

THE NORSEMAN NEWS

Fall 2020



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE
BRITISH COLUMBIA AVIATION MUSEUM

Bye Bye Buffalo... Hello, Kingfisher

This last Friday, September 25th, marked the beginning of a new era for Canadian Forces Search and Rescue squadrons.

The first C-295 Kingfisher arrived at Comox to begin training and familiarization on this new aircraft. It has been a long process to get these planes on the ramp.

In 2004 the Liberals began the process of replacing the de Havilland DHC-5 Buffalos, and older CC-130 Hercules, used for Search and Rescue across our huge nation. Finally in 2005 a contract was signed. These aircraft are manufactured in Spain by Airbus. The training center will be at Comox with 418 Squadron. The first Buffalos have already been sent for storage at Mountain View, Ontario. We will miss the throaty "Roar" of the Allison engines and their three-bladed props as they takeoff from our airport. The engines / propeller assembly was becoming a reliability issue.



The Kingfisher is powered by two Pratt & Whitney 127G turboprop engines driving six-blade propellers. These engines are in widespread use. They will be much more reliable and will provide the Kingfisher with much greater speed and range than the 50 year old "Buff". The new aircraft will have a highly advanced avionics suite enabling searches to be carried out from higher, safer

altitudes. The old Buffalo relied largely on the Mk#1 eyeball for spotting victims on the ground. Flying low into mountain valleys was slow and risky work. The Kingfisher has a forward-looking infrared turret under the nose, and a proper search radar in a pod under the fuselage. These 16 aircraft will replace the few remaining Buffalos at Comox in 442 squadron as well as the CC-130H Hercules still serving at Winnipeg, Trenton and Greenwood, Nova Scotia over the next 2 years.

Tomorrow My wife and I will take advantage of this nice weather to drive up island. We may be lucky enough to spot one of these new birds at Comox....

Jack Funk

President's Message

Half Full Silver Lining

With the prospect of gloomy days coming and no let up from the pandemic it may be difficult to see a good winter ahead. However, every cloud has a silver lining. Being closed for an extended period, and currently having days when we are not open, has allowed a lot of work to be completed that otherwise would not have been done.

We have refurbished the gardens, gift store, Norseman Room, washrooms and many display areas. We recently completed a restack of aircraft that has allowed us to get every aircraft except one inside. The current layout is more logical and different in a way that will attract new and returning local visitors. Several more projects are being actively worked on including the DC3 nose, restoration hangar clean up, dedicated eBay room and a new strategic plan is in the works. Other projects such as externally tidying up the Viscount are planned. Many thanks to those volunteers who give so much to keep our museum operating and moving forward.

So there is plenty to do and it would be fantastic to see some more volunteers return and move these projects forward. It would be particularly welcome to see some progress on the Lancaster. Currently the museum is quiet Mon - Weds with enough space for volunteers to come in and maintain physical distancing. So if you have not been in for a while please consider giving some of your time. It can be done safely.

Unfortunately we still have not come up with a way to hold our usual volunteer lunches or any other social events. It also seems likely that we will have a virtual AGM and board election early in the new year. If anyone would like to volunteer to help out, or has ideas on how we can do this as inclusively as possible, please contact me or any other board member.

There are other things in the works for us to look forward to. Without giving the game away there are aircraft acquisition projects underway that may result in three new aircraft coming to the museum.

Negotiations are underway and transport (the only cost to us) being arranged as economically as possible. Although refurbishment work will be required all airframes are basically complete and in sound though scruffy condition. These are interesting aircraft with BC connections that will fill gaps in our current collection and hopefully bring in new volunteers and visitors.

So cheer up and help out to beat the winter blues!

Dave Jackson, President BCAM / davejackson@bcam.net

Museum Reopening

The Museum reopened its doors on July 4, beginning with Saturdays and Sundays, and on the 16th, moving to Thursdays and Fridays as well. Since then we have had a steady flow of visitors, with many families with children who have enjoyed our scavenger hunts. Thank you to greeters, hangar monitors, cashiers and tour guides who have helped to maintain a safe and healthy environment. We have provided regular sanitizing of high frequency areas, and have been diligent with the contact tracking process. Volunteers are required to "beep" in using the new volunteer RFID cards, and if they don't have one, they must sign the Volunteer Log. Guests are required to sign the Visitor Log, and to indicate where they are travelling from. Visiting members, people dropping off donations and delivery people are also required to sign the Visitor Log. In other words, anyone who walks in, signs in. We will continue to remain open four days a week until the weather changes and when we see a drop in attendance numbers.



Important Upcoming Dates

October - December 2020

Due to the unusual times we live in, Museum events may be affected.

The museum itself opened on 4 July, and is currently open 4 days a week from 11am-3pm (see page 2). Please continue to check happenings at the Museum's website or current Slipstream magazine for events!

- Oct 21 ~~Speaker Night~~
CANCELLED
- Oct 22 ~~Members' Meeting Volunteer Lunch~~
CANCELLED
- Nov 11 Remembrance Day & Food Bank Day
- Nov 18 ~~Speaker Night~~
CANCELLED
- Nov 19 ~~Members' Meeting Volunteer Lunch~~
CANCELLED
- Dec 10 ~~Members' Meeting Volunteer Lunch~~
CANCELLED
- Dec 12 ~~Christmas Dinner~~
CANCELLED
- Dec 25 Christmas Day - Museum Closed
- Dec 26 Boxing Day - Museum Closed
- Dec 28 ~~Kids Fest~~
CANCELLED

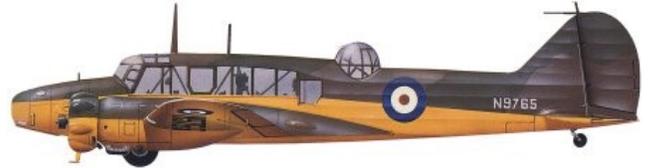
Calendar for Board Meetings

October - December

October 16

November 12

December 3



Join or Renew Your Membership



Update on the Lt "Hammy" Gray Memorial

The Covid19 restrictions have seriously delayed the Lt Gray Project due to production delays both at the monument factory, and site preparations at the BCAM.

The site is now expected to be prepared in October, and the monument installed by late November. Provincial Government "public gathering" restrictions means that a "Ceremony on a Grand Scale" cannot be conducted until at least Spring 2021 which is now the revised plan.

The finances of the project are in good shape and hopefully no further "hiccups" will be encountered.

Stan Brygadyr

This article by an anonymous SR-71 pilot first appeared in the Fall 2013 Norseman News.

Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird

Scores of significant aircraft have been produced in the 100 years of flight, following the achievements of the Wright brothers.

Aircraft such as the Boeing 707, the F-86 Sabre, the P-51 Mustang are amongst the important machines that have flown our skies. But the SR-71 also known as the Blackbird stands alone as a significant contributor to the Cold War victory, and as the fastest plane ever. Only 93 Air Force pilots ever steered the “sled” as the aircraft was affectionately known.

The SR-71 was the brainchild of Kelly Johnson, the famed Lockheed designer, who created the P-38, the F-104 Starfighter, and the U-2. After the Soviets shot down Gary Powers’ U-2 in 1960, Johnson began to develop an aircraft, that would fly three miles higher and five time faster than the spy plane, and still be capable of photographing your license plate.

However, flying at 2,000 m.p.h. would create intense heat on the aircraft’s skin. Lockheed engineers used a titanium alloy to construct more than 90% of the SR-71, creating special tools, and manufacturing procedures to hand-build each of the 40 planes! Special heat-resistant fuel, oil and hydraulic fluids, that would function at 85,000 feet and higher also had to be developed.

In 1962 the first Blackbird successfully flew and in 1966, the same year I graduated from high school, the Air Force began flying operational SR-71 missions. I came to the programme in 1983 with a sterling record and a recommendation from my commander completing the week long interview and meeting Walt, my partner for the next 4 years.

He would ride 4 feet behind me working all the cameras, radios and electronic jamming equipment. I joked that if we were ever captured he was the spy and I was just the driver! He told me to keep the “pointy end forward”!

We trained for a year, flying out of Beale AFB in California, Kaduna Airbase in Okinawa and RAF Mildenhall in England. On a typical training mission we would take off near Sacramento, refuel over Nevada accelerate into Montana obtain a high Mach speed over Colorado turn right over New Mexico, speed across the Los Angeles Basin run up the West Coast turn right at Seattle then return to Beale. Total flight time: Two hours, 40 minutes!

We were high above Arizona one day monitoring the radio traffic of all the mortal aircraft below us. First, a Cessna pilot asking Air Traffic controllers to check his ground speed, “Ninety knots” ATC replied. A Bonanza soon made the same request, “One-twenty on the ground” was the reply. To our surprise a Navy F-18 came over the radio with a ground speed check. I knew exactly what he was doing. Of course he had a ground speed indicator in his cockpit, but he

wanted to let all the bug-smashers in the valley, know what real speed was, “Dusty 52, we show you at 620 on the ground” ATC responded. The situation was too ripe! I heard the click of Walt’s mike button in the rear seat and in his most innocent voice Walt startled the controller by asking for a ground speed check from 81,000 feet clearly above controlled airspace. In a cool professional voice the controller replied “Aspen 20, I show you at 1,982 knots on the ground”. We did not hear another transmission on that frequency all the way to the coast.

The Blackbird always showed us something new, each aircraft possessing its own unique personality. In time we realized we were flying a national treasure. When we taxied out for take-off people took notice. Traffic congregated near the airfield fences because everyone wanted to see and hear the mighty SR-71. You could not be a part of this programme and not come to love the airplane. Slowly she revealed her secrets to us, as we earned her trust.

One moonless night while flying a routine training mission over the Pacific I wondered what the sky would be like from 84,000 feet if the cockpit lighting were dark. While heading home on a straight course I slowly turned down all of the lighting. To my amazement I saw a bright light outside my window. As my eyes adjusted to the view, I realized that the brilliance was the broad expanse of the Milky Way now a gleaming stripe across the sky; the dark spaces in the sky that usually existed were now dense clusters of sparkling stars. I had to get my eyes back on the instruments, to my surprise with the cockpit lighting still off I could see every gauge lit by starlight. Despite our speed we seemed still before the heavens, humbled in the radiance of a much greater power.



Most people were not aware that the plane flew over North Vietnam, Red China, North Korea, the Middle East, South Africa, Cuba, Nicaragua, Iran, Libya and the Falkland Islands. On a weekly basis the SR-71 kept watch over every Soviet Nuclear submarine, mobile missile site and all of the their troop movements. It was a key factor in winning the Cold War.

I am proud to say I flew about 500 hours in this aircraft. She gave way to no plane proudly dragging her Sonic Boom through enemy backyards, with great impunity. She defeated every missile, outran every MIG and always brought us home. In the first 100 years of manned flight, no aircraft was more remarkable not once taking a scratch from enemy fire. On her final flight, the Blackbird, destined for the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, sped from Los Angeles to Washington in 64 minutes, averaging 2,145 m.p.h. and setting four speed records.

(SR-71 pilot)

The Esquimalt Air Force by Doug Rollins

Many aviation enthusiasts would consider the following 'facts' to be true: The Mark VIII Spitfire was never operated in Canada; Spitfires were never based in British Columbia, and, the Esquimalt Naval Base in Victoria, British Columbia, never had an Air Force. Seems reasonable. However, upon further review, not correct. How so, you say? Read on!

Early in 1946 a career naval officer in Esquimalt, BC, named Vernon Howland had a problem, and a brilliant solution. The abrupt conclusion of World War II had left Britain with a surplus of war equipment and they gifted two aircraft carriers to the Royal Canadian Navy. To allow the RCN to get into naval aviation, the carriers would be equipped with the naval version of their outstanding Spitfire; the Supermarine Seafire. As a supply officer with the Royal Canadian Navy, Howland was ordered to establish a Supply and Secretariat School on the base to train and prepare his staff for the arrival of this aircraft. The problem for the supply officer was how this might best be done.

Howland wrote to the Head of Naval Stores in Ottawa, Commander Charles Dillon, asking for some Seafire spare parts so that he could establish a mock Stores Depot to train his staff. Dillon duly wrote back to suggest he try the Air Force as they had lots of Spitfire parts that would do nicely. Back went a short memo to #6 Temporary Building in Ottawa, and in due time Howland read the reply that the Air Force had found his request for a few parts "...too difficult" but that a complete Spitfire was already on its way to him and he could do with it what he liked! As Howland had just learned, the wheels of bureaucracy can churn with alarming velocity from its habitually moribund state when suitably motivated. As it turned out, the Air Force just happened to have a mothballed Spitfire on its books sitting at nearby RCAF Station Comox. Instead of having to dispose of the Spitfire, the Air Force saw that it was much quicker and easier to simply send the thing to the navy, and let them worry about it!



The Spitfire was JG480; the only Mark VIII model ever stationed in Canada. It had been shipped to RCAF Station Comox for cold weather evaluation trials in early 1944. (One might wonder if there were more suitable bases in Canada for cold weather testing, but, no matter!) Overtaken by the end of the war, it was now languishing on the base with no future until Howland's memo landed on that distant 'In Basket' in far-away Ottawa. At a stroke, the problem of disposing of the Spitfire was solved!

In July of 1946 Howland received notice from the Victoria freight depot that his shipment had arrived by flatcar and that he should pick it up as soon as possible. Howland immediately borrowed a flatbed truck with a crane, and with the help of a hastily-assembled collection of writers, cooks and stores-men, unloaded the heavy wooden crates and piled them on the parade ground at Esquimalt. Then, with the help of whomever was around, Howland began to piece the thing together as best he could. An immediate problem was that no fasteners were included. This was addressed by going to Stores and requisitioning ordinary Stove Bolts. Not an aerodynamically-elegant solution, but no matter!

Attaching the tail was accomplished by having the smallest man available skivvy down the narrow fuselage and install the bolts while everybody else held the tail section in place. Unfortunately, when they tried to attach the wings they found the bolts were too big to fit. Howland then carted the Stove Bolts over to the Machine Shop and told them to grind "... a few thousands" off, and they fit! Next, with slings under the fuselage, a crane hoisted the fuselage and someone reached in and pulled the gear handle. Amazingly, the wheels dropped from the wings and locked with two reassuring thumps; the Spitfire now stood on its feet. From there the propeller, control cables and canopy were fitted and suddenly an intact Spitfire had materialized on the corner of Esquimalt and Locklie Streets!

Once complete, Howland never had the heart to reduce the Spitfire to spares, and so it sat on the corner for about a year. Then, without warning, the Navy suddenly wanted it removed! The resourceful Howland found another spot for it; inside the main gates at Naden, off Admiral's Road. The problem was getting it



there. The starboard wing was removed and using a borrowed crane and a 're-deployed' transport truck, and with the help of a few base MPs who closed the main road, the Spitfire was towed to its new spot on the base. Meanwhile, Howland had found the lure of a pickled 1,700hp Merlin engine sitting just the other side of the firewall to be irresistible; that winter and into the spring of 1947 the enterprising store-man labored in his spare time to put the engine in order. This involved wiring the electricals, installing the cooling system plumbing and putting the exhaust pipes together. At last all was ready for a trial run.

Having no hydraulics, they stacked lumber in front of the wheels to prevent a runaway. Then, going to the Motor Pool, five gallons of vehicle gas were procured, and poured into the header tank with a garden hose. Meanwhile, two very large, heavy duty 12-volt boat batteries were hooked up in series and attached to the starting motor. A somewhat nervous Howland clambered into the cockpit, turned on the master switch and mags, primed the engine and then hit the coil boost and starter buttons. With a whirl the big propeller turned and almost immediately caught; there was the characteristic cough, a belch of smoke, and a plume of flame shot from the exhaust ports. The Spitfire was now idling with the sweet note that only a Merlin can produce. Howland cautiously advanced the throttle, but when anything more than a fast idle was attempted, the engine died. Obviously the Merlin was not keen on the common car gasoline provided, which might have prevented the aircraft from jumping the chocks and heading for parts unknown. (Or maybe, ... just parts!).

Unfortunately, shortly afterwards, Howland was reposted and left Esquimalt. And so the Spitfire remained on display for the next few years with the elements taking their toll; the tires went flat, the paint faded and the canopy crazed over. Howland was reposted back to Esquimalt in late 1947 and when he returned the Spitfire was gone. It seemed that his successor was not as enchanted with the Spitfire as Howland had been. Likely it was sent for scrap in 1950, but just maybe, in some remote corner of a warehouse on the Esquimalt Naval Base, sits the crated remains of JG480; the only Mark VIII Spitfire to come to Canada, the only Spitfire to be based in BC, and the entire compliment of the Esquimalt Air Force!

Who Am I? I am a figure involved in aviation (and other things). Can you guess who I am from the clues below? Submit your answer to norsemannews@bcam.net to gain recognition (verbal only, alas) in the next newsletter!

1. I was born in Ottawa in 1915. After school and college I became a stock broker.
2. At 24 years of age, signs of potential conflict in Europe became evident. I tried to join the RCAF but was turned down because in those days, a degree was required to join. Instead, I walked across the street and was happily accepted into the RAF.
3. I trained as a Pupil Pilot in England and after two years became a Flying Officer in 1941.
4. Two months after I began flying with 609 Squadron, I was shot down and became a POW for the duration.
5. My adventures did not end there – I was interned in Stalag Luft 3, and took part in “The Great Escape” as the last man out of the tunnel. Alas, I was recaptured the next day and re-interned. I remained a POW until liberated by Allied forces in 1945.

The correct answer to the last issue’s Who Am I is O.G.S.Crawford. There were no correct answers. In fact, there were no answers at all! Too obscure - although he does have his own Wikipedia page. Here’s an easy one instead.

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