

WARRIOR

WINTER 2022



Queen Elizabeth II

1926-2022



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Submissions: Text submissions can be either paper, email or electronically produced in Word.

We will format the text for you. No need to centre headings, indent paragraphs etc. Graphics are best submitted electronically; they should be 300 dpi. A jpg file at 300 dpi is acceptable if no compression is used. Please keep your stories under 6 pages if possible.

We will attempt to use any pictures, whatever the format. NOTE WELL: When sending mail of any kind, newsletter articles, letters, membership renewals, donations etc., please ensure the envelope is addressed correctly to:

**Shearwater Aviation Museum Foundation
 or SAM Foundation 12 WING PO BOX
 99000 STATION FORCES HALIFAX
 NS B3K 5X5**

Deadlines for receiving submissions are:

Spring 1 March

Summer 15 June

Winter 15 October

Stories should be no more than 6 pages long. Send only when you have finalized.

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COVER PHOTO & INSIDE COVER:

Canadian Museum of History, has many objects and archival material related to Queen Elizabeth II reign under its care. Caroline Dromaguet, Interim CEO, Canadian War Museum and Canadian Museum of History.

CWM 19780386-028

Princess Elizabeth. Royal Visit to Canada, 1951.

Photograph taken by RCAF photographer Squadron Leader Lloyd Walker.

CWM 19780386-005

The Duke of Edinburgh, Princess Elizabeth, Minister of National Defence Brooke Claxton, and Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent. Royal Visit to Canada, 1951.

Photograph taken by RCAF photographer Squadron Leader Lloyd Walker.

Queen Elizabeth II. Facebook pages from The Greatest Generations Foundation Web pg www.TGGF.org

Special thanks to Valour Park Association for their photos, WWII Canadian military D Day negatives restored. Inside back cover and back cover.



(SEPT 08, 2022) FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS -- A PRINCESS AT WAR: Queen Elizabeth II has died peacefully at Balmoral. Queen Elizabeth II was 96.

During the Second World War, life changed dramatically for the people of Britain, including the Royal Family.

On September 13, 1940, shortly after the start of Germany's bombing campaign on the towns and cities of Britain, five high explosive bombs were dropped on Buckingham Palace.

The Royal Chapel, inner quadrangle, and Palace gates were hit, and several workers were injured. Rather than flee the city under attack, King George VI and his wife, Queen Elizabeth, remained at Buckingham Palace in solidarity with those living through the Blitz. This was a highly symbolic decision and received much attention in the press. The royal couple visited areas of London devastated by air raids, speaking to residents and members of the local emergency services.

The Queen took a keen interest in what was being done to help people who had lost their homes. After Buckingham Palace was bombed, she is reported to have said: 'I am glad we have been bombed. Now we can look the East End in the eye.'

Princess Elizabeth was 13 years old when the war broke out on September 3, 1939. Like many children living in London, Elizabeth and her sister Princess Margaret were evacuated to avoid the dangers of bombing raids. They were sent to Windsor Castle, approximately 20 miles outside of London.

The young princesses were two of over three million people—mainly children—who left cities for the safety of small towns and the countryside during the war. The government's Children's Overseas Reception Board evacuated over 2,600 children to Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United States.

On October 13, 1940, in response to this mass movement of people, Princess Elizabeth gave her first address from the drawing room of Windsor Castle as part of the BBC's Children's Hour to boost public morale. She spoke directly to the children who had been separated from their families as part of the evacuation scheme.

"Thousands of you in this country have had to leave your homes and be separated from your fathers and mothers. My sister Margaret Rose and I feel so much for you, as we know from experience what it means to be away from those you love most of all.

To you living in new surroundings, we send a message of true sympathy, and at the same time, we would like to thank the kind people who have welcomed you to their homes in the country."

Public responses to this broadcast varied. Interviewers from the social research project Mass Observation took to the streets to ask people what they thought to gauge the reaction of the British public. Out of 57 people surveyed, 38 had heard the broadcast. More than 20 people positively commented how "charming," "sweet," "beautiful," or "lovely" Princess Elizabeth sounded, but also that she spoke "very clearly," was "wonderful," and "did very well."

Most people assumed that the speech had been written for her and suggested it was “propaganda” or “a way to ‘keep the population quiet.’” However, several newspapers positively reported the speech and included a photograph of the two princesses at the microphone.

Princess Elizabeth championed more aspects of wartime life and resilience as the war progressed. In 1943, she was photographed tending her allotments at Windsor Castle as part of the government’s “Dig for Victory” campaign, in which people were urged to use gardens and every spare piece of land to grow vegetables to help combat food shortages. Before the Second World War, Britain had relied on food imports from across the world, but when the war started, shipping was threatened by enemy submarines and warships. This resulted in food shortages and led to the rationing of foods such as meat, butter, cheese, eggs, and sugar.

Princess Elizabeth undertook her first inspection of a military regiment during a parade at Windsor Castle on the morning of her sixteenth birthday. She had been given the honorary colonel of the Grenadier Guards, symbolizing her military involvement in the war effort. When Princess Elizabeth turned 18 in 1944, she insisted upon joining the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), the women’s branch of the British Army.

For several years during the war, Britain had conscripted women to join the war effort. Unmarried women under 30 had to join the armed forces or work on the land or in industry. King George ensured his daughter was not given a particular rank in the Army. She started as a second subaltern in the ATS and was later promoted to Junior Commander, the equivalent of Captain.

Princess Elizabeth began her training as a mechanic in March 1945. She undertook a driving and vehicle maintenance course at Aldershot, qualifying on April 14. Newspapers at the time dubbed her “Princess Auto Mechanic.”

A wide range of jobs is available to female soldiers in the ATS: cooks, telephonists, drivers, postal workers, searchlight operators, and ammunition inspectors. Some women were part of anti-aircraft units, although they were not allowed to fire their guns. The jobs were dangerous; during the war, 335 ATS women were killed and many more injured. By June 1945, around 200,000 members of the ATS from across the British Empire served on the home front and in many overseas theaters of war.

While Princess Elizabeth spent most of her days at the training facility, it was close enough to Windsor Castle that the princess would return there each evening rather than sleep at the camp with her fellow ATS members.

The King, Queen, and Princess Margaret visited Princess Elizabeth at the Mechanical Transport Training Section in Camberley, Surrey, and watched her learn about engine maintenance. When describing the visit to LIFE Magazine, the Princess commented, “I never knew there was quite so much preparation [for a royal visit] ...I’ll know another time.”

On May 8, 1945, the war in Europe ended. In London, thousands of people took to the streets to celebrate, flooding Trafalgar Square and the Mall leading up to Buckingham Palace, where the King and Queen greeted them from the balcony.

As the light began to fade and the celebrations continued into the night, Princess Elizabeth, dressed in her ATS uniform, slipped into the crowds with her sister to enjoy the festivities. In 1985, the now Queen spoke to the BBC about how she tried to avoid being spotted, "I remember we were terrified of being recognized, so I pulled my uniform cap well down over my eyes." She described the "lines of unknown people linking arms and walking down Whitehall, and all of us were swept along by tides of happiness and relief." There are reports that the princesses joined a conga dance through the Ritz Hotel as they celebrated with the crowds. "I think it was one of the most memorable nights of my life," she recalled.

Before his passing, Queen Elizabeth served as colonel-in-chief of 16 British Army regiments and corps and many Commonwealth units. As a member of the ATS, she was the first female of the Royal family to be an active-duty member of the British Armed Forces. The Queen is also the last surviving head of state to have served during the Second World War. In her later years, she is often pictured behind the wheel and has been known to diagnose and repair faulty engines, just as she was taught during her wartime service in the ATS.

RIP Queen Elizabeth (1926-2022)

"Every Day is Memorial Day"



The Greatest GENERATIONS Foundation

Web: www.TGGF.org



The Maritime Provinces and Newfoundland were hit particularly hard by Hurricane Fiona in late September as you are all well aware. You could see it on the news nightly as it plodded its way along through the Caribbean, the southern USA, by Bermuda and finally it took a bead on the Maritimes. And did it ever live up to its advance billing! We still watch in amazement (Mid October) as the Power Companies continue to struggle completing the massive repair job everywhere down here. East of Halifax got the worst of it, ruining large parts of Cape Breton, PEI, portions of the southern part of New Brunswick, and Newfoundland. It is now over three weeks as I write this note since it made its appearance and yet, there are still portions of PEI, Cape Breton and Newfoundland that are still trying to get their power back, allowing some sense of normalcy to return to thousands of folks. The south west shore of Newfoundland perhaps took it the hardest, as their built right on the shore line small fishing huts which allowed them to step out the front door and head to their work harvesting the sea, were literally washed out to sea. Regrettably, an elderly woman was swept out to sea and was drowned, with the only happy moment in that story being that she was found the next day floating in the water. Her family was grateful for her discovery and the closure that gave them.

But you know, as Maritimers have done for years, we have a way of stepping up to assist each other at the worst moment of any of their lives. Food that remained was shared, warm clothes appeared for those who had no roof over their heads, the young Premier over there got on his horse and was out with the people very shortly after the fear of going out into the storm subsided, and you could sense the resignation and the hope for the future that was written all over their faces. It just makes everyone feel so small and inconsequential when something like this happens. And in a sense the process is now re-victimizing them all over again, as they wait in lineups literally for days trying to register for one of the government grants of a mere few hundred dollars to replace their food, for emergency repairs to their homes, and for a little hope to return to their tired voices. So perhaps as this Christmas season approaches, we might all consider a donation to the Red Cross or a local charity for the storm repair and relief that these folks are now engaged in. And a few prayers thrown in there for good measure might do us all a lot of good as we watch this continuing debacle of human suffering and heartbreak unfold.

In other happenings, it was back to normal business in Halifax after a two-year Covid break for the Defence and Security Exhibition, which was held the first week in October at the new Trade Centre in Downtown Halifax. Normally run as an adjunct to the Air Show, the two events were separated by five weeks this year and I would have to say they were both very successful. Two great events which grew out of the Shearwater International Air Show have now graduated to the big leagues. Colin Stephenson runs the both of them and is doing an absolutely bang-up job on them. Well done Colin and your team of volunteers for two really well-run events. May we wish you every success in the future as you continue to go from strength to strength.

The resurgence in downtown Halifax has been most remarkable to watch over this two-year period, as apartments and new hotels continue to grow out of the ground, new office buildings are rising on the waterfront, the cruise ship terminal itself has continued its modernization, and now up to four very large cruise ships can be seen on any given day nestled up to the wall, particularly in the fall. A 10,000-visitor day is now getting to be the norm for the cruise ship business which is good for all of Halifax and Nova Scotia. We met some old USN friends who were only going to be in town for a few hours from their cruise ship, and we were able to drive around the new Halifax, take them for a little trip out past Shearwater and into Boondock's restaurant in Eastern Passage at Fisherman's Village for a great lunch, then back to the ship for their daily naps prior to dinner. What a way to travel, but I must say it is a good feeling to be able to show off the new Halifax to anyone who swings by. A far cry from the 1950's and 60's that most of our readers will remember so well with the old freight sheds down on the waterfront.

By the way, while I am thinking of it, there are now three chapters in Canada of the group that Brian Akitt and friends started in Ottawa: The Whispers Gang. There is also one in Victoria which Ian Lightbody has his arms around, and in Halifax there is now one run out of Pilots Pub on the road to Shearwater. This one is run by Steve "Fig" Newton. I was at the last one and it was good to sit down with old friends who, although they live in the local area, we would have little chance of bumping into without a monthly get together on the schedule. So well done guys! And now let's plan a little cross pollination between the three groups. First Thursday of the month at Pilots for starters, and who knows how well this new one will grow.

In SAM news, we finally received permission to do a "soft opening" of the Museum late in July. It was a welcome day when we could finally say we enjoyed our "open to the public moment" again.

Christine and her team are continuing with the polishing and spiffing up around the premises, and making sure that everything is as ship-shape as it can be. There are some really neat new things to both see and do for kids and adults alike, so when you are next in the area of the Museum, please stop in and pay us a visit. Our policy has

not changed: no entrance fees, with a donation box at the front door if you feel so inclined. Pleased to report that other than some minor water issues, SAM itself survived the Hurricane and proved the workmanship of the roof repairs that were done three years ago this coming winter. No Drips, no leaks, no errors! A successfully weathered storm, especially when you look at the damage around Halifax in downed trees alone.

Last week brought the sad news that two more acquaintances have joined the DELTA. I had the pleasure of working for Admiral Chuck Thomas when I was at NDHQ the first time around. He of course ran the Navy, and I was his Class Desk Officer for the Navy's aircraft fleets: the Sea King Helicopters, Trackers and T-33's that flew out of Shearwater, Summerside and Pat Bay. A fine fellow to work for, a terror on the golf course and as nice a man as I have met in a long while. A true gentleman and a very smart one at that. And I noticed an Obit this week for a very fine Tracker Pilot who was in 880, briefing on the other side of the briefing room on the ship, August "Gus" Pokotylo. Being from the two different worlds of HS and VS, we didn't get to spend a lot of time with each other. But you get to know the same guys who are sitting on the other side of the Briefing Room from you, flying on the same sorties and working a datum with them. Gus my friend, you will be sorely missed by family, colleagues and friends.

All of this brings me to the point where all of us at SAM and the Foundation wish to send you our very best wishes for a joyful Christmas season and a Happy New year in 2023. I know that every day that goes by, I feel worse about our Ukrainian friends, who still continue to suffer, and can only hope that they will "find a way" to rid themselves of the Russians who are proving themselves to be this generations unworthy adversaries of the year. And that's all I am going to say about them.

Merry Christmas to all and a happy New Year in 2023! Give your Grand kids a hug. From the waterfront...

John Cody
Sam Foundation





Karen Collacutt-McHarg

We have had a good year with membership payments being made on time so thank you very much, membership payments are due at the first of each year however you can make them anytime before that. (As mom would say” without your generous donations we would cease to exist”) We have provide an envelope enclosed if you would like to send a cheque.

Winners of the 500 Club Ticket Draws 2022

June 3rd 2022	Wayne Dannhauer	\$500 Ticket # 110
Jun 10 th 2022	Rolly West	\$250 Ticket #107
June 17th 2022	Gilbert Schrumm	\$250 Ticket # 23
June 24 th 2022	David Todd	\$250 Ticket #28
June 30th 2022	David Critoph	\$250 Ticket #66
June 30th 2022 Monthly	Mary Lue Eldridge	\$300 Ticket #085
June 30th 2022 Canada Day	John Luc	\$500 Ticket # 009
July 8th2022	Paul Baiden	\$250 Ticket #098
July 15 th 2022	Denise Corkum	\$250 Ticket #105
July15th2022 423 Birthday	Peter Nordland	\$250 Ticket #60
July 22nd 2022	Douglas Paul	\$250 Ticket #051
July 29th 2022	Gordon Soutter	\$250 Ticket #093
July 29 th 2022 end of month	Edgar Keats	\$300 Ticket # 033
Aug 5 th 2022 CYAW birthday	Gordon Crumpler	\$500 Ticket #034
Aug 12 th 2022	Mick Stephenson	\$250 Ticket #001
Aug 19 th 2022	John Cody	\$250 Ticket #423
Aug 26 th 2022	Ron Caudle	\$250 Ticket # 101
Aug 26 th 2022 monthly	Jack Ouellette	\$300 Ticket # 086
Aug 26 th 2022 Final draw	Patti Adam /Anne Teasdale / Ann Heaton	\$500 Ticket #048

I wanted to take a moment and remember Elaine Elliott one of our foundation members, Elaine passed away in Aug this year. Elaine helped me with the editing of the Warrior magazine as she did with mom over the years, Elaine was teacher to both of my girls as well as making mittens and hats for our auctions for many years. She will be missed dearly.

A special friend to Shearwater and all that knew him, Mr. Ron Caudle was always at the Shearwater rink where I skated and taught figure skating, he and his boys were fixtures over the years involved in many sports. He will be remembered fondly by many.



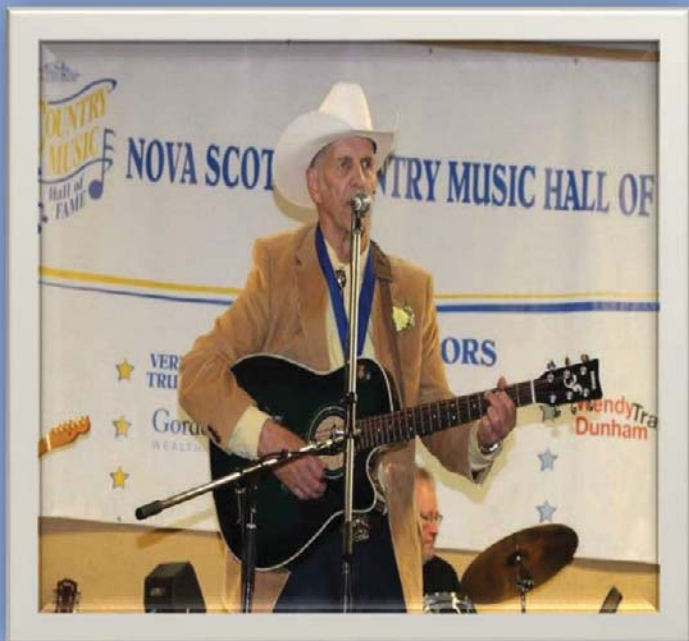
Ronald Henry Caudle, Sr. – 87, Truro, passed away peacefully on Sunday, August 28, 2022, at Colchester East Hants Health Centre, Truro, with his family by his side. Born in Truro, he was a son of the late George and Alice (McCallum) Caudle. Ron began his 33-year career in the Canadian Navy in 1955, serving on several ships including HMCS Bonaventure, Athabaskan, Iroquois, and Ottawa. Most of his time was served at CFB Shearwater with postings to Prince Edward Island and Alberta thrown in. He rose to the rank of Chief Warrant Officer before retiring in 1988. In his early years, Ron was an active participant in many sports including basketball, football, rugby, and broomball just to name a few. He later turned his interest to golf and spent many a day on the fairways and greens. Ron was a member of the Enfield, Elmsdale and District Lions Club as well as the Elmsdale Legion, where he was always ready to offer up his time for any event. Ron will be lovingly remembered by his wife of 66 years, Eileen (Henderson); sons, Ron Jr. (Sylvia), Kitchener, Ontario; Mike (Debbie), Wellington, Nova Scotia; Ted (Dana), St. John's, Newfoundland, loving grandchildren, Matthew (Shannon), Michelle, Monica, Kristen, Kori, Jordan (Amy), Gordon, Riley, Mark, Tim; great grandsons, Nathaniel, Brysin, Cole, Brody, Caidan; sister, Shirley MacPhee; brothers-in-law, Dave (Judy) Henderson, Fred (Lorraine) Henderson; many nieces and nephews.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year to you and your family

Karen



A BIG thank you to NOVA SCOTIAS SINGING COWBOY Robert Fralic (Fritz) for all your entertainment and service.



Robert Fralic (Fritz) WO 1st Class - joined 1956 - retired 1986

Bob joined the Canadian Forces in 1956. Serving on many ships, including the Bonaventure. He has written many songs and poems over the years. Some Poems have been published in some of the past Warriors. For many years Bob has volunteered his musical talents to Charity's here and abroad. He was the base Santa for many years in Shearwater. Always ready to entertain, it's what he loved to do. Performing with his guitar was his hobby. Having been in several groups spanning over 60 years. In October 2013 Bob was inducted into the Nova Scotia Country Music Hall of Fame. His picture hangs today in The Hank Snow Museum in Liverpool, NS. Also known as Nova Scotia's Singing Cowboy.



SAMF MEMBERSHIP DONATION FORM

**Note: MEMBERSHIP YEAR IS
JAN 1 ST – DEC 31 ST**

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Sustaining \$100 yr Regular \$50 yr

Family up to 7 \$300yr

Additional Donation \$ _____

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Restoration Dinner Auction



Note: If "In Memory or Honour " Please provide name and address of recipient for the family to receive a letter of acknowledgement from the office administrator.

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Phone: 902-461-0062 or

Toll Free: 1-888-497-7779

Fax: 902-461-1610

Email: samf@samfoundation.ca

WALL OF HONOUR

Guidelines for designing your “Wall of Honour” Tile.

The tile used is made from high quality marble which is 12 inches square. The tile can be sand blasted in various ways to suit your wishes. All lettering will be in upper case and the tile will be mounted in the diamond orientation as opposed to a square orientation. All Text will run horizontally across the tile.

The options are:

Option A: One half tile 12" X 12" x 17" and triangular in shape with up to 5 rows of 3/4" letters for a maximum of 60 letters and spaces. The longest row can accommodate up to 20 letters and spaces. The remaining 4 rows will decrease in length as the border/edge of the tile dictates. It should be noted that the upper half of the tile will start with a short row and the bottom half will start with a long row.

Option B: The full tile with up to 6 rows of 1" letters for a maximum of 55 letters and spaces. The two centre rows can accommodate up to 16 letters and spaces. The remaining rows will decrease as the edge of the tile dictates.

Option C: The full tile with up to 10 rows of 3/4" letters for a maximum of 120 letters and spaces. The two centre rows can accommodate 20 letters and spaces. The remaining rows will decrease as the edge of the tile dictates.

Option D: The “Buddy” Tile - sold only as a full tile. This tile is divided into 4 quarters - each 6" X 6". Each quarter can accommodate up to 6 rows of 1/2" letters for a maximum of 48 letters and spaces. The two centre rows can accommodate up to 12 letters and spaces with the remaining rows decreasing as the tile edge dictates.

Option A



\$300

Option B & C



\$600

Option D



\$600

Wall Tiles may be purchased through monthly installments.

Half Tiles - \$100 day of purchase - \$100 per month for the following two months.

Full Tiles - \$200 day of purchase - \$ 100 per month for the following four months.



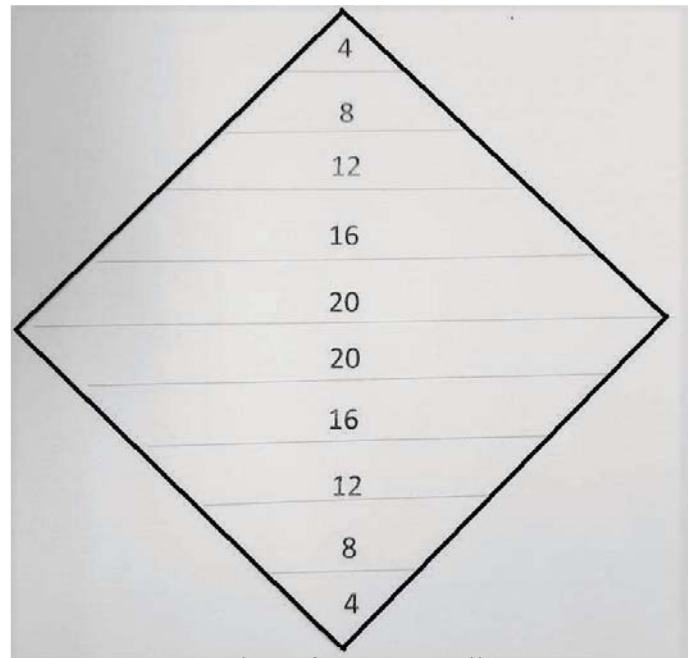
(Wall Tiles (continued))

ENGRAVING REQUEST

The colour of the tile will be 'Belmont Rose'. If the submission requires any alteration, the subscriber will be contacted by phone or email by the coordinator for further discussion. **REMEMBER TO COUNT THE SPACES!**

From:

NAME: _____
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 CITY: _____
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Number of spaces per line

TYPICAL OPTION 'C' above

CIRCLE CHOICE: OPTION 'A' OPTION 'B' OPTION 'C' OPTION 'D'

Method of Payment: Cheque (made payable to SAMF or SAM Foundation) Money Order Cash

VISA/MASTERCARD Card # _____ Exp. Date: _____

3# security code on the back of card _____

For further information, please call the SAMF Secretary: Toll Free: 1-888-497-7779 of (902) 461-0062

Fax (902) 461-1610 Email: samf@samfoundation.ca

Please check engraving details for accuracy before sending. We cannot be responsible for misspelled words on your order form.



PLANNED GIVING

There are two primary ways in which gifts may be made to the Shearwater Aviation Museum Foundation: by giving a gift of money or securities as a Gift (Inter Vivos) or by making provision in your Will for giving of a gift to the Foundation. Remember a Will “speaks” for us from the date of death, since Wills are revocable and thus any Tax Benefits of a gift to the Foundation, through a Will, cannot be realized until one dies. A gift (Inter Vivos) i.e. a gift Now does benefit from the **reduced rate of Income Tax**.

Requests made by Will: In your Will, you may leave a lump sum bequest or a bequest of a specified percentage of the remained of your estate, or a bequest specified as “the rest and residue of your estate” to the Foundation. You may also make a gift of property or securities (stocks, T-Bills, bonds, GIC’s) to the Foundation by means of a provision in your Will.

Income Tax Benefits: A bequest made by your Will confers an important advantage to your estate when the bequest is made to a Charitable organization such as the Shearwater Aviation Museum Foundation. Your lawyer or financial advisor can advise you on such advantages and the implications or limitations of such bequests.

Request of Life Insurance: The gift of a Life Insurance Policy can be an effective way of offering a benefit to the Foundation on your death. You may either give an existing policy which you may no longer need, or a new policy obtained specifically for the purpose of making a donation to the Foundation. In both cases, the Income Tax benefits of such gifts can be very important to the Foundation and you. Consult with your Insurance Agent re the specifics of such benefits.

Or BY MEANS OF A SIMPLE CODICIL TO YOUR CURRENT WILL. (The following is a simple Codicil which can be added to your present Will.)

Codicil to the Last Will and Testament of _____ Which Last Will

and Testament is dated _____ Day of _____ 20____. I hereby add to that said Will as follows:

I give, devise and bequeath to the Shearwater Aviation Museum Foundation the sum of \$ _____ to be paid out of my general estate.

Signed and dated this _____ Day of _____ 20 _____

In the City of _____ Province of _____ Postal Code _____

Witness: _____ Witness: _____

Address: _____ Address: _____ Signature of the Testator

**Thank you for supporting
the
Shearwater Aviation Museum Foundation**

Westland Wapiti Canada's First Bomber

Ernie Cable - SAM Historian

Wapiti in the RAF

Following the First World War the Royal Air Force's (RAF) standard aircraft was the Airco DH 9A two-seat biplane, which provided distinguished service as light bomber during the war. Employed as a general-purpose aircraft its roles included army cooperation, photography, bombing, reconnaissance, and communication duties. The aircraft was particularly valuable in Britain's Middle East and Indian theatres where air superiority was not a factor. The RAF had been given responsibility for the military administration of Iraq and was charged with keeping the peace on the Northwest frontier of India where local tribes harboured long-standing resentment at British interference with their traditional lifestyle of thievery, pillage, and rape. The DH 9As worked hard under abominable conditions and by 1927 required replacement. Westland, a British aircraft manufacturer already had considerable experience in redesigning and constructing the DH 9A and submitted the Wapiti aircraft, derived from the DH 9A, in the replacement competition. Because the Wapiti had a large number of DH 9A components the economy of using common parts appealed to the British Air Ministry. As the Wapiti's performance was considered acceptable it was selected as the DH 9A replacement and ordered into production.

The Wapiti prototype employed wood and fabric wings, tail, control surfaces and the wing struts of the DH 9A. The new and deeper fuselage and new undercarriage created control problems which were corrected by a much larger fin and rudder than the DH 9A. The aircraft was powered by a 420 horsepower Bristol Jupiter VI radial engine.

A total of 565 Wapitis were built by Westland, 517 of which were delivered to the RAF. The major production version was the Wapiti Mark IIA, which had no wooden components. The Wapitis equipped 10 RAF squadrons in Iraq and India and despite being over worked gave reliable though unspectacular service for more than a decade. Indeed, some Wapitis remained in service in India until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

Procuring RCAF Wapitis

Many aviation enthusiasts mistakenly believe that Canada's first experience with bomber operations occurred early in the Second World War when the RCAF's phenomenal growth led to the establishment of eight distinct RCAF bomber squadrons and the creation of Canada's first bomber group. No. 6 (RCAF) Group became a major component of the RAF's Bomber Command and grew to 15 bomber squadrons by war's end.

However, parliamentary records indicate that the RCAF's first encounter with bombers dates back more than a decade before the formation of No. 6 (RCAF) Group. In 1927, the Canadian government decided that the RCAF should forgo its flying activities in support of civilian government departments and be reorganized as a basic Air Force dedicated to national defence. The department of Civil Government Air Operations assumed sole responsibility for civilian roles such as forestry and fishery patrols. To adopt to its new posture the RCAF needed to be equipped with strictly military type aircraft such as bombers, fighters, and flying boats. Accordingly, the RCAF purchased six Armstrong Witworth Siskins, first line British fighters, and six Armstrong Witworth Atlases, the latest RAF army-cooperation aircraft during 1928-29. However, the financially devastating Depression in 1929 deferred all government spending including the reorganization of the RCAF and the acquisition of additional aircraft until the mid-1930s.

In 1933, as the economic situation improved Parliament decried the decrepit condition of the RCAF with only 12 combat aircraft and stated that if Canada was to have an Air Force, it should be properly equipped with

modern aircraft. Parliament wanted to acquire sufficient aircraft and personnel to put the RCAF on a military basis comparable to the country's other defence forces. Budgetary considerations still prohibited the purchase of new aircraft, so the British Air Ministry was approached in 1934 to query the availability of any used aircraft. The first fruits of this enquiry were ten additional Atlas aircraft. Later in 1934 further enquiries were made to determine the availability of surplus fighters or bombers in the next financial year. The Air Ministry replied that no aircraft were available with the possible exception of some Fairey III reconnaissance aircraft or Wapiti bombers in the Middle East, which were in dilapidated condition and not recommended for purchase.

In 1935, the House of Commons budget included large increases for all three services with the largest share, \$2,630,000, going to the RCAF. The new financial allotment emboldened the RCAF to make another inquiry to the Air Ministry into the availability of a small number of used fighters and bombers. However, it was not a propitious time to ask for any aircraft as the RAF had embarked on a long overdue expansion and every aircraft, old and new, was urgently required for service training. Therefore, the Air Ministry received the Canadian request with little enthusiasm. This prompted, Squadron Leader (S/L) F.C. Higgins, the RCAF Liaison Officer in London, England to make a specific request directly to the RAF's Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) for six Wapitis, presumably because this type was most likely to be made available. The CAS was sympathetic to the Canadian cause and shortly thereafter, S/L Higgins was informed that "with a little imagination" six Wapitis could be declared surplus and offered to Canada at a reasonable price.

The Wapitis destined for the RCAF were the mainstay of the RAF Auxiliary Squadrons in England. The Auxiliary's Wapiti IIA's were powered by the ungeared Bristol Jupiter VI engine and, although well used by the weekend warriors, were in considerably better shape than the Wapitis that had spent their service career in Iraqi desert or India's Northwest frontier. The six Wapitis for the RCAF were built in 1930 and averaged 500 airframe hours while the engines were built in 1927-28 and averaged 700 hours. The RAF agreed to sell the Wapitis for 20 pounds (Stirling) per aircraft and 100 pounds per engine, for a total cost of \$3,506.40. The entire transaction including spares, equipment, packing, and shipping totalled \$13,914.00.

S/L Higgins had to determine the amount of reconditioning required and arrange shipment to Canada. Westland was quite cooperative and enlisted Canadian Vickers in Montreal as their Canadian representative and prepared a reconditioning and modification schedule. Bristol was concerned about the lack of engine overhaul facilities in Canada, but their fears were eventually allayed and on 22 February 1936 the six Wapitis were shipped to Canada, arriving 5 March. The RCAF retained the Wapiti name, which was an Asian name for an elk, one of the largest species of the deer family and one of the largest mammals in North America and eastern Asia. A major increase in the 1937-38 defence budget permitted the purchase of 18 additional Wapitis formerly used by the Royal Air Force Auxiliary, along with other modern aircraft.

Rebuilding the RCAF Wapitis

According to the agreement with Westland, Canadian Vickers was awarded the contract for the reconstruction of the first six Wapitis, which had been given RCAF serial numbers 508 to 513, at an average price of \$9,850. The RCAF estimated that it would have cost \$25,000 to purchase similar aircraft new. The aircraft were completely stripped, reconditioned, and refinished. The bulk of the work required brought the aircraft up to first-class RAF standards, but some additional work was required to adapt the RCAF aircraft for cold weather operations. A hood for both cockpits was designed and installed as well as controllable oil coolers and exhaust pipe mufflers for cockpit heating. Because the RCAF intended to use the Wapiti solely as day bomber two universal bomb racks were installed under each wing and a light bomb rack was installed under the fuselage. Two of the aircraft destined for the Air Armament School had TR-2 wireless radios installed while the four allotted to the newly authorized No. 3 (Bomber) Squadron were equipped with T1083-R1082 wireless radios. It was initially intended to apply yellow dope to the fabric surfaces of the two Air Armament School Wapitis and apply aluminum dope to the fabric surfaces of the remaining four destined for the proposed No. 3

(Bomber) Squadron. However, for some unexplained reason the fabric on all six aircraft were finished in yellow dope. The metal fuselage panels foreword of the cockpit retained their natural metal colour.

The first Wapiti, 512, was successfully test flown in May 1937, however, it was discovered that opening the gunner's aft cockpit hood in flight caused severe vibration of the vertical tail. The aircraft was accepted after the gunner's hood was removed; fortunately, the hood over the pilot's cockpit created no adverse effects and was retained. As a result of the test flights other modifications included draft proofing the cockpits and extending the exhaust pipes downward to divert the exhaust away from the cockpit. The remaining five Wapitis were accepted in June and July 1937.

The second batch of 18 Wapitis, allotted serial numbers 527 to 544, arrived in Canada in November 1937. For unknown reasons the reconstruction contract was switched to the Ottawa Car and Aircraft Company, however, the reconstruction was nearly identical to first six. The major differences between the two batches were that the last 18 were finished in aluminum dope and had a more exaggerated "humped-back" rear fuselage than Wapitis 508 to 513 to accommodate a larger radio compartment. Wapitis 527 to 544 were accepted by the RCAF between July and December 1938. Five were issued to No. 3 (Bomber) Squadron and six to the Air Armament School at Trenton, ON, while the seven remaining were stored in Trenton as reserves.

There were few major in-service modifications to the RCAF Wapitis. The landing gear was a persistent problem as the original wire-spoke wheels were in poor condition and the RCAF could not obtain an adequate supply of the preferred disc wheels with low-pressure tires. Consequently, the Wapitis operated with both types of wheels throughout their RCAF service. Another frequent problem was the wind-driven fuel pump which tended to seize without warning. Its location under the rear fuselage made it particularly susceptible to damage so an emergency manual pump was installed in the pilot's cockpit. The installation differed from the RAF Wapitis in that the pump handle was lengthened so that the pump could also be operated from the rear cockpit. Armament modifications included replacing the manual bomb release gear with an electro-magnetic mechanism and reducing the number of bomb racks under each wing from two to one.

The Wapiti in RCAF Service

To prepare for the Wapitis' arrival the RCAF authorized the formation of No. 3 (Bomber) Squadron at Trenton, ON on 1 September 1935. For nearly the first two years of its existence the "Bomber" title was a misnomer. Although the establishment called for two flights, one bomber and one equipped with Siskin fighters, the bomber flight existed only on paper until April 1937. It possessed no aircraft, and its airmen were attached to either RCAF Station Trenton HQ or employed on the Siskin flight.

In late April 1937, the squadron's Commanding Officer, S/L Lewis, arrived at Trenton to prepare for the arrival of the Wapitis by setting up a training syllabus (identical to that used by RAF bomber squadrons) and arranging for the necessary spares and equipment. It was not until June that the first Wapitis reached the squadron. Then, only weeks later, on 17 June 1937, No. 3 (Bomber) Squadron with Wapitis 508, 509, 510 and 513 was transferred to RCAF Station Rockcliffe, leaving the fighter flight at Trenton to become No. 1 (Fighter) Squadron. (Wapitis 511 and 512 were converted to target towing aircraft for the Air Armament School).

Although, No. 3 (Bomber) Squadron was new to the Wapiti and bomber operations it had little difficulty adapting to both. The great majority of the squadron's airmen were experienced in their trades and took pride in their Wapitis, despite their age; they were delighted to work on real military aircraft. Aircrew personnel consisted of five pilots and four crewmen. By the end of the summer the squadron had made considerable progress in their training and the Rockcliffe CO stated, "The Wapiti aircraft are standing up well, and are the type of aircraft one becomes attached to in spite of their lacklustre performance". It was not until October that the aircraft were fully equipped with guns, wireless radios, and bomb racks, however, the generators for the wireless did not arrive until December.

By early autumn individual aircrew training was nearly complete. In October the squadron attended an armament training camp at Camp Borden, ON. with considerable success as the Wapiti proved to be particularly stable in both the level bombing and dive-bombing roles. Night cross-country flights as far as Trenton and Montreal were common training exercises during the autumn, as were supply drops. By late November the squadron felt confident enough to request permission for cross-country flights as far afield as Halifax and Winnipeg.

Before these ambitious ventures could be undertaken adverse weather drastically curtailed flying. Heavy rains in November saturated Rockcliffe's grass airfield and the pilots discovered that because of the Wapiti's high narrow-tracked undercarriage and the forward position of its tail skid it tended to nose over while taxiing on sodden turf. Therefore, little flying was done in November. Worse weather followed in December when several feet of snow covered the Rockcliffe airfield.

In January 1938, the Wapitis were equipped for winter operations by replacing the wheels and tail skid with skis. The skis proved to be a mixed blessing both in the air and on the ground. In flight their drag plus their 420 pounds (190 kgs) of extra weight made the Wapiti very mushy in the climb or a steep turn and reduced its already modest cruising speed by 5 knots. When the temperature hovered around the freezing point the sticky snow made take off with a full load impossible, and the pilot had to struggle to keep the aircraft from nosing over. To counter the effect of snow drifts the squadron removed the tail ski, which caused the tail to bounce high in the air on contact with drift and replaced it with the original tail skid. The skid not only acted as brake but also, on cutting through the drifts, caused the snow to sift into the rear fuselage and freeze the control actuators. When the snow drifts on the airfield were packed-down the tail skis were re-installed. Also, the oil breather tubes on the Wapiti tended to freeze, resulting at least once in a burst oil tank.

Despite the winter flying problems, No. 3 (Bomber) Squadron developed sufficient expertise in winter operations to plan a long-distance flight to Winnipeg in February. Much to everyone's disappointment higher RCAF authorities cancelled the flight as they were uncertain about the condition of the new Trans-Canada airway facilities in winter. In June 1938, the squadron having received only four of its Wapitis made its first long-distance flight to Halifax via Megantic, QC and Saint John, NB. The worthy citizens of Halifax appeared to be most impressed with Canada's aerial might – or maybe they were just being polite.

Summer training concentrated on night flying; however, this incurred the wrath of the citizens of Ottawa who complained that their children were staying awake to watch the aircraft and were not getting to sleep. RCAF HQ solved the problem by decreeing that night takeoffs at Rockcliffe would follow a right-hand circuit over the Ottawa River. Also, during the summer the squadron suffered its first major accident when an engine failure caused Wapiti 508 to flip over during a forced landing and had to be written-off. Fortunately, the pilot, Sgt. Michalski, was only slightly injured. Despite being reduced to only three aircraft, the squadron had a busy summer participating in a major militia concentration and was heavily involved in simulated bombing of troop and vehicle concentrations, photography, and reconnaissance. Once again, a long-range flight to Winnipeg had to be cancelled due to shortage of aircraft. Frustration with the shortage of aircraft was exacerbated when the first two Wapitis from the second batch were assigned to the squadron, but then had to be given to the Air Armament School. The delivery of three Wapitis (530, 532 and 535) in September followed by the arrival of two (542 and 543) in October finally brought the squadron up to full strength of eight aircraft.

On 14 September 1938, the squadron was advised that it was to be stationed in Calgary, AB. However, the move was postponed for four weeks because of the German Munich Crisis in Europe. But, on 18 October after British Prime Minister Chamberlain declared, "Peace in our time", and war against Germany seemed to be averted, all eight fully equipped aircraft, flown by the squadron's six pilots plus two borrowed pilots, set out for Calgary. The main body of squadron personnel plus unit stores departed by train. The aircraft reached Calgary

on 24 October without incident. The 2,300-mile (3,200 km) flight was by far the longest move by a RCAF squadron by air.

At Calgary conditions were less crowded as NO. 3 (Bomber) Squadron had to share the airfield with only No. 1 (Fighter) Squadron, which was in the process of exchanging their Siskin biplanes for new Hawker Hurricanes, the RCAF's first monoplane fighter. The 3,460 feet (1,150 meters) airfield elevation considerably lengthened the Wapitis' take off distance, which was exacerbated by telephone and power lines at the end of the runway, effectively eliminating any night flying. Nevertheless, the squadron enthusiastically continued its training program and gave rise to the Officer Commanding the RCAF's Western Air Command to observe, "No. 3 (Bomber) Squadron is probably the most efficient unit in the RCAF at the present time".

Although, the squadron had been brought up to full strength of eight aircraft before leaving Rockcliffe, the squadron did not receive the commensurate additional aircrew to fully man the squadron. In April 1939, the squadron's aircrew consisted of six pilots and five air-gunners. Selection of air-gunners was made from the aero-engine and airframe trades; therefore, the air-gunner was also responsible for aircraft maintenance. Each air-gunner strived for high serviceability of his own aircraft; all enjoyed flying and were eager to have their aircraft available for the next flight. The air-gunners' role was crucial; the squadron's 1938 annual report stated that there were only five key men who could certify the aircraft serviceable, and they were all air-gunners who were required to fly as crew and not available to work on aircraft when in the air. Flight Sergeant supervisors had to revert to carrying out maintenance as well as supervise.

Stan Cable, (author's father) who was a No. 3 (Bomber) Squadron air-gunner, wrote about his time on the Wapiti and the squadron:

"I was an air-gunner at the time and wore the winged bullet above the rank badge on the right arm. Air-gunners occupied the rear cockpit and were responsible for navigation, operating the radio, bomb aiming and firing the Lewis [machine] gun. Annually we would carry out live exercises at Camp Borden, ON with the Lewis gun, which used .303 calibre ammunition and 8 ½ pound (3.8 kg) practice bombs, which were dropped from 6,000 feet (2,000 meters) during bombing exercises. The exercises were simulated at our home base by using a gun camera for air firing and the bombing was carried out using a camera obscura (pinhole camera) located in a tent to subdue the light, which acted as the target. To simulate the release of the bomb the air-gunner (bomb-aimer) would press the bomb release button which activated a flash bulb, and the flash would be recorded on the camera obscura on the ground. Ground assessors could then calculate where a live bomb would have hit. The camera obscura was also used very effectively at night. I think No. 3 (Bomber) Squadron was the first in the RCAF to do night bombing.

To prepare for a bombing exercise the air-gunner would have to slide the floorboard he normally stood on forward, as the bombsight was mounted under the sliding floor; he would then lie on his stomach to operate the bombsight. Determining wind speed and direction were very important to accurate bombing, therefore before reaching the target the aircraft flew on several different headings. By measuring the drift on the bombsight on each heading the air-gunner was able to set the wind speed and direction on his bombsight. The pilot and air-gunner were now ready to approach the target and with good teamwork were able to score well. Other training activities on squadron included, formation flying, cross country navigation exercises, oblique and mosaic photography.

The Wapiti's Jupiter engine was started using compressed air, which was stored in an air bottle behind the engine. When air was released to turn the propeller the person in the cockpit hand cranked the magneto at the same time to start the engine. If the air bottle ran out of air or air was not available at visited airfields, crews had to join hands and pull the propeller through. Fuel was fed to the engine from a gravity tank, which was

filled from a larger tank by an air-driven pump driven by small wooden propeller. Before reaching the gravity tank the fuel passed through a prism to indicate proper fuel flow and pump operation. In the event of a malfunction fuel could be transferred to the gravity tank by a hand pump operated by the pilot or air-gunner. Although particular attention was given to the air driven fuel pump to ensure it was well lubricated and not leaking prior to every flight, I think every pilot or air-gunner experienced a trip that had to be pumped home.”

Wapitis in Wartime

On 17 August 1939, No. 3 (Bomber) Squadron was warned that because of war clouds forming in Europe it had to be prepared to move at 24 hours' notice. That notice was given on 26 August and that same day, seven Wapitis (509, 510, 513, 532, 535, 542 and 543) were enroute to the squadron's war station at Halifax, NS. The order had reached the squadron during the court-martial of a pilot who had crashed Wapiti 530 while low flying. As he was one of only six squadron pilots (a seventh had to be borrowed for the flight to Halifax) the court-martial was adjourned, and he took his place on the squadron.

The 3,000-mile (4,800 km) flight in the obsolete Wapitis from the foothills of the Rockies to the Atlantic coast is one of the epics in RCAF history. Departing Calgary on 26 August, the seven-plane formation's route across western Canada included refuelling stops at Swift Current, Regina, and Winnipeg. At the end of this first stage, the squadron diarist commented on the amount of work the crews had to perform, "The Wapiti has many maintenance shortcomings but there was only one crewman (air-gunner) per aircraft to make repairs." On reaching Sioux Lookout the next day, there was no accommodation available, so the crews had to sleep in sleeping bags carried in the aircraft. The following day the Wapitis refuelled at Nagaming, Kapuskasing, and North Bay before finally arriving at Ottawa at 1830. Thorough inspections of the aircraft lasted until 0200, and the next morning the squadron, reinforced by three Wapitis from Trenton, (538, 541 and 544) headed for the East Coast. With ten aircraft now on strength the squadron was divided into two flights of five. The next refuelling was to have been Moncton, NB, but after refuelling at Megantic, QC, and flying over the state of Maine two Wapitis in the flight led by S/L Lewis suffered engine trouble almost simultaneously. The five Wapitis landed at Millinocket, ME. where they remained overnight. As Canada was not yet at war the American authorities were not concerned about violation of their neutrality laws. (Canada declared war on Germany on 10 September.) The next day, 1 September, the three serviceable Wapitis flew on to Halifax where they joined the other light of five that had successfully refuelled in Moncton. The same day a RCAF Fairchild 71 photographic/reconnaissance aircraft flew to Millinocket with parts and two fitters who quickly repaired the two Wapitis. However, bad weather forced them to remain there until 6 September when they finally joined the squadron in Halifax.

On 5 September 1939, No. 3 (Bomber) Squadron was redesignated No. 10 (Bomber) Squadron and set up shop on the tiny Halifax Municipal grass airfield, which it shared with the RCAF's No. 2 (Army Cooperation) Squadron and the Halifax Flying Club. Facilities at the airfield were practically non-existent. Tents and marquees were set up for offices, stores, and workshops, while personnel were billeted in private homes. The airfield known as "Dogpatch" to the men of 10 (Bomber) Squadron was located in the city's west end near the intersection of Chebucto Road and Connaught Ave. Today, a park and small monument dedicated to Wing Commander Donald W. Saunders who was involved in the development of aviation in the Halifax area mark the location of the former airfield.

The squadron's first task was to check the serviceability of the Wapitis after their long cross-country flight. Inspections revealed they could not have gone much farther without encountering major problems. Their age showed signs of not being suitable for such strenuous operations. The first flights from Halifax took place on 4 September. The squadron's primary role was to stand by as an air striking force either in cooperation with the Royal Canadian Navy or independently against any enemy force that came within range. If the Wapitis had to carry out an over water strike a Stranraer flying boat from No. 5 (Bomber Reconnaissance) Squadron based at RCAF Station Dartmouth's, seaplane facility, would escort the Wapitis as a navigation aircraft. The tiny

Halifax airfield prevented the Wapitis from taking off with a full bomb load, so the maximum load was limited to 2 x 250-pound (114 kg) bombs. The main activities were training for the air-gunners, cooperating with naval vessels and ground defences, and photography. Between September and December many of the original personnel departed either to convert to the squadron's new Douglas Digby aircraft or to form the nucleus of No. 11 (Bomber Reconnaissance) Squadron that was forming at Rockcliffe with Lockheed Hudsons. The designation of 10 Squadron was changed in October 1939 from "Bomber" to "Bomber Reconnaissance" to reflect its maritime role. April 1940 was the last month that the Wapitis flew regularly; that month the Digbys started to arrive at RCAF Dartmouth, No. 10 Squadron's new war station where construction was recently completed on the new runways.

In November 1939, the RCAF decided that the remaining Wapitis were too advanced as elementary trainers and too obsolete as service trainers, so the best role they could play in the war was as ground instructional airframes in technical training establishments. Many riggers and fitters trained on the Wapitis until 1943 when they succumbed to wear and tear and passed into oblivion as scrap. 10 (BR) Squadron became one of the most famous of the RCAF's Home War Establishment squadrons and a far cry from the friendly little unit of 1937-39, while most of the men who had flown and maintained the Wapitis went on to form the backbone of the RCAF's bomber reconnaissance squadrons.



Wapiti 513 at Rockcliffe in 1937



12 WING SHEARWATER

WE MIGHT NOT KNOW THEM ALL, BUT WE OWE THEM ALL

INTO THE DELTA

BABBITT Bill (Jumper)	Oct 2022
BAILEY Derek (Beetle) Peter	Jun 2022
CAUDLE Ronald Henry, Sr.	Aug 2022
CRITOPH David Stanton	May2022
ELLIOTT H. Elaine	Aug 2022
FORD Helen Judith (Judy)	Jul 2022
GATES Garnet Foster	Aug 2022
GRUBER John Alfred	Jul 2022
HOLMES Peter	Feb 2022
IRWIN Eugene (Gene)	Sep 2022
JOHNSON Fredrick (Fred) Edwin Herbert	Jul 2022
MACKILLOP Donnie Alexander	Sep 2022
MEADS John Robert (Bob)	Jul 2022
NOWELL David	Oct 2022
POKOTYLO August Elmer	Oct 2022



LEST WE FORGET

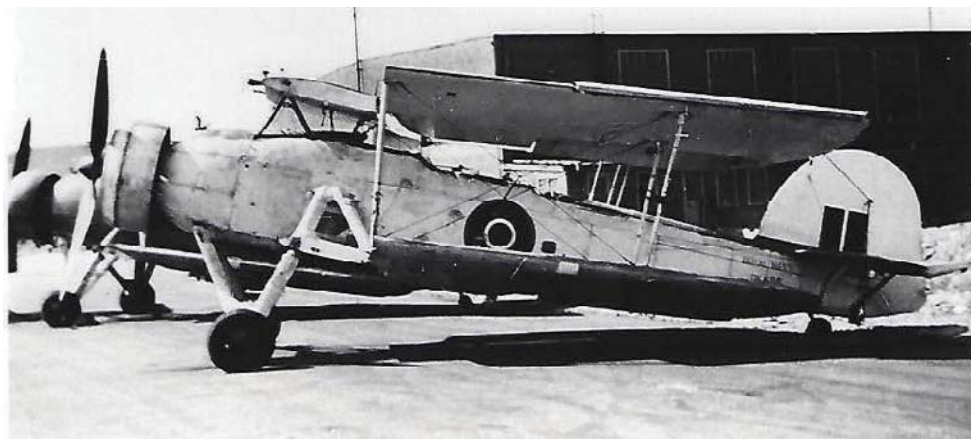
Crispy Critters

Leo Pettipas
Winnipeg

Even in peacetime, military airplanes can meet a flaming demise in any number of ways. They can undergo an untimely air-to-ground crash-and-burn sequence for a variety of reasons; or they can go up in flames on the ground due to ground-crew accident or error. Or they can just grow old and be sent to the fire dump where their hulks can be burnt to cinders during crash-crew/fire-fighter training/practice.

This article reviews an obscure topic for which little seems to be available to the historian who doesn't have ready access to primary archival documentation (I don't) that is held in Ottawa.

The earliest information I have on the general subject pertains to *HMCS Shearwater* and dates to 1949 or thereabouts. A group of retired Fairey Swordfish biplanes were parked on an out-station (the Hines Road dump) on the base. The relics were considered an eyesore, and continued efforts were made to obtain permission for their summary disposal. After a long engagement with Headquarters, a signal was finally received giving approval to burn them on-site. The local authorities proceeded to do just that, apparently overlooking the fact that *Shearwater* was also a civvy airport, and the burning area was only a hundred or so metres off the main runway. On the day that the Swordfishes were bidding their flaming adieu, some in-bound airline passengers had thought upon their arrival that a nasty crash had just taken place (“Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, this is your Captain speaking. Welcome to *HMCS Shearwater*”), and were understandably a tad shaken.



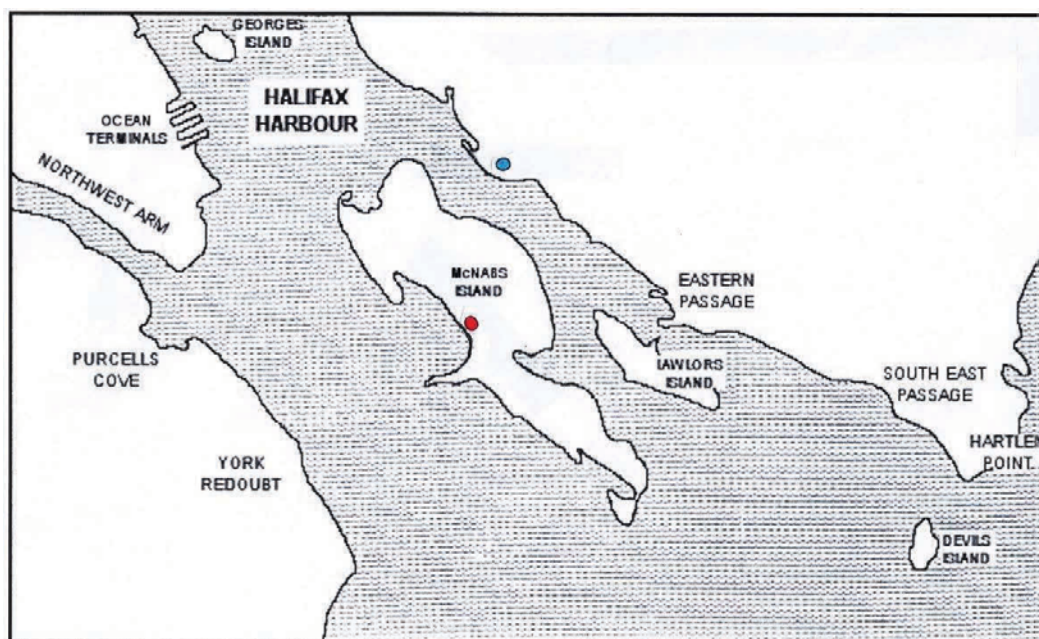
A Royal Canadian Navy Swordfish in better times that were not to last. Credit: Royal Aviation Museum of Western Canada.

Although the above scenario may have provided an opportunity for fire-fighting practice, it can't truly be considered as such because its prime purpose was to get rid of some refuse, not to train people. But by mid-1952, the RCN's entire Supermarine Seafire XV fleet had been retired from active duty, and the majority of them were resting, intact, in outdoor storage on Fairey Aviation of Canada real estate. A year later they could be seen, minus their engines, in a pastoral setting near the Eastern Passage shoreline behind the Aviation Supply Depot (ASD), awaiting their final disposition. Herein was an ideal resource for fire-fighter/crash-crew training; the location was in close proximity to a site that went on to be used for several years as a training area, and a number of the Seafires were committed to that purpose. We can further say without hesitation that one of them, bearing the serial number PR 503 and RCN identification code VG-AAA – was “the one that got away,” of which more below.

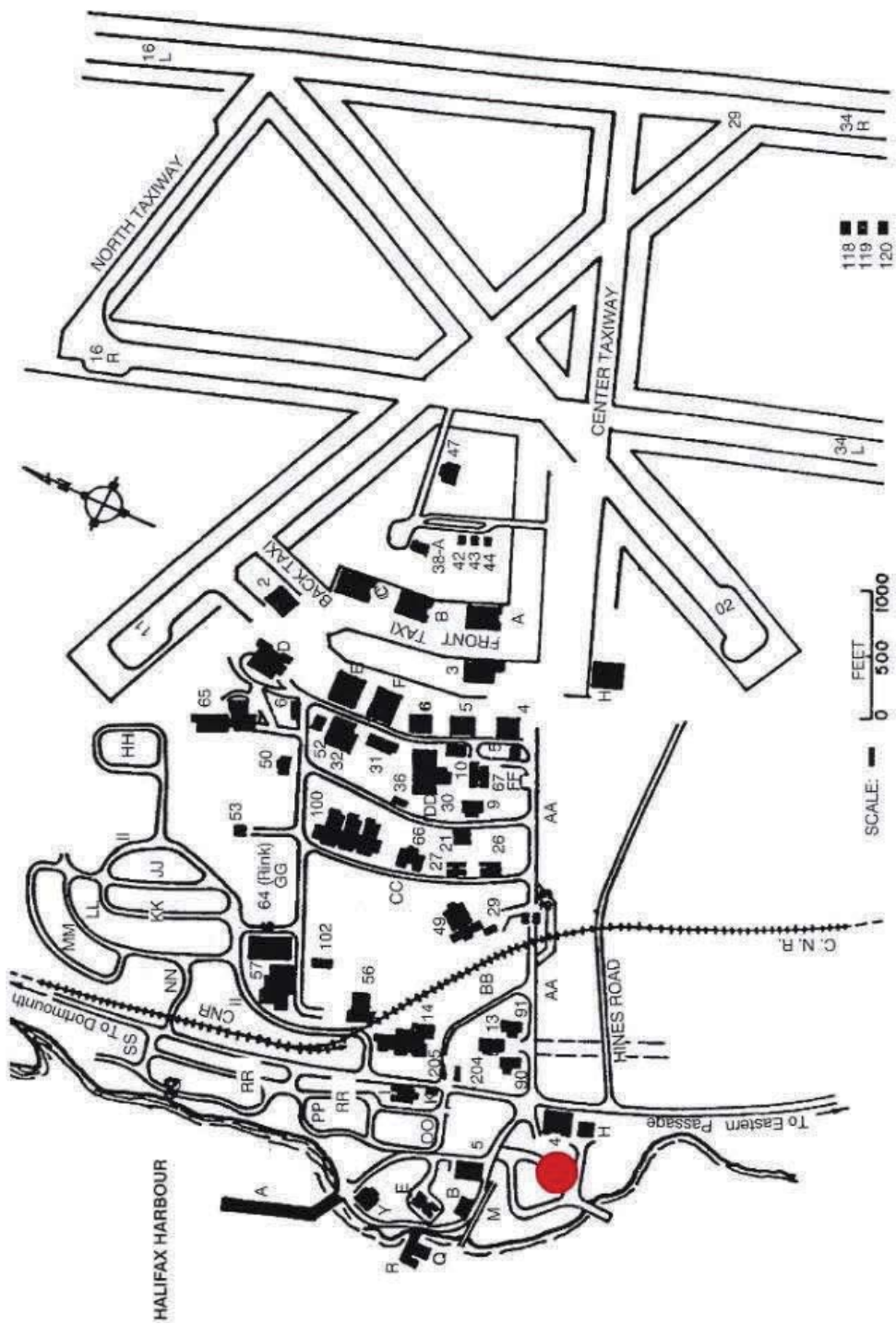


The retired Seafires in storage at Fairey Aviation in the summer of 1952. ~Seventeen examples of the type are visible in this picture. DND photo.

There were two sites within the precincts of Eastern Passage that were used by the Navy for crash-crew training. One of them, the “Marine,” aka “Lower,” Base was part of the *HMCS Shearwater* aerodrome complex. It was situated on the local mainland between Highway 322 and a part of the nearby eastern shoreline of Halifax Harbour. The other was located on the western shore of McNabs Island across the channel and south of the Marine/Lower Base.



Eastern Passage and environs, showing the locations of the Marine/Lower Base (blue dot) and the McNabs Island burning site (red dot). Source of original map: crittersnus.blogspot.com.



Built-Environment of *HMCS Shearwater*: Black symbols = buildings; Red disk = Marine/Lower Base burning area.

The Marine (Lower) Base, *HMCS Shearwater*.



The Seafires, their engines now removed, parked at the Marine Base. Note McNabs Island in background. DND/RCN photo.



A Seafire alight on the concrete burning pad adjacent to the Air Supply Depot (ASD) at the Marine/Lower Base, *HMCS Shearwater*, DND/RCN, via Pat Martin.

The above-mentioned PR 503 has quite a story behind it and I am pleased to relate it here. It begins with a letter written to me in early 1993 by R.E. (“Dickie”) Bartlett, now deceased. **“I was thrilled,”** he wrote, **“to learn of the fate of the old Seafire. As I remember, it had been ‘written off,’ i.e., no longer existed, and turned over to my department for use in crash-crew training. At the time, 1960, I was LCDR Flying at *Shearwater* and the airfield crash crew was one of my responsibilities. This included their fire-fighting training. For these exercises an area was set aside at the Marine Base where written-off or mock-up a/c were set on fire and the crash crew practiced rescue operations on the burning airframes.**

Seafire PR 503 was in this area and was meant to be used for this training. I had completed a fighter refresher course at the end of the war on Seafires and loved them and hated the thought of the last one on the base being burnt. CPO Radcliffe was in charge of the crash crew. He knew my feelings and, being the gentleman that he was, went along for months with regular postponement of the burning.

I had just about given up and was almost ready to give the OK for the burning when we heard a rumor that some cadets in Bedford wanted it for maintenance training.¹ This solved my problem and I was only too ready to co-operate, and although I never mentioned to the base CO that the aircraft was to be moved to Bedford, I understood that he knew it was being done. We moved it out of the base at four AM when road traffic would be at its lightest. Also, fewer people would see it and therefore fewer questions were likely to arise. I must admit that I had some worries about the whole thing.

In this regard, I can see how the question of ownership would have been difficult because the plane had been written off all records when we obtained it for burning. In fact, we were supposed to have destroyed it. Hence it didn't exist, so there couldn't have been an owner. Crown Assets must have had difficulties bringing about a "second coming"! No wonder they dropped the price to \$50. 00."

After PR 503 had been delivered to Bedford, the fuselage was placed atop a log scaffold in a local back yard, and there it sat for several years. Meanwhile, the students graduated and embarked on their adult careers, and the Seafire faced an uncertain future. In due course, it was passed on to the Nova Scotia Chapter of the Experimental Aircraft Association, and thence to the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum in Hamilton, Ontario. From there it was purchased by a series of private owners in the US, the last of whom restored it to immaculate flying condition.



Seafire XV PR 503 AAA as she appeared in the summer of 1948. DND/RCN photos.

Four photos of PR 503 AAA depicting her condition 12 years later (in 1960) at the Marine Base. Peter Meyers photos.



¹ Author's note: Some of the individuals in question may indeed have been cadets, but more to the point they were members of a local high school Aviation Club. One of their extra-curricular pursuits involved arranging guided tours of nearby military air bases, and on one occasion they were visiting Shearwater when they spotted the derelict PR 503 sitting near the Aviation Supply Depot. Clearly, the badly wounded creature needed to be rescued and restored to its former glory – hence LCDR Bartlett's narrative here in progress.



The rescued PR 503 on her “pedestal” on private property in Bedford. Note the starboard mainplane leaning against the shed with the RCN designator “VG” on its underside. Photo courtesy of John Liddle.

The Marine Base at *Shearwater* saw the burning of aircraft types other than Seafires. Pictured below are the hulks of Avengers and Banshees awaiting their turn. These photos were taken in the summer of 1961. The blue and white stripes on the Avenger’s rudder on the left denote that the aircraft had recently been retired from VC 920 Toronto Reserve Squadron.



Avengers (above) and Banshees (below), summer of 1961 at the Marine Base. Photos by the author.



McNabs Island

The other dedicated burning site in the general *Shearwater* area of which I'm aware was actually located on McNabs Island directly to the west and south of the Marine Base. The earliest photo I have of it dates to March 1953. This locale is referenced in an article titled "The Flight Deck Crew" in the November 1953 issue of the Navy's magazine "Crow'snest," to wit, "Every opportunity is taken to send members of the [*Magnificent*] flight deck crew to the fire-fighting school on McNabs Island for practical training. There they fight real fires and 'rescue' dummy-pilot manikins from blazing aircraft."

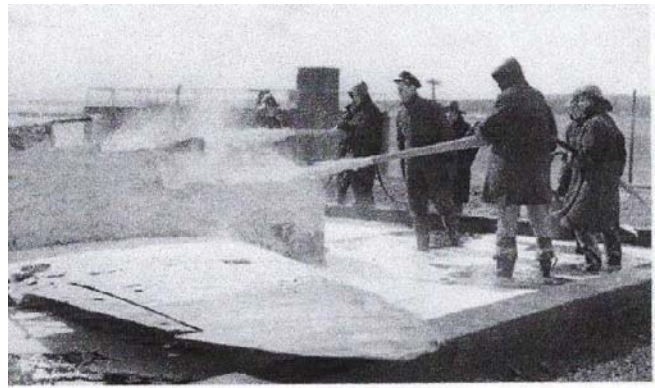
Something of a curiosity is the aircraft referred to in the above photographs: it is surely an ex-RCAF Spitfire, not an ex-RCN Seafire. The published record notes that two and possibly three Spitfires were handed over to the Navy by the Air Force for mechanics training at *HMCS Stadacona* in Halifax. It is unclear what became of two of them in the end; all are listed as "fate unknown" in the published data base, but to be sure, one of them (serial number X 4555) ended up as a "target" at the crash-crew training site on McNabs Island.



Spitfire X4555 at RCAF Station Rockcliffe well before she participated in crash-crew training on McNabs Island. DND photo, via Lee Walsh.



The McNabs Island site was still in operation in March 1955. Note the aircraft hulk in front of the truck in the centre of the photo. DND/RCN via LAC.



Hosing down the hulk(s) with fire retardant at the McNabs Island site. The left photo (DND/RCN/LAC) was taken in March 1953; the right image, courtesy of the Shearwater Aviation Museum Archives via Lee Walsh, is undated.



Left: Retrieving a manikin from X 4555 at the McNabs Island training site. Right: The forward section of an X 4555 wing. Both photos show machine-gun ports -- but no evidence of cannon -- in the wing leading edges. These are diagnostic traits of the Spitfire. Both photos via Lee Walsh.



Left: The McNabs Island burning site as it appeared in 1962. DND/RCN photo, via LAC and Lee Walsh. Right: Recent Google image of the rehabilitated McNabs Island site. Note the circular field at the right-centre of the photo where the large fuel tank had once stood. Via Lee Walsh.

Debert Military Base

During the first half of the '50s decade, a standing agreement between the RCAF and RCN stipulated that the Air Force would provide a range of logistic support for Naval Aviation. This included allocation of a hangar at the military complex at Debert, Nova Scotia for use as long-term storage of retired naval aircraft pending their final disposal. By 1956, this function had been terminated at *Debert* and transferred elsewhere.

This change didn't spell finis to the Navy's presence at the site, however; in 1960, the RCAF relinquished its share of the *Debert* base to the Navy, and arrangements were made with the Army, now the main user of "*Camp Debert*," to accommodate the Navy's field carrier landing practice (FCLP) activity and its personnel.

By this time, the tenure of the McDonnell F2H-3 Banshee ("Banjo") jet fighter pretty well had run its course in the RCN and there wasn't much chance that the type ever carried out landing practice there. Nonetheless, *Debert* did bear witness to a relic of the Banshee era; shown here is a 1979 photo of an immolated "Banjo" left behind by the crash-crew.



Left: The incinerated fuselage and tail assembly of the *Debert* Banshee. At first glance, only the latter section could be counted on to readily disclose its identity as an F2H-3. Barrie MacLeod photo.

Right: The Banshee hulks at the Marine Base. It is surmised that it was one of these that was transported to the *Debert* burning site. Photographer unknown to the present writer.

The Bottom Line

The centre-piece of the Canadian post-war naval fleet was the aircraft carrier, of which the RCN possessed three sequentially over two and a half decades. In all that time, there was only one instance of a crash-and-burn deck incident of an aircraft -- Sea Fury NAVY 294 -- that required the close attention of the flight-deck fire-fighters and rescue personnel. The Pilot -- Lt Gordon Edwards -- rendered the following account of the event; it provides a good description of the kinds of emergency conditions under which the men operated on board *HMCS Magnificent* in the mid-1950s.



Gord Edwards' Sea Fury (NAVY*294) and friend in happier times. DND/RCN photo.

The sea was rough on that day; there was appreciable deck movement, and in fact it was a tough decision before launch as to whether it was a good idea at all -- mostly because no one was sure it wouldn't get worse once the aircraft were aloft. However, those were the "can do" days, and off they went.

The real excitement entered the picture when Edwards' aircraft was coming in to land. The wheels caught #2 barrier; the a/c pitched forward; and the nose went under #3 barrier. The cables came right up and over the windscreen and on to catch the tail. Edwards could have been decapitated, but it would seem that the forward motion of his body meant that his head was well forward within the cockpit area and the wire travelled over the engine cowling and just nipped the top of his helmet as the aircraft burst into flames.

Edwards was getting up to vacate his seat, which seemed like a very good idea to him at the time, and, to up the ante, a flight-deck crewman who was trying to turn off the fuel cock got in his way. Flames were already roaring past the port side of the cockpit, but Edwards' effort to "abandon ship" was successful and he happily survived the whole ordeal, which went down in history as "Gordy's Flamer." It is graphically illustrated in the following sequence of photographs. Note the two rescue members in their white asbestos suits in the second and third photos.





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Lest we forget

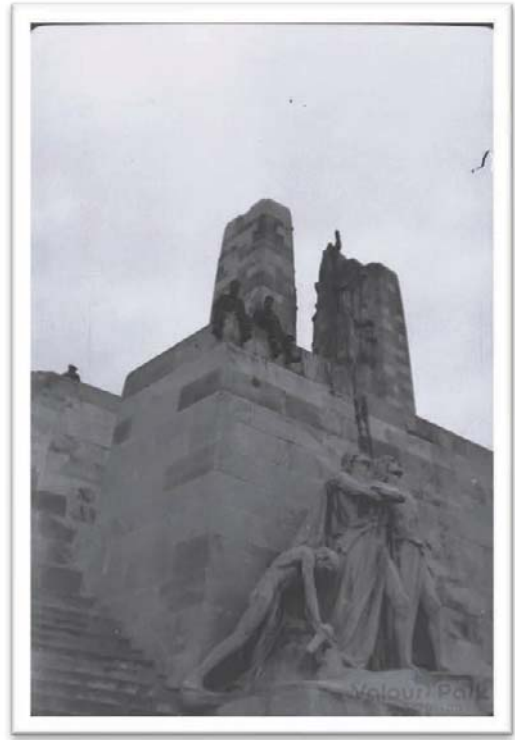
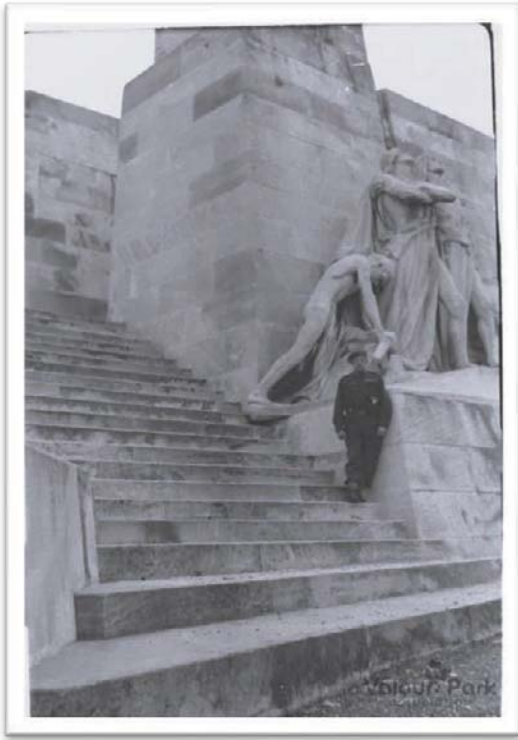
WWII Canadian Military D Day negatives restored.

Over the past several months **Valour Park Association** was able to save some Canadian military history. After several months of cleaning and restoring the VPA has saved more than 400 negatives taken by Canadian military doctor Captain W.E. Finkelstein. **The pictures tell the story of Capt. Finkelstein and members serving with the 11th battery, 12th Field Regiment, 3rd Canadian Division. The story begins on June 5th, 1944, D Day -1.** The full collection will be made available shortly on the valourpark.org website. Special thanks to Guinevere and Tristan for the great find and to Olivier and James for the restoration of our Canadian history!



D-DAY Church Service





Vimy





D Day troops Landing



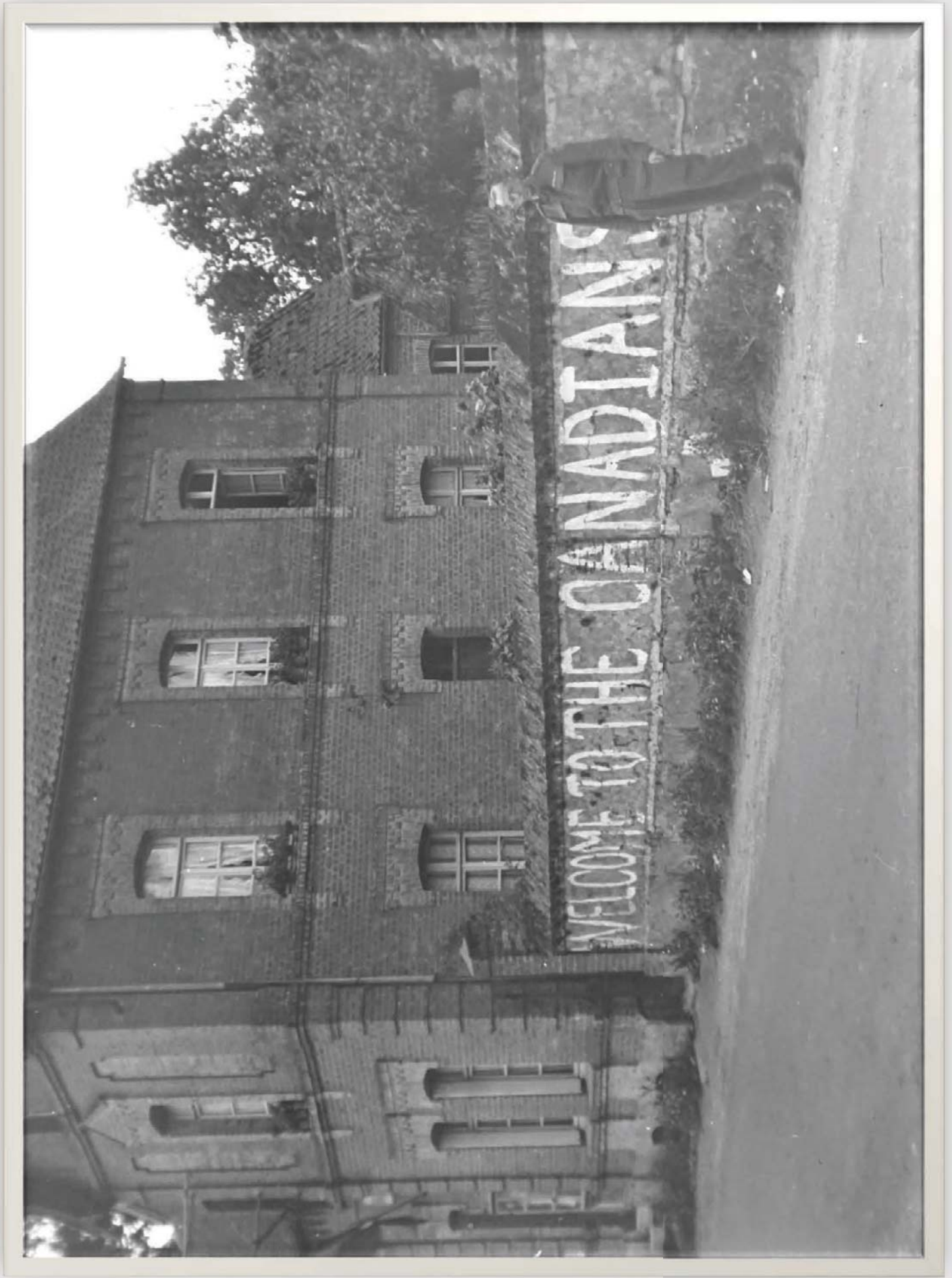
Juno Beach June 6th 1944 Arial



Canadian Cooks



Landing craft inventory





Vimy Monument France 1944