

FLY NORTH



NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO AVIATION HERITAGE CENTRE

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



NOAHC News ...

Acquisitions The first few months of 2023 have seen a substantial number of donations to NOAHC. They range from newspapers to memoirs and aircraft parts. The family of Oscar Sideen, a well-known pilot and flying instructor, in the northwest, donated a box of material detailing his life in aviation in the 1940s and '50s. (*for more information see Page 4*).

NOAHC received a couple of large items from Jason Robinson of Dryden, namely a ski and doors from a Noorduyn Norseman.



*One of the
Norseman Doors*

The Ski

They are in reasonable condition and with a bit of work they can be brought up to display condition or made suitable for a future Norseman restoration.

Deidre Doubleday donated a copy of the *Fort William Daily Times Journal*. It is dated February 29, 1944 and described as the *Wings Edition*. In two sections it contains a variety of articles on wartime aviation activity in the region, in particular aircraft production at Can-Car.

Two wheels were donated by Brian Berringer. They may or may not be tail wheels for the Curtiss Helldiver. Serial numbers and other identifiers are being researched to try to establish their origin.

Obituaries

Stan Johnson 1948-2022

Stan Johnson was born in Marathon, Ontario and although his career as a stationary engineer took him to other parts of the country, he never lost his love for the town and the countryside around it. He was interested in the history of the region and became a leading light in the Marathon Museum and Historical Society, spearheading a campaign to return the tugboat *Peninsula* to the town. Stan was a good friend to NOAHC. He provided the Centre with a manuscript written by his friend Colin MacMillan, a pilot for the Ontario Provincial Air Service and the Marathon Paper Company, which was published by NOAHC. Stan also helped to sell the book by regularly distributing and selling it to his contacts in the Marathon area.

NOAHC extends its condolences to the Johnson family.

Allan Kenneth McLeod 1931-2022

Allan McLeod was born in Sioux Lookout, Ontario and spent much of his adult life flying in the northwest. Hoping to learn to fly he enlisted in the RCAF, but they trained him as a navigator and he had to leave the Air Force and take private lessons in Winnipeg, Manitoba before he became a pilot. He regularly flew floatplanes such as the DH Beaver into remote northern lakes to pick up minnows, which were in demand for fishing. He also flew for the Ministry of Natural Resources for several years at different locations in the northwest, including Sioux Lookout. In 2019, Allan donated his Log Books, Licences, a DVD and a variety of clippings and photos to NOAHC.

NOAHC extends its condolences to the McLeod family.

Volume 15, Number 1:
January – March 2023

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Recovering a Downed Aircraft and Crew.

As well as carrying out their normal fire patrols the pilots of the Ontario Provincial Air Service (OPAS) in the northwest were often called out on search and rescue missions. In the summer of 1943, Yorkie Fisker, senior pilot at Nakina and Colin MacMillan from the Pays Plat base were involved in the search for an RCAF Avro Anson that had disappeared in the Armstrong area.

Fisker and MacMillan established a search pattern, which involved a series of zig-zags along the Anson's projected flight path. What follows is Colin MacMillan's account of the discovery of the downed aircraft, the rescue of the crew and the subsequent recovery of the plane.....

"On the westward end of one of our zags, Ed Pike, my observer thought he saw the sun flash on some object some 10 miles further west, so we lengthened our zig and there was our lost Anson, sitting in the water, about 100 or so feet from the shore of a small loon shit lake (loon shit is 60 parts water to 40 parts mud). We came down to the treetops and circled to look the plane over. The crew of three were on a small point of land on the north end of the lake. They had a smudge fire going and all three were standing and moving. We gave them a wing wag then climbed up to locate a near-by lake that we could land in. The nearest suitable was about a mile north. Here, we landed and tied up and, with a hand compass, walked through the bush to where the Anson crew were. No one was hurt but they had great hunger. The only thing they had to eat in 72 hours was one small red squirrel, divided among three men. When we returned to my plane, I pulled out by box of emergency supplies and told them to help themselves. Ed and I wrestled the empty fuel drums out of the plane, leaving them on the shore for future retrieval. While I taxied down the lake for takeoff, the Anson crew were having a picnic on the cabin floor of corned beef, raisins, chocolate, sardines and Finnish bread, which only filled a small corner of those empty bellies. We were back at Caribou Lake in time for a late dinner. Fisker had continued on north on his side of the course line until he came to Fort Hope, as I did not show up there at the appointed time, he assumed I had located the missing plane and had returned to Caribou Lake.

So ended the search, but it was not the last of our association with the lost Anson. A few days after returning to my base at Pays Platt, Fisker phoned and said that the R.C.A.F. had flown in an aircraft salvage expert to see the Anson. His verdict was that the plane was unsalvageable. Fisker suggested we have a look at it. Permission was obtained for the flight. We took a canoe with us and the Chief of Police from Geraldton. He was a big man and good at packing a canoe through the woods. We flew north to the wrecked Anson and packed the canoe in to the lake where the Anson lay. We gave the plane a good looking over and could see no reason why the craft could not be salvaged, providing money for the work was available. Upon returning to Geraldton, we prepared a report for the Air Service Director, George Ponsford. To speed things up, we telephoned him our report. We told him that the Anson could be raised out of the water, repairs made and when the lake froze over in January, the Anson could be flown out on skis. The other alternative we recommended was to raise the Anson out of the water and salvage all removable parts.

We gave an approximate cost for each alternative. The Director contacted the R.C.A.F. and a couple of days later phoned us. If there was no imminent fire hazard, we could go ahead with the salvage of parts. Ed Pike came along to help. I took my flight engineer with me (Bill MacCarthy). Fisker came with the Geraldton plane, a Buhl Air Sedan.

We took a complete fire-fighting kit for 10 men and before going to the scene of the wreck, we flew to Fort Hope, where we hired six Cree Indian packers. On reaching the large lake near the wreck, we set up our camp and cut a good wide trail through the woods to the wreck. The plane was about 100 feet off a swampy shore, partly submerged in gooey muck. We decided that the only way available to us to raise the Anson was to build a floating causeway of trees from the shore to the plane, then build a floating island around the plane. When this structure was sufficiently buoyant, we would pry up one wing or tail section at a time, and fill under the raised portion with logs and brush and gradually raise the plane out of the water. It took us two days to construct the causeway and the island and another day to raise the plane completely out of the water. We then removed the two Jacobs radial engines, propellers, all engine accessories, retractable landing gear, instruments, cabin accessories, cables, pulleys, fuel tanks, oil tanks, ailerons, rudder, elevators, windows, wind screen, seats, etc. We took everything that was removable. The entire salvage job took about 10 days. As we worked, we made a photographic record, which Fisker later sent with a report to the Deputy Minister of Lands and Forests (Frank MacDougall). He was so impressed with our salvage job and, possibly to show up the R.C.A.F., that he sent the photos and salvage report on to the Popular Mechanics Magazine. They published a four-page spread with photos of the salvage operation."



Packing equipment in to salvage the partially submerged Anson

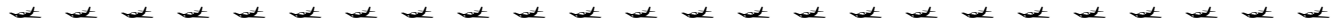
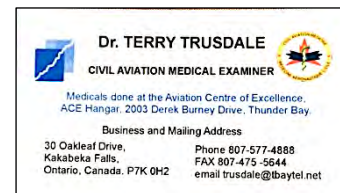


The wrecked Anson on-shore with all of the salvageable equipment removed

Read more about Colin MacMillan's exploits in the northwest in his book, "From Cape Breton to Northwestern Ontario". It is available from the NOAHC gift shop at a price of \$20.00, with a 10% discount for members

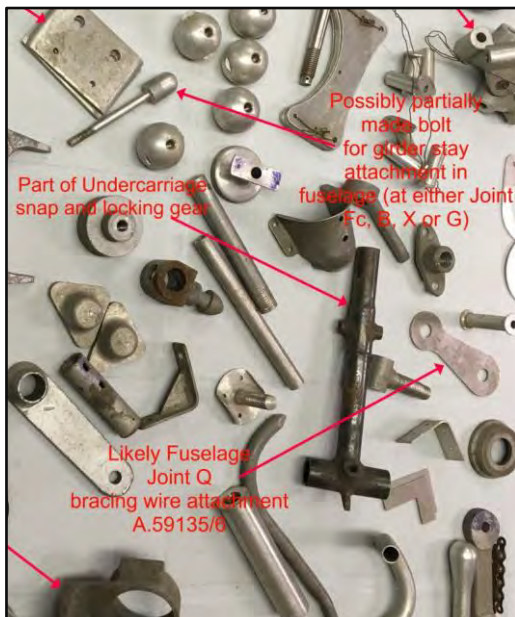


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Hurricane parts: NOAHC recently received a box of spare parts originally used in the construction of the Hawker Hurricane fighters built at the Canadian Car and Foundry plant in Fort William in the early 1940s. Originally sent by Jay Minor to Robin Webster, both since deceased, the parts were subsequently passed on to the Centre by Liz Wieben. The parts are small and probably of limited interest to anyone other than aeronautical engineers or aircraft restorers and for the most part are not easily identifiable. However, Steven Smart, a Hurricane enthusiast from Winnipeg, was able to identify the names and use of many of the parts. It seemed that the parts had limited display potential at the Centre, but could be of use to Hurricane restorers. With that in mind, John Hill, a NOAHC Board member, contacted Vintage Wings, an aircraft restoration and display organization in Gatineau, Quebec, to see if they had any interest in the parts. They had just completed the restoration of a Hurricane built at Can-Car and were happy to obtain spares for possible future use. John consolidated and packed the individual items before sending them off – a contribution from NOAHC to the maintenance of an historic aircraft.

If you have anything similar that you would like to donate to NOAHC, please let us know.



Some of the parts identified by Steven Smart



Parts sorted and packaged, ready to go to Vintage Wings



1. Rudder bar adjusting star wheel
2. Adjustment nut for throttle Lever – identified by Steven Smart



Landing gear indicator face plate

