

# DISPERSALS

2TAF MEDIUM BOMBERS ASSOCIATION NEWSMAGAZINE

Nov 2019



At the going down of the sun  
And in the morning

**We Will Remember Them**





## 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

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*On our cover: Representatives of all eight squadrons of 137 & 139 Wings, 2 Group RAF*



## **CHAIRMAN'S NOTES • NOVEMBER 2019**

This issue is the last regularly scheduled Dispersals newsletter.

From this point forward we will see two or three Dispersals annually on an 'ad hoc' basis, as time and collected materials allow. We will continue to email 'Interim Updates' as items of interest to our members occur; please advise us should you see any appropriate items. Contact details are on the inside front cover.

2TAF MBA members in Canada currently receiving hard copies via Canada Post should ensure we have your email address on file so you receive future electronic (.pdf) copies; there will be *no further hard copies* except for Canadian Veteran members.

This issue's 'Last Post' is an interesting twist, remembering an airman and airwoman who served together at RAF Dunsfold and married after their service obligations were completed.

'A Long Way to the Front' is the bittersweet memory of a New Zealand Airman's circuitous training path that was softened by a particular happy period along the way.

'Looking Back on No. 34 OTU' gives a civilian's look at the history of the Pennfield Ridge training base through which a great many of our veterans passed on their way to 2<sup>nd</sup> TAF service.

**We Will Remember Them**

# LAST POST

**Cpl Constance D. Brooker • Logistics • RAF Stafford**

**F/O F.P. 'Freddy' Brooker • Air Gunner • 98 Squadron**



*Connie - 1944*

Constance Dorothy 'Connie' (Freeman) Brooker passed away 11 Sep 2019. She was predeceased by her husband Freddy Brooker on 12 Dec 2003. They had one child, Carole (Brooker) Jay, who supplied the information for this post.

Connie joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) during WWII and served as a Corporal in logistics for No. 16 Maintenance Unit at RAF Stafford for most of the war.

Freddy volunteered for the RAF and, after completing his Air Gunner training, was posted to 98 Squadron RAF at Foulsham in Jan '43 as a Sergeant. He flew his first op 01 Feb 43 with crewmates P/O R.F. 'Dicky' Martin, Pilot; Sgt J. Bishop, Observer; and Sgt C. Pollit, Wireless Op/Air Gunner. They would fly a complete tour, ending 02 Jan 44 at Dunsfold. Freddy was posted away to RAF Pembury for 'rest' and returned to Dunsfold as a Flight Sergeant to begin a 2<sup>nd</sup> tour. His crew was S/L H.R. 'Dickie' Leven, Pilot; F/L H.I. Nolan, Observer; and F/S H.A. Roby, Wop/AG. Their first operation was 05 Sep 44 and they would complete the war together.



*Freddy - 1943*

On 04 Nov 44 Freddy was commissioned a Warrant Officer and Connie, now part of Dunsfold's WAAF contingent, was assigned to show the new officer around. They were obviously mutually impressed, as they married 28 Sep 46, after completing their war service.

Connie and Freddy were keen on holidays, gardening and dancing. They were both members of 2TAF MBA; they had many happy holidays and reunions

with the Association and also enjoyed many holidays abroad as far afield as North America and New Zealand. After Freddie's passing in 2003, Connie went on several cruises with Carole and Phillip (daughter and son-in-law). She enjoyed her cruises and visited many countries. In addition to the usual Mediterranean she particularly liked her special Alpine Flower cruise to Norway and other Scandinavian countries plus St. Petersburg in Russia. On her 90th birthday she cruised around the UK, Ireland and France; people were amazed at her energy and couldn't believe her age.

She had a replacement hip at 82; and at 92 her knees began to trouble her. She had several falls and it became difficult to manage the bungalow and deal with all the chores. Her failing eyesight made it difficult to read so she relied more on the TV. Carole and Phillip helped as much as possible; in September 2018 Connie conceded that she needed to move to a Care home. She took time to settle and enjoyed Christmas 2018. She had a day at RHS Hyde Hall in June and enjoyed a garden party at the home on 2<sup>nd</sup> August. She slowly got frailer, but managed to celebrate her birthday on 31<sup>st</sup> August. Connie only took to her bed for the last four days; she was still very aware – her mind remained sharp as a pin; her short and long term memory was exceptional.



## **We Will Remember Them**



# A LONG WAY TO THE FRONT

David Poissant

107 Squadron Mosquito Pilot F/O Frank G.A. ‘Mac’ McJennett RNZAF was killed during a 23 Apr 44 night flying exercise.

Richard ‘Sandy’ Sanderson related the incident in his memoirs ‘Sandy’s War’ in our Nov 2016 issue. A few months later New Zealander Jan Cameron, Frank McJennett’s 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin, Googled his name while looking for information on him and our Dispersals came up. In an email, she told me: *“Frank was my father’s cousin and no one alive now knows anything about his war service, other than that he was killed in Britain. I have visited his grave at Brookwood...I would cherish any information that can be given to me about him, what sort of bloke he was or his war record...I understand from newspapers that Frank had been in Britain since 1941 but don’t know where he was or what service he saw prior to 1944.”*



*Frank McJennett while  
in training with RNZAF  
Jan Cameron photo*

Sandy didn’t know Frank personally, so I gave Jan details on how to get her cousin’s RNZAF records from the New Zealand Defence Force. She did that and forwarded copies to me to assist her in assembling Frank’s record.

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Frank George Andrew McJennett was born in Wellington, on the South Island of New Zealand, in 1922; the only son of Andrew and Frances Evelyn (McWhirter) McJennett. After secondary education at Wellington College he was employed by Selfridges (NZ) and, as part time staff, at the Wellington Fire Brigade. He enlisted 7 May 40 at RNZAF Levin and was attached to the Fire Section for ten months before remustering to aircrew.

He reported to RNZAF **Initial Training Wing**, Levin 02 Mar 41; then to **No. 2 Elementary Flying Training School**, New Plymouth 12 Apr 41 and **No. 3 Service Flying Training School**, Ohakea 24 May 41 where he trained on Hawker Hinds and Airspeed Oxfords. On 16 Apr 41 he was awarded his flying Badge and was promoted to Sergeant. Frank's intermediate Ground Training examination here saw him placed 30<sup>th</sup> in a class of 33. His results were: Armament (85%), Airmanship (72%) Maintenance (70%) and Signals (26%). His instructor was unhappy and noted "*Results disappointing; he should concentrate more on theoretical subjects.*" Frank rewrote the Signals test and raised his mark 30 points.

He embarked for the UK 31 Aug 41 and arrived 19 Oct 41 at **No. 3 Personnel Reception Centre (PRC)** in Bournemouth, Hampshire on the south coast of England, where he would spend just four weeks before his 22 Nov 41 move to **No. 9 Service Flying Training School (SFTS)** at RAF Hullavington, Wiltshire in Southern England just west of the border with Wales. Here he trained on Miles Master aircraft that would have been a 'step up' from his Hawker Hinds training in New Zealand; the beginning of a conversion to front line aircraft.



*Miles Master aircraft used for training* photo: ww2aircraft.net

09 Mar 42 saw Frank move to **No. 1 Anti-Aircraft Co-operation Unit (AACU)** at RAF Towyn, Gwynedd in Wales. He piloted Hawker Henley aircraft, towing target drogues for anti-aircraft gun crew trainees. This posting was probably a ‘place holder’ until a spot in an Operational Training Unit opened up; which happened 22 Sep 42: **No. 57 Operational Training Unit (OTU)**, RAF Hawarden, Flintshire a bit south of Liverpool and just inside Northwest Wales. OTUs were for aircrew conversion to aircraft types they might use in battle. In this posting, Frank would have trained on the Vickers Supermarine Spitfire, Hawker Hurricane and Miles Master.



*Hawker Henley target tug. Note the ‘windmill’ winch used to reel in target drogues.  
BAE Systems photo*

During his training in the UK, Frank met and became engaged to Miss Ann Francis of Tenby, Wales. We don’t know how and where they met, but it seems logical that it would have been during his tenures at RAF Hullavington, RAF Towyn and RAF Hawarden, all within a reasonable travelling distance of Ann’s home in Tenby, on the south coast of Wales. Adding credence to that assumption is the fact that during those twelve months Frank was twice

reprimanded for being ‘Absent Without Leave’. Ann may have worked at one of those RAF bases; or they may have met at a local dance, or even at church.

Frank’s RAF personnel records were edited during that time, listing Ann’s Father, Mr. W.G. Francis, as a person, in addition to his own Father, “to be notified in case of casualty.”

07 Nov 42: **RAF Brighton, Aircrew Disposal Wing (ACDW)** in East Sussex, where he would have been put up in the Metropole Hotel for two weeks until a 22 Nov 42 to **No. 12 Pilots Advanced Flying Unit ((P) AFU)** at RAF Hixon, Staffordshire for advanced training in single-seat front line aircraft (Hawker Hurricanes). While at RAF Hixon, Frank was promoted to Flight Sergeant (01 Dec 42).



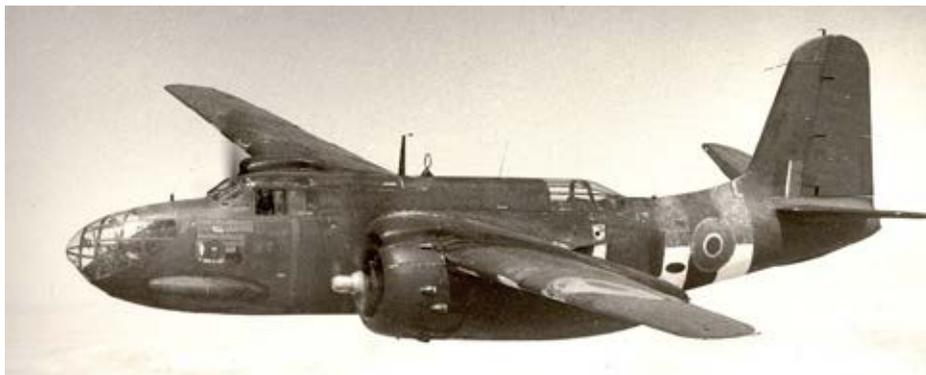
*Hawker Hurricane*      *Wikipedia photo*

On 22 Dec 42 he was posted to **No 14 (P) AFU** at RAF Ossington, Nottinghamshire for further advanced training.

Aircraft used at Ossington included Airspeed Oxfords and Curtis P-40 Tomahawks; we know that Frank eventually went to a Mosquito squadron, so he likely trained on Oxfords here, as they were twin-engined. In February of ’44 he completed a beam approach (blind, instrument landing) course at 1520 Flight at Home-on-Spalding Yorkshire.

Finmere, Buckinghamshire and **No. 13 Operational Training Unit (OTU)** was his next stop, 06 Apr 43. Well-known to most 2 Group, 2 TAF veterans, as a great many went through conversion to Bostons, Mitchells or Mosquitos here. Frank converted to Blenheims and then to Douglas Boston IIIs here, further evidenced by his 28 July 43 assignment to **No. 307 Ferry Training**

**Unit (FTU).** Co-located with 13 OTU at Finmere, 307 FTU was tasked with converting Blenheim pilots to Bostons and Havocs for their delivery to North Africa. Frank most likely served as an instructor for those pilots.



*Douglas A-20 'Boston' of 88 Squadron RAF photo: Carl Vincent*

As of 22 Aug 43 he was back at **13 OTU** 'Awaiting Disposition' while instructing and undergoing more training which finally included his conversion to the de Havilland DH98 Mosquito. During this time he was promoted to Pilot Officer (27 Nov 43).

The day Frank had anticipated for three years finally came: 15 Feb 44. He was posted to **107 Squadron RAF** at RAF Lasham, Hampshire and would soon be flying Mosquitos on operations!



*'Bombing up' a de Havilland Mosquito D. Poissant collection*

The RAF recognized potential in Frank, so he and his navigator, F/O Owen Edward Parry Newcater RAFVR, were first sent on a 2 Group Leadership course at RAF Swanton Morely, Norfolk 17 thru 25 Mar 44. After their return to the Squadron, they were still undergoing familiarization and check flights, etc. when, on the night of 22/23 Apr 44, they crashed during a night flying program. They had hit a tree shortly after take-off.

From the 107 Squadron April, 1944 Summary:

*“OTHER FLYING: A full night flying program was carried out by the crews not on the Battle Order. At 01.15 “X” [Mosquito OM-X] P/O McJennett and F/O Newcater, crashed 4½ miles west of the aerodrome and both members of the crew were killed instantly. A most unfortunate loss of a crew, who although recent arrivals, had already become a popular and valued addition to our strength.”*

Proceedings of RNZAF Court of Enquiry; Conclusions:

*The Mosquito Frank was piloting, OM-X serial HX854, “had just previously completed a night cross country flight...was seen to use a landing light while taxiing to the take-off position [not standard procedure]...took off and climbed normally to about 200 feet with his landing light still burning. He then proceeded to lose height, probably caused by attempting to extinguish the light while unfamiliar with the position and operation of the switch. Since the aircraft struck the tree with the port tailplane and cleared it with the main plane, we conclude he was pulling up the airplane viciously. The aircraft then cleared a line of trees of the same height as the tree he struck and 170 yards from it, before coming down steeply and crashing 80 yards further on. There is evidence that the aircraft stalled, dropping its starboard wing and swinging through 90° of starboard before hitting the ground. The aircraft then exploded and a small fire ensued.”*

Also part of that conclusion is the statement *“That more attention be paid to experience both day and especially night of pilots before they are posted to operational Squadrons.”*

Frank, 21 years of age and Owen, 36 years and the father of two girls, had not yet flown on operations. They were ‘Killed on Active Service’ and buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery in Surrey, England.

Frank’s father, Andrew, received a wonderfully empathetic letter of condolence from W/C Michael E. Pollard of 107 Squadron RAF in which he was very complimentary of Frank, referring to him as ‘Mac’ and promising *“...we shall harden our hearts and make the enemy pay for his sacrifice, for his death in preparing himself to fight the better is as much the responsibility of the German as if he were shot down over the other side. We shall not forget.”*

Frank’s final Air Force pay was forwarded to his father, Andrew in New Zealand. All his personal effects, including his bicycle, were delivered to his fiancée Ann in Tenby, Wales.

We know precious little of Ann; what we do know is thanks to Jan Cameron’s sleuthing on the internet. Through genealogical records, she discovered that Ann did marry and have a family. Jan’s further searching of the internet found Ann’s grandson in a responsible position in London business; he was most cooperative upon contact, advising Jan that the family was aware of Ann’s engagement with Frank, that she thought fondly of him and she recalled them meeting at church. Although Jan didn’t want to press further, he said he would try, when the opportunity presented itself, to see if his grandmother might relate a few more details of those days.



*Frank McJennett’s grave at Brookwood Jan Cameron photo*

# RAF AIRFIELD DEFENSE

Nick Catford • 1998

During the summer of 1940 following an airborne attack on Crete by German forces, Britain's airfields were considered to be exposed to a risk of enemy bombing or a paratroop attack. Until then, airfields had only been lightly defended with a few Lewis anti-aircraft guns scattered around the perimeter.

To counter this threat, new defences were constructed, including slit trenches, pillboxes, more light anti-aircraft guns and barbed wire. Two new types of defence structure also appeared, specifically designed for airfields. One was the Pickett-Hamilton Fort, a retracting hydraulically operated pillbox sited close to runways. This remained flush with the ground to allow normal operation of the airfield but during attack, could be raised to permit cross fire.



*Hamilton Pickett Fort in raised and lowered positions. RAF photos by F/O G. Woodbine*

The other new structure was the battle headquarters (HQ), designed to be occupied only if the airfield came under attack and would have been used to co-ordinate the defence of the airfield. They were generally located at the highest point of the airfield, sometimes outside the perimeter. Some were located close to the control tower and a few were linked to the control tower by a tunnel. There were three types; the **first** design is only seen at fighter stations protecting London. This consisted of a pillbox with two rooms below it, one above the other; the upper room being entered down a flight of steps

from the surface. The **second** design replaced it and was confined to the other (non-permanent) fighter stations; this was smaller and was entered through a hatch. The **third** and most common was originally erected at bomber stations but appears to have been adopted by all RAF Commands sometime after 1942.

They were a network of five underground rooms entered by steps at one end leading into a lobby. Straight ahead was a latrine and to the left, the office; passing through the office was a door in front to the sleeping quarters and a door to the right into mess room. A door on the right hand corner of the mess room led to the emergency escape ladder and from the bottom of the ladder were three steps up to an observation cupola, built 3 feet higher than the other rooms. The cupola was 6' square and projected three feet above the ground with a thick re-enforced roof; a 2" wide observation slit ran all around to allow the Defence Officer a 360° view.

The battle HQ at Dunsfold is the third type and is semi-sunken on a high point overlooking the south side of the airfield, alongside a public footpath outside the perimeter fence. It is heavily overgrown but the cupola is visible from the footpath [as of 1998]. The access stairway had been backfilled but has been partially dug out; it is possible to squeeze into the lobby. Internally the structure is clean and dry although stripped of any original fittings.



*Dunsfold Battle HQ. Left photo: entrance is beneath the tree on the right.  
Right photo: interior of the Battle HQ. Both photos by Nick Catford*

# LOOKING BACK ON No. 34 OTU

'Part of VE Day' by Nellie Allen (2005) • via Chris Larsen

They came from as far away as Australia and New Zealand, young men eager to fight the Second Great War from the air. They landed in a small New Brunswick community called Pennfield Ridge, a flat stretch of highway in the midst of blueberry fields, sixty kilometers southwest of Saint John.

Here they would spend several months training and learning to work together as air crews; crews that would be assigned to fight the war in Europe and the Middle East. They would mix with the people of the small communities surrounding Pennfield.



*1941 Air Navigators Course • Pennfield Ridge, NB Pennfield Parish MHS photo*

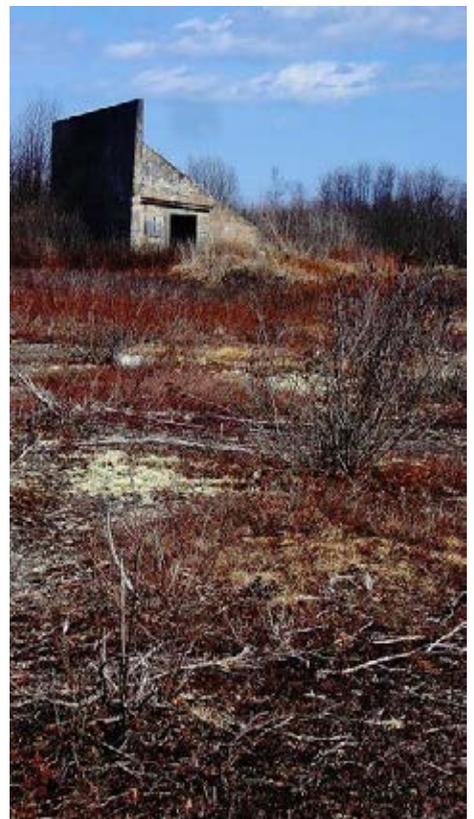
They would play here; some would fall in love, marry and make their home here; some would take new wives back to their country; some would die and be buried here.

They were young. Very young. In their late teens and early twenties. With the increasing need for aircrew, the age limits were adjusted to include those from 17 ½ years to 33 years. Susan, in Australia, remembers her 17-year-old brother going off to an unknown destination. He was one of those who died here.

During the 1930s Canada and Britain spent much time in political negotiations for training pilots and aircrew for the Royal Air Force (RAF). In 1939, at the beginning of war, they finally came to an agreement and on December 17 Canada, Britain, Australia and New Zealand signed an agreement, known in Canada as the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP).

The start of WWII made the need to train pilots and aircrew even more urgent. Canada was the ideal location as it was away from the war in Europe and close to the resources available in the United States. Pennfield Ridge was one of 151 training schools located across Canada, and one of three in New Brunswick. Today there is little to remind us of what was there. The tarmac is there but alders, grass and blueberry bushes have grown up around it. All you can see as you drive by is a strange chunk of concrete rising above the bushes and three two story houses on the opposite side of the road.

Sixty years later, who remembers? There are few left to tell the stories. I have a very limited recollection of the Air Base. I remember the bus from Saint John stopping there, when we were on our way home from visiting my sailor father when his ship was in port. I remember the airman who helped my grandmother down from the St. George bus. I hit him and told him to leave my Mammy alone and he called me Spitfire. I remember the stories of the murder in our village.



*Gun butt (back stop) on the 25-yard pistol practice range  
C. Larsen photo*

For some strange reason, I still remember every time I pass the site. I see the three houses that I always thought were homes for the base commanders. Now I have learned they were for Department of Transport personnel associated with the base. There is the huge concrete “thing” rising out of the ground. I have learned it was where the gunners conducted their practice. Thousands of people drive by every day and have no idea of the significance of this location.



*“Thousands of people drive by every day...” Sheri Larsen photo*

Sadly, little is written about the Pennfield base. Most books and articles are about the bases in the West or Ontario. One author referred to Pennfield Ridge as the least successful of the transplanted Operational Training Units (OTUs). Weather, generally fog, was often referred to as a problem, closing the base for days or weeks.

## THE BEGINNING

In November of 1940, a half million-dollar contract was awarded to build the No.2 Air Navigation School at Pennfield Ridge. To the many small communities in the area, still struggling out of the depression, this had an economic impact they could never have imagined.



*Aircraft Hangar (1 of 5) Construction Pennfield Parish MHS photo*

The base opened with little fanfare in the summer of 1941. It was expected that advance training for air observers and navigators would be the focus of the base. After the fall of France this changed and, in 1942, the British decided to move four of their OTUs to the safety of Canada. Number 34 OTU was moved from Greenock, Scotland to Pennfield Ridge. Here men were put together as four man crews and trained for operations over Europe and the Middle East.

The RCAF and the RAF shared responsibility for operation of the base and training school. The British arrived with their families and searched out accommodations in small communities near the base. As Maynard McKay remembers it, "Every cottage and room for miles up and down the coast became home for these people. Families of three were sometimes crowded into the spare room of a local home. Pennfield Ridge went from a small community of 188 people in 1939 to approximately 5000 by 1942." The population on the airbase was greater than all the surrounding communities put together.

McKay also remembers, "The British brought their lorries with them. The steering wheel was on the wrong side and they were not used to driving on the ice we had. They were sliding all over the place and into the ditch. They had to switch over to our type of vehicles."

The British also brought their "Batmen". Roy Swanston was one of them and he still lives at Pennfield. Their time at the Base was spent serving the British officers. They pressed uniforms, polished shoes, sewed on badges, made beds and carried out a host of duties required to keep the officers in the manner to which they were accustomed.

The base was a complete community with a hospital, theatre, dance hall, sports facilities and accommodations for thousands of trainees. It straddled the number one highway, with most buildings being on the north side. Private businesses expanded to meet their personal needs. Cottages were built to accommodate those operating the school. Three restaurants were located on the south side of the road. The bus from Saint John to St. Stephen stopped there. "Yes, there was lots of money around," said Maynard MacKay, "but there was rationing and very little that the locals could spend it on."



*Unidentified RAF personnel  
Pennfield Parish MHS photo*

The base put on parties for the school kids; there was a Santa Claus, parades and ice cream – a treat not widely available off the base. Local theatres, dance halls and social clubs also entertained the staff and trainees. Some met the woman they would marry.

One meeting was not so pleasant. A young RAF Sgt. was accused of murder in the death of a young woman from Black's Harbour. He was tried and the jury found him guilty. He was the last person to be hung in Charlotte County. It is said that his ghost still haunts the St. Andrews Courthouse.

Many of those who married and stayed here are no longer around to tell the stories. Two charming men in their eighties shared theirs with me. Roy Swanston was a Batman, from Lincoln, who met the love of his life and came back to stay. Across the room of a dance hall, Canadian Pilot John Morden spotted the woman who would be his wife for 60 years.

## TRAINING

The BCATP united thousands from Commonwealth Countries, as well as Free French, Polish, Italian, Norwegian, Belgian and Dutch. They were trained as aircrews and then sent to Britain to be part of the bombing raids on Europe.

John Morden, a Canadian pilot serving with the RAF, was returned from



active duty in Egypt to become an instructor at Pennfield. Men arrived from training facilities around the country and formed into crews consisting of Pilot, Navigator, Wireless Operator and Air Gunner. As Morden put it, "This was not done scientifically. They were lined up, told to meet each other and decide who they wanted to fly with." The crews spent 12

*'Crewed up' at 34 OTU – Nov '43 Peter Ryan collection*

weeks training together then shipped out to make room for a new group.

Crews practiced their flying and navigating skills by doing "cross-country", flights over New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Bombing practice was conducted on an island in Lake Utopia and over the Bay of Fundy. A "crash boat", manned by air force personnel, was kept at Black's Harbour. They had the task of rescuing downed flyers from the Bay.

There were crashes in the bay, on the base, in the hills of Charlotte County and Nova Scotia. Records at the BCATP Museum, in Brandon Manitoba, indicate 35 men died while assigned to No.34 OTU at Pennfield. Some were never found but their names are inscribed on the Ottawa War Memorial. Some were returned home. Two RAF men and one Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) man are buried in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia where there was a gunnery and bombing school.



*Ventura crash on No. 34 OTU George V. Smith (RAAF) photo*

Ten airmen are buried in the Rural Cemetery in St. George, New Brunswick. Headstones from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission mark the sites of these men: one RCAF, two RAAF, four RAF and three RNZAF.

Sgt. Evan Williams RAAF, is remembered by his sister in Australia, the last remaining member of his family. When she received the photos I sent she shared his story with her daughter. She remembers a 17-year-old brother gone off to war. His letters home were general and censored so his location was never known until his parents received a letter reporting him missing in a crash over New Brunswick. He and his crewmates were found six months later, near Minto, N.B.

The Canadian member was returned home and Pilot Officer N. C. Harris RAF, Sgt. Donald Stuart Bates RNZAF, age 21 and Williams are buried here. Bates had been in Pennfield for only a few weeks. The families of these young men connected and corresponded for a while.

Pilot Officer Geoffrey Norriss, RNZAF, had been an active member of his community and a committed volunteer with the Boy Scout movement. He wanted to be a pilot and at first they turned him down because of his age (33) and in spite of his high performance marks. He trained for all positions while in Canada and was commissioned as a Pilot Officer Navigator, November 20, 1942. On January 23, 1943, while serving as navigator, his plane crashed near St. Stephen. He was 37 years old and left behind a wife and son in New Zealand. He and one of the two Canadians, PO Bayden Willams RCAF, of Calgary also rest here.

Sgt. Gerald St. George Putt RNZAF was 23 years old when his plane crashed while trying an emergency landing after take-off at the Base. He had arrived in Canada in February 1942 and died November 22, 1942. He and the other crewmember, Sgt. D. Smith RAF are buried in St. George.

Information about Rogers RAAF and Senciall RAF has not been readily available. Rogers died at age 21, one year after enlisting.

St. George Legion, Branch #40 of the Royal Canadian Legion, has installed flags at the cemetery and honours the memory of these ten men. On Remembrance Day, a small Canadian flag flew from each grave, three flags on the main poles flew at half-mast and a wreath was placed in remembrance of them.

VE Day, May 8, 1945 was possible because of the commitment of these young men and others, like them, who passed through our training schools. Winston Churchill is said to have referred to the BCATP as Canada's greatest contribution to the Allied victory and a letter from US President Franklin D. Roosevelt described Canada's role as the "aerodrome of democracy."

At the end of the war, the buildings were dismantled and sold. The tarmac and the hangars remained for a number of years. RCAF Heavy transport flew out of here for a few years. Trans Canada Airlines, precursor to Air Canada, used the airport until they moved to Saint John in the 1950s. After the hangars were

gone, the tarmac was used for car racing and now has come to an ignominious end as a place for drying seaweed.

There is no memorial or sign indicating that people lived and died there. There is nothing to suggest the importance of those blueberry fields relative to the winning of WWII.

The morning after my visit to the site was clear and crisp. As I packed up my car in the darkness at Deadman's Harbour, I could see the lights of Eastport, Maine, twinkling, miles away across the bay. There was a sliver of a moon in the cloudless sky - a perfect morning. Minutes later I was driving across Pennfield Ridge. There was none of the fog that usually blankets the area. I thought of those young men who bravely faced fog, snow and wind as they prepared for their 'fight for democracy'. I said to them, "You would love it today. It's a perfect day for flying, boys."



*Final class at No. 34 OTU • 1945*



*David J. Youngdahl*