

Spring 2018

The Tribute

An Air Force Museum Society of Alberta publication



Dave Lowery photo

Chair report

Let me start this report with a word of thanks for all of those we team with in our day-to-day activities. From our volunteers, to the staff at TMM, to our contractors and network of

RCAF Museums across Canada; we have the privilege of working with enthusiastic people who share our passion for the RCAF and for Canada. Thank you one and all. It is a pleasure and honour to be on the same team.

In January the 11 RCAF museums gathered in the RCAF Aerospace Warfare Centre at 8 Wing Trenton. Our goal was to participate in the work to update the RCAF History and Heritage Programme (H&H). For three days we participated in briefings and discussions on the role RCAF museums could play and gave our feedback on the best use of the RCAF Museum Enterprise. It was very empowering to see how the RCAF plans to integrate history and heritage into the RCAF's core business. Museums have a role to play in the development and implementation of a programme that will capture, preserve, promote and operationalize RCAF history and heritage.

For RCAF museums this is the first step to see how we can best help to meet the objectives of:

- Creating a culture of preservation
- Operationalizing history to support airpower development and
- Honouring and showcasing RCAF H&H

This gathering showed clearly that each of the museums has unique characteristics, however, we all share a desire to work together to achieve

the higher goals. There will be much more to come but the RCAF Museum Enterprise is off to a great start.

Let's switch now from the RCAF to a joint venture between the army, navy and air force that took place at TMM in 2017. I refer to the War Stories 1917 exhibit in the Founders' Gallery. We were asked to participate in the exhibit so we researched and prepared the stories of three Canadians who flew over the battlefields of Vimy Ridge, Hill 70 and Passchendaele. This opportunity to tell the stories and honour the 26 thousand Canadians who served in the RFC, RNAS and RAF would not have taken place had we not shared the same building and developed a close working relationship over the years. We, at the Air Force Museum, feel privileged to work with the army and navy daily and believe strongly that we are all the better for the cooperation.

As well, as part of the same campaign to keep our great military history alive, David Howard of the Canadian Legacy Project, made a table available for the museum to send eight folks to the Victories Centennial Ball and Gala in October. Thank you Dave!

We continued our community outreach through several programs, two of which were the Field of Crosses and Valour Canada. We view this as an important part of our mandate as a RCAF museum and we will

continue to work diligently, particularly during the lead up to and the day of Remembrance Day.

In closing let me mention two important air events this year in Calgary. They are:

Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame 45th Induction Ceremony and Dinner, Thursday June 7, 2018 at the Sunwest Aviation Hangar in Calgary and;

RCAF Association Biennial General Meeting from 12 to 14 October 2018 at Hotel Arts.

We will be working with the RCAFA to provide venue and event support. More to follow.

Hope to see you there.

Respectfully, Don, chair, Air Force Museum Society of Alberta

Exhibit chairman's report

It has been a busy and interesting time at the Air Force Museum since our last newsletter in the late summer of 2017.

The enhancement of the Cold War Exhibit has been our focus over the last six months. You may recall we set two goals to upgrade the exhibits and displays in the museum. The first goal was to balance the major efforts of the RCAF during these 40 years. NORAD received less emphasis than NATO and we set out to correct that. The final text panels will be in place by mid-February and they have relocated to ensure they receive better visitor visibility.

The second goal was to research, plan and develop a memorial to the members of the RCAF who lost their lives during the Cold War. To our surprise we discovered that 937 men and women died on duty during that time frame. In order to present this information to the public we built a memorial wall that contains the 937 names. The second phase is currently being developed where additional information about each individual can be accessed by a touch screen located directly in front of the memorial wall. We believe this is the only place where all those who paid the supreme sacrifice can be found in one location in Canada. Once the project is complete we will make it available on the internet to anyone who visits our website or Facebook page. In the longer term we will include additional information about each individual as it becomes available.

One of the important missions of a museum is to refresh our displays and stories about the RCAF on a regular basis. We are constantly searching for events where the Air Force played an important role and which we can build upon to provide an informative and interesting display. It is helpful to have artefacts, images and anecdotes to support the main text. If any of you have stories or experiences that you believe should be told please contact our curator, Alison Mercer at alison@themilitarymuseums.ca or drop in and speak to her. You can also contact me at gerrymorrison11@gmail.com.

Gerry Morrison, exhibit chairman

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The tragic death of LAC K.H. Ingram

By Donald M. Norrie

One of the names on the Museum Memorial Wall is that of LAC K.H. Ingram. This short article relates the details and circumstances which caused his untimely death while on duty in 2 (F) Wing on 05 March 1958.

It was during the Cold War years that I served a tour of duty as a munitions & weapons technician – or armourer as we were better known – at 2 (F) Wing, Grostenquin, France. This wing was one of four wings which comprised 1 Air Division, which was Canada's air force contribution to NATO in Europe. The others were 1 Wing, Marville, France, 3 Wing Zweibrucken and 4 Wing Baden-Soellingen, both located in southern Germany.



Ken Ingram, France, 1957.

Our main Canadian fighter aircraft at the time were the F-86 Sabre and CF-100 Canuck; the Sabre an armourer's dream and the CF-100 an Armourer's nightmare. But, what the hell, we had to take the bad with the good, and we did have some good times.

We Canadians were in a new world in France, most of us unable to speak the language, but willing to learn. The local beer was awful, the wine great, the toilets were different and the weather was better than what I had just left in Winnipeg. The Moselle Valley where the wing was located was most beautiful, but the pungent smell of the manure piled high in front of the farmhouse and adjacent to the main road leading through the villages still lingers in my nostrils.

Our daily duties of maintaining the fighter aircraft for the most part were routine. But we took great pride in sustaining a high aircraft serviceability rate so our wing would be the best in 1 Air Division. Then at day's end we would head for the wet canteen or "the wets" to quaff a Neufang beer (ugh) and hold forth on what a great job we were doing to keep the aircraft flying.

Then a day arrives that "takes the wind from under your wings." One of our fellow armourers lost his life to an on-the-job accident. The date was Wednesday, March 5th, 1958, and the day was cold, drizzly and foggy. That day was also the day that G/C Arthur Searle held his monthly commanding officer's parade on the ramp in front of #4 hangar. A quarter of a kilometer to the east of the parade assembly was the 1000 foot Sabre harmonization range. An F-86, Mk 6, serial number 23619 of 430 Squadron was being prepared to have its six .50 calibre machine guns "fired in" before departing for air-to-air firing exercises in Sardinia. We actually refer to this procedure as "harmonization" because the guns are all calibrated to converge at a point 1000 feet in front of the aircraft.

The armourers had been on the range since 0700 hours and were behind schedule due to the intermittent inclement weather. They were also forbidden to fire the guns – due to the noise – until the CO's parade had been terminated. The harmonization crew of five personnel, comprising a sergeant, corporal and three LAC's were impatiently waiting for the parade to end. The scenario for an accident was developing rapidly.

The range was constructed in a hurry in order to get the wing operational as soon as possible. Consequently, some important safety features were bypassed. The area where the target was situated was at the front of a concrete abutment filled with sand and calcium chloride to absorb the fired rounds, and was commonly known as the "butts." Ranges of the time period were normally built to have the target lowered to below ground level so the armourer could count the "hits" on target and relay this info to the sergeant in charge via telephone, then patch the holes with masking tape and raise the target for the next session without ever being exposed to those deadly .50 calibre machine guns.



Harmonizing. Funk, Linneborne, Peterson. 1956



Ingram - Temporary grave marker.

But, due to the haste in getting the wing up and running, the range was not constructed properly as the target did not retract below ground level like similar ranges in 1 Air Division. Because of this, the armourer had to leave the safety of his underground bunker to mark and patch the bullet holes in the target. Looking up-range, he could see the open-mouthed, six-eyed monster and hoped the guns were clear as the sergeant had declared.

The parade was finally over and the crew resumed harmonization. In order to make up for lost time two armourers proceeded to the underground bunker at the butts instead of just one as stipulated in the range orders. When the butt armourer was ready, he confirmed via telephone to the NCO at the aircraft that he was safely inside, steel door closed, and that firing could commence. The safety rationale of this procedure was that if the telephone was answered, the “butt man” would be safely inside the bunker.

On this day P1 (port upper gun) was fired-in and information exchanged between the NCO i/c and the butts as to where the bullets impacted the four foot square target. With P1 completed, they moved to P2 (port centre) gun. Wisps of fog were intermittently moving across the range area obscuring the target area when the corporal at the aircraft called for clearance to fire another five rounds. The airman in the bunker gave what the NCO i/c misconstrued to be the “all clear” to fire. He visually checked down range and, partly because of the weather, did not see LAC Ingram.

LAC Kenneth Handley Ingram, clad in khaki clothing and probably invisible to the naked eye from 1000 feet up-range, was still patching the holes in the target when a .50 calibre bullet struck him in the center of his back. He died instantly. The ensuing investigation concluded, in part, that the accident happened because of personnel not adhering to the range orders, constant problems with the telephone system, and more importantly, incorrect construction of the butts area. Armourers had complained but nothing was done until this fatality. Finally, the

range was shut down and reconstructed properly so that the armourers never again had to be exposed to the line of fire.

LAC Ken Ingram was 37 years old. He had been a soldier in WW2 and Korea with the Royal Canadian Artillery before transferring to the RCAF in 1955. He now rests in the RCAF Cold War cemetery located in Choloy, France, near Nancy in Grave 15, Section 5, Row C. He is also commemorated in the 7th Book of Remembrance and the Canadian Virtual War Memorial. He left a wife and seven-year-old son.

Postscript

1. This article was published in the RCAF Association magazine in 2007. Shortly thereafter, I received a telephone call from Robert Ingram, Ken’s son who lives in Ontario. He informed me that his mother was never told how her husband died. She went to her grave knowing only that he died in a “work related accident.” Robert was more than appreciative for this story on his father and that it lifted a huge load from his mind. There is nothing more satisfying in life than helping others.

2. The offending aircraft in this story was transferred to 439 Sqn at 3 (F) Wing where, on 08 April 1960 it was involved in a mid-air collision with Sabre 23515. Both pilots ejected safely.



Roberge at Butts.

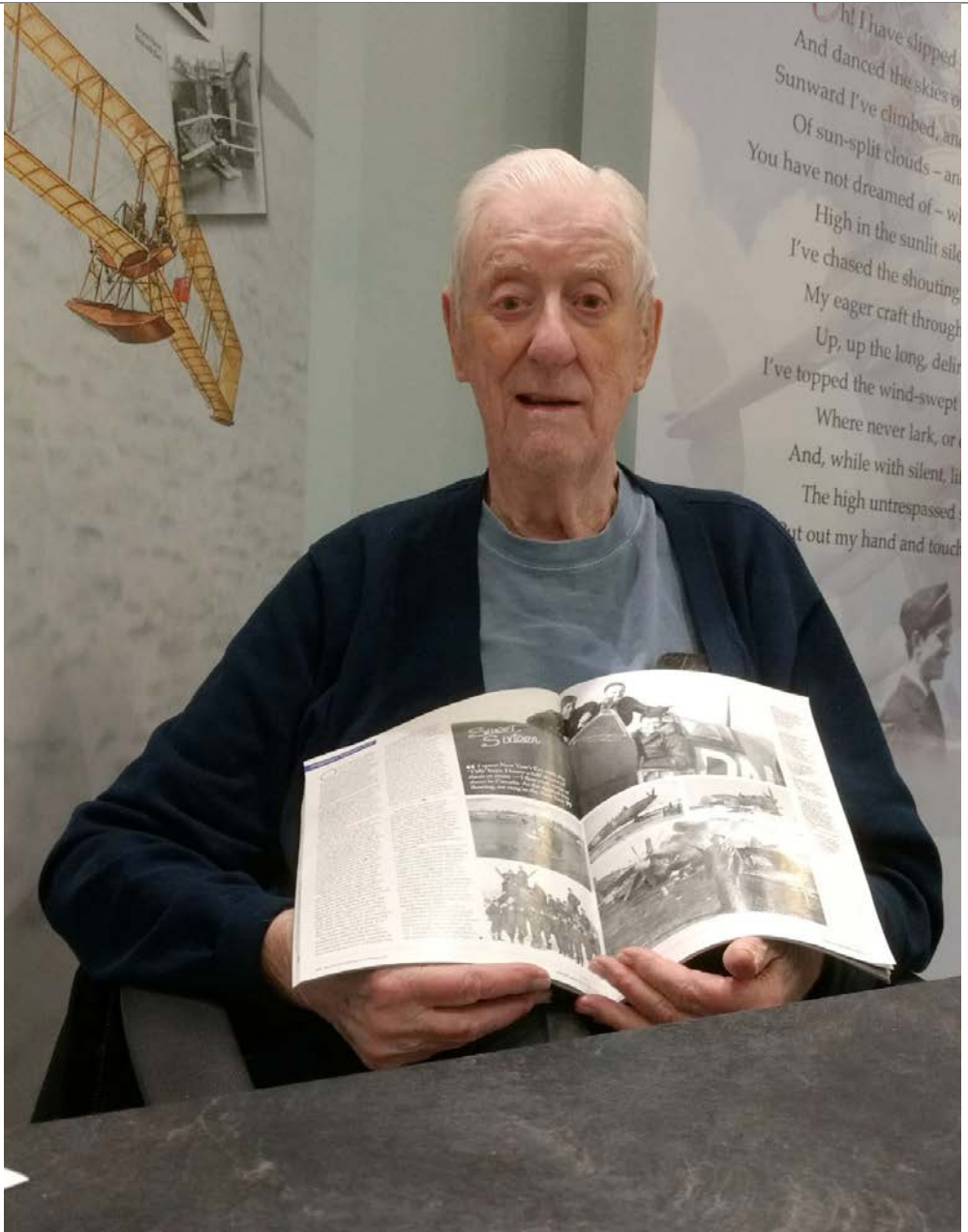
Hello from the basement! Amidst the additions to the Cold War Exhibit, work has been progressing well in the collections area. Our new museum-grade storage cabinets arrived in November and they nearly double the size of our available storage space. The next step will be a reassessment of our current storage organization to see how we can spread our collection out more effectively.

Our Friday afternoon gallery host, Gordon Hill, has also been featured in an article from *Aeroplane Monthly*, published in the United Kingdom. The article discusses the Luftwaffe's attacks on Allied airfields in the Low Countries early in 1945. Flying Spitfires with 416 Squadron, RCAF, Gordon recalls his encounters with the enemy in the air and on the ground at Eindhoven. For those interested in reading more, the article can be found in *Aeroplane Monthly* October 2017.

Donation highlights

Via Paul Storwick, Bruce MacLennan donated materials belonging to his father Ian Roy MacLennan, a Spitfire pilot stationed in Malta with 401 Squadron RAF. MacLennan shot down seven enemy aircraft and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal. Imprisoned in Stalag Luft III after being shot down himself on 7 June 1944 over Normandy, Ian was transferred to Austria after the Long March but escaped and made his way back to Paris on foot. Our thanks to Mr. MacLennan for the donation of this excellent collection and to Mr. Storwick for facilitating the transfer.

Thanks as well to Lynne Orsten for the donation of materials relating to her mother, Lillian Brown. L.J.C. Brown joined the RCAF Women's Division in 1942 and travelled overseas in 1943, working on the records of returning servicemen in London, England. Brown was also an avid baseball player, playing for an overseas league and for Morton's League in Edmonton.



Gordon Hill



Right: The new storage cabinets.