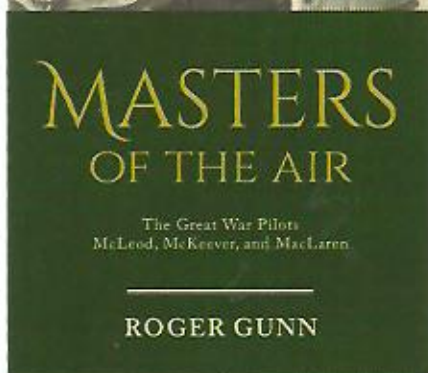


# Masters of the Air: The Great War Pilots McLeod, McKeever and MacLaren

Roger Gunn

Much has been written about Billy Bishop, the highest-scoring Canadian pilot in the First World War, and there are some books on William Barker and Raymond Collishaw, two of the other famed Canadian pilots of the war, but none is devoted to three lesser-known Canadian pilots: Alan McLeod, Andrew McKeever, and Donald MacLaren. They were distinctively different from each other. So too were the machines they flew, and their respective roles in the war.

Alan McLeod, from Stonewall Manitoba, Andrew McKeever, from Listowel, Ontario and Donald MacLaren, originally from Calgary, Alberta had incredible skills and ability in the air. Each are distinctively different from the other in personality, in the planes they flew and in their contribution to the war effort. They are brought to life in this book. It explains their development as pilots, their combats in the air, and near-death experiences.



The actions of McLeod, McKeever and MacLaren should be better known to Canadians and lovers of aviation history. We, as a people, do not celebrate or know much about our history and the important personages within it. *Masters of the Air: The Great War Pilots McLeod, McKeever and MacLaren* (Dundurn 2019) gives the reader an appreciation of what these three pilots did and the courage they exhibited in the skies over the Western Front in World War One.

Alan McLeod was a pilot in No. 2 Squadron and flew an Armstrong Whitworth F.K.8 on reconnaissance missions over the front lines. He wrote many letters home to his family describing life in the squadron and his experiences flying, many of which are quoted in the book. He won the Victoria Cross as a result of his bravery, having survived being shot down and having saved the life of his



A.E. McKeever climbing into a captured Fokker DVII  
(Library and Archives Canada)

observer. McLeod was the youngest Canadian to be awarded a VC and one of only three Canadian VC recipients from the Royal Flying Corps.

Andrew McKeever was king of the two-seaters.

Flying a Bristol Fighter in No. 11 Squadron, he shot down more enemy aeroplanes than any other two-seater pilot in the war. His combats are described in the book, as is his leadership role in the formation of the Canadian Air Force in late 1918 and 1919.

Donald MacLaren flew a Sopwith Camel as part of No. 46 Squadron from December 1917 to October 1918. In that time, he was victorious over forty-eight enemy machines and six German balloons for a total of fifty-four victories. Many of his aerial combats are described in detail, showing his marksmanship and flying ability. MacLaren was also instrumental in establishing civilian airlines in Canada after the war. He was a pioneer in this endeavor.

They answered the call to go to war like many thousand others and went overseas to fight for

the British Empire. These three men achieved greatness in the air when aviation was in its infancy. *Masters of the Air* is a fascinating read, one that aviation buffs and lovers of history alike will enjoy. Roger Gunn's first book, *Raymond Collishaw and the Black Flight* is also published by Dundurn.

*Masters of the Air* is available at all major bookstores or online through [Amazon.ca](https://www.amazon.ca) or [Indigo.ca](https://www.indigo.ca).

Both Alan McLeod and Donald MacLaren are both inducted members of Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame, McLeod being inducted in 1974 and MacLaren in 1977.



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