

# DISPERSALS

2TAF MEDIUM BOMBERS ASSOCIATION NEWSMAGAZINE

Aug 2018



## 9 RAF-Defining Places

Includes Dunsfold

## The Only WAAF On Ops

## A Spit Visits Home

## Trenton ANZAC Ceremony



## 2<sup>nd</sup> TACTICAL AIR FORCE MEDIUM BOMBERS ASSOCIATION

Incorporating  
88, 98, 107, 180, 226, 305, 320, & 342 Squadrons  
137 & 139 Wings, 2 Group RAF

### MBA Canada Executive

Chairman/Editor

**David Poissant**

1980 Imperial Way, #402, Burlington, ON L7L 0E7  
Telephone: 416-575-0184  
E-mail: david.poissant@sympatico.ca



Secretary/Treasurer

**Susan MacKenzie**

#2 - 14 Doon Drive, London, ON N5X 3P1  
Telephone: 519-312-8300  
E-mail: mackensu@gmail.com



Western Representative

**Lynda Lougheed**

PO Box 54 Spruce View, AB T0M 1V0  
Telephone: 403-728-2333  
E-mail: lougheedlynda61@gmail.com



Eastern Representative

**Darrell Bing**

75 Baroness Close, Hammond Plains, NS B4B 0B4  
Telephone: 902-463-7419  
E-mail: dbing@peakgroup.com



### MBA United Kingdom Executive

Secretary/Archivist

**Russell Legross**

15 Holland Park Dr, Hedworth Estate, Jarrow, Tyne & Wear NE32 4LL  
Telephone: 0191 4569840  
E-mail: rlegross@gmail.com

Treasurer

**Frank Perriam**

3a Farm Way, Worcester Park, Surrey KT4 8RU  
Telephone: 07587 366371  
E-mail: fperriam@live.com

Registrar

**John D. McDonald**

35 Mansted Gardens, Romford, Essex RM6 4ED  
Telephone: 07778405022

### MBA Executive - Australia

Secretary

**Tricia Williams**

PO Box 304, Brighton 3186, Australia  
Telephone: +61 422 581 028  
E-mail: elegantsol@yahoo.com.au

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*On our cover: Vintage Wings of Canada's magnificent Spitfire Mk IX takes to the sky after restoration in the likeness of 442 Squadron's Y2-K. Photo by Peter Handley (VWoC)*



## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES • AUGUST 2018

### CANADA'S ONLY FLYING SPITFIRE

To the beleaguered population of Britain during the early part of the Second World War, the Spitfire became the ultimate symbol of defiance and the lone British stand against the seemingly unstoppable German advance. Its heritage springs from a long line of float-equipped racing aircraft designed by the legendary R.J. Mitchell and built by Supermarine Aviation works, a division of Vickers. Widely considered the most beautiful aircraft design of its day and possibly of all time, the Spitfire's elegantly shaped "elliptical" wings, sleek and powerful lines and role in the Battle of Britain combined to cement its status as symbol of a nation's will to endure and ultimately triumph. This highly capable fighter was nimble and fast and was much loved by its pilots, most of whom were trained in Canada.

More than 22,000 'Spits' were built in nearly thirty variants including the 'Seafire' a carrier-based fighter of the Fleet Air Arm. The Spit is the only fighter of the Second World War that was in continuous production before, during and after the conflict. The Vintage Wings of Canada Spitfire is a Rolls-Royce Merlin-equipped Mk IX that is painted in tribute to Arnold Roseland, a Canadian who flew 442 Squadron's Y2-K aircraft more than 65 times before being shot down and killed in 1944 over France.

*The above description is from the Vintage Wings of Canada Website.*

See the article on page 12 of this issue for more on this gorgeous Spit.

I'm sure you'll also enjoy reading of the only WAAF to go on a wartime bombing raid (page 14).

And in this issue we remember Steve Stokl RCAF 180 Squadron Observer, who went to his Last Posting 16 April 2018.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DAVE'.

# LAST POST

## STEVE STOKL • OBSERVER • 180 SQUADRON



**Steven Anthony Stokl** passed away peacefully at St. Peter's Hospital (Hamilton, Ontario) on Monday, 16 April 2018 in his 96<sup>th</sup> year. He was predeceased by his loving wife Anne Josephine (Morgan) with whom he was married for 61 years. He is survived by his children Barb, Steve Jr (Lisa), Joe (Rita) and Monica (Kevin), 12 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren.

He was born in San Martin, Romania and came to Hamilton, Ontario as a young boy. After excelling in school and a love of playing baseball, he joined the RCAF in 1944. After completing training as an Observer (Navigator/Bomb Aimer) F/O Steve Stokl was posted from No. 2 General Service Unit to 180 Squadron

RAF at Melsbroek, Belgium on Monday, 19 Feb 45 along with fellow RCAF member and pilot F/O A.W. Smith.

Steve flew his first operation on 22 Feb 45 as part of *Operation Clarion*, a coordinated attack by RAF Bomber Command, 2<sup>nd</sup> TAF and 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> US Army Air Forces against 200 German communication points. His crewmates were P/O A.W. Smith (P), F/S J.K. Fairhurst (AG) and Sgt P.L. Morrison (AG). They flew 25 operations together until, on Wednesday, 28 Mar 45, in attack on German railway rolling stock at Engelskirchen, Germany, Steve was wounded in his right arm, ending his operational tour. The rest of the crew were uninjured.



Returning home to Hamilton, Steve was a co-owner of *Hamilton Machine Parts Ltd.* before working at *Stanton Pipe* and *Wright Abrasives*. He loved time at his cottage, was a proud member of Knights of Columbus and an active parishioner of St. John the Baptist Church.

A funeral mass for Steve was celebrated at St. John the Baptist 20 Apr 2018 before his interment at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Burlington, Ontario.

**WE WILL REMEMBER THEM**

# ANZAC DAY AT 8 WING RCAF TRENTON

Reprinted from 'The Maple Leaf' – Defence Stories  
Makala Chapman • Editor of 'Contact' 8 Wing's Newspaper



*Corporal Hayley Pitman RNZAF salutes after laying a wreath in front of a monument to those who lost their lives in Trenton while training under the BCATP during WWII. She was participating in ANZAC Day at St. George's cemetery in Trento 25 April 2018. Photo: Makala Chapman.*

The sacrifices made by members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) during the First World War continued to be remembered, more than a century later.

In addition to Remembrance Day, Anzac Day is a time for the people of Australia and New Zealand to remember the sacrifices made by veterans and current serving military members.

Commemorated each year on April 25, the day also pays tribute to the more than 8000 Australians and 2700 New Zealanders killed during the invasion of the Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915 during the First World War.

To pay their respects on Anzac Day, a modest crowd gathered at St. George's Cemetery in Trenton, Ontario, despite grey skies and sprinkles of rain. The momentous occasion was one of the first of its kind in the area, noted event organizer Chris Charland, a senior associate Air Force historian located at 22 Wing North Bay, Ontario.

“This started out just an idea and has blossomed into something special,” he explained. “I love both Australia and New Zealand and have always been impressed by their spirit and devotion to duty.” Being honoured for their service posthumously were **Flight Lieutenant**

**Dudley Tabor Everett** [03 May 43] and **Pilot Officer Alexander Robert Ross** [21 Mar 44] both Second World War members of the Royal Australian Air Force.

Mr. Charland explained that the two men had been killed in separate flying accidents during their time posted at 8 Wing Trenton—then known as RCAF Station Trenton—and laid to rest in St. George’s Cemetery. “These airmen are a long way from home,” he noted. “I don’t think anybody has really paid any tribute to them other than when they first had their funerals, so here we are.”

Flight Lieutenant Mark Anderson of the Royal Australian Air Force and Corporal Hayley Pitman of the Royal New Zealand Air Force, who are both military exchange members at 8 Wing Trenton, were in attendance.

“I’m very proud to be here,” said Corporal Pitman. “I didn’t realize there would be (commemoration) here and thought I was going to be missing out on Anzac Day.”

She went on to add that the memorial had been touching and hoped to one day have the opportunity to pay her respects to Canada’s fallen at a Remembrance Day ceremony.

As for why she chooses to observe Anzac Day each year, Corporal Pitman said it came down to wanting to honour her own family’s sacrifices during the war and to show her gratitude.

Flight Lieutenant Anderson’s grandfather served at Gallipoli during the First World War.

“The fact that I’ve been able to commemorate in another nation has meant a lot to me and my family,” he said. “It’s important to remember what’s happened in the past so you can look towards the future. Never forget what people have sacrificed to allow you to do what you do.”

He noted that Anzac Day traditions in Australia include participating in a march organized by the military, as well as attending a memorial service held at dawn.

As for next year’s Anzac Day, Mr. Charland said he hopes to return to St. George’s Cemetery for an even bigger ceremony.

## **Anzac Day and Gallipoli**

Anzac Day marks the anniversary of the first major military action fought by the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) during the First World War.

In 1915, ANZAC forces were part of an expedition to capture the Gallipoli peninsula to open the Dardanelles to allied navies. ANZAC forces landed on Gallipoli on April 25,

meeting fierce resistance from the defenders. The engagement quickly turned into a stalemate and dragged on for eight months. At the end of 1915, allied forces were forced to evacuate after sustaining heavy casualties; more than 8000 Australian soldiers and nearly 3000 New Zealand soldiers died.



*Colonel Shayne Elder (left), the commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force Aerospace Warfare Centre, and Flight Lieutenant Mark Anderson of the Royal Australian Air Force lay a wreath at St. George's Cemetery in Trenton on Anzac Day—April 25, 2018. photo: Makala Chapman*

Canadians did not participate in the Gallipoli campaign, but soldiers from Newfoundland, which was not yet part of Canada, were deployed. According to the “Heritage Newfoundland” website, 44 members of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment lost their lives and hundreds more were wounded or became ill.

Anzac Day is marked by commemorative services, often at dawn (the time of the original landing) and marches later in the day. Over the years, the day became a time to remember all those who fought and lost their lives in defence of their nations.

Adapted from content on the Australian War Memorial website.

**WE WILL REMEMBER THEM**

# ICE FISHING TALES OF A GUN PLUMBER

Donald Norrie • RCAF Association News • October 2013

I was a poor munitions and weapons technician on the strength of CEPE/AAED [*Central Experimental & Proving Establishment/Air Armament Evaluation Department*] at RCAF Station Cold Lake. I say "poor" because I had purchased a new mobile home and financed it through the only institution an airman in those days could get credit: the Industrial Acceptance Corporation (IAC).

The monthly payments turned out to be higher than contracted, and I was in a financial pickle. I could sell the unit or get a part-time job. I chose the latter and became a bartender in the officers' mess at 50 cents an hour.

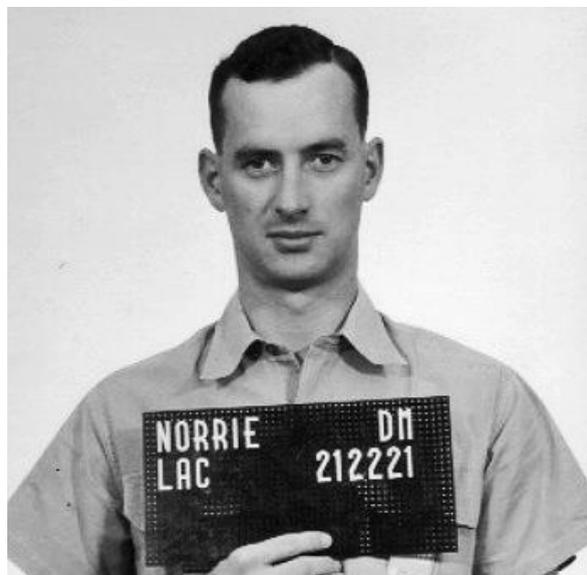
The officer's mess had only two full-time steward tradesmen to do whatever it was that stewards did in those days. The rest of the help were all "moonlighting" airmen like myself trying to make an extra buck for one reason or another.

Once the chief stewards had ascertained your honesty — that you didn't have your fingers in the cash drawer and you weren't sampling the alcoholic delights — you could reasonably work as many hours as you wished. We were cautioned, however, that whatever we heard or saw in the mess, stayed in the mess.

One day the chief steward asked if I would like to be the VIP bartender and explained that there was a VIP suite equipped with a bar in one of the officer's quarters behind the mess. I readily accepted the offer.

If my memory serves me right, this tale took place in January or February in 1961. Group Captain Mussells was the interim commanding officer, looking after things until the arrival of G/C Dudley L. MacWilliam, who had been attending NATO Staff College.

A group of approximately 10 USAF generals and "full bull" colonels had been at the station for a couple of days. The rumour was that they were there to examine the construction of arenas and curling rinks for inclusion on some of their bases. I found this hard to swallow, but I wasn't in the need-to-know bracket anyway.



I was just finishing my Saturday evening supper when the call came that my presence was immediately required in the VIP suite. On with my other uniform of black pants, white shirt and black bow tie. Then into my little blue Volkswagon beetle, which got me to the VIP suite in record time.

The scene at the VIP lounge was not a party-type gathering as I had envisioned, but rather a serious meeting was in progress. The group captain was talking and the USAF officers were listening intently. The evening dragged on, and it became obvious to me that no one was leaving until the group captain got the answers he wanted.

Finally at about 0130 hours G/C Mussells summoned his aide to his side. He advised the aide that he was to take the USAF VIPs ice fishing and asked if he know a good lake for that activity. I heard the aide say that the north end of Cold Lake was a good place, and he would take them there. With that, the aide disappeared.



My "big ears" couldn't help but listen, and I knew the ice fishing in Cold Lake was not good for many reasons, and I didn't want to see our American guests "skunked." So my "big mouth" opened and took the opportunity to tell the G/C that the aide should probably take the entourage to Primrose Lake where ice fishing was excellent and not to Cold Lake.

The CO asked me if I was an ice fisherman, to which I replied in the affirmative. “Good,” he said, “be at No. 7 hangar at 0700 hours tomorrow, the helicopter will be at your disposal to take our USAF friends wherever you want.”

Well, that certainly came as a surprise, and anyone that knew G/C Mussels was aware that “no” or “can't be done” was not in his vocabulary.

“Yes sir!” I said and was returning to the bar when he called out. “Lac Norrie,” the CO said while pointing his right index finger and making eye-to-eye contact, “remember one important thing, I want them to catch fish, do I make myself clear?”

“Yes sir: very clear sir.” He then dismissed me for the evening.

It was a short sleep, but I got to the hangar on time and with all the ice fishing equipment in my inventory. The weather was CAVU [*ceiling & visibility unlimited*], but very cold. The chopper — “old shaky,” a Sikorsky H-34, #9635 — was being pulled out of the hangar.



*I couldn't find a photo of #9635; this bird, just a digit away, crashed in 1959...Ed. Photo by Wings Palette*

I met the aide, and we went to talk with our pilot. The pilot was aware of our mission and informed us that we would go to his favourite lake — the best fishing anywhere. Eventually five or six of our visitors showed up and shortly we were “whopping” our way to May Lake.

Upon landing, the aide and I started making holes in the almost 2-foot thick ice where the pilot indicated was the best fishing area. No ice auger, just my trusty old 5-foot steel bar and round-mouth shovel. Lines were set, and the fish began biting immediately.

In all my days of fishing, I have never seen such big perch, pickerel or northern pike. I moved among the generals and colonels, removing the caught fish and rebaiting their lines.

One colonel was a friendly man. As we made small talk, he informed me he was stationed in Edmonton during World War II and worked on the aircraft part of the Lend-Lease

program, which was ferrying the Bell Airacobra fighters and other aircraft to Russia via Edmonton and Alaska.



*Russian Lend lease B-25C/D Mitchell arrives Alaska via Edmonton; summer '42. Photo: Warbirds Resource Group*

After an hour or so on the ice, we had our limit of fish and took the flight back to Cold Lake. I sat beside the friendly colonel who then told me he had married an Edmonton girl he met during the war. Since I was a prying Edmonton boy, I asked where his wife lived at the time and her maiden name. To my astonishment, I knew the entire family as I was their paperboy for about two years. What a small world.

On landing back at Cold Lake, the colonel thanked us all for our efforts, then departed with the others and a gunny sack full of frozen fish, never to be seen again.

Monday after work I was back at the bar tending to the gaggle of CF-104 pilots who had stopped in for a quick beer before heading home. Eventually G/C Mussells presented himself at the bar and wanted his usual drink — a martini made with Beefeater Gin.

I thought of mentioning to the G/C that we had a successful ice fishing trip with the USAF crowd, but decided not to broach the subject. Then the thought crossed my mind that maybe he had something to say to me about the adventure — like thanks for a job well done.

That never happened, and my section head didn't give me a day off for working Sunday. After all, it was at my moonlighting job. Oh well, it was still a great day. In the years to come, May Lake was designated as a trophy lake and still maintains that category to this day.

# SPITFIRE Y2K COMES HOME

Scott Stanfield • Comox Valley Record via RCAF Association

A rare Second World War aircraft returns to Comox this summer, coinciding with the launch of a legacy fund named after local legend Stocky Edwards.



*Spitfire Y2-K, refurbished at 19 Wing Comox, British Columbia, and in Gatineau, Québec, takes to the sky in an undated photograph. photo: Ken Lin, [www.pbase.com/klin](http://www.pbase.com/klin), via Comox Valley Record*

Efforts to re-construct Spitfire Y2-K began in Comox, British Columbia, nearly 20 years ago, but the plane has been at Vintage Wings Canada in Gatineau, Québec, for the past three years for wing assembly, finishing work and test flying. “She’s finally coming home for a visit,” says RCAF Colonel (retired) Terry Chester. “It’s the culmination of 18 years of work.”

Departing Gatineau in mid-July, the Spitfire will spend a week at AirVenture in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, for the 100th anniversary of the Royal Air Force. “It then begins a journey that has never, ever been taken by a Spitfire before—across Canada,” Colonel Chester says.

The aircraft will route through the U.S., come up through Winnipeg, Manitoba, and arrive in Comox in early August. “They don’t want to go over the top of the Great Lakes for very good reason,” he says. “This is a single engine [Second World War] airplane, and if their engine quits, they don’t have a place to land. So, they’re airport-hopping out here.”

Pilot Dave Hadfield, brother of astronaut Chris Hadfield, will fly Spitfire Y2-K, which will be here for the Homecoming Celebration and carry out a flypast of the Comox Marina on British Columbia Day on August 6, 2018.

A fundraising campaign has been initiated to cover the costs of flying the aircraft across Canada, which covers fuel, aircraft fluids, maintenance and logistics. The campaign includes a sponsorship program, sales of souvenir items, and a banquet at 19 Wing on August 8, 2018.

Wing Commander James “Stocky” Edwards, an Order of Canada recipient, will be the guest of honour at the banquet, which will seat 350 to 400 guests. Wing Commander Edwards, Canada’s highest-scoring Ace of the Second World War, fought with the Desert Air Force, in the Italian campaign and in northwest Europe.

The 97-year-old Comox resident will climb into the cockpit of the MK IX Roseland Spitfire. “He’s going to do a startup,” Colonel Chester says.

The banquet will also kick off the Stocky Edwards Legacy Fund, a bursary program to support young people pursuing careers in aviation.



*Y2-K readying for first post-restoration flight • Vintage Wings of Canada. photo: Peter Handley VWoC*

# THE ONLY WAAF TO GO ON A WARTIME BOMBING RAID

Bill Cumming • 'FlightLines' Canadian Warplane Heritage Newsletter

When CWH member Rowen Baker and I volunteered at the Canada 150 Celebrations' Tall Ships Gathering presented by the City of Hamilton on July 1 (2017) weekend, we met David Vollans.

Once David found out we were associated with the Canadian Warplane Heritage, he mentioned that his father served with a Lancaster squadron during WWII, and had a few interesting experiences during his time in the air force. We were curious about what he had to say, so we invited him to the Museum to see the Lancaster and tell us more about his father. Later that fall, David and his sister Linda met with us at the Museum; they told us of their father and one of the exploits in which he was involved during his service with 153 Squadron RAF.

James 'Jim' Vollan was born 29 Apr 1916 in Windsor, Ontario; when he was very young, his family moved to Galilee, a small community 35 miles south of Moosejaw, Saskatchewan. His parents divorced a few years later and Jim accompanied his father back to Ontario and a farm at Woodslee.

At the age of 26, Jim married his sweetheart, Florence; he was not particularly fond of life on the farm and, on 16 Jun 24, he enlisted into the RCAF. He completed Initial Training School at No. 16 ITS Toronto and then trained as an Air Bomber at No. 1 Bombing & gunnery School at Jarvis, Ontario. Then a six-week course at No. 1 Air Observer School at Malton and a graduation parade at Malton on 25 Jun 43 where he was promoted to Sergeant and awarded his Air Bomber's badge.

More training followed when Jim was transferred overseas to No. 18 Operational Training Unit (OTU) in England. Here he met the crew mates with whom he undertook training on Vickers Wellington heavy bombers in preparation for operations. Jim soon had his first taste of Avro Lancasters, briefly assigned to 300 Squadron RAF at Faldingworth in July '44. He was then posted to 153 Squadron at Scampton, just north of Lincoln, on 28 Nov 44 and



*Sgt James Vollans after earning his Bomb Aimer's badge.*

*Photo: Vollans family collection*

assigned to Lancaster B.1 serial NG500 squadron code P4-V (V-Victor), displaying 'Vicious Virgin' nose art.

Jim related a remarkable recollection in an interview that was published in an RAF Bomber Command newsletter:

The Pilot of my second crew, F/O Bob Purves RCAF, was dating Iris Price, a WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Force) while at the operational air base at Scampton. One night while they were on a date, Purves dared her to fly on a combat operation; she accepted the dare, saying if he would provide her with the proper flying equipment, she would go.



*Tour-expired crew of 'Vicious Virgin' sometime after the storied event. Back row, l-r., Sgt Junior 'Al' Hardiman, flight Engineer; W/O Jim 'Granny' Vollans, Bomb Aimer; F/S George Woolmer, Rear Gunner; unnamed ground crew member, F/O Bob Purves, Pilot; WAAF Iris Price; F/O Tommy Burke, Navigator; F/S Jim Story, Wireless Op; Sgt Jack Crowther, Mid Upper Gunner; unnamed Station Medical Officer; F/S in charge of maintenance. Front row: 7, all kneeling, are unnamed Ground Crew members.*

*Vollans family collection/153 Squadron Ass'n.*

So the next night operation, we were on. Purves secured the necessary flying equipment and placed it in the aircraft for Iris to put on before we took off for this mission to the Ruhr

[13 Mar 45 against the synthetic oil plant at Gelsenkirchen]. It was a night op which made the plan of smuggling Iris onto the plane easy to achieve.

Once on, she promptly donned the flying gear, chute and harness, ready for takeoff. On the way to the target there were a lot of searchlights and flak. At this stage she began feeling ill. We arrived over the target, the bombs were dropped and we turned for home, mission accomplished. She began to feel better. Then something happened we hadn't prepared for: she had to relive herself.

Purves gave her a paper bag we carried for air sickness and she went back in the fuselage. After some time passed, Purves, as he could not leave his station himself, sent the Flight Engineer to see why she was taking so long. He found her lying on the floor, anoxic from lack of oxygen. Her supply hose had become disconnected while she was struggling to partly undress and dress again as, in those days, flying clothes were not made to accommodate women. He immediately gave her oxygen from a tank he had with him and she gradually came around, but not completely, as the tow gunners had to help her off the plane and into the crew bus which was being driven by her friend who kept the secret.

The next day, Iris was not feeling well, and went to the doctor. He gave her a couple of days off, as he put her not feeling too well down to a touch of the flu.



*Jim Vollans (left) and Bob Purves as crewmates on 'Vicious Virgin'. Vollans family collection*

While all these problems were going on, I started to wonder if Iris had died, what we would have done. Would the whole crew be blamed or would it just be Purves? In any case, we

all would have been charged if it was found out by the RAF. If we had been shot down with Iris aboard, it could have been a political embarrassment to the allies. I must confess I had some evil thoughts of what to do with the body if Iris had died. Thank goodness she survived and my thoughts were never put to the test.

The incident was forgotten until many years later when Doris Davies, the crew truck driver who had covered for Iris and was in on the secret, brought it to light again in 1996. She approached Cilla Black, the host of 'Surprise, Surprise', a British light television program, with the story. Cilla was interested in including the story on one of her programs. Iris was contacted in New Zealand, and myself in London, to appear on her program in London England.

**DORIS DAVIES** wrote, in a letter to the 153 Squadron Association: "At the time of the event I was a crew bus driver on No. 153 Squadron based at Scampton. The girl involved was, and is today, a friend of mine named Iris Price. On the night of the trip I saw Iris at the dispersal and thought she had gone out on the bus with the crew to wave goodbye to her boyfriend Bob Purves, as she had done many times before. I did not see her again and assumed that she had gotten another lift or walked back to the control tower. However, when I went to collect the crew of V-Victor upon their return, I was amazed, when the plane door opened, to see Iris, semi-conscious, being supported by two crew members. I first gave this version of the story to the editor of the No. 153 Squadron Association Newsletter and it was immediately confirmed. This prompted me to get in touch with Iris, now living in New Zealand, in order to get her version...and here it is."



*Jim 'Granny' Vollans with Doris Davies (left) and Iris Price on the set of the Surprise, Surprise TV show; 23 April 1996. Vollans family collection.*

**IRIS PRICE** writes: "I can remember bob daring me to go on a mission with him, so being the daredevil that I was in those days, I agreed. It was a night operation, which made the plan easy to achieve. A friend stood in for me while I was gone. Bob got me a helmet,

mask, parachute and harness. I was in my Battle Dress, normal MT [*Motor Transport*] garb. We all took off for Germany, via France and Belgium. There were lots of searchlights and some flak. At this stage I was feeling sick. We arrived over the target, bombs were dropped and we turned for home. Mission accomplished, I calmed down a bit. Then it happened: I wanted to relive myself. This I managed to do, eventually, into a bag which was disposed of down the flare chute. However, in the process of partly undressing and struggling to dress again, I lost my oxygen supply and became anoxic. Fortunately the crew were checking on me and brought me to, but the feeling of sickness returned. The next day I reported to the SSQ [Station Sick Quarters] and the MO [Medical Officer] put my disposition down to a touch of the flu and I got two days off duty. At the time, neither I nor the crew members dared to tell anyone. Goodness knows what the consequences would have been! The whole business was an experience I shall never forget.”

Jim continues: After the show they had a small reception for us in one of the board rooms, to which my son David and daughter Linda were invited. Florence could not attend as she was ill; many pictures were taken. I was standing by myself when this young man came up to me and said “Jim, I am curious to know what you really would have done if Iris had died.” I jokingly replied “No problem, I would have dumped her in the North Sea on the way back to England to get rid of the evidence.” To my surprise he was a reporter and put this story in his paper in England.

After the war Jim found it difficult to readjust to life in Canada, but the family survived; Jim went to work at the Ford Motor Company of Canada and the Fredric & Stevens Company in sales.



*Jim Vollans with fellow veterans Jack Jacques, Robert Stot and Bill Roger at Brantford Airport with CWH Lancaster Sep 2009.*

*Vollans family collection.*

Jim Doris and Iris are all gone now, but their memory will live on in this story. As Jim said, “We were all young once.”

*Many thanks to David and Linda Vollans and the 153 Squadron Association for sharing details of this story.*

# 9 PLACES THAT TELL THE RAF STORY

Simon Hawkins • Historic England

On 01 April 2018 the Royal Air Force celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

The formation of a new and separate service was, at the time, a controversial decision and it reflected the growing role of airpower in warfare, and the need for a single command of air research, training, resources and operations.

Historic England has helped protect some of the structures that illustrate key achievements of the RAF during the twentieth century. Here we take a look at 9 of them:

## 1 • RAF Stow Maries, Essex

Towards the end of the First World War the newly formed RAF took over a number of airfields that had been used to protect London from the new threat of aerial attack from airships and Gotha bombers. RAF Stow Maries, is a well preserved example of this type of base, and illustrates the ‘high street’ layout before dispersal of buildings was identified as a key element in surviving aerial attack.



RAF Stow Maries @Mapio.net

The world’s first independent air force was founded by the first Chief of Staff, General Sir Hugh Trenchard, who concentrated upon developing its strategic role as an offensive bomber force. His primary considerations were in laying the foundations for a technology-

based service, through the training of officers and technicians. The RAF was conceived as a meritocracy and in 1944, the Halton Apprentice Scheme allowed any entrant the opportunity to develop a full career and possibly go on to become Chief of Staff.

## 2 • RAF Bicester, Oxfordshire

More than 100 air bases were built between 1923 and 1939. RAF Bicester, a Scheduled Monument, is one such airfield and is the most complete surviving bomber site from this period. The grass flying field still survives with its 1939 boundaries largely intact, bounded by a group of bomb stores from 1928-29 and airfield defences built in the early stages of the war. The remains include the listed hangars, and other the key structures within this military landscape

Over the last three years, Heritage at Risk funding has been provided by Historic England to help the Bicester Heritage Trust repair 8 defendable air-raid shelters and one gun emplacement.



*Defended Air-Raid Shelter at RAF Bicester; before and after repair. © Historic England/Bicester Heritage Trust*

## 3 • RAF Duxford, Cambridgeshire

The 38 listed buildings include a uniquely complete First World War technical group, in addition to technical and domestic buildings that are typical of the inter-war Expansion Period of the RAF.

Duxford played an important role in the Battle of Britain and provided fighter support for the American Eight Air Force daylight bombing raids.

#### 4 • RAF Cranwell, Lincolnshire

By 1933, training of RAF officers was established in a new purpose-built facility at RAF Cranwell, listed, which was designed by the Officer of Works architect J G West, FRIBA [Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects]. The monumental elevations and clock tower were intended to promote a sense of pride and history for the newly formed service.



#### 5 • RAF Biggin Hill, London

Perhaps the Second World War provided the greatest test for the independent air force. The fighter pens at Biggin Hill are of the early E-type design and recognised as being nationally rare. Biggin Hill's location south of London guaranteed its front line involvement in fighter operations throughout the Second World War, from the Battle of France to the support of daylight raids by Bomber Command. By the end of the war more enemy aircraft had been destroyed by squadrons based at Biggin Hill than any other airfield and it is probably the most famous of the Battle of Britain airfields.



*The iconic Spitfire operated from Biggin Hill during the Battle of Britain. IWM CH2929*

## 6 • Underground Operations Room at 11 Group HQ, London

The underground operations room at 11 Group Headquarters was built in 1938 and played a role of fundamental importance in the economic marshalling of air defence that sustained victory in the Battle of Britain and in other key actions of the Second World War.



## 7 • Building 58 at RAF Barnham, Suffolk

In the post-war age the RAF was responsible for delivering our nuclear deterrent. The atomic bomb store 'Building 58', at the former RAF Barnham, was built to house components of the 'Blue Danube' atomic bomb. These bombs were designed to be delivered by new and futuristic V bombers such as the Victor.

The Cuban missile crisis of 1962 took western forces to the brink of a nuclear conflict. The Thor missile site at RAF North Luffenham is a physical reminder of this tense period during which 59 of the 60 missiles were made ready to fire. The missiles were under a joint-key control by RAF and United States Air Force (USAF) officers.

## 8 • RAF Dunsfold, Surrey

Defence from nuclear attack was also a key requirement. Military planners forecast that our primary RAF bases would bear the brunt of an attack within four minutes of the start of a nuclear conflict. Aircraft such as the Hunter fighter were used by the RAF in a quick reaction air defence role, where crews would be airborne inside the four minute warning.



The V/STOL (Vertical Short Take Off and Landing) Harrier was designed to continue operating away from established airbases, after the first nuclear exchange. Both aircraft were developed at RAF Dunsfold, where the engine running pens and the VSTOL blast grid survive.

## 9 • The RAF Museum, London

It is fitting that on the centenary of the RAF's establishment, its place in military history is secured and represented by a dedicated museum. The museum fabric includes a pair of 1914 timber framed hangars with elliptical Belfast trusses and timber lattice supports.





180 Squadron RAF B-25 Mitchell EV-R serial no. FL-185 (USAAF 41-12653) photo: Laura Postaltrip Cidoncha