

Flypast V.40 N. 8

April 2006 Meeting

Topic: David Hornell's Victoria Cross / Production of the DVD

Speaker: Robert (Bob) Cole

Reporter: Gord McNulty

Edited by: Robert (Bob) Winson

Toronto Chapter President Howard Malone introduced **Robert (Bob) Cole**, a veteran CBC cameraman, and special guests from 442 David Hornell V.C Wing of the Air Force Association of Canada led by John Bamlett, Past President. Bob was born in 1935 in Long Branch about four miles west of where David Hornell lived. He is one of eight brothers and sisters, sometimes called the "Coley Gang". Bob's brother Syd, was among the crew of the PBV-5A Canso flown by Flight Lieutenant David Hornell, VC, when it was shot down in 1944. Bob has vivid memories of Syd's homecoming parade coming down Long Branch Avenue to the family home on Lake Promenade. Bob worked for CBC News for 37 years, including 10 years with black and white film, 13 years with colour film and then ENG (video). His biggest news story was covering the 1967 Six-Day War from Israel. His biggest sports stories were the 1972-Canada-Soviet series and the Muhammad Ali – George Chuvalo fight with his reporter, Howard Cosell. Bob is now retired and living in Milton, but he still has lots of energy to devote to projects in photo journalism.

Discussing how he became involved in producing the DVD, Bob recalled that on his brother Syd's 70th birthday in 1990, Syd played a 1946 CBC radio tape about the David Hornell story narrated by famous Canadian WWII Broadcaster, Lorne Greene. Then, in 2001, all of the family members from the Hornell crew were invited to the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum at Hamilton Airport to attend a ceremony dedicating the museum's Canso in memory of David Hornell. Bob was able to combine footage from the CBC tape and the CWH dedication, together with Internet research, to produce the DVD. On June 24, 1944, Flight Lieutenant David Hornell of No. 162 Squadron and his crew were just completing a 12hour patrol and were starting to return to their base at RAF Wick, Northern Scotland, when they spotted a submarine. They commenced an attack on German submarine **U-1225**.

Unfortunately, the submarine spotted the Canso and commenced accurate and destructive Flak fire. As described in the [Royal Canadian Air Force at War 1939 – 1945](#) by Larry Milberry and Hugh Halliday, the squadron was deadly to submarines breaking out into the Atlantic from Norwegian and German ports. However, it also sustained heavy casualties ----evident of German "fight on the surface" tactics, the Canso's vulnerability to flak and the "press on" determination of the Canadians flying with Coastal Command. Hornell exemplified their courage in continuing to attack U-1225 despite sustaining heavy flak damage which set the starboard engine

on fire, which subsequently fell off into the sea during the attack. After the depth charges were dropped from 50 feet, Hornell and his co-pilot Bernard Demony ditched the Canso into a heavy swell. The attack was a success and U-1225 sank with a total loss of life.

Hornell's crew abandoned the Canso and launched two dinghies. When one of the dinghies exploded like a pricked balloon, (Apparently from over-inflation) the eight crew members were left with just one dinghy-----designed to hold four men ----in the cold North Atlantic with 30--foot swells. After eight hours had passed, the crew managed to signal a Catalina, a Norwegian aircraft from 333 Squadron, as it flew over. F/O Graham Campbell had three flares. Nothing happened when he tried to fire the first two but fortunately the third one went off and the Catalina crew saw it. In the meantime, the RAF had become aware of a Canso down, and sent out Air Sea Rescue Launch HSL 2507, equipped with long range fuel tanks, from the Shetland islands in 12 foot waves and deteriorating weather. After one engine failed the crew continued on for 17 hours and completed the rescue mission of the survivors. The RAF rescue Launch was Captained by FL/Lt William Wakelin Garrett 50636 RAFR. He was later awarded the MBE for him and his crew's valiant effort to reach the downed fliers. However, the rescue effort proved to be a harrowing ordeal which lasted for 21 hours in all. Three crew members died, including Hornell, who was the last to perish. When a Sunderland flying boat from the Norwegian Air Force was finally able to drop a dinghy close enough to the crew, the rescue came too late for the gallant Hornell. He died in the RAF rescue launch, blinded and exhausted, in spite of four hours of artificial respiration. He was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his heroism in the attack and afterward. His was the first RCAF VC of the war. Many other richly deserved decorations were awarded for the events of June 24-25 1944. FO Campbell, for example, was awarded the DFC and Syd Cole was awarded a DFM. (Also see Appendix)

As part of his research, Bob Cole told how he located a person from the Norwegian 333 Squadron. He called a friend in Iceland, and after four months, he received an email from Norway informing him that there was one survivor from the squadron----and even better, he lived in Midland, Ontario. Bob contacted the airman, Rolf Hauge, and interviewed him. Bob also interviewed Graham Campbell, the last surviving member of the crew. Bob spent three years putting the documentary together. He showed two four-minute trailers from the DVD, which included excerpts from a film narrated by Lorne Greene and highlights from the Canso (The Mary K) dedication ceremony at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum. F/O Campbell, DFC, attended the ceremony as the sole survivor of the Hornell crew and enjoyed a flight in the Canso. Chapter President, Howard Malone, expressed his thanks to Bob for his informative talk and presented him with a copy of the book, *Flying Boats and Seaplanes*.

Appendix

Other members of the Hornell crew that were awarded decorations.

F/O **B.C. Demony**, Chatham ON, Co-Pilot **D.S.O.**

F/O **S.E. Matheson**, Nelson BC / Regina SK, Navigator **D.F.C.**

F/O **Graham Campbell**, Vancouver BC, Wireless Air Gunner **D.F.C.**

Flt. Sgt. **I.J. Bodnoff**, Ottawa ON, Air Gunner **D.F.M.**

Flt. Sgt. **S.R. Cole**, Toronto ON, Air Gunner **D.F.M.**

The two crew members that perished with David Hornell are listed below

Sgt. **D.S. Scott**, Almonte, ON, First Flight Engineer

Sgt. **Fernand St. Laurent**, Father Point QC, Second Flight Engineer

Source: CP / Ottawa



V.C. -Victoria Cross Medal



D.F.C. -Distinguished Flying Cross



D.S.O. - Distinguished Service Order



D.F.M. - Distinguished Flying Medal

Submarine U-1225 Specifications

Type -IXC/40 **Launched** -21 July 1943 **Commissioned** – 10 November 1943 **Sunk** – 24 June 1944 **Displacement** -**Surfaced** 1144t (1126 Long Tons) **Submerged** 1257t (1237 Long Tons) **Length**- 76.76m (251 ft. 10in) **Pressure Hull**- 58.75m (192 ft. 9in) **Beam**-6.86m (22 ft. 6in) **Pressure Hull** -4.44m 14 ft. 7 in) **Draught**- 4.67m (15 ft 4in) **Power** – Twin Surcharged four stroke 9 cylinder Diesel Engines Two electric motors producing 1000 shaft horsepower. Two shafts and two propellers.

Performance – Can operate at depths to 230m (750 ft.) **Speed** – **Surface** 18.3 kts. 21.1 mph **Submerged**- 7.3 kts 8.4 mph **Range**- Surfaced 13,850 nautical miles / 25, 650 kilometres / 15, 940 miles. **Weapons**- **Torpedo Tubes**- 4 Bow / 2 Stern **Torpedoes** 22 **Guns**- 1 Deck Naval Gun 10.5 cm / 4.13 in / 1 Flak Gun M42 3.7 cm / 1.5 in / Twin Anti-Aircraft Guns 2 cm / 0.79 in

Complement at the time of sinking -56

Source - Wikipedia



An Anti -Aircraft 3.7 cm 1.5 in. M42 Flak Gun Photo Courtesy - City of Liverpool -Birkenhead - Dario Rich



An illustration of a U-Boat similiar to U-1225 showing the Deck Gun and AA Machine Guns



Twin Anti-Aircraft 2 Cm. 0.79 in. C30 Machine Guns Photo Courtesy - City of Liverpool -Birkenhead - Dario Rich

Memorials to David Hornell V.C.