

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

NOAHC has received a large model of a DHC-2 Beaver from the North of Superior Tourist Association in Red Rock. George Holborn and John Hill brought the model from Red Rock to the Centre where Archie Gribben dealt with a few necessary repairs. The model now hangs from the ceiling in the Vic Stevenson Theatre.



Considered by many to be “the best bush plane ever” the DHC-2 Beaver made its first flight on August 16, 1947. By the time the last plane came off the assembly line in 1967 1,657 had been built. The first delivery was made to Ontario Lands and Forests in April 1948 and it quickly became the plane of choice for many bush plane operators in the northwest. It is appropriate therefore that NOAHC has added the Beaver model to its collection.

Memberships

As 2024 approaches it is time for membership renewal. This issue contains a membership renewal form. Payment can be made by cheque, mailed to the Centre, or by cash and credit card at the Centre itself. E-transfers can be made to noahc@tbaytel.net

Visitors

On October 4, 2023, Marie Murphy and Cherie Simons visited the Centre. Each had a father, from northwestern Ontario, who had served with RCAF squadrons in England during WWII. Marie’s father, Charles Fiori, flew as a navigator with No. 434 (Bluenose) Squadron and Cherie’s father, Rupert Boyes, flew as a Flight Engineer with No. 419 (Moose) Squadron. Each brought pictures and other memorabilia which has allowed *Fly North* to present their stories. (see page 2)

Confederation College Aviation Centre of Excellence

The Confederation College Aviation Centre of Excellence (ACE) celebrated its 50th anniversary this year with a reunion on the 17th and 18th of November. A *Meet and Greet* was held on Friday the 17th in the Embassy Room in the Victoria Inn and the following day ACE hosted an Open House at its Hanger at Thunder Bay Airport between 11:00 and 15:00. The reunion concluded in the evening with a dinner in the Embassy Room. The ACE program has produced nearly 1300 graduates over the years, one of them being John Hill who is a member of the NOAHC Board. With his help NOAHC was able to set up a display at the Open House.

Walleye

The November issue of the *Walleye* includes a piece on the Hawker Hurricane by local author Kathryn Lyzun. It tells the story of the production of Hurricanes at the local Can-Car plant in the early 1940s. NOAHC was happy to be able to provide some of the pictures and information used in the article.

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Fg/Off C.F.H. Fiori RCAF

Charles Fiori, born in Port Arthur in 1923, enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force as an LAC 2 in November 1942 in Brandon, Manitoba. Following basic training, the air force decided that he should be trained as a navigator, which he did at various British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) schools. By 1944 he was in England at Croft in Yorkshire flying as a navigator in an Avro Lancaster bomber of the No. 434 (Bluenose) Squadron. He flew in Lancaster WL-L, Lollipop, captained by Flt/Lt J.C. Kitchen of Panoka, Alberta.



photo courtesy Marie Murphy

The crew of L for Lollipop. Charles Fiori is sixth from the left. The lollipop logos indicate that the crew had completed 9 missions at the time the picture was taken. Squadron records show that by the time they flew their last mission in May, 1945, that number had gone up to 23.

As well as showing the route to the target and back to base his navigator's logs include details of the height and time over the target plus sketches of the fires and bomb bursts at the target site. The dropping of the bombs activated a camera which took a picture of the bomb zone to allow the accuracy of the bombing to be evaluated. Charles Fiori's daughter Marie had a copy of one of these photos taken over the town of Mathias Stinnes in the Ruhr, where the target was a synthetic oil plant.

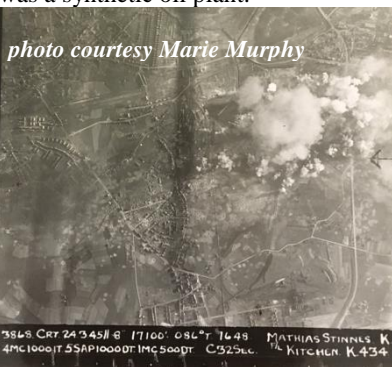


photo courtesy Marie Murphy

Taken from 17,000 ft. this aerial photograph shows bomb bursts and smoke from fires started during a daylight raid on a synthetic oil plant at Mathias Stinnes, on March 24, 1945.

Charles Fiori's first mission was to Hannover in early January, 1945. His final one was to the island of Wangerooge on April 25, 1945. By that time the war in Europe was almost over and aerial activity was much reduced. Much of the month of May was spent preparing for the return of the squadron to Canada and navigators such as Charles underwent extensive training and practice particularly on long distance Astro Navigation before flying back to Canada in early June 1945.

Fg/Off R.N. Boyes RCAF

Rupert Boyes, born and raised at Shebandowan, entered the Royal Canadian Air Force at the age of 24 in 1941 as an LAC 2. He attended the RCAF Technical Training School in St. Thomas, Ontario where he trained as a groundcrew mechanic. In 1943 he was transferred to England to become a member of No. 419 (Moose) Squadron at Middleton St. George in Yorkshire. Initially he was involved with the servicing of Handley Page Halifax heavy bombers, but he volunteered for air service and attended the RCAF Flight Engineering School in Wales after which he was promoted to the rank of Sergeant as a Flight Engineer. In April 1944, the squadron had been re-equipped with the Canadian-built Avro Lancaster X and Rupert Boyes became part of the crew of VR-Q captained by Fg/Off J.E. Errington.



photo courtesy Cherie Simons

The crew of VR-Q at the tail of their Lancaster. Rupert Boyes is standing third from the left.

The crew flew its first sortie on July 6, 1944 to St Pol-Sirecourt in northern France and its final on November 6, 1944 to Gelsenkirchen in Germany. Between these two dates they flew 32 missions. However, the numbers do not tell the whole story. All missions faced the potential hazards of anti-aircraft fire (flak) and attacks by night-fighters, but some were more hazardous than others. On August 15, VR-Q suffered flak damage over Soesterberg and the following night returning from Stettin was attacked by a night-fighter. The damage was not major and the crew was back in the air on the 18th. The following month, on September 12th on a mission to Dortmund, the starboard outer engine was put out of action by flak and the tail and rear fuselage were also hit. Fg/Off Errington brought the plane back on three engines. The damage required about 2 weeks to repair and the crew flew different aircraft until the 28th of the month when VR-Q returned to service. Rupert was honourably discharged from the RCAF in March 1945.



photo courtesy Cherie Simons

Rupert Boyes back in Canada. He was promoted to Flying Officer, October 12, 1944



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Memories and Archives:

Memories such as those from Marie Murphy and Cherie Simons, whose fathers served in Bomber Command during WWII, (see page 2), are important to NOAHC in recording the personal experiences of aviators from northwestern Ontario. Thousands of young men took part in what was arguably the most intense, dangerous and prolonged bombing campaign of all time. *Fly North* has already told the stories of RCAF pilots such as Gord Stinson and Bill Turner (vol 5; no 4), navigators such as E.D. Johnson (vol 15; no 2) who flew with the RCAF squadrons of Bomber Command as well as Art Puchalski (vol 12; no 4) an air gunner, who like many Canadians served in an RAF squadron. The accounts of the experiences of Charles Fiori and Rupert Boyes have been preserved because of the interest of their daughters in keeping their memories alive. Many other families have done the same and their accounts reveal how individual airmen felt about their experiences and how they coped with the hazards and stress of regular, often nightly, encounters with flak and night-fighters. In addition, there are archives available that contain information on RCAF activities that returning aircrew, for whatever reason, did not reveal to family members. One such archive is held in the Bomber Command Museum in Nanton, Alberta (see *Fly North*, vol 14; no 2). Copies of the Squadron Operations Record Books held in the museum record the activities of the squadrons involved in the bombing campaigns and the aircrew that flew the bombers. After every operation each crew was debriefed and the recorded results from the 16-18 planes in the squadron that had taken part were integrated to become part of the squadron and bomb group history. The reports provide a range of information including the target, bomb load, take off and return times, the weather to, from and over the target, the accuracy of target marking by the pathfinder aircraft, enemy air activity and the location and intensity of flak.



Bomber Command Memorial Wall commemorating the more than 10,000 RCAF aircrew who died during WWII

but it must be seen against the backdrop of the incessant roar of the Lancaster's four Merlin engines over a six-to-eight-hour sortie, plus the flash of searchlights, exploding flak or the bursts of cannon shells from attacking night-fighters. On top of the regularly collected observations, the reports also include events that are even more hazardous than normal and sometimes deadly. In the case of Charles Fiori, for example, the record for March 5, 1945, shows that on a mission to Chemnitz, his plane was attacked by a Ju88 night-fighter. The fighter's cannon shells damaged the starboard undercarriage and starboard fuel tanks. In evading the attack, the plane collided with a Halifax bomber, which caused damage to the area around the rear turret. Despite that, Fl/Lt Kitchen brought the crew home safely. Some reports provide information on missing aircraft, each of which meant the loss of 7 crew members adding to what became a total of 10,000 deaths for RCAF squadrons in Bomber Command.

For more check the Bomber Command Museum web-site at bombercommandmuseum.ca



Aviation themed merchandise available at the Centre



Caps
\$15.00

NOAHC has recently brought in a variety of new products that are now on sale at the Centre. These may be purchased during regular opening times on Wednesday and Sunday. The Centre will also be open on **December 9, between 11:00 and 3:00** when purchases can be made.



Mugs
\$15.00



Other T-shirt designs available

Jigsaw Puzzles
\$5.00

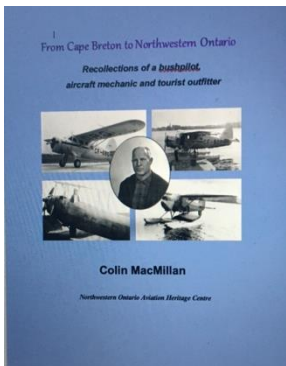


T-shirts
\$23.00

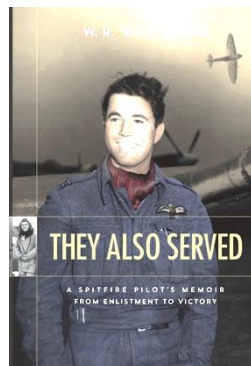


Sweat shirts \$25.00
Fleeces \$39.00
Hoodies \$39.00

NOAHC publications



"From Cape Breton to Northwestern Ontario"
Colin MacMillan
\$20.00



"They Also Served"
Bill McRae
\$30.00

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