

the

OBSERVAIR

**Ottawa Chapter Newsletter
Canadian Aviation Historical Society**



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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

On 11 November 2015, I went to see the new documentary film *Reunion of Giants*. It was great to see such a good turnout to the theatre (including some familiar CAHS Ottawa faces). For those not familiar with the film, it follows the story of the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum's (CWHM) Avro Lancaster FM213 flying from Hamilton to RAF Coningsby in England to fly with the RAF's Battle of Britain Memorial Flight (BBMF) Lancaster PA474. The film does a great job transitioning back and forth from following the story of FM213 and her crew to interviews with veterans. The latter being one of the main reasons both groups continue to do what they do; to help ensure the preservation of the memories of those who served with Bomber Command during the Second World War. Everywhere these aircraft went, you could see their importance to everyone who came out to see them, especially for the veterans and their families.



A screen capture from *Reunion of Giants*.
©Suddenly SeeMore Productions

I would highly recommend watching this film when you get the chance; throughout its 90 minute runtime I was glued to the screen. The filmmakers did a wonderful job explaining why it was important that the Canadian Lancaster returned to England, and helping the audience feel the welcome that FM213 and her crew received. The visuals are stunning, especially when the formation of two Lancasters, a Hurricane and a Spitfire fly low past the white cliffs of Beachy Head *en route* to the Eastbourne Airshow. The film also highlights the differences between FM213 and PA474; the latter still a military aircraft flown by RAF pilots, and because of this, the interior is what you would expect from a military aircraft. As one of the BBMF pilot's put it, you can actually stand up in FM213!

Kyle Huth
Chairman

The Observair is the newsletter of the Ottawa Chapter, Canadian Aviation Historical Society, and is available with membership. Membership fees are payable in September. Any material for *The Observair* Newsletter should be directed to the Editor, Kyle Huth. All matters relating to membership should be directed to the Secretary/Treasurer: Mat Joost

Kyle Huth	Chairman/Editor
Mathias Joost	Secretary/Treasurer
Colin Hine	Newsletter Editor
Don MacNeil	Program convenor
Hugh Halliday	Official Greeter
George Skinner	Museum Liaison
Erin Gregory	Research Group
Bill Clark	Refreshments

PAST MEETING

UNKNOWN ACE: JOHN BRAHAM

Mike Braham

Sixty-five members and their guests turned out at our October meeting to hear speaker Mike Braham tell the fascinating story of his father, fighter ace John Randall Daniel "Bob" Braham. During the Second World War, Bob was credited with 29 destroyed enemy aircraft, one probable, and 6 damaged. He was the top scoring Allied twin-engine aircraft ace, ranking fifth among Commonwealth fighter aces. He was also the most decorated British Commonwealth fighter pilot of the Second World War, with three DSOs, three DFCs, the AFC, the Belgian Order of Leopold, and the French Croix de Guerre. Avoiding the publicity enjoyed by so many fighter pilots in post-war Britain, Bob's name remained relatively unknown, even after publishing a book in 1961 about his exploits. The book was called *Scramble*, and has been reprinted several times under the title *Night Fighter* in the United States, the Netherlands, and most recently in Denmark.



Bob was born 6 April 1920 in Holcombe, Somerset. His father was a Methodist minister who had served as a pilot in the Royal Flying Corps during the First World War. In 1937, at the age of 17 Bob joined the Royal Air Force with a short service commission. He did his flight training at No.7 Elementary Flying School at Desford, Leicestershire. On March 30 1938, Bob made his first solo flight in a de Havilland Tiger Moth after 13 hours of instruction. His proficiency was rated as "Average"; weak instrument flying was his principal fault. He began training as a fighter pilot in May 1938 on the Hawker Hart and by December he had graduated the final phase of training; his proficiency rating was still "Average".

He was posted to 29 Squadron, flying Hawker Demons out of RAF Station West Malling in Kent. In February 1939, much to Bob's disappointment (he wanted to fly Hawker Hurricanes), 29 Squadron converted to the Bristol Blenheim IF (*the short-nosed bomber with a four Browning machine gun pack under the belly*). In August 1939, 29 Squadron converted to Hawker Hurricanes, only to revert to the Blenheim IF at the outbreak of war, with the intention of 29 Squadron becoming a night-fighter squadron. It was around this time that he gained his nickname, Bob.

On 19 January 1940, Bob had his first of several aircraft accidents, belly landing his Blenheim IF at Debden. Both he and his air gunner were unharmed. Around the same time, the Blenheim's of 29 Squadron were fitted with the AI Mk.III radar. On the night of 24 August 1940, Bob downed his first enemy aircraft, a Heinkel He.111, that had been caught in the searchlights. In September 1940, Bob was promoted to Flying Officer and 29 Squadron began converting to the new Bristol Beaufighter. He was also hospitalised in September because of a car accident. On 17 November 1940, Bob flew his first Beaufighter operation and two months later he would be awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC).

For the next year, Bob would hone his skills as a night-fighter pilot, becoming an ace on 12 September 1941, and receiving a Bar to his DFC. He now had seven downed German bombers to his credit. After nearly a year of constant operations, he was rested and posted to No. 51 Operational Training Unit (OTU). Somehow in 1941, he found the time to marry Joan Hyde in June and on 10 February 1942 was able to take leave to attend the birth of his first son, Mike. Shortly after, he was involved in his second car accident which took him off flying for a brief period. On 13 March 1942, Bob had to make two emergency landings in the same day; the first was when the engines of his Beaufighter cut out, and the second was when an engine on his Beaufighter caught fire! Both occasions, he returned the aircraft back safely. His luck held 6 June 1942 when, after downing a Dornier Do.217, he overshot the runway due to bad weather and damaged the Beaufighter he was flying in, while remaining uninjured himself.

By the end of June 1942, Bob was re-posted to 29 Squadron as a flight commander with the rank of acting-Squadron Leader. On 29 August, he attacked and destroyed a Junkers Ju.88 flying at 150ft above the English Channel. Before crashing into the sea, the Ju.88 had fired at and hit the Beaufighter's port engine, causing it to catch fire and then crash land near Beachy Head. Once again, Bob and his radar operator were unharmed. That brought his tally up to 10 enemy aircraft destroyed, and earned him the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) on 9 October 1942. After celebrating his DSO, Bob attempted to drive home drunk and crashed into a traffic island. This was his third car crash and would result in a fine of £5.

Bob's tally continued to rise, and on 23 December 1942 he was promoted to Wing Commander (W/C) and given command of 141 Squadron at RAF Station Ford in Sussex. He was 22-years old, the youngest W/C in RAF history. 141 Squadron moved to Predannack, Cornwall, in February 1943 to carry out night intruder operations over Brittany and

France and daylight operations over the Bay of Biscay. During these missions Bob would damage four E-Boats (fast enemy patrol-boats) and one U-boat; in turn being attacked by German fighters and flak.

In May 1943, 141 Squadron was chosen to be the first radar-equipped night-fighter squadron to operate over Germany and occupied Europe in the bomber support role. For this role, the Beaufighters of 141 Squadron received the new Serrate Radar, which was designed to home in on the German night-fighters Lichtenstein radar. It was while Bob was conducting Serrate trials in Scotland that his second son was born on 2 June 1943. On the 14th of that month, he destroyed his first German night-fighter using the Serrate radar, a Messerschmitt Bf.110; the next day he was awarded a second Bar to his DFC. Eight days later, his guns jammed after firing on a Ju.88 and his aircraft was attacked by two enemy fighters. His Beaufighter was stuck by enemy fire and one engine set on fire. Bob was able to douse the fire, evade his pursers and return home on one engine.

In July, Bob took a three day break from flying and at the invitation of the Royal Navy, he sailed in HMS *Whitshed* on convoy escort duty up the East Coast of England. On the night of 17 August 1943, he flew his most successful intruder operation; downing two Messerschmitt Bf.110s. Towards the end of the month, his Beaufighter was badly damaged by flak and had to limp back across the English Channel, making a forced landing after crossing the coast.

In September, Bob became board with the lack of action and began flying ground attack missions, despite orders prohibiting him from doing so. He would often fly dangerously close to the ground to attack targets and it was not uncommon for his aircraft to return home with damage to the underside of the fuselage. Apparently, after one sortie against enemy shipping, the armourers were drenched with salt water and seaweed when they went to rearm his Beaufighter. He was awarded the first bar to his DSO on 24 September 1943. By the end of September 1943, Bob had brought his total to 19 enemy aircraft destroyed.

On 1 October 1943, Bob was rested from operations and posted away from 141 Squadron. On 11 February 1944, he was posted as Wing Commander Night Operations at Headquarters No.2 Group under AVM Sir Basil Embry (*who would become an important and positive influence on Bob*). Bob was able to persuade Sir Basil to allow him to fly daylight intruder operations using de Havilland Mosquito FB.VIs loaned from the various squadrons in the Group. He flew 14 of these missions while on staff with No.2 Group, and raised his total to 21 air victories.

Bob was presented with his second Bar to the DFC by King George VI at Buckingham Palace on 14 March 1944. In March and April, he added six more enemy aircraft to his total and flew his first bombing raid (*despite lacking bomber pilot training*). Of that mission, his log book reads – “*Quite Good Fun*”. By this time, however, there was growing evidence that battle fatigue was beginning to impair his judgement. On 12 May 1944, after his Mosquito was damaged by a Bf.109 and debris from downing a Fw.190, Bob ditched his aircraft in the North Sea. After being rescued by an RAF Air-Sea Rescue launch, Bob was given a severe dressing down for taking unnecessary risks. During the D-Day landings, he was flying low-level ground attack missions and on 13 June 1944 he received the second Bar to his DSO.

On 25 June, Bob was flying a Mosquito loaned from 21 Squadron when his aircraft was intercepted and shutdown by two Fw.190s. The Mosquito crash landed near a German radar station and Bob and his navigator Flight Lieutenant Donald Walsh were soon captured. They were brought to Germany for interigation, and it was while there that he met the Luftwaffe pilot who had shot him down – Leutant Robert Spreckels. Bob promised Spreckels that he would buy him a whiskey after the Allies won the war. There was no ill will between the two pilots; later in Ilife the two would become friends. Bob and Walsh were sent to Stalag Luft III until 27 January 1945 when the advancing Red Army forced them to march westward in freezing conditions. They would travel over 500km by foot, truck and rail before being liberated by elements of the Brisith Army on 2 May 1945.

Bob had trouble adjusting to life in post-war Britain. His family found him hard to live with, and any reporter who came to the house seeking a war story was quickly ejected from the property. This helps explain why he was virtually unknown when compared to other fighter aces. Still serving in the post-war RAF, Bob joined the Nightfighter Development Wing of the Central Fighter Establishment. The post-war RAF was a very different service than it had been during wartime. Cost saving flying reductions and massive disarmament were the new norm. He became disillusioned with the service and resigned in March 1946 and applied to join the Rhodesian Colonial Police. Sir Basil heard of this and convinced Bob to return to the RAF at the rank of Flight Lieutenant (*with the pay of a Wing Commander*). Bob then spent the next two years in the Air Ministry in London. It was during this time that he was awarded the Belgian Order of the Crown and French Croix de Guerre with Palm for his wartime flying.

During this difficult time, on 26 October 1948, Bob's third son was born. Bob also had the oppurtunity to fly some of the latest jet aircraft, including the Gloster Meteor, the de Havilland Vampire, the North American F-86 Sabre, and the McDonnell Banshee. He was awarded the Air Force Cross on 1 January 1951.

In May 1952 Bob decided that he would not be able to afford his sons' private education on a Wing Commander's salary so he resigned from the RAF and joined the RCAF with the rank of Wing Commander. When he arrived in Canada, he was appointed Staff Officer for operations and training at Air Defence Headquarters in St. Hubert, Quebec. While at St. Hubert, Bob was able to add the Avro Canada CF-100 Canuck and the Lockheed T-33 to the list of aircraft he flew. In 1954 he was posted to Command of 3AW(F) OTU in North Bay, Ontario. It was here that he received an official commendation for averting a potentially fatal accident when the CF-100 he was flying in (*as an Instructor*) lost a flap on landing.

After being posted for two years in North Bay, Bob was posted to Air Force Headquarters (AFHQ) in Ottawa, and then posted as Commanding Officer 432 Squadron at RCAF Station Bagotville. On one flight with 432 Squadron, he was injured after ejecting from the CF-100 he was piloting. The aircraft had been involved in a mid-air collision while in close formation with another CF-100.

In the summer of 1960, Bob was posted to Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) Headquarters outside of Paris. Back in skies above Western Europe, Bob would fly patrols as often as possible, though this time in newer, faster aircraft like Lockheed F-104 Starfighters and English Electric Lightnings. In 1961, he accepted an invitation from Robert Spreckels (*his victor in the 25 June 1944 air battle*) to visit him in Germany. They had been in correspondence since 1956. Bob would refer to Spreckels in his book *Scramble* as "*one who is counted among my company of friends*".

In 1964, Bob returned to Canada and attended the National Defence College and took up another posting at AFHQ Ottawa. However, with the unification of the Canadian Armed Forces in 1968, he resigned from the RCAF and moved to Nova Scotia with his wife and youngest son. There he joined the Historic Sites Department of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and became an area superintendent.

John Randall Daniel "*Bob*" Braham died of a brain tumour on 7 February 1974 at the age of 53. During his career with the RAF and RCAF, he flew 67 types of aircraft! His medals are on display at the RAF Museum at Hendon. Mike finished off his presentation with a tribute to his mother, and all military spouses for their support, sacrifices, and services to the careers of their military spouses.

Kyle Huth



RAMBLING THROUGH RECORDS – KNOWLTON, QUEBEC

Hugh Halliday

It was a beautiful Thanksgiving weekend when I drove to Knowlton, Quebec. The leaves glowed with inner fire and the farms were clearly prospering. Knowlton is practically the entrance to the Eastern Townships, and what drew me there was the Brome County Historical Museum and a unique artefact - the only original Fokker D-VII in North America. The museum would shortly be closing for the winter, and seeing the airplane was on my "bucket list".

It was said that the D-VII was capable of transforming a mediocre pilot into a good pilot. It was relatively easy to fly and could "hang by its prop". When it appeared in service in April 1918, Allied pilots initially under-estimated the boxy fighter, so inelegant compared to Albatross fighters that had been so common hitherto. The D-VII proved to be formidable in combat - more than 750 were operating at the time of the Armistice.

D-VIIs were much sought after as war trophies for the Allies. The Dominion Archivist, Sir Arthur Doughty, was the principal "scrounger" of such trophies, ranging from small arms to artillery pieces. Having been shipped to Canada, the trophies were exhibited, then scattered across the nation to be incorporated into local war memorials.

Some 22 D-VIIs were sent to Canada in 1919, assembled at Camp Borden, and subsequently featured prominently at air shows and races. Seven were loaned to Bishop-Barker Aeroplanes Limited. The Knowlton machine is the only survivor. For that we may thank Senator George Foster. On November 27, 1918 - only 16 days after the Armistice - he was writing to Doughty, asking that Knowlton have its share of



the loot. He had a particular interest in airplanes - his son, George Buchanan Foster, had flown with distinction in the Royal Flying Corps and had been awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross.

The Fokker D-VII was only part of what the village got, but it was the most significant trophy. It had actually been manufactured under license by Albatross (the work number was Alb 6810/18). On 27 May 1920, it was shipped in pieces from Camp Borden to Knowlton at a cost of \$112.50. More than a year passed while a special building was constructed. On 5 May 1921, Foster wrote to Doughty, stating that the building was now ready, including a concrete floor. He also asked if somebody could please come to assemble the aircraft. The Canadian Air Force complied. The museum annex, virtually a small war museum including several other trophies, was duly opened on 26 August 1921 by Sir Robert Borden, with Doughty on hand. Several other items, including artwork, have since been added.

For the Brome County Historical Museum, the D-VII is undoubtedly the jewel in the crown. Officials wryly admit that few people would fly from Europe or drive from Montreal to see their collections of pioneer artefacts, but thousands will come to view the airplane. It has been outside its building only once - in 1962 when it was loaned to (and restored by) the RCAF for incorporation in the Air Force Day at Rockcliffe. Sadly, it is now visibly deteriorating. Like many small community institutions, the Brome County Historical Museum lacks governmental funding (federal, provincial, or municipal) and no corporate or private sponsors have volunteered to underwrite repairs.



The museum reopens in May, and I intend to revisit the place to review their archives for aviation material from both world wars. I would encourage readers to add Knowlton to their "bucket lists". As a further inducement to accompanying wives, be it noted that Knowlton is a good place to begin a tour of the Eastern Townships with numerous antique shops and a growing wine industry. I have often said that some museums are run by amateurs who behave like professionals. Within the bounds of their finances, the staff of the Knowlton Museum are very professional.

Hugh Halliday



SABLE ISLAND REVISITED – PART 1

This story begins at RCAF Station Sydney, NS, on 2 June 1941 when Bolingbroke IV 9007 of No. 8(BR) Squadron (Sqn) departed Sydney on a routine convoy patrol and failed to return. This occurrence was to produce far reaching effects in Eastern Air Command HQ and its operational units. On 3 June, three Douglas Digbys, RCAF Nos. 740, 755, and 756, of No. 10(BR) Sqn Gander, Newfoundland, took up the search, along with Stranraers 918 and 921 of No. 5(BR) Sqn Dartmouth, NS. Stranraer 921 departed for Sable Island but had to return due to heavy fog over the sea. Also on 3 June, Hudson I RCAF No. 782 of No. 11(BR) Sqn departed Dartmouth to search for the Bolingbroke east of Nova Scotia. The Hudson was flying in heavy fog when it struck the top of the radio mast on Sable Island. The aircraft partially disintegrated and crashed into the sea near the shore of Sable Island, killing all five crew members.

The RCAF Court of Inquiry into the crash speculated that an error in the altimeter setting may have existed due to a lower atmospheric pressure at Sable Island than at Dartmouth. On 3 June, the Operations Record Book (ORB) of RCAF Station Dartmouth stated: The RCAF Ship *OK Service* of the Eastern Air Command Marine Section at Dartmouth with a cargo capacity of 150 tons and a Royal Canadian Navy corvette were dispatched to Sable Island to salvage the wreckage of Hudson 782.

On 4 June, Stranraer 921 departed again for Sable Island and picked up the bodies of the crew of the Hudson and returned to Dartmouth. Also on 4 June, Stranraer 918 of No. 5(BR) Sqn, piloted by F/L J.C. Scott and F/O B.H. Moffit proceeded to Sable Island to search for the missing Bolingbroke and then flew north to Sydney, where they continued to search up to 6 June but found no trace. On 6 June, the ORB of RCAF Station Sydney stated: ... the search continued for the missing Bolingbroke. There does not appear to be much hope of finding the aircraft or crew.

The crew of Bolingbroke IV No. 9007 were:

Pilot: C766 S/L R.B. Wylie of Estevan, SK.
Navigator: J4963 P/O F.J. Parker of Montreal, QC
WAG: R74046 SGT. L.J.R. Chabot of Hamilton, ON
AG: R72040 AC1 F.J. Tibbett of Bracebridge, ON

The crew members have no known grave. Their names are listed on the Ottawa War Memorial.

The crew of Hudson I No. 782 were:

Pilot: C982 F/L G.B. Snow of Ottawa, ON
Navigator: C1074 F/O I.L.G. Gillis of Paradise, NS
Medical Officer: C3582 F/L F.J. Bell of Toronto, ON
WOP: R51049 CPL D.E. Craig of Saskatoon, SK
WOP: R61440 AC1 G.A. Dillworth of Rush Lake, SK

F/L G.B. Snow was buried in Beechwood Cemetery, Ottawa, ON.

Note: The book *Canadian Military Aircraft Serials and Photographs* lists Bolingbroke 9007 lost at sea 11 December 1941. This is an error. The correct date is 2 June 1941. The date 11 December 1941 came from the aircraft inventory card and is the RCAF write off date for this aircraft.

R.H. Smith



Pubs & Mags

Twenty-Five Great Canadian Aviators (part of Legion Magazine's series *Canada's Ultimate Story*) – 96pp., including 5 aircraft profiles and a 3pp. fold-out timeline.

Air Classics (Nov 2015) – 11pp. on restoration and flight of de Havilland Mosquito B.Mk.35 VR796 (ex-Spartan CF-HML), now flying as C-FHMJ in markings of RAF 109 Sqn Mk.IX "F for Freddie" – 11 pp. on propliners in Alaska.

Notices and Announcements

Peter Sharman is selling off his extensive collection of Battle of Britain items. These items include: books, prints, photos, commemorative plates, mugs, maps, models, and more! Images of his collection will be at the November meeting. He can be contacted at:

Images from the National Research Council online archive

In 1950, Canadair C-54GM / CL-2 *North Star* PX513 became the second aircraft to be named *Rockcliffe Ice Wagon*. PX513 was specially modified to study the problems associated with aircraft de-icing. A dorsal fin (with a heating pad installed on the leading edge) was mounted to the top of the fuselage, with two observation blisters forward of and on either side of the fin. The propellers were equipped with conducting rubber heater elements, with a window installed ahead of the port propellers to observe them. On top of the modifications, PX513 carried a variety of scientific instruments on board, as well as two engine-driven 60kw alternators to supply electricity to the heating units. Again, unfortunately no captions came with the original images. However I will point out that the aircraft in the background of the top picture is the Avro Canada C102 Jetliner!

Kyle Huth



SYDNEY BAKER – PART II: GETTING MY ENGINEER'S LICENSE

I had by now reached the age of 21 and became eligible to sit for my Engineer's license. For the previous six months I had been studying Air Regulations and the Air Navigation Order of 1923 plus numerous books on aircraft construction and maintenance. The examinations, held I believe under the control of the Air Ministry at Victory House, London, included written papers on airframes, engines and air regulations. These were followed by personal interviews with three Air Ministry inspectors. I wrote the examinations in early October 1936 and completed the interviews on the same day. On October 30th I received notification that I had passed the examination and Ground Engineer License No. 3109 was issued. My license was endorsed as follows:

Category A valid only for:

"DH 84" and "Spartan Cruiser" land planes (including turn indicators but excluding compass adjustments and electrical service.

Category C valid only for:

"Gypsy Major" engines in aircraft (excluding supercharged engines and engines fitted with VP airscrews.

At that time there were four categories of engineer's licenses:

1. Category "A" Certification of aircraft before flight;
2. Category "B" Certification of aircraft after repair or overhaul;
3. Category "C" Certification of engines before flight; and
4. Category "D" Certification of engines after repair or overhaul.

An "X" license could be issued for the repair or overhaul of instruments, compasses, variable or constant speed propellers and ancillary engine components. To obtain additional aircraft or engine type endorsements one was required to pass an examination or attend a manufacturer approved course on the type of aircraft or engine.

Before leaving England in 1952 I held endorsements for nineteen different aircraft types and eleven engines. I also held endorsements for electrical services and compass adjustments.

In early 1937 British Airways was expanding rapidly and planning its move to the new modern Gatwick Airport. This airport had access to a rail station with a direct service to London.

To cope with this expansion, British Airways purchased five Lockheed 10A aircraft from the United States. These aircraft were transported as deck cargo for which the wings were removed and elaborate protection was applied to prevent corrosion from the salt atmosphere. Upon arrival in Liverpool, the aircraft were transported to Speke Airport where the wings were installed; the aircraft were then serviced, and flown to Gatwick. The maintenance base at Eastleigh with all its personnel was moved to the new maintenance base at Gatwick Airport.

The Lockheed aircraft were put into service on the Gatwick-Paris run in competition with Imperial Airways who were then using Handley Page HP 42 aircraft. At that time it was said the Lockheed 10A could fly a return trip while the HP 42 was flying one way.

Spare power plants and engines for the Lockheed 10A were also purchased at this time, so a time stagger system was devised to avoid the possibility of engines becoming time expired at the same time. This required a schedule for changing all ten engines in the five aircraft at different times. This system involved a lot of all-night work to be certain the aircraft were ready for service the next day.

British Airways also held a contract to carry mail between Croydon and Berlin. The contract was shared with a German airline, each flying on alternate nights. British Airways used the Lockheed for this service and the German airline used Junkers Ju.52. To service our aircraft we were taken by road from Gatwick to Croydon. On one occasion at Croydon, I was able to get a good look at a Curtiss Condor, a huge twin engine bi-plane used for cargo. It was painted a vivid red; I guess that's why it has remained in my memory.

In 1937 Mr. F.J. Jeans, who had helped me so much at Spartan Airlines and British Airways, left to join Straight Corporation as chief engineer. This corporation was started by Mr. Whitney Straight, whose American parents I believe were in the steel business. Mr. Straight later became a British citizen. His main interest, after giving up motor racing (he once drove for Auto Union, the German motor racing team), was promoting aviation in the form of flying clubs. He would approach local municipalities and interest them in opening up an aerodrome, and then he would assist them in building a hangar and club house. Later he would add restaurants and squash courts and he would supply aircraft and all personnel required to operate a flying school. He encouraged members to participate in the social activities of the club. Flying clubs were established at Exeter, Plymouth, Ramsgate, Ipswich, and Inverness. In 1938, Straight Corporation took over the operations of Western Airways at Weston-Super-Mare.

In October 1937, Mr. Jeans wrote to me asking if I would be interested in a position as engineer-in-charge at Exeter Flying Club, which had just started operating. On October 6th, I attended an interview at Straight Corporation's head office in London at 17 Manchester Square. I was offered the position as outlined by Mr. Jeans. The position was subject to one month's trial and a six month probationary period before I would become eligible for any of the corporation's benefits. I accepted the position as I felt it would help broaden my experience in the aircraft industry.

I commenced my duties at Exeter Flying Club on October 25, 1937, at a salary of 5 pounds ten shillings per week. F/O L.R. Mouatt was the club's manager and flying instructor. I felt a little lost as this was the first time I had been on my own with complete responsibilities; I was then only one year past my 21st birthday.

Exeter was not to prove to be too kind to me. The club had one DH.60G Gypsy Moth and one morning, while doing the daily run up, one of the wheel chocks somehow slipped. I closed the throttle, but by then it was too late and the aircraft tipped on its nose, smashing the propeller and the right side engine bearer which was an integral part of the wooden aircraft structure. Mr. Jeans came down from London and decided I was quite capable of carrying out the repairs as I had some experience at this type of work while working with Spartan Aircraft. The repairs were very interesting and involved removing the engine and replacing the right side engine bearer. All this went very well with everything falling in place and after airworthiness certification by Mr. Jeans, the aircraft went back in service. Strange, but true, this incident seemed to build up my confidence as an engineer, although I was not too popular with the club manager, F/O Mouatt.

In 1937, this aircraft was written off after a crash in which F/O Mouatt and his pupil were seriously injured. At the time it was thought F/O Mouatt was demonstrating a falling leaf manoeuvre and was unable to recover from it. Another report was that the pupil's foot got caught under the rudder bar and the plane spun in before he could disentangle it. We will never know for sure. Late in 1937, I was transferred to Ipswich which had just opened with a hangar and clubhouse with a restaurant, bar and squash courts. Provision had been made in the hangar for an engine overhaul shop operated under the supervision of Bill Lancaster whom I had worked with previously at Eastleigh.

Flying instruction at Ipswich was carried out using Hillson Praga high wing monoplanes powered by twin cylinder, 37 hp J.A.P. engines. Today this plane would likely be considered a powered glider. Seating was side-by-side in a rather cramped cabin. Cost of instruction was 15 shillings per hour.

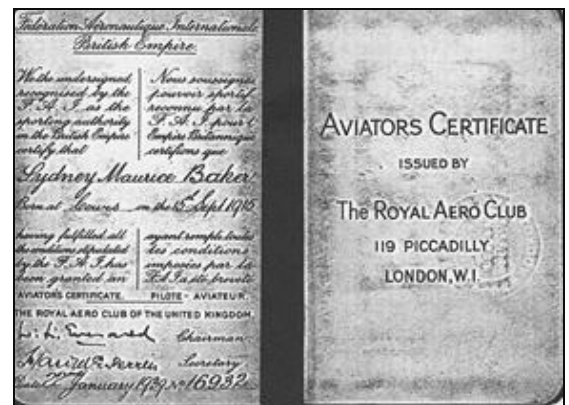
In 1938, the British Air Ministry formed the Civil Air Guard (CAG). This provided a system through which individuals were provided a subsidy toward obtaining a civil pilot's license. Individuals were given ten free flying hours per year. It was intended that the system would yield a reserve of pilots in the event of war. The private pilot's license regulations applied to applicants' age, medical and attendance at ground school. I joined the Ipswich detachment of the CAG and began my instruction on February 4th 1938. I did my first solo flight on December 15th 1938 after 4hrs and 10mins of instruction time under three different instructors, one being Col. L. A. Strange whom I had known at Spartan Aircraft Ltd.

The test for the license went as follows: first a short check flight accompanied by the chief flying instructor – If he considered you competent, you then proceeded to the air test. That process was observed by the chief flying instructor from the ground.

The candidate would take-off; climb to 2,000 feet; complete two figure-of-eight manoeuvres; descend to 1,600 feet and fly over a pre-determined spot on the aerodrome; at this point the throttle would be set to idle and the candidate was required to glide to a landing as closely as possible to the pre-determined spot.

My private pilot's license number 16693 was issued on January 30th 1939 and was endorsed for all types of landplanes.

Colin Hine



Sydney Baker -Private Pilot License No. 3109, issued January 22, 1939

NEXT MEETING OF THE OTTAWA CHAPTER CANADIAN AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY



IT ALL STARTED WITH A GREAT ENGINE: THE HISTORY OF THE CANADAIR SABRE MK. 3 AND HOW IT INFLUENCED ALL THE REST

Bernie Runstedler

Late in 1952, Canadair installed an Orenda 3 engine in an F-86 Sabre. Much to the dismay of both the Americans and the British, they made it work. Orenda-powered F-86s became the best fighter aircraft of the day. This is the story of how Canadair made it work and how an inanimate object came to receive the affection of those who flew it and those who worked on it.

LOCATION: Bush Theatre, Canada Aviation and Space Museum, Rockcliffe

DATE/TIME: Thursday, 26 November, 2015, 1930 Hours

LANDING FEES: \$1.00

Meetings include guest speakers, films, slide shows, coffee and donuts

Visitors and guests are always welcome