

CONTACT

Canadian Aviation Historical Society New Brunswick Turnbull Chapter



Fall 2013

<http://turnbull1922.wordpress.com/>



From the President's Desk

Hello members,

Another year has rapidly flown by. I apologize for not having a meeting in November, an unexpected problem took my attention.

Will try to schedule a meeting in Fredericton in late March.

Also, we are looking for a volunteer to head a Program Committee, arranging for speakers for our meetings.

Our Vice President, Norman Sheppard, Director Harold Wright and Treasurer, Boyd Trites have been meeting with the Town of Sackville Council members to establish a RCAF Memorial there.

Norm and Director Everett McQuinn collaborated to make some changes to the propellers displayed at the McClure Gallery.

I hope you will continue supporting our efforts to promote our Maritime aviation history by renewing your membership in the new year.

The Canadian Aviation Historical Society is looking for new members. Are you a CAHS National member? The CAHS National produces the quarterly "CAHS Journal". Membership in the CAHS National is \$50.00 a year. Membership forms are available for downloading from the CAHS website:

http://www.cahs.ca/images/pdf/CAHS_National_Membership_form.pdf.

Cheers,

Jim Sulis



The above commemorative plaque was presented by Turnbull at the Golden Hawks evening banquet during the 2013 Miramichi Airshow. The first copy currently resides with the City of Miramichi and a second one with Vintage Wing's Hawk One.

Content

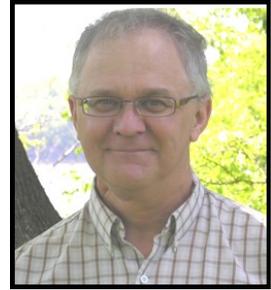
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New Brunswicker's in the Battle of Britain

By Harold E. Wright



The air battle over England was Germany's attempt to gain air superiority over the Royal Air Force. The name of the battle derives from Prime Minister Winston Churchill's speech in the House of Commons: ". . . the Battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin . . ."

The Battle of Britain was the first major campaign of the Second World War to be fought entirely by air forces. The failure of Germany to achieve its objectives of destroying

were from New Brunswick. To qualify for the Battle of Britain clasp to the 1939-45 Star, airmen had to have one operational sortie with a Fighter Squadron between the period 10 July-31 October 1940. There may be an eighth pilot, a Fredericton native

who flew with a Coastal Command Squadron. He flew one operational sortie in co-operation with hurricanes. He was issued the Battle of



Vintage Wing's Hurricane at Saint John Airport during the 2013 Battle of Britain ceremony.

Britain clasp and initial research indicates that he is entitled to wear this clasp.

There were other New Brunswick aircrew who served with the RCAF and RAF during the Battle of Britain. They flew with non-Fighter Command Squadrons, or served as ground crew with Fighter Squadrons. Others served in other roles such as wireless operators.

The Battle of Britain London Monument is a superb monument to "The Few" - commemorating those people who took part in this vital battle of the Second World War. HRH The Prince of Wales, said at the dedication of the monument in 2005: "The Battle of Britain pilots have earned a very special place in this Nation's history - and its heart - and this magnificent monument will provide a lasting tribute to their bravery for generations to come." To learn more about this monument, which includes the names of all Canadian pilots, visit <http://www.bbm.org.uk/>

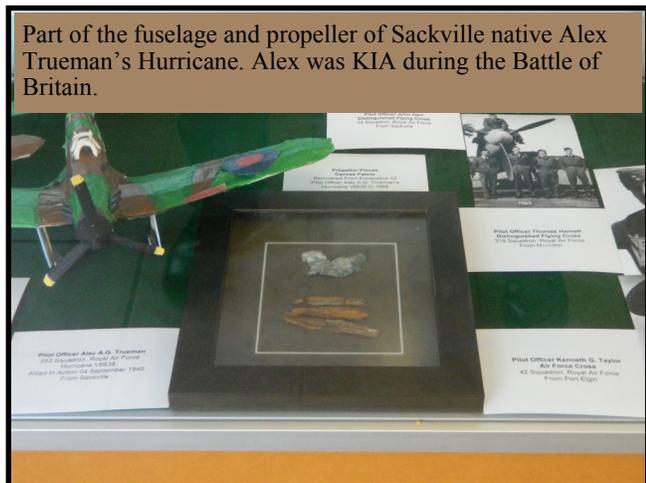
Those from New Brunswick who served during the Battle of Britain are:

P/O Duncan Alexander Hewitt, RAFVR P/O Robert Roy Wilson, RAFVR F/L Harry Raymond Hamilton, RAF P/O Alec Albert Gray Trueman, RAF P/O Kirkpatrick MacLure (Pat) Sclanders, RAFVR P/O Thomas Harnett, DFC P/O John Stewart Hart, DFC P/O Kenneth Garth Taylor, AFC F/L Donald Gordon Belyea F/L Wilfred Jasper Burnett, DSO, DFC, AFC, CdeG (Fr) Cpl. I.F. Fainer Sgt. David Gillis Sgt. Donald Ken Gordon P/O Fred William Holden A.D. Hudson P/O D.L.G. Jones S/L Ralph C. Kierstead F/O George McAvity Sgt. Spurgeon J. Sisson, DFC F/O Charles



Britain's air defences, or forcing Britain to negotiate an armistice or an outright surrender, was its first major defeat and a crucial turning point in the war.

There were 2,936 airmen who flew operational sorties in the Battle of Britain, including 112 from Canada. Seven



Part of the fuselage and propeller of Sackville native Alex Trueman's Hurricane. Alex was KIA during the Battle of Britain.



Cheesman God is My Co-Pilot (Conclusion) By Harold E. Wright



Around midnight the Doctor was back from seeing the patient and told Al that the injured woman had to get to the hospital. "Wait a minute", said Cheesman. "I can't take off in the dark. I'll tear the floats off and kill all of us." The Doctor emphasized in no uncertain terms that the flight had to be now! Al got the plane ready and the near-death woman was secured inside the aircraft. With his hand on the throttle Al closed his eyes and said "Dear God, please be my co-pilot. Take the controls and get us out of this lake in one piece."

At the beginning of the war Al offered his services to both the RCAF and the Finnish Air Forces. Eager to join in the fight, he and two other Saint John pilots, Pat Sclanders and Tim Ellis, president of the Saint John Flying Club, offered their services to the Finnish Air Force in their fight against the Russians. Al was definitely determined to get into our air force. He used the name of C.D. Howe, the Minister of Transport, for his character reference. In his letter Minister Howe wrote that Al is "our friend" and that he has had one or two brushes with air regulations, but on the whole "he has a splendid flying record." In February 1940 Al was accepted into the RCAF and this ended his offer to fly for the Finns. Al was given the rank of Sergeant and sent on a flying course at Trenton for civilian pilots with experience.

By August 1942 Cheesman had been transferred to Goose Bay as the Staff Pilot in command of the #1 Rescue and Salvage unit. His aircraft was the famous Canadian designed and built Noorduyn Norseman. Al's job was not only to fly RCAF missions but also to bring food and medical supplies to the local native communities.

Flying these search and salvage missions was, by their nature, dangerous business. In January 1943, Cheesman, Sergeant Gerry Landry and Corporal G.A. Nimmons crashed shortly after takeoff from the Scoudouc Repair Depot in New Brunswick. An oil line broke, covering the windshield with oil. Cheesman brought his Norseman around to return to Scoudouc. On final approach another aircraft cut off the Norseman. Al's plane was a total wreck.



A week later "Lady-bad-Luck" again visited them, but this time with near tragic results. With the same crew on another routine flight to Goose Bay, the Norseman went missing. Landry recorded that the flight was uneventful until they encountered strong head winds and ran into a blinding snowstorm which forced them to land on a large lake where they spent the night. The next day, believing they were northwest of Goose Bay, they took off and flew southeast until they ran out of gas and were forced to land on a larger lake. The crew made the best of a bad situation and rationed their meagre supply of food which included a fruitcake and a bottle of whiskey.

By the seventh day missing, Gerry's diary entries changed from optimism and resignation to ones of despair and discouragement. On the ninth day he wrote: ". . . the silence of the arctic skies were broken by the roar of 2 cyclone Hudson motors north west of us . . ." Their wreck was found two weeks later and the rescue aircraft dropped food, water, cigarettes, blankets and snowshoes. A few days later a Canadian Pacific Fairchild 82 landed nearby. The rescue crew saw the survival tent but with no smoke coming from it, nor any signs of footprints in the snow. The rescuers nearly jumped out of their flying boots when Al shouted; "Why in hell are you all standing outside there in the cold like a ruddy group of statues? Come into the tent and have a cup of coffee . . . or aren't you staying for a while?"

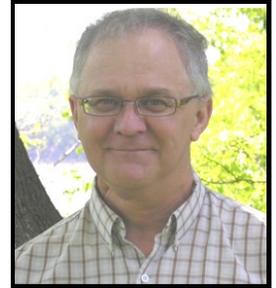
Gerry Landry of Moncton was known as Cheesman's "Man Friday". For most of his wartime service he flew on the Norseman with Al, the seasoned and renowned bush pilot. Cheesman mentored the young air mechanic and taught Landry most of his own survival and aeronautical techniques. They quickly built a solid reputation as a talented team who were not afraid to take some chances and use their ingenuity to find missing airmen and salvage their damaged aircraft. Gerry remained with the Air Force until 1970.

They also spent a considerable amount of time flying into native villages to provide food and medical supplies. At Hopedale, on the Davis Inlet, they were told that the 78 natives were in dire need of food and medical supplies. When they arrived they found only one man, about 70 years old, who was able to walk to meet them. The rest were ill with influenza. In one tent they found a family of fifteen, with two children subsisting on a diet of flour and water. The supplies Al and Gerry brought into that camp saved most of their lives. They received a touching note of thanks from Nain, on the coast of Labrador.

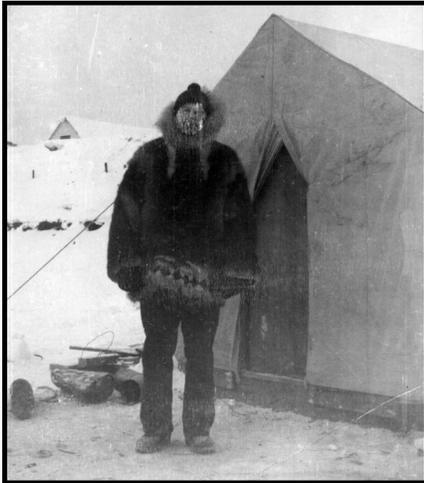


Cheeseman

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It read: "Naglitama Kitamik agloyomga . . ." and continued in the local native language. Al didn't know the words but luckily for him a translation was included. It read: "My Dear friend, I write a little because we wish to thank you because you have helped us we being miserable poor beings. Therefore I thank you greatly because you have never been unwilling to help us. Thank you very much. The writer Gustai Sillitt".



When Al left the air force, his love of fishing, poker playing and drinking, and his ingenuity at problem solving, was not soon forgotten at Goose Bay: [the] "lads there, including the bar staff . . . and the natives for whom I am informed you acted as Mayor, send their greetings. Your picture hangs prominently in the mess. They said that they missed your happy smile, the sweet aroma of your long cigars . . ." wrote an air force friend. Al had served in seven provinces during the war.

Cheesman returned to Port Arthur after his medical discharge (hearing loss) from the RCAF but continued flying. With a partner he set up Thunder Bay Air Lines, hoping to assembling Harvard IVs for the RCAF.



In March 1958 Al developed pneumonia and, a few days later on April 2nd, a heart attack stilled the pilot who was known as the "Mayor of Goose Bay". After a well-attended funeral from the Blake Funeral Chapel, Al was buried in the Mountain View Cemetery in Port Arthur. The folklore and legend of Cheesman continued decades after his death. In 2007 Jim Polling, a retired newspaper journalist, wrote about Al's exploits in the wilds of Ontario's northern bush. Jim said that his own father had flown with Al and on one occasion they found that the lake was too short for take-off. Al had the plane tied to a tree on shore, revved the plane to full power and then gave the men on shore the signal to cut the rope. The plane shot forward as if it had been shot out of a cannon and barely cleared the trees.

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GOD IS MY CO-PILOT

Starring **DENNIS MORGAN**
DANE CLARK • RAYMOND MASSEY • ALAN HALE
ANDREA KING • JOHN RIDGELY

His hobby... was pointing his fingers at the fuselage!
Dennis Morgan as Col. Robert L. Scott

Oh! Cheesman the farthest flying flier of them all!
You could count on the Flying Padre for comfort—and a laugh!

This is but a snapshot of the legendary bush pilot of Saint John - Silas Alward Cheesman.





At a Glimpse

Obituary

W.C. (Bill) Stewart



New Brunswick native, Bill Stewart passed away on Friday December 6, 2013 at his home Halifax. He was 79.

Born in Dalhousie, New-Brunswick, Bill joined the RCAF and flew F-86 Sabres with 434 Squadron in Germany. He then went to Gimili Manitoba on T-33s. It was during this period

in 1959 that Bill received a call, later sending him to Chatham NB to join the RCAF Golden Hawks. He worked at different jobs during his three years with the team. At first, as spare pilot and show commentator, then as second solo pilot, formation pilot (box) with team leader Fern Villeneuve, then as lead solo pilot.

After completing the STU course in Chatham, Bill was off to Cold Lake to fly CF-104s. He later went to Germany and flew with 427 and 434 Squadrons.

After retiring from the Canadian Armed Forces, Bill worked with the Department Transportation based in Moncton.

Golden Hawks Team Leader Jim McComb said in a private interview that his brother in law, Bill Stewart was the finest fighter pilot he ever saw! See more at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Hgsa_BqW0s.

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Newsletter Editor

I would like to thank everyone who supported me as editor of Contact since 2010. What started out as a commitment for one issue continued for over 3 years. It has been fun and has provided me with a few opportunities that would not have been possible otherwise!



A special thanks to my daughter Amélie for helping me with this newsletter format and wife Lise for reviewing each issue!

I've met and learned from lots of people who have similar interests and have been kind enough to include me in their plans.

Its now time to pass the reigns to the new editor Norm Sheppard who will no doubt bring this Newsletter to the next level making it one of the best in the Country!

Thanks again!

Daniel Goguen

Special Thanks

Jim Sulis, Boyd Trites, Harold E. Wright, Norm Sheppard, Peter Noddin, Bruce Atkinson, Lise Goguen,

Contact



The Spruce Mountain Mystery Aircraft Wreck Solved!

Part Two

Peter Noddin

Maine Aviation Historical Society 2006



In the afternoon, a 92nd Bomb Group aircraft flew for several hours and "succeeded in locating the crash". Lt. Kennard, the medical officer who had responded with the first ambulances, flew as a spotter on this aircraft. (the aircraft would have been a B-17F, 36 of which were TDY at Dow at this time for upgrading at the sub-depot there and additional crew training for the European Theatre later that month.) A map was marked in the aircraft and dropped to the base camp. Nelson states in his report that: "Close examination disclosed the fact that the point indicated on the map was inconsistent because of distance and general location from the point where the survivor had reported."

Kennard had reported that Machan had been "delirious and unable to give any directions as to where the plane was, how far it was, or in what condition his comrades were." This may have been provided by Dr. H. W. Lyons and referred to his state upon transport to Bangor, and meant to convey that no further useful information could be gotten from him. The initial Bangor Daily News article on this same day stated that Machan related to those who found him some basic facts such as that the plane had hit a "hill or mountain" flying at an indicated 4000 ft. (1900 ft actual!), at 150 knots, he had escaped through the bottom of the plane, he had gotten burned after he left the plane and that he had walked down off the mountain taking well over two hours. The assumption is that the woodsmen had a pretty good idea which mountain he had come from, since some had seen the aircraft east of Saddleback just before the crash.

Nelson telephoned Base Headquarters and reported the discrepancy. A second "corrected" map was dropped to the camp but "This map also proved to be of little value due to the inconsistency of direction and distance."

The ground team returned at 1700 with no sign of the crash being located.

Nelson concluded that a return trip to Dow "for further instructions from the Base Commander was necessary" and he and Lt. Olson returned to Dow AAF that evening.

As a result of their meeting with the Base Commander, Major Robert Ford, Lt. Kennard, the Medical Officer who had spotted the crash site was ordered to return to Katahdin Iron Works and help the ground team locate the crash site. This group set out for the camp at 0415 on Sunday, 16 August after a delay due to unspecified "transportation difficulties", and arrived back at Mud Gauntlet Deadwater around 0700.

On arrival, Nelson found several additional locals at the site as well as Forest Rangers and other "State Officials" offering assistance. Lt. Kennard "described the crash site in detail- terrain features" to the locals present. "By process of



elimination" the most likely spot was decided on and 2 parties were organized to approach from different angles.

Around 1230, the search team which included Captain Nelson and Lt. Kennard "found the spot as described" near Crater Pond on Saddleback Mountain. They had been downwind of the site and followed the burned odor to it. The second team passed within 100 yards of the 150 ft. wreckage strewn swath cut through the heavy softwood brush without finding it.

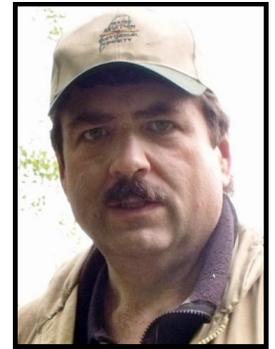
Squadron Leader Bryant identified the bodies and 4 guards were left at the site overnight. Captain Nelson left Lt. Kennard to take charge of a 24 man team of fresh troops arriving from Dow on Monday morning to remove the bodies. All military personnel had left the area by Monday evening, 17 August.

The history goes on after the report of Captain Nelson to state that "Due to unforeseen difficulties and information gained from these troubles, Captain Nelson made a number of suggestions for future search parties."

1. Aerial search planes should carry cameras and photograph crash sites.
2. Maps of this section of the country are inadequate in detail. Captain Nelson is quoted from another document "In this case, the most prominent landmark, a pond or small lake, was not shown on any of the four detailed maps that were submitted, which resulted in confusion and wasted effort."

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Peter Noddin

A NEW CONCLUSION - A piloting error and an inaccurate news report.

It is important in the analysis of this record to look closely at what is not found in this document, which is by far the most detailed record of the events surrounding the search operations near Katahdin Iron Works on 14-17 August 1942. There is absolutely no reference to a second crash or even a theory of a second crash. The air search reported only one crash site, but its location on the map was suspect due to facts in the possession of the ground searchers. There was no ground search team sent to either Big or Little Spruce Mountain, as some news reports suggested.

The ground team knew the wreckage was on Saddleback Mountain based on several locals seeing the plane before the crash and information about where/how long Machan had traveled before finding the camp. Lacking details about where he had come from, he was obviously able to tell the woodsmen who found him that he had walked about 2 hours (he stated 90 minutes later in the hospital) down off the mountain. Anyone familiar with the south face of Saddleback in this area knows that it is a steep downhill climb "hands on trees" a good part of the way down. The logging road and possibly the camps would have been periodically visible to Machan as he hiked down. It would have been pretty clear to the locals that there was no way that he had walked from one of the Spruce Mountains, over 7 miles, across the valley and over Saddleback based on his statements and condition.

Nelson's report refers to the crash site, singular, throughout. Kennard reported locating the crash and dropped a map showing its location. He redrew it and sent it up from Dow to the search camp. In both cases, Nelson concluded that the crash was marked wrong on the maps. When Kennard returned and described the crash that he saw from the airplane, locals were able to correctly place it near Crater Pond on Saddleback and Kennard was with the ground team that located the crash site as he had himself described it.

The conclusion to be drawn is that the Anson crash site was placed incorrectly on the next mountain north of Saddleback in error. During the discussions back and forth between Kennard at Dow AAF and Nelson at Katahdin Iron Works on the afternoon of the 15th, someone apparently started a theory or simple scuttlebutt/rumour of a second crash on Spruce Mountain, where Kennard had marked it on the map. This got picked up by a news reporter and printed Monday morning as fact. We all know that newspaper facts

are usually the least accurate of all sources when researching crashes. News copy simply isn't written with the intent of being used for legal or military purposes and by historians later on.

So how could someone on the B-17 put the crash on the wrong mountain? The clue is in Captain Nelson's comment in his recommendations "the most prominent landmark, a pond or small lake, was not shown on any of the four detailed maps that were submitted". This would refer to Crater Pond, atop Saddleback Mountain, a few hundred yards from the crash site. Crater Pond was in fact missing from the 1930's vintage topographic maps of the area (which also misnamed the mountain Saddlerock). There are several small mountains in the vicinity of the woods camps that were at Mud Gauntlet Deadwater, which appear different on a good topographic map but somewhat similar when in full foliage from the air. Also, the range of peaks formed by Big Shanty, Little Shanty, Little Spruce and Big Spruce Mountains looks very similar to Saddleback Mountain, but on a larger scale with somewhat steeper faces between peaks. This similarity is clear using a modern 3d topographic program or flying over the area.

The key piloting navigation features of this forested track of land would have been Silver Lake, the adjacent Village of Katahdin Iron Works, the railroad tracks, a few roads and the prominent forested mountains from Ebeemee to White Cap. If Crater Pond was not represented on the map aboard the B-17, and Lt. Kennard and perhaps others were looking for the "pond just east of the peak" where the crash site was visible, it is plausible that they matched the terrain up with Greenwood Pond between Little and Big Spruce Mountains and placed the crash site on the east face of Big Spruce Mountain above the pond. The area is similar in appearance, just at a different magnitude of slope and elevation. Again, from the air, Saddleback and the Shanty/Spruce range look like big and little siblings to each other. This error could be compounded if Saddleback was perceived as the Wilkie Mountains near the logging camp used as a base camp.

So, years of research and a few air and ground searches later, we are faced with a preponderance of the evidence that the famous (in our niche little aviation history circles anyway) "Spruce Mountain mystery wreck" is nothing more than a rumour, or self serving statement quoted in a newspaper, started by a bad map, read incorrectly, compounded by the primitive search coordination techniques of the early days of WW II.

Folks, it never existed, except in a newspaper!





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