

FLY NORTH

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NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO AVIATION HERITAGE CENTRE

Preserving and celebrating the diverse history of aviation in the northwest, through the collection and preservation of artifacts and stories of the persons and events that made this region unique in aviation history

NOAHC News -----

AGM: Advance notice

The Annual General Meeting of NOAHC for the receipt of reports and election of office-bearers is scheduled for May. The specific date and time will be announced shortly.

Avro Arrow

On April 26, at 7:00 pm at the West Thunder Community Centre NOAHC will present a talk and film on the history of the Avro Arrow, Canada's potential, but unfulfilled contribution to the air defence of North America during the Cold War era.

Superior Shores:

NOAHC has become a member of the Thunder Bay bingo community. Once a month volunteers will participate in a bingo at the Superior Shores Gaming Association facility on Memorial Avenue with the aim of raising funds for the Centre. Board members and volunteers have already successfully covered two sessions. Our efforts are being managed by Robin Webster. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Robin via noahc@tbaytel.net.

World War One Centennial Project



NOAHC was represented at the launch of a new website for the WWI Centennial Project on February 27 at the Brodie Resource Library. The project was initiated in 2014 to commemorate the local impact of the First World War through online stories displays and exhibits. Initially led by the Thunder Bay Public Library, it involves ten project partners, who have contributed photographs, records and expertise to a dynamic online exhibit depicting life at the Lakehead during WWI. Contributions have also come from the local community. The project has won an Ontario Historical Society Award and a City of Thunder Bay, Arts and Heritage Award. Visit the website at www.tbayworldwarone.com

Jack Minor 1930 – 2018



Jack Minor passed away on January 18, 2018. He was born and raised in Kenora and started a life-long career with the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests, and the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Working there he became well known for his skill in fighting forest fires and developed his great interest in airplanes. On retirement, he and his wife, Heilene, devoted many years to volunteering at the Canadian Bushplane Heritage Centre in Sault Ste. Marie. After moving to Thunder Bay to be closer to family, Jack and Heilene became members of NOAHC and donated a collection of photographs to the Centre's archives. NOAHC extends its condolences to the Minor family.

Dryden Flying Club

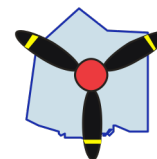
The Dryden Flying Club celebrated its sixtieth anniversary in 2017 and is the only flying club still in existence in northwestern Ontario. It started flying with planes on wheels, floats and skis, but after moving to property overlooking Lake Wabigoon in 1984 club members now fly floatplanes only. The club owns a Piper PA-12 on floats, which members can rent. NOAHC sends its congratulations to the club and its members.

Centre Statistics:

During 2017, members of the board and volunteers amassed a total of 2018 hours, not including the countless volunteer hours spent by members working away from the Centre. After the move into the new facilities on Victoria Avenue, NOAHC did not open for visitors until mid-March, but from then until the end of the year 600 people visited the Centre.

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The Great Beech Hunt by Robert W. Arnold

It was the winter of 2016 when it was decided that, along with two colleagues of mine, I would take a road trip in search of any remaining Beech 18's. The thrust behind the journey came about when I received an email from my friend Brian, who lives in the UK, indicated he wanted to make a plane-spotting visit to Winnipeg.

With the aid of a few maps and the help from my close friend Guy, we put together a trip down highway 71 to Fort Francis, where over the years, I had seen many Beech 18's along the way in various conditions, some flying and some not. For Brian, photographing a Beech 18, especially one that was still operating, would be like finding the holy grail, but he certainly would not exclude any other gems that we might happen to come across along the way.

While being one of the two cofounders for the Vickers Viscount website, www.vickersviscount.net, Brian also has this huge appetite for any aircraft that has a round engine bolted to it. Apparently this is becoming a very rare sight in the UK.

With Guy as our driver, our cameras fully charged and ready for hundreds of photos, off we went with high hopes of achieving our aim of visiting Northwest Flying Inc.'s operation at Nestor Falls.

What a delightful surprise we had coming down the hill as we spotted several aircraft types tied to the dock. Two of the aircraft were highly polished Beech 18's on floats. One Beech 18, C-FHZA, was loaded with passengers and was ready for departure while the other Beech 18, C-FNKL, was about to take on several passengers along with their camping and fishing gear. On the other side of the dock office was a little jetty with a pristine looking DHC-2 Beaver, C-GEBL and a Cessna 180, C-GIUN, that was also in pristine shape.

As we stood back and watched all the activity take place, we took several photos of the event. While doing this, the opportunity presented itself to have a brief chat with Shane Pope who we discovered was owner, chief cook and bottle washer of Northwest Flying Inc. During our conversation we briefly explained the purpose of our trip and of course it wasn't long before someone asked the inevitable question, was there was a chance we might get a flight in one of the Beech 18's. To our surprise, the answer was an affirmative yes, but Shane encouraged us to stop by on our way back the next day as Sunday wouldn't be as hectic as today, Saturday, was. With this information, we continued on our way to Fort Frances, where we spent a good day photographing planes at Rusty Myers Flying Service floatplane base, and at the Northern Wilderness Outfitters base.

The next morning, Sunday we were up early and set out for Nestor Falls, looking forward to our ride in a Beech 18. We found the parking lot full of vehicles, mostly with American licence plates, but were able to park the van in a wee corner next to the highway. We then headed to the office where we waited for Shane as we watched him help turn around one of the Beech 18's that had just arrived. After he helped with that, he came into the office where we struck up several interesting conversations with him. Shane's father and former owner, Jack Pope, also happened to be in the office at the time and he added several stories of his bush-flying career to the conversation. Some were nail-biting to say the least. We all had a great time as we stood around talking, and it wasn't long before many interesting aviation stories were exchanged.

Soon we heard that familiar sound of a Beech 18 coming up the waterway. Once the aircraft was closer, the pilot chopped the power and the aircraft slowly drifted to the dock area where Shane along with a couple dockhands, began to maneuver the aircraft into place as they began turning it around and face back it to where it came from and then quickly secured it to the dock. While this was going on, the three of us stood back and watched while taking pictures.

Now it was our turn to take to the air. We were even offered a choice of which Beech 18 we preferred. Shane suggested we use C-FHZA, as it had a pair of three bladed props. The three of us approved of the idea and we were ready to go.

With Shane as our pilot for the day, it wasn't long before we were all buckled in and taxiing away from the dock. After a few minutes we began our turn into the wind, powered up and off we went. With the forces pushing us back into our seats, the takeoff run began as we skimmed the surface of the lake. The take off was quite smooth as the lake was calm and with very little chop. Before we knew it, we were up on the step and then broke free of the water. With the three bladed propellers pulling us along, it was no time we were off the water and in the air.

Once we were above the trees, Shane made a slow bank to the left as we continued our climb to about 2000 feet. From 2000 feet we could see the hundreds of lakes that dotted the region and made up the area known as Lake of the Woods. For a brief time we followed highway 71 and then made a few turns left and right as we drifted around the area. We could even see Ft. Francis in the distance. One of the turns took us to a remote, yet paved airstrip. We made a low level and what felt like a high-speed pass over the airstrip before pulling up and making a hard bank to the left. After about twenty-five minutes of flying around, it was time to get back on the ground. We powered back slightly and made a slow, low-level pass over of the company headquarters before once again turning into the wind and making one of the smoothest water landings I have ever been part of.

The flight was now over, but what an experience we all had. We continued our excited, yet interesting conversation with Shane while slowly taxiing towards the dock. With the power to both engines now chopped, it was very quiet in the cabin, with only the sound of us talking and the gyros winding down.

After deplaning and standing safely on the dock, we all took a moment to shake hands with Shane and his crew and thank them for all the kind hospitality they provided. There was time for a brief photo as we stood beside the aircraft after which we said our goodbyes for the last time and headed across the parking lot towards the van. After a stop in Kenora for more plane spotting and pictures, we headed home to Winnipeg.

As I reflect back, it was a wonderful time as I spent it with my close friends and also met new people. It was eye-opening in many ways. The bonus part of the trip was of course the flight in a vintage Beech 18. Along with the many experiences we all gained, the three of us had captured several hundred photographs of our journey along the way.

At the end of the day, judging by the smiles all around, the hunt for the mighty Beech 18 was more than a success. I know for sure both my friends Brian and Guy had a great time as their missions too had been accomplished.

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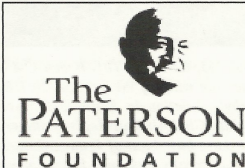
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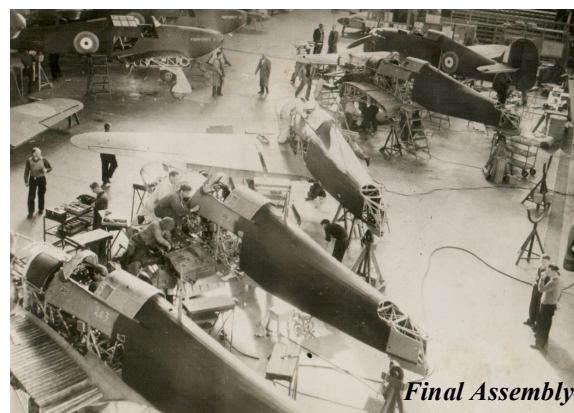
**JOHN ANDREWS
FOUNDATION**



Can-Car in 1941 - recently donated pictures



C.D. Howe, who was instrumental in securing the Hurricane contract, addressing employees in March 1941



Pictures taken by Hartley Whittaker, who worked in the Final Assembly Shop, and donated by his nephew Jim Geils, a NOAHC member

Some of the aircraft discovered during the Great Beech Hunt



Four Beech 18 fuselages at the Rusty Myers base in Fort Frances. From left to right they are C-FZRI, C-FBGO, C-FERM and C-FRVL



C-FNKL at the Northwest Flying Inc. dock in Nestor Falls. Built as a military aircraft and converted into a floatplane by Bristol Aerospace in 1962. Owned by NFI since 1964



C-FHZA taxiing up to the dock. It was built as a corporate transport in 1948. Flown by Chimo Air Service out of Red Lake from 1996, then acquired by NFI in 2012



Up out of Nestor Falls in C-FHZA

All photographs on this page courtesy of Robert W. Arnold, a regular contributor to *FlyNorth*



Back at the dock. Robert Arnold is on the left of the group.