

“Until We Meet Again...”

Gerry Madigan with

G Christian Larsen– Pennfield Parish Military Historical Society ,
Nick Devaux – The Project Log Book, and
Krista Ghanekar-Taylor - “ Until the Cows Come Home: Memoirs of Merle Taylor.”

Introduction

Sunday, July 11, 2022, marked the 82nd anniversary of the beginning of the Battle of Britain, which lasted a grueling two and a half months, with Britain’s fate continually hanging in the balance. In that battle, the Luftwaffe eagerly wished to seize the initiative to gain air superiority. They later initiated an operation, Aldertag (Eagle day) August 13, 1940, to do so. It was designed to be the “coup de gras” to defeat the Royal Air Force for the planned invasion of Britain.

The climax of the Battle peaked 15 September 1940 in which the Luftwaffe was finally denied air supremacy necessary for an invasion. But it was well into October before the Battle was finally concluded.

The German Army’s cross channel invasion, Operation Sea Lion, was then postponed until the next year. Their defeat in the air was due to “The Few” and the fact that the oncoming prevailing winter weather conditions were too hazardous for a cross-channel assault.¹

The Battle of Britain was an important victory. It bought time and breathing space in what was a very dramatic year that saw France defeated on the continent and where Britain stood alone. In that time there were huge changes and events. Before the Battle of Britain began, Winston Churchill replaced Neville Chamberlain as Prime Minister. He began his tenure by forging a coalition cabinet taking members from all parties to manage the war.

Quickly following Churchill’s appointment was the defeat of the French and British Expeditionary Forces in France with the evacuation of the remnants at Dunkirk. More than 300,000 encircled men trapped on its beaches, were saved with only the loss of most of their heavy arms. Dunkirk in of itself was a small victory but the fact is, wars cannot be won by small wins.

¹ Winston S. Churchill, **The Second World War – Their Finest Hour**, Houghton Mifflin Company Boston, 1949, pg.340 (Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few)

Dunkirk proved the British mettle to continue the fight and struggle in the face of adversity even on their own. Surrender was never a Churchillian option.

At this time, Churchill also assumed the key role as Defence Minister. He had the levers of power regarding military matters and operations firmly in his hands. It was unprecedented but Churchill proved to be the man of the hour who motivated his people and who boosted their morale to continue the fight.

Churchill was in a fighting mood but had far too few resources to bring directly to bear on the enemy. The one tool he did have for an immediate and direct effect was his air force, notably bomber command. Churchill would use this tool to great effect. But in the beginning the RAF lacked an abundance of strategic long-range aircraft and personnel.² It all had to be built up and it was, here, in Canada, under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) that it happened to a large extent.³

The tenor of the air campaign would change from defensive to offensive in which the bomber would play a key role. Over time Bomber Command was built up. This force would see a good number of trainees filter through the BCATP. And many allied airmen and women either trained or served in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island.

It was here where many of our small stories are found, especially in Nova Scotia. Canada was not only the training ground for Commonwealth aircrew but was also a key conduit for the procurement of modern aircraft and their trans-shipment over seas.⁴

Eventually we also produced not only components but also the aircraft that were either employed in all theatres of war or in training. We have an example of that here in Nova Scotia, where the Canadian Car & Foundry Company in Amherst produced the Avro Anson during the war.⁵

Those stories here in Nova Scotia make up the smaller mosaic of war that also contributed to the final act. Over the course of time some additional information has come to pass that warrants an update to at least two stories previously published in the Guysborough Journal, “Mystery on the Lake”(2015) and “Loose Threads” (2021).

Recap “Mystery on the Lake” - Crash Card 2159 - March 22, 1944⁶

“Mystery on the Lake” was the story of a plane out of RCAF Station Dartmouth that was returning from an operational anti-submarine patrol that ran into difficulty over Guysborough County. Ventura 2159 was in-bound to home base on March 4, 1944.

This aircraft came to be in certain distress when passing by Country Harbour while returning from a maritime patrol. It was about three o’clock in the afternoon when it crossed the Nova

² Marshal of the R.A.F. Arthur Harris G.C.B. O.B.E A.F.C, **BOMBER OFFENSIVE**, A Greenhill Book, 1986 Copyright © Sir Arthur Harris, 1947, 1998 , pg.33

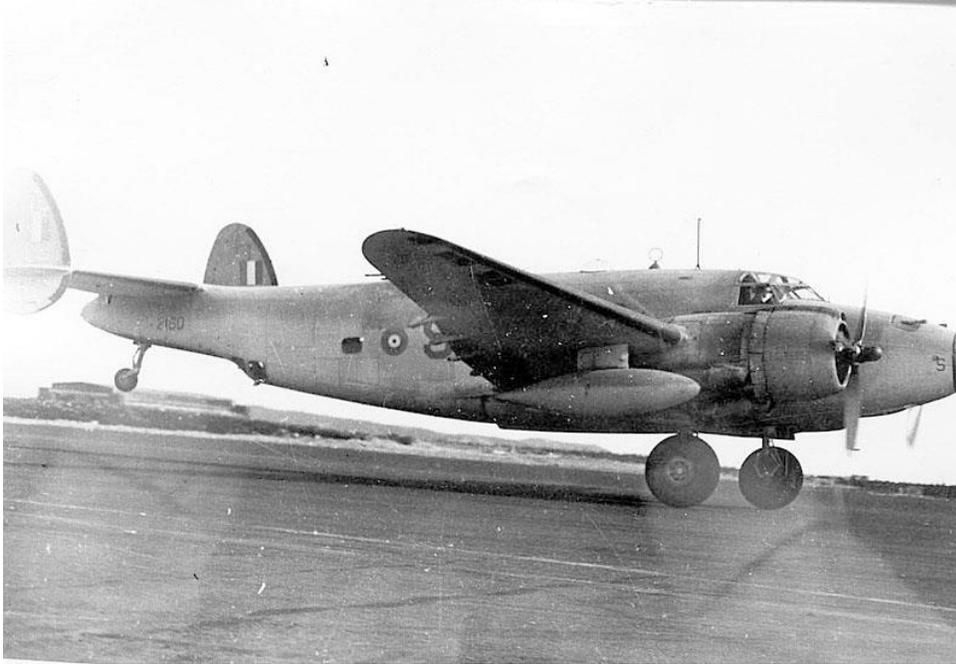
³ Sir Arthur Harris, 1947, 1998 , pg. 54 & pg.90

⁴ Sir Arthur Harris, 1947, 1998 , pg.34

⁵ Wikipedia, [Warbirds and Airshows- Canadian WWII Aircraft Manufacturing Sites](#), Accessed: 11 July 2022

⁶ Gerry Madigan, **Mystery on the Lake**, Guysborough Journal, 2015

Scotian shore at some unknown point. The aircraft and crew were lost. It crashed landed on Archibald Big Lake at Cross Roads Country Harbour where all the crew of Ventura 2159 were safely rescued in due course.



Archive photograph Pennfield Parish Military Historical Society - Sister Ship - Ventura 2160 on take off

RCAF authorities must have been on site soon after and assessed the plane to be “salvageable.” A decision was made to repair the aircraft in the field. Those repairs on Archibald Big Lake took the better part of two weeks.

ACCIDENT CLASSIFICATION											
UNIT 145 Sqdn			REV. E	PLACE Stuart Lake			DATE 4-3-44	TIME 1750 GMT			COMMAND
A/C TYPE VENTURA GRV			NO 2159	CRASH CAT #30			REG. NO. 1100-21-59	ST. N. T. NIGHT			
PERSONNEL		RANK	NUMBER	DUTY		INJURIES		SIGNAL		NO. DATE	STAGE OF FLIGHT
TANNER, J.C.		WO2	R71261	P		Uninj.		A.744 4-3-			
EDGLEY, A.W.G.		WO1	R55664	NAV		Uninj.		D 14 (REVISED)		NO. CHECKED	FORCES LANDING
MARRIS, W.A.		P/O	J38953	WOAG		Uninj.		1			
MCMICHAEL, A.		WO2	L62946	WOAG		Uninj.		#1		NO. CHECKED	FORCES LANDING
ENGINE		ENGINE NUMBER(S)		HOURS FLOWN BY PILOTS				TOTAL		NO. CHECKED	FORCES LANDING
Pratt & Whitney		5538/7005		INST.		NIGHT		ON TYPE			
Double Wasp		5537/7050						SING. DUAL		SING. DUAL	TOTAL
E2800-31				28		50		38 36			
								300		SING. DUAL	TOTAL
								263			
ACCIDENT CLASSIFICATION											

A replacement wing was brought in on a six-wheeled truck from Halifax to effect the repairs. The truck passed through Antigonish and finally onto Country Harbor Mines. Then the aircraft was suspended on the lake on a makeshift lift while the broken wing was removed, and a replacement wing installed. Forty five-gallon cans of fuel were hauled out to the lake to refuel the plane. This gives a broad hint at the reason and the necessity of the forced landing; the plane was simply running on empty!

The fuelling of the plane marked the end of a journey of sorts. It was about to be recovered from the frozen surface of Archibald Big Lake. It was achieved by some intrepid pilot who was tasked to do the honours.

There was great fanfare on the day scheduled for take-off. The procedure for that take-off was simple. Holes were made in the lake. Men placed large poles that were secured in the resulting openings. Ropes were then tied and tethered to the aircraft. Finally, the aircraft's engines were revved as fast as possible.

The plane strained and shook violently against the ropes tethered to the poles, struggling to be released, and striving to become air borne. The ropes were cut. Away went the plane at full throttle, hurtling down the lake, and then, in a short bit, bolted up to the sky.

This may sound far-fetched, but it was typical of the extraordinary efforts and ingenuity used toward the salvage of valuable aircraft at the time. It is an amazing insight to the skills and problem solving of the day. It was all in a day's work of getting the job done in what was most likely the most expedient way possible! But who was the intrepid pilot willing to undertake such lunacy?

[The Saga Continues⁷](#)

The story of Ventura 2159 did not end there. Later that month on March 22, 1944, it was involved in another crash. This one, a "Ferry Flight" to the depot at Scoudouc, NB, occurred at nightfall and upon landing.

⁷ This section: Files from Chris Larsen, Pennfield Historical Society, Crash Card Ventura 2159 22 March 1944 and Sqn Leader Gilbert Biographical material, 9 July 2022

ACCIDENT CLASSIFICATION									
UNIT 4 H.D.		TYPE		PLACE		DATE 22-7-44		FILE 2015	
VENTURA V		2159		W. egg of L.A.		1150-21-59		X X	
PERSONNEL		NAME		RANK		DUTY		SIGNAL	
GILBERT, G.F.		Sgt.		P		Unit		A-25 22-3	
								I	
								#10	
ENGINE NUMBER		SERIAL		TYPE		TOTAL			
P. & W. Engine 18051/7005 Nil		Wasp 2500-31 7050 Nil		117 30 62		303 38			
ACCIDENT CLASSIFICATION									

The pilot on that night was S/Ldr Gilbert. He was flying on his own, solo, on what was supposed to be a routine salvage flight with gear down. Eight minutes in, the starboard engine almost totally failed. Gilbert had to retract the undercarriage to maintain height to prevent the aircraft from stalling.

One problem led to another. He soon found that he had no fuel pressure in the main tank, so was obliged to switch to his main rear tank with only five gallons remaining in total. Shades of Archibald Big Lake! Gilbert landed at Scoudouc with the port engine nacelle smoking. His gear collapsed on landing causing further damage to the aircraft. But he was unscathed, another close call. Blame for the crash was placed on numerous technical failures.

S/Ldr George Frederick Gilbert

S/Ldr George Frederick Gilbert was a unique airman. Some considered him a maverick. He got his start in aviation in 1929 in Yorkton, Saskatchewan. He was bitten by the aviation bug at a very early age when aviation was new and perceived as a unique adventure. He was amongst the growing throng to pursue it.

Gilbert and an uncle went into aviation avidly with both feet. They took the plunge and constructed a Russell parasol type monoplane based on plans published in an aeronautical magazine. This tricky aircraft was little more than a motorcycle engine with wings.

The aircraft could be bought as a kit for self-assembly. But a ready-made plane was also available for purchase for a mere \$695. But for those who were not inclined to buy their own

airplane or kit, one could simply purchase the drawings for the princely sum of five dollars, buy the parts and build one. Regardless, it was a licensed aircraft. And as such, anyone could build and fly it, and then after 200 hours, obtain a commercial pilot's license.⁸



With permission [Joe Barr Collection](#) - [Heath Parasol Model V](#) - Ron Clear - Airspeed Test Pilot. [Christchurch, Hants \(EGHA\), UK - England](#) 1949 (approximate)

The young Fred Gilbert, with the barest knowledge or understanding of the fundamentals of the theory of flight, “checked” himself out solo on his first hop. It followed that the craft crashed while taking off. It was put down to the “inexperience of its pilot” and, no doubt, perhaps some faulty construction. Shortly afterwards, Fred and his uncle placed the remains of the “crate” away in a dark corner of their garage. But the experience did not dissuade Gilbert one iota!

Fred Gilbert soon moved to nearby Melville where he started aviation seriously. And it was serious indeed. It required a commitment of driving 200 miles to the Regina Flying Club for his studies and instruction. He was a quick learner for after three of four successive Sundays, he soloed on the third Sunday under the practiced tutelage of Roland J. Groom. Groom held a No.1 Commercial Flying Certificate for Canada. Then on the fourth Sunday, young Fred Gilbert put in

⁸ Air War [Heath Parasol](#), 2021
Source: [Heath Parasol \(airwar.ru\)](#)
Accessed: 12 Jul 2022

three additional hours of solo flying. He successfully obtained his license. These were halcyon days before a pilot was required to log 100 flying hours to secure a commercial ticket.

Fred Gilbert - Service History

Fred was born at Yorkton, Saskatchewan, January 1, 1909. He was 28 years old in 1937 when he went to Vancouver. There he instructed at Gilbert's Flying Service, an aviation school and charter firm owned by his uncle. He joined the RCAF in 1939 two years later at the ripe old age of "30". With his vast aviation experience and accumulated flying hours, Fred began his war as a staff pilot at an Air Navigation School teaching fledgling navigators to find their way around without getting lost. He remained there for several courses located at Camp Borden and Trenton, then was posted to No.4 Repair Depot.

But Fred's time in the RCAF was a hit and miss affair. He was perceived by some of his superiors as an indifferent officer who lacked discipline. His personnel assessments were variable that tended to be weighted by his commanding officers' opinions as anywhere between outstanding to loathsome. In short Fred was not your average RCAF service man willing to bend to the dictates of the system. So, he tended to buck them. And quite obviously he did not get along well with some of his commanding officers. Many wanted to be rid of him. But he thrived under some and found his place in the valuable effort of test flying and aircraft recovery from difficult circumstances.

Fred was ultimately posted to No.4 Repair Depot at Scoudouc NB where he was an immediate success.⁹ A report of 12 May 1942 stated: "This officer has given satisfaction since being posted to this unit as Test Pilot, which has included general transportation and ferrying. He has qualified on six additional types of aircraft recently to enable him to test all types passing through this Depot."

Then a Flight Lieutenant, Fred Gilbert practically flew every type of aircraft in the RCAF inventory. Significantly he flew these in all stages of repair. He was a cautious man who familiarized himself with all types by flying them solo without any preliminary instruction on their peculiar habits.

It was noted that "Since he was posted to No.4 RCAF Repair Depot over a year ago, he has flown 20 different makes of aircraft and 56 different types - a type being a modified version of an existing make. His logbook recorded a total of 3,300 hours in the air. One entry showed that in one day he flew ten different types, ranging from a light single-engine Fleet trainer to a big twin-engine Canso patrol amphibian weighing many tons."

Fred Gilbert was the "go to" man for the RCAF recovery effort. It became a matter of routine if an Air Force plane in Eastern Air Command required repairs, which could not be made at its own

⁹ National Archives of Canada, **Confirmation of location No.4 Repair Depot, No 1 RDF Maintenance Unit No 4 Repair Depot, Scoudouc, NB,**

Source: [No 1 RDF Maintenance Unit \(c-and-e-museum.org\)](http://No 1 RDF Maintenance Unit (c-and-e-museum.org))

Accessed: 17 Aug 2022

air station, Fred was the man on the spot to haul the repaired wreck to No.4 Repair Depot. He accomplished this after a temporary repair was made, then the aircraft under its own power, was subsequently flown to be fully repaired and returned to service.

Gilbert was frequently called out by salvage crews to fly these damaged planes out of swamps, off country roads, or from many other difficult locations for that matter. In such cases he used just enough gas to fly to the nearest airfield, so the craft was light for take-off. The aircraft's damaged parts were patched, taped, wired together to make it just "airworthy" enough for a short hop.

Fred Gilbert was a brave man. He once took off on two three-foot wide duckwalks, with a deep draining ditch on either side from one recovery site. His reasoning, "Service flying over Europe has demonstrated that aircraft can be flown hundreds of miles after being shot full of holes".

But he did not do these things willy nilly. He knew the quirks of his charges very intimately and was aware of their limitations. He was also aware of his own limitations and abilities as well. One of the hardest things about his job, Fred said, "was to keep from forming habits. When a pilot climbs into a machine he flies regularly he automatically reaches here for the hydraulic undercarriage release, there for the "boost" pressure plunger and some place else again for the throttle. But the position of gadgets vary in different aircraft."

So perhaps the lunatic who took off from Archibald Big Lake that day in March 1944 was none other than S/Ldr Fredrick Gilbert. A man who knew his job well and who greatly contributed to Canada's war effort as a recovery and test pilot. And all this began with a Heath monoplane built from a kit in 1929 in Yorkton, Saskatchewan where Fred was bitten by the aviation bug.

Hidden History

But what became of the Heath company the designer of Fred's first aircraft? Unfortunately, Edward Heath died in February 1931. He was evaluating a new model of an aircraft at the time. However, his firm continued to operate despite his death and the ongoing world economic depression. The company was eventually sold to Harold Anthony in 1935. It continued to sell aircraft until after World War II. Anthony rebranded the company following the war and named the firm "Heathkit" which now produced designs and self-assembly radio kits instead.¹⁰

As for Ventura 2159, it was initially taken on strength by the RCAF April 30, 1943. This particular Lockheed Ventura was a G.R. Mk V, serial number 5157 model, that was transferred from USN inventory to No. 145 (BR) Squadron (RCAF). The aircraft was stationed at RCAF Station Dartmouth, NS from 1943 to 1945.¹¹ Lockheed Ventra 2159 went on to serve under

¹⁰ Air War **Heath Parasol**, 2021

Source: [Heath Parasol \(airwar.ru\)](http://airwar.ru)

Accessed: 12 Jul 2022

¹¹ R. W. R. Walker , Canadian Military Aircraft Serial Numbers

Source: http://rwrwalker.ca/RCAF_FN639_FP702.html,

Accessed: 10 June 2015

RCAF colours until it was finally struck off strength December 7, 1946, coincidentally five years after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour.¹²

A Tribute

Finally, to end this story, Fred Gilbert died in Victoria, July 27, 1974. He had a lifelong career in aviation. His accomplishments were many but perhaps the greatest tribute is found in this statement, “This officer has shown exceptional devotion to duty and competency as Chief Test and Communication pilot at this unit since February 1942.

He has tested as many as eight different types of medium and heavy training and operational aircraft in one day. He has also been outstanding in flying in crashed aircraft, temporarily repaired, from small fields, thereby effecting a saving of thousands of hours of mechanics’ time. He has always displayed fearless determination to complete his allotted task.”

And perhaps that sums up the life of George Frederick Gilbert best, he was fearless.

Loose Threads - The Battle of the Ruhr

“Loose threads” the more recent article also required an update of two intertwining story lines, where fate saw two family’s stories converge and evolve, then how two paths diverged. One family saw a son survive the war, the other saw a beloved uncle lost, remembered in “ **Until the Cows Come Home: Memoirs of Merle Taylor.**”

So, we begin with the spring of 1942, when most of Europe was ravaged by the growing intensity of the Second World War. As with so many young Canadians at this rather great time in our history, the late Merle Taylor wished to contribute in a meaningful way to the war effort.¹³ She joined the RCAF Woman’s Division in 1942 to become a Morse code instructor where she taught her skills to airmen in training.

Merle was inspired to join the RCAF by her uncle Sandy Horne’s service who was then a bomb aimer on active service. Her recollection of him was of a family loved one leaving for far distant shores and battlefields. It was a common sentiment and memory shared by many Canadian families. Their common bond was in the recollection of loved ones leaving for overseas; where some regrettably, never returned home, and in which, they were lost forever.

¹² Canadian Wings :: The History & Heritage of the Royal Canadian Air Force, **Aircraft Serials Database, Ventura 2159**, 2004-2016 Accessed: 12 June 2015

Source:<http://www.canadianwings.com/Aircraft/Database/listpage.php>

¹³ Wartime. In *Until the Cows Come Home: Memoirs of Merle Taylor* (pp. 23-49). (2013). Halifax, NS: Quadrule Services Inc. pg. 23-49 (starts this entire section was extracted and use with permission of the authors)

Merle's uncle was one amongst the 125,000 Commonwealth service personnel who served in Bomber Command, where sadly 55,573 were killed over the course of the war. That tally included over 10,000 young Canadian lives. Only ten percent survived unscathed from those who had served from the beginning of the war.¹⁴ Sandy Horne was not amongst them.

Sandy Horne was shot down on a mission over Germany in March and only officially reported missing in action some months later December 26, 1943. In the fog of war, there was always a slight hope that he had escaped injury or death, or that perhaps he survived and was taken prisoner of war. So often as not, authorities would officially delay informing the families of an airman's fate. This would allow sufficient time for details to reach them as these percolated slowly through the Red Cross or from other agencies. In the meantime, though, families would receive some interim notification in the form of a dreaded telegram.

Merle's uncle Sandy was amongst a vast score of names published daily in casualty lists in newspapers across Canada. These lists were the means that informed the Canadian public of their sons' and daughters' heroism, service, devotion to duty, and deaths throughout the Second World War.

Survival to a full tour of 30 missions in Bomber Command was considered dubious at best by many crews who flew them night after night. And yet, these young men bravely continued to do so, knowing the odds were against them, while climbing into their fragile aircraft, not knowing if they would ever come home again.

The biggest trial for many began in early 1943. That year marked the true beginning of a major bomber offensive against Germany whose origins began with a simple memorandum of intent. It was drafted and released on January 10, 1943, by the Air Staff to initiate plans for a coming offensive. This memorandum contained a directive stating all available heavy and medium bombers were to be used for a forthcoming air offensive against Germany.¹⁵ But the force required to do so still had to be assembled in the meantime.

Despite a brief respite, the trial of this offensive was set for March 5, 1943. A message was promulgated to all concerned bomber stations, stating that a maximum effort on Essen was

¹⁴ Bomber Command Museum Of Canada, **Bomber Command's Losses**, Nanton, Alberta Canada, 2022

Source: [Bomber Command's Losses – Bomber Command Museum of Canada](#)

Accessed: 15 Jul 2022

¹⁵ W. Cooper, Air Battle of the Ruhr – The RAF Offensive March- July 1943, Pen Sword, AVIATION (1992), 2013 pg. 21 & 33

required that very night. Every station involved then scheduled a main briefing for the raid roughly around 6.30 p.m. with a scheduled take-off at 8.30 p.m.¹⁶

In the hours leading up to take off aircrews were assembled in closed briefing rooms, where the doors were sealed, and guards posted on the outside. Finally, a guarded screen was drawn back for the assembled crowd to reveal the map of that night's target.¹⁷

The night of 5/6 March marked the true beginning of the Battle of the Ruhr. The target for all to see in the briefing that night was the city of Essen's Krupp steelworks.¹⁸ Essen and its steel works were to be on the receiving end of a very heavy raid by 442 aircraft.¹⁹

Every opportunity and trick in the book was employed to ensure minimizing casualties amongst aircrew. This was done by routing through feints and spoofs attempting to confuse the enemy, or by using window, metal strips that blinded enemy radar.²⁰ These efforts were sometimes successful but more often at other times, not.

Getting there

Essen was not an easy task, and it was dreaded by all. The target, the Krupp's factory, was a vast area, about ten miles wide and by twenty miles long, located some 250 miles from Britain's Norfolk coast. It may have seemed large, but it was a pinprick on the map. On this night, the force was guided by a new technology, Oboe, which guided Allied air forces electronically to target.²¹

Allied aircrews ran a gauntlet that had to be navigated all the way through to Essen. On the one hand was the organized intense flack, anti-aircraft belt defences, organized in depth that provided mutual support. This defence was guided all the time by enemy radar belts, all the way in and all the way out. And most grievously, they had to anticipate the unseen, deadly, and stealthy night fighters that were also radar-guided to attack the main bomber stream both incoming and outgoing. Often as not these night fighters flew over the target by the bravest of German aviators who endured the same hell as the Allied bomber crews.

The operation of 5/6 March 1943 was one of many attacks on Essen. It was a well known and a most familiar target, having been attacked 21 times since the beginning of the war. But now it was to become intense. The code-name for Essen initially was 'Stoat' but was subsequently

¹⁶ Sir Arthur Harris, 1947, 1998 , pg.33

¹⁷ W. Cooper, 2013, pg. 33

¹⁸ Sir Arthur Harris, 1947, 1998 , pg. 144

¹⁹ Martin W. Bowman, **Nachtjagd, Defenders of the Reich 1940-1943**, Pen & Sword Aviation, 2016, pg.127

²⁰ Bowman, **Nachtjagd**, 2016, pg.250

²¹ Will Iredale, **The Pathfinders – The Elite RAF Force that Turned the Tide of WWII**, Penguin Random House, 2021, pg. 321, and

Sir Arthur Harris, 1947, 1998 , pg. 146

changed to 'Bullhead.'²² The announcement of "Essen" as that evening's target was greeted by many aircrew across the briefings, in the expletive, "the bloody Ruhr."

The plan

The plan for the Essen raid called for an assembly of 442 aircraft consisting of a mixture of Halifax, Lancaster, Wellington, and Stirling bombers. These were meant to overwhelm German defences by advancing on the target from different heights and directions. The main force was preceded by Pathfinders, a force consisting of a mixture of Lancaster and Mosquito bombers tasked with laying down green markers which then guided the main force onto target.

The force flew from various bases in England to a coordinated point and concentrated into a bomber stream at Egmond on the Dutch coast.²³ From there they flew directly to a point 15 miles north of Essen, at which point their Pathfinder heavies began marking the target with markers. "From there the mainstream bombers began the run-up to the which they were to reach at the rate of eleven a minute" according to Air Vice Marshall Harris. The whole attack was scheduled to last thirty-eight minutes.²⁴

The Pathfinder Lancasters attacked at intervals of one to two minutes beginning at zero hour and then, lingered over the target replenishing their markers for another 40 or more-minutes. All that time they would be at the mercy of enemy night fighters and anti-aircraft defences.²⁵

The main force was detailed to attack in three sections at various intervals:²⁶

1. Section 1: Halifax's, zero plus 2 to zero plus 20 minutes
2. Section 2: Wellingtons, and Stirling's, zero plus 15 to zero plus 25 minutes
3. Section 3: Lancaster's, zero plus 20 to zero plus 40 minutes.

The mission proceeded as planned. Then shortly before midnight, 49 Squadron's Lancaster's began landing back at Fiskerton.

The crews arrived tired as they clambered aboard the buses which ferried them to de-brief . Most gave optimistic reports of a 'good show'. And their optimism proved positive by the reconnaissance pictures taken later that morning. 160 acres of the target were destroyed with the main area of damage being between the Krupp's works and the city centre.²⁷

Post Script

Bomber Command lost 14 aircraft and crews out of its 442 aircraft on this raid. This was the heavy price to pay for the privilege of bombing Essen.

²² W. Cooper, 2013, pg. 36

²³ Ron MacKay, **RAF Bomber Command –'Strike Hard, Strike Sure' 1936-1945**, Fonthill, 2022, Pg.155-156

²⁴ Sir Arthur Harris, 1947, 1998 , pg. 145

²⁵ W. Cooper, 2013, pg. 37

²⁶ W. Cooper, 2013, pg. 37

²⁷ W. Cooper, 2013, pg. 37

The fourteen aircraft dispatched by the enemy on this mission, represented a loss rate of 3.1% on the night. Six of these were shot down by five German night fighter crews from IV/NJG1.²⁸ The casualty rate on the night, was considered light and an acceptable margin by RAF Bomber Command.²⁹

Sandy Horne and his aircraft ED431 were amongst the fallen. Sandy, the loss of his mates, and aircraft sadly followed a very typical pattern.

The Demise of No. 49 Squadron (RCAF) ED431 and Crew

Now a WO(II), Sandy Horne was the bomb aimer for ED431 on the mission to Essen, the night of 5/6th March 1943. Horne was posted to a Canadian Unit, No. 49 Squadron (RCAF), where he served as a crew member on Lancaster III, Serial: ED431. This Lancaster was based at RAF Fiskerton, Lincolnshire.³⁰

The mission to Essen began on a Friday night, which normally for many service units, was the night to wind down and blow off steam for surviving another week's work. It was often capped with celebrations and happy hours in the mess. However, when a mission was on, their expectations for a good time were necessarily delayed to the following day on their expected return Saturday morning. Instead, they were rewarded following the mission with a breakfast of bacon and one egg in the mess for a job well done, if they survived.

ED431 had taken off from RAF Fiskerton at 19:20 hrs, to attack the Krupp's works in Essen. 442 aircraft took part. To recap, the dispositions of the force were 157 Lancaster's, 131 Wellingtons, 94 Halifax's, 52 Stirling's, and 8 Mosquitoes. Of this outgoing force, 56 aircraft returned to base because of technical difficulties. Sadly, on that night and morning, a further 14 aircraft were lost due to enemy action, whose number included ED431.

²⁸ Bowman, **Nachtjagd**, 2016, pg.127

²⁹ Sir Arthur Harris, 1947, 1998 , pg. 145-46

³⁰ Air Crew Remembered, **05/06.03.1943 49 Squadron Lancaster III ED431 EA-M Sgt. Thom**, Compiled from official National Archive and Service sources, contemporary press reports, personal logbooks, diaries and correspondence, reference books, other sources, and interviews

Source: <https://www.aircrewremembered.com/thom-james.html>

Accessed: 31 Jan 2020



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P00811.019

At FISKERTON RAF STATION, LINCOLNSHIRE, ENGLAND, 1945. A LANCASTER BOMBER AIRCRAFT OF NO. 576 SQUADRON RAF ON THE RUNWAY PREPARING FOR TAKEOFF (public domain)

The mission was successful and had a great impact on the enemy. Later reconnaissance revealed 160 acres of Essen were laid waste including 53 buildings within the Krupp's works. The bombing also included damage to civilian targets with the destruction of 3,018 homes and a further 2,166 seriously damaged. There were civilian casualties as well that ranged between 457 and 482 killed, 10 of whom were fireman. On the other side of the balance sheet, aircrew losses amounted to 75 killed, with 18 surviving and one made a prisoner of war. One lucky crew member evaded capture and escaped to return to England.³¹

Lancaster ED431 was lost over the North Sea, 15 km west of Texel, Northern Holland, at a height of 3500 metres at 22:48 hrs. Lt. Rolf Bussmann 11./NJG1 claimed its destruction. But in the fog of war another also claimed ED431 as well. The further claim was made by Lt. Robert Denzel of 12/NJG. Lt. Denzel stated that ED431 was lost 20 km west of Texel also at a height of 3500 metres. But significantly Denzel's claim was 46 minutes earlier at 22:02 hrs. Records are seldom clean or accurate, but the one true fact was ED431 was lost west of Texel.³²

The fickle finger of fate also touched the enemy who downed ED431. Lt. Rolf Bussmann survived the war. He was a successful night fighter pilot credited with 21 kills. Lt. Robert Denzel, however, was killed later that year on 25/26th May 1943 during a combat in an action with Beaufighter No. V8744 from 141 Squadron. This Beaufighter was flown by F/O. H.C. Kelsey and Sgt. E.M. Smith who had 7 and 9 night fighter kills respectively to their credit.

Although No. 49 Squadron (RCAF) was listed as a Canadian Squadron, the casualties aboard ED431 revealed the true nature of the Commonwealth effort in the air war over Germany. The fate and nationalities of the crew of ED431 are listed as³³:

³¹ Will Iredale, 2021, pg.134-146

³² W. Cooper, 2013, Pg.146 Appendix 2

³³ W. Cooper, 2013, Pg.146 Appendix 2

- Pilot: Sgt. James Myles Thom DFM. 1368871 RAFVR Age 29. Killed
- Fl/Eng.: Sgt. David Gow Fairly 632330 RAF Age 21. Killed
- Nav: Fl/Sgt. John Henry Prior DFM. 1375981 RAFVR Age (unknown) Killed
- Air/Bmr: W/O. II Alexander Manson Horne DFM. R/76770 RCAF Age 33. Killed
- W/Op/Air/Gnr: Fl/Sgt. Kenneth Bolton 989205 RAFVR Age (unknown) Killed
- Air/Gnr: Sgt. Douglas Stuart Bratt 1546821 RAFVR Age (unknown) Killed
- Air/Gnr: Sgt. Frank Harry Liddon Vines 1316193 RAFVR Age 21. Killed

Death came methodically, silently, and often by stealth.

WO (II) Alexander (Sandy) Manson Horne R/76770 of 49 Squadron RCAF was reported missing in action (MIA) March 6, 1943.³⁴ His family did not learn of his true fate until later in December of that year. Like many Canadian families they held out in hope that Sandy would be found alive.

³⁴ Air Crew Remembered, **05/06.03.1943 49 Squadron Lancaster III ED431 EA-M Sgt. Thom**

Air Casualties

Ottawa, April 11 (CP). —The Royal Canadian Air Force in its 546th casualty list of the war yesterday reported one man killed on active service overseas, 22 missing on active service after air operations overseas, and one dead from natural causes in Canada. Following is the latest list of casualties with next of kin:

KENNEDY, Donald Lloyd, FO, killed on active service overseas. Mrs. L. H. Kennedy (mother), 7 Lorne Avenue, Chatham, Ont.
 BERNETT, Neville, FO, missing on active service after air operations overseas. James Bennett (father), Boubly, Sask.
 PRIDEAUX, John Geoffrey James, FO, missing on active service after air operations overseas. B. C. Prideaux (father), Aylmer, Ont.
 BENNETT, Donald Edward, PO, missing on active service after air operations overseas. G. S. Bennett (father), Evansburg, Alta.
 FRY, Ernest John, PO, missing on active service after air operations overseas. Mrs. E. J. Fry (wife), Westmount, Que.
 GRAHAM, Robert, PO, missing on active service after air operations overseas. Daniel Graham (father), Moose Jaw, Sask.
 PARTRIDGE, Henry Albert, PO, missing on active service after air operations overseas. F. S. Partridge (father), Robin, Man.
 TRASK, Cyril Randolph, PO, missing on active service after air operations overseas. J. L. Trask (father), Meadow Lake, Sask.
 HORNE, Alexander Manson, Flt. Sgt., missing on active service after air operations overseas. Mrs. A. M. Horne (wife), Edmonton.
 MILAN, Clifford Arthur, Flt. Sgt., missing on active service after air operations overseas. W. A. Milan (father), Three Hills, Alta.
 AMIRAULT, Alois Baptiste, Sgt., missing on active service after air operations overseas. L. N. Amiraault (father), Centre East Pabuco, N.S.
 DAVIES, William John Ross, Sgt., missing on active service after air operations overseas. Dr. J. W. Davies (father), Sherbrooke, N.S.
 DELLAR, Joseph Charles Edward, Sgt., missing on active service after air operations overseas. Charles Dellar (father), Montreal.
 FULTON, Roy Oswald, Sgt., missing on active service after air operations overseas. Mrs. R. C. Fulton (mother), Newton P.O., New Westminster, B.C.
 MacDONALD, Denis Charles, Sgt., missing on active service after air operations overseas. Dr. J. D. MacDonald (father), Victoria.

McLEOD, Daniel Melvin, Sgt., missing on active service after air operations overseas. John McLeod (father), Belmont, Man.
 PATERSON, Norman Fraser, Sgt., missing on active service after air operations overseas. Mrs. A. T. Paterson (mother), Ottawa.
 SMITH, Clarence Harold, Sgt., missing on active service after air operations overseas. Malcolm Smith (father), Sydney Mines, N.S.
 TOOZE, Russell Mark, Sgt., missing on active service after air operations overseas. E. A. Tooze (father), 80 Kilbary Road, Toronto.
 TURNER, Alvin Clinton, Sgt., missing on active service after air operations overseas. F. M. Turner (father), Codette, Sask.
 VAN BUREN, Russell Benson, Sgt., missing on active service after air operations overseas. Mrs. R. B. Van Buren (wife), Troy, N.Y.
 WALLEN, George, Sgt., missing on active service after air operations overseas. George Wallen (father), Saskatoon.
 WILLIAMS, Robert Earl, Sgt., missing on active service after air operations overseas. Mrs. E. E. Williams (mother), Cynthiana, Ky.
 SWEANOR, George Joseph, FO, previously missing on active service, now reported prisoner of war overseas. Mrs. G. J. Swenor (wife), Durham, Eng.
 TAYLOR, Albert Henry, Flt. Sgt., previously missing on active service, now reported prisoner of war overseas. Mrs. A. H. Taylor (wife), Montreal.
 BISHOP, Murray Winston, Sgt., previously missing on active service, now reported prisoner of war overseas. H. A. Bishop (father), New Minas, N.S.
 NICOLL, William James, Flt. Sgt., seriously injured on active service overseas. Mrs. W. J. Nicoll (wife), Victoria, Ont.
 FOY, John Vincent, Flt. Sgt., dangerously ill as a result of injuries received on active service overseas. Mrs. Daniel Foy (mother), Almonte, Ont.
 DUNCAN, Douglas Stuart, LAC, dangerously injured accidentally overseas. R. W. Duncan (father), Sackville, N.B.
 BOLTON, Edward William Roberts, LAC, died from natural causes in Canada. Mrs. V. E. R. Bolton (mother), Murrumbidgee, N.S.W.

030-033-022

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 WAR
 EUROPEAN
 1939
 CANADA
 AIR
 FORCE
 CASUALTIES

Globe and Mail, 1943/04/12 -

<https://collections.museedelhistoire.ca/warclip/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5017058>

Accessed: 31 Jan 2020

Death came methodically, silently, and often by stealth. In all the action going on about them, few were aware of their stalkers in the night.

Major Schnauffer, one of the Luftwaffe's most successful night fighters stated, every victim of his, was unaware of his presence. All it took was but one long burst into the fuel tanks after he was guided into the bomber stream, and it was curtains for the bomber.³⁵ Major Schnauffer had 121 confirmed victories all four-engine bombers.

³⁵ Martin W. Bowman, *Voices in Flight: The Night Air War*, Pen & Sword Aviation, 2015, pg. 121

Major Schnauffer's one acknowledged risk and fear was that of collision. Large numbers of bombers and night fighters were tightly packed into a confined space in any given attack on a target. RAF tactics essentially channeled the assaulting force, much like an infantry ground assault, through a confined space where the bomber stream was filed into a killing field, but in the sky. Allied tactics essentially channeled their forces in space and time, a mere 30 minutes over a target.

The concentration in the killing zone for the enemy was accomplished easily enough as on the one hand, the enemy used radar, which placed their resources in time and space. On the other hand, our tactics although designed to swamp the ground defences, also concentrated resources in the same time and space.

Targets were not only illuminated from the ground but were also illuminated from the exhaust of their own engines. All that was required of the night fighter, was a stealthy approach from below, and bam, gone!³⁶ Both sides knew of this weakness and flaw. And part of that was also the story of measures taken to overcome them. For the German night fighters though, it simply became a piece of cake.

And yet the reality was that despite any measures, many times, the bomber crews never knew what hit them until they were spinning out of control or that their aircraft was blown to smithereens. And this is where the miracles happened. Bodies were often flung wildly into the air after being pinned in an aircraft and freed as the plane ripped apart from the g-forces or perhaps as it disintegrated from a bomb blast. The lucky ones who remained conscious long enough, or who came to in time, were only too eager to live and pulled the ripcord on their parachutes to either descend into the unknowns of the enemy's hands or to escape.³⁷

The 10,000

Ten thousand young Canadians lost their lives on air operations during the Second World War. To put it all into some perspective, some 364,514 operational sorties were flown during the war. The deadly toll saw some 8,325 aircraft lost in action. With a total of 125,000 aircrew participating in the air campaign, 57,205 were killed (a 46 percent death rate), 8,403 wounded in action, and 9,838 became prisoners of war.³⁸ Canadian losses were reported as part of British losses.

The true cost of the air war on our side is easily found and broken down as follows:³⁹

³⁶ Bowman, **Voices in Flight**, pg. 121

³⁷ Will Iredale, **The Pathfinders**, pg. 258

³⁸ Source: [RAF Bomber Command aircrew of World War II - Wikipedia](#), 29 May 2022, at 04:19 (UTC). Accessed: 17 Jul 2022

³⁹ Source: [RAF Bomber Command aircrew of World War II - Wikipedia](#), 29 May 2022, at 04:19 (UTC).

Name	Country	Fatalities ^[213]
Royal Air Force	 United Kingdom	39,804
Royal Canadian Air Force	 Canada	10,183
Royal Australian Air Force	 Australia	4,089
Royal New Zealand Air Force	 New Zealand	1,703
<i>Polskie Siły Powietrzne</i>	 Poland	977
<i>Forces Aériennes Françaises Libres</i>	 France	218
Others	Includes: 68 members of the United States Army Air Forces , 34 Norwegians, and 12 South Africans. While 311 Squadron was officially a "Czechoslovak" unit, its personnel were officially members of the RAFVR and are not counted separately.	231

Wikipedia

Some 57,000 next of kin were notified often as not through a telegram.



Family Archives, Missing in Action Telegram, Leslie O'Keefe, Uncle

It was the one thing that families rued most, was the receipt of a telegram delivered at their door. It marked a very public display where all one's neighbours became very aware of their pain or loss. We just cannot comprehend the human toll or how ubiquitous was the scythe of death.

Many years later long after the war, Dave O'Malley, historian, undertook the task of mapping one Ottawa neighbourhood's air crew losses alone. It does not include Army, Navy, or Merchant Marine losses. His work can be found in the archived publications of Vintage Wings of Canada

Accessed: 17 Jul 2022

as “**In the Glebe, from 1939 to 1945, Death Came Knocking**”. It is a horrific and graphic account of the carnage of our air losses widely felt not only by this one neighbourhood, but also one that was extant across the country. ⁴⁰

O'Malley's work displays the aircraft and aircrew who were lost, and whose remains are scattered over wide swaths of western Europe as a microcosm of this destruction in one snapshot of the carnage felt by and found in this one small Ottawa neighbourhood alone.

Condolences

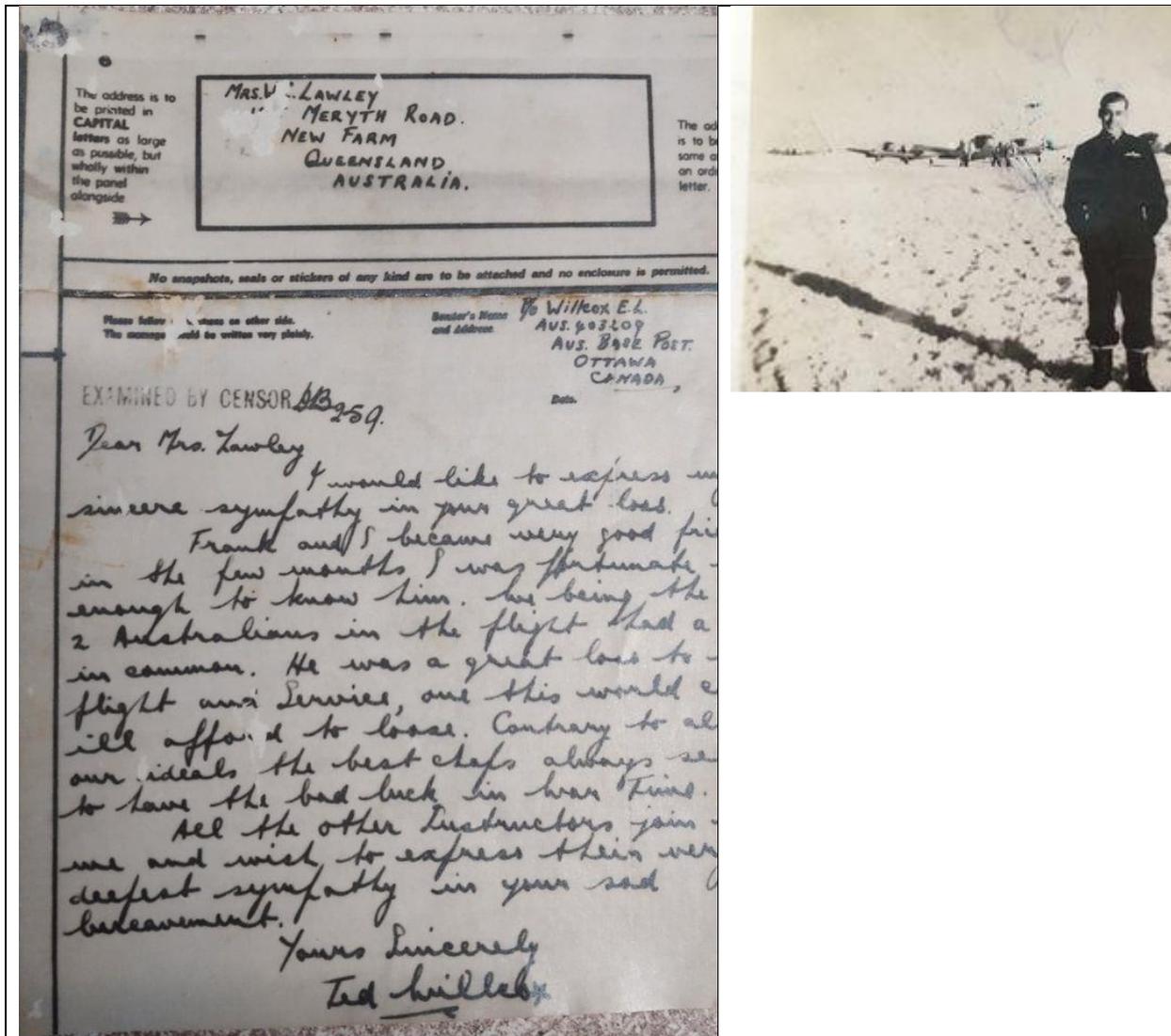
The loss of a member was normally conveyed in a casualty letter of condolence too, often written to the family by the airman's superior officer or often as not, by a close friend, very soon after the fact. The lives lost not only left holes in the fabric of these families but also a great hole amongst their friends and colleagues overseas who grieved as well.

⁴⁰ Dave O'Malley, **In the Glebe, from 1939 to 1945, Death Came Knocking**, Vintage Wings, 2018

Source:

http://www.vintagewings.ca/VintageNews/Stories/tabid/116/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/618/Death-Came-Knocking.aspx?fbclid=IwAR34UZkhT3wGL3wdoJeJbyh3nMMbelj5DRO1ZeplvS5GhTFe7C5I_lz8qPU

Accessed: 20 Nov 2018



With Permission Alan Lawley - family archives – 414242 Sgt Pilot Leslie F Lawley RAAF – Uncle -Son of William Charles and Lizzie Florence Lawley of Yeronga, Queensland, Australia -buried DAUPHIN (RIVERSIDE) CEMETERY, Lot O. Sec. 7. Block 6., Manitoba , Canada

Firm friendships were often forged in the cauldron of war. In many cases an individual's demise was graphically witnessed by these friends who were then left with the sad duty of informing the family.

Many lives were deeply touched in this way and the demise of a friend before one's eyes left an indelible mark on the survivor that many carried with them long after the war. And then sadly too, sometimes the writer's letter was received by a family well after the loss of the "sender" as well. The hand of death didn't care whether one was on his first mission, his next to last, or on a

first, second or third tour. Death reached out in randomness and took whatever it wanted. Those who survived were the lucky ones.

The air battle fought by Bomber Command over the course of the Second World War was remembered both with fear and misery by many of its survivors on both sides. The Battle of the Ruhr was one of truly untold grief. Death took its toll regularly and yet there were some instances of true miracles, escapes, which offered hope for the future, but these were all too few.

The Log Book Project

During the summer of 1943, Dame Vera Lynn, the darling of the Armed Forces, sang before an enthralled audience of airmen and airwomen. All clapped and cheered enthusiastically as she began to sing, "We'll meet again." The renowned song was also the title of the 1943 musical film in which Lynn played the lead role.

This venerated song written in 1939 and first sung by Lynn was composed and written by Ross Parker and Hughie Charles. It became a stalwart expression of hope for many who endured WWII; those soldiers, sailors, airmen and women going off to fight, as well as their families and sweethearts at home too.⁴¹

Lynn was a true hero of the Second World War. She served as an entertainer who ventured far and wide to bring cheer and improve morale. She counted her visit near the front lines of the Burma campaign as one of her most important contributions. Not only did she entertain the troops, but she also spent time in a field hospital with the injured and dying, at great peril to her own safety. Lynn's story and legacy were captured by The Log Book Project (TLBP), after she agreed to autograph the WWII logbook belonging to Nick Devaux's father, Cyril Devaux.

TLBP began in 2016, some 70 years after Cyril Devaux's last flight entry. Wanting to preserve his father's legacy, Nick has gathered the autographs of surviving war veterans and civilian witnesses who lived and served through one of history's darkest chapters. Each was asked to autograph Devaux's RCAF pilot logbook, adding their own experience. I was privileged to have assisted Nick in adding the late Merle Taylor's account in which we discovered a connection between Cyril and Merle's husband, Fred. Both men were stationed at No. 3 Service Flying Training School between April and November 1944.

The Log Book's own story, as it travels the world obtaining signatures, is also being recorded. Having surpassed some quarter of a million miles, (433,000 KM) and with over 200 signatures obtained via 382 waypoints, the journey of the last 6 years has been a fascinating experience in bespoke kindness and facilitation from complete strangers. Each signature represents a tangible link to a unique story and firsthand witness account of the horrific conflict of World War II.

Nick states "The book travels in anonymous solitude among thousands of packages through the various transportation systems - this time the US Postal Service. I cannot fathom the reaction, if

⁴¹ Vera Lynne, You tube Clip "We Will meet again," 1943 [Vera Lynn - We'll Meet Again \(1943\) - YouTube](#) Accessed: 19 July 2022

the full weight of awesome history were revealed to any of The Log Book's various handlers, while enroute to its next appointment."

Tara Garcia's 102 year old grandmother Cresencia Garcia is expected to be the next signatory as this goes to press. Tara may have captured its significance: "I made the mistake of opening the package this morning before a meeting and I was in tears. What an incredible time capsule you've created. I can't wait to see what's there!!" Evidently a warning concerning when to open, may be required with the handling instructions that accompany the book.



TLBP spent an extremely productive period in Canada this past Spring, beginning with Jaxon Hekkenberg, a young man from Ottawa who secured a signature in the logbook. Hekkenberg has connected Nick with several other signatories, one as far as Japan. Next, Scott Masters, initiator of the Oral History Project at the Crestwood Preparatory College in Ontario obtained over 30 signatures in TLBP. Devaux's logbook then proceeded to Mr. Byron Reynolds, representing the Reynolds Heritage Preservation Foundation in Wetaskiwin Alberta.

On 6 April 1945, while stationed at Sywell in the UK, Devaux logged a 30-minute flight in Tiger Moth N9151. This plane now resides in the Reynolds Heritage Preservation Foundation collection. In a profound tribute, Reynolds graciously took to the skies with the logbook in this Tiger Moth some 77 years after Devaux's flight in 1945.



Tiger Moth - Reynolds Heritage Preservation Foundation in Wetaskiwin Alberta.

Nick is amongst my many colleagues working to preserve these important examples of sacrificial service. He hopes future generations who encounter the book and its compilation of testimonies, will be inspired by the veterans' legacies.

We all need to strive continuously for peace and reconciliation. "TLBP is therefore a memorial to all who suffered incalculable and irreplaceable losses and to those who served to purchase the freedoms so often taken for granted today."

G Christian Larsen of the Pennnfield Parish Military Historical Society perhaps put it best "their stories need to be told and re-told to keep the sacrifices of the greatest generation alive."

It is our fervent hope in some small way, our collective work respectfully remembers those sacrifices for those that followed. My generation has had the privilege of living life in relative peace. We must take the time to "appreciate the unspeakable horrific suffering and deprivation experienced by millions - on all sides - during World War II" that have allowed us to do so.

Perhaps then, we can truly come to appreciate, understand, and remember them all through the longing and sentiment of that generation's song "Until we meet again...don't know where...don't know when."

Amongst the many threads that brought this story together, I would like to make special mention of the following sources in particular that were of special help in bringing this story to life:

- Joe Barr (United Kingdom) for use from his collection - Heath Parasol Model V - Ron Clear -
- Alan Lawley (Burnett Heads, Queensland Australia) - for the use of the letter of condolence and photograph of his uncle Leslie F. Lawley from his family archives
- And a big thank you to my daughter, Tara Madigan, for taking time out on her family vacation with us in assisting with the final editing

A fully cited and unabridged version of this story can be found at www.madiganstories.com.

Gerry (GD) Madigan, CD, MSc, MA is a retired logistician, Canadian Armed Forces. Major (Retired) Madigan's career spanned 28 Years as a finance officer. His notable postings included time served at National Defence Headquarters, CFB Europe, Maritime Canada, Cyprus, and The First Gulf War, Qatar. He is a graduate of Saint Francis Xavier University (BSc), McGill University (MSc) and the Royal Military College of Canada (Master of Arts War Studies).

August 25, 2022