

Wing Mate

Royal Canadian Air Force Association

Newsletter 408-437 Wing



Bristol Blenheim Mk. I



Egypt 1940

March  2022

AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION of CANADA MISSION STATEMENT

The Air Force Association of Canada is a national aerospace and community service organization whose aim is to commemorate the noble achievements of the men and women who have served as members of Canada's Air Force since its inception, advocate for a proficient and well equipped Air Force and, support the Royal Canadian Air Cadets.

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Sick and Visiting

Be sure to advise Barbara Newman, Fellowship Chair, if you are aware of a Wing member who is ill or in distressed circumstances.

Barbara can be reached at 416-223-7840.

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March 2022

March 19 John Bamlett

March 24 Hassina Heather

March 27 George Peckett

Happy Birthday!



Funnies

I MIGHT WAKE UP EARLY
AND GO RUNNING. I ALSO MIGHT
WAKE UP AND WIN THE LOTTERY.
THE ODDS ARE ABOUT THE SAME.



I always wondered what those things are for.

President's Report



I've been in contact with the Legion, for the moment only open Friday and Saturday evenings. So-o-o, now that restrictions are lifted, we are due a party. I think the best idea is to look for an obliging restaurant. With real tablecloths and silverware. What we, your executive, will need to know is how many are willing to show. (Armin and Domenico, you are at the top of the list.)

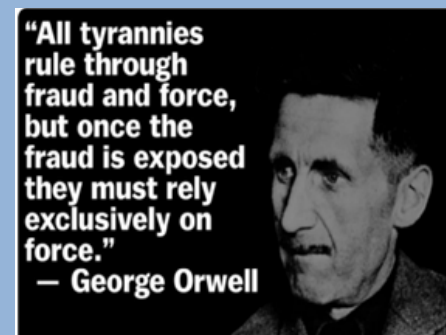
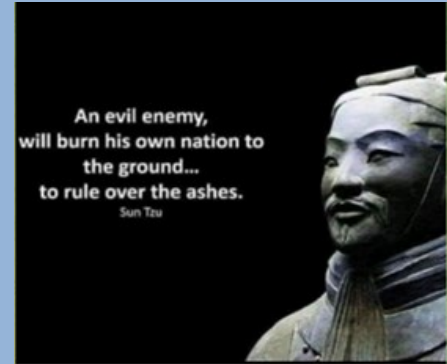
Details will follow.

Well folks, you read it first here, in your very own *Wing Mate* of December. I stated with some self-assurance this Covid immobility will end in late March, and here we are out of the blue the confinement release date whizzed to the first of March. Why? I will give credit where its due. My barber/hairstylist said that he heard from his second cousin whose neighbour's *marital unit* is a discredited member of the party for beliefs held, let it slip that Mr. Ford, visited **Delphi** recently and spent some significant time (*mask status unconfirmed*) with a mysterious individual. One's (*no pronoun*) name is only whispered with reverence as **The Oracle**. Some said at an ancient truck-stop. This tidbit related to me as unconfirmed gossip. But then what is gossip? Still there is the matter of the **Ides-of-March**. Ignore it at your own peril or is it **Thursday 2nd of June**.

I did say back then that the end is near (*can I say this without causing panic*.) My thoughts on the value of masks shockingly have an upside, in retrospect the bigger the better in limited instances. After all it confuses the facial recognition software. Wear sunglasses: It will think you're a Troll. Draw eyes on it and the software will crash.

Perhaps I wasn't clear . . . I was referring to **Delphi**, Ontario, you know tobacco country, not Greece.

Inner thoughts, beliefs we fought wars over.



What's the first thing that comes to mind?



We will remember them.

Claire Bamlett
31 January 2022



Bristol Blenheim/Bolingbroke

The Bristol Blenheim was a British light bomber aircraft designed and built by the Bristol Aeroplane Company which was used extensively in the first two years of WW II, with examples still being used as trainers until the end of the war.

Development began with the *Type 142*, a civil airliner, in response to a challenge from Lord Rothermere to produce the fastest commercial aircraft in Europe. The *Type 142* first flew in April 1935, and the Air Ministry, impressed by its performance, ordered a modified design as the *Type 142M* for the RAF as a bomber.

Canadian production was undertaken by Fairchild Aircraft in Longueuil, Quebec, where the type was known as the Bristol 149 Bolingbroke. 676 were built in several variants, the most important of which being the Bristol 149 Bolingbroke IV (185 built with US instrumentation and de-icing equipment) and the Bristol 149 Bolingbroke IV-T (457 built with 920 hp Mercury XX engines for navigation and gunnery training).



Blenheim Mk 1

Deliveries of the newly named Blenheim started with RAF 114 Squadron in March 1937. In service the Type 142M became the Blenheim Mk. I which would be developed into the longer Type 149, designated the Blenheim Mk. IV, except in Canada where Fairchild Canada built the Type 149 under licence as the Bolingbroke. The Type 160 Bisley was also developed from the Blenheim, but was already obsolete when it entered service.

By the end of 1936, 1,568 aircraft were on order. To meet the demand, secondary assembly lines were established at Chadderton by Avro and at Speke by

Rootes Securities. The aircraft was built under licence by foreign countries, including Finland, (55 a/c),



Blenheim Mk. 1 Cockpit

and Yugoslavia, (16 a/c) with a further 24 in advanced stages of completion when Germany invaded Yugoslavia. Other countries also procured the Blenheim, including Romania, Greece and Turkey. By September 1939, orders for the Blenheim had risen to 2,088 aircraft. Total production of the *Blenheim Mk I* in England was 1,351 aircraft prior to the end of the production run in 1939; production had been terminated in favour of more advanced variants.

The Blenheim was one of the first British aircraft with an all-metal stressed-skin construction, retractable landing gear, flaps, a powered gun turret and variable-pitch propellers. The Mk. I was faster than most of the RAF's biplane fighters in the late 1930s but advances soon left it vulnerable if flown in daylight, although it proved successful as a night fighter. The Blenheim was effective as a bomber but many were shot down. Both Blenheim types were used by foreign operators, and examples were licence built in Yugoslavia and Finland, in addition to Canada.



The Bolingbroke, which had been developed in response to Air Ministry Specification G.24/35 to procure a coastal reconnaissance/light bomber as a replacement for the Avro Anson, had substantial improvements that would serve as the basis for improved variants of the Blenheim. Both the navigator's station and range limitations of the Blenheim Mk. I had been subject to considerable criticism, prompting the development of an improved model to rectify the shortcomings. In September 1937, an experimental Blenheim Mk. I, modified with an extended forward fuselage beyond its original stepless cockpit, smooth-fronted nose enclosure, made its first flight. In addition to operating as medium bombers, both versions were converted into heavy fighters by the addition of a gun pack with four Browning .303 in machine guns mounted under the fuselage.

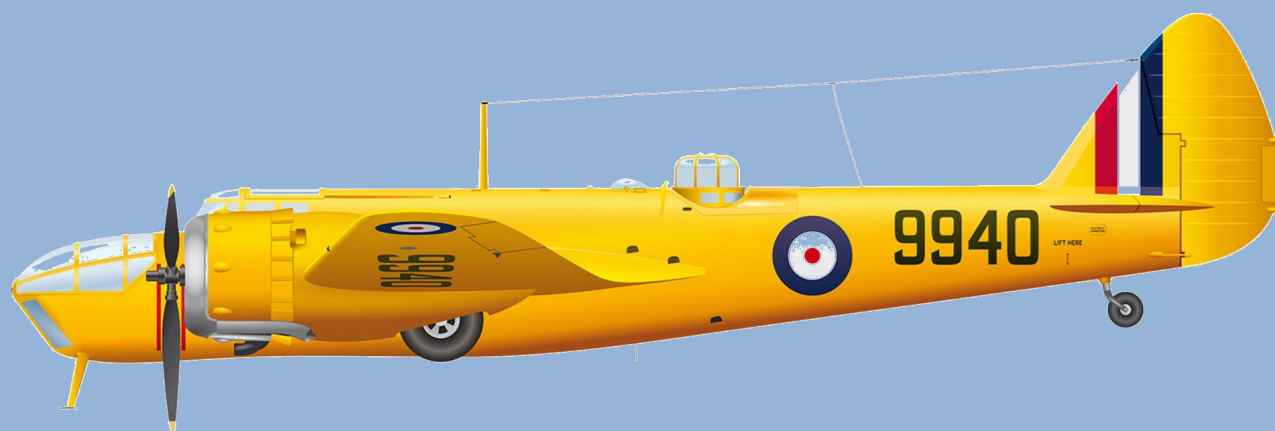


Built by Fairchild-Canada, it was a variant of the Bristol Blenheim Mk IV. No. 115 Squadron was an RCAF Canadian Home War Establishment Squadron, and flew Bolingbroke Mk IV's from November 1941 until August 1943 when the unit converted to Lockheed Ventura GR.Vs. It flew anti-submarine patrols on the B.C. and Alaskan coasts as part of Western Air Command. On the 7th of July 1942 F/Sgt. PMG Thomas and his Bollingbroke crew attacked the Japanese submarine Ro32 damaging it badly and they then directed U.S. Destroyers to the scene which sank it. The squadron disbanded at Tofino, British Columbia in August 1944.



The Mk. IV was also used as a maritime patrol aircraft and both aircraft were also used as bombing and gunnery trainers once they had become obsolete as combat aircraft. Future marks provide more room for the bomb aimer. This required the nose to be "scooped out" in front of the pilot to maintain visibility during takeoff and landing.

The Bolingbroke was the maritime patrol aircraft used by the Royal Canadian Air Force during WW II.





Fairchild worker at the Quebec plant



Ring and bead gunsight

Bolingbroke IV Cockpit (asymmetrical dash due to cut out in nose)

P/O Jimmy Abbotts, RCAF: A Miraculous Escape

P/O J.E. Abbotts was flying with 421 Squadron on 29 July 1943. The assignment: escorting B-26 Marauder bombers. Abbotts and F/L Goldberg were flying as White 3 and 4 with 421 Squadron which was short of pilots and had borrowed from 403 Squadron. When enemy aircraft were spotted south-west of Amsterdam, 403 stayed as top cover. Abbotts, who was flying Spitfire BS509, coded KH-H, described what happened next:



"I spotted 2 – ME 109s below. Winco 'Johnny' Johnson told me to keep an eye on them; finally he said 'Go after them'. I rolled out of the formation and was just coming up nicely through the odd puff of flak when something hit me; lots of oil and smoke. I fired anyway but was out of range."

According to a German soldier, who witnessed the action from the ground, Abbotts had been 'bounced' by a Me110 while he had been concentrating on attacking the Me109s.

Jimmy turned towards the North Sea, but his engine failed and he was still being pursued by the 109s:

"I spun away to about 4,000 or 5,000 feet and decided to bale out. I rolled over and came out but hit the fuselage and was knocked out. When I regained consciousness, the shoulder strap of my parachute was around the aerial mast. I was hanging on the right hand side of the a/c, the a/c was right side up, wings level and in a nice glide. I held on with one hand and

tried to tear the chute out, but I was getting too close to the ground. I decided that it was all over. And thought 'I've had it'. I passed out. I woke up 3 hours later safe in the arms of – Germans. Several letters from Dutch people tell me that the a/c just missed a house, belly-landed, jumped a ditch, went through a hedge and started to burn while I was still hanging on. They cut me free."

Somehow Abbotts had survived. His only injury was a broken leg. His weight hanging over the side of the fuselage, as well as the way the controls had ended up, resulted in a gentle flat spin and the aircraft glided down with fate at the controls. Albert Philipps, a resident of Hilegom, watched Jimmy's perilous descent



towards the bulb fields...

"The weather was beautiful, but the sky was dampy (fog) so we could not clearly count the bombers and the fighters we just only could hear. Suddenly however a plane came down circling around with its engine heavy smoking. We noticed at once when it came out of the damp that it was a British fighter. The lower it came the more scared we got because we didn't know where it should come down, because of its circling around. You should have seen the workers in the fields, they were also running a circle. When the plane came lower we saw the pilot was hanging besides the plane near the tail. His parachute was hooked on the little radio mast, behind the aviator's seat. He was a lucky fellow, because the plane came on the ground all by itself with not too much speed, after flying over the roof of a little house with it missing it by a few inches. The aviator was dirty and black from sand and mud, and injured not severely. I asked what he was, and he said a 'Canadian'. Then I had to shut my dirty mouth, so as the German soldiers said to me, which showed up by that time."

Jimmy Abbotts became a Prisoner of War and was taken to Stalag Luft III, where the Great Escape took place. He did not attempt to escape but did exercise sessions in the yard while men made the tunnel. After the War, he returned to his hometown, Owen Sound, Ontario, Canada. Jimmy got married and had two children, but was sadly killed in a drink-driving accident on December 19th, 1959.

Rest in peace, P/O James Elmer Abbotts, and thank you for your service.

Wing Mate March 2022

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Souvenirs from Holland

On 24 June 1945, the Canadian Department of National Defence for Air in London received a letter from a Mr. Phillipps of Holland about that fateful day:

“Dear Sir: Herewith I let you know that I would be very pleased to come into conversation with a Canadian pilot who landed on one of our bulbfields in Hillegom, Holland on the 29th of July, 1943.

It happened in the morning on a beautiful day, probably during an air raid on the aerodrome of Schiphol by a couple of RAF twin engine bombers escorted by fighter planes (Spitfires). The weather was beautiful, but the sky was dampy (fog) so we could not clearly count the bombers and the fighters we just only could hear. Suddenly however a plane came down circling around with its engine heavy smoking. We noticed at once when it came out of the damp that it was a British fighter. The lower it came the more scared we got because we didn't know where it should come down, because of its circling around. You should have seen the workers in the fields, they were also running a circle. When the plane came lower we saw the pilot was hanging besides the plane near the tail. His parachute

the aviator, which is now of course out of prison camp might like to have it as a souvenir of that plane which did his duty so wonderful to save his life by landing so beautifully all by itself. The plane's number was KH-H49. BS 509 Spitfire. Please be so kind and let me have the pilot's name and address or you might tell him about this letter so we could come into connection with each other, and he can have the propeller if he wants it as a remembrance. Another man found a beautiful tie pin near the plane, which might be from the pilot. It has the form of an Indian Sword (Klewang). The man still got it, and don't know if he likes to keep it. I think he will, but it is the property of that aviator probably, and it might be a very worthing remembrance tie pin which he would like to have back (from his mother, father, or girl or wife). I hope you will do all you can to find out the aviator's name, so we can come in touch with each other. Thanking you for taking notice of this letter.

Very truly yours,

Albert Philipps

Jimmy Abbotts did in fact receive the propeller and pin from Albert Phillipps, that kind resident of the town where the pilot crashed and survived in such a miraculous manner.

Canadian Airmen Airwomen

“Wally” McLeod, DFC 1915-1944

Henry Wallace McLeod was born in Regina, Saskatchewan to James Archibald McLeod, and Hannah Elizabeth McLeod on 17 December 1915. James McLeod was from Brooklyn, Nova Scotia and went to Acadia University. At the time of his death, long after World War II, he was reputed to be the oldest living graduate of Acadia. McLeod's mother, Hannah, died from Spanish flu, during the pandemic, when he was three. McLeod was an average student, never excelling, but always managing passing grades. From a young age he had a reputation as a fast learner.

McLeod began his military career in 1928, serving with the 5th Saskatchewan Regiment and Regina Rifle Regiment until 1934. McLeod joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in September 1940, graduating from training in April 1941 and arriving in Great Britain in May 1941, attending No. 57 OTU.

McLeod began fighter sweeps over France in July 1941 with No. 485 Squadron and No. 411 RCAF. By May 1942 he had scored five victories. On 13 October 1942 McLeod was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. The citation read:

“In September 1942, this officer participated in an engagement against at least 20 Messerschmitt 109s. Despite the odds, Flight Lieutenant McLeod so skilfully led his section during the combat that the enemy force was completely broken up. This officer has always displayed the greatest determination to engage the enemy and has destroyed at least 5 and damaged

a number of other hostile aircraft. His leadership has been most inspiring.”

Soon afterwards McLeod was moved to No. 603 Squadron on Malta and in July joined No. 1435 Squadron. On 3 November 1942, he received a Bar to his DFC for his actions in the island's defence. It is believed McLeod was credited with 12 enemy aircraft at this point. During his time in Malta, it is thought McLeod may have shot down and killed the 47 victory ace Heinz "Figaro" Golinski on 16 October 1942. The citation read:

“One day in October, 1942, this officer took part in an attack on a formation of six Junkers 88's and shot two of them down. Although his aircraft was damaged in the combat he led his section in an attack on another formation of nine enemy bombers. Afterwards, he skilfully flew his damaged aircraft to base. During a period of five days Flight Lieutenant McLeod destroyed five enemy aircraft in the defence of Malta. A gallant fighter, this officer has destroyed 12 and damaged many more enemy aircraft.”

On 4 December 1942 it was reported that McLeod had been sent for a rest in Britain after destroying 13 enemy aircraft in three months. Included in his claims were seven Messerschmitt Bf 109s, three Junkers Ju 88s and three Macchi C.202.

On 5 September 1944 McLeod was appointed a Companion of the Distinguished Service Order for 250 missions and 21 aerial victories, plus three probably destroyed and 12 damaged. McLeod scored most of his kills in the Spitfire Mk V, scoring 13 kills, two probably, 11 damaged and 1 shared damaged. The citation read:

“This officer continues to display the highest standard of courage and resolution in air operations. He is an exceptional leader and a relentless fighter whose achievements are worthy of the highest praise. He has destroyed 17 enemy aircraft.”



On 27 September 1944, McLeod was leading a section of six aircraft of his squadron on high patrol as part of the fighter Wing led by Wing Commander James "Johnnie" Johnson over Nijmegen, Netherlands. During the action McLeod went missing. Johnson made repeated calls over the R/T, but McLeod did not answer. After landing, Johnson could see his friend had not returned. Johnson questioned the rest of the pilots and one reported seeing Wally chasing a lone Messerschmitt. Knowing McLeod's character, Johnson believed he would have attacked regardless of the enemy fighter's advantage:

"I feel certain that he wouldn't have let go of the 109 until the issue had been decided one way or the other. There was no other aircraft in the area [that Johnson had seen] and they must have fought it out together, probably above the cloud. To start with he would have been at a disadvantage, for the 109 was already several thousand feet higher. I think the Messerschmitt got him. It was always all or nothing for Wally."

Remains of his Spitfire IX (NH425) were discovered in September 1949. McLeod was still in the wreckage of his Spitfire, in the outskirts of Wesel, near Duisburg, just inside the German border. He was buried in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery at Rheinberg. McLeod may have been shot down by Major Siegfried Freytag of Jagdgeschwader 77 flying a Bf 109, who claimed on this day, the only Spitfire shot down in the Duisburg area near Wesel for his 101st victory.



In WW II, No. 1435 Flight was a night fighter unit on Malta, subsequently raised to squadron status, becoming the only RAF flying squadron to be given a four digit number.

In Memorium

Claire Adele Naylor Bamlett

2 May 1928 – 30 January 2022

Our Wing expresses its condolences to John Bamlett and family. Claire passed away peacefully at Credit Valley Hospital at the age of 93.

Beloved wife of John Bamlett and the late Eric Naylor. Loving mother of Brenda Parks (David), Karen Barrett (Mark), Eric Naylor (Nicole Emmett) and Andrew Naylor (Cheryl). Much loved Grandma of Ryan, Craig and Keith Parks, Victoria and Rebecca Barrett, Elizabeth Silva, Steven, Amber and Emilie Naylor.

Claire was known to many in the Air Force Association and was a great supporter of our Wing and of the meetings at the provincial level.

For those who wish, donations may be made to the Heart & Stroke Foundation or the Alzheimer Society.



No. 1 Wing RCAF

Located at Canadian Forces Base Kingston, 1 Wing is the home of Canada's tactical aviation capability. Equipped with a mixed fleet of **CH-146 Griffon** and **CH-147F Chinook** helicopters, 1 Wing provides integrated tactical aviation airpower effects for the Canadian Army, the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command, and the Royal Canadian Air Force as part of Canada's national and international objectives. Our personnel are highly trained, dedicated professionals who maintain a culture of uncompromising standards, safety and operational fitness to deliver combat-effective airpower. 1 Wing consists of a Formation Headquarters and seven Total Force (employing both Regular and Reserve force personnel) RCAF squadrons distributed across Canada.

History

The oldest Wing in Canadian military aviation, No. 1 Canadian Wing Royal Air Force was formed in 1919 and disbanded in 1920. Over the following decades, 1 Wing was re-instated and moved several times: Winnipeg, 1925; Montreal, 1950, in the RCAF Reserve Group as part of Air Defence Command with operational responsibility for the defence of North America; England, 1951, in support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); Marville, France, 1955; and Lahr, Germany, in 1967.



Colonel Michael Babin



Chief Warrant Officer Lori White

Squadrons

400 Tactical Helicopter Squadron

403 Helicopter Operational Training Squadron

408 Tactical Helicopter Squadron

427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron

430 Tactical Helicopter Squadron

438 Tactical Helicopter Squadron

450 Tactical Helicopter Squadron

