



VIMM Newsletter

Fall 2023

Vancouver Island Military Museum

Women's War Work The Canadian Red Cross Comfort Quilt



By Heather Neil, VIMM volunteer.

The Vancouver Island Military Museum has a new acquisition in its Home Front display. Kindly donated by Maxine March of the Canadian Red Cross Research Group (London, UK) via the Royal Alberta Museum (Edmonton), this newest addition is a rare, hand-made WW 2 Canadian Red Cross Comfort Quilt.

As we all know, during the Second World War, the Canadian Red Cross worked on many relief projects to ease the suffering of people overseas directly impacted by the war. These included soldiers, women in Britain's Land Army, hospitals, orphanages, bomb shelters and those who lost all in the Blitz.

One of the CRC projects was the collection of handmade quilts. Canadian women groups all over Canada, in towns large and small, made hundreds of thousands of these quilts. In one six-week period in 1944, some 25,000 reached Britain to be distributed by the UK Women's Voluntary Society, the Red Cross, and the Salvation Army. Now collectively known as "Red Cross Quilts," very few have survived.

But now, after almost 80 years, these same quilts are being traced and repatriated to Canadian museums by the Canadian Red Cross Research Group in the UK. Unfortunately, of the 400,000 quilts sent

to the UK, the research group was only able to document 200 quilts and collect 100 quilts over a 20-year period. So, these quilts are considered rare.

We are honoured to be chosen as a recipient of this new exhibit, and to display it as a further testament to the tireless dedication of women during war time.

We welcome you to come, and enjoy, and view yet another piece of Canadian war-time history.



Now on display, a Canadian made comfort quilt, recovered from a garage in Sandbach, Cheshire, UK.

The original recipient is thought to be the Sutton family, victims of the Blitz.

Vice President's Message

It has been another busy summer for our hard-working museum staff who, I am glad to report, have coped in their usual professional and courteous manner. Even the reduced schedule caused by maintenance issues at B.C. Ferries didn't deter those seeking a vacation on Vancouver Island - all good news for the folks at Tourism Nanaimo who continue to support the Vancouver Island Military Museum in their advertising and promotional campaigns. This, together with publications like the Nanaimo and Voyager Magazines, the Nanaimo News Bulletin and Provincial GO Magazine, helps generate a steady increase in visitors to Nanaimo and Central Vancouver Island.

Looking forward, as we approach the fall season, our plans are now focused on the activities surrounding Remembrance Week, especially on 11 November when we open the museum to those attending the ceremony at the Cenotaph. This whole week is usually the busiest one of the year.

As in previous years we will again be conducting tours during Remembrance Week for youth organizations, school groups, and community organizations.

I am delighted to report that fellow Director of Security (and Spitfire aficionado), Pat Murphy is back after a brief illness. Things had been a tad dull but defiantly quieter during his absence - that being said, things wouldn't be the same without his boisterous enthusiasms. Great to have you back Pat!

Brian McFadden.



Medal Mounting

The VIMM will gladly mount your medals in court mounting or in a frame. Contact us for further information and prices.



Canadian troops on NATO duty in Latvia.

New Display – NATO

By Brian McFadden

Founded in 1949, as a bulwark against Soviet aggression and expansion, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is the pillar of North American - European military cooperation. Headquartered in Brussels, the Alliance was formed to counter Soviet expansion after Russian forces occupied several countries in Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War. NATO is a consensus-based alliance in which decisions must be unanimous; however individual states or sub-groups can initiate action outside of the alliance. Under the treaty's Article 5, an attack on any member country is considered an attack on all, and Article 10 stipulates that any European country which supports the principals of the treaty can apply for membership in the alliance. The NATO Alliance embodies the transatlantic link that binds North American and European security. As well as defence commitments, a critical component in this political and military alliance is to safeguard the freedom of its people, and to promote stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. These values are based on the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law. Canada was a founding member of the NATO Alliance and has since contributed to nearly every NATO military operation.

The Alliance's latest Strategic Concept sets out three core tasks: Collective Defence, Crisis Management, and Cooperative Security, which are critical components of NATO's deterrence and defence policy in Eastern Europe. To be an effective political-military alliance fit to deal with the challenges of the twenty-first century, NATO must pursue cooperation with other partners to extend regional security.

In recent years the allies have enhanced NATO's position in Europe by establishing eight multinational battle groups based in Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. Canada currently leads the multinational battle group in Latvia. In



addition to these battle groups, warships, aircraft, and troops have been deployed in NATO's Eastern flank from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south. These actions demonstrate the allies' solidarity, determination, and ability to defend alliance territory and populations.

Outside of the Euro-Atlantic zone, NATO's sub-group member operations include Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan. The Alliance also cooperates on security issues with the member states of the African Union.



RCN ships on NATO duty. In addition to leading the NATO battle group in Latvia, Canada contributes to NATO air force and naval operations



Canadian troops on NATO duty in Latvia.

The RCAF Centennial Project

By Greg Devenish

On 14 December 1967, RCAF Lieutenant-Colonel "Bud" White sat in his modified CF-104 Starfighter on the main runway at Ottawa International Airport. This was a special sortie, an attempt at a world record, and one wonders what the Wing Commander was thinking prior to take off. Much planning had been done over the centennial year and this would be the final attempt to pass 34 714.28 m (113,892 ft.), a "world absolute altitude record" for a plane to take off from the ground. R.A. "Bud" White had a long and distinguished flying career. Born in Sudbury, Ontario, in 1938, he joined the RCAF in 1948 and went on to fly F-86s. In 1960, he flew with the Central Experimental Proving Establishment in Edmonton. In 1962, he was one of four Canadians on loan to NASA to work on the



Wing Commander Bud White in the cockpit of a CF-104. Note the pressure suit.

Mercury and Gemini space programs. In 1965, he transferred to the Aerospace Engineering Test Establishment (AETE) as a Wing Commander and chief test pilot.

aerobatic team, The Golden Centennaires, forerunner of the Snowbirds, was formed and thrilled people from coast to coast. A USAF exchange pilot, Capt. Jim Reed, suggested the world altitude record to White.

"...beat the Russians," he said, "and capture the world's absolute altitude record for Canada in the Centennial Year".

There are numerous aviation records, but only six are

absolute records recognized by the International Aviation Federation.

Altitude is one of them. During the 1950s, the two major powers, Russia and the USA, made numerous altitude records. In 1961, a Russian pilot, Colonel Georgy Mosolov, set an altitude record with a rocket assisted MIG 21 to 34 714 meters (113 892 ft).

A proposal was put forward and the RCAF was keen to support the project. The RCAF had ordered a total of 238 Lockheed CF-104

Starfighters, built by Canadair in Montreal. They were designed as supersonic air superiority fighters. Rather than using existing RCAF Starfighters, it was decided to modify the original CF -104 prototype (12700). It was lighter and would only carry the necessary instrumentation. The Orenda Engines Company of Toronto joined the project and began work on 12700. It took five painstaking months to prepare the aircraft. Electrical and pressurization systems were modified; even the RCAF markings were cut, to reduce weight. The area chosen to attempt the record was the St. Lawrence valley because of its high energy jet stream winds. A full pressure suit for the pilot was secured from the USAF.

White wrote, "By starting one pull up from within the core of the jet wind, we estimated we could increase our maximum height by some 5000 ft. (1524m) for every 50 knots of jet speed, to carry more energy into the vertical and thus reach greater heights."

During the first flight in October, 12700 reached a

Record altitude for jet

OTTAWA (CP) — Wing Cmdr. R. A. White of Kirkland, Lake, Ont., has flown a CF-104 Super Starfighter to 100,100 feet and set a Canadian altitude record for jet aircraft.

The defence department said Monday an application is being made to the Federation Aeronautique Internationale for formal recognition of the record, the first established for Canadian jet aircraft.

It said also that Wing Cmdr. White flew his aircraft at more than 1,800 miles an hour, the fastest any aircraft has ever flown in Canada.

The 40-year-old chief test pilot of the aerospace test establishment at Uplands Canadian forces base set the record last Thursday about 100 miles west of the capital and tried unsuccessfully to exceed it Friday.

White's record announced in the Regina Leader-Post, 19-12-1967.



This picture was taken by the chase plane of 12700. Note the inlets and lack of tip tanks. After this picture was taken all markings were removed except for the maple leaf flag and the "X" which stands for experimental.

speed of Mach 2.4 and flew at a 25 degree climb angle. Over the next flights, the goal was to increase speed and climb angle. On the 29 October flight, the aircraft reached 29 261m (96 000ft) at Mach 2.2.

On 14 December, with the project coming to an end, a forty first and final flight was arranged. Traffic controllers from Ottawa, Toronto, and Montreal vectored civilian aircraft away from the test space. White recounted this last flight.

"I took off and began my climb out to the west of Ottawa....at 35000 ft, I dumped cabin pressure and checked my suit at 47000

ft. I went full power and dove down to 35000 ft. I was supersonic almost at once...I continued to accelerate...at 57 degrees pitch angle I seemed to be going straight up! ...at 75000 ft. my afterburners blew out and at 84000 ft. I shut the engines down to prevent overheating...It was just like riding an artillery shell...I had peaked at 100 100 ft. (30 815 m)."

Bud White at first was disappointed that the record was not broken. However, a closer examination revealed that much had been accomplished. The Centennial project did establish a Canadian altitude record, and much had been learned about the qualities of the CF 104, which would prove useful to RCAF squadrons in Germany. Of the 41 flights, 25



So, what became of 12700? It now is permanently on display at the Canadian Aviation Museum in Ottawa

reached 28956 m (95000 ft.) or more. The team of air force personal, private contractors, and aircraft manufactures gained a lot of experience.

Bud White finished a distinguished career in the RCAF, had a business career, and lived in New Zealand for ten years. He now lives in Vancouver. He has received the "Lifetime Achievement Award" from the BC Aviation Council, was awarded the McKee Trophy, an award given annually for contribution to the advancement of Canadian aviation and was elected to the Canadian Aviation Hall of Fame.

Sons and Grandsons of Nanaimo Leaders Became Flyers

By Angus Scully



David William Gordon, MP

David William Gordon was a Nanaimo builder and architect, and Member of Parliament for the area from 1882 until his death in 1893. His two sons became pilots in the First World War. Two of his daughters were married to Albert Edward Planta, who served eight terms as mayor of Nanaimo and became a senator (but resigned office when convicted of fraud in 1917). Two of Gordon's grandsons were pilots in the RCAF and were killed in the Second World War.

Vancouver Camden Gordon was born in Nanaimo in 1888 and named after the constituency his father represented in parliament – Vancouver (Island). He graduated from the University of Toronto in 1912, with his yearbook entry humorously saying he “occasionally” attended classes in political science. He was studying law at Osgoode Hall in Toronto when the war started. His records show that he was a lieutenant in the Canadian Army, but

he transferred to the Royal Flying Corps in England in December 1915, earning his Royal Aero Club membership in early 1916. In France, he flew FE2b planes with RFC squadrons 18 and 23, which were reconnaissance units used for aerial photography. In

December 1916, Vancouver Gordon was rested from combat and attached to the staff of the School of Aero Gunnery at Hythe in the UK. In May 1917, he was sent to Camp Borden, the huge RFC training base north of Toronto, then he took the instructor's course at Armour Heights, another RFC base near Toronto. He went with the RFC to Texas in the winter of 1917-18 to act as liaison with the United States air services.

In 1918, Vancouver Gordon was discharged and returned to civilian life in Toronto, where he married Dorothy Roblin. They had two sons. David W. Gordon, named for his grandfather and uncle, became a pilot in the RCAF and was killed in Takoradi, West Africa in 1942, age 19. Huntly Parker Gordon was also a pilot in the RCAF. His Halifax bomber was shot down over Germany in 1944. The whole crew was lost and are buried in Hamburg, Germany.



Takoradi European Public Cemetery in Ghana where David W. Gordon is buried along with four members of the Royal Australian Air Force, 16 from the South African Air Force, and 18 from the Royal Air Force.





Huntly Parker Gordon, grandson of David W. Gordon, MP, was 21 years old when he was killed

David William Gordon was born in Nanaimo in 1891 and named after his MP father. He joined the Royal Flying Corps in Canada and did his early pilot training in Ontario. The timing

of his arrival in England in March 1918 suggests that he was training at the same time as Osborne Orr, but the RFC operations in Ontario were huge, and we can only wonder if the two native sons ever met. After advanced pilot training in England, David was posted to 18 Squadron in France, which specialized in long range attacks. On April 10, 1918, he was wounded and spent the rest of the war in hospitals in England and Ireland. He was discharged in April 1919, and returned to Canada. He married Ethel Rooney in Toronto in 1920, with his brother, Vancouver, as his best man. He died in 1969.

Dr. George A. B. Hall was born in 1868 at Carleton Place, Ontario, grew up in Victoria, and attended dental school in Philadelphia, USA. He set up his dentistry practice in Nanaimo in 1890 and was active in local sports, winning a sculling race around Protection and Newcastle islands. He moved to Nelson, married Christine Poole, was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly

in 1908, but then left provincial politics and went to Stanford University in California to study medicine. He had a long and important medical career in

Victoria, Vancouver, and Nanaimo, serving as Medical Officer of Victoria, official CPR surgeon, medical referee for the BC Workman's Compensation Board, and was a specialist in obstetrics. During the First World War, Dr. Hall joined the army and served at Esquimalt Barracks. After the war he was a popular doctor in Nanaimo in partnership with Dr. Giovando. His three sons also became doctors. In 1930, he was elected mayor of Nanaimo. In 1936, he opened the Hall Clinic at 43 Commercial St., in partnership with his doctor sons Earle and Alan. He died at his home in Lantzville in 1948, age 80.

Norman Douglas Hall, eldest son of Dr. George Hall, was born in Nelson BC. He joined the Royal Naval Air Service after learning to fly in Toronto in 1916. During training in England, he was described as a very good pilot and a "keen and promising officer."

He joined No. 1 Wing of the RNAS at Dunkirk, France, as a fighter pilot, flying Camels. He may have met Raymond Collishaw, the famous ace from Nanaimo who is featured

in two displays at VIMM. On May 9, 1917, Hall was presented with a medal by the Town Council of Dunkirk for shooting down a German plane over the city. He was wounded later that month and then, in September 1917, he was shot down,

taken prisoner by the Germans, and remained a POW for the rest of the war. Norman Hall returned to live with his family in Nanaimo, then studied medicine at McGill University in Montreal and John Hopkins University in Baltimore, USA. He was briefly in practice in Nanaimo with his father and two younger brothers, also doctors. He moved to Alaska, married, then moved to Arizona and served in the US Army in the Second World War.



DISPATCHES

from VIMM



Remembrance Day



The museum will be open, with **no admission charge**, after the service at the Nanaimo cenotaph.



Mark Your Calendar! Volunteer Christmas Party.

Thursday November 23rd

11:30am @ Grand Hotel.

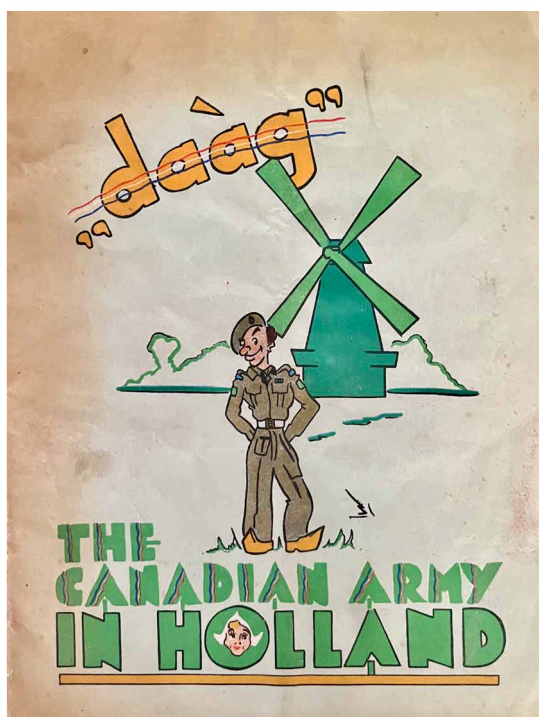
Sign up details to come.

Recent Donations



1. "Sheet Music"

A mixture of Canadian, British, and American songs in sheet music, from the First World War, was donated by Mary Lou Smith and Patrick Smith of Nanaimo.



2. "Daag"

("Good Day" in Dutch) is the title of a rare book of cartoons by Dutch artist Jan Nieuwenhuys. Published in 1945, the colourful book, says the introduction, ... will give you an idea of how a young and promising Dutch artist "outside looking in" sees the boys from Canada. Nieuwenhuys later became famous as an experimental and abstract artist.



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