

# 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

This is a picture of one of two wheels 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, so far without success.



NOAHC would be happy to hear from anyone who can provide information on the wheel.

Over the years NOAHC has acquired a number of logbooks, both military and civilian, which record the flying activities of local aviators. All have been pilots' logbooks. However, Wayne Milne has donated a logbook entitled *Flying Log Book For Aircrew Other Than Pilots*. It was kept by E.D. Johnson, a navigator in the RCAF in 1944 and 1945. Find out more about what the logbook reveals on

#### Memberships / Volunteer Hours

Archie Gribben, Membership Secretary, reports that NOAHC has 50 paid-up members with an additional 38 in arrears. Between mid-March and mid-April, 166 volunteer hours were recorded, 147.5 at the Centre or elsewhere and 18 at the Bingos.

In that time, we also had 58 visitors!

#### Visit from Pioneer Ridge Residents

On April 29, a group of six senior citizens from Pioneer Ridge visited the Centre. After a tour of the Centre, they watched the "Rosies of the North" movie and were introduced to the flight simulator, which was a big hit with the group.

#### Visit to Air Cadet Squadron

On April 29, NOAHC visited No. 70 Elsie MacGill Air Cadet Squadron. See report on page 3.

#### Snowbirds over Thunder Bay

On June 3 and 4, the Royal Canadian Airforce Aerobatic Team, the *Snowbirds*, flying CT-114 Tutors, gave two displays in Thunder Bay. Thousands of spectators at the Marina and other suitable viewing sites, such as Hillcrest Park, were treated to a mix of individual and formation aerobatics.

This was the first display of the 2023 season, which will include 20 locations in Canada, plus two displays in California.



*Incoming over Hillcrest Park*



*Final Flypast*

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## Flying Log-Book For Aircrew Other Than Pilots

E.D. Johnson of College Street in Port Arthur, began training as a navigator in the RCAF in December 1943 at No. 5 Air Observer School in Winnipeg, Manitoba, which was part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP). The training included ground school, but the logbook records only the air time.

Johnson's first flight took place on December 10, 1943 in an Avro Anson and by the end of the month he had spent 16 hours and 15 minutes in the air. The course lasted for just over 4 months, by the end of which he had accumulated 107hrs/25min, 67hrs/35min during the day and 39hrs/50min at night. During that time training had included basic navigation techniques, map reading and square searches as well as Astro Fixes, Star Shots and Sun Shots. On April 21, 1944, Johnson qualified as a Navigator, having scored 78.6% in his ground work and 74.4% in his air work.



In early July that year he shipped to Britain and spent time at various bases, mainly in northern England, from which he made familiarization flights to western Scotland and Northern Ireland. By the end of the year, he had accumulated 113hrs/20min day time flying and 80hrs at night. Johnson's next big move was to No. 24 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at Honeybourne, Worcestershire, where the RCAF had a unit to train aircrew on the Vickers Wellington bomber. For navigators, the training involved



cross country flights, south-west to Devon and Cornwall and north to Scotland and the whole crew had to undergo parachute and dinghy drill. Fighter affiliation was also part of the training, the main purpose of which was to acquaint new pilots with the maneuverability of fighters and how to avoid them. In training, friendly fighters would attack a bomber, recording their efforts with camera guns, while the bomber pilot, attempting to escape, launched his aircraft into a variety of violent maneuvers. Fighter affiliation exercises in daylight with friendly fighters was one thing, but conditions over enemy territory in the dark were different. At the first indication of the presence of hostile aircraft, often as a result of observations by the gunners, the pilot began avoidance maneuvers, which involved sudden changes in altitude

to the heading for the target. Although operations were over by the time Johnson was fully trained, he did take part in several fighter affiliation flights on the Wellington and later on the Lancaster.

Johnson ended his training at No. 24 OTU on April 30, 1945, with accumulated flying hours totalling 278hrs/15min. Although the war in Europe was only a few days from being over, he was transferred to No. 1666 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU) at RAF Wombleton in Yorkshire. This was an RCAF station in 6<sup>th</sup> Group Bomber Command, where aircrew trained to fly heavy 4-engined



bombers such as the Avro Lancaster and Handley Page Halifax. Johnson had his familiarization flight in a Lancaster on June 25, followed by cross-country flights, bombing practice and fighter affiliation. Other activities recorded in the log book include 2 and 3 engine flying and radar demonstrations. However, Johnson's time in the RCAF was coming to an end. His logbook entry for July 25, 1945 lists flight times of 187hrs/10min daytime and 129hrs/50 night.

Shortly after that he left England for Canada and on October 10, 1945 he was demobilized in Winnipeg.

At first sight logbooks may seem no more than a lists of numbers, places and planes. However, if the activities that these lists represent are placed in the appropriate local or even national/international context, an interesting story of events in the life of the keeper of the logbook often emerges, as it does with E.D. Johnson.

### *The Corkscrew* — an evasive maneuver practiced during fighter affiliation as described by Phillip Gray in his book *Ghosts of Targets Past*

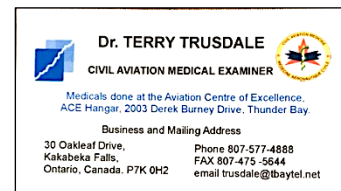
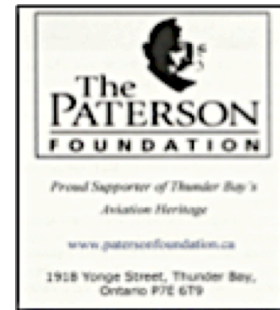
“ ‘Rolling over on a corkscrew...now’, I warned. The pilot of the Spitfire was making his initial attack a conventional one from the starboard side, so I hammered in full right rudder to narrow his angle, pushed the control column far forward and turned the wheel to starboard to follow the rudder. R-Roger fell out of the sky like a bag of wet cement. ...My patter over the internal intercom was relentless. ‘Down starboard, rolling, down port, rolling, up port, rolling, up starboard.’ ...During the last bout of corkscrewing, Clin in the rear turret said his blood ran cold when he saw the Lancaster’s wings bend and wave in the extreme flying conditions.”

**Phillip Gray** (2005) “Ghosts of Targets Past; The lives and losses of a Lancaster crew in 1944-45” Grub Street, London





## Our corporate supporters...



## Royal Canadian Air Cadets No 70 Elsie MacGill Squadron

On April 29, several members of NOAHC gave presentations to the members of No 70 Squadron, Royal Canadian Air Cadets at St. Patrick's High School. The squadron was created through the amalgamation of two other local squadrons and given its name in recognition of the contribution of Elsie MacGill to local and national aeronautics. Denise Lyzun organized the program along with squadron CO Captain Kate Yap. She showed excerpts from the "Rosies of the North" video that illustrated Elsie MacGill's work at Can-Car, followed by a question and answer session on what the cadets had learned from the video. Liz Wieben talked a bit about career opportunities for women in aviation but also emphasized the value of everyone being in cadets because their training brings special skills to apply in their future. David Bryan, a former cadet, gave an account of some of the highlights of his time in the organization and showed some artifacts from the Centre that have links to the cadets. Resplendent in his Air Canada uniform, John Hill described the opportunities that the Flight Management program at Confederation College can offer. George Holborn organized the technical support required to show the video and also helped set up the display tables. He gave a brief review of our flight simulator. The display table included a poster display of Elsie MacGill's work on her Maple Leaf Trainer and the Hawker Hurricane, as well as other memorabilia from the Centre's collection.

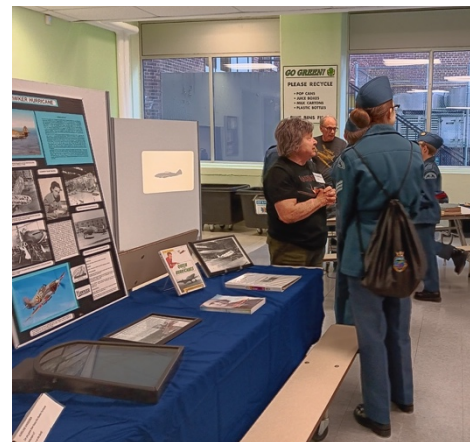
The presentations were considered a success by those involved and a measure of that success was the fact that a number of those who had attended the event visited the Centre in the following week.



Happy winner of a T-shirt draw with Liz and George



Trying on a WWII vintage RCAF greatcoat



Liz elaborating on some items on the display table



## Stinsons in the Northwest

The Stinson Aircraft Corporation was founded in 1926 by Eddie Stinson, an ex-military pilot turned barnstormer. In the 1920s he ran a charter company in Michigan flying Junkers JF-6s connecting Detroit to Chicago, with longer flights east to New York and south to Kansas City. He also participated in group flights across the United States aimed at encouraging the development of civil aviation. His big break came in 1925 when he persuaded a syndicate of Detroit businessmen to support him financially to design and build a four-passenger cabin biplane. Its features included, an enclosed cabin with a heater, wheel brakes and an electric starter; the plane, which he called the Stinson Detrouer, was the first to combine these features in one aircraft. The success of the Detrouer - ten were built and sold in 1926 the year it was introduced - provided the impetus that the company needed to grow. Between its formation in 1926 and its demise in 1948, it built a considerable variety of aircraft, from single-engine biplanes to tri-motors and introduced important innovations in their designs. For the pilots of the northwest the most significant of these designs were the Reliant and the Voyager with its derivative the 108.

**Stinson Reliant** A high-wing plane that could carry a pilot and 4 passengers. Equally at home on wheels, floats or skis.



CF-OAW, one of 5 Reliant SR-9s flown by the Ontario Provincial Air Service (OPAS). Powered by a 450hp Pratt and Whitney Wasp engine it was based at Pays Plat between 1941 and 1945, when it was used on fire patrols, search and rescue and other Air Service business.



CF-BAG, Reliant SR8 DM of Superior Airways. Powered by a Wright R-760-E1 engine, it is shown here at the company's maintenance base on the Kaministiquia River.



**Stinson Voyager** High wing, three-seat light-utility monoplane, derived from the Stinson HW-75 and first built in 1939. The ultimate variant was the 108, which continued in production into the 1950s, by which time the Stinson Company had been taken over by Piper. Over 350 post war Stinson 108s were exported to Canada.



CF-OLZ, Voyager 108. Damaged twice in accidents near Red Lake in 1965 and at Eagle Lake in 1966, but repaired and in good shape by the time Ray Buffington took this picture at Fort William in 1993.



C-FKRU, built in 1952 as a Voyager 108-3, it came to Thunder Bay in 2000 and remained there under various owners until 2008. Current location unknown. On its nose it has the slogan "Stinson flying station wagon". Photographed by Ray Buffington in 2000