

434 Niagara

BULLETIN



Vol. 23 no 5 May - June, 2021

General Meetings

3rd Thursday of each month at

Branch 4 RC Legion

383 Morningstar Avenue Welland ON

We proudly promote the glorious tradition of the RCAF

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2020-2021

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Fort Erie	Branch 71	Hall	905-871-8682
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Royal Canadian Air Force Association of Canada

Chairman's Report April 2021

Hello to all at 434 Wing and to the RCAFA membership at large

It seems as though the topic of conversation these days is this pandemic we are in but, there is still a whole world out there and we go about our daily lives as best we can.

That being said, as a whole, we are severely impacted as to how we are able to function as an organization being unable to hold our monthly meetings, fundraisers, etc. Thank god for the internet and telephones and so we go forward.

The fundraiser currently underway is a framed collage of 4 signed photographs by Tom Vance standing beside the Spitfire that he flew during the war; Tom is the lone survivor today of 411 Squadron and his 99th Birthday is approaching. This undertaking was headed up by member Brian Heikkilla with the assistance of 2nd VP Norm Sonnenberg.

The framing was professionally done by Tom's daughter Barbara who has her own business in that field. Special thanks of course goes to Tom himself for his participation in this project. At the time of writing, it is well underway with many already sold. Many thanks to all for your efforts.

Other fundraisers are under consideration but, for those, we are in the early planning stages and will advise as arrangements are made, as always we ask you all to give some thought to taking part where possible.

The briefness of this report is the result of course of the restrictions we face, but I wish all members good health, please practice safety and precautions as you go about your daily routines.

At some point in time we will be able to get together once again and make up for lost time

Per Ardua ad Astra

Secretary/Treasurers' Report

The Wings' finances are growing with the success of a current fund raiser. Led by member Brian Heikkila and assisted by Norm Sonnenberg, they are selling four signed black and white framed pictures of flight lieutenant Thomas Vance with his WWII Spitfire for \$200.00. We have sold 11 so far with 3 promised. They are beautifully framed by Barbara Vance Studios and she has graciously gifted our Wing the first five frames free of charge and only charging \$100.00 each for framing all of the rest. You must see them! Please make sure you personally thank her if you get the chance. Great job Brian and Norm!!

Our newest fund raiser is another Big Red Market which everyone will have already have received. You can safely sell these boxes of meat to your own family members, relatives or close neighbours while staying safe.

April is the last month that you can nominate a member for the Board of Directors. May is Election month. The current Board has decided to stay for another term but that does not stop a member from putting their name forward for consideration to the Board if they wish.

We are again in a 28 day lock down that will put us into mid May. The Legion and Optimist Club is closed so there are no meetings. The one saving grace is that the vaccines are becoming available. Please get them when you can. Any protection is better than none!! Stay Safe!!

Secretary/Treasurer

George Groff

Welfare and Membership

From membership Just a reminder that membership dues will be coming due in June and I will be sending out invoices soon. Hope everyone is safe and well. Would love to hear from all Jette13@gmail.com or masterlee434@gmail.com

Jeanette Lee

Welfare and Membership Chair

Kit Shop / Web Site News

Kitshop If you haven't been to the website 434wingrcafa.com in a while please do so as I have added new content & stores to shop from. I ask anyone who would like to write an article for the site please do and send it to me @ masterlee434@gmail.com.. I'm also pleased to tell you I have gotten permission from Sam Newman to use some of his tales from his two books so watch for his page in the near future.

all the best, Rod

Rod Lee

Kit Shop Chairman

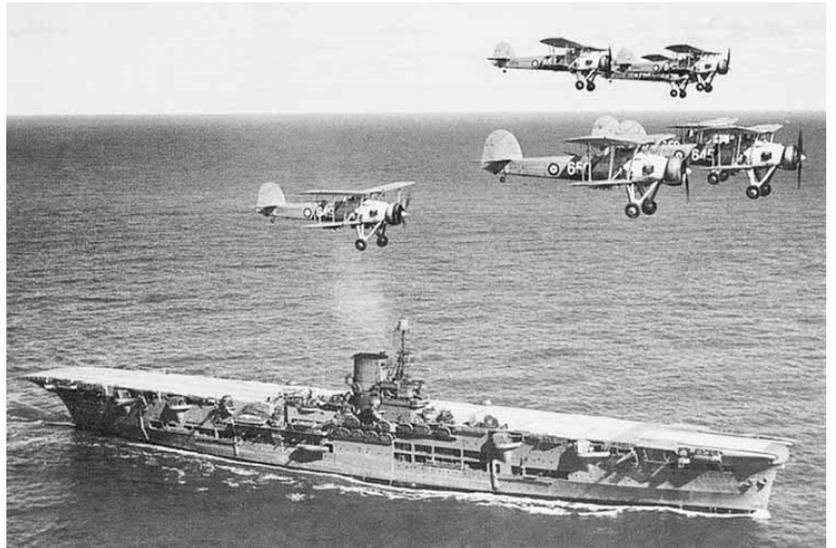
Fairey Swordfish

An Unsung Hero of WWII

The Fairey Swordfish, known as “Stringbag” was a biplane and like Russia’s Po2, biplane, it served a key role throughout WW2 until it was retired in late May 1945. It held the distinction of having caused the destruction of a greater tonnage of Axis shipping than any other Allied aircraft, Stringbag notable actions included:

The Bismarck

When the Bismarck sank the British battle cruiser HMS Hood in the Atlantic Britain realized that the Bismarck had to be stopped. However, when Britain launched a pursuit, the Bismarck was able to evade her pursuers. The only ship nearby which could disable the Bismarck was HMS Ark Royal which had 16 Stringbags equipped with torpedoes on board. The Stringbags took off an hour before sunset on May 26, 1941. A Stringbag piloted by Lieutenant Commander John Moffat dropped its one torpedo which hit home, striking the Bismarck’s rudder, jamming it mid turn leaving the ship to travel in endless circles. Two days later on May 27, 1941, the Bismarck sunk after being bombarded by British naval ships which had surrounded it.



HMS Royal Ark and Stringbags

The Battle of Taranto

The Italian *Regia Marina*'s First Squadron was based at Taranto, a port-city on Italy's south-east coast. The Italian fleet at Taranto was powerful: six battleships, seven heavy cruisers, two light cruisers and eight destroyers. This made the threat of a sortie against British shipping a serious problem. In planning an attack on Taranto, Lumley Lyster, the captain of *Glorious*, advised that biplane torpedo bombers were capable of a night attack. HMS Eagle was considered the ideal choice with an experienced air group composed of Stringbags. When the Eagle suffered a breakdown in her fuel system the brand new HMS *Illustrious* was selected and it took on the Swordfish from the Eagle and launched a surprise attack on November 11, 1940. The Battle of Taranto was the first all aircraft ship-to-ship attack in history and heavily damaged the Italian fleet with 1 battleship lost, 2 battleships heavily damaged, 1 heavy cruiser slightly damaged, and 2 destroyers slightly damaged: an incredible result for 21 biplanes. For centuries the success of the Royal Navy was dominated by battleships but on the night of 11-12 November 1940 a small band of naval pilots flying Swordfish bi-planes marked the birth of a new era in naval warfare. The Battle of Taranto changed many naval experts' thoughts regarding air-launched torpedo attacks.

When the Royal Navy took over the Fleet Air Arm from the Royal Air Force in 1938, it inherited obsolete aircraft on six obsolete aircraft carriers. Between the two world wars there was little funding provided to the armed forces. This period saw the Great Depression and the recession that followed. Moreover, many senior naval officers felt that high performance aircraft could not be flown from aircraft carriers. The best of the six were two converted battle cruisers, Courageous and Glorius. Both of these carriers had a shortened main flight deck to accommodate a take-off deck at hangar level.



HMS Courageous with shortened main flight deck and short take off deck at hangar level.

Birth of the Fairey Swordfish

In 1933 the Admiralty asked Sir Richard Fairey to design an aircraft which met their listed requirements. The first six: reconnaissance at sea and over the land; shadowing by day and night; "spotting" the fall of shot from ship's guns; convoy escort duties such as anti-submarine searches and attacks; torpedo and dive-bombing attacks against shipping; mine laying and carrying of other heavy loads which could vary from search lights to rockets, plus depth charges, bombs and flares. It was a revolutionary concept and other considerations include being able to land in small areas and on pitching decks at very low speeds. These requirements pointed to a biplane as the obvious design. When the first prototype was flown successfully, because of the seemingly endless variety of stores and equipment that the aircraft was cleared to carry, one woman commented that "No housewife on a shopping spree could cram a wider variety of articles into her stringbag." The name struck and from that moment on pilots called it the Stringbag. The Air Ministry ordered 89 of the production model and the first examples reached the RAF in July 1936. By 1940 Fairey had delivered 692 Swordfish.



Swordfish taking off from deck of an aircraft carrier

HMS Courageous carried 24 Swordfish. At the beginning of the war it does not seem to have occurred to anyone to employ the aircraft to attack enemy naval ships. The Swordfish aircraft were expected to hunt For U-Boats, harass them and keep them down, making it difficult for them to attack merchant ships. There was still a great deal to be learned about the operation of aircraft carriers and the use of the aircraft. On Sunday evening of September 17, 1939 two torpedoes from a German U-Boat struck the Courageous and she sunk in 20 minutes; 518 men were lost.

Fairey now turned to the production of other Fairey models. The Swordfish was the only British aircraft that was flying operationally at the outbreak of the war and was still flying against the enemy when the war ended in 1945. It outlived the Fairey Albacore designed to replace it during the war.

In early 1940 the Admiralty arranged for Blackburn Aircraft to begin manufacture of the Swordfish. The Swordfish Mark II appeared in 1943 with a metal covered lower wing to allow it to carry projectiles. Later Mark II models were fitted with the Bristol 820 hp Pegasus XXX radial engine. Mark II maximum speed was 138 mph, with a range of 546 miles and a service ceiling of 19,250 ft. Armament consisted of two 7.7 mm machine guns, one 457 mm torpedo or eight 27.2 rocket projectiles. The Swordfish Mark III also appeared in 1943 which carried ASV radar in a housing between the main landing gear legs which eliminated the ability to carry a torpedo. Swordfish production ended on August 18, 1944 with 692 having been built by Fairey and a further 1699 having been built by Blackburn Aircraft.

The Stringbag had three cockpits, one for the pilot, facing forward, a second for the observer/navigator facing toward the tail and a third for the telegraphist air gunner (TAG) who also sat facing the tail.

Aft



Model of Stringbag showing the three cockpits

Flying the Stringbag

Communication between the three crew members was by means of a complex series of hand signals or by the use of Gosport tubes, rubber voice-pipes between the cockpits connected to the earpieces of all three flying helmets.

Communication with the base was by telegraph. The typical radio kit

used by Fleet Air consisted of a 1082 Receiver, a 1083 Transmitter and an R1110 beacon receiver (for detecting an aircraft carrier's revolving beacon).

Its low stall speed and inherently tough design made it ideal for operation from the merchant aircraft carriers in the often severe mid Atlantic weather. Its takeoff and landing speeds were so low that it did not require the carrier to be steaming into the wind, unlike most carrier-based aircraft. On occasion, when the wind was right, Swordfish were flown from a carrier at anchor.

The Swordfish relied on its exceptional maneuverability as its main defense when intercepted. In a vertical bank it could turn around almost in its own length. This or a sudden climb—essentially standing the plane on its tail—presented the attacking fighter pilot with an apparently stationary target disappearing behind him at 300 mph. Attempting to slow and follow these aerobatics would cause a stall. It will maneuver in a vertical plane easily as straight and level.

The Stringbag was described as almost totally foolproof. It was stable and even at the lowest possible speeds the controls were firm and positive. In a steep dive the speed would stay below 225 mph and firmly pulling back on the stick would never result in a high speed stall.

The Swordfish fly over the ocean,
The Swordfish fly over the sea;
If it were not for King George's Swordfish,
Where the 'ell would the Fleet Air Arm be?



A 1082 receiver section of the radio kit in 1940. The red and green plugs had to be changed to alter frequency.



The Last Flight

Captain Brian Howard (Retired) passed away April 12. He was a member of the 434 (Niagara Peninsula) Wing of the Royal Canadian Air Force Association, former CO of both 23 and 809 Air Cadet Squadron, a pilot and long time member of the Niagara Training Site and the OPC. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his wife Kathy, his family and friends.

Weather

The Other Enemy

By Ron Butcher

(Edited for the purpose of inclusion here)

Man has managed to harness almost everything else, but Nature still controls the weather.

There are many examples through the ages where unforeseen changes in weather have had a major impact on the plans of military commanders, among others: the Lost Legions of Varus in 9 AD, Napoleon's adventure in Russia in 1812, Operation Overlord in June 1944, and the Battle of the Bulge that December.

Meteorology was an inexact science insofar as the WWII bomber offensive was concerned. During the bitter winter of 1943/44 both England and Europe were plagued by atrocious weather. The Jetstream was reactively unknown so aircraft were unable to choose flight levels to advantage. Briefing officers gave their forecasts to aircrews with the appearance of great confidence, but it was soon realized that they had little to work with.

Bombing in WWII was a blunt instrument, even more blunt because of the changing weather and the relatively imprecise navigation instruments available at that time. Marking by the Pathfinders was difficult because many German cities, particularly Berlin oftentimes had cloud cover in place. Winds for navigation had to be computed within the first 400 miles on long trips because the main navigation aid was subject to enemy jamming.

The writer of this article, Mr. Butcher, continues to say on return from operations that the weather over England December 16/17/1943 was the grimmest for recovery: extremely low cloud was in place and heavy fog existed in low lying areas (by coincidence) areas where airfields are built. Although anticipated, the fog had arrived earlier than expected. Low on fuel, we declared an emergency and were diverted to Tholthorpe because aircraft were stacked to a great height at our home base. Twenty-five aircraft failed to return 5.2percent of those despatched. The abandonments and crashes over England added 30 more bombers, bringing the toll to 55 (probably approaching 385 aircrew)

January 28/29 following briefing, taking off became questionable and was twice delayed due to weather conditions, eventually we got away at midnight (one hour late). Climbing to 20,000 feet we encountered severe icing, gunners reported all guns frozen. The long route home was difficult, made worse by cold and tiredness, thick cloud, icing once more and the extremes of buffeting in cloud made navigation more difficult.

All in all, the rotten weather caused a real obstacle to Bomber Command's effectiveness and many aircraft losses.

Ron Butcher is W/C Ronald W. Butcher, DFC, CD (Ret.) is a WWII Lancaster navigator with

408 Squadron

In the News

Further UK Orders for F-35 Now Indefinite As Focus Shifts to Space



Tempest—See 434 Bulletins Nov-Dec 2020 & Sept-Oct 2020

Defence Command Paper

The United Kingdom has dropped its reference to an earlier stated commitment to procuring 138 F-35 Lightning combat aircraft. In the **Defence Command Paper** released on 22 March, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) has deferred to a later date any commitment to further buys beyond the 48 it is currently earmarked to receive by 2025.

The government is committed to spending £188 billion over the next four years with a greater focus on technological warfare and extensive plans for war in space. There will be a greater emphasis on the RAF Space Command whose first commander is Air Vice-Marshal Godfrey, the National Cyber Force and new artificial intelligence (AI) research facilities. The high tech focus will include unmanned aircraft and direct energy weapons. Among flagship projects is the continued development of the Tempest stealth fighter.

In an earlier announcement Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

“The security and intelligence agencies will continue to protect us around the clock from terrorism and new and evolving threats. We will invest another £1.5 billion in military research and development, designed to master the new technologies of warfare. We will establish a new centre dedicated to artificial intelligence, and a new RAF space command, launching British satellites and our first rocket from Scotland in 2022.”

“I can announce that we have established a National Cyber Force, combining our intelligence agencies and service personnel, which is already operating in cyberspace against terrorism, organised crime and hostile state activity. And the RAF will receive a new fighter system, harnessing artificial intelligence and drone technology to defeat any adversary in air-to-air combat.”

In a speech delivered March 19, 2021 prior to the release of the Defence Command Paper the **Rt Honourable Ben Wallace MP**, referring to the RAF, raised the following points among others:

UK Strategic Command will, therefore, invest £1.5-billion over the next decade to build and sustain a ‘digital backbone’ to share and exploit vast amounts of data, through the cloud and secure networks.

to ensure our workforce are able to exploit new domains and enhance productivity the Command will invest in synthetics and simulation, providing a step change in our training.

the National Cyber Force will lie at the heart of defence and GCHQ’s offensive cyber capability and will be based in the North West of England.

keeping ourselves informed of the threat and ahead of our rivals means that Defence Intelligence will be at the heart of our enterprise. We will exploit a wider network of advanced surveillance platforms, all classifications of data, and enhanced analysis using Artificial Intelligence.

strategic Command will partner, alongside the RAF, to deliver a step-change in our space capabilities. From next year we will start delivering a UK built Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance satellite constellation.

Space is just one area in which the MOD will prioritise more than £6.6-billion of research, development, and experimentation over the next four years.

In the News

Finland—Deja Vu

The Finnish Defence Forces Logistics Command has sent the Request for Best and Final Offer (BFO) for the HX Fighter Programme to replace its ageing F-18 Hornet aircraft.

The Request for BFO concerns the following multi-role fighters and their related systems and weapons: Boeing F/A-18 Super Hornet (United States), Dassault Rafale (France), Eurofighter Typhoon (Great Britain), Lockheed Martin F-35 (United States) and Saab Gripen (Sweden).

The deadline for finalized tenders is 30 April 21 while the government will decide on the procurement at the end of 2021.

The Finnish Parliament has approved an authorization order of EUR 9.4 billion to procure multi-role fighters to replace the Hornet fleet.

Algeria Places Additional Order for Su-34 Fighter-Bombers

Algeria has placed an order for 14 Russian Su-34 fighter-bombers with deliveries to be completed before the end of 2023.

Algeria placed orders in 2020 for 14 MiG-29M medium weight fighters and 16 Su-30MKA multirole heavyweight fighters both of which are currently being delivered.



Su-34 Fighter Bomber



Sukhoi Su-30MKA Multirole Heavyweight Fighter (16 ordered and being delivered))



**MiG-29M Medium Weight Fighter
(14 ordered and being delivered)**

In the News

South Korea Rolls Out First Prototype of Its Combat Fighter Designated KF-21 Boromae

Features

- AESA Radar & Advanced Avionics
- Advanced Precision Weapons
- 10 Weapon Hard Points
- High Maneuverability
- Enhanced Survivability
- Advanced Support Features
- High operational efficiency
- Single & Tandem Seat Aircraft

Specifications

Max. Thrust	44,000 lb
Ferry Range	1,550nm
Max. Speed	1,400mph
Max. Payload	17,000lb
MTOW	56,400lb

Dimensions: 36.7ft (11.2m) wingspan, 15.6ft (4.7m) height, 55.4ft (16.9m) length.

As first reported in 434 Niagara Bulletin for March-April 2021, Korea Aerospace Industries has been assembling the prototype fighter originally designated KF-X, as part of a 8.8 trillion won (US \$7.9 billion) project. The first prototype was rolled out on April 9th. Flight tests will be carried out in 2022 and serial production will begin as soon as tests are completed. It is expected that 40 of the jets will be deployed by 2028 with a total of 120 by 2032.

Around 65% of its components are being made indigenously. In addition, in May 2020, GE Aviation delivered the first F414-400K engine for the KF-21. For weapons, Germany's IRIS-T and MBDA's Meteor missiles will be employed as the air-to-air short- and mid-range missiles. Korea plans to develop its own long range air to ground missiles. South Korea considers the project to be of national importance with 16 of universities, 11 laboratories and 553 suppliers participating .



Photo by Adrian Adkin

The Avro Arrow

Have We Betrayed Our Veterans

Figures are readily available for how many died for each country from fighting in WWII. Canada: Military and Civilian; 45,400; Russia: Military and Civilian; 26,600,000, USA: Military and Civilian; 418,500 and so on. These figures do not include how many returned from war disabled for life, how many returned with what we now call Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, how many returned to face a broken marriage, etc. Freedom comes with a high price. Many left Canada to fight believing that if we did not stop Hitler, Germany would be on our shores before long. They were intent on protecting Canada's freedom along with helping Europe regain its freedom.

Aeronautical technology in Canada boomed during WW2 and it was the intention of the government to continue supporting the aircraft industry. Canada decided to start from the ground up and indigenously develop an all-new advanced interceptor. Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) Specification AIR 7-3 was published in 1953. No existing design in the world could meet the requirements of the Specification. Avro Canada's engineers went to work on revolutionary jet fighters, commercial airliners, flying saucers and a space plane. They placed Canada at the technological cutting edge of the new Jet Age. From their work the hypersonic Avro Arrow was born. We all know, it was faster and more technically advanced than any other comparable aircraft in the world.

What is equally important is that it showed CANADIANS that using their own abilities they could do something better than anyone else in the world; they could soar on the Avro Arrow out of the dark shadows and into the bright sunlight of the entire world. Canadian technology could be the base for a new vibrant economy employing thousands of Canadians making Canada a stronger nation and protecting its freedom.

Black Friday

On February 20, 1959 the announcement came that the Avro Arrow and the Iroquois engine projects were cancelled. Blow torches and paper shredders would quickly rip Canadian's national pride to pieces. It is estimated that 50,000 Canadian jobs were lost and within hours of the cancellation, NASA approached our Canadian engineers.

Freedom

"The power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint." "The Arrow represents a period when Canada stood up on its own and did its own thing," Paul Squires, a historian with the Canadian Aeronautical Preservation Association, told *Global News*. "In many ways, it's become a symbol of the country."

Today, does Canada "stand on its own and do its own thing?" Or is Canada unduly influenced by other sources on matters such as which countries are to be its friends and which are its enemies, which people are to be our friends and whom should be blacklisted, what products should we buy and which products should we avoid, what should we manufacture and what must we not manufacture, etc? If the Avro Arrow symbolized Canada standing "on its own and doing its own thing," did its cancellation put Canada on a path of giving up its freedom and relying on others to direct our future?

Canadian journalist Spencer Fernando recently wrote, *"There are tremendous opportunities for Canada to seize, but that won't happen unless we become more assertive, and gain confidence in our own ability to direct our future, rather than always waiting for others."* In today's world of shifting economic and military power, is waiting for others to tell us what to do putting Canada in a precarious position? Have we frittered away our freedom and initiative as symbolized by the Avro Arrow. **Has Canada betrayed those who gave so much to protect our freedom?**

Remnants of Canada's National Pride



Avro Arrow Replica
Edenvale Aviation Heritage
Foundation Museum
Stayner, ON



Avro Arrow Nosecone RL 206
Canadian Aviation & Space Museum
Ottawa, ON



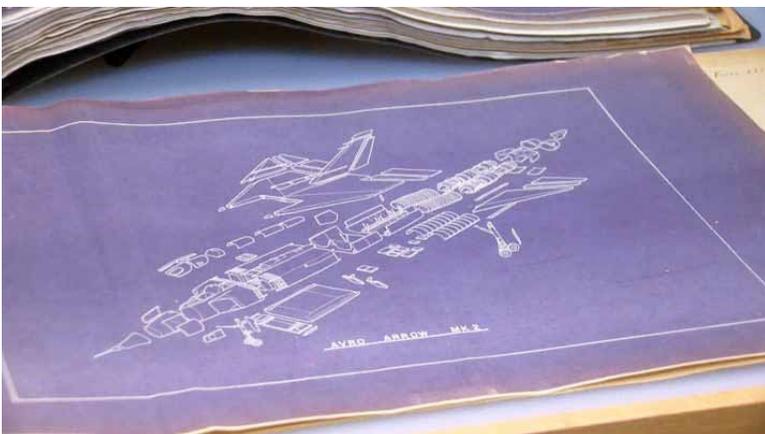
Orenda PS13 Iroquois turbojet
Canadian Aviation & Space Museum
Ottawa, ON



Wings of 3rd
Prototype
Canadian Aviation &
Space Museum
Ottawa, ON



Avro Arrow Control Column from CF-105
Bagotville Air Defense Museum
LaBaie, QC



Blueprints
University of Saskatchewan
Diefenbaker Canada Centre

Royal Australian Air Force 100th Anniversary



The Royal Australian Air Force, formed in March 1921

It directly continues the traditions of the Australian Flying Corps (AFC), formed on 22 October 1912.^[1]

The RAAF took part in many of the 20th century's major conflicts. During the early years of the Second World War a number of RAAF bomber, fighter, reconnaissance and other squadrons served in Britain, and with the Desert Air Force located in North Africa and the Mediterranean. From 1942, many RAAF units were formed in Australia, and fought in South West Pacific Area. Thousands of Australians also served with other Commonwealth air forces in Europe, including during the bomber offensive against Germany.

^[1] By the time the war ended, a total of 216,900 men and women served in the RAAF, of whom 10,562 were killed in action.

In the European theatre of the war, RAAF personnel were especially notable in RAF Bomber Command: although they represented just two percent of all Australian enlistments during the war, they accounted for almost twenty percent of those killed in action. This statistic is further illustrated by the fact that No. 460 Squadron RAAF, mostly flying Avro Lancaster's, had an official establishment of about 200 aircrew and yet had 1,018 combat deaths. The squadron was therefore effectively wiped out five times over. Total RAAF casualties in Europe were 5,488 killed or missing.

This year 2021 marks the 100th anniversary of the Australian Air Force. Congratulations



Centenary Flypast Canberra

World Famous Red Arrows Commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Royal Australian Air Force

On March 31st the Red Arrows performed a flypast over Englefield Green in Runnymede to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Royal Australian Air Force. Her Majesty the Queen was in attendance to view the flypast and visit the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Air Forces Memorial.



The Red Arrows began practicing earlier this year in anticipation that they would be able to carry out aerial displays in 2021. Their first engagement was the flypast at Englefield Green.



Practice flights earlier this year



Excitement Builds as Tom Vance's 99th Birthday Approaches in July



Tom, wishing you all the best for your forthcoming birthday! May your life be filled with many more "blue skies."

The Story of former 434 Niagara member Don Sherk and his three Brothers as reported in the Welland Tribune August 27, 2005

Wording from first page of article

Sixty years ago four brothers from Black Creek joined the fight for freedom in Europe. Don and Ray Sherk joined the Royal Canadian Air Force and flew Spitfires in the defense of England, while Jim and Ben went to sea. They all saw more than their share of action.

"We were right in the middle of it," Ray said.

Ray who now lives in Toronto, shot down three Nazi planes and teamed up with two other pilots to shoot down a fourth.

Don, who lives in Welland, shot down a number of jet engine-powered V-1 missiles the Allies called "doodlebugs" as a Folke Wolfe FW-190

Jim, who returned to his roots in Black Creek, signed with the U.S. navy and spent most of his time patrolling the South Pacific aboard the USS Hambleton.

And Ben, who lives in Niagra Falls, sailed with the Royal Canadian Navy aboard the HMCS Trail.

On Friday afternoon the four brothers got together again at a Pelham restaurant to share each other's company. They also had something to celebrate—Jim, the youngest, turns 80 on Sunday.

Despite the many years as well as fighting in the Second World War together, we all survived to our octogenarian age, said Ray, 83.

Often their duties kept them thousands of mile apart, but Jim recalled one day more than 60 years ago, shortly before the invasion of Normandy, when his air-borne brothers had a chance to visit him.



From left are brothers Don, Jim, Ben and Ray Sherk. Despite many years, as well as fighting in the Second World War together, "we all survived to our octogenarian age," says Ray.

Brothers in arms

■ OFTEN THOUSANDS OF MILES APART, THE SHERK BROTHERS WERE PART OF THE FIGHT TO FREE EUROPE 60 YEARS AGO

BY ALAN BENNER
Tribune Staff
WELLAND

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'I'm an escaped prisoner of war'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

"They said they were coming down to see me, but I had trouble getting off the ship," Jim said.

Because of the pending invasion, he said the ship was on lock down. "Our liberty was cancelled," he said.

Regardless, he managed to get permission to leave the ship to spend the day with Ray and Don.

Don, who turns 85 in September, even borrowed a plane for the visit.

"My squadron commander allowed me to take an airplane and fly down to Plymouth," recalled Don.

Not long after Normandy, Jim was on board the first ship to reach Tokyo Harbour on his 20th birthday, Aug. 28, 1945.

Meanwhile, Ben was aboard a corvette in the North Atlantic, assigned to ensure safe passage for ships as they crossed the sea from Europe to North America.

Ray was also shot down a few times during the war, he said.

He was even captured once by Nazi soldiers after he was shot down behind enemy lines.

"I was a prisoner, but I escaped after a year," he recalled. "I'm an escaped prisoner of war."

In the past several months, memories of the war have meant a lot to the brothers.

Earlier this year Ray and his wife, Heather, joined other veterans from



SPECIAL PHOTO

Don Sherk remembers being allowed to borrow a plane so he could go visit his brother in Plymouth during the war.

around the world when he returned to Appeldoorn for the 60th anniversary celebration of the liberation of Holland.

He also had a chance to spend some time with Smokey Smith before he passed away this summer at the age of 91.

Smokey, also known as Ernest Alva Smith, was the last winner of the Victoria Cross, and someone Ray considered a friend.

Sponsors

Giant Tiger

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Sobeys

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Fonthill, ON L0S 1E0

McDonalds Restaurant

Joanne Martin
569 Main St. W., Port Colborne, ON

Serge Maveev

Owner operator
111 Shaw St., Welland, ON L3B 5X4
(905)-735-4434

It's
with

Botanix

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