

# 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*

Volume 16, Number 1:  
January-March 2024

### NOAHC News ...

#### *Royal Canadian Air Force Centenary*

This edition of *Fly North* celebrates the creation of the Royal Canadian Air Force 100 years ago on April 1, 1924.

Although J.A.D. McCurdy's flight in the *Silver Dart*, the first powered flight in Canada, took place in 1909, there was little interest in flying in the country at that time, either from the military or the general public. It was only with the boost that World War I gave to aviation that the situation changed. By the end of the war there were 13,000 Canadians in the Royal Air Force, including some who called northwestern Ontario home. The stories of Stanley Rosevear, Hector Dougal, Ernest Potter and the Rutledge brothers, for example, have been told in past issues of *Fly North*. They served in the Royal Flying Corps, the Royal Air Force or the Royal Naval Air Service, all British organizations, but in November 1918 two Canadian squadrons were formed. They were too late to take part in the conflict and after the war the Canadian government decided it did not plan to have a permanent airforce and the squadrons were disbanded. However, the contribution of Canadian airmen in WWI ultimately led to the creation of a force that at the height of World War II numbered some 200,000 personnel.

Work continues at the Centre on a display to commemorate the Centenary of the Royal Canadian Air Force. It will include stories of local men who served in the RCAF, samples of the uniforms they wore and, models of the aircraft they flew. Since the RCAF was created on April 1, 1924, it is planned to have the display completed by April 1 this year and open to the public at that time.

#### *Visitors*

This summer NOAHC will be hosting visits from two different historic aircraft. The final details are yet to be confirmed, but in early July a Canso, recently restored by the Fairview Aircraft Restoration Society (FARS) in Alberta, will be visiting. In August, four Harvards from the Canadian Harvard Aviation Association (CHAA) in Tillsonburg, Ontario will be visiting. The organization has several Harvard IVs that were built in Fort William and it is expected that a couple of these will be in the visiting group. There is also the possibility that an additional Harvard, also Can-Car built, will be visiting from Saskatchewan at the same time.

For more information on the Canso, see page 3 in this issue of *Fly North*. Additional information on the Harvard visit will appear in the April-June issue.

Both of these aircraft types played a significant role in the aviation history of Canada and exhibiting restored flying versions of such aircraft is one way of making that history come alive. However, it is expensive and NOAHC would be happy to receive donations to help offset some of the costs. Donations can be made to NOAHC through Canada Helps ([canadahelps.org](http://canadahelps.org)), which provides a tax receipt for all donations. Donations can also be made at the Centre. If you wish your donation to go to either the Canso visit or the Harvard visit, please indicate which on the Canada Helps donation form.



Can-Car built Harvard IV

### Inside this Issue:

2. Short History of the Royal Canadian Air Force
3. FARS Canso visit
4. Aviation Puzzles

### **NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO AVIATION HERITAGE CENTRE INC.**

*Mailing Address*  
403-1100 Memorial Ave  
Thunder Bay, ON  
P7B 4A3

*Centre Location*  
905 Victoria Avenue E  
Thunder Bay

*Contact NOAHC at*  
(807) 623-3522  
or  
[noahc@tbaytel.net](mailto:noahc@tbaytel.net)

*Webpage*  
[www.noahc.org](http://www.noahc.org)



*A Short History  
of the  
Royal Canadian Air Force*

Although Canadian aircrew had made a noteworthy contribution to the air war in Europe, when WWI ended in 1918 there were only two Canadian Air Force (CAF) squadrons, one fighter and one bomber. Neither survived for long since the Canadian government decided it did not want a permanent air force and, in 1919, they were disbanded. However, views changed and the following year saw the recreation of the CAF as a non-permanent organization designed to provide refresher courses for former wartime military officers and airmen. This did not prove very successful, with the number participating being low and no new pilots being trained. As a result, in 1922 the CAF was reorganized to become a permanent organization and following a period of transition the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) came into being on April 1, 1924. Initially the RCAF was very much involved in non-military activities such as forest and fishery patrols, aerial photography, exploring new air routes across the country and even experimenting with air mail service. With stations on the east and west coasts and the multitude of lakes in the interior, the main aircraft used were flying boats such as the Vickers Viking and Vedette and the Curtis HS-2L. Other aircraft on the establishment at that time include trainers such as the Avro 504N and the first of the RCAF's designated fighters, the Armstrong Whitworth Siskin. Throughout the '20s, the organization grew only slowly and when the worldwide depression struck in 1932, both personnel and activities were reduced significantly. It was only with the growth in political tensions around the world in the mid-1930s that things began to change. In 1936 the RCAF was reorganized as a purely military organization. It lost its involvement in civil aviation and, as defence expenditure increased, squadrons that had been disbanded during the depression were reformed and new auxiliary units were created. When WWII broke out in 1939, the RCAF had 19 squadrons, but some were paper units with no aircraft and others included obsolescent types. Only one squadron was equipped with a modern fighter, the Hawker Hurricane. The shortage of available fighters was such that RCAF was forced to take on strength a 1931 vintage biplane, the Grumman Goblin, which had been built by Canadian Car and Foundry (Can-Car) in Fort William, although it considered it outdated and too slow.



*Grumman Gobblins*

bombing offensive with 15 squadrons comprising 6 Group of Bomber Command. That came at a major human cost, however, with nearly 10,000 airmen killed in Bomber Command alone. RCAF units also served in North Africa and

That situation soon changed and by 1945, the RCAF had 86 squadrons of which 47 served overseas. No. 1 Squadron served in the Battle of Britain and in 1942 six Spitfire squadrons participated in the infamous Dieppe Raid. RCAF squadrons also made a major contribution to the Allied

South East Asia. At home it managed the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, which between 1940 and 1945 trained more than 130,000 aircrew.

At the war's end, the RCAF contracted significantly, but during the Korean War it provided important logistical support for the UN Forces, delivering personnel and material across the Pacific using its North Stars. At the same time, as a member of NATO it based 16 fighter squadrons, mainly Sabres, but also some CF-100s, in France and Germany. These were later replaced by the CF-104 Starfighter and the CF-101 Voodoo, which continued in service until 1982 when the CF-18 Hornet was introduced. More than 40 years later it remains the RCAF's main combat aircraft, but replacement CF-35 Lightnings are now on order. Search and Rescue services are provided by the CC-130 Hercules which is also used for transportation along with the heavy lifter CC-117 Globemaster. Training aircraft include the CT-155 Hawk and the CC-156 Harvard II. The previous main trainer, the Tutor is now used by the RCAF aerial display team, the Snowbirds.

Since 1958, Canada has been part of NORAD, the North American Aerospace Defence Command, a cold war response to potential attacks from the USSR across the North Pole.



*The Snowbirds*

The Canadian operational requirements of that treaty were met by the aircraft and personnel of the RCAF and conflicts in other parts of the world have led to the RCAF providing military assistance in the Gulf War and such hot-spots as Kosovo and Afghanistan.

In 1968, the three branches of the military were amalgamated as the Canadian Armed Forces, but the new set up was not well-liked and eventually in 2011 the three services reverted to their former status. Currently the RCAF has a regular force complement of more than 12,000, plus a reserve force of nearly 2,000 and more than 1,500 civilian members. However, there are problems attracting new recruits and the force is under strength. The RCAF has had a women's division (WD) since 1942, designed to allow women to fill non-combatant roles such as clerks, telephone operators, drivers, hospital assistants, instrument mechanics, parachute riggers, photographers, air photo interpreters, intelligence officers, weather observers or wireless operators. Women make up about 20% of the organization's complement, but it was only in 1981 that they were accepted as pilots. They now fly all types of aircraft including the CF-18, the RCAF's current front-line combat fighter/interceptor.

The RCAF at present has 430 aircraft, both fixed wing and helicopters, in service, but some are reaching the end of their useful life. To resolve that situation the Canadian government has since 2022 finalized the procurement or upgrade of approximately 140 new or refurbished aircraft, such as the CF-35 Lightning, the CC-330 Husky Tanker and the P-8A Poseidon maritime surveillance plane, which together will help the RCAF maintain its position as a modern air force.

*For more information, visit the library at NOAHC, which has a variety of books on RCAF aircraft and personnel and the events in which they were involved*



*Our corporate supporters...*

Lakehead Models  
Steve Melnick  
262 Bay St.  
Thunder Bay, ON  
P7B 1R5  
Tel.: 807-345-5776  
Fax: 807-344-6489  
lakeheadmodels@shaw.ca  
lakeheadmodels.com

**Jay Caldwell**  
Manager, Maintenance & Manufacturing  
309 Hector Dougell Way  
Thunder Bay, ON  
P7E 6M5  
Canada  
807-475-5249  
Fax: 807-475-8238  
jay@thunderbayaviation.com  
www.thunderbayaviation.com

**The PATERSON FOUNDATION**  
*Proud Supporter of Thunder Bay's Aviation Heritage*  
www.paterosonfoundation.ca  
1918 Yonge Street, Thunder Bay, Ontario P7E 6T9

**SUPERIOR SHORES GAMING ASSOCIATION**

**ROY P. LEUBENBERGER**  
President, Director of Maintenance  
Lot 6 Geraldton Airport • PO Box 698 • Geraldton, Ontario P0T 1M0  
P 807.854.2425 F 807.854.2426 E roy@reconair.net • www.reconair.net

**Thunder Bay Airport**  
*The right approach*

**Dr. TERRY TRUSDALE**  
CIVIL AVIATION MEDICAL EXAMINER  
Medicals done at the Aviation Centre of Excellence, ACE Hangar, 2003 Derek Burney Drive, Thunder Bay  
Business and Mailing Address  
30 Oakleaf Drive, Kakabeka Falls, Ontario, Canada, P7K 0H2  
Phone 807-577-4888  
FAX 807-475-5644  
email trusdale@tbaytel.net



*Visit of the Fairview Aircraft Restoration Society Consolidated Canso:*

In July this year the Fairview Aircraft Restoration Society (FARS) will be bringing its restored Canso PBY-5A, C-FNJE, a Canadian built version of the Consolidated Catalina, to Thunder Bay. It went into service as RCAF 11094 in 1943 as a patrol bomber on the east coast, so it is appropriate that it be involved in the recognition of the RCAF's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

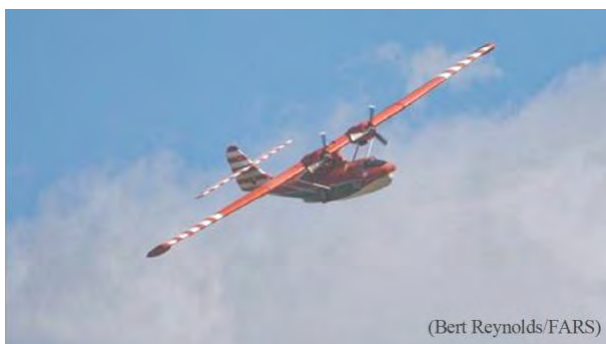
After WWII, it was converted into a water bomber and spent several decades protecting Canadian forests in Newfoundland and NWT from wild fires. FARS mission is to share that history with Canadians. In 2001, operated by Buffalo Airways, C-FNJE was fighting fires in the Inuvik, NWT area, when it started taking on water while loading on Sitidgi Lake and sank in about 100 feet of water. It was floated to the surface and pulled to the northeast shore of the lake. It remained there until Don Wieben, a Fairview farmer, pilot and member of the well-known, northwestern Ontario aviation family, the Wiebens, heard of it. After establishing that it could be restored, he and five other farmers from the area set about getting the Canso from the lake to Fairview. After arriving there in 2008, hundreds of hours were spent on the restoration by the crew and other volunteers until C-FNJE flew again at Fairview on June 18, 2017. For more on FARS and the Canso see the society's webpage [savethecanso.com](http://savethecanso.com)

Cansos served as waterbombers with the Ontario Lands and Forests, including in Northwestern Ontario. As well as being the Centenary of the RCAF, 2024 is also the Centenary of the establishment of the Ontario Provincial Air Service (OPAS), which was responsible for protecting Ontario's forests from fires. Thus, having been a military aircraft and now a water bomber, C-FNJE can be part of the celebration of both events.

**Hosted by NOAHC, the visit of the Canso will take place on July 5, 6 and 7 at Thunder Bay airport. The plane will be available for public viewing on the Wasaya Airways ramp. One of the days will be reserved for visits by NOAHC members. This will be a static display with no flights being given.**

As well as visiting Thunder Bay, the plane will also visit Trenton and, if time and funds permit, will go on to St. Anthony in Newfoundland, where it was once based.

Such events involving flights more than half way across the country and back are expensive and any donations to offset the cost would be appreciated. Donations can be made to NOAHC through Canada Helps ([canadahelps.org](http://canadahelps.org)), which provides a tax receipt for all donations. On the Canada Helps donation form, please indicate "Canso". Donations can also be made at the Centre by cheque, credit card or cash.



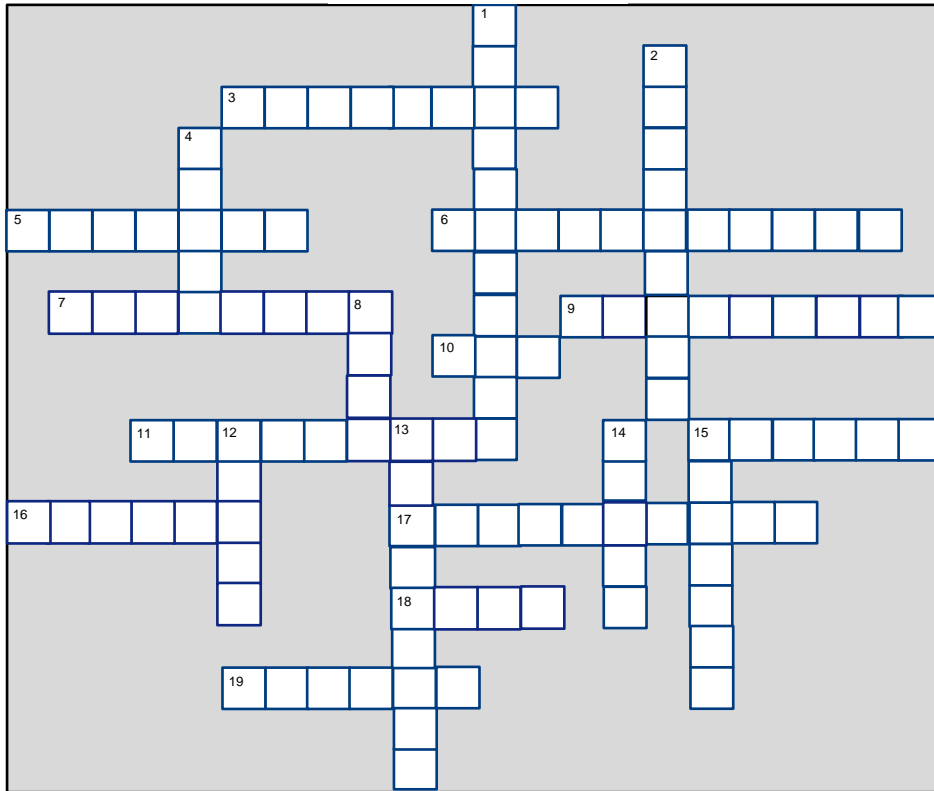
(Bert Reynolds/FARS)

*Canso PBY-5A (C-FNJE)  
on its first post-restoration  
flight out of Fairview  
on June 18, 2017*



**Aviation Puzzlers**

**RCAF Crossword**



**ACROSS**

- 3. Home of the RCAF's current flying display squadron
- 5. RCAF's biggest military helicopter
- 6. WWI ace and later RCAF Air Vice Marshall
- 7. Nickname of No. 434 Squadron RCAF
- 9. Aim of all trainee pilots
- 10. Final training unit that aircrew attended before going on operations
- 11. One of RCAF's heavy bombers in WWII
- 15. RCAF's current jet fighter/interceptor
- 16. Fort William based aircraft builder in the 1940s
- 17. They keep the planes ready and able to fly
- 18. Target of many bombing missions during WWII
- 19. Alberta location of the Bomber Command Museum

**DOWN**

- 1. RCAF's fastest Cold War fighter
- 2. RCAF's current flying display squadron
- 4. Nickname of number 419 Squadron RCAF
- 8. School that provided WWII initial pilot training
- 12. US/CAN organization created to defend North America against Soviet air attacks
- 13. Basic trainer on which most RCAF pilots learned to fly
- 14. Electronic system that allows aircrew to find and identify enemy aircraft and targets
- 15. Secondary trainer for fighter pilots in the BCATP

**RCAF aircraft wordsearch**

R	A	V	E	D	E	T	T	E	V	E	P	R	S	U	W	Y	M
E	T	H	O	R	N	E	T	A	E	N	G	O	B	L	I	N	I
T	U	T	O	R	A	M	M	S	A	T	D	T	T	W	L	M	E
S	N	N	I	M	C	P	G	M	E	R	C	A	B	T	R	O	H
A	V	O	R	T	I	E	E	S	A	C	A	R	P	D	E	F	N
C	S	F	L	R	R	S	K	V	S	A	T	E	J	I	G	R	E
N	S	F	E	T	R	T	R	U	P	N	O	B	W	E	X	E	L
A	P	I	T	O	U	A	K	S	I	S	K	I	N	N	B	D	B
L	Y	R	N	N	H	A	W	K	T	O	A	L	S	A	P	N	O
T	I	G	E	R	M	O	T	H	F	N	D	S	T	R	A	A	R
H	A	L	I	F	A	X	A	S	I	P	R	T	O	C	S	S	T
E	B	A	Y	L	I	F	E	G	R	U	L	S	B	I	T	Y	E
R	E	D	A	U	R	O	R	A	E	E	H	O	N	T	V	L	A
C	V	I	C	S	C	R	V	S	A	B	R	E	N	I	O	L	N
U	A	A	B	H	U	D	S	O	N	H	Y	N	D	P	O	R	T
L	E	T	Y	P	H	O	O	N	T	A	X	I	R	A	D	D	Y
E	B	O	L	L	I	N	G	B	R	O	K	E	N	W	O	S	O
S	P	R	K	R	A	H	S	F	I	N	C	H	G	O	O	S	E

This square contains names of 36 RCAF aircraft, past and present. They may be presented horizontally forward (GOOSE), backward (ESOOG), vertically forward G, vertically backward E

O	S
O	O
S	O
E	G

as well as

diagonally forward or		backward.	
G	E	E	G
O	S	S	O
O	O	O	O
S	O	O	S
E	G	G	E

Answers to each puzzle can be submitted to NOAHC and correct submissions will be entered into a draw for a T-shirt, mug or cap. One winner will be drawn for each puzzle. Send answers by e-mail to [noahc@tbaytel.net](mailto:noahc@tbaytel.net) or by Canada Post to 403-1100 Memorial Ave, Thunder Bay, ON P7B 4A3. Answers may also be hand-delivered to the Centre on Sunday or Wednesday open days.