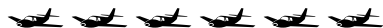




Fly North

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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

CANADIAN WARPLANE HERITAGE MUSEUM LANCASTER BOMBER THUNDER BAY, JULY 27 and 28, 2010



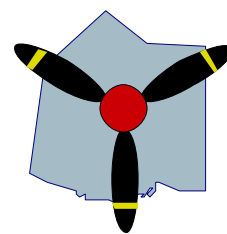
CWHM Avro Lancaster MkX

At Thunder Bay Airport, around noon on Tuesday, August 27, 2010, the unmistakable rumble and roar of four Merlin engines announced the arrival of the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum's Avro Lancaster from its base in Hamilton, Ontario. After landing it taxied to the Confederation College ACE apron where it remained on public display for two days. The CWHM Lancaster is one of only two in the world still in flying condition and maintained that way through the work of dedicated volunteers at the Museum. It spends much of the summer every year giving flying displays at the museum and at air displays across the country. The Thunder Bay visit was fitted in at the beginning of a western Canada tour to Winnipeg, Calgary and Abbotsford.

After some initial enquiries by NOAHC to start the process, the Thunder Bay Airport Authority took over, placing the planning in the capable hands of Kevin Hlady, Airport Operations Specialist. Thanks to Paul de Oude of Con College the apron in front of the ACE hangar was made available to park the Lancaster. On the day it arrived the aircraft was open for viewing by VIPs, including veterans, groups from the Airport Authority and Con College, local MPs, the Mayor and, of course, members of NOAHC. Public viewing the following day was a great success, with hundreds of enthusiasts lining up for a nose to tail tour through the plane. Our thanks go out to CWHM, the Airport Authority, Con College and all the volunteers who made the visit such a success

Inside this issue:

Lancasters - then and now	2
Bill Bissonnette - Lancaster Vet	2
P/O Andrew Mynarski	3
Lancaster visit in pictures	4



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Lancasters-Then and Now

Along with the Short Stirling and Handley Page Halifax, the Avro Lancaster was the mainstay of the RAF heavy bomber squadrons during WWII. Of these, the Lancaster was most successful. Developed from the twin-engined Avro Manchester design by increasing the wingspan and replacing the unreliable Vulture engines with four Rolls Royce Merlins, the first Lancaster had its maiden flight in January 1941 and became operational in March 1942. With its crew of seven it could carry a 15,000 lb bomb load over a range of 3,000 miles, bringing most of the Reich within reach of its bombs. In addition to its normal activities, the Lancaster was also modified for special operations. Perhaps the most famous was the Dam Busters Raid of May 1943 in which specially designed 'bouncing bombs' were used to breach the Mohne and Eder dams and cause flooding downstream in the Ruhr valley. The Lancaster was also the RAF's only heavy bomber capable of carrying the 12,000 lb Tallboy bomb, used to sink the Tirpitz in 1944, and the 22,000 lb Grand Slam, nicknamed the 'earthquake bomb', because of the devastating effects of its explosion. On the humanitarian side, Lancasters flew several thousand sorties on Operation Manna, when in 1945 they dropped food to the starving people of Holland, an event fondly remembered by an older Dutch-Canadian woman who came to see in Thunder Bay the aircraft that had flown over her home when she was a young girl. At the end of the war, hundreds of POWs were ferried home aboard Lancasters.

Over 7,300 Lancasters were built between 1941 and 1945. The last was withdrawn from the RAF in 1956, but some continued to be used in search and rescue missions or survey work by the RCAF, the French Navy and the Argentine Air Force into the mid 1960s. Seventeen Lancasters survive around the world in various states of repair or restoration, but only two are still in flying condition, one with the RAF Battle of Britain Memorial Flight in the UK and the other with the Canadian Warplanes Heritage Museum at Mount Hope, Hamilton, Ontario. That aircraft is a MkX Lancaster (serial number FM213), one of 400 built by Victory Aircraft at Malton, Ontario between 1943 and 1945. One of the last planes off the production line, FM213 was too late for wartime service, but in the 1950s and early 1960s it was flown on search and rescue patrols off the east coast. Struck of strength in October 1963, it spent some time on display at Sky Harbour in Goderich, Ontario before being acquired by CWHM in 1977. Restoring a 1940s-era bomber is no easy task—the Lancaster has 55,000 component parts—but after eleven years of dedicated work FM213 took to the air again in 1988. Since then, flying for approximately 50 hours per season, it has delighted thousands of people, young and old at the museum and at airshows across the country.

Read more about Lancasters:

Jarrold Cotter, *Living Lancasters*, Sutton Publishing (2005)

Includes an interesting section on the CWHM Lancaster

M. Garbett and B. Goulding, *Lancaster*, Ian Allan Ltd. (1992)

Includes first hand accounts by those who flew the Lancaster

Bill Bissonnette -Lancaster Vet

Among the most important VIPS who came out to view the Lancaster were a handful of veterans who had flown in the aircraft during WWII.



One who was obviously excited to be there was Bill Bissonnette, who flew as a navigator with 106 Squadron, an RAF unit based at Kirmington, Lincolnshire in eastern England. By the time he was 23 years old, Bill had flown a full tour of 30 missions in Lancasters—no mean feat at a time when casualty rates in Bomber Command were the highest of any branch of the services.



Talking to him, it was clear that Bill had fond memories of his time flying Lancasters. He had with him a copy of a poem by Audrey Grealy, entitled "Lancasters" which includes the following verse—a verse which more than anything reflects the feelings that Bill and his fellow airman had for the plane that they flew.

*The Lancs are no more, they are part of legend,
But memory stays bright in the hearts of the men,
Who loved them and flew them through flak and through hellfire,
And, managed to land them in England again.*

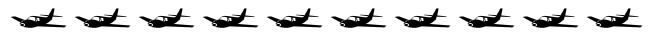
P/O Andrew Mynarski



By the end of WWII, 105 of the 400 Lancasters built in Canada had been lost in wartime service. The CWHM aircraft is painted to represent VR-A of 419 Squadron, No 6 Group Bomber Command, one of those that was lost and to commemorate the heroism of one of the crew, P/O Andrew Mynarski, the mid upper gunner. VR-A's last flight was on June 12, 1944 when it set out to bomb railway marshalling yards in Cambrai, France. Its crew included two Lakehead men, Jack Friday, the bomb-aimer and Pat Brophy, the rear-gunner. Nearing the target, the bomber was attacked by a German Ju88G-7 night-fighter causing an explosion in the port wing fuel tank that crippled both engines on that wing. In addition it started an hydraulic oil fire in the rear fuselage. Unable to extinguish the fires or control the aircraft, the pilot gave the order to bail out. Jack Friday and the others escaped through the forward hatch, leaving Andrew Mynarski and Pat Brophy to use the aft escape hatch. As a result of the hydraulic fire, however, power to

the rear turret had been lost and Brophy was trapped. Seeing what had happened, Mynarski, despite the fire, tried to free his friend, first with a fire axe and then with his bare hands, but to no avail. Realizing that it was futile, Brophy motioned Mynarski to jump before it was too late. With his clothes and parachute now ablaze he gave Brophy a final salute before bailing out. Sadly, although he survived the jump he succumbed to his burns shortly afterwards and was buried at Meharicourt Cemetery, near Cambrai in France. Brophy remained trapped in the crashing Lancaster, which broke up on hitting the ground causing the rear turret to break away and release him, still alive. Hidden by the French Resistance, he eventually returned to England in September 1944, when he learned of Mynarski's death and was able to reveal the whole story. As a result, in 1946, Andrew Charles Mynarski was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross, for 'valour of the highest order'.

In 2005, at Middleton St. George, the bomber base at which he served, a larger-than-life statue of Andrew Mynarski was dedicated in his memory. Appropriately, it depicts him at the rear of the stricken Lancaster, his right arm raised in salute. Pat Brophy's two daughters attended the ceremony as did Veterans, Canadian Air Cadets and the commander of the present 419 Squadron from Cold Lake Alberta. Plans are in the works to have a similar statue raised in Winnipeg, Mynarski's home town. The CWHM Lancaster is a living tribute to a Canadian hero, seen and appreciated by thousands of airshow and museum visitors every year.



In Memoriam

Ron Kyle 1934-2010

With the passing of Ron Kyle on July 13, 2010, the aviation and aeronautical maintenance engineering communities in northwestern Ontario lost a well respected member. NOAHC extends its condolences to the Kyle family.



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The Lancaster Visit in Pictures



Kevin Hlady, TBIA
Airport Operations
Specialist who co-
ordinated the visit

