

November Meeting

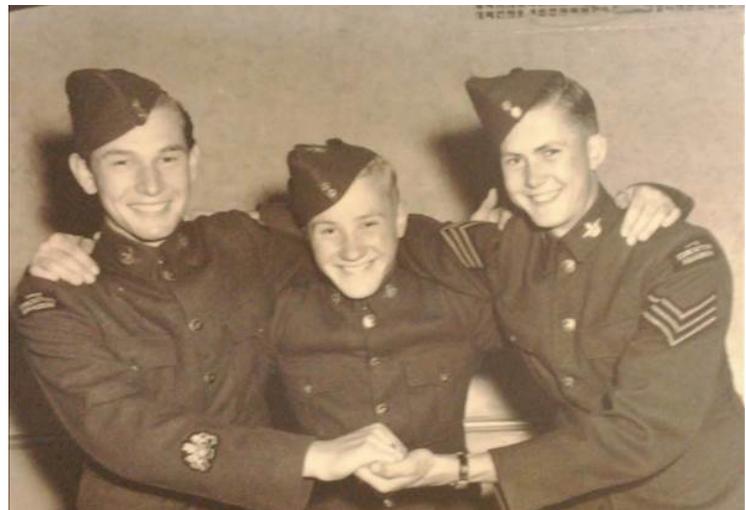


Speaker: Bill Cumming
Photo credit: Neil McGavock

Topic: “The Air Cadet League of Canada”
Speaker: Mr. Bill Cumming
Reporter: Gord McNulty

Chapter President Sheldon Benner welcomed attendees and guests to another enlightening presentation. Treasurer Paul Hayes led the audience in a Remembrance Day moment of silence for the 116,000 Canadian military personnel who have given their lives in the line of duty since 1914. Lest we forget. Paul then introduced William J. (Bill) Cumming, who has enjoyed a long and distinguished involvement in the Air Cadets, described by Paul as “without a doubt, the best movement for youth in Canada.” Bill was born in 1950 in Brandon, Manitoba. The oldest son of a career soldier, he grew up in various military communities including Whitehorse, Yukon; Shilo, Manitoba; and London, Ontario. Bill first became interested in aviation in the early 1960s, when his uncle, who flew one of the support aircraft for the RCAF’s Golden Hawks, allowed him to sit in the cockpit of one of the team’s Sabre jets.

Bill joined 540 Squadron Royal Canadian Air Cadets in Oakville at the age of 13 in 1963, graduating as a Warrant Officer in 1969. He attended two summer camp training courses at CFB Trenton, the Senior Leaders Course at CFB Borden and obtained his Private Power license at Kingston with the Air Cadet program. He briefly served with the Canadian Forces while attending university, graduating with a diploma in Aerospace Engineering from Ryerson. Following graduation in 1974, Bill was employed with Westinghouse Canada, Rolls-Royce Canada and Siemens Canada. He worked in the Engineering department, Marketing department and Contract Management group until retirement in June 2013.



WWII Air Cadets Photo
Courtesy 12 Squadron RCAC Edmonton

From 1974, Bill volunteered with the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum. He was a staff pilot for almost 20 years and a member of the museum Board of Directors for 12 years. He was also Chairman of the Hamilton International Air Show and a member of the air show Board of Directors for 10 years. Bill volunteered with the Hamilton International Tattoo for 12 years and has served on various committees for summer events and other special events for the past 20 years. During the 1980s and 1990s he contributed articles to the *CAHS Journal* and other aviation publications. Along with Ron Page, Bill co-authored *Fleet the Flying Years*, published in 1990.

Returning to the cadet program in the 1980s, Bill served briefly as a member of the 735 Squadron sponsoring committee in Dundas. He joined the Ontario Provincial Committee (OPC) of the Air Cadet League of Canada in 1996, as a Director, supporting 104 Squadron, Brantford; 150 Squadron, Hamilton; and 713 Squadron, Stoney Creek. He was appointed in 2002 as the Area Vice Chair for the

Kitchener/Waterloo/Hamilton Area, with overall responsibility of 13 squadrons. In 2002 he was elected to the OPC Board of Governors.

In 2005, Bill was appointed the Chair of the OPC Squadron Operations Council in 2010, and in October 2011 was appointed 1st Vice Chair of the OPC Board of Governors. He was appointed Chair in October 2013 and recently became Immediate Past Chair OPC. Bill is the recipient of the Air Cadet Service Medal (with two bars), Air Cadet League Volunteer medal, and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal. He has also received the Air Cadet League of Canada Certificate of Merit. Bill and his wife Anna currently reside in Jarvis.



Air Cadets positioning a glider
Photo - Courtesy Alberta Provincial Committee

In a comprehensive presentation, entitled “Celebrating the Past, Shaping the Future,” Bill covered all aspects of the Air Cadet organization from its inception until today. In the very early days of World War II, Canada was in critical need of aircraft and men trained to fly and maintain them. That led to the beginning of the Air Cadet League of Canada. The idea was to establish a selected corps of teenaged youths who would devote some of their spare time to preparing to become RCAF aircrew. In 1940, the Minister of National Defence for Air, Charles G. Power, asked a group of influential civilians to create a country-wide voluntary organization to sponsor and develop this movement. A civilian organization was created to work in partnership with the RCAF. On 19 November, 1940, an Order-in-Council PC 6647, established the Air Cadet League of Canada. The order authorized the Air Cadet Corps: Junior Air Cadet Corps for boys 12-14 and Senior Air Cadet Corps for boys 15-18.

On 9 April, 1941, the Secretary of State of Canada by Letters Patent officially granted a Charter establishing the Air Cadet League of Canada, under Part II of the Companies Act 1934, authorizing it as a charitable, non-profit corporation. The Charter was applied for by Air Marshal Billy Bishop, George B. Foster and Hugh P. Illsley, all of whom served as pilots in the First World War. An administrative headquarters was established in Ottawa, with provincial committees in each province under a Provincial Chairman. The Provincial Committees established and recruited local sponsorship committees for the squadrons. Nine committees were established originally. Today, there are 12 across Canada.

By May 1942, the movement had grown to more than 10,000 Cadets in 135 squadrons. It peaked in September 1944, encompassing 29,000 Cadets in 374 squadrons, 1,750 officers and instructors, and another 200 civilians who supplied financial and other support. Air Cadets contributed to the war effort, and enjoyed opportunities to see, up close, the work of the RCAF at home. Training and instruction followed air force lines: drill (not too much) and discipline, instruction on aero engines, airframes, theory of flight, navigation, wireless and meteorology. Flying Schools offered summer camps for these young men from 15 to 18. The camps familiarized Air Cadets with most aspects of RCAF training, including drill, airmanship, navigation, wireless, aero engines, armaments, aircraft recognition and theory of flight. Cadets really enjoyed the camp activities and flights within the air force system. Bill displayed wartime photos showing cadets at RCAF stations across southern Ontario.

By early 1943, the government was concerned the flow of recruits into the training schools was being exhausted. The RCAF had to fully utilize the Air Cadets as a source of new aircrew recruits. Accurate records of the contribution made by Air Cadets to the wartime forces do not exist. However, an estimated 3,490 Air Cadets graduated into the wartime RCAF in varying capacities, and more than a score of them were subsequently decorated for gallantry.

A new branch of Scouting, Air Scouts, was formed at the 29 January 1941 Annual Meeting of the Council of the Boy Scout Association. Air Scouts would receive ordinary Scout training, together with additional training appropriate to the branch. New proficiency badges were introduced --- Air Apprentice, Air Mechanic and Air Navigator. In Canada, a program called “The Flying Lions” was



Cadet Glider on Aerotow
Photo - Courtesy Air Cadet League of Canada

introduced into the Troop. It had two levels of proficiency, with awards known as “Red Wings” and “Silver Wings.” However, as found in Boy Scouts Canada annual reports, few boys registered as Air Scouts. The 1942 report referred to “the energetic enrolment campaign of the newly formed Air Cadets, with their free Air Force type uniform.” The report added that this appeal “was largely balanced during the year by an Air Cadets change in policy aimed to discourage enlistment of boys under 15.” The enrolment of boys 12-14 was ended.

Whether in part as a result of the policy change, there was a marked increase in Flying Lions training in late 1942. Small groups participated in Toronto, Winnipeg, Halifax, Vancouver, Montreal, Windsor, Ottawa and a few smaller centres in the Maritimes. With the end of the war in 1945, Air Scout activity dropped --- possibly due to the closing of air stations and dispersal of personnel who were leaders and instructors in the Air Scout groups. The Air Scout branch was reduced in 1946, although some training continued at some troops as part of the main training until 1951.

Although the primary purpose of the Air Cadet movement was a military one, with peacetime conversion its founders began to contemplate the long-range benefits of Air Cadet training. The character-building aspect appealed strongly to Canada’s youth leaders. Service clubs, veterans’ groups and others offered their services to the League, not only as a contribution to the military but also to develop qualities associated with good citizenship which is the core of the Air Cadets today. When the Air Cadet League of Canada was formed, the various squadrons were known as Canadian Air Cadets. The “Royal” designation was authorized by an Act of Parliament (Royal Canadian Air Forces Act) on 26 June, 1946. The organization has been known as the Royal Canadian Air Cadets ever since.

The post-war transition necessitated that the League and its partnership provide incentives that would appeal to youth and replace the wartime goals of graduation into the RCAF. Various awards for outstanding proficiency and loyalty at the local squadrons provided the answer. A two-week basic summer camp, a.k.a. “tent city,” was established at some RCAF stations across Canada. In 1946, the

RCAF introduced powered Flying Scholarship Awards for competition by Senior Cadets through local flying clubs. In 1947, in co-operation with the UK Air Training Corps, the first Overseas Exchange Awards were introduced. Bill displayed a photo of two exchange cadets, from 172 York and 79 Port Colborne squadrons, who were once honored to meet the Queen. The exchange program started with England and now covers about 17 countries every year. The first Leadership Training Course of seven weeks was introduced in 1952, and in 1953 a course for Drill Instructors at RCAF Station Borden. In 1958, the government set a maximum number of Air Cadets at 25,000. In 1972, the League was authorized to increase it to 28,000.

With Canada's unification of the army, navy and air force, the Air Cadet League of Canada lost its original partner - the RCAF -- and found a new partnership with the Canadian Forces. In 1969, the Directorate of Cadets was formed at National Defence Headquarters to set policy and co-ordinate the three cadet movements. This office functioned under the Director General Reserves and Cadets. Two significant changes occurred. After several years of "unofficial" participation in squadron-operated "Girl Flights," the official participation of girls in the Air Cadets was approved by Parliament on 30 July, 1972. The Air Cadets blue uniform was changed to the 'unification' green in the 1970s. It then reverted back to the blue uniform in the 1990s.

During the 1960s, Air Cadet leaders faced challenges in revitalizing the movement and establishing credibility with young Canadians. Until unification, the RCAF operated a number of bases with an impressive variety of aircraft such as the Otter, Expeditor and Dakota to provide familiarization flying opportunities for Air Cadets. The situation changed drastically with the closing of bases following unification and the trend to larger, long-range aircraft which weren't as practical. There were no opportunities for Air Cadets to experience "the thrill of flight." In the summer of 1965, with a view to "put the air back into Air Cadets," the League embarked on an experimental gliding program. A glider procurement program was launched in 1967 and gliding became highly successful. It developed to the point where more than 50,000 cadet glider flights are conducted each year.

The air force set up five Regional Cadet Gliding Schools in Canada and more than 60 CFS (Cadet Flying Sites) to provide familiarization flying to local cadet squadrons. About 65 gliders and 35 tow planes are used across Canada for flight training during the summer camp season as well as the spring and fall. In Ontario, with operations based at Mountainview in Prince Edward County, the Air Cadet League owns one of the largest non-commercial flights in Canada: 22 active aircraft, plus four or five spares. In the Air Cadet paint scheme of yellow with blue trim, the two-seat Schweizer SGS 2-33 glider and the two-seat Bellanca Scout tow plane are a familiar sight in Ontario. The impressive Mountainview fleet is by far the largest glider school in Canada. In the Pacific Region, the 1950s-era Cessna L-19 Bird Dog was the tow plane for many years until it was replaced with a fleet of highly modified Cessna 182P Skylanes dubbed the "Pacific 182."



Cessna L-19 Towplane

Photo - Courtesy Quebec Provincial Committee

The sixth and final Cessna 182 was delivered in June, 2015, with a two-tone paint scheme of yellow on the top side and blue on the bottom side. Paint schemes had varied with mixed yellows and whites across the regions through the years, but all of the aircraft in Canada are to be standardized in the new yellow and blue.

The Air Cadet partnership with the RCAF remains strong today, with 12 Provincial Committees across Canada reporting to Ottawa and working with five Regional Cadet Support Units nation-wide. The federal government is reaffirming its commitment to Cadet programs, maintaining support at current levels. In a five-year initiative, the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Armed Forces plan to identify savings in overhead and administration and reinvest those resources in the community-level programs. DND/CAF will aim to increase participation, so that more young Canadians can benefit from the enriching Cadet experience. It will also enhance partnerships with the Cadet organization, other government departments, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. Programs will be improved to enhance the voices of Cadets and Junior Canadian Rangers (JCR) and their parents.



800 Squadron Band
Photo Courtesy - R. Winson

The first phase of renewal studied the command and control structure, with a new governance model within the military. The second phase, just started, covers uniform modifications among other things. The army and navy cadets already have field training uniforms and the Air Cadets will get one similar to that of the navy, basically a cargo pant with a light training shirt. Cadets can wear them when on field exercises or community events requiring cleanup. They are strictly a fatigue uniform and not a parade uniform. The new command structure, involving the National Cadet and JCR Support Group, was stood up 22 April, 2015. Brigadier-General Kelley Woiden was the first commander. The DND's commitment is generally to look after all of the training, uniforms and staff, while the Air Cadet League is responsible for the financial and administrative side.

As of May, 2015, Canada had 25,890 Air Cadets in 457 Squadrons (with 53,535 Cadets in all three services). Ontario, with 8,358 Air Cadets, had 32 per cent of the total, in 120 squadrons in the Central Region of Ontario. The average squadron size is 70 cadets. This does not include six squadrons based in the Ottawa Valley which belong to Eastern Region. Training from September to June covers many rewarding activities, including technical, instructor and survival training; biathlon; brass/reed, pipe band musician; physical/recreational/field training; military drill and ceremony. Other topics include discipline, leadership, healthy living, first aid, citizenship, community support, flying scholarship, effective speaking and debating. The cadets have really taken to debating. An Ontario-wide public debate is held at Mohawk College in April which Bill recommended.

Summer training camps are what Air Cadets strive for during the year. Junior and intermediate courses, running two and three weeks, are offered for cadets coming into camp for the first time. Courses include general training; basic aviation technology; fitness and sport; basic drill and ceremonial; aircrew survival; intro to space; technical training; and music/band – brass and reed, pipes and drums. Senior courses, for six weeks, occur in the fourth or fifth year of the program and are more extensive. They include the ultimate course of power pilot (seven weeks); and glider pilot. Cadets can achieve their licences on both courses. Other programs include drill and ceremonial instructor; aircraft maintenance and airport operations; advanced aerospace; survival instructor; air rifle marksmanship instructor; military band and pipe band advanced music course; international exchange (two to three weeks); and staff cadets. The Blackdown Summer Training Centre at CFB Borden was traditionally an army camp. It's now a tri-service camp and about half of those who attend are Air Cadets. A large graduation parade, involving more than 2,100 cadets, usually takes place in the third weekend of August and was also recommended by Bill.

About 10,000 Air Cadets, 38 per cent of the total, attend summer camp. The total includes 310 cadets in the Glider Scholarship; 255 in the Power Scholarship; 736 in Music; and 74 in the International Exchange Program. As many as 150 to 180 cadets from the three services participate in the exchange. In Ontario, the flying scholarship was offered this year through flying clubs in Windsor, London, Oshawa, Waterloo and Sudbury. Instead of the well-remembered “tent city,” the cadets at CFB Trenton now live in barracks. They also enjoy rides in the C-17 Globemaster III, the Airbus CC-150, and the Hercules. A basic aviation technology course is offered at Trenton, with maintenance and repairs taught on an old Cessna 150. They are also shown how to make an aircraft from sheet metal.

Scholarships are offered to assist cadets in post-secondary education, while awards are given to assist cadets in pursuing their interests. They are provided through established trust funds and donations from corporations and individuals. About \$77,800 was provided from the Air Cadet League of Canada, including 21 Flying Awards; nine Academic and Competition Awards; five Music Awards; and two University Scholarships. A number of sponsors contribute to the Flying Awards, encouraging cadets to find careers in military or civil aviation.

The Air Cadet League of Canada will celebrate its 75th anniversary in 2016, at all levels across Canada. It's an ideal opportunity to inform the public about the organization, which Bill described as “one of the best-kept secrets in Canada.” The commemoration started on Sept. 1, 2015, with the Air Cadets authorized to wear an anniversary pin on their uniform until Dec. 30, 2016. Other events include a competition for an Air Cadet anniversary poster and a cadet leadership symposium in Ottawa. A Charter Night Gala Celebration was held in the CASM at Ottawa on 21 Nov. In Ontario, a memorial plaque will honor all cadets who were lost, either as cadets or later in military service. It will be dedicated at Trenton in the first week of April.

All of these much-anticipated activities will recognize the heritage, leadership and partnerships of the Air Cadets, of which the organization is justly proud. As Bill noted, the goal is “to learn, to serve, to advance.” With its many outstanding achievements, the Air Cadet League of Canada has more than lived up to its goals. It continues to be invaluable in developing the disciplined strategic thinkers and leaders of tomorrow. Bill answered numerous questions. Chapter Volunteer Bob Winson thanked Bill, presented him with a gift, and added a cheque to the Air Cadets on behalf of the Chapter. Bill's presentation was especially enjoyable for Bob, who had been a Civilian Instructor (CI) for seven years with two air cadet squadrons in Mississauga. Many Chapter members have also been former air cadets, including Earl Barr, Gord McNulty and the late Ed Rice. Finally, our Chapter Treasurer, Paul Hayes, while in the air force served as Chief of Reserves and Cadets and later was a member of the Ontario Provincial Committee of the Air Cadet League of Canada.



Air Cadet Badge
Courtesy - The Air Cadet League of Canada