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The *ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE JOURNAL* is an official publication of the Commander Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and is published quarterly. It is a forum for discussing concepts, issues and ideas that are both crucial and central to air and space power. The *Journal* is dedicated to disseminating the ideas and opinions of not only RCAF personnel, but also those civilians who have an interest in issues of air and space power. Articles may cover the scope of air-force doctrine, training, leadership, lessons learned and air-force operations: past, present or future. Submissions on related subjects such as ethics, technology and air-force history are also invited. This journal is therefore dedicated to the expression of mature professional thought on the art and science of air warfare and is central to the intellectual health of the RCAF. It serves as a vehicle for the continuing education and professional development of all ranks and personnel in the RCAF as well as members from other environments, employees of government agencies and academia concerned with air-force affairs.

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ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE JOURNAL

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EDITOR'S **MESSAGE**

In the late 1930s, then Prime Minister of Canada, William Lyon Mackenzie King had serious concerns. War with Germany was fast approaching; war with Japan loomed on the horizon, and he knew that many men were going to be needed to fight in the upcoming campaigns. With the horrible casualties suffered by Canada during the Great War, Prime Minister King was determined to find a way for Canada to assist in the war effort while minimizing Canadian casualties.

When the British sought to re-establish an aircrew training system in Canada, as had been done during the Great War, a convenient way for Canada to assist appeared at hand. The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) was an opportunity to contribute to the war effort, with the majority of the personnel working in the relative safety of Canada. Indeed, the BCATP went on to become an organization of 104,113 men and women working in 151 schools across Canada that trained 131,553 aircrew (of which 72,835 were Canadian).[1] This incredible contribution is celebrated in this edition of the *Royal Canadian Air Force Journal (RCAFJ)* to honour the men and women who trained those who turned the tide of the air battle over Europe, in the Pacific and everywhere else the conflict raged.

One of the reasons the plan became so successful was the incorporation of aircrew who had conducted operational tours of duty overseas. These combat veterans were able to better prepare trainees for the rigours of war with hard-earned experience. The number of aircrew produced had barely met the needs early in the war, but with determination and hard work from new instructors and veterans alike, Canadians built a massively successful plan that helped win the war. Without question, the success of the BCATP is worthy of commemoration with a special edition of the *RCAFJ*. The articles within will expand our knowledge of the contributions that were made and give us an opportunity to reflect upon the differences and similarities of the challenges our predecessors faced in comparison to today's continued requirement to provide trained and effective aircrew with operational experience. There is much to be learned from the BCATP.

Enjoy the read.

Sic Itur Ad Astra

Lieutenant-Colonel Doug Moulton, CD, MBA
Senior Editor

ABBREVIATIONS

BCATP British Commonwealth Air Training Plan

RCAFJ *Royal Canadian Air Force Journal*

NOTES

1. "The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan," Veterans Affairs Canada, accessed June 28, 2016, http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/history/second-world-war/british-commonwealth-air-training-plan

Colin Bowley


ROYAL CANADIAN
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Photo: DND

BCATP Revisited:

The Wartime Evolution of Flight Training in Canada

By Matthew Chapman

Editor's note: Reprint from the Canadian Air Force Journal
Vol. 4, No. 2, Spring 2011

Originally presented at the 2010 Military and Oral History Conference, hosted by the University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, 6 May 2010.

Aviation in Canada underwent dramatic changes between 1939 and 1945. This was evident not only in the number of aircraft, airports, and navigational aids spanning the nation, but also in terms of the technical skills and professional culture of Canadian aviators. During the Second World War, pilot training in Canada began following a trend already well established in the United States and parts of Europe. Shifting focus from preparing students primarily for the "stick and rudder" skills required of bush flying and aerial combat reminiscent of the First World War, Canadian flight schools began emphasizing training on instrument flying procedures, thus allowing student pilots to gain the required proficiency to safely and reliably operate highly sophisticated, multi-system, high performance aircraft in increasingly adverse atmospheric conditions. In so doing, this shift in training drove the development of a new professional aviation culture which helped shape and define the rapidly expanding post-war Canadian aviation industry.

This shift in training was driven by a combination of technological developments and political and military pressures which together expanded and complicated the environment in which substantial numbers of aviators were able to operate for the first time. While the growth of major airlines south of the border and across the Atlantic during the late 1920s and early 1930s resulted in increased emphasis placed on teaching instrument procedures in those locations, a similar process had only begun in Canada in the late 1930s with the consolidation of small bush operations around James Richardson and the burgeoning Canadian Airways, and the development of the logistical facilities of the Trans-Canada Air Route and the founding of Trans-Canada Airlines (TCA), the forerunner of Air Canada. What modest advancements that were made in interwar Canadian flight training with respect to teaching instrument flying procedures were, however, for the most part relegated to the isolated world of these larger airlines as well as the relatively small cadre of pilots in the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) who nevertheless retained the moniker of Canada's "bush pilots in uniform."[1]

The broad changes that came to professional aviation during the war were not, of course, unique to Canada. Between 1939 and 1945, pilots of all nations faced similar operational challenges in the air and employed comparable adaptive strategies to cope. Yet given the unique role that Canada played in flight training during the war through the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP), the ability of Canadian flight instructors, flight school administrators and civilian and military policy makers to adapt to the challenges faced in the skies both at home and abroad proved to be of vital importance in shaping not only Canadian aviation history, but also that of global aviation more broadly. As such, just how prepared Canada was in 1939 to adapt to the new era of aviation heralded in by the Second World War, and just how rapidly and at what cost those adaptations were made, are important to consider when studying the history of a technology and a profession that have changed not only the way humans travel, but also how they have come to conceptualize time and space in a continually shrinking world.

Referencing the relatively small body of secondary source academic literature on the topic, a collection of primary source documents from Library and Archives Canada and the Department of National Defence, and, in the spirit of the conference for which this paper was originally written, oral histories, the following will assert that while Canada was well positioned strategically and geographically for training aircrew for the war, it was relatively poorly positioned with respect to the professional experience of Canadian aviators with the type of flying the vast majority of BCATP-trained pilots were expected to perform after graduation. The following will defend this assertion through an examination of the challenges faced and adaptations made by plan administrators, instructors and, perhaps most importantly, BCATP students.

At the commencement of BCATP training in 1940, few fully operational RCAF pilots were kept in Canada to act as instructors. Rather, the vast majority of fully qualified military pilots were sent overseas to take part in the defence of Britain. As a result, the first instructors in the BCATP were civilians who flew for privately operated, commercially run flying clubs. These men were typically ex-bush pilots or veterans of the First World War who had trained both civilians and military personnel in the methods of flying demanded by interwar Canadian aviation. That is to say, skills associated primarily with bush flying.

The scale of flight training demanded by the war outstripped the capabilities of the civilian run clubs to a significant extent. Pre-war RCAF training plans, which included a civilian instruction component, were built around the expectation that approximately fifty pilots were to be trained annually for the then still fledgling air force.[2] While the civilian clubs had a capacity for producing considerably more pilots than this, they still fell far short of the capabilities required to produce the thousands demanded by the war effort. To make up for the shortfall in instructors, the RCAF allowed clubs to nominate student pilots of their choosing to quickly receive a minimum of 150 hours of flight experience and then placed them into Central Flying School for instructor training. Upon completing a four-week course in instruction, these students were made sergeants in the RCAF and granted temporary leaves of absence to instruct at the civilian-run BCATP schools.[3] This practice effectively lasted until 1941 when the plan began producing enough pilots to internally staff instructor positions.

Commercial airline pilots from Canadian Airways and TCA, who had perhaps the most experience of any Canadian aviators in 1939 with the type of flying that the vast majority of BCATP recruits would eventually perform overseas, that is, long distance, multi engine, instrument flying in bombers and maritime patrol aircraft, were largely barred from leaving their civilian employment to join the RCAF.[4] Canadian Airways was put to use producing BCATP recruits in the staffing of an Air Observer School where the airline's pilots acted as "air-chauffeurs"[5] to RCAF instructors and their Air Observer (navigator) students. TCA was involved in training pilots for the trans-Atlantic ferry program with Royal Air Force (RAF) Ferry Command,[6] and helped RCAF Eastern Air Command aircrew convert from the twin engine Digbys to the four-engine B24 Liberators; however, no formalized agreement was ever arranged to allow the airline's pilots to instruct directly in the BCATP.

In 1940 and early 1941, in an effort to rapidly produce more pilots to supplement the civilian instructors in the BCATP, instructional time at Elementary Flight Training Schools (EFTS) was reduced from the initial plan of 8 weeks to 7, and Service Flight Training Schools (SFTS) from 16 to 14.[7] This was, as a Department of National Defence post-war historical report noted, a "temporary and dangerous expedient and was abandoned as soon as possible."[8] Nevertheless, the reduction of flight hours for the first classes of BCATP recruits had lasting impacts on both the Plan and operational flying both at home and abroad. Before these impacts are directly addressed, however, it is useful to examine the experiences of the first generation of BCATP trained pilots to understand the role they played in subsequent training.

Upon graduating from SFTS, the vast majority of the first BCATP recruits were, much to their general disappointment, trained as instructors and sent back into the Plan to teach.[9] The practice of recirculating graduates back into the scheme meant that the bulk of instructors who remained in the BCATP during the first critical years of wartime training had themselves been taught in abbreviated fashion. Furthermore, they had been instructed primarily by civilian pilots whose skills were geared more towards bush flying in rugged simple aircraft rather than long distance, high altitude, poor weather flying in the type of aircraft then being developed for the war.

In 1940, Initial Training School (ITS), the first step along the aviation-oriented path of a pilot's career, was little more than a holding area for uncategorized aircrew. ITS instructors were given general course syllabi to teach, most of which focused on military procedures and protocols as well as academic subjects such as mathematics and physics, but few of those instructors received any educational training for the task.[10] There was, furthermore, little oversight of training both in the classroom and the Link trainer, a pneumatically controlled flight simulator, from any central agency. This resulted in a wide range of instructional quality between schools.[11] It was not until August 1941 that aviation theory began to be taught at ITS, and even longer before instructors with educational training were put to the task.[12] These changes, when they came, extended ITS training from four to ten weeks and represented just one of the myriad of improvements in theory of flight training made in the BCATP throughout the war.

Upon graduating from ITS, candidates selected for pilot training proceeded to EFTS. In 1940, these schools were staffed primarily by the aforementioned civilian instructors who had received abbreviated service instruction at RCAF Central Flying School. The syllabi used to teach students at EFTS, where they were indoctrinated into the basic principles of flying, included teaching emergency procedures, basic aerobatics, navigation, and take-offs and landings among other fundamental manoeuvres. These were taught using a form of instruction known as "patter," where the instructor memorized a series of verbal commands to give to the student through a primitive intercom system.[13] As Major-General G. J. J. Edwards, who became an EFTS instructor following his own training within the BCATP in 1941, recalls, "you were to become a human tape recorder."[14] Both instructors and students reported that this method of communication "was very poor,"[15] and as such, training was often tedious for the instructor who had simply to repeat memorized instructions, and frustrating for students who were unable to easily ask questions in the air. The monotony of the experience, both for instructors and students, may be one explanation, admittedly among many, for a problem which plagued the BCATP for the duration of the war, though one that was particularly troublesome in its early years.

Photo: DND Student pilots in front of Harvard MK II.

Unauthorized low flying was the most significant cause of accidents and fatalities in the BCATP.[16] Often explained as the result of pilots' "skill(s) not matching their daring,"[17] the rash of accidents attributed to low flying was in fact more endemic than the result of a few exuberant students pushing their luck. Indeed, such accidents were just as often caused by instructors as by students, particularly in the first years of the war. A 1940 accident investigation branch report noted that more than 50 per cent of low flying accidents occurred while trained pilots, that is, instructors, were in command of the aircraft.[18] Illustrating this problem in a somber vignette, Lewis Duddrige, who trained as a pilot in the BCATP in 1941, recalls an accident where four instructors perished as a result of a breach of regulations:

> When four young men (all instructors) were killed west of Saskatoon in a Cessna Crane, it was utterly ridiculous. They were overstressing the wings. They were cloth covered … (and the pilot in command) put it into a dive and pulled it out, and the wing uncovered and it crashed. Somebody had a stupid idea, they should never, ever have allowed that aircraft to do that. Why somebody else in the crew, the other three, didn't manhandle him is more than I know.[19]

Unauthorized low flying was the most significant cause of accidents and fatalities in the BCATP.

By late 1941 the problem of students and instructors breaking regulations, particularly with respect to low flying, had only increased in parallel with the expansion of training. Of 170 fatalities in the BCATP that year, 40 were directly attributed to "low aerobatics and low flying."[20] Indeed, memories of unauthorized low flying are common amongst veterans who trained in the BCATP, and particularly so for those who trained early on in the war. Major-General Edwards recalled that shortly after take-off on his first flight his instructor quickly diverted from the planned orientation exercise and brought the aircraft to treetop level to complete an inspection of a local herd of cattle. "I found that a little nerve racking,"[21] Edwards remembers. Andrew Robert MacKenzie, a pilot trainee in 1940, recalled that it was common for trainees to follow the lead of instructors like the one who trained Edwards. While training plans called for specific manoeuvres to be practiced while recruits went up without an instructor, MacKenzie recalls that, "ninety-nine percent of us went up and did aerobatics … instead of practicing the set sequence … down, kicking the tree tops, flying around just like a high speed car."[22] Even for students at SFTS where unauthorized low flying remained officially prohibited, the official history of the RCAF notes, "as future fighter pilots they were also 'almost encouraged' to experiment with the aircraft." There was "still something of the First World War's adventurism and romanticism in flying, an air of exciting improvisation about the whole experience."[23]

Accidents appear to have played only a limited role as a deterrent to other students and instructors who sought to push the limits of their own skills and abilities. Such was the case given the continuing rash of accidents attributed to both recruits and instructors breaking regulations by performing risky and unauthorized aerobatic manoeuvres throughout 1941 and 1942. Recalling his memory of accidents in the BCATP during training in 1941, Major-General Edwards recounts:

> I forget how many of my classmates killed themselves … . Out of the sixty or seventy students, I think we killed … I think there were killed, eight or ten … we didn't hear much about the accidents, you know, they backed and filled them in immediately (holes caused by the impact of aircraft). They didn't want to panic the balance of the course … we buried quite a few. But you knew it was never going to happen to you.
>
> You suspected all along that the other fellow, as much as you liked him, was not nearly as skilful as you were and he made a nonsense of it somewhere and killed himself.[24]

Asked about the impact of other students' accidents on one's own attitude towards training, Lewis Duddridge recounts, "I would say there was more flippancy about accidents then … I do not think that too many student pilots were afraid of the airplane as they walked towards it."[25]

A sample of accident report summaries from a typical month of BCATP operations from September 1942, a period where the first generation of recruits had already—like Major-General Edwards—been recirculated back into the Plan as instructors, tells of tragic consequences of regulations routinely being broken by student and instructor alike:

> A Sergeant instructor with a student flying a Stearman aircraft engaged in unauthorized low flying. Through an error of judgment the aircraft struck the water of the Bow River and both occupants were killed … . A Pilot Officer instructor with a student flying a Harvard aircraft was engaged in (prohibited) mock fighting manoeuvres with an Oxford which was flown by an experienced pilot with a crew of two. The Harvard collided with and destroyed the tail of the Oxford, the crew of which were killed, together with the student in the Harvard. The instructor escaped by parachute. This mock air fighting was pre-arranged by the pilots concerned before leaving their home station … . A Pilot Officer with a student in a Crane aircraft engaged in unauthorized low flying collided with a straw stack and crashed. Both instructor and student were killed.[26]

Fatal accidents at OTUs were alarmingly routine, particularly during the early years of the war.

In this one non-exceptional month alone, 12 fatal crashes caused the deaths of 24 personnel. In 7 of those 12 accidents, instructors were implicated in the accident's cause.[27]

While fatal accidents in the BCATP in 1941 totaled one per 11,156 hours flown, total accident rates were much higher. During the summer training season of 1942 the average accident total was 445 per month.[28] By the last year of the war, in an indication of improvements made in training and the establishment of safety protocols which placed a high value on precision instrument flying, the total number of fatal accidents, in proportion to the total number of students in the system at the time, was halved.[29]

The relatively few BCATP-trained pilots who were sent to Europe rather than recirculated back into the Plan as instructors in 1940 and 1941 encountered a new type of flying in England for which many were simply unprepared. Norman L. Magnusson, an air observer who graduated from SFTS in 1941, recalls that the flying experienced at Operational Training Units (OTU) in Britain:

> was a maturing period for most of the aircrew and pilots who began to realize that war was a pretty serious business. Prior to that time it was a great deal of fun. Learning how to fly, being involved in flying activities was great fun … . We lost a number of crews (at OTUs) … it seems to me that the memories I have of the operational training unit were the difficult flights that we had, the other was carrying coffins to the cemetery. We spent a great deal of time burying our friends.[30]

Fatal accidents at OTUs were alarmingly routine, particularly during the early years of the war. This may have been due to a number of factors, one of which was that preparatory training was likely insufficient for preparing the students for the poor weather, congested airspace, and blackout conditions of wartime England. Another factor was that the length of time required to move a pilot from a Canadian SFTS to an overseas OTU allowed for too long a period of flight inactivity for the then still junior pilots to safely make the transition. Whatever the reason, it was clear that many Canadian-trained pilots were unprepared for overseas OTUs and subsequent conversion training. Illustrating this problem, Major-General Edwards recalls the impact of having operationally experienced pilots relate their experiences of OTUs back to him while he was still instructing in the BCATP:

> By the summer of 1942 we were shaking ourselves down. We were getting people back from the European theatre as instructors. That was interesting because a lot of these chaps came back and I recall the long discussions with some of them, and they were saying you are just not teaching them the right way, you are not teaching them the right thing. There is all kinds of bad weather flying over there, they are not getting it back in Canada … .

Pilot Officer E. E. Alien of Brantford (right) & Pilot Officer J. Gordon (left).
Photo: DND

> I gather a great many of the graduates that went across wiped themselves out very early in the subsequent conversion training programs in the United Kingdom because of the bad weather conditions. … The more experienced people could handle it easily. Most of the less experienced found out in a hurry and survived. But some, perhaps even many, flew into hills, flew into trees. People getting lost all the time. Flying into balloons … dying.[31]

Reports from the United Kingdom on the quality of pilots that Canadian schools were producing indicated that training at BCATP schools in Canada was deficient in certain areas. One report from as late as the spring of 1943, which was representative of prior assessments, suggested that the skills of Canadian-trained pilots were "low in relation to the flying hours completed." Navigation was "found to be of a low standard," and night flying skills were determined to be "not compatible with the hours of night flying recorded in log books."[32] Such results, although highly contentious as the official history of the RCAF notes,[33] seem to correspond with the relative lack of emphasis placed on instrument training given to Canadian students prior to late 1942. That reports were issued later in the war vindicating Canadian training is likely in no small part due to the presence of experienced operational pilots returning to the training system as instructors, and a realization by Plan instructors and administrators that they needed to adapt their instruction to meet the challenges posed by operational flying.

Interviewed for the second volume of the official history of the RCAF, the lead historian for the first volume, S. F. Wise, recalls that as a pilot recruit in late 1943 he was processed through a system that was notably different from that experienced by Edwards and MacKenzie. Beginning even before recruits stepped into the cockpit of an airplane, combat experienced pilots began to play a role in the first stages of BCATP training. At ITS, Wise recalls the experience of having an "all important" fifteen minute interview with combat-experienced pilots for the purpose of selecting recruits for pilot training:

> You were brought before a board which consisted of officers who themselves had had (operational) tours. It was really the first time we had ever been up against what I would refer to as the "real" air force, the real fighting air force, instead of training … they may not have been that old but, my god, they had old faces. It was an extremely serious business … I can remember that I sweated.[34]

Whereas MacKenzie went through 12 weeks of training in 1940 where adventurism and bravado were encouraged among young recruits who attempted to fly their Tiger Moths "like the Canadian Red Baron,"[35] in 1943, Wise endured 21 weeks of intense, precision-oriented flight training. Included in the extended time was more emphasis placed on instrument flying through increased night, hood,[36] and Link Trainer experience. Wise commented that this training encouraged students to fly with precision, and:

> a sense of professionalism. Not military professionalism, real professionalism as a pilot. The sense that you were training for a highly skilled kind of occupation. That's not a proper thing for a service person to feel, and yet it's true. I think one of the effects of the BCATP was to create that sort of a sense of professionalism, pride in being a pilot. Their indoctrination reinforced that. The indoctrination had less to do with the RCAF as a fighting unit than it had to do with the creation of an aircrew spirit in which there was a high level of professionalism.[37]

By the end of the war, BCATP course structure and syllabi had adapted to the demands of overseas flying considerably. Tour-expired pilots were recirculated back into the training system, educating not only students in the process, but Plan administrators as well. By 1945, training at ITS had been extended from four to ten weeks, passing through seven editions of course syllabi along the way.[38] EFTS training syllabi had progressed through eight editions, all of which placed increased emphasis on instrument and night training, with the last appearing as late as February 1945. At SFTS, while training programs early on in the war called for as little as five hours of synthetic, instrument-oriented training on the Link trainer, the final syllabus required no less than 48 hours of synthetic training, most of it on new versions of the Link, and given by instructors with considerably more experience and knowledge of what it was they were teaching.[39] Emphasis was likewise increasingly placed on preparing students for poor weather flying with improved instruction offered on instrument and navigational procedures. "Stunting" and low flying had not been eliminated, but associated casualties had dropped.

As the experiences of MacKenzie, Edwards, Duddridge, Magnusson, and Wise help illustrate, the Plan evolved as the war progressed. At some level this evolution was administrative and organizational, as there clearly were a number of logistical hurdles to overcome in the development of an undertaking as ambitious as the BCATP. Much of the evolution in flight training, however, was the direct result of Canadian aviators experiencing a new type of flying for the first time and having to adjust their attitudes towards safety and professionalism in the process. It was the successes and failures of those aviators which instructed the next generation on how to handle the challenges posed by a new era in aviation history. To summarize and conclude here, in the words of Lewis Duddridge:

> I think, if you wanted to call flying in Canada in 1939 a vacuum, then the things that happened in 1940 and 1941 were things that were happening if you put an aircraft into service before you had wind-tunnels to test it. Some things had to change because of the trial and error system … this improved our system and what we were putting out. That's what I really believe.[40]

Harvards flying in formation. Photo: DND

Matthew Chapman is currently completing his Master's degree in Canadian military history at the University of Victoria. Graduating from Selkirk College in 2002 with a diploma in professional aviation, he received his Bachelor of Arts from the University of Victoria in 2007 before working as a researcher and writer for the West Coast Canadian Forces Auxiliary Fleet at Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt. Matthew's Master of Arts thesis is combining his professional experiences and academic interest to examine the impact of wartime aviation on the post-war Canadian commercial aviation industry.

Abbreviations

BCATP	British Commonwealth Air Training Plan
EFTS	Elementary Flight Training Schools
ITS	Initial Training Schools
LAC	Library and Archives Canada
OTU	Operational Training Units
RAF	Royal Air Force
RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force
RG	record group
SFTS	Service Flight Training Schools
TCA	Trans-Canada Airlines
UVSC	University of Victoria Special Collections

Notes

1. Allan D. English, *The Cream of the Crop: Canadian Aircrew, 1939–1945* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1996), 11.

2. W. A. B. Douglas, *The Creation of a National Air Force*, vol. 2, *The Official History of the Royal Canadian Air Force* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 201.

3. By having these men enlist, the RCAF prevented them from leaving Canada to instruct in the United States where pay was better. Douglas, *Creation of a National*, 230.

4. By an Order In Council, TCA was deemed an essential service provider, thereby preventing the airline's employees from leaving the company to join the RCAF or RAF unless they received permission from both TCA and the government. D. B. Colyer, Vice-President TCA, "Letter to Captain R. Allen, Training Superintendent, British Ministry of Aircraft Production," 18 August 1941, Record Group (RG) 70, Vol. 6, File TCA-1-2-8, Library and Archives Canada (LAC).

5. Douglas, *Creation of a National*, 224.

6. Trans-Canada Airlines Internal Memo, "Re: War Effort in the Form of Air to the Royal Air Force Ferry Command," RG 70, Vol. 6, File TCA-1-2-8, LAC.

7. Douglas, *Creation of a National*, 224.

8. "British Commonwealth Air Training Plan - Flight Training" (Historical Narrative) Circa 1950, 181.09(D89)(A) Directorate of History and Heritage, 3.

9. Douglas, *Creation of a National*, 237.

10. "British Commonwealth Air Training Plan - Flight Training," 17.

11. Ibid., 17–18.

12. Ibid., 16.

13. Known as Gossport Tubes, the intercom was simply a tube running from the mouth of the instructor to the ears of the student and vice-versa.

14. Air Vice-Marshal Gerald J. J. Edwards, interview, Reel 1, Side 2, 13 June 1975, ID 207, University of Victoria Special Collections (UVSC), Canadian Military Oral History Collections, Dr. Reginald H. Roy Collection.

15. Douglas, *Creation of a National*, 242–43.

16. "British Commonwealth Air Training Plan - Flight Training," 85.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Lewis Duddridge, interview with author, July 2009.

20. F. J. Hatch, *Aerodrome of Democracy: Canada and the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan 1939–1945* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply Services Canada, 1983), 148.

21. Edwards interview.

22. Douglas, *Creation of a National*, 279.

23. Ibid., 280.

24. Edwards interview.

25. Duddridge interview.

26. RCAF, "Accident Investigation Branch Monthly Summary of Accidents, September 1942," August 1942, RG 24, Vol. 3278, File HQ 235-11-1.

27. Ibid.

28. Average monthly accident totals for June–September 1942. "Accident Investigation Branch Monthly Summary of Accidents" June to September 1942, RG 24, Vol. 3278, File HQ 235-11-1.

29. Hatch, *Aerodrome of Democracy*, 148.

30. Air Vice-Marshal Norman L. Magnusson, interview, Reel 1, Side I, 13 June 1979, ID 207, UVSC, Canadian Military Oral History Collections, Dr. Reginald H. Roy Collection.

31. Edwards interview.

32. Douglas, *Creation of a National*, 270.

33. Ibid.

34. Douglas, *Creation of a National*, 282.

35. Ibid., 280.

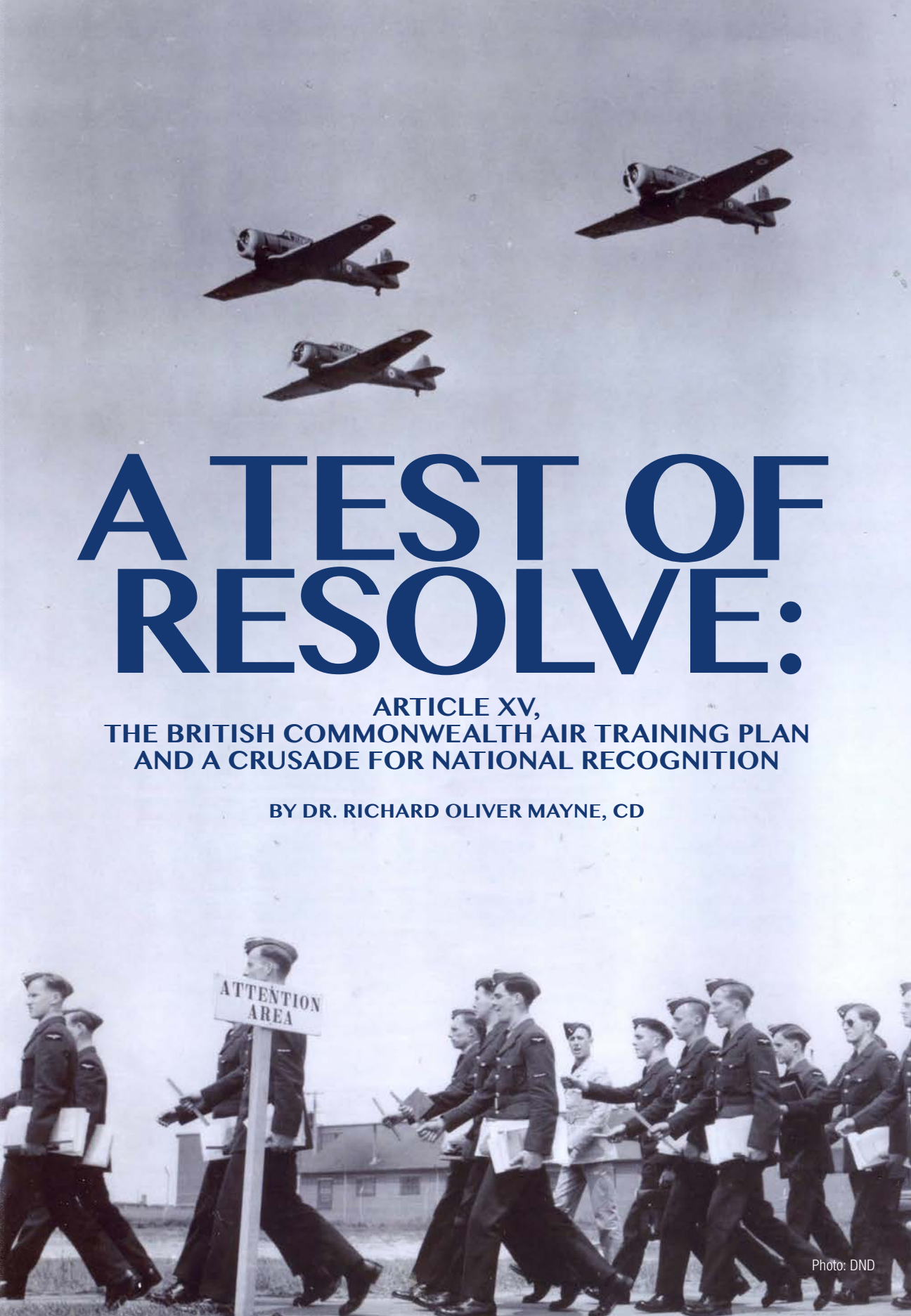
36. To simulate IFR (instrument flight rules) conditions in flight, instructors used (and continue to use today) a hood which is placed on the head of a student to prevent them from seeing anything but the instrument panel in front of them.

37. Douglas, *Creation of a National*, 284.

38. "British Commonwealth Air Training Plan - Flight Training," 21.

39. Ibid., 51.

40. Duddridge interview.



A TEST OF RESOLVE:

ARTICLE XV, THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH AIR TRAINING PLAN AND A CRUSADE FOR NATIONAL RECOGNITION

BY DR. RICHARD OLIVER MAYNE, CD

Photo: DND

The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) was one of Canada's greatest contributions to the Second World War. It was a massive undertaking that would require new and upgraded airfields, tens of thousands of instructors and support workers, the acquisition of thousands of aircraft and the mobilizing of many national resources—all of which would result in the training of 131,553 Allied aircrew.[1] For a country that had only gained control over its own foreign policy from the United Kingdom (UK) in 1931, the BCATP was a test of Canadian resolve as well as a measure of its sense of nationalism and direction as an independent state. Nowhere was this more evident than in the intense negotiations that took place, particularly between the Canadian and British representatives, to formalize an agreement that would make the BCATP possible.

Given the importance of the BCATP, most individuals would understand why the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) would want to commemorate the 75th anniversary of an agreement that helped turn it into the professional force that it is today. What is perhaps less certain is why the RCAF is marking this event in 2016, rather than two years earlier when the 75th would have corresponded with the signing of the agreement on 17 December 1939. The answer, quite simply, is Article XV. The importance of this clause for both Canada and its air force cannot be overstated. It read:

> The United Kingdom Government undertakes that pupils of Canada, Australia and New Zealand shall, after training is completed, be identified with their respective Dominion, either by the method of organizing Dominion units and formations or in some other way, such methods to be agreed upon with the respective Dominion Government considered. The United Kingdom Government will initiate inter-governmental discussions to this end.[2]

What this meant was that rather than belonging to British units, as had been done during the First World War, many Canadians serving overseas would do so in national squadrons under their own commanders. As such, it not only led to a greater sense of identity and independence for the RCAF as a national organization, but it also allowed Canada to make a significant and direct contribution to the air war.

Perhaps nothing demonstrated this more than the establishment in March 1941 of the first of the famous 400-series squadrons, which—thanks to Article XV—were the identifiers that signified a Canadian overseas squadron.[3] Given that a number of the 400-series squadrons are active today and will be celebrating their 75th anniversaries over the next three years, it seems only natural that the article that made this all possible would be remembered. Much has been written on the BCATP and Article XV for that matter, yet no one has explored the negotiations surrounding the latter in the type of detail that can yield new insights into the importance of this clause to Canada and the RCAF.[4] Therefore, this piece is aimed at telling the remarkable story of how Article XV became an important part of the BCATP as well as how its negotiation was symbolic of Canada's growing maturity, confidence and sense of nationalism.

While the roots of the BCATP can be traced to before the Second World War, the official start of the negotiations began when the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, proposed the idea of an air training plan to Canada, Australia and New Zealand on 26 September 1939.[5] The concept was immediately popular with Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King. The First World War had cost Canada dearly, not only in terms of citizens lost in combat, but also the stress that controversial issues such as conscription had taken on the national fabric. As one renowned historian observed:

> an air effort had more physical appeal than "great expeditionary forces of infantry" … [which] seemed to hold out the hope of smaller forces, fewer casualties, less pressure on manpower and a reduction of the danger of conscription. The Air Training Plan project was particularly attractive, presumably, in that it would be largely carried on within Canada and held out the prospect of a considerable portion of the RCAF being employed on training at home instead of in operations abroad. … Chamberlain may not have realized it, but it is scarcely too much to say that in 1939 the Air Training Plan must have seemed the answer to any Canadian politician's prayer.[6]

Australia and New Zealand were equally receptive to the concept, and it did not take long before officials began to arrive in Canada to hash out a deal. That Canada was selected as the location to host this plan was understandable. Free from enemy air activity while remaining relatively close to the UK, Canada was the ideal location to prepare pilots, navigators, observers and air gunners for the Allied cause. Yet while that cause may have represented a common effort, it did not mean that each participating country was going to ignore their national interests during the negotiations.

The British delegation was led by Lord Riverdale (Arthur Balfour), a prominent steel manufacturer who arrived on 15 October, and was later reinforced by Captain Harold Balfour, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Air, as well as Sir Gerald Campbell, the High Commissioner for the UK in Ottawa and Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham. The main Canadian participants were the Prime Minister, Mackenzie King; the Minister of National Defence, Norman Rogers; the Minister of Finance, James Layton Ralston; and the Minister of Transport (and later Munitions and Supply), Clarence Decatur Howe. The Canadian delegation would prove formidable, particularly when it came to Article XV, as it was clear that it "seems likely that First World War Royal Flying Corps (RFC) / Royal Air Force (RAF) Canadian training precedent was never far from the minds of [British] Air Ministry officials in 1939" and that incorporating Dominion airmen into RAF squadrons "was in purely military terms probably the most convenient, efficient, and economical way to build a large air force."[7] If this truly was the British position upon arriving in Ottawa, they would soon find that this assumption was gravely mistaken.

Lord Riverdale (seated, left) and Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King (seated, right) sign the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan Agreement on December 17, 1939.

Photo: DND

The desire to have Canadians serving in their own national units was strong among King and his cabinet members. Even before the negotiations had begun, King had made it clear to the British High Commissioner in Ottawa that while his nation was more than willing to help, "it is the desire of this Government that Canadian Air Force units be formed as soon as sufficient trained personnel are available overseas for this purpose, such squadrons to be manned by and maintained with Canadian personnel at the expense of the Canadian Government." [8] This was a concept that the British seemed, at first, to understand as King was told that Canadian personnel lent to the RAF would later have the option of joining RCAF units should their government decide to form distinctive overseas air units.[9]

THE PRIME MINISTER REALIZED THAT SUCH AN APPROACH WOULD NOT BE NECESSARILY IN CANADA'S BEST INTEREST, AND HE, THEREFORE, LAID THE GROUNDWORK FOR FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS BY TAKING A POSITION OF STRENGTH AND EMPHASIZING HIS COUNTRY'S STATUS AS AN INDEPENDENT NATION.

Despite such reassurances, King was suspicious of British intentions. Almost from the onset, King went to great pains to emphasize that the BCATP was not a Canadian scheme. Instead, King wanted to make it perfectly clear that it was the British who were asking for Canadian assistance. It was an important point. Even before the negotiations began, King was concerned that the mother country would take a condescending and dictatorial approach with its former colonies. The British did not disappoint. After meeting with the Canadians on 31 October, in which Riverdale and Balfour explained what was being requested from Canada, King later confided in his diary how they had lived up to his expectations:

> This was blindly set forth as to what Canada was expected to do … . There was nothing in what Riverdale or Balfour said which was in the least appreciative of Canada's readiness to co-operate. It was a sort of taken-for-granted attitude that it was our duty and obligation, and that the part of the mission was only to tell us what we would be expected to do.[10]

The Prime Minister realized that such an approach would not be necessarily in Canada's best interest, and he, therefore, laid the groundwork for future negotiations by taking a position of strength and emphasizing his country's status as an independent nation.

A number of King's cabinet members shared his concern. Certainly his minister of finance understood all too well what was being asked, as he let his Prime Minister know that, while everyone knew that Canada wanted to "pull her full weight and more in the conflict,"[11] the country could not come "within shooting distance"[12] of the type of money that it would take to finance the plan, especially because Canada did not have an Empire to mortgage as collateral. King agreed and would later tell the British delegation that Canada would not go beyond its resources in terms of what it could commit. Yet in fairness to the British, it is important to note that King and his ministers wanted something from the deal as well. At a 31 October Emergency Council meeting (later renamed War Cabinet meetings), King laid out how it had been suggested that Canada should busy itself with the financing and training of the plan, whereas, he felt that popular opinion would insist that Canadian squadrons be created overseas to serve in combat roles. In an assumption that would

later come back to haunt him, King figured that—given that Canada would make a considerable contribution to the Air Training Plan—it was only natural that the UK would cover the cost of equipping and maintaining the RCAF overseas squadrons once they were formed.[13]

King was not alone in this assumption. Certainly Ralston observed that he had personally discussed the idea with the UK delegation, going so far as suggesting that such payments could be offset against credits provided by British purchases in Canada. Yet it was Rogers who was quick to point out that, while this subject may have been broached with the UK delegation, the fact remained that there was no reference or provision for crediting British purchases in the proposal that they had prepared on the scheme. As such, when they first met with the British delegation, King and his team were quick to emphasize their position and rationale for the requirement of establishing overseas Canadian squadrons that would be maintained by the UK. Whether the British delegation fully understood what the Canadians were proposing is not entirely clear because King's diary makes it obvious that this first encounter was less of a negotiation and more of a heated debate, confiding to his diary that "Lord Riverdale saw that he had gone a little too far in his railroading."[14]

If this first meeting was indeed something akin to a sparring match, it appears that the first round went to the Canadians. At least that was King's interpretation, as he thought Riverdale looked "deflated" by the end of a session where "it was quite clear that the [British] plan of approach had been one of steam-rolling, just the very thing we complain about Hitler in his method of proceeding."[15] While there was no knockout blow, King did land some powerful jabs that let the British know that Canada was its own master. His attitude, along with his cabinet ministers involved, left no doubt that the Canadians intended to negotiate from a position of strength.

It appeared to King that the British were intimating that they were the ones who were making a "free contribution" to the plan. Therefore, he emphasized that such thinking was "the wrong way around" and that it was "Canada that was making [the] contribution," which "should be kept in mind." King had no problem hitting the British hard, as he felt that the negotiations would get nowhere if "it was assumed that the central part of the Empire tells the outlying parts what to do," particularly since "the worst part of the whole business is that this scheme is, in reality, a recruiting scheme for the British air force rather than any genuine attempt for co-operation."[16]

Although King and his ministers thought that they had made their position clear on the need for the UK to support Canadian overseas squadrons as part of the air training scheme, time would soon prove that the British either did not understand this assumption or simply ignored it. Yet for the Canadians, it was a potential deal breaker, and no one captured the importance of the concept better than the Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), Air Marshal G. M. Croil. When asked for his opinion, Croil was blunt. Turning to history to prove his point, Croil reminded his political masters that Canadian squadrons were being formed at the end of the First World War, which, he emphasized, were the product of public pressure.[17] This was certainly true. Beginning with newspaper articles in the national press, the desire to form some type of distinctive Canadian air identity was so strong that it eventually led the prime minister of the time, Robert Borden, to reverse his earlier position that air power was an imperial responsibility. In fact, Borden, having personally witnessed how the identities of Canadians were being buried within the RFC, was so concerned that he had come to the conclusion that "I am inclined to believe that the time for organizing an independent Canadian Air Service has come."[18]

For Croil, however, the issue was more than just a question of identity. As essential as that was, he also made his political bosses aware that he considered it pivotal that the RCAF would have to do more than provide for the training of the Empire. In a telling memorandum, Croil explained how:

> (a) It would be detrimental to Canadian prestige as a nation to restrict its official air effort to Home Defence and Training.
>
> (b) The training scheme will prepare Canadians for combat duties in the air but if Canada has no squadrons overseas, the work of the individual will be merged in the RAF. We have every reason to expect that Canadians will do well in the air. If they can serve in Canadian squadrons they will bring credit to Canada as a nation, and build up tradition for the RCAF and their squadrons.
>
> (c) The training scheme involves the employment of 26,000 Canadians, on training work in Canada. This is not in keeping with the temperament of Canadians who prefer to be at the front and they would be dissatisfied unless some provision is made for them to have a chance of getting overseas.[19]

Croil's words perfectly capture the spirit of the RCAF and the government's desire for national recognition throughout a war that was promising to be as long and costly as the last one. This time, Canadian achievements were not going to get lost by the fact that its airmen were included exclusively in British units. It is clear from Croil's comments above that Article XV was the manifestation (and codification) of this patriotic thinking, and it was one that the CAS fully supported.

King had other demands, aside from the creation of overseas RCAF squadrons. Realizing the domestic value of the scheme, the Prime Minister insisted that the British officially recognize that the training programme was the single greatest contribution that Canada could make to the war effort (known as the primacy of effort issue). King had more practical political purposes for making this request, especially since a Canadian Army division was about to land in the UK. Put simply, the Prime Minister needed this statement about the primacy of the Air Training Plan for domestic consumption so as to pacify parts of the country, particularly in Quebec, that were nervous about a repeat of the heavy casualties taken during the First World War and the policy of conscription which, while required to replace those losses, nearly tore the country apart.

King's demands did not end there. To further give Canada control over its own destiny, the Prime Minister also wanted an assurance that the plan would be administered and controlled by the RCAF and Canadian government. While the negotiations had been proceeding fairly smoothly throughout November, the clarification of these provisions did start to slow things down by the end of the month. To make matters worse, the British were mounting pressure on the Canadians to have a deal signed before the Australian and New Zealand delegations had to go home.[20]

Despite encouraging words from several camps that a deal was close at hand, the British and Canadian positions were actually further apart than anyone imagined.[21] King was not going to back down on his conditions, and after telling his ministers that he had received a message from Chamberlain, he noted that it:

> did not, however, give us the conditions which we had said would be essential. I thought the telegram dissembling in the way in which it worded with respect to the British attitude for our request. I felt very strongly, and

> the other Ministers agreed with me, that it was essential to have all matters thoroughly understood before any agreement was reached—all liability and obligations fully understood; particularly did I feel it was important to have the question of administration properly settled. … By standing firm on this point, which is all important from the point of view of responsible government, and Canada's status before initialing the agreement, I feel we should get that feature satisfactorily settled.[22]

King was playing hardball. As far as he was concerned, such a direct approach was the only way that the British would ever let a Canadian minister run the programme or "get the question of identity of commands satisfactorily settled as well as the conditions we are asking for."[23] King's tactics were leading to delays, but he showed little remorse whatsoever as he wrote that:

> I confess as to the agreement itself that a pretty heavy load has been handed over on the back of Canada by the British Government. They can well be thankful that they have so loyal a Dominion to take on this burden at this time. I feel, of course, that Britain is fighting for freedom and that we owe all that we are doing and more to the course.[24]

It was at this juncture that matters were more or less left to Rogers and Balfour to settle. Some progress was obviously made between these two men, as it did not take long before the British accepted the "primacy of effort" issue. This, of course, was premised on a British counter request that King's Government emphasize the arrival of Canadian troops in the UK, which in itself was a political request aimed at British public consumption.[25] Ground was also gained on the question of control over the plan. Here, too, the British were willing to let the RCAF and government run the plan—a concession that undoubtedly was made easier by the agreement to create a multinational board that would give all participating nations a voice and some sense of authority over the BCATP.[26]

That left the issue of establishing Canadian overseas squadrons. On the surface at least, it appeared that things were going well with this question too. Realizing that the complexity of forming the squadrons with British assistance would likely require its own agreement, King was only after an assurance from the UK government that it supported the concept.[27] The British delegation was not in a position to do that, but the Canadians were optimistic, as it was observed that "the question of identity and command of formations and units in the field have been discussed by the Minister of National Defence with Captain Balfour and we have every reason to believe that agreement will be reached on these points."[28] The Canadians then told the British they would be more than happy to sign the agreement. And that was where matters stood when Balfour returned to the UK to present the Canadian case directly to his superiors.[29]

It was not until 7 December that King finally received word from Chamberlain confirming what earlier communications had already suggested, namely that the British were willing to concede the issue of priority of effort. King was delighted and recorded that this assurance "practically settles the agreement," especially since his defence minister was meeting with Riverdale in an effort to finally put the question of Canadian overseas squadrons to rest. It was not to be. The results of the Rogers-to-Riverdale discussion led to a letter, which, once sent overseas, would bust the entire negotiations open again.[30] In itself, Rogers's letter was inoffensive, as it simply provided the proposed wording of what he called "Paragraph 15." Presumably, this was the product of the discussion that the two men had had the day before because Riverdale responded with the optimistic message that he believed his government would readily accept this interpretation.[31] He was wrong.

It did not take long before King started to realize that there was still a potential problem with the deal. For instance, having become aware that there was a good possibility that Riverdale's response was actually drafted by another junior member of the British delegation, King ensured that "Lord Riverdale [was made] definitely to understand that I would not sign [the] agreement until Mission or British Government agreed to interpretation given paragraph on this subject in agreement as set out in Rogers letter."[32] For his part, Riverdale personally confirmed that he did, in fact, support the Canadian position, but this did little to ease the Canadian Prime Minister's concerns, particularly when he discovered that Balfour was not so convinced that Article XV should be approved, since he actually had "some difficulty" with the concept. That was all King needed to persuade him that the negotiations were not over, interpreting this fact as evidence that the "Air Ministry in England, is trying to keep Canadian squadrons at its disposal, merged into British forces, creating all the trouble in the air field that was created on land with the army in the last war. This must be avoided at all costs and will be by my standing firm on this matter as I did on the one priority re contribution of services."[33]

King was determined to win this battle and immediately went on the offensive. A request from Campbell to come out to Canada to discuss the matter was declined—likely designed to show the British how serious King was on this matter—and was followed up by a reiteration that Canada would not sign the entire agreement without an acceptance of Article XV. It was an effective tactic, but one that was not entirely based on cold, calculating logic. That certainly was apparent when King let his emotions show in a daily diary entry:

> It is really shameful the way in which the British Government in these matters seeks to evade and undo and to change the meaning of the most definitely understood obligations. No wonder the Germans and others find it difficult to deal with governments that behave in that fashion towards those that are of their own with kith and kin in doing what they can to help them. … The British want to be on top in everything, not even to go 50-50 with those who are helping to save their very existence.[34]

Yet King was not done with the British. In an effort to place some pressure on them, a message was sent to the UK on 11 December, noting that Article XV was the only point that was holding up the agreement which, in Canada's opinion, was the product of the "unwillingness of the United Kingdom Government to accept our proviso that Canadian personnel from the air training plan will … be organized in RCAF formations in the field." And to further put the British under the gun, the British High Commissioner for Canada in the UK was instructed that "It might save some time if you would let the British Government know how strongly the [Canadian] Government feels on this point."[35]

King's bluster effectively brought the British back to the table and drew the battle lines for what would be the last set of negotiations before the agreement was signed. It was not an easy process, as the following six days were filled with drama, intrigue and diplomatic gamesmanship. As such, they are worth describing in some detail, as they clearly illustrate how important Article XV was to Canada as a whole and the RCAF specifically.

In many ways, it is easy to see why the British took issue with Article XV. From their perspective, and with more than a little justification, Article XV was setting up a situation where British taxpayers would be the ones who ultimately paid for the Canadian squadrons overseas. They had a point. Even if Canada's contribution to the scheme was devoted to maintaining and equipping

separate squadrons, it still would not be enough to cover the costs of all the Canadians trained by the scheme, and it was clear that King and his team were expecting the UK to pick up the remainder of the bill. Understandably, this was something that the British government did not favour, but they were willing to welcome as many Canadian squadrons as the RCAF cared to send—that was, of course, if Canada was willing to pay for them. How Canada was expected to find the funds to both support the training plan and pay for these operational squadrons—which as King identified would place a tremendous burden on his country—was not explained.[36] Yet, while the British were sympathetic and acknowledged that it appeared impossible for Canada to find sufficient funds for the training scheme and overseas squadrons, it nevertheless appeared that their former colony was trying to get its proverbial cake and eat it too. More to the point, as one Canadian scholar would correctly argue, "the demands of finances and national identification pulled in opposite directions."[37] Nor was this the only place where the British had trouble following Canada's apparently self-serving logic.

Money was one aspect; personnel was another. For instance, one British observer was quick to point out that if all the Canadian pilots trained by the plan were suddenly formed into RCAF units, it would mean that half of the current squadrons in France would be Canadian—despite the fact that they would consist of only one tenth of the total number of personnel stationed there.[38] This concept became even more intriguing when the numbers were crunched within the individual squadrons. The nature by which squadrons operated always ensured that the supporting ground crew would greatly outnumber the aircrew and that begged the question whether it was right to call a squadron "Canadian" when the vast majority of its personnel came from another country. Adding weight to this British counterpoint, Charles "Chubby" Power, who would go on to become the Minister of National Defence for Air, was forced later in life to admit that: "to call a Canadian squadron, when the personnel attached to it were British in the ratio of about ten to one, would be somewhat an anomaly."[39]

These arguments, as valid as they were, did not convince King. In his view, Canada was assuming a tremendous burden with the plan, and as such, it was not unreasonable to expect the British to yield to this particular demand. After all, it was Canada that was coming to the aid of the UK and not the other way around. When viewed through this prism, King had a point. Much was being asked from Canada, and as such, the British should not have been unsympathetic to Canada's growing sense of nationalism and desire to control the fate of its airmen by having them serve in their own national squadrons. Certainly, this was a point that Ralston, who was probably the most ardent advocate for Article XV, made very clear to the British delegation as King recalled how:

> Ralston kept coming back to [the] point of command and care of our own men. That when enlisting large numbers of pilots in Canada, the first thing that they would ask would be whether they would be under Canadian Command. Whether they could look to being in Canadian squadrons rather than in squadrons commanded by British officers. Ralston pointed out quite clearly that unless there was very clear understanding on these matters in the say Canada would have, there would be a fear among our men that they would be sent into such places as Passchendaele in the last war, and their lives unnecessarily sacrificed. I stated that I would have to give parliament assurance that we had guarded against this kind of thing. I made clear it was only reasonable that we should ask this when we were contributing the lives we were.[40]

And it was that fact, namely that many Canadians soon would be making the ultimate sacrifice to assist the British in the war effort, which served as the strongest argument that the UK should do whatever it could to create as many Canadian overseas squadrons as was feasible.

Of course, the British were not against using personnel from the plan to form Canadian overseas squadrons, as long as it was fairly done. Their first attempt at a compromise was less than satisfactory to King. In effect, the British suggested that the Canadian contribution to the scheme should be the key factor that determined how many overseas squadrons would be formed. According to this formula, therefore, Canada would be able to field approximately 15 national squadrons. Oddly enough, this calculation was almost identical to one that Rogers had proposed on 6 November when he suggested that if 15 RCAF squadrons were maintained by the UK overseas then it would be only reasonable for Canada to assume 15 per cent of the cost of the air training scheme.[41] The problem, however, was that the current British formula was assuming a much higher financial contribution from Canada than 15 per cent.[42]

It was at this juncture that the Article XV negotiations took a turn for the worse. Based on a suggestion from Campbell, a group—consisting of Lieutenant-Colonel K. S. MacLachlan (the deputy minister of national defence for navy and air) and Croil representing the Canadians on the one hand and Brooke-Popham and another junior member of the British delegation on the other—was formed in the hopes that they could devise a formula that would be satisfactory to all. Their solution differed from the earlier formula in that it did not take financial factors into consideration, but instead suggested that the organization of RCAF squadrons in the field should be dependent on whether there were sufficient Canadian ground personnel. King was livid, arguing as he did that "this is quite a new suggestion" which he was surprised was being raised at the end of the negotiations, particularly since neither the proposed Article XV, nor the rest of the plan itself, had ever made any mention of ground crew. That his own CAS had agreed to this formula did not surprise King, who believed "it was clear the Air Force men were favourable to the formula as it would mean complete Canadian formations both in the air and on the ground."[43] Exactly what Croil's logic was is not certain—although it could be surmised that he felt that purely Canadian-manned squadrons would have more permanency and, therefore, would be more likely to survive the peace after the war—but in King's view the CAS did not understand the bigger political picture.

The trouble with this formula was that it was based on the premise that British ground crews could replace Canadians assigned to the plan so that the latter could be sent overseas to their own national squadrons. According to Riverdale, the British had proposed this idea purely as a means to give the Canadians what they wanted. However, King and his ministers were not impressed, as the Prime Minister felt that it "would result in public criticism that Canadians were being substituted for UK personnel in zones of danger," or even worse that Canada was "sending our men to the front to be killed." Howe was equally critical, arguing that the British proposal "offended common sense and was inefficient."[44]

This reference to inefficiency was likely the product of the fact that all Canadian financial estimates regarding the plan were done on the assumption that the British would provide the ground crew for overseas squadrons, which, both King and Ralston emphasized, had been their understanding from the outset of the negotiations. But while for Ralston this British concept would render Article XV meaningless, King was quick to point out that the RAF was getting all the Canadian pilots it wanted and that the UK could easily offset "their expenditures on ground men [for overseas squadrons] by our expenditure on ground men required for training schools here." For the Canadians, however,

the bottom line was quite simple, the British formula was "quite unsatisfactory," as it would limit the number of squadrons in the field overseas, which for King's cabinet "would not satisfy public sentiment in Canada."[45]

With King digging his heels in over Article XV, an incident occurred which he believed was a deliberate tactic to force his hand to sign the larger agreement immediately.[46] Much to his surprise, King learned on the morning of 15 December that the Australian Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, had announced that his nation and the UK had entered into an agreement regarding the Air Training Plan. It is important to note that, despite King's suspicions and belief that this was "an outrageous violation of understanding,"[47] there is currently no evidence that the British specifically used the Australians to put pressure on Canada. Yet this was exactly what Menzies' statement did. The fact that Canada was still negotiating with the British after a deal had been reached with Australia could easily be interpreted that it was King and his government that were delaying the larger agreement. Nor was Australia the only Commonwealth partner to annoy King over Article XV, as New Zealand's representative had placed earlier pressure on the Canadian Prime Minister by noting that there was an immediate need to sign the agreement and that "we should trust the British and not raise the issue [Article XV] at this time."[48] Isolated and alone in his desire to give the Commonwealth nations some autonomy over their own overseas squadrons, King was now under tremendous pressure to get his own statement out in the press. How he was going to do that without the Article XV negotiations being settled was anything but certain.[49] However, he knew two things: that his cause was just and that Article XV was a principle that was worth the fight. King was not going to back down, as in his view

> it is really a question of the British wanting to have their numbers count and getting all the dollars from us that they possibly can. It is a rather mean attitude in the face of the enormous outlay we are making and the generous line we are taking throughout. I am glad I held firm last week, as this question [Article XV] raises an issue even larger than the one [primacy of effort] we thought was at stake.[50]

King's determination carried him through. Instead of cowering from what he saw as British gamesmanship and, to some extent, dirty tactics, the Prime Minister went on the offensive. His first step was to meet with Riverdale who, King rightly concluded, was the most reasonable and approachable member of the British delegation. In the process of doing so, King emphasized that Menzies' statement was a great embarrassment to Canada and that matters had to be settled at once. In reality, if the British had indeed used Menzies to pressure Canada, they had severely underestimated King, as his political cunning was about to totally undermine their position.

King immediately went to work with Riverdale, as he believed that "our minds were fairly close together." Later admitting that "he had a lot of trouble with his own people"—a reference which seemed aimed at Campbell and Brooke-Popham—Riverdale wanted the agreement signed as badly as King did. He, therefore, showed King a draft response to Roger's letter of 8 December 1939 that more or less stated that the British were willing to accept Article XV as the Canadians had defined it.[51] Had Riverdale been able to act alone, the crisis would have ended there. Having shaken hands "on getting matters settled," Riverdale stated to King that he would have to show his response to Campbell and Brooke-Popham, after which he hoped to return shortly. Riverdale never came back. Instead, with the matter being referred to Campbell and Brooke-Popham, King should not have been surprised that the entire matter was now suddenly being referred to London. By the next day, 16 December, King was reluctant to call Riverdale for fear that it might be interpreted that he was anxious, or worse yet

scared, and send the wrong message at a pivotal moment of the negotiation. He instructed Ralston to make contact with Riverdale and Brooke-Popham. Ralston's response was less than satisfactory, as he noted that both men had wanted some time to think about what was said. King was not satisfied, and in the end, he did contact Riverdale, only to be told that it was impossible to reassemble the British team, as some were out for dinner and others were attending a hockey game.[52]

Photo: DND

The Tiger Moth was a reliable elementary trainer during the Second World War and a mainstay of the BCATP.

It is hard to escape the conclusion that the British were stalling in the hopes that the pressure from the Menzies statement would finally get to King. This was certainly evident when King told the British representatives that he felt that he personally should call London for a response. Claims from Campbell that "it was too late to call," or that the chance that King's conversation could be intercepted and provide aid and comfort to the enemy, reeked of desperation and served as a signal that the British position was not as strong as they were letting on.[53] King was right to be suspicious. When the British response finally came, it was a jaw dropper.

Having heard from London, Riverdale told King that he was now authorized to respond to Rogers's original letter of 8 December. The British were willing to accept Article XV, but with one important proviso: namely, that the organization of Canadian overseas squadrons would be firmly tied to the amount of money that Canada contributed to the scheme. King was outraged, arguing that the British response was "cold" and completely disregarded "Canada's heavy contribution of fighting men in the way of pilots, observers and gunners." This was the final straw for the Prime Minister, as he believed that "the message implied what we have all along thought, that the Air Ministry was trying to exact more in the way of money out of the Government of Canada or make the position such as to render impossible command of Canadians where service crews were British." His reaction was brilliant and was illustrative of the shrewd and cunning politician that he was.[54]

First, King was willing to abide by the terms that he and Riverdale had worked out that morning, and in the process of doing so, he was effectively ignoring the one he had just received.[55] Next, he drafted and sent a telegram direct to Neville Chamberlain that left no doubt about the Canadian Prime Minister's resolve on this matter:

> I fear there is grave danger of the whole Joint Training Plan being seriously imperilled unless agreement between our two Governments can be reached without further delay. … I cannot too strongly impress upon you the importance which the people of Canada will attach to the principle involved in the letter of the Minister of National Defence, of December 8th, affecting as it does Canadian fighting personnel in the field. We are most anxious to conclude the agreement and get under way with the plan as rapidly as possible.[56]

His final tactic was perhaps the most brilliant, as he went to see the Governor General. It was a bold move, as by going to King George V's representative in Canada, the Prime Minister was effectively engaging that British monarchy. It worked. The Governor General was more than sympathetic, as King laid everything on the table, including his suspicion about the Menzies announcement involving the British Air Ministry and his fear that the UK was trying to extort more money from Canada in order to accept Article XV. The Governor General found this all "ridiculous" and "outrageous," but it was what King said next that seemed to upset the King's representative the most.[57]

King's most devastating comment came when he related certain derogatory comments Brooke-Popham had made towards Canadians during the negotiations associated with the creation of overseas squadrons. Here King had a powerful point. At first glance, Brooke-Popham's arguments appeared to make sense, as he had earlier argued that units needed to be homogeneous.[58] Yet this statement did not account for the fact that there were already large numbers of Canadians serving in British squadrons and that led Howe to ask whether "the UK Mission means to suggest that while it was possible for RCAF air crews to join RAF squadrons, it was, on the other hand, impossible for RAF ground personnel to join RCAF Squadrons."[59] It was a powerful point but even more salient was a comment that King overheard which suggested that the British Air Marshal could not accept

Article XV because it would lead "to a large number of 'Englishmen' serving under Canadian command."[60] This, in King's view, had "let the cat out of the bag"[61] and reinforced the idea that:

> As we thought, what is really in the minds of the British Air Force is to keep command in their own hands though they have been obliged to admit, on many occasions, that Canadian pilots have more skill and judgement than their own. In view of this remark, I made up my mind we would have to hold out more strongly than ever against any doubt as to what the position would be once our men were across the seas.[62]

King's account that Article XV, and possibly the entire agreement, was going to fail on account of the British delegation's unwillingness to let British personnel serve under Canadian commanders struck a deep cord with the Governor General who, the Prime Minister noted, "was 100% with me."[63]

While King appeared intent on referring this matter to King George V, he first wanted the Governor General to go to Brooke-Popham who, himself, was a former colonial representative. King's strategy could not have worked better. In an effort to frame that discussion, King noted that he was desperately trying to close an important deal and that in his view the Governor General was in the best position to explain the situation to Brooke-Popham. It would be unfortunate to "imagine it becoming known that this agreement … which should have been settled with the word 'yes' on the 8th of December … is to be held over for days longer because men cannot be brought together because they are at dinner parties, or hockey matches, etc."[64] King was effectively shaming the British, and it set the stage for one final, and to some degree pathetic, showdown between the two delegations.

Just before midnight on 16 December, King met with the British delegation, and it was clear that his tactics with the Governor General had worked. A review of documentation related to the negotiations clearly show that Brooke-Popham was the greatest obstacle to Article XV, as he no doubt believed that it was operationally more efficient to assign Commonwealth aircrew to British squadrons. In many respects he was right. For the RCAF, the desire to create national squadrons, a policy that in time would gain notoriety as "Canadianization," did lead to some issues that would not have emerged had the Commonwealth nations agreed to lump their personnel into what effectively would have been one large imperial air force. Yet this was where Brooke-Popham, and the British as a whole, had seriously underestimated the desire within the Commonwealth, and Canada in particular, to be recognized under the banner of their own nations rather than always being lumped into larger British units. Nowhere was this more evident than in a report that Campbell had written just days after the conclusion of the BCATP negotiations in which he observed that:

> All things being equal, no doubt he [the Canadian] would prefer to be brigaded with his fellow Canadians … . The average Canadian well remembers the exploits of Canadian airmen in the last war. He knows that they did not suffer from serving in the Royal Air Force. He would undoubtedly say get me to the Front, put me in a machine, and send me up against the enemy: that is all I need to show the world of my Canadian identity.[65]

It was a flattering comment, but it did not take into account that King and his ministers had a better sense of what their country wanted, and it was clear to them that the public would accept nothing less than the majority of Canadians serving in their own national squadrons.

That King had finally won the battle over Article XV was soon evident when he saw Brooke-Popham for the last time before the treaty was signed:

> I should say that I never saw a man look more deflated in a way that Sir Robert Brooke-Popham did. He looked indeed as if he had been spanked. His face was very red and his manner very crushed. I think having the GG [Governor General] speak to him was something he had never anticipated, and having been a Governor of a Crown Colony himself, he would realize the significance of the word of a Governor in a self-Governing Dominion, given in the name of the King.[66]

As one observer noted, the BCATP negotiations were "bitter at times and that was evident when Article XV was finally settled.[67] Rather than accepting that he had been outmanoeuvred by King, Brooke-Popham threw one last barrage at the Canadians. It was a ridiculous point that perfectly captured how low the negotiations over Article XV had sunk. After reading the text of the response that would finally settle the matter, Brooke-Popham had taken umbrage with a single sentence that noted:

> On the understanding that the numbers to be incorporated or organized at any time will be the subject of discussion between the two governments, the United Kingdom government accepts in principle, as being consistent with the intention of Paragraph 15 of the Memorandum of Agreement that the United Kingdom Government, on the request of the Canadian Government, would arrange that **the** Canadian pupils, when passing out from the training scheme, will be incorporated in or organized as units and formations of the Royal Canadian Air Force in the field.[68] [emphasis added]

For Brooke-Popham the word "the" before Canadians had a sinister significance which suggested that all RCAF personnel trained through the plan would have to go to Canadian units. At such a late hour of the night, King was aghast that one single word was holding up the agreement, and he had a hard time trying to determine how it changed the meaning of Article XV one way or another. Perhaps realizing that this was Brooke-Popham's way of saving some semblance of face from what was otherwise a Canadian victory in the negotiation, King gave in to this request and agreed that the offending "the" would be omitted. With that one seemingly insignificant alteration, the battle over Article XV was finally done.[69]

The BCATP agreement was signed and dated on 17 December 1939, which also happened to be King's birthday, and it was a suiting wish that he hoped that what had just been consummated would represent: "an instrument of peace [that would] hasten the day when peace would be restored and maintained. Just as we were signing, I turned to the others in the room and said my first prayer in this new year of my life was that this document, which we were signing, might hasten the peace of the world."[70] That is exactly what the BCATP would do, as its graduates would become part of the Allied air effort that was essential to bringing victory and ending the war. However, thanks to King, his ministers and the CAS, Canada's role in the air war would gain significantly more recognition than had its effort been solely lumped into the RAF. It was a monumental moment, as Article XV would result in the renumbering of three existing squadrons and the formation of no less than thirty other overseas 400-series squadrons. They would all fight bravely and build a proud tradition that has lasted to this day for those units that are still active. With 400, 401 and 402 carrying on lineages of

existing squadrons, the creation of 403 Squadron in March 1941 was a pivotal moment for the RCAF. And since the establishment of these squadrons 75 years ago was a direct result of the Article XV negotiations, the RCAF is in an important position to recognize the BCATP that made it all possible.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BCATP	British Commonwealth Air Training Plan
CAS	Chief of the Air Staff
LAC	Library and Archives Canada
MG	manuscript group
RAF	Royal Air Force
RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
RG	record group
UK	United Kingdom

NOTES

1. F. J. Hatch, *Aerodrome of Democracy: Canada and the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan 1939–1945*. (Ottawa: Directorate of History, 1983), 2.

2. British Commonwealth Air Training Plan Agreement, n.d., Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Record Group (RG) 25, vol. 1858A, file 72-T-38c.

3. The 400 series was created to avoid confusion between Commonwealth forces. For instance, during the Battle of Britain there was a No. 1 Squadron RCAF and a No. 1 Squadron RAF. To avoid these situations, Canada was assigned a block of numbers from 400 to 449. The astute observer may note that this does not account for 450 Squadron. The fact that Canada has a 450 Squadron was a post-war error, as it was not realized that 450 as a squadron designator was assigned to Australia. Fortunately, the Australians agreed to share the squadron number with Canada.

4. It should be noted that, while this article takes a close look at the Canadian side, no one has yet explored in detail the British records regarding Article XV.

5. C. P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada 1939–1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), 19.

6. Ibid, 20.

7. W. A. B. Douglas, *The Creation of a National Air Force* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 213.

8. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 18.

9. Ibid.

10. William Lyon Mackenzie King Diary (hereafter cited as King Diary), 31 October 1939, LAC, accessed May 5, 2016, www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/king/index-e.html, 1191–1195.

11. Cabinet War Committee, 31 October 1939, LAC, RG 2, 7 C, vol. 1.

12. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 21.

13. Cabinet War Committee, 31 October 1939, LAC, RG 2, 7 C, vol. 1.

14. King Diary, 31 October 1939, LAC, 1191–1195.

15. Ibid.

16. Cabinet War Committee, 31 October 1939, LAC, RG 2, 7 C, vol. 1; and King Diary, 31 October 1939, LAC, 1191–1195.

17. Cabinet War Committee, 6 November 1939, LAC, RG 2, 7 C, vol. 1.

18. As quoted in Brereton Greenhous and Hugh Halliday, *Canada's Air Forces 1914–1999* (Montréal: Art Global, 1999), 19. For more information on this period see, Richard Oliver Mayne, "Royal Matters: Symbolism, History and the RCAF's Name-Change, 1909–2011," *Royal Canadian Air Force Journal* 1, no. 4 (Fall 2012).

19. CAS to minister, 23 November 1939, Directorate of History and Heritage, 180.009 (D12).

20. Minutes of the Emergency Council, 14 November 1939, LAC, RG 2, 7 C, vol. 1.

21. Secretary of State for External Affairs to High Commissioner for Canada (London), 25 November 1939, LAC, RG 25, vol. 1858A, file 72-T-38c, part 1; Message 111 British Prime Minister to Canadian Prime Minister, 27 November 1939, LAC, King Papers, Manuscript Group (MG) 26 – J 13; and Message 118, Canadian Prime Minister to British Prime Minister, 27 November 1939, LAC, RG 25, vol. 1858A, file 72-T-38c, part 1.

22. King Diary, 27 November 1939, LAC, 1261–1262.

23. King Diary, 28 November 1939, LAC, 1265–1266.

24. Ibid.

25. Secretary of State of Dominion Affairs to Secretary of State External Affairs, 1 December 1939, LAC, RG 25, vol. 1858A, file 72-T-38c, part 1.

26. Rogers to Balfour, 27 November 1939, LAC, King Papers, MG 26 – J 13, 234424.

27. Minutes of the Emergency Council, 27 November 1939, LAC, RG 2, 7 C, vol. 1.

28. Secretary of State External Affairs to Secretary of State of Dominion Affairs, Response to telegram No. 111, 28 November 1939, LAC, RG 25, vol. 1858A, file 72-T-38c, part 1.

29. Balfour to Rogers, 27 November 1939, LAC, RG 25, vol. 1858A, file 72-T-38c, part 1; and King Diary, 28 November 1939, LAC, 1265–1266.

30. King Diary, 7 December 1939, LAC, 1296.

31. Rogers to Riverdale, 8 December 1939, LAC, King Papers, MG 26 – J 13, 234432; and Riverdale to Rogers, 8 December 1939, LAC, King Papers, 234437.

32. King Diary, 9 December 1939, LAC, 1300.

33. Ibid.

34. King Diary, 10 December 1939, LAC, 1302–1303.

35. External Affairs Ottawa to High Commissioner for Canada in Great Britain, 11 December 1939, LAC, RG 25, vol. 1858A, file 72-T-38c, part 1.

36. Notes of a meeting at the Dominion office on December 13th to discuss the air training programme, 13 December 1939, LAC, RG 25, vol. 1858A, file 72-T-38c, part 1; and Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 26.

37. Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 215.

38. Notes of a meeting at the Dominion office on December 13th to discuss the air training programme, 13 December 1939, LAC, RG 25, vol. 1858A, file 72-T-38c, part 1.

39. Charles G. Power, *A Party Politician* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1966), 204.

40. King Diary, 15 December 1939, LAC, 1314, 1316–1318.

41. Cabinet War Committee, 6 November 1939, LAC, RG 2, 7 C, vol. 1.

42. Notes of a meeting at the Dominion office on December 13th to discuss the air training programme, 13 December 1939, LAC, RG 25, vol. 1858A, file 72-T-38c, part 1.

43. King Diary, 14 December 1939, 1310–1311; and CAS to minister, 23 November 1939, Directorate of History and Heritage, 180.009 (D12).

44. Cabinet War Committee, 14 December 1939, LAC, RG 2, 7 C, vol. 1; and King Diary, 14 December 1939, 1310–1311.

45. Cabinet War Committee, 14 December 1939, LAC, RG 2, 7 C, vol. 1.

46. King Diary, 16 December 1939, 1319.

47. King Diary, 15 December 1939, 1314, 1316–1318.

48. King Diary, 10 December 1939, 1302–1303.

49. King Diary, 15 December 1939, 1314, 1316–1318.

50. King Diary, 14 December 1939, 1310–1311.

51. King to Riverdale, 15 December 1939, LAC, King Papers, MG 26 – J 13, 235648.

52. King Diary, 16 December 1939, 1319.

53. King Diary, 15 December 1939, 1314, 1316–1318.

54. Riverdale to King, 15 December 1939, LAC, King Papers, MG 26 – J 13, 236642; and King Diary, 15 December 1939, 1314, 1316–1318.

55. King to Riverdale, 15 December 1939, LAC, King Papers, MG 26 – J 13, 235648.

56. King to Chamberlain, 16 December 1939, LAC, RG 25, vol. 1858A, file 72-T-38c.

57. King Diary, 16 December 1939, 1319.

58. Cabinet War Committee, 14 December 1939, LAC, RG 2, 7 C, vol. 1.

59. Ibid.

60. King Diary, 16 December 1939, 1319.

61. King Diary, 15 December 1939, 1318.

62. King Diary, 15 December 1939, 1314, 1316–1318.

63. King Diary, 16 December 1939, 1319.

64. Ibid.

65. UK High Commissioner to Dominion Secretary, 19 December 1939, The National Archives (UK), Prem 1/397. As quoted in Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 214.

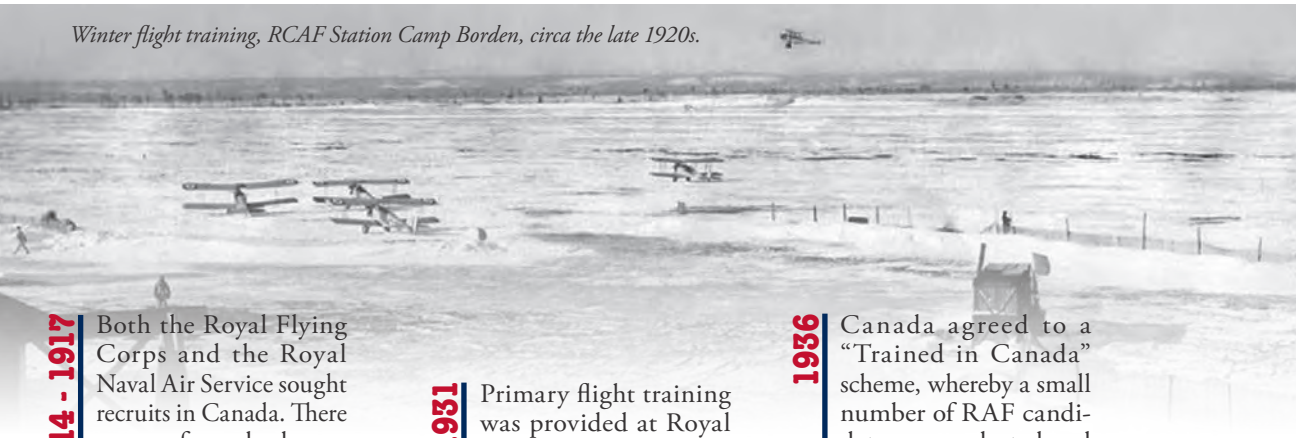
66. King Diary, 16 December 1939, 1319.

67. Power, *Party Politician*, 204.

68. Riverdale to Rogers, 16 December 1939, LAC, King Papers, MG 26 – J 13, 234434.

69. King Diary, 16 December 1939, 1319; and Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 27.

70. King Diary, 16 December 1939, 1319.



Winter flight training, RCAF Station Camp Borden, circa the late 1920s.

British Commonwealth Air Training Plan:

1914 - 1917

Both the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service sought recruits in Canada. There was no formal scheme, and those who obtained basic flight training did so through civil schools before proceeding to England.

1917 - 1918

The Royal Flying Corps (the Royal Air Force [RAF] after 1 April 1918) established a training organization in Canada. With primary fields at Borden, Deseronto and Armour Heights (all in Ontario), the Royal Flying Corps (Canada) was responsible for thousands of Canadians who served in British squadrons during the war.

"Stunting" over the hangars at Royal Flying Corps (Canada) airfield at Camp Borden, 1917.

1919 - 1931

Primary flight training was provided at Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) Station Camp Borden until the late 1920s, when it was then assisted by 22 civilian schools that were subsidized in part by the government. Advanced training remained centred at Borden.

1931 - 1937

Flight training in Canada continued to be provided by a mixture of service and civilian agencies and was adequate to meet the needs of a small RCAF. A number of Canadians were recruited by the RAF during this period but were, for the most part, trained in England.

A Curtiss Reid Rambler was one of the aircraft types provided to civilian clubs to assist with RCAF pilot training.

1936

Canada agreed to a "Trained in Canada" scheme, whereby a small number of RAF candidates were selected and trained by the RCAF.

A de Havilland DH 82 Tiger Moth in flight. This aircraft was used as a pre-war trainer and would serve throughout the BCATP at Elementary Flying Schools.

A Canadian Timeline

by Major William March, CD, MA

All photos: DND

1938

January

The first batch of 15 commenced their training in January; 13 graduated in October 1938 and then proceeded overseas.

May

Led by industrialist J. G. Weir, a British air mission visited Canada to survey the country's aircraft-manufacturing potential. Weir was instructed to broach the subject of RAF use of Canadian airspace and facilities for training purposes with the Canadian government. Prime Minister Mackenzie King supported the request but indicated that RAF control of any training scheme was unacceptable.

5 July

The Canadian government submitted an offer to the British government, whereby British pilots were trained in Canada, albeit under Canadian control.

July - August

The British submitted a proposal drawn up by Group Captain J. M. Robb, Commandant of the RAF Central Flying School, and Wing Commander G. R. Howsam, RCAF Director of Training. The "Robb Plan" called for training up to 300 Canadian recruits for the RAF per year.

6 September

King—unwilling to bend on what he saw as a Canadian sovereignty issue—rejected the proposal and reiterated that the offer was to train "British" pilots, as Canadian recruits were needed for a slowly expanding RCAF.

31 December

In response to a slightly different training proposal received from the British on 9 December, King reiterated his position.

1939 (Pre-war)

January - February

While discussions continued with the British government, the RCAF modified its training regime. From a continuous 10-month course, pilot training consisted of three 16-week stages that encompassed primary, advanced and operational training. It was decided that primary flying training would be contracted out to eight civilian flying clubs located at Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Winnipeg, Hamilton, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax.

April - May

RCAF Station Camp Borden operated a special course, focused on military training requirements, for civilian instructors from the various flying clubs. Twenty-seven of the 33 civil pilots who started the course graduated in October.

No. 5 Elementary Flying Training School, High River, Alberta. Left to Right: Ground Instructor, Flying Instructor with RCAF Wings, (he was formerly a Sgt/Pilot RCAF) and Flying Instructor (Civilian) with a number of the ground crew wearing the new issue grey uniform.

1 September

Germany attacked Poland.

The RCAF was placed on active service. RCAF strength was 298 officers and 2,750 airmen in the Permanent Force with an additional 112 officers and 901 airmen in the Auxiliary for a total of 4,061 all ranks.

4 September

Clayton Knight Committee. William A. "Billy" Bishop, appointed to the rank of air marshal in the RCAF, telephoned his American friend Clayton Knight in New York. Knight, a First World War fighter pilot and well-known aviation artist, was convinced by Bishop to assist in recruiting Americans who wished to join the RCAF. Creating a loosely organized committee, Knight arranged for thousands of young Americans to cross the border and enlist in the RCAF. Activities came to a gradual halt after the United States entered the war in December 1941.

Air Marshal William "Billy" Bishop was active in public relations and recruiting throughout the war. 21 July 1941 Movie "Captains of the Clouds", Uplands, Ontario. On the tarmac beside a Harvard trainer, two famous personalities talk over the old flying days. Air Marshall Billy Bishop is the former flyer and with him is screen star and Oscar award-nominee Jimmy Cagney. Cagney came to Canada to make a film about the RCAF.

1939

3 September

Great Britain and France declared war on Germany.

One of Canada's front-line aircraft in 1939, the Supermarine Stranraer. This one, belonging to No. 5 Squadron of the Home War Establishment, is on patrol on the east coast.

10 September

Canada declared war on Germany.

RCAF Grumman Goblin fighters of No. 118 Squadron, RCAF Home War Establishment, on patrol.

14 September — An Order-in-Council created the RCAF Special Reserve and placed it on active service.

26 September — A formal proposal was received from the British government, seeking to create a Commonwealth air training plan, with Canada being the principal training location.

Prime Minister Mackenzie King (second from right) and members of his cabinet addressing the nation on 3 September 1939.

28 September — After consulting Cabinet, Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King accepted the British proposal in principle, pending further discussion.

31 October — Riverdale met with the Canadian Cabinet and presented the British air-training proposal. Formal discussions commenced.

1939

7 October — The United Kingdom Air Training Mission, led by Lord Riverdale, departed England for Canada.

Ottawa, December 1939. Negotiators of the BCATP Agreement. Front Row, left to right: Air Chief Marshal Sir R. Brooke-Popham, RAF; Colonel J.L. Ralston, Minister of Finance, Canada; Group Captain H.W.L. Saunders, Chief of the Air Staff, New Zealand; Senator R. Dandurand, Canada; Lord Riverdale, United Kingdom; Prime Minister W.L.M. King, Canada; J.V. Fairbairn, Minister of Air, Australia; E. Lapointe, Minister of Justice, Canada; Captain H.H. Balfour, Undersecretary for Air, United Kingdom; N. McL. Rogers, Minister of National Defence, Canada; Air Marshal Sir C. Courtney, RAF.

18 September — An RCAF Manning Pool was formed at Toronto. Later renamed No. 1 Manning Depot, it was the first of four manning depots created to serve the RCAF.

Recruits doing a bit of close order drill, No. 1 Manning Depot, Toronto, 26 July 1940.

1939

1 November

No. 1 Service Flying Training School was stood-up at RCAF Station Camp Borden. Although the unit predates the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP), as it was already in existence, it became the first BCATP school.

When No. 1 Service Flying Training School stood-up at Borden, Ontario, the training facilities had not changed significantly since the First World War.

Even as the RCAF began to expand, there was an urgent need for training aircraft, which led to the acquisition of a number of obsolete types such as the Northrup Nomad.

17 December

The BCATP Agreement was signed by representatives of the governments of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The plans called for the creation of 74 units and schools, with training to begin 28 April 1940 (Z-Day). It was scheduled to last until 31 March 1943.

Lord Riverdale (on the left sitting) and W.L. Mackenzie King (on the right sitting), signing the BCATP Agreement.

Another one of the obsolete aircraft that the RCAF hurriedly acquired was the North American Yale.

31 December

RCAF strength: 8,287 all ranks.

April

The age limits for pilot trainees were set at 18 and 28. For other aircrew categories, they were 18 and 32.

Potential aircrew flocked to RCAF recruiting centres.

1 January

Air Training Command (Toronto) was renamed No. 1 Training Command. To implement the BCATP, three additional training commands (TC) were established: No. 2 TC on 15 April (Winnipeg), No. 3 TC on 18 March (Montreal) and No. 4 TC on 29 April (Regina).

1940

February

Air Commodore Robert Leckie, a Canadian who had served in the RAF since the First World War, was appointed Director of Training at RCAF Headquarters to oversee the BCATP. Leckie was appointed due to a lack of experienced RCAF staff officers. Leckie transferred to the RCAF and became Chief of the Air Staff in 1944.

No. 1 ITS sign

Barrack inspection at No. 1 ITS Toronto.

A Portrait of Robert Leckie as an Air Vice-Marshal, 12 November 1941.

15 April

No. 1 Initial Training School, Eglington Hunt Club, Toronto, officially opened. The first of seven initial training schools, it received its first intake of 164 trainees on 29 April.

With the establishment of the BCATP, recruiting went into high-gear and posters, such as this one, became a common sight throughout Canada.

28 April

Z-Day. The BCATP commenced officially.

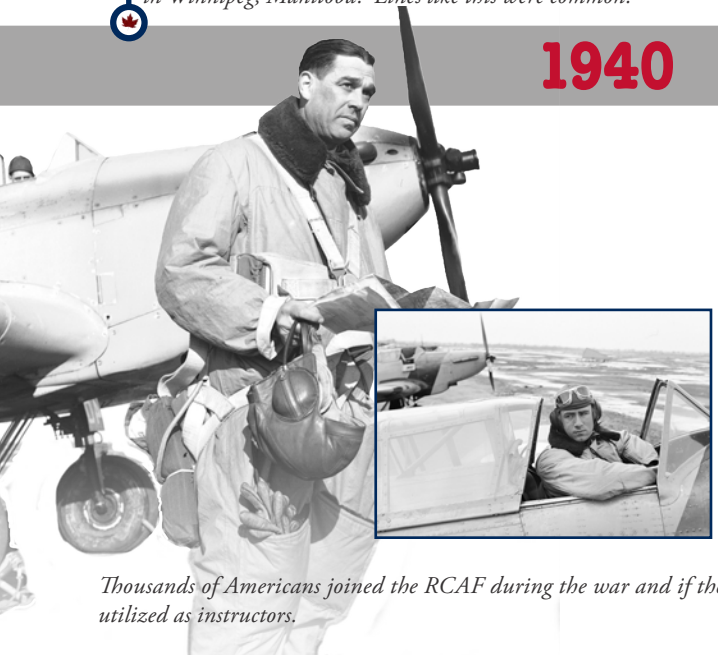
Applicants to the RCAF line up at a recruiting centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Lines like this were common.

27 May

No. 1 Air Observer School, Malton, Ontario, opened officially; it was the first of 10 air observer schools that were established. They were operated by civilian organizations with RCAF supervision.

Student navigators at No.1 Air Observers School in Malton, Ont., climb into an Avro Anson for a navigational training flight.

1940



7 June

A Canadian order-in-council stated that foreign nationals enlisting in the Canadian armed forces were not required to swear allegiance to His Majesty the King. This ruling was made so that American recruits—who by law would lose their citizenship if they swore allegiance to a foreign head of state—could continue to enlist in the RCAF.

Thousands of Americans joined the RCAF during the war and if they had flying experience, they were quickly utilized as instructors.

Flying Officer W. Westphal (top left) - 43 yrs. old of 1200 Ban Ness Ave., San Francisco. Was shop superintendent of James W. McAlister (Auto distributors) of San Francisco, California. He owned four planes of his own. Was an instructor at San Francisco Airport. Has been flying 13 yrs. Has 1100 hrs. in air. Was a private in U.S. Army 1917. Enlisted in R.C.A.F. Nov. 13th, 1940. An instructor at No. 1 Bombing and Gunnery School, Jarvis, Ontario.

Flying Officer H.A. Clayton (top right) is 24 yrs old of 6151 Bryan Parkway St., Dallas, Texas. He graduated from Palmer Chiropractic University in Davenport, Iowa. Has flown commercially for crop dusting cotton - cross country work, also private flying. He has been flying for 9 years and has 2300 hrs in air. Played football for all city team in Dallas. Enlisted RCAF Sept. 19 – 1940. An instructor at No. 1 Bombing and Gunnery School, Jarvis, Ontario.

24 June

The first four Elementary Flying Training Schools were opened: No. 1 at Malton, Ontario; No. 2 at Fort William, Ontario; No. 3 at London, Ontario; and No. 4 at Windsor Mills, Quebec. In the end, 24 Canadian and 6 Royal Air Force Elementary Flying Training Schools were established. The Canadian schools were operated by civilian companies with RCAF oversight.

Pilot and instructor discuss the morning's training flight in front of a Tiger Moth, No. 1 EFTS, Malton, Ontario.

Harvards in formation, Uplands, Ontario.

5 August

No. 2 Service Flying Training School, Uplands, Ontario, was officially opened. No. 2 Service Flying Training School was the first of 18 RCAF and 10 RAF schools that were purpose built.

1940

22 July

The first intake of BCATP trainees arrived at No. 1 Service Flying Training School, RCAF Station Camp Borden.

Yale aircraft preparing to take off, BCATP Aircrew Course - RCAF Borden.

24 November

The first draft of BCATP graduates arrived in England. The 12 officers and 25 sergeant observers had graduated from No. 1 Air Navigation School, Trenton, Ontario, on 24 October.

Part of the first graduating class of observers on their way to England, 15 November 1940, Ottawa, Union Station.

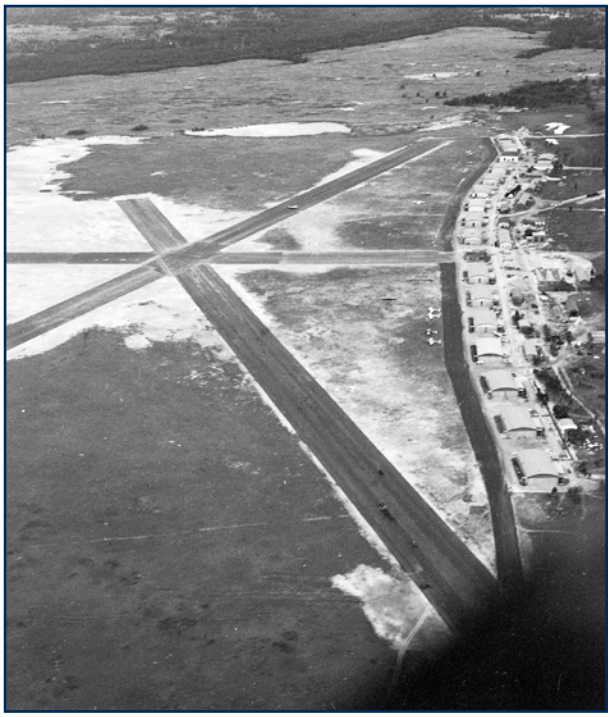
September

Seeking additional pilot trainees, the upper age limit was raised to 31.

1940

30 September

The first BCATP-trained pilots graduated from No. 1 Service Flying Training School, RCAF Station Camp Borden, Ontario. Most of the graduates were posted to other schools as instructors. By the end of 1940, of the 203 new Canadian pilots, 165 of them were employed within the BCATP.



No. 1 Service Flying Training School, Borden, Ontario, June 1940.

January Upper age limit for all aircrew categories except pilots was raised to 33.

Sqn Badges

1 March RCAF Squadrons overseas were renumbered. To avoid confusion with RAF Squadrons, RCAF units were re-numbered in the 400 series. No. 110 became 400 Squadron, No. 1 became 401 Squadron and No. 112 became 402 Squadron.

1941

7 January The Sinclair–Ralston Agreement between the British Secretary of State for Air, Sir Archibald Sinclair, and Canada's Minister of National Defence, James Ralston, was signed. Supplementary to the 17 December 1939 BCATP Agreement, this document quantified the establishment of "Article XV" squadrons, allowing Canada to form 25 RCAF squadrons overseas in the next 18 months. These were in addition to the three currently deployed RCAF squadrons (Nos. 1, 110, 112).

1 March No. 403 (Fighter) Squadron was formed at Baginton, England. The first "Article XV" squadron, 403 was joined by 17 more over the next 10 months.

August 1941 Pilot Officer Phil Carrillo of New York City is shown in his Spitfire at Canadian 403 Fighter Squadron Overseas. Carrillo is a graduate of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan in Canada.

Minister of National Defence, Colonel, the Honorable J.L. Ralston conferring with Air Marshal Harold "Gus" Edwards, Commanding the RCAF Overseas HQ, London, 17 October 1942. Most of the Article IX Squadrons would go to 6 (RCAF) Group, Bomber Command.

2 July

Created in part to meet additional personnel requirements at BCATP airfields, the Canadian Women's Auxiliary Air Force (CWAAF) was formed.

C.P.R. Station Women's Division recruits boarding the train for a Manning Depot in Ontario. Section Officer is Keir recruiting officer, Calgary Recruiting Centre.

First to hold a commission in the Royal Canadian Air Force (Women's Division) was Squadron Officer Kathleen O. Walker, Ottawa, widow of the late Group Captain C.C. Walker. Formerly stationed at Air Force Headquarters, she is now attached to R.C.A.F. Bomber Commander, overseas.

Maning Depot Rockliffe, Women's Division, Kit inspection has its place in barrack block routine. Airwomen receive $15 for the purchase of underwear and other necessaries, are issued with uniforms for walking out, fatigue, and p.t. Special trades such as cooks and hospital assistants, have special duty uniforms. Pictured here, are, left to right: AW Doris McCallum, Windsor, Ont.; AW2 Lenore Snetsniger, Toronto, Ont.

1941

October

The entry age limit for aircrew was reduced to 17½ for all categories. Pilot trainees were then accepted up to 33 years of age and up to 35 for all other trades, except air gunner which was raised to 39.

10 November

Nineteen-year-old Leading Aircraftsman (LAC) Karl Mander Gravell, from Vancouver, British Columbia, was posthumously awarded a George Cross. During a training flight from No. 2 Wireless School, Calgary, Alberta, the DH-60 Moth containing pilot Flying Officer Johnston and LAC Gravell crashed. Despite being seriously injured, Gravell attempted to rescue the pilot from the burning wreckage. Badly burned, he was unsuccessful in his attempt and later succumbed to his injuries. Miss Frances Walsh, a teacher at a local school where the Moth crashed, was awarded a George Medal for her efforts in assisting and caring for LAC Gravell.

Leading Aircraftman Karl Mander Gravell, George Cross.

George Cross

1941

7 December

Canada declared war on Japan.

8 December

The United States declared war on Japan. As of this date, there were approximately 6,100 Americans serving in the RCAF, almost half of them were trainees.

11 December

The United States declared war on Germany.

1942

3 February

CWAAF was renamed the RCAF (Women's Division). Popularly known as the "WDs," they were considered a formal part of the RCAF, and although paid less than their male counterparts, all rules, regulations and terms of service were applicable.

Leading Air Woman (L.A.W.) Brown, I., of Winnipeg, Manitoba, doing some maintenance work on an aircraft, No. 2 Service Flying Training School, Uplands, Ontario.

B & G School, Jarvis, Ontario, Leading Air Woman (LAW) Joyce Phillips, Holden, Alberta. operating spark plug polishing machine.

French-English School, RCAF No. 7 manning Depot, Rockcliffe, Ottawa, Ont. Some of the students at the French-English School learning English. Left to right: Air Woman 2nd Class (AW2) Rita Joncas, Cap a L'Aigle, Quebec.; Section Officer M.E. Carry, Toronto; AW2 Yolande Begin, Quebec City; Assistant Section Officer M.E. Ferguson, Montreal, one of the instructors; AW2 Marie-Paule Bélanger, Montreal; and AW2 Grazielle Dube of Quebec City.

1 March

The Accident Investigation Board was formed. Concerned about the number of serious accidents at BCATP schools, the RCAF established an Accident Investigation Board to analyse accidents and recommend changes to promote flight safety.

An unfortunate meeting between two Cessna Cranes (Nos. 7765 and 8705) on the No. 3 SFTS, Calgary, airfield. There were no casualties.

1942

22 May - 5 June

The Ottawa Air Training Conference was held in Ottawa, Ontario. The end date for the BCATP was extended to 31 March 1945. As well, an additional 9 schools and 10 specialist schools (operational training units, school for instructors, etc.) were established. All 27 RAF schools already in Canada were placed under the administrative control of the RCAF's Combined Training Organization. The extension of the BCATP Agreement was signed on 5 June.

Minister of National Defence for Air, Charles Gavan "Chubby" Powers, seen here talking to his son, was the chief government negotiator.

30 June

The original BCATP agreement came to an end. At this stage, a total of 23,802 aircrew had graduated, of which 80 per cent were Canadian.

1943

1 January

In a letter to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, drafted by Canadian diplomat Lester B. Pearson, American President Franklin D. Roosevelt noted the third anniversary of the BCATP, calling Canada "the Aerodrome of Democracy."

President Roosevelt speaking to a Canadian crowd, Ottawa, 1943.

14 May

Twenty-one-year-old LAC Kenneth Gerald Spooner, from Smiths Falls, Ontario, was posthumously awarded a George Cross. Spooner and three other students attached to No. 4 Air Observer School, London, Ontario, were onboard an Anson aircraft when the pilot lost consciousness. Although untrained, Spooner took control of the aircraft and kept it aloft long enough for the other students to bail out. Soon thereafter, the aircraft crashed into Lake Erie.

Kenneth Gerald Spooner, George Cross.

1944

January

The BCATP reached its peak strength. There were 97 flying schools in operation—including 24 operated by the RAF—and 184 ancillary units. There were an estimated 11,000 aircraft operating from BCATP airfields throughout the country.

mid-January

By mid-January, the RCAF reached its peak wartime strength of 215,200 personnel, including 15,183 members of the Women's Division. Of that number, 104,000 were committed to the BCATP.

16 February

Balfour–Power Agreement. Harold Balfour, the British Undersecretary of State for Air, and Canada's Minister of National Defence for Air, Charles Gaven "Chubby" Powers, signed an agreement implementing a 40 per cent reduction in the BCATP. The reduction was deemed necessary due to a large pool of personnel who were awaiting training and was to be achieved gradually over the next 12 months.

Minister for National Defence for Air, Charles Gavan "Chubby" Powers chatting with recent BCATP graduates in Halifax prior to their departure overseas.

1944

May - June — Recruiting of both air and ground crew for the RCAF was suspended.

October — By agreement with the United Kingdom, the closing down of BCATP schools was accelerated.

30 November — Nos. 2 and 4 Training Commands were disbanded and replaced by No. 2 Air Command, Winnipeg, Manitoba (formally stood up on 1 December).

31 December — The BCATP was reduced to 50 schools plus two additional facilities that had been transferred from the RAF.

1945

15 January — Nos. 1 and 3 Training Commands were disbanded and replaced by No. 1 Air Command, Trenton, Ontario.

31 March — The BCATP was officially terminated. Of the 159,340 trainees who had entered the BCATP, 131,533 graduated as trained aircrew. It had operated 360 schools and support units, on 231 sites and was manned by over 104,000 personnel.

September — Under the direction of H. G. Norman, the financial advisor for the BCATP, and F. C. Fayers, representing the United Kingdom, the total cost of the plan was determined to be $2,231,129,039.26. Canada's share amounted to $1,617,995,108.79—approximately 72 per cent of the total. When all of the "bills were paid," the United Kingdom still owed Canada $425,000,000.

RCAF Trenton Station

1946

7 May

Canada's parliament passed a bill that cancelled the United Kingdom's outstanding BCATP debt. Canada's share of the cost to operate the BCATP rose to approximately 92 per cent.

1949

The BCATP Memorial Gates

30 September

The BCATP Memorial Gates were presented at RCAF Station Trenton, Ontario. The ceremony—attended by representatives from the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand—commemorated the successful organization and operation of the BCATP.

Major Bill March, a maritime air combat systems officer, has spent over 38 years in uniform. He is currently a member of the Air Reserve, serving as the RCAF Historian within the Directorate of RCAF History and Heritage.

Abbreviations

AW	air woman
AW2	air woman, second class
BCATP	British Commonwealth Air Training Plan
B&G	Bombing and Gunnery
C.P.R.	Canadian Pacific Railway
CWAAF	Canadian Women's Auxiliary Air Force
LAC	leading aircraftsman
p.t.	physical training
RAF	Royal Air Force
RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force
SFTS	Service Flying and Training School
sqn	squadron
TC	training commands

Photo: DND


Photo: DND

The Great Canadian Air Battle:

The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan and RCAF Fatalities during the Second World War

By Dr. Jean Martin

Editor's Note: Reprint from the Canadian Military Journal *Vol. 3, No 1, Spring 2002.*
The author's spelling and punctuation conventions have been maintained.

The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) was a major Canadian contribution to the Allied war effort during the Second World War. Between May 1940 and March 1945, more than 167,000 students[1] from Canada, Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand, as well as from Belgium, Free France and Poland, were trained in the 107 schools established across Canada. The BCATP schools produced some 50,000 pilots during the course of the war, which is three times the number of aircraft built in Canadian factories in the same period. Consequently, the BCATP had a significant impact on air operations in Europe, Asia and Africa.

When contemplating this accomplishment and the enormous impact the war had on the Canadian landscape, readers might recall that when the war broke out, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) had scarcely fifty aircraft, most of which were civilian-model planes equipped mainly for surveillance missions. There were few civilian airports at that time, and the rare aircraft seen in Canadian skies were usually equipped with floats in order to land on the country's many lakes and rivers. As well, in practically all regions, farmers made up a significant portion of the population, and horses were still used for most field work. Once the war commenced, aerodromes transformed much of Canada's quiet landscape.

A DANGEROUS AERODROME

While operational units of the RCAF were mainly concentrated in the eastern and western parts of the country for the protection of Canada's coasts, inauguration of the BCATP brought about the opening of a host of aerodromes further inland. Overnight, the roar of Wasp and Merlin engines of Harvard and Hurricane airplanes became a familiar sound throughout the countryside of Alberta, Manitoba and Quebec. Air Force activities were thus more widespread throughout the country, and also much more visible to the population than those of the Canadian Army or Navy. Given the intensity of air training in Canada during the war years, Canada was very appropriately called "the Aerodrome of Democracy."[2]

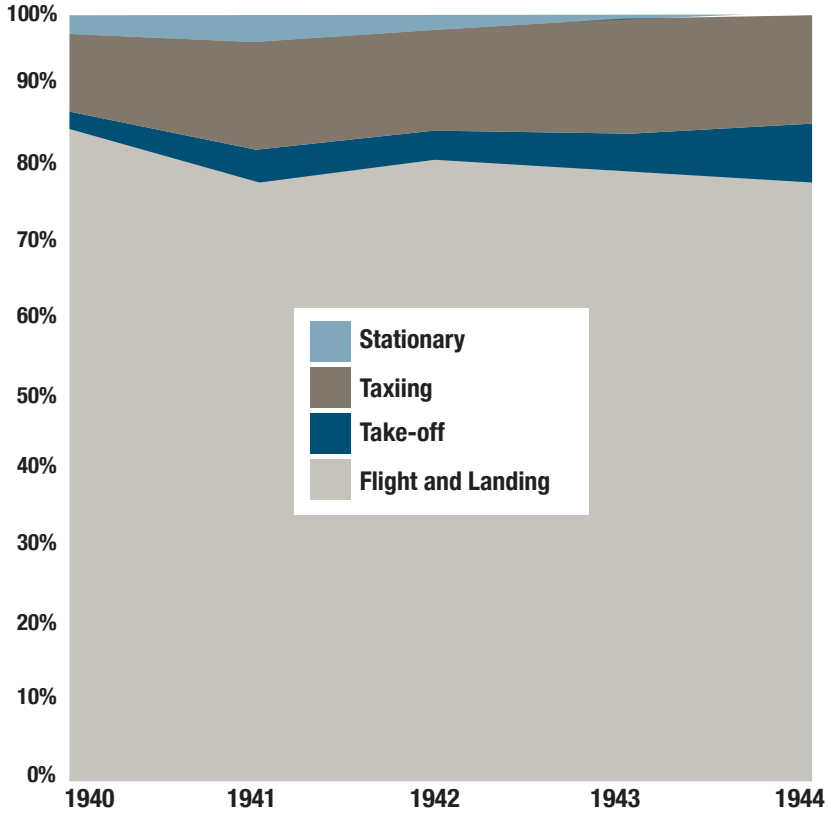


Figure 1. Distribution of BCATP Air Accidents according to the stages of flying, 1940–1944

Some comparative statistics will serve to illustrate the magnitude of BCATP activity. Before the war, Royal Canadian Air Force airplanes logged only about 27,000 flying hours per year. In contrast, those of the BCATP logged four times more hours every week during the summer of 1942.[3] Between October 1942 and September 1943,[4] when BCATP training reached its peak, the hundred schools spread across Canada logged on average 500,000 flying hours every month—the equivalent of seven airplanes flying 24 hours a day at each school. Almost 7,000 aircraft flew an average of 17 hours a week throughout 1943.

Inexperienced students piloted most of these aircraft, so take-offs, landings and flying manoeuvres were not always carried out with great success. During 1942 and 1943, BCATP aircraft averaged one accident for every 900 hours of flight, most of them, fortunately, having no serious consequences. There were over 6,000 accidents at BCATP schools between October 1942 and September 1943. Serious accidents, even if they represent a very small portion of the total, were nevertheless frequent: there were slightly more than 300 fatal accidents during this period. There was, however, a tendency to underestimate these losses, as well as those that occurred in Canada in general during the war. This underestimation comes from a misinterpretation of the data, coupled with a general tendency to consider only casualties that occurred in foreign theatres. The defence of Canadian soil has never really captured the interest of military historians, who usually prefer to contrast the peaceful lives of those who remained in the country with the courage of those who left to face the dangers of combating the enemy abroad.

UNDERESTIMATED LOSSES

Examinations of BCATP losses are usually based on numbers given by F. J. Hatch in his book, *The Aerodrome of Democracy: Canada and the BCATP, 1939–1945*, published by the Department of National Defence in 1983. These figures come from the final report produced by the BCATP,[5] an entirely credible source. This report reveals that 856 students were killed during their training in Canada, of which more than half (469) belonged to the RCAF. These losses of life, however regrettable, constitute only a very small part of the RCAF's roughly 17,000 fatal casualties during the Second World War.

However, these 856 deaths are in fact far fewer than the total number of airmen who lost their lives in Canada during the war. Hatch was not mistaken: there were indeed 856 students killed during the five years of the BCATP, but the total number of lives lost in Canada by the RCAF is 2,367, or 14 percent of all fatalities recorded over the duration of the war. This figure far exceeds the fatal casualties of the Dieppe and Hong Kong disasters, and is even greater than the losses of the Royal Air Force (RAF) and its Allies during the Battle of Britain, when 915 aircraft were lost. How, then, can the difference between the 856 generally acknowledged accident fatalities and the 2,367 deaths mentioned above be explained? These figures come from another compilation produced by the RCAF during the months following the end of the war.

Slightly over a quarter of these fatalities (619) were not the direct result of military activity; they include natural deaths, road accidents and even suicides. This proportion is far higher in Canada than overseas, where this type of death constitutes less than 2 percent of the total. Of the remaining 1,748 deaths in Canada, 22 percent (383) occurred in operational units, and only eight were the result of "enemy action." One could argue that the fatal casualties that occurred in Canada did not involve the same element of violence as those that took place overseas, but it should be noted that the deaths that occurred abroad were not always the result of enemy action. Almost 40 percent of the RCAF's fatal casualties (5,630) did not result from such action, and almost 2,000 occurred in non-operational units. In all, out of the 17,001 pilots that the RCAF lost during the Second World War, enemy action played a direct role in just 54 percent of the cases (9,209).

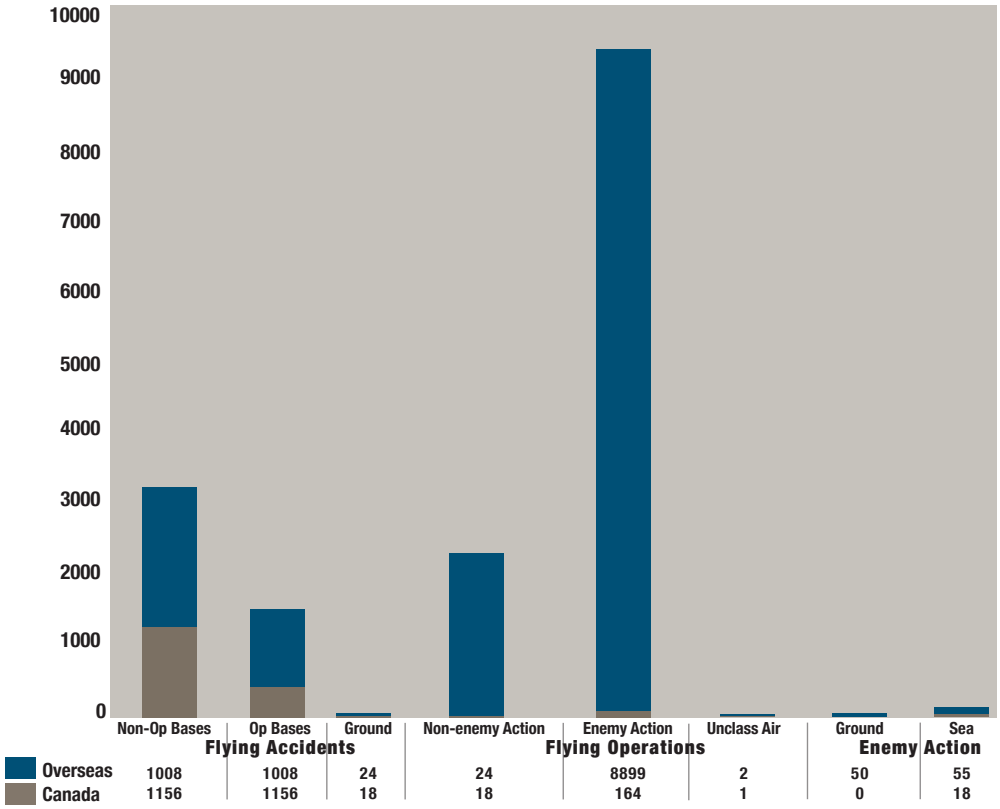


Figure 2. Fatal casualties of the RCAF, 1939–1945

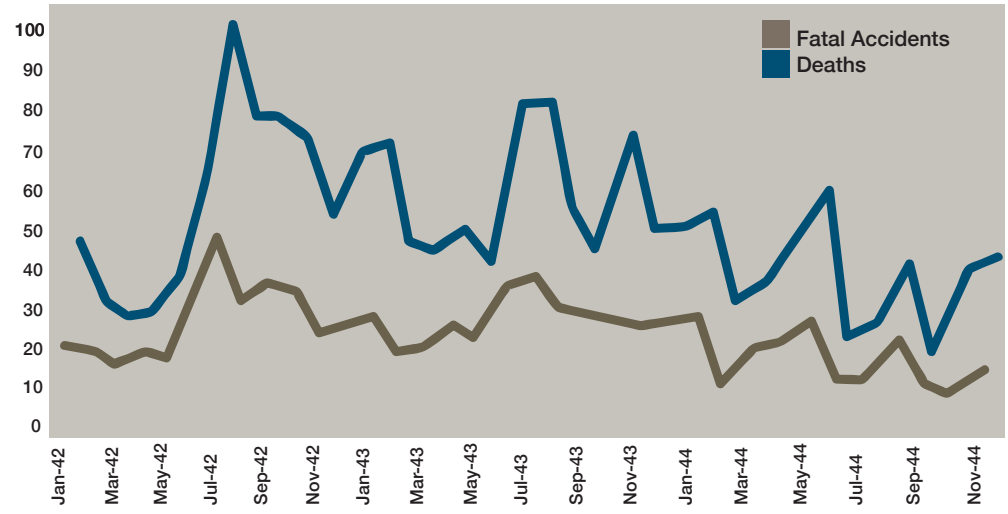


Figure 3. Fatal air accidents of the BCATP from January 1942 to November 1944

Generally, no distinction has been made between the 3,063 airmen killed in flying accidents overseas and the 9,004 others who were killed in action. Therefore, there is no reason to make any distinction between those killed overseas and those who died in Canada. The 2,367 RCAF airmen who died in Canada merit the same honours as the 14,643 who lost their lives overseas. But who were these 2,367 pilots, since it is generally agreed that the BCATP lost only 856 "students" during training? In fact, the source of the confusion, for the BCATP, lies in the use of the term "student."[6]

In addition to its Elementary Flying Training Schools, the BCATP also had Service Flying Training Schools, other specialized schools (for bombing, observation, navigation, etc.), and Operational Training Units, where recently graduated pilots would go to complete their training while participating in domestic defence activities. For example, the pilots of Operational Training Unit No. 1 in Bagotville, Quebec, were involved in the air defence of important aluminum factories in Arvida, in the Saguenay region. These pilots, no longer considered students, could be accident victims. The BCATP's final report even establishes that they were involved in accidents more often than the students: "One point was common, however, to all types of schools, namely, that trained pilots were involved in more than half of the flying accidents which occurred."[7] As well, instructors and other members of the school staffs were the first victims of these accidents.

For that reason, how can the true total of the BCATP's fatal casualties be established? RCAF statistics show that 1,155 deaths resulted from accidents involving non-operational units, which were therefore training units.[8] However, this number only accounts for airmen from the RCAF. BCATP schools also trained pilots from other air forces. Canadian airmen made up only 55 percent of the 856 students killed during their training: another 291 of them belonged to the RAF, 65 to the Royal Australian Air Force, and 31 to the Royal New Zealand Air Force. If these proportions were applied to all of the fatal casualties at non-operational bases in Canada, the total of deaths among BCATP airmen, including both students and graduates, would be 2,108.[9]

This would suggest, however, that pilots from Britain, Australia and New Zealand did all of their operational training in Canada, which was, of course, not the case. It is difficult to know exactly how many Allied airmen to add to the fatal casualties of the RCAF. The number for the entire BCATP programme would have to be somewhere between the 387 that appear in Table 1 (showing the 856 students who died in training) and the 953 resulting from applying the calculations explained above. The monthly compilation of accidents reveals 850 fatal accidents that resulted in 1690 deaths in BCATP schools between January 1942 and June 1945.[10] But since it is already known that students were involved in less than half of these accidents, it can be affirmed that the BCATP had at least 1,713 fatalities[11] during the war, and conceivably even 2,000. If the losses of the operational units are added, one can put forth the claim that some 3,000 Allied and Canadian airmen died in Canada during the Second World War.

Method of calculation	Number of deaths
Deaths before graduation	856
Non-operational units of the RCAF (1,155), including Allied students of the BCATP (387)	1,542
Students killed (856), representing less than 50% of the total	1,713
Monthly data gathered from 01-1942 to 06-1945 (1,690), spread over the entire duration of the program	1,991
Proportion of RCAF students who died before graduation (54.8%), applied to the total of non-operational units of the RCAF	2,108

Table 1. Fatal BCATP casualties, 1939–1945, according to various hypotheses

THE MOST COSTLY AIR BATTLE IN CANADIAN HISTORY

It is easy to forget certain things about the war. When we consider Canada's participation in the Second World War, we understandably think about the ordeals of Hong Kong and Dieppe, the difficult battles in Italy, the spectacular landing on 6 June 1944, and the long campaign to reclaim Europe that followed. The contributions of Canadian pilots to the Battle of Britain, and of the Royal Canadian Navy to the victory in the Atlantic, are also remembered. However, all too often, we forget that the war was also taking place on Canadian soil.

In fact, during the early years of the conflict, it was mostly in Canada that the war found its victims: over 1,000 airmen had already lost their lives on Canadian bases before the raid on Dieppe was launched in August 1942. From the beginning of 1942 to the end of 1944, 831 fatal air accidents took place in Canada—an average of 23 per month, or five every week. Each week, at least a dozen airmen died in Canada, an enormous number. Imagine how Canadians of today would react if a Canadian Forces operation recorded such a high proportion of fatal casualties! Perhaps we also need to be reminded that during the Second World War Canada had only one third of its current population.

But we cannot compare a wartime situation with a period of relative peace. This is precisely the whole point of the preceding analysis: a reminder that between 1939 and 1945 the war was also taking place in Canada. The country may never have suffered any direct attack, and indeed no fighting took place on our soil,[12] but the thousands of airplanes flying in our skies, and the hundreds of aircraft that crashed in fields, lakes and even occasionally in cities, certainly does not fit the peaceable image that we too often imagine of Canada at that time. During the first years of the war, Canada was, figuratively speaking, the most dangerous place a pilot could be.

Dr. Jean Martin is with the Directorate of History and Heritage at National Defence Headquarters.

Double Anson crash. Photo: DND

ABBREVIATIONS

BCATP	British Commonwealth Air Training Plan
DHH	Directorate of History and Heritage
RAF	Royal Air Force
RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force

NOTES

1. The oft-mentioned number of 131,553 graduates does not, of course, include the 26,061 students who never finished their courses. Nor does it take into account the 5,296 graduates of the RCAF and the Fleet Air Arm who were transferred to the BCATP before 1 July 1942, or the 1,726 students who began their training too late to receive their wings before the end of March 1945. Another group of 2,816 pilots who had received their training elsewhere also served in operational training units in Canada. Students from the other Allied forces (France, Poland, etc.), whose exact numbers are unknown, are not included in these statistics.

2. The expression is from Lester B. Pearson. While he was posted to the Canadian embassy in Washington, he slipped it into a message that he had written for the President of the United States to sign. The expression was later used by F. J. Hatch in the title of his book on the history of the BCATP.

3. C. G. Grey and Leonard Bridgeman, *Jane's All the World Aircraft*, 1939, p. 15b.

4. The monthly compilation of air accidents in Canada only distinguishes between losses attributable to the BCATP and those sustained in other units based in Canada as of October 1942.

5. BCATP Final Report available at Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH), 73/1558, Vol. 10.

6. The English version of the report uses the term "trainee."

7. BCATP Final Report, p. 40.

8. One must also take into account the 237 airmen who lost their lives in the course of Ferry Command operations. Unfortunately, it is not known whether RCAF statistics considered those losses operational or not.

9. If the 469 Canadian students represent 54.8 percent of the 856 who died before graduation, one could conclude that 2,108 fatal casualties occurred in training units in Canada, since 1,155 Canadians died in them (1,155 = 54 percent of 2,108).

10. *B.C.A.T.P. Monthly Summaries from 1942 to Present*, DHH, 80/482. The Accidents Investigation Branch was only set up in March 1942, which explains the absence of precise statistics before that time. The monthly average is 48.3 deaths, and the total would be 1,991 deaths for the entire programme, were we to apply at least the general trend of the period

for which data is available to the periods for which there is no data. The lower number of schools and students would have to be kept in mind, however; but so would the higher ratio of accidents per flying hour during the first months of the programme.

11. Most of the accidents typically involved "trained pilots, including flying instructors and staff pilots" (*B.C.A.T.P. Monthly Summaries* …, October 1944, p. 1). The already determined number of 856 students can therefore be doubled, and at least one more victim could be added to the total, resulting in a minimum of 1,713 deaths.

12. With the notable exception of the Battle of the St. Lawrence, during which German submarines sank many ships in Canadian waters between 1942 and 1944. Perhaps it will also be necessary to refer to a "Battle of Canada" when the heavy casualties sustained in the country by the RCAF and other air forces during the Second World War are considered.

THE CRUCIBLE FOR CHANGE:

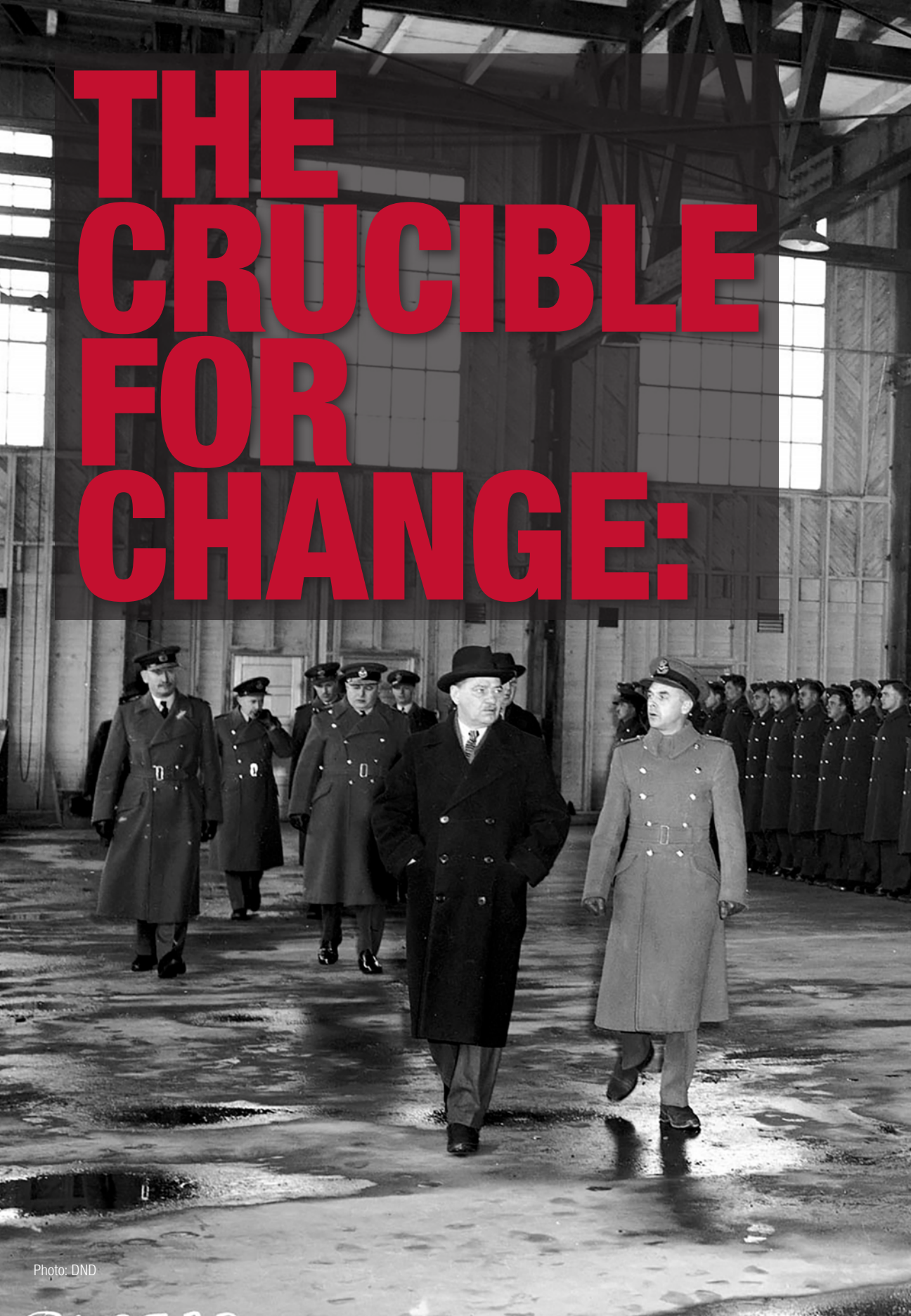
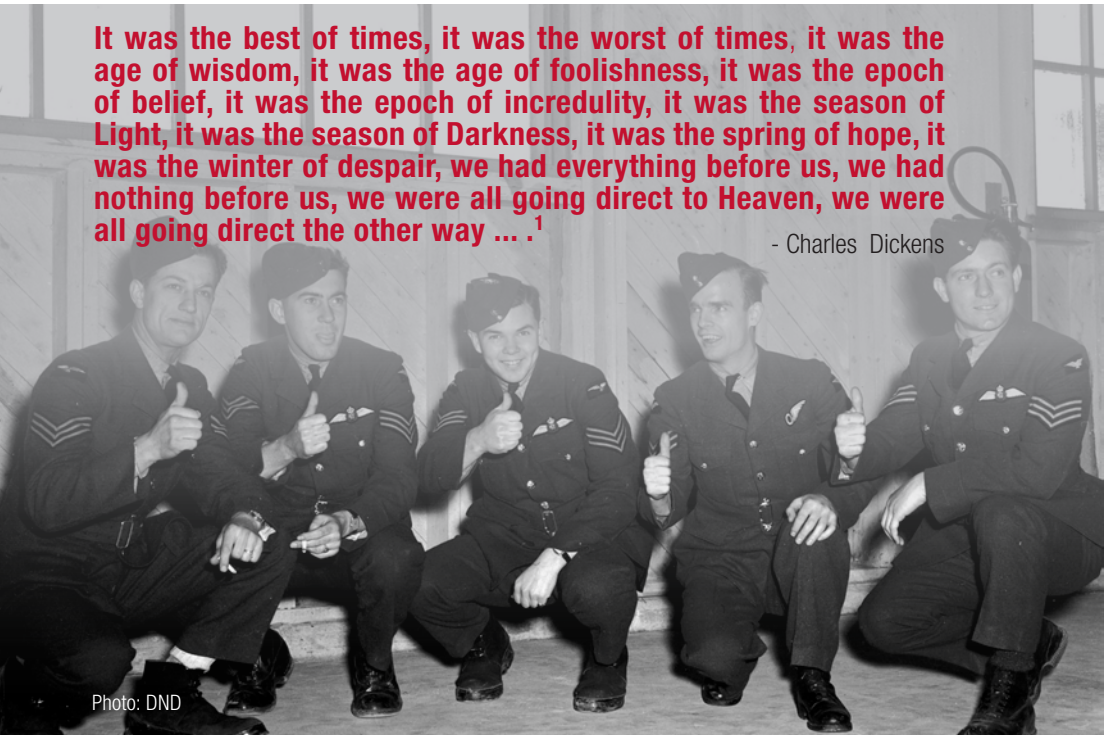


Photo: DND

DEFENCE SPENDING IN DEBERT, NOVA SCOTIA, DURING WORLD WAR II

By Major Gerry D. Madigan, CD, MA (Retired)



Left to right; K.L. Magee of Moncton, NB.; J.H. Long, of St. John, NB.; W.D. Gelbert of Fredericton, NB.; H.J. Ryan of Chatham, NB.; L.V.S. Wiggins of Waterborough, NB.

Editor's note: Reprint from the Royal Canadian Air Force Journal *Vol. 2, No. 1, Winter 2013.*

INTRODUCTION: THE WORST OF TIMES

People easily quote Charles Dickens "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times … ."[2] But Dickens' opening paragraph to the epic *A Tale of Two* Cities illuminates much more; it also illustrates the breadth and depth of human emotion, pain, suffering, trials and triumph inherent in history. History is neither black nor white. It is changeable and dynamic, and it is dramatic.[3] The course of human conflict is much the way that Dickens describes.

History, though, is often seen as peeks through the rear-view mirror. Its points are viewed along a line in a continuum. But in so doing, we often miss the bigger picture. World War II is such an example. It shaped the Canadian experience. But we often tend to concentrate on the "specific" period of the war without looking back upon it. There is a context of what came before and what followed that is often overlooked. The before and after provide some insight on who and what we are today.

World War II changed the way Canada looked at itself as well as its values. The war shaped Canada's future. The story of "opening the floodgates" on public spending during World War II is the story of policy and social change within Canada. The Great Depression was but a very recent memory. Canada's war investments were used to pave not only the road to victory but also the way ahead for its post-war future. Fiscal policy would become an instrument of economic and social policy and, more importantly, change.

Some consider the "Dirty 30s" or the Great Depression as the most traumatic and darkest period in Canadian history. It was a low point that deeply shaped the Canadian psyche to the core. There was a loss of hope. The mood was one of desperation and despair. Its effects were felt very deeply by many Canadian families. Many were impoverished, and without a job, they lacked the basic necessities of life, food and shelter. The statistics of the day paint a horrible picture. At the height of the Depression, more than half the wage earners in Canada were on some form of relief. One in five Canadians was on the dole.

Interestingly, the poverty line was marked at $1,000 per year for a family of four. What points to the desperation and plight of many Canadian families, though, was the fact that for many the average annual income was less than $500.

What did the government do? It had decided that balancing the budget was more important than feeding its needy and hungry. It took a laissez-faire approach to the management of the economy and suffering. Little succour was provided in the way of government relief. People and families were left to their own devices. These were truly desperate days, the blackest period in Canadian history, with a "government" unmotivated to act to spare the suffering.[4] That desperation was the crucible for change.

TIME FOR CHANGE

The change for many was felt 10 September 1939, the day Canada declared war on Nazi Germany. The change was both noticeable and palpable. For many Canadians the government's declaration effectively ended the Great Depression. It also ended the government's fiscal parsimony. The purse strings suddenly opened!

Although war would bring great privations, trials and tragedy, it would also bring prosperity and jobs. There would be a vast industrial expansion. The addition of defence spending boosted the demand for labour for war production and full employment. In some ways, the war restored hope and prosperity to a nation by stimulating the moribund Canadian economy. It not only jumped-started the Canadian economy but also was the catalyst for a new view on fiscal management and social development for the post-war period.

A country that had been unable to find work or succour for a fifth of its people in the Dirty 30s and Great Depression would suddenly, and miraculously, be able to find work for all, including women, young boys and old men.[5] It was an economic miracle that did not go unnoticed.[6]

Government spending became widely and broadly felt across all reaches of Canada, especially in Nova Scotia. This paper will illustrate the impact of government spending on the local economy, expectations and lives, with particular emphasis on Debert, Nova Scotia. World War II was not just fought overseas; it was also fought on the home front.

THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH AIR TRAINING PLAN

At the onset of the war, Prime Minister Mackenzie King had some expectations for managing Canada's war effort. He wished to limit the employment of Canadian armed forces.[7] King and many Canadians did not relish the thought of war or "active" service. The open sores of World War I were still all too recent. Thus, King and the public desired a very limited Canadian role at the beginning. So the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) was designed as the sop

to that end. Canada's major contribution was designed to be the "aerodrome of democracy" for the training of Allied aircrews on Canadian soil.[8] To King's dismay, matters did not unfold as intended.

King signed the BCATP on 17 December 1939, which was coincidentally his birthday, three and a half months after the declaration of Canadian hostilities.[9] But King's desire for limited participation would be for naught. All of Canada's armed forces, industry and public opinion would be eventually engaged and employed toward winning the war.

ON THE FAST TRACK TO BUILDING AN AIRFIELD AND AN ARMY CAMP

The BCATP was just the tip of the iceberg. It was an ambitious undertaking. Yet, defence spending was increased, thus creating a complex web of military and defence establishments, manufacturing, construction and labour, all in support of Canada's military. Thus the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), Army and Royal Canadian Navy would come to have a huge bearing on defence and local spending. The government would try to find economies of scale. Debert is an example. It was chosen as a site that was strategically located near Halifax, where both the Air Force and Army would be collocated.

As ambitious as King's BCATP was, the facilities simply did not exist in 1939. They had to be created and built largely from the ground up. Mackenzie King's declaration of 17 December, in effect, not only increased the defence establishment and contribution to the war effort but also set Canada's economy firmly on a war footing. The government of the day not only mobilized defence establishments; it also mobilized the country's economic and labour flows to achieve those ends under extremely tight deadlines.

Defence construction at Debert commenced August 1940. There was virtually nothing there but woods and farmlands. The Army and Air Force facilities were literally carved out of the woods. Engineers hired local woodsmen to clear the forests, and then, these were followed by the builders who turned 28 million board feet (66,073 cubic metres) of lumber, poured concrete and paved roads and runways that transformed the forests into the training facilities, accommodations and other infrastructure, which were crucial to the war effort.[10]

The construction effort required the rapid mobilization of Canadian industrial capacity and labour to meet a looming start date of 29 April 1940 for the BCATP alone.[11] Nine hundred and eighty nine million dollars was set aside to achieve the aim of the plan that was designed to train 29,000 aircrew annually. The BCATP "sausage machine" was geared to produce 850 pilots, 510 air observers / navigators and 870 wireless operators / air gunners monthly.[12] Debert was to play an important role in execution of that plan.

The BCATP aerodrome building program, alone, was most ambitious. It required detailed organization, thought and planning. But its ends were ultimately achieved through basic standardization. All the training establishments would be built on the same pattern, thus achieving efficiencies that helped save time and effort.[13]

Contractors were able to rapidly build the facilities because of the forethought of standardization. The aerodromes were often built with all buildings (including hangars, barracks and workshops) and hard-surfaced runways completed within the incredibly short period of eight weeks from the shovel in the ground to planes on the tarmac.[14] The economic impacts were felt very quickly and locally. Many rural communities were transformed from sleepy hollows to bustling centres.

DEBERT AND THE IMPACTS OF THE AIR FORCE: ARMY PRESENCE

Donald Davidson, a long-time resident, recalls Debert in the 1930s as a small rural town located in central Nova Scotia. This small town's population numbered no more than 500–600 people at any one time. The local residents survived on mixed farming and lumbering, with a permanent lumber mill and factory located near the local train station. The town, by the standards of the day, was large. It supported three stores, a post office, a barber shop, a two-room school, a community hall and a blacksmith shop at the outset of the war.[15] All that changed with the local defence construction.

Some 5,400 men were soon employed in the construction of an Army camp and airfield nearby. They had to be provisioned, housed and fed along with elements of the Army which also occupied the same site while under construction. It was to the credit of this workforce that the necessary accommodations, sewage, hospital facilities, special storage areas for gasoline and 30 miles (48 kilometres) of paved roadway were constructed in quick time.[16]

In the meantime, the village of Debert changed too. It grew immensely. The town now supported 10 restaurants, two drug stores with lunch counters, two meat markets, an additional grocery store, a hotel with telephones and running water, two barber shops, a telephone office, a bank, three taxi services, a laundry service, a bus line service to Truro (20 kilometres southeast) and a charter service to meet a growing demand.[17]

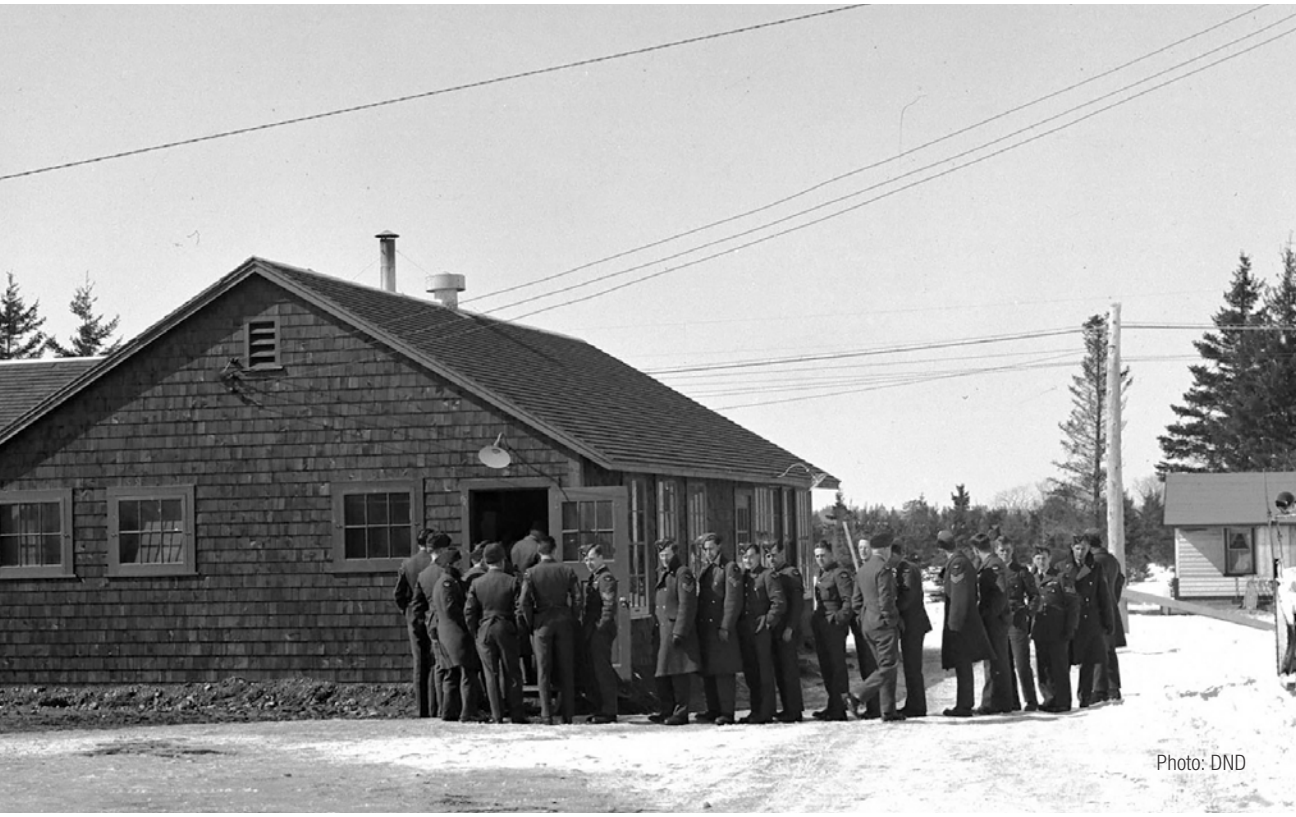


Photo: DND

Line-up at post office in Debert, NS.

This gives one a sense of the pace of construction and prosperity, but in no way does it adequately describe the magnitude or scope of the Air Force and Army projects. The Army project was massive and was the first to be "completed." Approximately 13,150 personnel were accommodated by Christmas 1940. In a nutshell, some 512 buildings (including a fully equipped 500-bed hospital; two fire halls; four dental clinics; a supply depot; a 100-cell detention barracks; quarters for other ranks, non-commissioned officers, medical staff, nurses and officers; and various messes) were all completed in that time, along with adequate water, sewage, septic and electrical systems. By the end of 1940, only 24 buildings remained under construction for the Army.[18]

The work on the airfield and facilities was deferred; it was completed in 1941. It continued in a small way over the course of the winter of 1940–41 with the further clearing of woodlands and fields in preparation for the next construction season. The Debert aerodrome required its own buildings, hangars, barracks, workshops and associated hard-surfaced runways. Those projects commenced with better weather. The work progressed well, and the aerodrome was ready to receive its first unit over the summer of 1941.[19]

DIFFICULTIES

There were bound to be difficulties and introspection, given the hurried state of the construction. Many were concerned with the lack of oversight as well as checks and balances. It did not help matters that, despite the apparent completion of many projects, much was left undone. The progress of the construction became subject to intense parliamentary scrutiny. None other than John George Diefenbaker, future Prime Minister of Canada, came to Debert to investigate.

The aerodrome was designated to and occupied by the Royal Air Force's (RAF's) Operational Training Unit 31 (O.T.U. 31), one of four units transferred from Great Britain. The unit and its equipment were moved across the North Atlantic in three echelons starting in May 1941.[20] Training at Debert, though, was necessarily delayed until August 1941, once again because of the unfinished state of the airfield.[21] It became a lightning rod for public scrutiny and attention.

Diefenbaker said of Debert, "if ever there was a camp chosen anywhere in Canada which is little short of disgraceful from the point of view of the men required to live in that Camp, it is Debert." In the spring of 1942, Diefenbaker stated that the camp was "inundated." He found difficulty with its selection, given all the available sites in Nova Scotia. Diefenbaker found it incredulous that this site was chosen, given that $239,000 had to be spent immediately on drainage.[22]

Diefenbaker's concern was not unwarranted. His observations were supported by the opinions of many trainees at the time. The facilities were indeed still under construction and the living conditions were Spartan.[23] Still Colonel Ralston, then Minister of National Defence, tried to dust off Diefenbaker's remarks as simply exaggerated.[24] Ralston could defend the costs, but he was hard pressed to defend the state of affairs at Debert.

In all fairness to Ralston, the facilities were started from scratch. Ralston defended Debert as a choice because of its accessibility to railroads, its central location and its proximity to the RAF airfield.[25]

Yet Diefenbaker's criticisms put the government of the day on the defensive. This scrutiny ultimately led to a public accounting of the results to 1943. Costs were at the forefront, and the public's need to know had to be satisfied.

ECONOMIC SPIN-OFFS

It is worthwhile to investigate the known costs, given the level of public scrutiny. For good or ill, money was being spent and many prospered. O.T.U. 31 and Camp Debert came into being. An additional 1,082 permanent and training staff were accommodated on this aerodrome; this was incremental to the Army's staff of 13,500 men already situated at nearby Camp Debert.[26]

The addition of approximately 15,000 military personnel in a small town of 600 produced many economic opportunities and financial windfalls. Soldiers and airmen get paid and do like to spend money. But there was more to it than that; there was local government spending on capital as well as operations and maintenance costs that also had collateral impacts.

There is a paucity of data on the individual costs for the BCATP and Army construction. However, F. J. Hatch provides insight for the Air Force costs in *Aerodrome of Democracy*, outlining details of the BCATP's total costs. From there, we can extrapolate some local impacts.

METHODOLOGY

The problem of estimating the individual airfield costs becomes a simple one. The essence of the plan was standardization, and as one airfield was designed to be more or less the same as another, it is logical, then, that they shared similar costs.

Still, we must recognize that each airfield did have unique circumstances. We can only arrive at a rough estimate of the individual costs, but surely, this is an indicator of the magnitude of the local economic boom.

To arrive at those rough costs, the first step is to segregate Hatch's data between flying schools and ground support establishments. There were 67 airfields built during the BCATP programme. But the BCATP was more than airfields; training was required for both flying and ground establishments. The BCATP consisted of 56 flying[27] and 13 ground support[28] establishments that directly supported flying training. From this first step, we can easily identify the standard airfield from the non-standard elements and estimate their costs. Then we apply the percentage of the standard airfield pool against the gross total to determine its portion of the total costs.

RESULTS FOR DEBERT AIRFIELD

Debert was one of 56 air training establishments. Thus, we can identify the percentage of Debert as part of the standard air training total (1.79 per cent) and apply that result against the share of the total costs to derive its component costs of the BCATP (see Table 1). It is a rough estimate, but it does provide an indication of what was spent locally. Thus, it is an indirect measure of the impact to the local economy.

CATEGORY	# OF ESTABLISHMENTS	% OF	COST (1941$)
All BCATP units	69	100.0	2,231,129,039.26[29]
Flying establishments	56	81.2 (BCATP units)	1,810,771,394.18
Ground support establishments	13	18.8 (BCATP units)	420,357,645.08
Debert	1 of 56	1.79 (flying establishments)	39,841,589.99
Debert in 2012 $ (per cent change 1,273.03)[30]			547,038,460.31

Table 1. Derivative costs of Debert airfield, 1939–45

Debert's representative share of the BCATP costs was approximately $39.8 million. It was a huge investment for its time. It may sound like a bargain today, but in terms of 2012 dollars, the expenditure amounts to $547 million (Table 1).

We can estimate the component and period costs associated with Debert. It must be noted that not all costs are associated with local spending. Capital costs and contributions are such examples. Furthermore, spending was not homogeneous. There were two critical periods of investment in Debert for the Air Force.

First, Canada invested $31.3 million from 1940 to 1943 for O.T.U. 31 alone (see Table 2). Notably, this is the period that had the highest intensity of investment in capital. Secondly, the remaining $8.5 million was spent between 1944 and 1945, when the airfield reverted back to RCAF control that had a lesser capital component but a greater operations and maintenance component.

MAJOR ELEMENTS	SPECIAL ELEMENTS	1941$
All flying costs		6,757,400[31]
O.T.U. 31 capital costs – aircraft		5,925,960[32]
Replacement value aircraft		2,021,560[33]
BCATP Debert share of costs (estimate)	Equipment contribution	2,897,514[34]
Materiel contribution		500,009[34]
	Lend lease	5,062,506[34]
	Army contributed capital investment	1,400,000[35]
Maintenance services and associated personnel costs	Maintenance	438,000[36]
	Personnel	704,155[36]
	Estimated O&M costs	3,714,494[37]
Other personnel costs (military salaries)		1,959,962[38]
Canadian $ investment total		31,381,560

Table 2. Invested and capital costs estimates to 1943 for O.T.U. 31

The potential local spending figure can be estimated by deducting the pertinent capital contribution and lend-lease cost categories from the grand total. Great Britain contributed all of the flying equipment that was used. Capital costs of aircraft likely had a minimal local impact, if any. Still, the aircraft had to be fuelled, that fuel transported, the airfield provisioned, heated, and so on.

But what likely matters to local spending were the direct costs associated with military/civilian salaries as well as operations and maintenance (O&M). Approximately $8.4 million in these costs was spent between 1940 and 1945 (Table 3).

PERIOD	CATEGORY	AMOUNT ($)
O.T.U. 31 1940–43 (from Table 2)	Maintenance	438,000
	Personnel	704,155
	Estimated O&M costs	3,714,494
	Military salaries	1,959,962
	Total O.T.U. 31	6,816,611.00
RCAF No. 7 Squadron 1944–45	Estimated O&M costs	1,643,418.99[39]
	Total (1940–45)	8,460,029.99
	Average spent annually	1,692,006.00[39]

Table 3. Estimate of annual O&M spending, Debert airfield, 1940–45

Recognizing that there were likely peaks and valleys to the spending pattern, the data suggests that the government's annual local spending on the Debert airfield was approximately $1.7 million.

O.T.U. 31 spent $6.8 million locally over its three-year lifespan in the Debert area. This spending pattern continued with RCAF No. 7 Squadron that subsequently replaced O.T.U. 31. Both entities spent an average of $1.7 million per year in personnel, operations and maintenance locally. The Army's presence also presented a sizeable opportunity that bears investigating.[40]

RESULTS FOR THE ARMY

The gross Army spending was easier to identify. The Army was made to account for all its wartime investments to 1943 because of Diefenbaker's scrutiny and censure. Diefenbaker's introspection prompted the government to report the spending in order to deflect some of these criticisms. Colonel Ralston, Minister of National Defence, reported that $1.8 billion was spent in defence of Canada's war effort to 1943. The specific details are found in Table 4.

CATEGORY	$	% TOTAL
Total War Related Expenditures (All Canada 1939–43)	1,861,578,353.37	
Army spending by military district	1,468,149,469.37	78.87
Navy shipbuilding by province	138,377,000	7.43
Navy building construction	36,668,000	1.97
Transport Canada departmental expenses	10,052,197	0.54
Transport Canada in support of air operations	81,446,825	4.38
Transport Canada in support of navy operations	653,636	0.04
Canadian National Railroad capital expenditures 1939–42	116,212,431	6.24
Works Department to 31 March 1942	10,018,795	0.54

Table 4. Summation of Army and other government spending, 1939–43[41]

Ralston was responsible for overseeing $1.8 billion spending on capital investments. This oversight crossed many departmental boundaries including the Air Force. The Army represented the lion's share of spending amounting to $1.4 billion (79 per cent) of the total of $1.8 billion then allocated to 1943.

This gross spending was broken down further by province and military district. The government of the day allocated $70.9 million to No. 6 Military District, Nova Scotia. This represented 3.8 per cent of the government's total spending to 1943 (Table 5).

CATEGORY	TOTAL	OTTAWA	ON	QC	NS	BC	OTHER
Total war-related expenditures (all Canada 1939–1945)	1,861,578,353.37						
Army spending by military district	1,468,149,469.37	1,051,506,087.00	156,447,745.00	41,129,214.37	70,939,213.00	53,473,248.00	94,653,962.00
Navy shipbuilding by province	138,377,000.00	0.00	42,325,000.00	38,085,000.00	29,997,000.00	25,875,000.00	2,095,000.00
Navy building construction	36,668,000.00	0.00	1,480,000.00	1,154,000.00	29,997,000.00	3,693,000.00	344,000.00
Transport Canada departmental expenses	10,052,197.00	0.00	4,356,817.00	1,921,351.00	58,046.00	863,945.00	5,852,038.00
Transport Canada in support of air operations	81,446,825.00	1,193,267.00	14,280,924.00	5,828,552.00	4,431,876.00	17,923,033.00	37,789,173.00
Transport Canada in support of Navy operations	653,636.00	0.00	180,326.00	107,273.00	184,328.00	181,309.00	400.00
Canadian National Railroad capital expenditures 1939–1942	116,212,431.00	0.00	27,496,823.00	45,610,790.00	13,750,802.00	5,086,432.00	24,267,584.00
Works Department to 31 March 1942	10,018,795.00	6,831,988.00	706,345.00	468,408.00	462,642.00	1,254,905.00	114,507.00
Provincial subtotals (1939–1943)		1,059,531,342.00	247,273,980.00	134,304,588.37	150,000,907.00	108,350,872.00	162,116,664.00
Provincial % share spending (all)		56.9	13.3	7.2	8.1	5.8	8.7
Provincial subtotals (1939–43, less Ottawa and overseas)	802,047,011.37		247,273,980.00	134,304,588.37	150,000,907.00	108,350,872.00	162,116,664.00
Provincial % share spent in Canada (less Ottawa & overseas)	43.1		30.8	16.7	18.7	13.5	20.2

Table 5. Summation of defence-related expenditure by province, 1939–43[42]

Regrettably, these figures could not be broken down into their component costs as was done with the Air Force at Debert. The government only reported the various departmental capital investment costs for the public's consumption. However, given the importance of Halifax (representing all HQ and armouries in Nova Scotia) and the fact that there were two major training units in Nova Scotia (at Debert and Aldershot), we can roughly estimate what the Army invested. At least one-third of the government's reported investment on Military District No. 6 ($70.9 million) must have been directed to the Army Camp Debert from 1939–43. That low estimate is approximately $23.6 million, but it was likely more.[43]

The amount that the Army spent from 1944 to 1945 in Nova Scotia was unknown. But based on the Air Force's spending pattern, the Army spent at least an additional $15.1 million on O&M given that the major capital investments had already been made. Thus, an estimated $38.7 million was spent on Camp Debert from 1940 to 1945.

This truly must have had a regional impact. Ralston's report provides some positive proof to that effect.[44] Army spending was spread out across the country, but the highest provincial spending gives an indication of where that spending was considered most important by the Canadian government.

Based on the percentage of directed government spending, Table 5 gives a clear indication of the provinces that were key to Canada's defence. Canada invested its money where the critical industries, strategic areas and major access/departure points were; therefore, these were likely essential and primary to its war effort.

Nova Scotia saw an investment of $150 million in Army spending, representing 8.1 per cent of total Army spending to 1943 or 18.7 per cent of funds actually spent in Canada (Table 5). Ontario enjoyed the lion's share, but significantly, Nova Scotia rated second. This is not surprising, given its importance as an open-water seaport and the importance of the convoy system as Britain's lifeline at the time. Added to that was the fact that both air and naval forces were employed in defending the strategic approaches that were essential to that lifeline for Britain.

TURN OVER OF FACILITIES TO RCAF

By 1943 though, matters were coming to a head. The tide was starting to change, imperceptibly at first. But the Air Force was among the first to feel the change. There was a virtual glut of surplus personnel in the BCATP training system.

One of the first units to be affected was O.T.U. 31 at Debert. Canada agreed that RAF schools would be the first to be closed as part of a rationalization plan. But British units considered essential were to be Canadianized and given RCAF designations. In the meantime, they would continue to function as part of the BCATP. Thus, Debert was given a temporary reprieve.

No. 31 Operational Training Unit at Debert and No. 36 at Greenwood, NS, were redesignated as No. 7 and No. 8 respectively and staffed with RCAF personnel.[45] A significant air presence would continue to exist at Debert along with the socio-economic benefits of that operation.

Still, a firm decision was made in 1943 to commence winding down the BCATP with the final termination in March 1945.[46] The financial taps for many communities were starting to be turned off and closed. But concurrent with this activity, Canada also commenced studying its post-war future. Dark days still lay ahead. It was not that victory was either assured or certain by 1943. There were still many trials to be surmounted. But, there was a stirring within the inner circles of government to start looking forward.

By late 1944, victory was seen as just a matter of time. May 1945 would bring the joy of Victory in Europe. Then the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, that produced Japan's unconditional surrender on 2 September 1945, finally ended the war. That surrender rendered Debert's purpose—and that of many other bases, stations and establishments in Canada—moot.[47]

WINDING DOWN: DECONSTRUCTION

There was no longer a reason for defence facilities once peace had arrived. Demobilization proceeded as quickly as possible. But "peace" was also a double-edged sword. Without the reason for being, the wartime boom soon dried up. Where there once was a frenzied pace, there was now silence and slow decay.

This was a reality facing Debert and many small Canadian communities in the fall of 1945. They prospered during the boom but were now being left to languish during the bust. And the bust was quick. For example, what was once a jewel in the crown of the Army's training system in Debert was now coming under the hammer. It was no longer wanted.

The *Calgary Herald* reported that 400 men were involved in the deconstruction and salvage of the Camp Debert buildings. The camp was abandoned. Windows were left open on many of the buildings and gaping holes were noticed in others. It was a ghost town whose only sign of recent activity was the initials left carved on the walls by many of the soldiers of the 168 units who trained at Debert. For many, this would be their final reminiscence of the time spent here in Canada.[48]

At the time of the *Calgary Herald*'s report, 68 buildings had come under the hammer with 55 totally demolished. In the process, 1.25 million feet [381,000 metres] of lumber, 12 tons [10,886 kilograms] of nails, 1,000 windows, 39 bath tubs, 200 basins, 139 radiators and 24,000 feet [7,315 metres] of piping and plumbing fixtures as well as assorted electrical supplies and other items had been salvaged.

These materials would get a new life under the *Veteran's Land Act* or emergency shelter programs in the erecting of new homes. The project was started in the fall of 1946 and was scheduled to be completed in April the following year with 75 per cent of the materials expected to be salvaged.[49]

On the Air Force side, it was much similar. Ralph Harris' reminiscence is poignant:[50]

> Debert, with all its natural advantages of clear approaches, cheap land for expansion, proximity to the army camp, location beside the Trans-Continental Railway and soon-to-be Trans-Canada Highway, not to mention its favourable weather record, was closed in a very few days.
>
> On October 6, 1945, I went to the release centre at Moncton, N.B., returning to Truro October 7. On October 8, 1945, I went out to Debert to see what was going on and found that most of the windows had been boarded up, about 50 personnel of all ranks dining in the Airmen's Mess, and the Control Tower gutted—radios and speakers had been ripped out of the console, furniture gone (contents of drawers simply dumped on the floor), even the motor gone out of the furnace.[51]

Debert no longer served a purpose, and there were too few people to safeguard the assets. But the government learned well from the BCATP experience. It realized spending brought prosperity. Government had a role to play in conjunction with the private sector. Of great concern from the experience of the Great Depression was the public's censure of the laissez-faire approach that was taken.[52]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

There was a certain hope on the government's part that the ultimate goal of the sacrifice and of its invested treasure would make Canadians the happiest people on earth. As early as 1943, the government looked to civil aviation as key to Canadian prosperity. Investments made in the BCATP and Debert were to be the basis of that expansion, and prosperity happened for some but not for others.[53]

Still, confidence remained high in the post-war period. There was a prosperous economic outlook even with the large industrial draw-downs in war production and the rapid demobilization of Canada's armed forces. Exports were far above the level required for full employment and were forecasted to remain so in 1946. But the government thought a buffer was needed to ease the future transition to a peace-time economy. Many measures were to be taken to ease any transition or social dislocation, such as the institution of unemployment insurance plans and social welfare.[54]

But Canadians, too, were concerned with the transition to peace. The war left many asking some deep social questions on the use of taxpayers' money. Many could not understand how the Government of Canada was able to find a billion dollar gift for Britain during the course of the war. Where did that capital come from? Why was the government unable or unwilling to ease the public's suffering during the Dirty Thirties / Great Depression with a similar investment?[55]

Canada's gross national expenditure (GNE) in 1943 was approximately $11 billion. This loan, therefore, represented 9 per cent of GNE or, from another perspective, represented 24 per cent of $4.1 billion of government spending that year.[56] That put pressure on the government. The seeds for change in public policy had been sown during the war, as the public had no desire to return to darker days.

Looking ahead in 1946, the domestic market was strong and demand for goods and services would continue to increase as they became available.[57] There was a pent-up demand after all the years of scarcity, saving and privation during the war years. Looking on the horizon, the world had to be rebuilt. Canada would continue to be looked upon as a bread basket and a source of raw materials for the post-war reconstruction. Prosperity appeared to be assured, and the future looked bright indeed.

But the reality was that for all the prosperity forecasted, it was boom for some, bust for others. The Canadian economy did grow, but for many regions, the pace was slower. Many communities languished, as their wartime tactical and strategic importance declined. Many reverted to what they were before.

The legacy of World War II was as Dickens foretold, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times … ."[58] The investments were not only just for prosecution and victory, but they were also the forge for change to Canada's future. It was a lasting legacy whose blood and treasure are still paramount and relevant to our generation. The active participation and work by many—in cities, small towns and villages—was accomplished by average Canadians. Their collective efforts were important and vital to winning the war. The home front was also a war front. It is an effort worth remembering!

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ABBREVIATIONS

BCATP	British Commonwealth Air Training Plan
CBI	Compensation and Benefits Instructions
DHH	Directorate of History and Heritage
GNE	gross national expenditure
O&M	operations and maintenance
O.T.U. 31	Operational Training Unit 31
RAF	Royal Air Force
RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force

NOTES

1. Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*: *A Story of the French Revolution*, Project Gutenberg, http://www.gutenberg. org/files/98/98-h/98-h.htm#2H_4_0002 (accessed December 5, 2012).

2. Ibid.

3. Herb Peppard, "The Agony and the Ecstasy," *Truro Daily News*, http:// www. trurodaily.com/Opinion/Columns/2012-07-04/article-3023331/The-agony-and-the-ecstasy/1 (accessed December 5, 2012). Peppard captures his experiences of the horrors of the past, the face of the present and his hidden hope in his wish for the future. His story is one of many of his generation who share this common background. It is a common story that shapes who and what we are today.

4. Pierre Berton, *The Great Depression: 1929–1939* (Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2001), 9.

5. Ibid., 503–4.

6. Alexander Brady and F. R. Scott, *Canada After the War: Studies in Political, Social, and Economic Policies for Post-War Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1945), 3. "[I]f we are not now to take thought for the future we can expect nothing but backsliding to the bad old ways of the inter-war period. As to the claim that thinking of the post-war future slackens the war effort, nothing could be more paltry. People are bound to think of the future. Only the promise of better things to come sustains us in war. If this promise is not to be frustrated and our high hopes disappointed, we must be prepared to discuss now in a realistic manner the modifications of our institutions necessary to fulfil man's aspirations for a 'better world.'"

7. Berton, *The Great Depression*, 499.

8. F. J. Hatch, *Aerodrome of Democracy: Canada and the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan 1939–1945,* Monograph Series No. 1 (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, Directorate of History, 1983), 1–2.

9. Ibid., 1.

10. G. H. Sallans, "Wilderness One Week, and a Home for Troops the Next—The Birth of Debert," *The Vancouver*, September 15, 1941, http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=JDN-lAAAAIBAJ&sjid=OokNAAAAIBAJ&pg=1267,3797474&dq=debert+nova+scotia+1941&hl=en (accessed December 5, 2012).

11. Hatch, *Aerodrome of Democracy*, 33.

12. Ibid., 16.

13. Ibid., 64.

14. Ibid.

15. Testimony given by Donald Davidson to William Langille, Chairman, Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, Halifax, March 1, 2001, http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/va/va010301.htm (accessed December 5, 2012), 6. This is the personal recollections of Don Davidson, who lived in Debert all his life; when the war started he was a teenager—15 or 16 years. During the war he was a businessman, operating Davidson's Store.

16. Sallans, "Wilderness One Week."

17. Davidson testimony, 6–7.

18. Canada, National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage, DHH File 360.003(D5) Debert Military Camp file.

19. Hatch, *Aerodrome of Democracy*, 64.

20. Ibid., 74.

21. Ibid., 74–75.

22. "Debert Described as an Efficient Camp, Ralston Says NS Development Best in Dominion Is Said Effectual, Answers Diefenbaker Who Says Choice of Site Is Little Short of a Disgrace," *The Montreal Gazette*, 1 June 1943.

23. Sergeant R. W. Harris, "Memories of Debert, N.S.," undated. Written account in Debert Military Museum archives, http://www.debertmilitarymuseum.org/harris.htm (accessed October 5, 2010, site discontinued).

24. "Debert Described as an Efficient Camp."

25. Ibid.

26. Bert Meerveld and Yvonne Holmes Mott, "Art Presswell: A Soldier's Journey," (November 2003), 4, www.Ocl.Net/Pdf/Art_Publication.Pdf (accessed December 5, 2012).

27. Hatch, *Aerodrome of Democracy*, 16. To avoid duplication of costs, the 15 air observer schools have been excluded as most were collocated with flying facilities for co-training and efficiency.

28. Canada, National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage, DHH File 74/13 No. 31 O.T.U, 2–7 and 11.

40. Davidson testimony.

41. "Spendings Broken Down by Provinces."

42. Ibid.

43. "Debert Described as an Efficient Camp."

44. Ibid.

45. Hatch, *Aerodrome of Democracy*, 184.

46. Ibid., 178–83.

47. "Lancaster's of Tiger Force: Canada's Contribution to Tiger Force," http://www. lancaster-archive.com/lanc_tigerforce.htm (accessed December 5, 2012).

48. "War Assets Salvaging Debert Camp Buildings," *The Calgary Herald*, 21 November 1946, http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=JilkAAAAIBAJ&sjid=onsNAAAAIBAJ&pg=7393,2288245&dq=debert&hl=en (accessed December 5, 2012).

49. Ibid.

50. Harris, "Memories of Debert."

51. Ibid.

52. Brady and Scott, *Canada After the War*, 3.

53. "Goal Is to Make Canadians Happiest People on Earth!" *Hamilton Spectator*, December 13, 1943, Canadian War Museum Archives, accession number 893-866-803, http://collections.civilisations.ca/warclip/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5059746 (accessed December 5, 2012).

54. Brady and Scott, *Canada After the War*; Kenneth C. Cragg, "Far-Reaching System Told By Mackenzie," *Globe and Mail*, March 17, 1943, Canadian War Museum Archives, accession number 100-006-005, http://collections.civilisations.ca/warclip/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5063669 (accessed December 5, 2012); "Social Changes Require Most Intelligent Study," *Hamilton Spectator*, March 22, 1944, Canadian War Museum Archives, accession number 100 017 004, http://collections.civilisations.ca/warclip/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5063723 (accessed December 5, 2012); "Postwar Planning Information," Wartime Information Board, May 16, 1944, Canadian War Museum Archives, accession number 100-017-003, http://collections.civilisations.ca/warclip/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5063722 (accessed December 5, 2012); "The Political Implications of Family Allowances," *Toronto Telegram*, July 20, 1944, Canadian War Museum Archives, accession number 084 016 019, http://collections.civilisations.ca/warclip/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5053637 (accessed December 5, 2012); and Charlotte Whitton, "We're Off!! To Social Security Confusion," *Saturday Night*, March 29, 1945, Canadian War Museum Archives, accession number 100 017 002, http://collections.civilisations.ca/warclip/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5063721 (accessed December 5, 2012).

55. "Bulk of Billion U.K. Gift Spent on Munitions: Breakdown of Goods Canada Contributed Furnished by Ilsley," *Globe and Mail*, May 12, 1943, Canadian War Museum Archives, accession number 071-017-012, http://collections.civilisations.ca/warclip/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5044854 (accessed December 5, 2012); Conversation Mr. V. G. Madigan / G. D. Madigan, March 28, 2012. My father lived through the Depression as a young boy. I asked him to review my paper for his opinions and for historical context and accuracy. Interestingly enough, he mentioned the $1 billion gift to Britain, which I found earlier but did not include as a reference in earlier versions of this paper. In the context of his time, he stated that many Canadians

found it incredulous that Canada was able to provide an outright gift of this sum, yet did nothing on the same scale to relieve the pain and suffering of many during the Great Depression.

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57. "Minister of Reconstruction Confident Regarding Future," *Hamilton Spectator*, 11 February 1946, Canadian War Museum Archives, accession number 898-817-881, http://collections.civilisations.ca/warclip/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5062612 (accessed December 5, 2012).

58. Dickens, *Tale of Two Cities*.

Horses on the Payroll

By J. E. (Jerry) Vernon, CD

Photo: DND

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Editor's note: The author's spelling and punctuation conventions have been maintained.

Abstract

In this paper, Jerry Vernon examines a unique part of Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) history when, among other things, horses were used to help deliver airplanes from the United States (U.S.) to Canada. When war was declared on 10 September 1939, the RCAF was in the middle of deliveries of Harvard and Hudson aircraft, and was about to start receiving Douglas Digby Bombers. These deliveries were threatened to be terminated due to changes made to the U.S. Neutrality Law which forbade the shipment of arms to belligerent countries. Within a matter of days, RCAF personnel, in conjunction with sympathetic American authorities, took steps to circumvent these laws.

The result was a variety of unique subterfuges which allowed this, the vital flow of aircraft, to continue to the RCAF. In certain cases the ex-American aircraft were arriving in Canada by means of "horse-power" that had nothing to do with their engines.

For those of you who are my age or older, the phrase "Horses on the Payroll" no doubt brings to mind headlines referring to the scandal of several decades ago … I think it was at Camp Petawawa … when an innovative contractor did some creative bookkeeping with the Department of National Defence (DND), and managed to have a number of horses paid as labourers on the job. My paper is not about this at all, but rather about the efforts to bring military aircraft into Canada at a time when war had broken out in much of the world, but the United States was still attempting to remain neutral, while continuing to manufacture and ship arms to "friendly" counties. The process involved landing aircraft on the U.S. side of the border and pushing them across into Canada, to be flown off again on our side. In the case of the larger aircraft, it was necessary to rent horses or tractors to pull them across.

This paper is based mainly on the contents of a very interesting wartime RCAF file. In 1990, I had stumbled across this file in a box at the National Archives, while researching the purchase of Grumman Goose aircraft for the RCAF. That was another process involving much innovation and deceit to get Goose aircraft from the U.S. into this country in the early 1940's. If time permits, I may discuss this briefly at the end.

Less than a year ago, I came across another historian, James McClelland, of Emerson, Manitoba, who was also independently researching the subject, with particular emphasis on the activities at his home town.

I have since located an old article by Gerry Beauchamp, Co-Editor of the Canadian Aviation Historical Society (CAHS) Ottawa Chapter Newsletter, covering some of the aircraft brought into Canada via Maine and the Maritimes for shipment to France and Belgium. Lastly, I was able to locate and interview Group Captain (G/C) Alf Watts, who had been the young Flying Officer originally tasked, in late 1939, with locating a suitable pair of border fields in Western Canada. Alf Watts is now a retired judge living in West Vancouver, British Columbia (B.C.).

For many years in the 1920's and 1930's, the United States was gripped by the powers of isolationism and pacifism. Even as war was breaking out in Europe in 1939, the U.S. remained neutral. In fact, many Americans still believe that World War Two started on the 7th of December, 1941!!

When war was declared in 1939, the U.S. found itself in the embarrassing position of delivering arms—particularly hundreds of aircraft—to countries at war, such as Britain, France, Belgium and Canada. As a result, on 4 November 1939, the U.S. Government passed the Neutrality Act which, among other things, forbade the delivery by air by U.S. pilots of aircraft to a belligerent country or the flying of military aircraft within U.S. airspace by citizens (either military or civil) of a belligerent county. Although U.S. pilots could not ferry these aircraft within Canada, the manufacturers were allowed to send mechanics to Canada to carry out repairs or warranty work. The Act did not forbid the shipment of crated aircraft by sea, road or rail, so the flow of aircraft to Europe was not greatly affected.

This action, less than two months after the Declaration of War, caught the RCAF just as aircraft deliveries were starting from the Lockheed, North American and Douglas factories in California. The first 15 Harvard trainers, out of an order for 30, had been delivered by air in September, as were the first 10 Lockheed Hudsons, out of 28 diverted from Royal Air Force (RAF) orders. Also, the first of 20 Douglas B-18 Digby bombers was about to be delivered in November, 1939.

The aircraft were urgently needed, and the contracts had been priced on the basis of direct delivery by air. This was long before the days when large cost overruns were routinely accepted and shrugged off, and the RCAF could not tolerate any delays or extra costs caused by having the aircraft dismantled and delivered by road or rail. Quick action was required, and this is detailed in a most fascinating file in the National Archives, entitled "Delivery of Aircraft from USA Under US Neutrality Law, 1939–41" (Record Group 24, File 1021-1-117), which I reviewed in detail on one of my last Ottawa business trips before retiring.

I have over 60 pages of research notes, but I will skim quickly though some of the highlights of the file, which covers the period from November of 1939 to mid-1940, when President Roosevelt managed to sort out his end and have the Neutrality Act provisions revised or repealed. Later, the Lend Lease Act made the export process quite legal.

The solution to the problem was to find a pair of landing fields, located a few feet apart on either side of the Canada/U.S. border, to circumvent the law as it stood. You will see that, within a period of several days a pair of fields was located and the aircraft began to flow again within a week or so. How fast would today's bureaucrats and politicians react?

Since all of the initial aircraft were coming from California factories, a search was started for a suitable location in the West. North American Aviation suggested a spot near Coutts, Alberta / Sweetgrass, Montana, and an RCAF pilot was sent there to set things up and start to receive the Harvards. A second location was arranged near Emerson, Manitoba / Pembina, North Dakota, and later a third site on the Maine / New Brunswick border.

The first batch of Harvards had been delivered in a normal manner in September of 1939, with American pilots flying them up the West Coast to Vancouver, where the RCAF took them on charge. The first item in the file refers to the delivery of more Harvards to Western Air Command via a site yet to be found near Sweetgrass/Coutts, although a handwritten marginal note from the Chief of Air Staff (CAS), Air Vice Marshal (A/V/M) Croil, suggests that he favoured the Pembina route.

A signal dated 13 November 39 identified the RCAF officer in charge initially at Coutts as Flying Officer (F/O) Alf Watts, a pilot with No. III Composite Army Cooperation (CAC) Squadron at Vancouver. Watts was a young Vancouver lawyer, in the RCAF Auxiliary, and he had been sent over the mountains by Wing Commander (W/C) Roy Slemon, Senior Air Staff Officer (SASO) at Western Air Command, to survey the situation and to meet with the local U.S. Customs Broker to sort out the "rules of the game." Minute(1) from the CAS asks "Is F/O Watts competent?" Western Air Command responded that he was!

Watts noted in his initial report that the aircraft could not be turned over to a Canadian military person on the U.S. side of the border. That is, a civilian had to accept each aircraft, push, roll or tow it across the border, and then turn it over to whomever he pleased! A Canadian Customs Broker was used to accept, check and move the aircraft across the line. Then an RCAF pilot would fly it as soon as possible to Calgary.

The U.S. pilot involved, from North American Aviation, was Waitt who worked with Watts to pick out the pair of fields to be used, and who later turned a profit for himself by tying up the lease on the U.S. field. Watts, as a member of the RCAF, could not cross into the U.S. to meet with Waitt, so the discussions were carried out in his hotel room at Coutts.

The strip on the Alberta side was 500 yards [457 metres (m)] long, on Federal Crown Land, into wind, and with a few gopher holes. No major work was required, apart from a white lime centreline and windsock. North American arranged for gas to be brought in from Great Falls. The Canadian field was 774 yards [708 m] North of the strip on the U.S. side, and it would be necessary to cut down a Crown-owned border fence for access.

Watts estimated that two days' work would be required to prepare the field, by which time Waitt would return with the first Harvard. He also requested a parachute, a fitter, some Emergency Purchase Orders and $100.00 for casual labour. Security during handover would be initially provided by the local Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Detachment, although later a platoon from the Saskatchewan Regiment [sic] guarded the airfield and aircraft.

The wartime diaries for No. 6 Bomber & Reconnaissance (BR) Squadron, Jericho Beach, B.C., note that a Sergeant, a Corporal and an Aircraftsman 2nd Class (AC2) were despatched to Coutts in November of 1939, to assist with the Harvards.

Since no RCAF funds had been advanced, Watts had to pay the civilian work crews out of his own pocket. He later had to apply for reimbursement of $500.00, which was much more than the tightfisted and never-smiling Roy Slemon had ever expected the job to cost.

Arrangements were to be made by telephone so that Waitt would not take off from Great Falls unless the weather was suitable right through to Calgary. The RCAF had to accept the aircraft "as is" at the border, since the RCAF pilot could not fly as a passenger in the U.S., and the North American ferry pilot was forbidden to fly within Canada. Deficiencies, if any, were to be sorted out at Calgary. Watts relates, however, that the U.S. ferry pilots on the first batch of Harvards were unable to locate the airfields, and flew blithely overhead, to the accompaniment of much fist-shaking and expletives from the ground. After flying well into Alberta, their leader realized his mistake, and they returned to land at the Montana field.

The ferry pilots on the first five Harvards were Flight Lieutenant (F/L) Berven, F/L Peterson, F/L Waterhouse, F/O Martin, and F/O Hodgson. Harvards 1336, 1337, 1338, 1339, 1340 came into Canada at Coutts on 19 November 39, and were then ferried "in bond" to Uplands (Ottawa) for Customs clearance. Once the ferry pilots had been provided, Watts did not have to ferry any Harvards himself, although he notes that he did in fact ferry one of the second batch up to Lethbridge, as a favour to F/L J. D. Blaine, who wanted to visit his parents in Alberta.

Watts remained in charge of the operation at Coutts for several weeks. He says "I hung around there until they started bringing the Digby's through. I was a little worried about that, because the Digby didn't have all that much bloody power, and the field wasn't all that bloody long. They flew them out of there and there was no problem. Shortly after that, I went home, because my wife was about to have a baby. They carried on for a little while, flew some more Digby's out of there, and then they transferred the whole operation to Winnipeg."

The first of the Douglas Digby aircraft was to be available about 20 November, and Douglas began to request urgent sorting out of the port-of-exit, detailed arrangements, etc. Douglas had some concern about the temporary Sweetgrass field. They preferred Pembina, located some 70 miles [113 kilometres (km)] from Winnipeg, as it was already a "proper" commercial airfield, but it was 3 miles [4.8 km] south of the border, and there was no matching field on the Canadian side at that time.

A/A OF Harvard A/C MKI (1339) port side.

For Pembina, the initially suggested solution that seemed to satisfy the letter of the law of the Neutrality Act was to establish a special zone, with a 10 mile [16 km] radius around Pembina, where Canadian pilots would be allowed to fly the aircraft on "checkouts" with Douglas factory pilots, and for Douglas to deliver them to Pembina with only one hour's fuel in the tanks. This would get them only as far as Winnipeg. A precedent for this was the 10 mile [16 km] circle around the Douglas factory where foreign military pilots were already allowed to fly for checkouts, dual training, acceptance testing, etc.

Later, there was some concern about the Pembina proposal—too much time needed for pilot checkouts on site, potential for sabotage, need for any maintenance or corrective repairs, etc. It was considered better to have the RCAF pilots checked out by Douglas pilots at the factory, while the aircraft were still the property of the Douglas Aircraft Company—this only needed Department of Army clearance, temporary Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) pilot licences, etc. They could fly within a 10 mile [16 km] zone around the Santa Monica factory … then travel commercially to Pembina to meet their aircraft, as they still could not legally ride in them as passengers over U.S. territory.

On l8 November 1939, the RCAF arranged for two Bolingbroke crews—four pilots and eight groundcrew—to be sent to Winnipeg to accept and pick up the first of the Douglas Digby aircraft. They were ordered to bring both uniform and "civvies," in case they had to cross the border. The Digby acceptance and ferry pilots were R. C. "Bus" Gordon, A. G. Kenyon, Claire L. Annis, and K. Birchall, plus 15 RCAF groundcrew. Several of these pilots were later well-known RCAF senior officers in the 1950's. The following excerpts from archival files detail some of the entire project.

> 19 November 1939 correspondence started between the Woodstock Board of Trade and the Honourable Noman Rogers, Minister of National Defence, on the possibility of exporting U.S. aircraft via Houlton,

> Maine and Woodstock, New Brunswick. There was an existing airport at Houlton, only ¼ mile [402 m] from the border, and their pitch was for building a matching airport at Woodstock, ½ mile [805 m] onto the Canadian side. This proposition was put into effect in early 1940.
>
> A file item on 21 November noted that the delivery of the first Harvards had gone smoothly, but expressed some concern regarding the use of the Coutts field by larger aircraft. It also noted that yet another site had initially been considered (and rejected) for delivery via Grosse Ile, Michigan, near Detroit.
>
> 22 November 1939 – the RCAF was advised that 10 more Harvards were at Great Falls, awaiting delivery. After some scrounging around, ten ferry pilots were loaded into a Lockheed and sent from Camp Borden to Coutts for the pickup.
>
> 22 November 1939 – a very detailed inspection report was prepared by F/O Watts, on the status, condition, possible future expansion, etc. of the field 3½ miles [5.6 km] West of Coutts. The U.S. field was 50 yards [46 m] South of the border, and the 774 yard [708 m] taxiway between the two fields dropped 25 feet [7.6 m] downhill into Canada. The initial Harvards were being taxied across the border here. The weather here was considered better than that at Haskett, Manitoba—yet another different site which was also being considered, 15 miles [24 km] West of Emerson and Pembina.

In more detail, the Coutts field was 1500 x 150 feet [457 x 45.7 m], at an elevation of 3480 feet [1061 m], with the capability of being extended to 3000 x 400 feet [914 x 122 m]. The field conditions were described as "uneven, caused by old buffalo wallows, buffalo trails and badger and gopher holes," which could be easily filled. It was suggested that the field could be oiled with locally available crude (then only 90 cents a barrel!), and there was space for a second crosswind runway if necessary. Winter snow conditions were not considered to be a major problem.

Alf Watts asked me if the file referred at all to the RCAF's unofficial popular name for the field, "Watts' Wallow." He went on to say "We had the horses there, but there was a pretty good grade down. As I recollect, we just pointed the old Harvard over the border and gave it a push, and let it roll down to our particular piece of property."

> 22 November 1939 – Douglas advised that delivery of the Digby aircraft was scheduled for December 1939, January and February 1940. They felt that the Sweetgrass strip was big enough (1500 x 250 feet [457 x 76 m]), but were concerned about snow and winter operations. They suggested that they could initially deliver some here and move elsewhere if the strip was snowed in. Also, Lockheed had apparently agreed to try the strip soon with a Hudson.
>
> One day later, Douglas had second thoughts about field conditions at Sweetgrass. Also, they had heard that the local Customs Broker (on the U.S. side) had leased the field, in cahoots with the North American pilot (Waitt) and was charging an "exorbitant" landing fee of $190 for Digby or Hudson sized aircraft.

24 November 1939 – Douglas allowed that Coutts was okay, but that Haskett had greater long-term potential for development of more runways, longer runways, etc. On the other hand, using Coutts allowed the aircraft to be stored inside large hangars at Great Falls, awaiting suitable weather.

24 November 1939 – a high level diplomatic telegram covered the "Catch 22" situation that existed. The Neutrality Act insisted that title to the aircraft must pass from the factory to the Canadian Government before they left the U.S. However, international law then prohibited aircraft of a belligerent nation from flying over a neutral country, ie: the U.S.

26 November 1939 – Harvards 1341–1350 were ferried through Coutts. The pilots were Hendrick, McBurney, Procter, Reynolds, Blaine, Mellor, plus four others not named.

28 November 1939 – a report in the file from Northwest Airlines Inc. described the fields two miles [3.2 km] from Pembina as consisting of two Quarter Sections—one on each side of the border—perfectly level and smooth, ploughed and dragged and solid enough to operate aircraft with 2500 feet [762 m] clear in all directions. The fields were separated by a 50 foot [15 m] border strip of level sod, and the farmer on the Canadian side would supply horses for towing at a cost of $3 to $5 per takeoff. The fields were located one mile [1.6 km] West of the Customs crossing.

28 November 1939 – a letter to Ottawa from Caribou, Maine, made another suggestion reference delivery of aircraft, using an ice runway on the Saint John River between Van Buren, Maine, and St. Leonard, New Brunswick, with the international boundary as the centreline of the runway.

29 November 1939 – yet another letter to the Minister of National Defence, from a U.S. contractor at Alburg, Vermont, proposed building and operating airports on both sides of the border (Alburg, Vermont and Noyan, Quebec). He claimed that he could do it all within 30 days of a contract award!! Alburg is a tiny town at the top of Lake Champlain, where Vermont, New York and Quebec all come together.

In another letter two days later, yet another group suggested a crossing point a few miles East of Alburg on the Quebec border at the town of St. Alban's, Vermont, on Lake Missisquoi, adjacent to Phillipsburg.

30 November 1939 – the first two Digbys were scheduled for delivery on 8 or 11 December. Title to the aircraft was to remain with Douglas until they reached the Port of Exit, and there was now no objection to RCAF pilots riding as "passengers" from the factory to the border.

1 December 1939 – correspondence referred to the squabble between North American, Douglas and the U.S. Customs Broker over charges for using the Sweetgrass field. J. H. "Dutch" Kindleberger, President

of North American, felt the charges were not exorbitant, in light of the work required to erect a "handover shed" (for the paperwork), staffing for security, crowd control, etc.

4 December 1939 – Douglas Aircraft agreed to try the Sweetgrass and Coutts fields for the first two Digby aircraft, but reserved decision on further deliveries.

5 December 1939 – Squadron Leader (S/L) Gordon and S/L Carscallen arrived at the Douglas factory, with a detachment of airmen. The aircraft were to be accepted without radio transmitters, due to unavailability, and delivered via Coutts, weather permitting. The RCAF would hold the first two aircraft at Winnipeg, since the missing radios were to arrive on board the third aircraft (but didn't!!).

5 December 1939 – it was reported to DND that Northwest Airways were taking out options on landing fields on both sides of the border near Emerson. Was this for the RCAF Digbys or RAF deliveries?? Later, it was stated that Northwest had leased the land on behalf of the Douglas Aircraft Company. This land was apparently 2 miles [3.2 km] from Pembina, on the Canadian side.

8 December 1939 – DND met with Department of Transport (DoT) to suggest that DoT operate a suitable airfield for the import of aircraft, to avoid high landing charges from a private owner on the expected future hundreds of aircraft. It was agreed that the Pembina area was the best location.

Another option suggested was to use the existing Pembina Airport, and then just tow the aircraft across the fields or down the roads to the border, to the Canadian airstrip, thus eliminating a new field on the U.S. side.

11 December 1939 – Douglas agreed that the two pilots and groundcrew could ride as passengers on the aircraft to Sweetgrass, re-enter Canada legally, and then fly them from Coutts to Winnipeg. These aircraft were RCAF 738 and 739, and they apparently crossed the border on 18 December 1939.

12 December 1939 – a letter from Lockheed referred to a shortage of RCAF ferry pilots to move 18 Hudsons to Canada. Deliveries were set to start the next week, but Canada wanted Lockheed pilots to ferry the aircraft all the way to Ottawa. Lockheed now preferred to go via Pembina, not via Sweetgrass. So did Douglas.

Alf Watts doubts that any Hudsons were in fact delivered via Coutts, as this aircraft required a longer takeoff run than the Digby.

> 21 December 1939 – Douglas planned to deliver two more Digbys via Sweetgrass (RCAF 740 and RCAF 741), on 3 January 1940, and requested the same two RCAF pilots as before (S/L's Gordon and Carscallen), due to familiarity with the Sweetgrass/Coutts fields, aircraft type, etc. A Douglas mechanic, Mr. Bouse, would accompany the aircraft to their unit to carry out warranty work and would spend 10 days familiarizing RCAF maintenance personnel.
>
> 4 January 1940 – detailed route and delivery instructions for Lockheed pilots now appeared to allow the Lockheed pilots to take the aircraft across the border, via Pembina, and through to Winnipeg, where they would clear Customs. However, this still required the aircraft to be landed at the border and wheeled across on the ground to the Canadian side, before they took off again for Winnipeg. It was suggested that the ferry pilots land at the main Pembina Airport, and drive over to the border to the transfer strips, if they had any doubts about field conditions.
>
> 8 January 1940 – reference was made to a 16 mm film of the Digbys crossing the border, forwarded by S/L Gordon to the RCAF Photographic Establishment in Ottawa. Does this film still exist?
>
> 17 January1940 – delivery was impending of the 5th Digby aircraft, RCAF 742.
>
> 20 February 1940 – an internal Trans-Canada Airlines (TCA) letter raised concerns about security, gossip and "loose talk" regarding the transportation of ferry pilots from Canada to the California factories. The TCA fare at the time, Winnipeg to Seattle, was $78.05, plus a further $62.93 (Canadian funds) for the United Airlines leg to Los Angeles.

It was also noted in this correspondence that there was a potential for 500 aircraft to be ferried, representing a considerable revenue to TCA for moving ferry pilots.

In March 1940, a DND letter to Mr. Alex H. Milne, Jr., of Emerson, Manitoba, referred to his offer of services in connection with the towing of aircraft across the border. Milne was the caretaker of the International Airport (ie: the ferry airstrip), and claimed that the horses were damaging the runways. Rather than continue to use horses, Milne offered the use of his tractor, which he kept on hand for smoothing the runways.

It is interesting to note that the old airfield site is currently owned by Robert Milne, a nephew of the late Alex Milne

> 16 March 1940 – a letter from S/L Gordon, the Officer Commanding (OC) of 10(BR) Squadron disputed the report that the horses were damaging the runway at Emerson. Reference was made to at least 10 Digbys towed across by horses at Emerson, using a maximum 3-horse team. However, the RCAF did have some concerns about jerking of the aircraft by the horses, if the teamster was not careful.

The local teamster, Joe Wilson, charged $3 per aircraft for the use of his horses. His wife's tally of the money owing on the contract covers 33 aircraft that used their horses, between mid-January and mid-August.

There is still no conclusive evidence, apart from a few old photos, of how many or which individual Digbys and Hudsons were delivered via Coutts versus the balance via Emerson. The first four Digbys came in at Coutts for sure, and possibly the fifth one as well.

> 27 May 1940 – more on the Woodstock, New Brunswick crossing, referring to 40 more training aircraft due to come to Canada within the next two weeks. The Woodstock folks still wanted to get a piece of the action, especially for aircraft delivered from Eastern factories. Their suggested method involved putting the tail wheel up on a truck and hauling the aircraft down a back road to a sod field on the Canadian side, for fly-away. The field was offered for rent at $250.00 for the summer.

As a longer term plan, the Woodstock people were still pursuing the idea of extending the Houlton, Maine, runway by 1000 feet [305 m] to the Canadian border. This would provide access to an easily-levelled field on the Woodstock side, which could be turned into a runway within two weeks for an estimated cost of $6000.00. The aircraft would then be delivered on what was later referred to as a "push-pull basis."

> 29 May 1940 – reference was made to 38 Stinson aircraft, for delivery to France. France requested that the Woodstock route be used, for aircraft being shipped out by sea. These are thought to have been the ex-civilian Stinson 105 aircraft referred to later.
>
> 31 May 1940 – a Department of Transport letter covered the agreement back in December to option land and develop a site two miles [3.2 km] West of Emerson. Since "aliens" were not permitted to own land in North Dakota, they used an American, Samuel L. Gwin, to buy the land near Pembina. As Canada couldn't openly pay for the U.S. land, it was covered by a "service charge," paid in advance, for a period of 300 days, at $15.00/day—ie: $4,200.00. Other costs cover seeding, weeding, and grass cutting.

The Emerson land (160 acres [65 hectares]—a Quarter Section) had been bought on 15 April 1940 from Messrs W. R. Forrester and R. A. Johnston for a total of $4,500.00. Messrs Choate, Hall and Stewart were the "sellers" of the North Dakota land, for $4200.00. Legal fees, miscellaneous improvements, maintenance, etc. of $2,000.00, brought the cost for the two fields to a grand total of $10,727.85. Foreign exchange and other unplanned costs later brought the final cost up to $12,189.85.

> 12 June 1940 – referred to a U.S. Proclamation, which then allowed U.S. nationals to travel in belligerent aircraft over New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. That is, U.S. pilots could deliver aircraft directly to ports or Customs points of entry in the Maritimes, thus eliminating the need for various devious arrangements.
>
> 12 June 1940 – 33 planes had been flown out via Woodstock between June 1st and 4th, plus three Curtiss bombers on 11 June, and 95 more

> Curtiss bombers were reported to be enroute from Boston. This would have been the Curtiss SBC-4 Cleveland biplane dive bombers for France, that were put on ships in the Maritimes, and were later dumped off in Martinique to rot, rather than let them fall into the hands of the Germans or the Vichy Government in France.

Gerry Beauchamp's article notes that the French had 90 Curtiss Clevelands on order from the U.S. However, due to the rapidly deteriorating situation in Europe, they persuaded the U.S. Navy to release 50 of its own aircraft for immediate use. These aircraft were serving on the United States Ship (USS) Lexington and USS Saratoga. They were taken ashore, flown to Wright Field (Dayton, Ohio), painted in camouflage markings and modified to French standards with new seats (to fit the French style back parachutes), French machine guns, French instruments, and, I presume, the "backward" style of French throttles. They were then assigned U.S. civil ferry registrations and flown to Houlton, Maine, where they came across into Canada. One aircraft, NX-21, was lost in a fatal crash at Houlton, killing a U.S. Navy Lieutenant.

By 15 June 1940, 44 SBC-4 aircraft had been loaded onto the French aircraft carrier Bearn at Halifax. Five other Clevelands were not loaded onto the carrier, due to lack of space, and were later diverted to the Fleet Air Arm.

The *Bearn* had arrived in Halifax in company with the cruiser *Jeanne D'Arc* and a cargo of 194 tons [176 tonnes] of gold, which was shipped by rail to the U.S. In addition to the 44 Curtiss dive bombers, a further 52 aircraft were also loaded onto the two French ships—21 Curtiss H-75A-4 Hawks, six Brewster Buffalo fighters (for Belgium) and 25 Stinson Model 105's. The Stinsons had been bought up from private owners all over the U.S. and ferried to Halifax by civilian pilots.

Hudson bomber MKI over ship.

No. 10(BR) Squadron at Dartmouth was involved in crating and loading these aircraft. In the end, six RCAF personnel, under the command of S/L (later A/V/M) Adelard Raymond, sailed with the ships, still engaged in this work. Unknown to them at the time, they were embarking on a long and roundabout journey.

> 16 June 1940 – the two French ships sailed for Brest. However, due to the further rapidly changing situation in Europe, they were diverted, first to Bordeaux, then to Casablanca, and finally back across the Atlantic to Martinique in the West Indies, where most of the aircraft were off-loaded and towed out into a field. The balance of the shipment was unloaded at Guadeloupe. The RCAF contingent did not arrive back home until 29 July 1940, having been further routed via several Royal Navy vessels and a freighter ride from Bermuda to Canada.

Following the French–German Armistice, the British tried to claim the aircraft, but this was rejected by the Vichy Government. The U.S. were concerned that Vichy-controlled aircraft would be within flying distance of the Panama Canal. They offered to take the aircraft back and give a full refund. Still being neutral, they maintained friendly relations with France, and were allowed to discretely send in naval personnel to mechanically disable the aircraft. In the end, most of the aircraft were either burned, blown up or simply allowed to fade away into a state of uselessness.

To complete this aspect of the story, additional aircraft arrived across the border into Halifax, but they were too late to get on the French ships. These included 33 ex-United States Army Air Corps (USAAC) Northrop A-17A Nomads and more Brewsters for the Belgian Air Force. The Northrops were taken over by the RCAF as target tugs, while the remaining miscellaneous leftover aircraft went to Britain.

Meanwhile, back at the border …

> 15 June 1940 – RCAF Headquarters (HQ) advised Trenton of a group of eight used civil aircraft, consisting of four Boeing 247D's, one Lockheed 10B Electra, one Lockheed 212, one Lockheed 12 and one Beech 18D, which had been bought in the U.S. and were expected to arrive at Pembina on 17 June 1940. These were to be ferried by civilian delivery pilots from Emerson to Trenton for Customs clearance.

Note that in this time frame, the RCAF bought at least 26 used airliners and light twins, plus a number of Grumman Goose amphibians, from U.S. sources. As these were ostensibly non-military aircraft, the Neutrality Act was easily circumvented by buying them on the U.S. civil market, issuing temporary Canadian civil ferry registrations, and then transferring them to the RCAF later. The Boeing 247D's were United Airlines hand-me-downs, bought from various smaller operators. They became RCAF 7637–7639, and were later transferred to Canadian Pacific Airlines for use on priority routes. The Lockheed 212 was an obscure bomber-transport version of the Lockheed 12. The file does not specifically mention any others besides these eight, that came in via Pembina.

> 16 June 1940 – an internal RCAF letter stated that "… the number of aircraft brought across the line at Pembina to be used for Home War Establishment purposes was so small that the total amount of this encumbrance should be chargeable to the Joint Air Training Plan … ."

We now have the "bean counters" starting to argue over which account pays for this operation.

> 19 June 1940 – a letter from Eastern Air Command referred to an inspection visit to Houlton, Maine, and Woodstock, New Brunswick, by Mr. J. A. Wilson (DoT) and F/L Z. L. Leigh, two well-known names in Canadian aviation. Reference was also made to an earlier inspection by Wilson and Major Dodds. It was noted that it would be necessary to build a 1 ¼ mile [2 km] towing road uphill through the bush and across the border and construct a 2500 foot [762 m] airstrip in Canada.

Starting about this time, there was much correspondence in the file concerning an ongoing "hassle," over many months, regarding payment of room and board for a group of U.S. Master Sergeants who were in Halifax to dismantle Curtiss P-36 pursuit [aircraft] for shipment to France. These were the Curtiss Hawks referred to earlier, that ended up in the Caribbean. Everybody, including the RCAF, British Purchasing Commission, French Air Commission, Curtiss-Wright and U.S. Army Air Corps, tried to pass this bill to some other country or agency, covering seven men for four nights at $1.00 a night, for total bill of $28.00, owed to Mrs Mahoney's boarding house!! This was not settled until nearly a year later, when the men involved each agreed to pay the $4 out of their own pockets.

> 11 July 1940 – on the subject of "Used American Aircraft," it was noted by the Department of Munitions and Supply that, in the future, it would not be possible for Canadian civil pilots to fly American planes that were definitely registered as military planes. In this case, this meant that only American pilots could ferry the NA-26 and NA-44, these being the two oddball Harvards used at Trenton. The NA-26 was to be pushed across the border at Pembina on 15 July 1940 and taken away by an RCAF pilot, while the NA-44 flew direct from New York to Camp Borden, using an American pilot.
>
> 31 August1940 – referred to relaxation of the regulations on the flying of aircraft across the border. DoT had anticipated that the International Aerodrome would now be little used … however, North American and Douglas had been using it continually. North American were taking three to five aircraft per week via Pembina. More bills were coming in regarding seeding, liability insurance and so on.
>
> 14 September 1940 – DND felt that further expense should not be incurred, as it was intended to fly all aircraft across the border in future. They considered that it should be up to the Pembina Landing Field Corporation and other parties (ie: North American, Douglas, Lockheed, etc.) to cover costs for any further use they made of this field.

The plan in effect by this time, although not detailed in the file, apparently involved flying the aircraft into Canada with both U.S. and Allied crew on board. Somewhere in mid-air, while still over U.S. territory, ownership would transfer to the buyers, who would, either in fact or in theory, take over control and then complete the flight to a Canadian airfield. The aircraft could then be delivered to the RCAF, ferried overseas to the U.K. [United Kingdom] or whatever. This further subterfuge was used until the Lend-Lease Act was passed in March of 1941.

The main file is very thick, and a second thin file is entirely on the ongoing subject of those 7 USAAC Master Sergeants, still arguing into early 1941 between Canada, U.K., France and Curtiss-Wright over who should pay Mrs Mahoney's $28.00 board and lodging bill. Some of this stack of correspondence over the $28.00 is so infantile and picayune that I must wonder if the authors knew that a war was on!

On a more useful note, [the] second file does give a few more details about the aircraft shipped out via Halifax, which were Curtiss and Stinson types for France and Brewsters for Belgium, part of the Belgian order for 40 Brewster Buffalo fighters. A few of the Belgian Brewsters ended up rusting in Martinique, with the French deliveries, but the bulk were diverted to the RAF. Also, there is reference to Northrop aircraft ferried into Canada via Douglas Aircraft for the British.

In summary, it would appear that the Pembina/Emerson route was used for at least 10, and possibly up to 16 of the Douglas Digbys (the first four went via Coutts for sure). Also, it appears that the last 18 out of 28 diverted RAF Hudsons (RCAF 769–786) came via Emerson, with the first 10 being delivered normally in September 1939, before the hassle arose, and the last 18 between December 1939 and March 1940. All 28 of these Hudsons were ferried to Canada with U.S. civil registrations.

Although 15 Harvards came directly to Canada in September 1939 and 15 more were brought via Coutts, it is obvious that North American were making regular use of Emerson later (quoted as being three to five aircraft per week). The single NA-26 came via Emerson, and there were several hundred Inglewood-built MK. II Harvards flown to Canada in 1940 and 1941 prior to the Canadian production start-up, that also may have come via this route.

Finally, at least eight used airliners and twins flew in via Emerson, out of 26 such aircraft bought (plus Grumman Goose, etc. types). Did many (or any?) more of these come via Emerson?

Douglas Aircraft [Company] are also mentioned as bringing more planes in via Emerson, apparently besides the Digbys. The last Digby, RCAF 757, was taken on strength by the RCAF on 22 May 1940. What other types does the file refer to, as Dakotas didn't start to come to the RCAF until 1943? There was one lone A-20 delivered in 1941, for Suffield, Alberta (also two others in 1943 and 1944). Possibly Douglas delivered RAF aircraft, such as Bostons, by air for shipment out of Canada?? I have no idea.

At least one aircraft brought in via Emerson still exists—Boeing 247D, CF-JRQ, at the National Air Museum in Ottawa was RCAF 7638, one of the four mentioned earlier. Any of the early Inglewood-built Harvards are also candidates for having come across at Coutts or Emerson.

It is also possible that the ex-RCAF Boeing 247D now restored and flying at the Museum of Flight in Seattle may have come across later at Emerson, as well as some of the Grumman Goose and Lockheed types that are still with us.

Prologue

If we have a few more minutes, I can also mention the Grumman Goose aircraft, several of which appear to have also been brought in by circumventing U.S. neutrality regulations.

The RCAF operated a total of 31 Goose aircraft. Some of these arrived in Canada individually and through devious arrangements, prior to the U.S. entry into the war. Although this is another whole story unto itself, a few words here will suffice for now.

The original RCAF Goose, RCAF 917, was purchased quite legally in July 1938 via the Canadian agent, Fairchild Aircraft Limited. The RCAF soon realized the value of an amphibious aircraft for legitimate general transportation duties, not to mention its ability to access VIP fishing and hunting camps. To complicate matters, the Minister of National Defence had first call on the Goose, and was cited as using it continually. I suppose things never do change in Ottawa!

In August of 1939, a proposal was forwarded for a second aircraft to be purchased as soon as possible or else included in the 1940–41 budget estimates. The proposal particularly noted the economies of using an $80,000 aircraft to do transportation work in Western Air Command currently being done by $250,000 Stranraer flying boats, which were further limited to water operations only.

A few days after war broke out, Mr. J. P. Bickell, a wealthy Toronto industrialist, donated his Goose to the RCAF, thus covering off the need for a second machine. At the same time, two additional aircraft were requested. This was soon amended to read three, and then again to four before September was over. Several former bush pilots, including Hump Madden, were offered immediate RCAF commissions to fly the newly-acquired Goose and Barkley-Grow twin-engine machines.

By late 1939 / early 1940, the RCAF was embroiled in an argument with the Privy Council and other non-flying bureaucrats and politicians over the merits and cost of the Goose versus the Beech 18, a non-amphibious aircraft which offered higher speed and lower cost, but obviously did not have the "go anywhere" amphibious capability the RCAF felt they required.

After a nearly five month delay, the two new Grummans were eventually authorized, plus a further approval to purchase two more on the used aircraft market, towards a new RCAF Communications Flight establishment for 9 such aircraft.

In the fall of 1939, there was apparently some promise by Lord Beaverbook that he would present a Goose aircraft to the DND, but this never materialized. Negotiations were also carried on with department store magnate Marshall Field and Captain Boris Sergievsky of Sikorsky Aircraft, for purchase of their personal machines, plus the Grumman factory demonstrator, but all three were lost to other eager buyers through foot-dragging in the Ottawa approval process.

In fact, five more Goose aircraft were obtained from various wealthy U.S. owners, namely Colonel Robert McCormick *(The Chicago Tribune),* bankers Henry S. Morgan and J. P. Morgan, Mr. E. Roland Harriman, Powell Crosley Jr. (Crosley Radio), and Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney (Chairman of Pan American Airways). A second Goose was also purchased from Jack Bickell, of McIntyre-Porcupine Mines, who was later the President of Victory Aircraft and Chairman of Avro Canada. After disposing of two Goose aircraft to the RCAF, Bickell finally settled on a Grumman Widgeon, a type that was rejected by the RCAF as being unsuitable, despite a hard selling job by Grumman at a price less than ⅓ that of the Goose.

Several of these used ex-U.S. civil aircraft were ferried into Canada prior to Pearl Harbor, carrying Canadian civil markings, presumably due to the continued U.S. neutrality. However, the RCAF Goose files do not confirm that any of these aircraft were imported via Emerson, Manitoba, or the other pairs of border airfields.

After the U.S. entered the war, additional Goose aircraft were obtained, via Lend Lease (for use on the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan [BCATP]) and the U.S. Navy, right up to late 1944. This even included some ex-civil aircraft overhauled by the U.S. Navy for Britain, then sold to Canada on a cash basis.

As a final gesture, by early 1945, with the war nearly over, the bean-counters had caught up with the fact that several of the used ex-civil Goose aircraft had made it up to Canada without benefit of Export Licenses. This, plus arguments over the Lend-Lease aircraft which had already been returned to Britain, kept them busy filling the Goose procurement file with letters until after VE Day.

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Abbreviations

A/V/M	Air Vice Marshal
B.C.	British Columbia
BR	Bomber & Reconnaissance
CAS	Chief of Air Staff
DND	Department of National Defence
DoT	Department of Transport
F/L	Flight Lieutenant
F/O	Flying Officer
km	kilometre
m	metre
RAF	Royal Air Force
RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force
S/L	Squadron Leader
TCA	Trans-Canada Airlines
U.K.	United Kingdom
U.S.	United States
USAAC	United States Army Air Corps
USS	United States Ship

THE POLITICS OF BCATP BASE SELECTION IN THE CANADIAN PRAIRIES

By Rachel Lea Heide

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Because patronage has been an integral part of Canada's political system since before Confederation, suggesting that politicians might not have used a large expenditure of public funds to reward the politically faithful and punish the politically wayward is usually met with disbelief. Nevertheless, citing precedents of patronage from the past or present is not justification for assuming all government endeavours were patronage-driven. To avoid anachronistic errors, one must look at the circumstances surrounding each expenditure in question and weigh the evidence as to whether or not patronage or meritocracy determined the outcome. Such prudence must be exercised when considering the driving force behind aerodrome selection for the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) during the Second World War.

In 1981, B. Greenhous and N. Hillmer put forward the pioneer school of thought on this issue; they suggested that the tenacity of a community's lobbying effort mostly likely influenced the final outcome of base selection.[2] Subsequently, in 1989, Peter Conrad—based on research conducted for his master's thesis on the BCATP in Saskatchewan[3]—explicitly asserted that the Liberal government of WLM King granted schools according to political affiliation:

> Most Liberal constituencies received a school early in the war, followed by constituencies that had a CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] member of Parliament, especially those CCF constituencies that had previously been Liberal … . Few Conservative constituencies received facilities.[4]

A different story is put forth by the records of WLM King. CG Power, CD Howe, the Department of Transport (DoT), the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), and the Aerodrome Development Committee (ADC). According to the documents in these files, the base selection process was intentionally designed to delegate authority away from those potentially possessing political agendas. Despite the expectations of Canadian constituents and politicians that patronage would govern the selection process, the responsibility was given to the RCAF and the DoT because jointly they had the expertise to select sites that would meet the necessary technical criteria. Examination of the lobbying efforts of four Liberal communities in Saskatchewan—Big River, Shaunavon, Melville, and Estevan—will show how failure to meet technical criteria determined the decisions of the Department of National Defence for Air.

In September 1939, the Canadian government accepted in principle the British government proposal to train 30,000 pilots and 20,000 other air crew annually in Canada.[5] Immediately afterward, constituents began lobbying members of parliament, DoT officials, RCAF officers, and the prime minister, intending to bring their communities to the government's attention, thus improving their chances of hosting a training school. Some arguments justifying communities' requests were echoed throughout the lobbying period. Attempting to influence government officials to decide in their favour, lobbyists claimed that aerodromes would alleviate financial hardships left by the Depression, would provide defence against enemy aerial attack, could be situated on important post-war air routes, or could benefit from climatic conditions conducive to flying.[6]

Other lobbying themes changed as the war progressed. How building in a certain community could benefit the war effort was an early theme used. According to the mayor of Mossbank, Saskatchewan, this meant stimulating interest in the war effort: "the work and presence amongst us of many members of the Air Force would give our people a new spirit, make them conscious

they are directly interested in the successful issue of the war, stimulate recruiting, [and] arouse their national feelings."[7] Other communities saw themselves as large resources of recruits waiting to be taken advantage of. For example, lobbyists of Grande Prairie, Alberta, highlighted that in their district of 75,000 people, there were large numbers of young men available who would likely be interested in attending a training school locally built.[8]

The claims that the nationality of an area should play a decisive role in aerodrome selection were unique to Saskatchewan. Two communities—Weyburn and Kelvington—argued that having a population [that] was mostly Canadian, British, and American was "more desirable than if such a population was foreign born."[9] On the other hand, Melville and Mossbank were of the opinion that unifying diverse cultures with a common goal—hosting an aerodrome—would ensure the efficiency of the airport for the good of the war effort. According to Mossbank's mayor, the presence of air force personnel would "weld together the various races in our midst into one United Canada and strong Commonwealth of Nations."[10]

After the initial selection of aerodromes, arguments about the benefits an area could offer gave way to a new emphasis on the communities' strong war effort and how a training school was a fitting reward for their patriotism. The Board of Trade in Boissevain, Manitoba, wrote how over $3000 had been collected for the Red Cross, how the town had doubled its allotment for Victory Loan and War Savings Campaigns, and how the residents had collected so much scrap iron that the railroad halted collection of more iron until the backlog in shipping was cleared away.[11] Lobbyists in Moosomin, Saskatchewan, claimed the town deserved a training school because it had "the record for the whole of Canada for percentage of enlistments in the military, air, and naval forces of the Dominion."[12]

As the BCATP infrastructure neared completion around the end of 1942, time was clearly running out for communities still not selected. Apart from complaints of being overlooked in comparison to less deserving regions,[13] there was particular stress on the social amenities a community could offer young airmen. Shaunavon, for example, argued that recreational facilities such as theatres, dance halls, swimming pools, golf courses, tennis courts, base ball diamonds, skating and curling rinks—all of which Shaunavon had—should be considered as important as finding level land for airfields.[14]

Nevertheless, the most notable tactic of this late lobbying period was the discussion of political consequences if an area was not selected—a tactic that was unique to Saskatchewan. Kelvington highlighted the positive effect granting an aerodrome would have: "the establishment of an airport in the constituency would strengthen the [Liberal] party's claim for support at the next election, and it would also assist considerably in getting a government supporter elected at the next provincial election."[15] On a more ominous note, while lobbying on behalf of Moosomin, the provincial Minister of Highways warned that "if [the visiting delegation is] refused an opportunity to put their claims before the responsible people, … not only will the Dominion candidates suffer, but it will be a very serious matter provincially.[16]

Because of the exigencies of war and the commitments the Canadian government made to the British in the December 1939 BCATP Agreement,[17] the Minister of National Defence for Air (CG Power) could not use alleviating financial hardships, rewarding communities for large contributions to the war effort, nor securing Liberal votes as reasons for selecting aerodrome sites. In order for Britain to be able to plan its war effort, the Canadian government had committed itself to an aerodrome construction schedule as well as a training schedule. After opening the first schools by May 1940, the RCAF was committed to graduating each month 520 pilots with elementary training, 544 pilots with advanced training, 340 observers, and 580 wireless operator-air gunners.[18]

Insisting that patronage dictate aerodrome selection could have been a greater detriment to the Liberal government's political future than failing to rewarding or attract Liberal votes. Missing deadlines would have tarnished Canada's reputation with its Allies and slowed the Allied war effort. If the government had insisted that only areas of Liberal affiliation be selected, many suitable sites would have been disqualified,[19] and this could have delayed the opening of some aerodromes.

Besides potentially delaying trainee output (thus affecting Britain's fight for air supremacy over Germany), pilot quality could have been diminished if training schools were built in certain areas for political reasons, despite poor aerodrome conditions or weather conditions that would continually ground flying and shorten trainees' practical experience. Any government that inefficiently handled its commitments—or lost a war—would soon be removed from political office in the next election.[20] Ensuring timely and high-quality aerodromes was of the utmost importance.

Because the Canadian government had agreed in December 1939 to open the first training school by May 1940, construction had to commence immediately in the spring. While the fall weather still permitted, surveys of potential sites had to be conducted so the preparation of plans, blueprints, and financial estimates could be completed before the end of winter. To expedite the selection and construction of aerodromes, the Liberal government looked to its technical experts: the RCAF and the DoT. The RCAF had been training small numbers of pilots during the interwar period;[21] hence, these officers knew what training aerodromes needed to function. The DoT had built the Trans Canada Airway during the interwar period; consequently, these officials were bringing first hand aerodrome selection experience to the BCATP. Besides being aware of what geographical areas of Canada were most conducive to air training, these officials also knew what topographical conditions would result in exorbitant costs.[22]

The official delegation of power away from elected politicians and into the hands of technical experts occurred by Privy Council Order 3710 17 November 1939. While giving the DoT the responsibility of investigating and surveying potential sites, preparing aerodrome layouts, purchasing land, and building the airports, the government delegated final selection authority to the RCAF.[23] The Liberal government had the confidence to delegate this power away from itself because the technical experts came to the BCATP project with predetermined technical criteria formulated by experience to ensure an aerodrome was safe from hazards, usable in adverse weather, and could be built quickly and economically.

Certain parts of Canada were immediately disqualified from aerodrome selection. Flying accidents in densely populated areas endangered civilians, and the Rocky mountains of British Columbia and Alberta were dangerous flying hazards for pilots. The government did not want military training schools within five miles [8 kilometres (km)] of the American border to avoid violating American neutrality if trainees became lost and landed across the border. The Atlantic and Pacific coasts were vulnerable to enemy attack and crowded by defence aerodromes protecting Canadian shores.[24]

When adjudicating potential aerodrome sites, technical officers inspected such things as the amount of levelling and grading a site needed, the number of obstacles that would have to be moved (buildings, fences, telephone poles), and the types of flying hazards that could not be removed (chimneys, water towers, radio transmitters, bridges). The surrounding area would have to be suitable for safe forced landings, and railroad services and highway connections were necessary. Also considered by selection officials were land values, climatic patterns, the slope of land for drainage, and the availability of utilities, gravel, and other construction supplies.[25]

Photo: DND

Once potential sites were fully investigated, the DoT would report to the Aerodrome Development Committee (ADC) with surveys, blueprints, and estimates. This body of RCAF officers would reject unreasonable set-ups, recommend reductions in cost for promising sites, and approve suitable plans. Although the RCAF had to get each site approved by the Minister of National Defence for Air (CG Power), neither this elected politician nor his politically appointed deputy minister—both of whom had vested interests in the success of the Liberal party in power—inserted political influence by changing the final recommendations of the ADC. Furthermore, CG Power never refused to forward an ADC recommendation for the standard royal assent of the Privy Council. The chain of command evident in the investigation files shows that the RCAF selected the aerodrome sites, while the elected politicians merely "rubber-stamped" these experts' recommendations.

Despite constituents' expectations of patronage, and despite powerful arguments used by lobbyists, selection officials compared sites with consideration to aerodrome safety, as well as speed, economy, and efficiency of construction. The unsuccessful attempts of three Saskatchewan towns to secure aerodromes—Big River, Shaunavon, and Melville—and the eventual success of Estevan, Saskatchewan, clearly show how meeting the minimum technical criteria for satisfactory aerodromes determined base selection.

Located in the federal constituency represented by the Prime Minister, WLM King, lobbyists of Big River assumed that the government would be interested in using their already built (yet abandoned) airport instead of building a new aerodrome.[26] The DoT informed the Prime Minister's Office that this airport would not be used because Big River was too remote for a training school, and because the town did not have enough housing and businesses to handle an institution as large as a training school.[27]

Nine months later, letters dated 3 September 1940 inundated the Prime Minister from the Board of Trade, the Canadian Legion, the local Liberal Association, and the Elks Lodge. All of these letters highlighted the perceived ideal nature of Big River's airport and the fact that the province was willing to turn the property over to the federal government.[28]

In response, the private secretary of the Prime Minister reiterated that the technical officers would not reverse their decision: Big River was too remote, and the town's facilities were too limited.

The secretary also informed the lobbyists of the policy concerning lobbying for BCATP bases, as set out by the Minister of National Defence for Air on 13 June 1940:

> I beg that the public generally—boards of trade, municipal councils, all interested persons—will refrain from making further representations. Those representations should not have and will not have the effect of changing the decisions arrived at by the technical officers. In this respect, I appeal as well to my colleagues … . Over-energetic representations made in the interest of particular localities can serve only to retard progress and to divert from their duties officers already completely engrossed in work of primary importance.[29]

Consequently, King felt "it would be quite impossible for him to make direct representations on behalf of any particular site after a decision in that matter had once been made by the technical officers concerned."[30] The historical record contains no more attempts by King nor Big River lobbyists to win favourable consideration for this particular abandoned airport.

While it could be seen immediately that the town of Big River was too remote and did not have the infrastructure to handle an aerodrome and its large population, Shaunavon initially appeared to show more promise, although investigation later showed that this area also failed to meet the necessary technical criteria. The Board of Trade argued that their district had weather suitable to air training, as evidenced by the existence of other training schools in southern Saskatchewan and Alberta.[31] These lobbyists also stressed the town's large financial support of the war effort, despite the numerous crop failures.[32]

Prime Minister MacKenzie King steps from the RCAF Liberator. Photo: DND

Upon preliminary investigation in mid-July 1941, the technical officers concluded that the large amounts of grading necessary, even for the most promising sites, rendered these fields not worth developing.[33] Approximately a year later, while looking for replacements for four existing schools, the RCAF noted Shaunavon as a possibility. Nevertheless, inspection again revealed that much grading was required, gravel costs were high, and the top soil was poor. When the ADC considered the DoT's findings, the Committee ruled that the winds were unfavourable for an Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS), and that bringing gravel 26 miles [42 km] by train and an additional 2.5 miles [4 km] by truck was too expensive.[34] Shaunavon's bid for an aerodrome came to an end in August 1942 when the Deputy Minister of National Defence for Air informed lobbyists that the RCAF was expanding existing aerodromes, to accommodate increased output, rather than building new aerodromes."[35]

Photo: DND

Capt. W. W. Kelland, Resident Engineer for the Department of Transport at work in his construction camp office.

The lack of success of Melville lobbyists to obtain a BCATP base shows how exceptions were not made to selection criteria in order to ensure that loyal Liberal votes were rewarded. The fact that the many sites suggested by the residents were rejected continually by technical officials also shows that persistent lobbying did not change decisions that were based on technical criteria. In mid-December 1939, the RCAF expressed interest in the Melville area since building an aerodrome in that part of Saskatchewan would provide a more even provincial distribution of schools, as well as easier administration and personnel movement.[36] Nevertheless, subsequent investigation by technical experts found that no sites were "suitable for cheap and quick development."[37]

Over the summer months of 1940, lobbyists argued otherwise. Town officials had surveyed the district and found numerous sites that could take advantage of affordable water and gravel supplies, as well as the local rail lines.[38] The Board of Trade also noted that a local BCATP school would stimulate increased enlistments and financial donations, and the school would also unite a diverse population in a common endeavour, as well as provide an airport for post-war aviation.[39]

In response to the persistence of Melville lobbyists, the DoT looked over the area again, only to report after "two aerial inspections and exhaustive ground surveys" that there were no suitable sites.[40] Besides the area being very rolling, all fields contained numerous potholes, which meant "tremendous amounts of dirt movement." In some cases, hills ten feet [3 metres] high would have to be levelled, which again added to the expense and construction time. According to one inspector, the most suitable site in the area would take a year to develop, which was too long to satisfy the training schedule.[41]

As lobbyists suggested potential sites, technical officers reported that these sites failed to meet necessary criteria.[42] In July 1942, the ADC considered the DoT's latest findings: the Melville set-up only met the criteria of an EFTS, not a Service Flying Training School (SFTS) because no emergency landing fields could be located within the 5 to 25 mile [8 to 40 km] radius of the main aerodrome.

Nevertheless, because the cost of levelling off the site was extremely high for an EFTS, the proposal was not approved.[43] In September, the ADC determined that the Melville site was not suitable for any other possibility. An SFTS could not be built because the necessary two emergency landing fields could not be located, and the set-up did not meet Operational Training Unit requirements because it lacked emergency landing fields as well as an air firing and bombing range.[44]

When the RCAF needed an SFTS for the beginning of 1944, Melville was considered again, but these new inspections revealed that forced landings were dangerous because of the rolling nature of the district. The amount of grading necessary to construct level emergency landing fields would be expensive and precluded construction from meeting the early 1944 deadline. The ADC selected a superior set-up found at Morden, Manitoba.[45]

Because Estevan eventually hosted a BCATP base after much lobbying, this effort appears to be an example of vigourous representations resulting in a decision's reversal. Nonetheless, careful examination of Estevan's investigation history shows that it was not Estevan's Liberal affiliation, financial blackmail, nor persistent lobbying that won the town a base. Rather, one technical consideration delayed the town's selection, and once this obstacle was removed, technical experts were free to select Estevan as an aerodrome.

In December 1939, constituents brought their area to the government's attention, arguing that building a training school in Estevan would not only relieve the hardships of unemployment, but that its close proximity to the American border would be an asset to post-war aviation.[46] When the preliminary investigation was conducted in September 1940, inspectors found suitable fields, as well as abundant water, power, gravel, and road connections.[47] Nevertheless, being within four miles [6.4 km] of the international boundary meant the RCAF could not develop the site.[48] In November 1939, the Chief of the Air Staff (A/V/M [Air Vice Marshal] GM Croil) issued a memorandum explaining that the objection to establishing flying training schools so close to the international boundary in time of war is that in the event of a forced landing in a neutral country, the aircraft and occupants would be interned for the duration of the war. As belligerents, we are not allowed to fly over the territory of a neutral state.[49]

Attempting to solve the problem of pilots getting lost and flying into American skies, the mayor suggested that two local river valleys could serve as excellent lines of demarkation for navigating. Because the climate was clear in the Estevan area, lost pilots could easily see these valleys, reorient themselves, and return to Canadian air spaces without incident.[50]

After the American President's speech declaring "all aid to Britain short of an expeditionary force," proponents of an aerodrome believed that the obstacle to being selected had been removed.[51] While highlighting how other fields were just as close to the border as Estevan was, and while suggesting that railway lines in the vicinity could serve as navigational aids, the Board of Trade informed the Minister of Transport that both the mayors of towns in North Dakota and the American federal government supported an aerodrome at Estevan. Hence, no one would cause problems if trainees landed in their American territory.[52]

Unsure if the RCAF would reverse its decision based on changes in American attitudes, the Board of Trade offered an additional incentive—veiled blackmail based on the town's past financial problems and present war campaign donations:

Unless some effective effort is made by the Federal Government to re-establish the financial balance of this community, further contributions to Red Cross, War Loan Bonds, and War Savings Certificates will greatly suffer. This town and vicinity has a most enviable record for assistance to all Government enterprises when called upon … . There will be a great falling off in contributions if there is not something done very quickly in order to restore confidence and offset our losses … . All of us are anxious that no such slump be allowed to develop as once the incentive to give is discouraged, it is a long and difficult uphill struggle to again establish the attitude which gives generously.[53]

This threat was unnecessary, for the change in the United States government's attitude was the removal of the only impediment to building an aerodrome at Estevan. In February 1941, the ADC noted that "present international relations" would allow a training school so close to the American border, and consequently, DoT officials were directed to make a detailed survey of the Estevan sites. By July, the ADC gave its approval to selecting Estevan as the location of an SFTS for the Royal Air Force.[54]

The fact that most BCATP bases were located in Liberal ridings is not proof that base selection was governed by patronage. The majority of the ridings in Canada before and after the March 1940 election were Liberal. After the 1940 election, 12 of the 21 ridings in Saskatchewan had voted for Liberal representatives. In Manitoba, 14 of the 17 ridings were Liberal. Of the prairie provinces, only in Alberta did non-Liberal ridings outnumber Liberal ridings: 10 New Democracy ridings (formerly Social Credit) compared to 7 Liberal ridings.

Although there was not an abundance of non-Liberal ridings from which to choose, these ridings not only received consideration, but the majority of them hosted bases. In Saskatchewan, 2 of 3 Conservative ridings and 2 of the 5 CCF ridings hosted schools. Contrary to Peter Conrad's assertion, only one of the CCF ridings selected had previously voted Liberal, while two of the CCF ridings rejected had been Liberal. In Manitoba, only one of the three non-Liberal ridings did not receive a school, while six Liberal ridings failed to win a training base.

Politicians' papers, [as well as] DoT, RCAF, and ADC files document a selection process that was based on choosing sites according to technical merit. Communities lobbied, using a variety of tactics, but it was not these arguments to elected representatives that determined what areas were selected to host aerodromes. Instead, politicians delegated selection authority to technical experts with the aim of building safe and economical set-ups on time. The civilian government never usurped the authority given to its subordinated military by reversing or dictating decisions to suit political agendas. Consequently, the selection of BCATP bases can be seen as an example of the civil-military relations in the 1940s, where the civilian government assigned tasks to the military, but where the military was given the freedom and power to complete its tasks, without interference, according to its expertise.

Although some historians have assumed that the Liberal government used BCATP expenditures to secure votes for future elections, the primary source evidence does not support this assertion: non-Liberal ridings won bases, and many persistent and faithful Liberal ridings did not. Instead of using BCATP base selection for patronage rewards, the Liberal government removed itself from the selection process and left the task to be completed by technical experts, thus ensuring that war needs were met. The greater good of the Liberal party's future in power was the motivating factor in avoiding patronage and letting technocracy dominate, for it was more politically expedient to ensure that Canada's war commitments were met and that an Allied victory in the war was achieved.

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Abbreviations

A/V/M	Air Vice Marshal
Ab	Alberta
ADC	Aerodrome Development Committee
BCATP	British Commonwealth Air Training Plan
CCF	Co-operative Commonwealth Federation
DoT	Department of Transport
EFTS	Elementary Flying Training School
km	kilometre
MG	manuscript group
MP	member of parliament
RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force
RG	record group
SFTS	Service Flying Training School
Sk	Saskatchewan

Notes

1. Based on research for *The Politics of British Commonwealth Air Training Plan Base Selection in Western Canada* (Ottawa: Carleton University MA Thesis, 2000). This research was made possible by a $1000.00 Research Grant from the *Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society*, Regina, Saskatchewan.

2. B. Greenhous and N. Hillmer, "The Impact of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan on Western Canada: Some Saskatchewan Case Studies," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 16 (Fall–Winter 1981): 134.

3. Peter Conrad, *Saskatchewan in War: The Social Impact of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan on Saskatchewan* (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan MA Thesis, 1987).

4. Peter Conrad, *Training For Victory: The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan in the West* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1989), pp. 14, 16.

5. 1939 09 28 telegram from Secretary of State for External Affairs to Dominions Secretary, in *Documents on Canadian External Relations* (Department of External Affairs, 1974), Document 690, pp. 556–7.

6. Rachel Lea Heide, "The Politics of BCATP Base Selection in Canada," paper presented at the *Canadian Aviation Historical Society* (Ottawa Chapter) 2000 02 24, p. 5.

7. 1940 01 11 letter from PJ Rawlinson (Secretary-Treasurer Village of Mossbank) to Minister of National Defence, RG [Record Group] 12 Volume 2332 File 5168-803 part 1.

8. 1940 06 24 letter from PJ Tooley (Chairman, Aviation Committee, Grand Prairie Board of Trade and Chamber of Commerce) to CD Howe (Minister of Transport and Supply). MG [Manuscript Group] 27 III B20 Volume 93 CD Howe Papers File 61-5-2 (Airports – Alberta Folder 2).

9. Undated "Brief of City of Weyburn for Presentation to Honourable CD Howe, Minister of Munitions and Transport," RG 12 Volume 2326 File 5168-699 (part 1); 1941 10 17 letter from AM Millar (President Kelvington Liberal Association) to CD Howe (Minister of Munitions and Transport), MG 27 III B20 Volume 93 File 61-5-3 (Airports – Saskatchewan).

10. 1940 01 11 letter from PJ Rawlinson (Secretary-Treasurer Village of Mossbank) to Minister of National Defence, RG 12 Volume 2332 File 5168-803 part 1; undated "Brief on Melville Air Port Submitted by the Town of Melville and Melville and District Board of Trade," RG 12 Accession 1993–94/110 Box 21 File 5168-C150 (Part 1).

11. 1942 06 21 Letter from Geo McDonald (citizen of Boissevain) to CD Howe (Minister of Munitions and Supplies), MG 27 III B20 Volume 94 File 61-5-4 (Airports – Manitoba).

12. 1941 08 l8 letter from AT Procter (Minister of Highways Saskatchewan) to CG Power (Minister of National Defence for Air), MG 27 III B20 Volume 93 File 61-5-3 (Airports – Saskatchewan).

13. 1941 07 12 letter from Frank Hopkins (Town Clerk Town of Biggar) to Department of Transport, MG 27 III B20 Volume 93 File 61-5-3 (Airport – Saskatchewan).

14. 1942 03 21 petition from Town of Shaunavon to JA Wilson (Director of Air Services Department of Transport), RG 12 Accession 1993–94/110 Box 28 File 5168-C476.

15. 1941 10 17 letter from AM Millar (President Kelvington Liberal Association) to CD Howe (Minister of Munitions and Supply), MG 27 III B20 Volume 93 File 61-5-3 (Airports – Saskatchewan).

16. 1941 08 26 letter from AT Procter (Minster of Highways Saskatchewan) to CD Howe (Minister of Munitions and Supply), MG 27 III B20 Volume 93 File 61-5-3 (Airports – Saskatchewan).

17. 1939 12 17, *British Commonwealth Air Training Plan Agreement* in RG 25 Volume 1858A File 72-T-38.

18. Ibid.

19. Prairie training schools built in non-Liberal ridings included #15 EFTS Regina, Sk [Saskatchewan], #23 EFTS Davidson, Sk, #4 SFTS Saskatoon, Sk, #8 SFTS Weyburn, Sk, #17 SFTS Souris, Mb [Manitoba], #5 EFTS Lethbridge, Ab [Alberta], #7 SFTS Macleod, Ab.

20. Rachel Lea Heide, "The Politics Behind BCATP Base Selection in Saskatchewan," paper presented at the *Underhill Graduate Students' Colloquium*, held at Carleton University 2000 03 04, p. 11.

21. 1939 09 28 Minutes of Emergency Council of Cabinet in *Documents on Canadian External Relations* (Department of External Affairs, 1974), Document 689, pp. 552–5.

22. 1939 10 13 Memorandum in RG 24 Volume 4775 File HQ 103-74/68 Part I (Cooperation Between the Department of National Defence and Transport on Aerodromes).

23. 1940 11 17, Privy Council Order 3710 in RG 12 Volume 624 File 11-6-9 (Regulations for BCATP sites).

24. W.A.B. Douglas and S.F. Wise, *The Official History of the Royal Canadian Air Force*, Volume II: *The Creation of a National Air Force* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), p. 220; Conrad, *Training For Victory*, *Op. Cit*., p. 14; Leslie Roberts, *There Shall Be Wings: A History of the Royal Canadian Air Force* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, and Company Limited, 1959), p. 125.

25. 1939 11 03 memorandum and blank "Preliminary Investigation Report" from AD McLean (Superintendent Airways) to Airways Inspectors and Airways Engineers, RG 24 Volume 4775 File HQ 103-74/68 (part 1).

26. 1940 01 31 telegram from Big River Liberal Association to WLM King (MP [Member of Parliament] Prince Albert), MG 26 J1 Volume 283 Reel C4566 p. 239588–9.

27. 1940 02 15 letter from WJ Bennett (Private Secretary Minister of Transport) to HRL Henry (Private Secretary Prime Minister), MG 26 J1 Volume 289 Reel 4570 p. 244388.

28. 1940 09 03 telegrams from Board of Trade, RM Bell (Secretary of Canadian Legion), Geo A Anderson (Exalted Ruler Elks Lodge), Liberal Association to WLM King, MG 26 J1 Volume 283 Reel C4566 pp. 239579, 239582, 239585, 239591.

29. 1940 09 04 letter from HRL Henry (Private Secretary Prime Minister) to Board of Trade, Canadian Legion, Elks Lodge, and Liberal Association, MG 26 J1 Volume 283 Reel C4566 pp. 239580–1, 239583–4, 239586–7, 239592–3.

30. *Ibid*.

31. 1941 06 26 letter from Acting Secretary (Shaunavon Board of Trade) to Deputy Minister of Transport; 1941 06 26 telegram from Shaunavon Board of Trade to CP Edwards (Deputy Minister Transport), RG 12 Accession 1993–94/110 Box 28 File 5168-C476.

32. 1941 06 26 telegram from Shaunavon Board of Trade to CP Edwards (Deputy Minister Transport); 1941 07 08 letter from President Shaunavon Board of Trade to CP Edwards (Deputy Minister Transport), RG 12 Accession 1993–94/110 Box 28 File 5168-C476.

33. 1941 07 17 Preliminary Investigation for RCAF Airport Sites (Shaunavon), RG 12 Accession 1993–94/110 Box 28 File 5168-C476.

34. 1941 07 17 letter from WH Irvine (District Inspector Central Airways) to Controller Civil Aviation Ottawa; 1942 07 31 letter from HA McIntyre (Water Supply Engineer) to Controller Civil Aviation Ottawa, RG 12 Accession 1993–94/110 Box 28 File 5168-C476.

35. 1942 08 05 letter from SL de Carteret (Deputy Minister National Defence for Air) to CR Evans (MP Maple Creek), RG 24 Reel C-5036 File 925-2-212.

36. 1939 12 15 letter from AC McLean (Superintendent of Airways) to District Inspector Central Airways and District Inspector Western Airways, RG 12 Accession 1993–94/110 Box 21 File 5168-C150 (part 1).

37. 1940 01 04 telegram District Inspector to Controller Civil Aviation Ottawa, RG 12 Accession 1993–94/110 Box 21 File 5168-C150 (part 1).

38. 1940 08 31 letter from H Mackay (Secretary Board of Trade) to CD Howe (Minister of Transport), RG 12 Accession 1993–94/110 Box 21 File 5168-C150 (part 1).

39. Undated "Brief on Melville Air Port Submitted by the Town of Melville and Melville and District Board of Trade," RG 12 Accession 1993–94/110 Box 21 File 5168-C150 (Part 1).

40. 1940 09 08 telegram from WH Irvine (District Inspector Central Airways) to Controller Civil Aviation Ottawa, RG 12 Accession 1993–94/110 Box 21 File 5168-C150 (Part 1).

41. 1940 09 09 letter from WH Irvine (District Inspector Central Airways) to Controller Civil Aviation Ottawa, RG 12 Accession 1993–94/110 Box 21 File 5168-C 150 (Part 1).

42. 1941 09 26 letter from JG Gardiner (Minister of Agriculture) to CP Edwards (Deputy Minister Transport); 1941 11 08 letter from WH Irvine (District Inspector of Central Airways) to Controller Civil Aviation Ottawa; 1942 04 22 letter from JG Gardiner (Minister of Agriculture) to CD Howe (Minister of Munitions and Supply), RG 12 Accession 1993–94/110 Box 21 File 5168-C150 (Part 1); 1942 05 06 memorandum from AC McLean (Controller Civil Aviation) to District Inspector Airways, District Airway Engineer, RG 12 Volume 370 File 1223-6 (part 6).

43. 1942 07 21 ADC Minutes of Meeting, RG 12 Volume 371 File 1223-6 (part 7).

44. 1942 09 15 ADC Minutes of Meeting, RG 12 Volume 371 File 1223-6 (part 7).

45. 1943 02 20 letter from SL de Carteret (Deputy Minister National Defence for Air); 1943 05 19 letter from A/C [Air Commodore] TA Lawrence (#2 Training Command) to Secretary DNDA [Department of National Defence for Air], RG 24 Reel C-5036 File 925-2-251-1; 1943 07 06 letter from CP Edwards (Deputy Minister Transport) to KS Maclachlan (Deputy Minister National Defence for Air). RG 24 Reel C-5036 File 925-2-251-2; 1943 07 06 ADC Minutes of Meeting, RG 12 Volume 373 File 1223-6 (part 11).

46. 1939 12 06 letter from JG Gardiner (Minister of Agriculture) to CD Howe (Minister of Transport), RG 12 Volume 2340 File 5168-867 (part I).

47. 1940 09 01 Preliminary Investigation for RCAF Airport Sites (Estevan), RG 12 Volume 2340 File 5168-867 (part 1).

48. 1940 09 06 letter from AD McLean (Superintendent of Airways) to District Inspector Central Airways, RG 12 Volume 2340 File 5168-867 (part 1).

49. 1939 11 15 memorandum from A/V/M GM Croil (Chief of the Air Staff) to Military Secretary, RG 24 Volume 4775 File HQ 103-74/68 (part 1).

50. 1940 10 18 letter from Mayor to CG Power (Minister of National Defence for Air), RG 12 Volume 2340 File 5168-867 (part 1).

51. 1941 01 09 "Roosevelt and Estevan," *The Estevan Mercury*, p. 3a (Saskatchewan Archives Board – Regina, microfilm reel 1.160, Accession #R49-179).

52. 1941 01 14 letter from AE McKay (Secretary Board of Trade) to Jesse P Tripp (MP Oxbow), MG III B20 Volume 93 File 61-5-3 (Airports – Saskatchewan) and RG 12 Volume 2340 File 5168-867 (part 1).

53. Ibid.

54. 1941 02 17 Extract of ADC Minutes of Meeting, RG 12 Volume 2340 File 5168-867 (part 1); 1941 07 18 ADC Submission #219, RG 12 Volume 369 File 1223-6 (part 3).