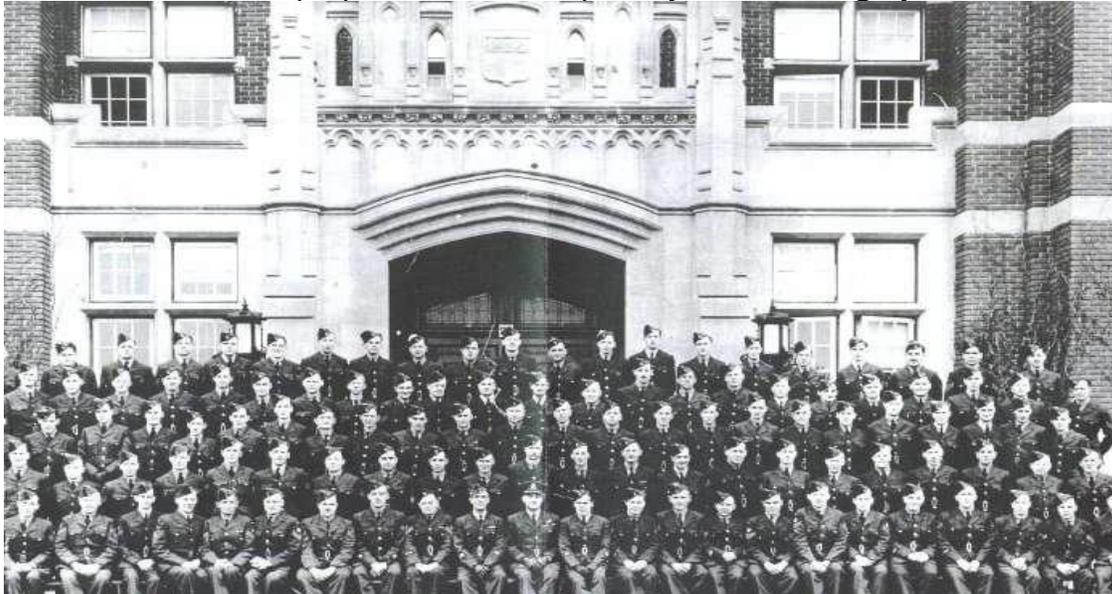
- The site of the turf R.2 Relief Field, Gladys AB is not accurately known, and the Frank Lake, R.1 Relief Field is now under water.

- The former site of No. 19 SFTS at Vulcan (5 hangars still standing) is about 35 km Southeast of High River – visit if time permits.!

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No. 2 Wireless School – Calgary & RCAF Detachment, Shepard, AB

On September 16th, 1940 the first *British Commonwealth Air Training Plan* School to open in the Calgary area - No. 2 Wireless School – was established by the RCAF in the facilities of the *Provincial Institute of Technology and Arts (PITA)* - located on the Sixteenth Avenue North properties now occupied by SAIT in Calgary.



No. 2 Wireless School – Calgary, AB – Officers/Instructors/Trainees -1943 (PITA) Glenbow Archives

Before the Second World War there was very little emphasis on the training of Wireless Radio Operators in the RCAF. However, as the War began, there was an urgent need for a great number of specialized, trained Radio Operators to be part of the crew of large twin-engine and four-engine bombing aircraft.

As a result, the establishment of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan in Canada in 1940 included plans for the construction of four dedicated 'Wireless Training Schools. The four Wireless Schools provided facilities for training Wireless Operators in the operation and maintenance of radio equipment, both for ground-based wireless stations - and as crew in aircraft, under actual flight conditions.

The main function of a Wireless Operator on a multi-engine aircraft during the War was to maintain contact with base stations, using CW (Continuous Wave) Morse code. It was a great deal more difficult to send and receive code while airborne, than in stable land-based radio stations; and *Airborne Wireless Training* was a major part of the curriculum at each of the four BCATP Wireless Schools during the war.

Initially, the Training Curriculum for a Wireless Operator was 20 weeks, but was soon increased to 28 weeks due to the greater complexities of equipment, and procedures in overseas bombing operations. Trainees designated as *Wireless Air Gunners* were given a further six weeks training at a Bombing and Gunnery School.

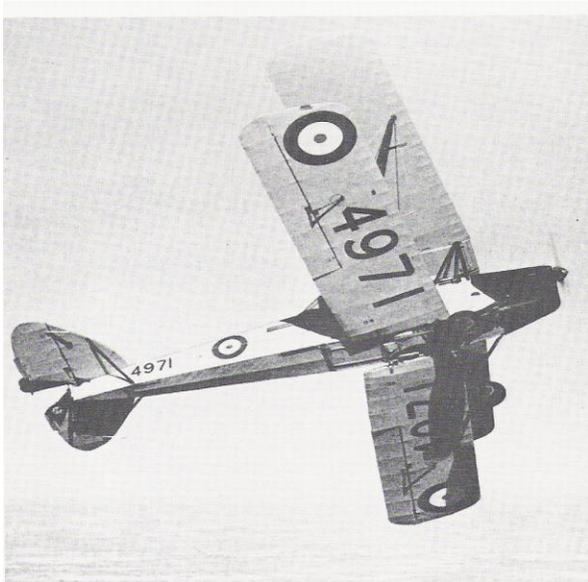
Towards the end of the Class Room Training, each Wireless Operator Trainee was tested in an '*aircraft simulator*'. Small cubicles were constructed in a class room, complete with aircraft wireless equipment; that were meant to simulate the restricted

working space for wireless operators on an actual aircraft. Each Trainee in a cubicle communicated by Morse code with an Instructor, and in-flight operating conditions and procedures were replicated as far as possible.

Following the '*airborne simulator*' experience, the Wireless Operator Trainee was assigned to actual airborne training, on an aircraft fitted with current wireless equipment. Trainees at No. 2 Wireless School in Calgary received their airborne wireless training on aircraft operating out of RCAF Detachment Shepard, AB.

An airfield was constructed five or six miles southeast of the City of Calgary; near the community of Shepard, AB – to accommodate the aircraft used for the *Airborne Wireless Training* operations of No. 2 Wireless School.

The usual tri-angular, single runway system was constructed – each about 2800 feet long; two single-bay BCATP hangars; as well as various support and accommodation buildings and barracks.



The airfield base was designated '*RCAF Detachment, Shepard*'. In the late summer of 1940, the RCAF assigned personnel as Aircraft Servicing technicians, Radio Operator Instructors, and the other staff needed for the *Airborne Wireless Training* operations.

In his book "Wings for Victory", Spencer Dunmore relates how *Aircrew Trainee* Howard Hewer, and his entire course at No. 1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto, was posted in September of 1940, to train as Airborne Wireless Operators at No. 2 Wireless School in Calgary, AB. This was the first "Course" at the new School.

No. 2 Wireless School, *Airborne Wireless Training operations* - began at RCAF Detachment, Shepard, AB - in September of 1940, using De Havilland DH-82C 'Tiger Moth' bi-plane aircraft.

Over the winter of 1940/41 it was found that the 'Tiger Moth' was much too light an aircraft for local weather conditions, and was under-powered to carry two crew members and the heavier radio equipment of that era. The extra strain on the *Gypsy Major* engine contributed to a series of engine problems.

On November 15th, 1941 – a De Havilland 'Tiger Moth' on a training flight from No. 2 Wireless School, crashed near 'Big Springs' school – about 25 miles from it's base at Shepard. *The Student Wireless Operator*, Karl Gravell, was badly injured and burned in the crash, but he went back to the burning aircraft in an attempt to rescue the *Pilot*, Flying Officer James Robinson. Although both Airmen died, LAC Gravell was awarded a Posthumous George Cross for his heroic efforts to save F/O Robinson.

In early 1942 the 'Tiger Moth' aircraft at No. 2 Wireless School were replaced by a Canadian designed plane – the Fleet 'Fort'.

Fleet Corporation of Canada had designed the Fleet Model 60 'Fort' in 1938, and the first aircraft was flown on March 22, 1940. The prototype was evaluated by the RCAF as an *intermediate*, single-engine training aircraft (a stage between an elementary bi-plane, and the more powerful 'Harvard' advanced trainer). 200 aircraft were ordered by the RCAF, and the first were delivered in the spring of 1941, at which time the order was reduced to only 100 aircraft.



Fleet 'Fort'
Aircraft No. 3660
No. 2 Wireless School
Shepard, AB - 1942

The 'Fort' was not successful as a pilot-training aircraft, and the concept of an *'intermediate'* training aircraft was abandoned. The Fleet 'Fort' aircraft were then assigned for use in Airborne Wireless Training operations, at No.3 Wireless School, Winnipeg, MB – and No. 2 Wireless School, Calgary, AB – in the summer of 1941.

An Instructor/Staff Pilot at No. 2 Wireless School in 1942 – Jack Merryfield, noted that the 'Fort' aircraft at that Base made fourteen forced landings in one three month period. Most of the problems were engine related – leaking oil tanks, broken oil lines, overheated engines, etc. One re-curent problem with the Fleet 'Fort' was the in-flight loss of the fuel tank cap, often resulting in the fuel being siphoned overboard.

Just as with the 'Tiger Moth' in the earlier operations at No. 2 Wireless School – the Fleet 'Fort' was under-powered for the weight of two crew members, and the heavy radio equipment – no doubt contributing to the on-going engine problems.



North American NA-75 'Harvard' Mk.IIB
Aircraft No. AJ900 - Code 21
No. 10 SFTS, Dauphin, MB - 1943

15/03/2007

Beginning in early 1943, the Fleet 'Fort' was replaced by North American 'Harvard' aircraft at No. 2 Wireless School. With the greater emphasis in the BCATP on twin-engine pilot training, and with increased production of the 'Harvard's' – these aircraft became more readily available.

The much greater engine power of the 'Harvard' meant that the heavy radio equipment installation could be handled with relative ease. There were no significant engine problems with the 'Harvard', as had been the case with the 'Forts'.

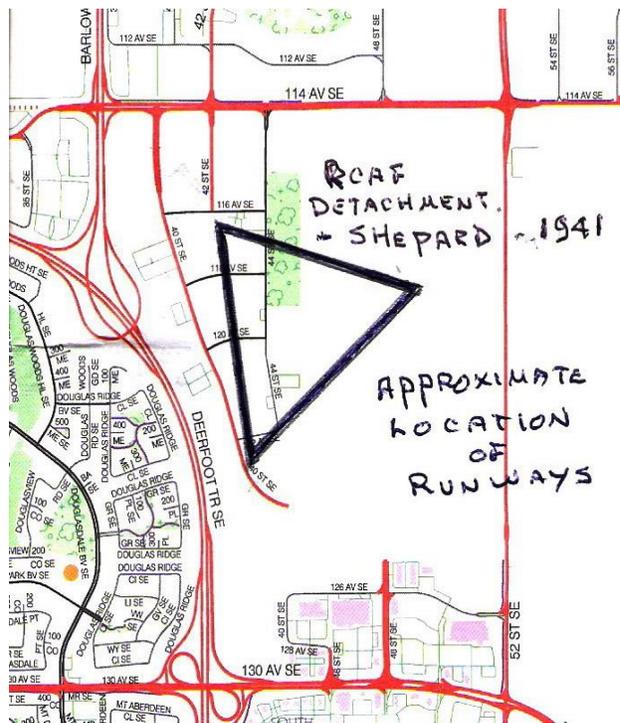
No. 2 Wireless School in Calgary **ceased operations on April 14th, 1945**; and RCAF Detachment Shepard closed on that date as well.

The reference location of RCAF Detachment (No. 2 Wireless School), Shepard, AB - is the area just east of Barlow Trail in Calgary – at the intersection with Deerfoot Trail. The buildings were all removed many years ago, but the runway system was used until September of 1998 by the Alberta Motor Association for driver education.

In 1995 the author was able to drive a car up-and-down the north/south runway at the site. The other two runways were already un-useable.

The site was developed as an Industrial Park in 2003, and there is now no remaining physical evidence of the location of RCAF Detachment, Shepard, AB – (No. 2 Wireless School)-

*RCAF Detachment – Shepard, AB (No. 2 Wireless School Flying Operations)
(AMA Calgary City 2010 map)*



RCAF Detachment 'Shepard' also functioned as the 'Relief Airfield' for No. 37 SFTS, Calgary – from June 1941 to September 1944.



*Fleet 'Fort' 3609 and 3610 – No. 2 Wireless School, Shepard AB – 1943
D.N.D.*

One Wireless Operator Trainee at No. 2 Wireless School, Calgary – Gordon Diller – relates having been given a 'familiarization flight' on a *Noorduyn 'Norseman'*, at RCAF Detachment, Shepard – in November, 1944.



*Noorduyn 'Norseman' Mk. IV
Aircraft no. 3537
No. 1 Wireless School
Montreal, QC - 1941*

Noorduyn 'Norseman' Mk. IV – No. 1 Wireless School, Montreal

(All Model aircraft by author)

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No. 3 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) RCAF - Calgary, AB.

No. 3 SFTS Calgary – was **opened on October 28, 1940**. No. 3 SFTS was an RCAF administered Base throughout the War. The air base for No. 3 SFTS was constructed on the western boundary of the City of Calgary, just north of 50th Avenue NW, and immediately to the south of the Canadian Army '*Currie Barracks*'.

A military airfield had been established on the site in 1921, and called the '*Canadian Army Air Field*' – or '*Calgary Military Air Field*'. (There were no paved runways until the construction of the base for No. 3 SFTS in the summer of 1940)

From 1938 to 1939, two Operational Squadrons of the Royal Canadian Air Force were based at the Calgary Military Air Field:

- No. 1 (Fighter) Squadron - flying *Armstrong-Whitworth 'Siskin'* bi-plane fighters, and No. 3 (Bomber) Squadron - flying *Westland 'Wapiti'* bi-plane bombing aircraft.



In late 1939, the RCAF based several *Hawker 'Hurricane'*, modern fighter aircraft at the Calgary Military Air Field. (still without paved runways, until 1940).

In 1940, the barracks, aircraft hangars, and other support buildings of No. 3 SFTS were constructed in the area just to the south of Currie Barracks. The buildings of Mount Royal University are now located right in the middle of what was a very busy Second World War, twin tri-angular runway system. In the year 2011 – seventy years later; the hangars of No. 3 SFTS are still in place just north of 'Richardson Way', the road that marks the line of the concrete taxi-way, in front of the hangars.

Although the accompanying map (1948) of the area around No. 3 SFTS in Calgary shows an extensive surveyed street system, in 1940-45 all the surrounding area was open countryside. The airfield was on an elevated plateau, several miles from the nearest developed housing area of Calgary in 1940.

Throughout the Second World War, No. 3 SFTS operated as a 'twin-engine' *Advanced Flying Training School*. Initially, the aircraft type flown was the Avro 'Anson' Mark I. The 'Anson' Mk. I aircraft were 'war-weary' planes shipped from Great Britain.

Most of the aircraft had earlier flown at Training Bases in the UK, and in some instances had operated as coastal patrol aircraft in Great Britain, in late 1939 and early 1940. The 'Anson' Mk.I was notorious for having 'hand-cranked' retractable landing gear.



Avro 'Anson' Mark I



Avro 'Anson' Mark II

The 'Anson' Mark II began to enter the inventory of No. 3 SFTS in 1941. The Mk. II aircraft were built in Canada, powered by American 'Jacobs' L6-MB engines, that were more powerful than the 'Cheetah' X engines of the 'Anson' Mk. I. There were other modifications/improvements on the 'Anson' Mk.II, notably the addition of hydraulic powered, retractable landing gear. An improvement greatly appreciated by every pilot that flew both the Mk.I and Mk.II 'Anson'.



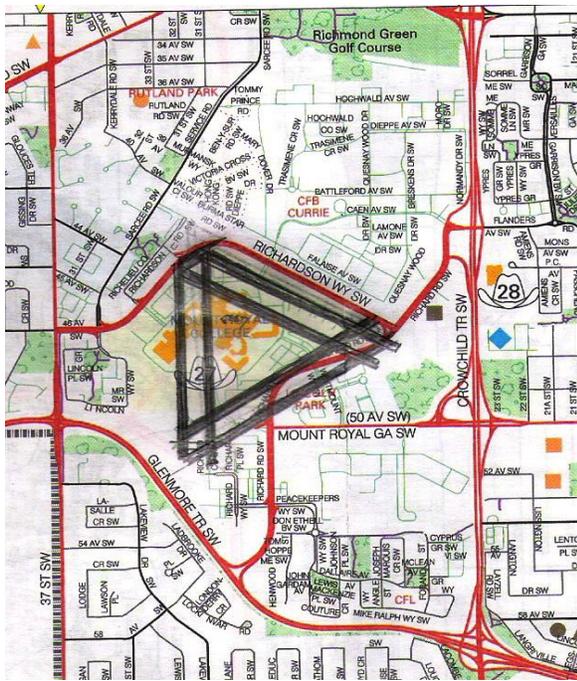
The major part of the Flying Training at No. 3 SFTS in 1943-1944 was with the twin-engine Cessna 'Crane' – a metal-frame, fabric covered aircraft - with Jacobs L4-MB engines. The Cessna 'Crane' had the lowest accident rate of all the aircraft types flown at Service Flying Training Schools (SFTS) in the BCATP – with 2,840 hours of flying/per Type A or Type B accident.

No. 3 SFTS was the *last Service Flying Training School of the BCATP* – all across Canada - to be **closed; on September 28th, 1945** – after five years of Flying Training operations. Over 1,100 pilots graduated from, and received their Pilot's Wings at No. 3 SFTS – one of the highest totals of all the BCATP Advanced Flying Schools.

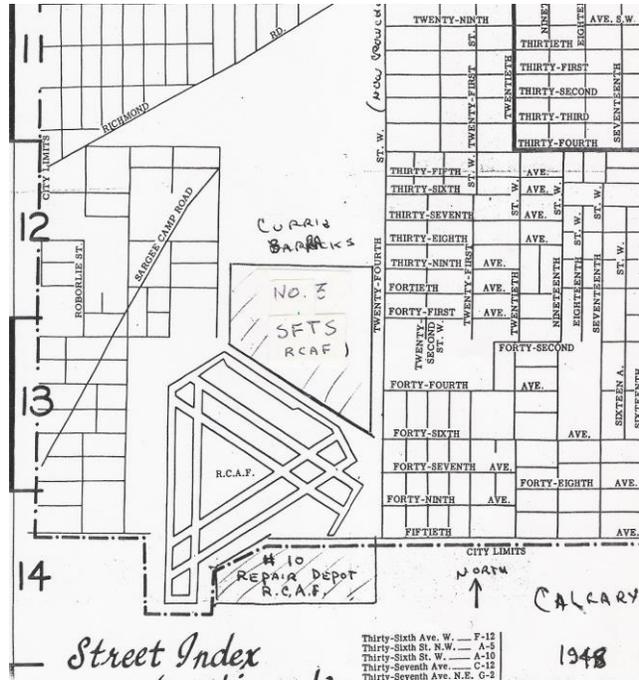


Glenbow Archives

Aerial view of No. 3 SFTS – looking southeast towards Glenmore Reservoir.
- No. 10 Repair Depot buildings to the south and east of runway system.-



Overlay of No. 3 SFTS runway system on 2010 Map of Calgary – Mount Royal University now Occupies all of the area of 1941 runways.



No. 3 SFTS location & runways system – 1948 map of Calgary. Although street grid is shown, the area To the east of runways was not yet built-up in 1948.

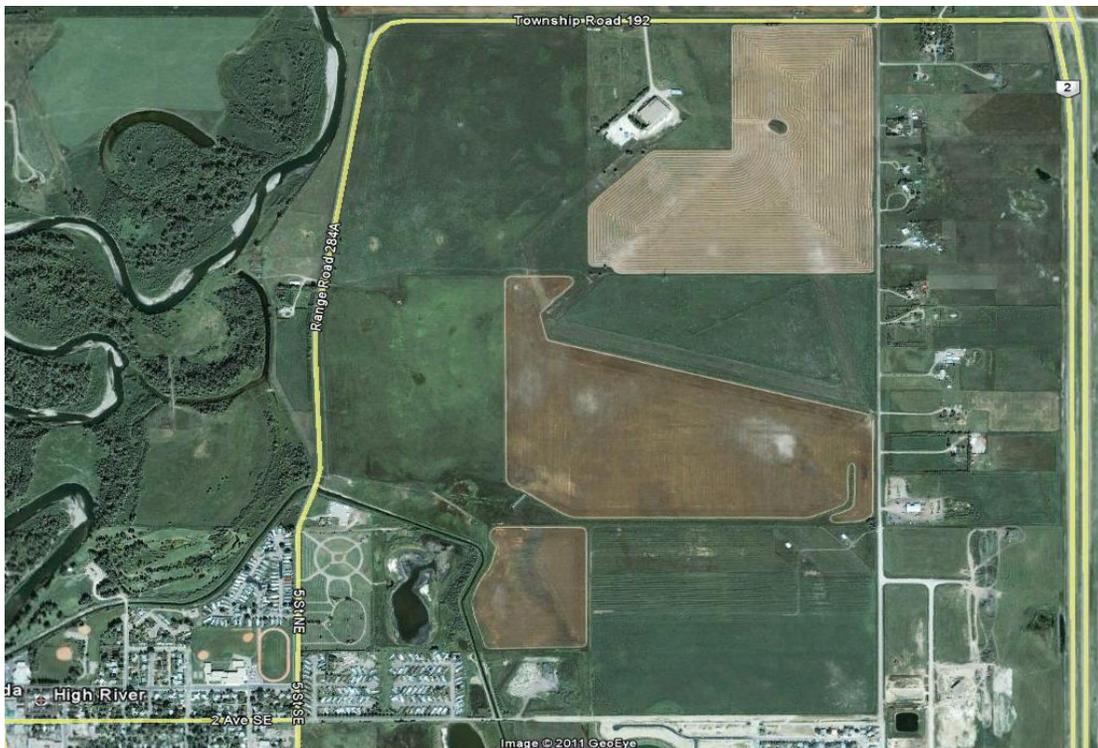
Following the Second World War, the hangars, and some support buildings of former No. 3 SFTS were occupied by, and refurbished by the Canadian Army – and have been in constant use ever since. One of the former hangars served for several years as the home of the 'Calgary Farmer's Market'. The future of these well-preserved, seventy-five year old buildings is now uncertain.

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No. 5 Elementary Flying Training School - (EFTS) RCAF- High River, AB

No. 5 EFTS originally opened at Lethbridge, AB – on 22 July 1940, as one of the many Elementary Flying Schools of the BCATP operated by civilian flying Clubs. No. 5 EFTS was operated by the Calgary Flying Club, incorporated as a 'Limited Company'.

The experience of elementary flying training at the Lethbridge airfield was quite difficult, because of the frequent and very high winds in that area of Southern Alberta. The wind velocity made flying in a light, bi-plane trainer aircraft (*De Havilland DH-82C 'Tiger Moth'*) – difficult and hazardous, and in June of 1941 the Elementary Flying Training at Lethbridge was terminated.



The outline of triangular runways and taxi system of No. 5 EFTS, High River, AB can just be seen in this 'Google Earth' photo – in the upper right quadrant, just to the left of Alberta Highway No. 2. The building at the top of the photo is the one remaining BCATP hangar. The road in the left quadrant of the photo leads into the northeast residential area of the Town of High River, (and past the cemetery, where are buried several RAF & RCAF airmen, who lost their lives in flying accidents at No. 5 EFTS).

The history of the airfield at High River began in 1921, when the Canadian Government opened a 'Flight Station', a few kilometers northeast of the town - including three, World War One 'Bessoneau' hangars. In 1924, with the creation of the Royal Canadian Air Force, the airfield was designated "High River Air Station". Aircraft and Personnel of the Air Station participated in 'fire patrols'; 'mountain aerial surveys'; and on several occasions during the late 1920's dropped mail for H.R.H. The Prince of Wales, when he was in residence on his 'foothills' ranch – 50 km southwest of High River.



Mural panel of the west side of the Telus Building in High River – By Doug Dreidiger. 1993/1994. Armstrong-Whitworth 'Siskin' Mk.III – several of these aircraft were based at High River Flight Station during the late 1920's and early 1930's. In this instance, on 'fire patrol'; sending messages back to airfield base by means of 'carrier pigeons', released in flight.

In 1932 the High River Air Station was de-activated by the RCAF, and the 'Bessoneau' hangars used for storage only, although there was some activity at the airfield during the 1930's by the Calgary Aero Club.

On 28 June 1941, No. 5 EFTS was moved from Lethbridge to High River, AB, where a new air base had been constructed to BCATP standards – with paved runways, a hangar, barracks, mess facilities, etc. The three 'Bessoneau' World War I hangars of High River Air Station continued in use at No. 5 EFTS throughout the war – and a second BCATP hangar was added in 1943, when the number of pilot trainees doubled.

A new Company – "High River Flying Training School, Ltd." was formed by the Calgary Flying Club in 1941, and managed by Mr. D.K.Yorath. That Company operated No. 5 EFTS until the termination of the BCATP. Although the Flying School was civilian operated – initially with all civilian pilot instructors, wearing a dark blue uniform with different buttons and cap badge - the RCAF was responsible for the course curriculum and testing standards.

The Chief Flying Instructor was an RCAF officer. Beginning in 1943, as the supply of RCAF trained instructors increased, and the number of student pilots was doubled; more RCAF officers were assigned as instructors at No. 5 EFTS, High River.

Aerial view of No. 5 EFTS, High River, AB. – looking to southwest. Note the three ‘Bessoneau’ hangars , on the left of the photo. One BCATP hangar is oriented with doors to the south; the hangar on the right has doors opening to the east.



Note the three ‘Bessoneau’ hangars , on the left of the photo. One BCATP hangar is oriented with doors to the south; the hangar on the right has doors opening to the east. - Glenbow Archives.

Flying training began at No. 5 EFTS High River in July of 1941 – the aircraft used initially was the De Havilland DH-82C ‘Tiger Moth’ – manufactured

in Canada, with enclosed and heated cockpits. In addition to flying training at the High River main airfield, there was an RCAF Detachment at Frank Lake (then a dry lake bottom) to the east of the Town of High River – as a relief field for landing and takeoff practice.



De Havilland DH-82C ‘Tiger Moth’ (the aircraft in this photo was flown at No. 16 EFTS Edmonton during 1942)

The first class of student pilots graduated from No. 5 EFTS in the early autumn of 1941. Over 100 pilot classes graduated from the School during the Second World War – a total of over 500 student pilots that received their initial flying training at No. 5 EFTS.

In late 1942, and on into 1943 - the Fairchild ‘Cornell’, a monoplane elementary training aircraft entered the inventory at No. 5 EFTS. Many of the ‘Cornell’ aircraft were from the United States of America – under a USAAF/RAF ‘Lend-Lease’ arrangement, and carried RAF serial registrations – as in the photo of the model aircraft below.



*Fairchild 'Cornell' (PT-26)
'lend-lease' from the USAAF, with RAF registration of two letters and three numbers.*

Almost all the 'Lend-Lease' Cornell aircraft were flown back to Montana from Saskatchewan and Alberta – at the end of the Second World War.

Following 'D-Day', in June 1944 – it was obvious that the war in Europe was nearly over, and the need for numbers of RCAF aircrew diminished. All but one Elementary Flying Training Schools of the BCATP were closed before the end of 1944. **No.5 EFTS High River ceased operations on 15 December, 1944**, just in time to send everyone home for Christmas.

In August of 2011, one BCATP hangar still remains at the former site of No. 5 EFTS, and is now occupied by a construction company. The concrete floor and ramp of the second BCATP hangar is also visible, but there are no other remaining vestiges of a once very busy – and historic Alberta airfield.

One of the mysteries surrounding the High River Airfield is the disposition of several pre-war, *Armstrong-Whitworth 'Siskin'* aircraft, supposedly placed in storage in one of the 'Bessoneau' hangars at the start-up of No. 5 EFTS in 1940; and all through the war.

No flying activity of any sort continued at the site of No. 5 EFTS High River, following the end of the Second World War. For some reason, a flight strip was constructed south of the Town of High River in the 1960s, and the runways at No. 5 EFTS have been removed and the site returned to farmland.

In 2002, monuments were erected at the former airfield, and in the town of High River, as a tribute to the men and women – civilian and RCAF – who served at No. 5 EFTS during the Second World War.

No. 5 EFTS Monument in the Town of High River, AB



Badges shown include RAF, RCAF, RAAF, RNZAF – The BCATP participants

A series of mural panels were painted by Doug Dreidiger on the outside walls of the 'Telus building' in High River - in 1993/1994; to commemorate the aviation history of the High River airfield. A panel on the south side of the building depicts a hangar of No. 5 EFTS, with a 'Cornell' aircraft on the ramp, and a 'high level' Inspection taking place.



Inspection of No. 5 EFTS personnel by the Governor General of Canada – the Earl of Athlone; Air Vice Marshall G.R. Howson; and S/L W.W. Smith. – 1943. Also in the mural is F/O Gordon Jones, an RCAF Instructor at the airbase. Gordon Jones is still resident near High River, and in 2010 owns and continues to fly a restored 'Tiger Moth'– one of the very aircraft on which he had been an Instructor in 1942/43.

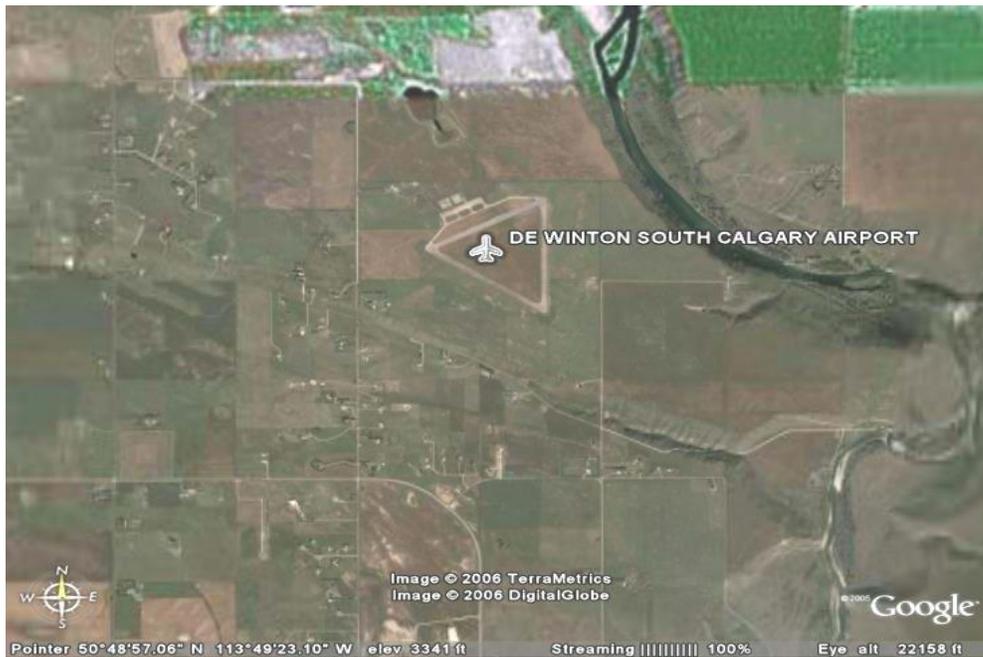
No. 31 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) RAF - De Winton, AB

The airfield for No. 31 EFTS, De Winton AB was constructed during the late winter of 1940, and spring of 1941 - and was opened on 18 June 1941 as a Royal Air Force, Elementary Flying Training School. During the term of the BCATP in Canada, all RAF Schools were assigned numbers in the '30' series.

On July 13th, 1942 responsibility for the operation of No. 31 EFTS was turned over to the Toronto Flying Club. The Toronto Club had operated the former No. 1 EFTS at Malton, ON - from 24 June 1940 to 3 July 1942. The Malton airfield became quite congested with the construction and testing of larger aircraft at that base— such as the Avro 'Lancaster', and the De Havilland 'Mosquito' - necessitating closure of No. 1 EFTS.

The Toronto Flying Club moved their Flying Instructors and Ground Staff – and their families – to the small town of De Winton, AB – to take over the operation of No. 31 EFTS from RAF Service Personnel. A civilian organization – “De Winton Flying Training School, Limited” took control of the School in July, 1942.

No. 31 EFTS was located 20 miles south and slightly east of the City of Calgary – quite near the Bow River. The airfield had the usual BCATP single, triangular runways; two hangars; and the usual barracks, mess halls, and other BCATP base support buildings.



GPS Co-ordinates – 50 Deg 48 Min 06 Sec. North - 113 Deg. 23 Min. 10 Sec. West.

The Bow River can be seen in the upper-right quadrant of this Google 'Earth' photo. For some time after the war, the former Airfield of No. 31 EFTS was called the South Calgary Airport. There is no record of any significant post-war aviation activity at the airfield.

The first aircraft to be used at No. 31 EFTS was the De Havilland DH82C – ‘Tiger Moth’ – an aircraft built in Canada.

In 1940 the British Government placed an order in the United States, for a number of Boeing-Stearman PT-27 - ‘Kaydet’ training aircraft – as ‘Lend-Lease’. A few of these aircraft were



de Havilland DH-82C 'Tiger Moth'
Aircraft No. 5804
No. 31 EFTS, De Winton, AB - 1942

based at No. 31 EFTS in early 1942 (as well as RAF Schools No. 36 EFTS Pearce, AB and No. 32 EFTS Bowden, AB). Although an excellent aircraft, the PT-27 had an open cockpit, and was found to be unsuitable for the harsh winter conditions of western Canada.



In November of 1942, all flying with the PT-27 aircraft at the three RAF bases in Alberta was suspended, and the planes flown back to USAAF bases in Montana, USA.

Boeing-Stearman PT-27
'Kaydet' No. 31 EFTS De
Winton – 1942

Although the majority of student pilots trained at

No. 31 EFTS were from Great Britain or other countries of the British Empire and Commonwealth - a number of French Nationals joined the RAF following the Allied Landings in North Africa in 1942. Perhaps several hundred French student pilots were trained at No. 31 EFTS; going on to advanced, single-engine training at No. 34 SFTS Medicine Hat, AB.

One pilot graduate of No. 31 EFTS, who became very well known post-war, was Arthur Hailey (Author of 1950's and 1960's novels - *Hotel*; *Airport*, *Runway Zero-Eight*). In 1941, as a young student pilot from England, Hailey was afflicted with 'airsickness' during most of his early flight training at De Winton.

Hailey was scheduled to be *'washed-out'*. But a perceptive Instructor allowed Hailey to repeat the Elementary Flying Course, and he successfully conquered the *'mal d'aire'* problem, and went on to Advanced training – to ultimately receive his pilot wings – and return to England on Operations.

Training at No. 31 EFTS continued with the De Havilland 'Tiger Moth', until late 1942



and early 1943 – when Fairchild 'Cornell' monoplane aircraft began to be phased in to the Flying curriculum at most BCATP Elementary Flying Training Schools.

Fairchild 'Cornell' FV725 at the BCATP Museum, Brandon MB - This aircraft, like many 'Cornell's flown in the BCATP, carries the RAF two letter-three number registration; as a

'Lend-Lease' between the British Government and the USA.

No. 31 EFTS ceased operations on 25 September, 1944 – as did the RCAF Detachment at 'Gladys' AB – the turf Relief Field southeast of the De Winton airfield.

The site of former No. 31 SFTS can be accessed from Highway No. 2, south of Calgary - at 'Dunbow Road'. (Heritage Point community) – The airfield is about 10 km east of Highway No. 2.

In August 2011 there are still some visible traces of No. 31 EFTS. The line of Spruce Trees leading off the road – at the end of Dunbow Road, marks the entrance to the Base. The buildings at the end of the tree line (now a farm house) were the Administration and Guard house. The large concrete 'gunnery' butt is still in place – and the concrete floors and ramps of the two BCATP hangars can still be seen.

The triangular single runways of No. 31 EFTS are still in place, but no longer in use for aviation purposes – although the Alberta Motor Association makes use of one runway for private and commercial driver training.

NB – Runways at former No. 31 EFTS DeWinton, have now all been ploughed up, and the airfield is no longer serviceable – 2009.

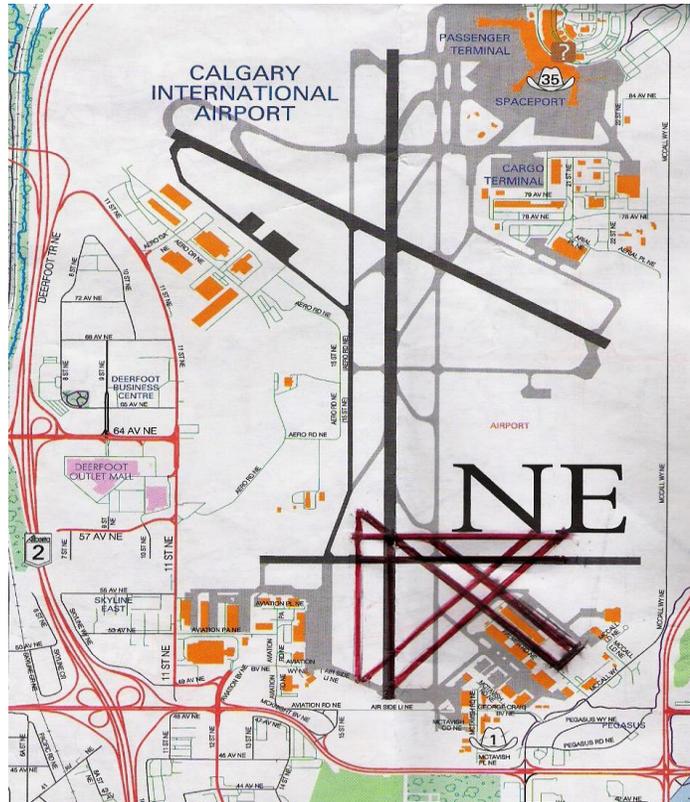
No. 37 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) RAF - Calgary, AB

No. 37 SFTS was opened on 22 October, 1941 – as part of the BCATP. All the Training Bases of the RAF in Canada were assigned numbers in the '30' series.

Student pilots came from Great Britain, Canada – and many other countries of the British Empire and Commonwealth.

About 800 pilots received their wings at No. 37 SFTS during the War. Some had received their Elementary Flying Training in Britain, Australia or New Zealand but most were trained at one of the Elementary Schools in Canada.

The number of Ground Staff at No. 37 SFTS usually numbered around 300 persons – The Flying Instructors and pilot students could number up to another 250 at any one time. So the total number of RAF Service men on the Base, may have been as many as 500 during peak years of operation in 1942/43



The map above shows the location of No. 37 SFTS – five miles from Calgary City Centre, at the Calgary Municipal Airport, and just north of McKnight Blvd. The double triangular runway system is highlighted in red at the south end of the main north-south runway of 2010. None of the BCATP runways are now operational.

(Google Earth photo)

Former site of No. 37 SFTS to the north of McKnight Blvd. Calgary – outline of BCATP runways is seen.

Five standard, double BCATP hangars were constructed to the south of the runway system, as well as numerous barracks and facilities of a large training airbase. Some BCATP hangars are still in use in 2010; one by 'Ken Borek' Aviation.

The 'Drill Hall' of No. 37 SFTS, now just off McKnight Blvd – that was also used for dances, boxing matches; indoor Wings Parades (in times of inclement weather); and other social events during 1942-1944, is the home of the Calgary Aero Space Museum.

No. 37 SFTS began operations as a 'twin-engine' Advanced Flying Training School, using *Airspeed 'Oxford'* aircraft – brought by sea from Great Britain and re-assembled in Canada.



Airspeed 'Oxford' Mk.II - No 37 SFTS Calgary 1942.



Airspeed 'Oxford' Mk.II
Aircraft No. AS537 -
No. 34 SFTS Medicine Hat, AB. 1943

Because of the relatively higher altitude of Calgary Airport – at 3,600 ft. A.S.L., the 'Oxford' take-off performance was less than satisfactory. The 'Oxford' was powered by the Armstrong-Siddley 'Cheetah' X, engine – the same engine installed in the 'Anson' Mark.I – but the 'Oxford' wing-lift capacity was much lower than the 'Anson'. An exchange was made for *North American 'Harvard'* aircraft from No. 39 SFTS, Swift Current, SK, in October 1942; and for the

remainder of the war, No. 37 SFTS was a single-engine training base.

No. 34 SFTS Medicine Hat, with 'Oxford' aircraft; also exchanged those aircraft in late 1942, for the '*Harvard*' aircraft from No. 32 SFTS Moose Jaw, SK .



North American NA-75 'Harvard' Mk.IIB
Aircraft No. AJ900 - Code 21
No. 10 SFTS, Dauphin, MB - 1943

15/08/2007

The R.1 'Relief Field' for aircraft of No. 37 SFTS was RCAF Detachment, Shepard AB – also the site of No 2. Wireless School flying.

North American 'Harvard' IIB –
No. 37 SFTS Calgary, AB 1943

One of the RAF 'Harvard' Instructor pilots based at No. 37 SFTS during the war, was F/O Peter Middleton – the grandfather of Catherine

Middleton; now the Duchess of Cambridge, and the wife of Prince William – 2nd in-line to the British Throne.

Training activity at No. 37 SFTS gradually diminished in early 1944, as pilot reserves were built up overseas. The Base was decommissioned and closed on **March 10, 1944**.

A 'plaque' commemorating the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan in Alberta is now located in a 'park' setting, adjacent to the Calgary Aero Space Museum; at the site of the Second World War, No. 37 RAF Service Flying Training School.

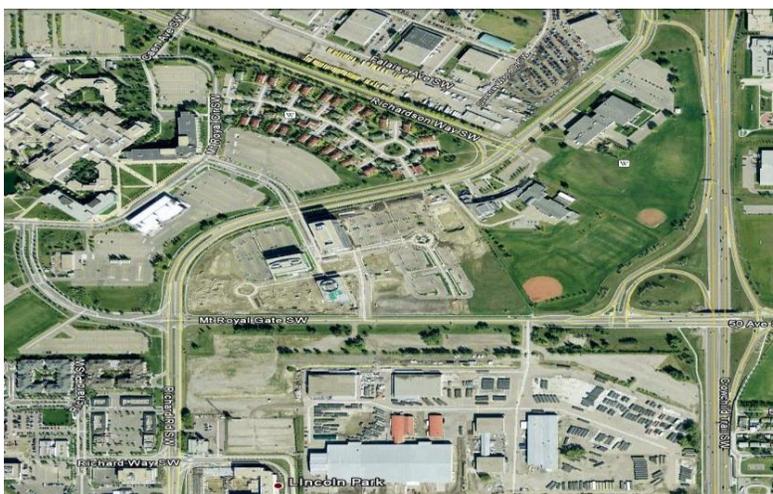


British Commonwealth Air Training Plan – Memorial

- Calgary Aero Space Museum -

No. 10 Repair Depot (RD) Calgary, AB - (Lincoln Park)

Google Earth photo of former site of No. 10 RD Calgary, AB - buildings in lower-right of photo
At top of photo are the hangars of No. 3 SFTS. To the left is Mount Royal College – former site of the SFTS runway system.

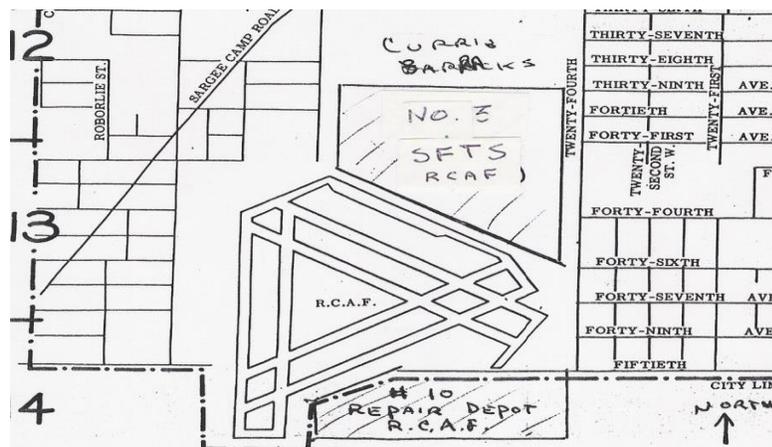


RCAF No. 10 Repair Depot, at Calgary, AB – opened in June of 1941, on a site just to the south of No. 3 SFTS, that had opened in October, 1940.

No. 10 RD was responsible for the overhaul and repair of all aircraft flown at BCATP bases in No.4 Training Command – essentially, all of Alberta, British Columbia, and parts of Saskatchewan. Recovery of aircraft damaged in accidents was also performed by personnel of No. 10 RD.

1948 Calgary City Map – showing location of No. 10 RD.

Aircraft repaired at No. 10 RD used the No. 3 SFTS runways for flight testing, before delivery of aircraft to Flying Training Schools



As shown in this 1948 Calgary City Map, –No.10 RD shared the runway system at 'Lincoln Park' with No. 3 SFTS – to the north, adjacent to Currie Barracks. **No. 10 Repair depot closed in September 1945** – at the same time as No. 3 SFTS.

Canadian Pacific Air Lines, Ltd., contracted with the RCAF in

June, 1951 to operate No. 10 Repair Depot, Lincoln Park, Calgary. Legendary WW-I Pilot Wop May was appointed as manager by CPAL, until his untimely death in 1952. Work at the Repair Depot included overhaul, maintenance, recovery and re-furbishing of RCAF Military aircraft until the Repair Depot was finally closed in 1964.

The buildings of former No. 10 Repair Depot were occupied for many years by ATCO Industrial Complex, at 50th Avenue North, and Crowchild Trail, but in early April 2013 all the buildings of the former No. 10 Repair Depot have been removed, and the site is being prepared for re-development.

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RCAF Detachment Airdrie, AB: 1940 to 1945

In the summer of 1940 a BCATP R.1 Relief Airfield was constructed a few miles east of the town of Airdrie, AB. The airfield included a single set of 2800 foot triangular runways, a hangar, and a few support buildings. The airfield was designated as the Relief Field for aircraft operating out of RCAF No.3 SFTS, Calgary, AB.



Google Earth photo of RCAF Detachment Airdrie, AB. – BCATP Relief Field on the right of photo. None of WW-II runways are operational. Post-war NW-SE runway cuts through middle of BCATP runway system.

The RCAF Airdrie Detachment remained in operation until the closure of No. 3 SFTS, in September of 1945.

Following the Second World War the airfield was used for light aircraft, private flying. Ultimately, a longer Northwest-Southeast paved runway was constructed, directly through the WW-II triangular runway system. The older triangular runways are now disintegrating.

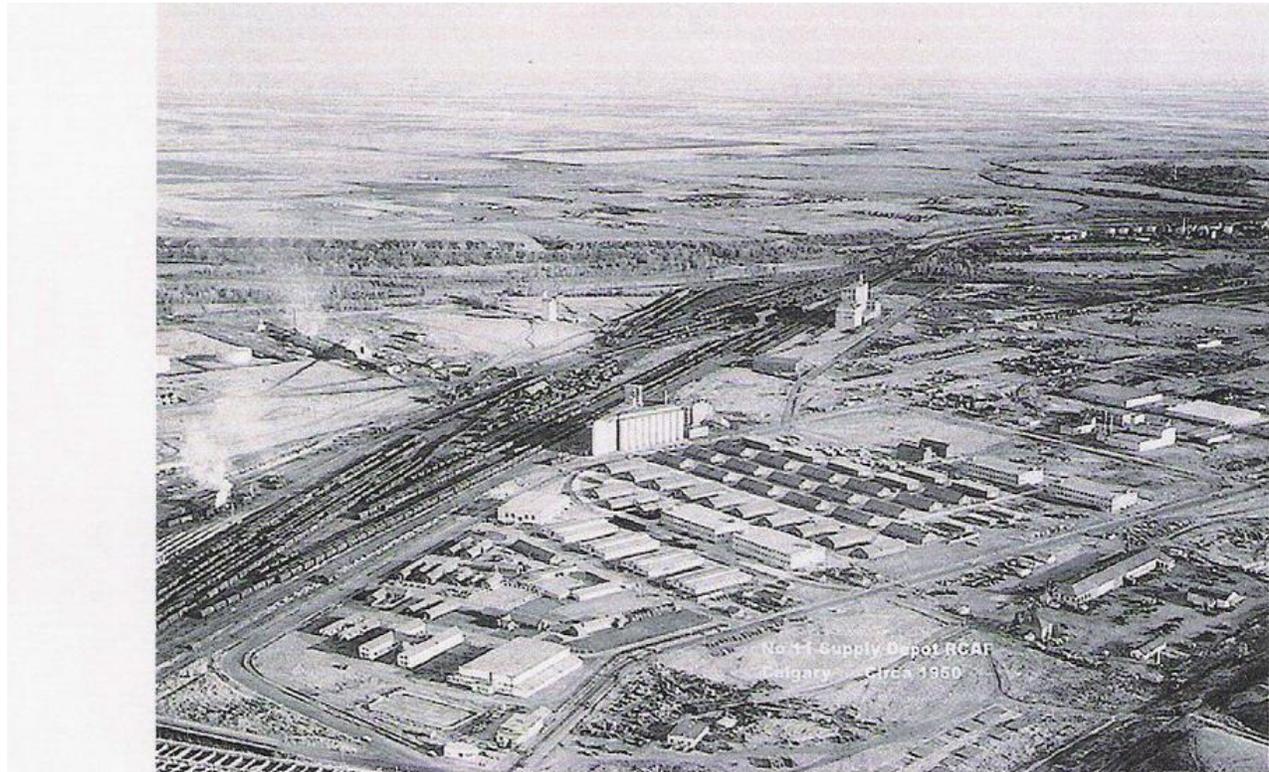
The Airdrie airfield is one of the very few BCATP WW-II sites that is still being used in 2011 for flying operations – (the site and some facilities of former No. 37 SFTS in Calgary is another) - seventy years after its creation in 1941; although the original runways are no longer serviceable.

Some BCATP buildings at RCAF Detachment Airdrie are still in use, including the hangar – that is now used by a construction company

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No. 11 Supply Depot (SD) – Calgary, AB

To provide logistic materiel support for all British Commonwealth Air Training Plan bases in No. 4 Training Command (RCAF), in 1941 the Canadian Government established a major supply depot in Calgary, AB.



11 SD Calgary Aerial Photo 1950

No 11 Supply Depot, RCAF, Calgary
Circa 1950

(1950 RCAF photo of No. 11 SD Calgary – looking towards the southeast – located between Ogden Road and the marshalling yards of the CPR. The railway bridges across the valley of the Bow River are just beyond the yards, at the top of the photo.)

No. 11 SD Supply Depot was located in the Ogden area of Calgary, directly adjacent to the railway lines of Canadian Pacific Railway Ltd. The Supply depot consisted of perhaps 20 one-story warehouses; several two or three stories warehouses; and barracks and support facilities for personnel working at the base.

No. 11 SD provided logistic support to BCATP Bases in British Columbia, Alberta and parts of Saskatchewan: supplying everything from aircraft parts, furniture, uniforms, and bedding – to food, kitchen and bathroom supplies.

wjc..Fin.

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