

# 434 Niagara

## BULLETIN

Vol. 23 no 1 Nov-Dec, 2020



### General Meetings

3rd Thursday of each month at

Branch 4 RC Legion

383 Morningstar Avenue Welland ON

# ***We proudly promote the glorious tradition of the RCAF***

## **434 Wing Board of Directors**

### **2020-2021**

<b>Chairman – Bill Heron .....</b>	<b>H - 289-820-8712</b>
<b>1 st Vice Chairwoman – Julie Sheppard.....</b>	<b>H - 905-734-6307</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairman - Norm Sonnenberg.....</b>	<b>H - 905-834-6722</b>
<b>Secretary Treasurer - George Groff.....</b>	<b>H - 905-734-4948</b>
<b>Membership Chair - Jeanette Lee.....</b>	<b>C - 905-359-3531</b>
	<b>C - 289-723-2544</b>
<b>Bulletin Editor – James Allan .....</b>	<b>H - 905-685-6787</b>
<b>Kit Shop Chairman - Rod Lee.....</b>	<b>C - 905-359-1975</b>
	<b>C - 289-686-8636</b>
<b>Director At Large – Wesley Pierce.....</b>	<b>H - 289-820-9827</b>
<b>Honourary Director – F/L Tom Vance.....</b>	<b>H - 905-834-8155</b>
<b>Wing Padre - Rev John Cathcart.....</b>	<b>H - 905-384-4660</b>

#### **COMMITTEES**

**Air - Cadets Capt - Julie Sheppard**  
**Audio Visual - Rod Lee**  
**Phone Committee - Jeanette & George**  
**Programs - George & Board**  
**Sick/Visitation - Jeanette Lee**  
**Publicity - Board**

#### **ROYAL CANADIAN LEGIONS**

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		<b>Canteen</b>	<b>905-734-6601</b>
<b>Port Colborne</b>	<b>Branch 56</b>	<b>Hall</b>	<b>905-834-9512</b>
<b>Fort Erie</b>	<b>Branch 71</b>	<b>Hall</b>	<b>905-871-8682</b>
<b>Fonthill</b>	<b>Branch 613</b>	<b>Hall</b>	<b>905-892-6293</b>

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**Royal Canadian Air Force Association of Canada**

# Secretary/Treasurers' Report

Our finances are holding steady after paying our National and Ontario Group dues. We have had one General meeting in September when the Optimist Board closed hall rentals. After getting clarification from our local health unit, they have again opened up hall rentals for up to 50 people with full covid 19 restrictions in effect. This means that until further notice, we can again meet on a monthly basis. Our next General Meeting will be on November 19 at 7:00 PM weather permitting. There will always be an e-mail and phone call before confirming the meeting and your attendance. Our two fundraising projects are progressing. The Christmas Card Packs are going very well and the Pocket Planners are needing a push. Please get behind this project. Even if everyone sells two planners each this fundraiser will be a success! They are only \$5.00 each.

The following is the latest information on Remembrance Day Celebrations;

WELLAND;

November 7 - Chippawa Park - Cancelled

November 11 - Branch 4 Legion - No spectators, Invitation only, wreaths are pre-laid

FONTHILL

November 8 - Pelham, Fonthill, Ridgeville, Fenwick - Cancelled

November 11 - Branch 613 Fonthill - Public is welcome, wreaths are pre-laid.

WAINFLEET

November 11 - No spectators - wreaths are pre-laid, ceremony will be televised

Ontario Central Region Fall Meeting held at 447 Wing Mount Hope in Hamilton was attended by 6 of the 7 wings comprising our region. 484 Wing Fort Erie was absent. Some of the Wings were very busy and some were not. 447 Wing is still holding their own but the property is still up for sale.

The National Convention will take place on May 7, 8 and 9, 2021 @ 447 Wing in Mount Hope, Hamilton.

The Ontario Group Convention will take place on May 21, 22 and 23, 2021 in Trenton, Ontario.

**George Groff**  
**Secretary/Treasurer**

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## Kit Shop / Web Site News

It's with great joy that I can announce that we have a website up and running. The site is [434wingrcafa.com](http://434wingrcafa.com) I urge every member to visit and share the site with all your friends and family. You see I have started several posts. The most exciting is the kit shop. You see I have gotten our site affiliated with Amazon. So what this means every time someone goes to the kit shop and clicks the link [find the perfect gift](#) they go to aviation gifts at Amazon or they can search anything else. If they purchase a product we make a small advertising commission. Holly cow how cool is that! Now that I have us started I need your help to keep the posts growing so if you have anything to add to any post started or even a new topic please let me know. So remember if you have an order for Amazon use our link [find the perfect gift](#) any questions you have can leave in the comment section on the Website [434wingrcafa.com](http://434wingrcafa.com)

**Kit Shop Director - Rod Lee**

# Chairman's Report October 2020

## From the home front

Still in the midst of this battle and with the numbers in certain areas not showing favourably I again wish ALL members good health, stay safe and pay attention to our health experts and the advice they offer.

## Generally speaking

At our General meeting in September, our Kit Shop Chair (Rod Lee) gave us a presentation on the setup and operation of our new website [434wingrcafa.com](http://434wingrcafa.com) it was an interesting presentation from which arose many questions. I believe that after Rod's explanations we are now more able to understand the benefits of the new undertaking.

With the inability to hold any fundraising projects over the summer months and as noted in my last report our 2 current fundraisers are now well underway. Christmas cards are selling very well and our 2 year pocket planners are off to a good start. I know that pocket planners are not for everyone as many now use their smart phones to keep track of appointments etc. but many of us do not have a smart phone in fact it may surprise some that in this day and age some of us don't have a cell phone period. So I ask that even if you do have a cell phone, a pocket planner might be a good idea for a stocking stuffer with Christmas on the horizon, please give it some thought. Your participation helps keep our funds up and in turn allows us to assist the Air Cadets.

George has given an update on the ability to hold future meetings please make note of these dates and the additional information he has supplied.

Member Tom Vance (411 Sqn. Spitfire pilot) has kindly offered a framed painting of a Spitfire to the Wing as a fundraiser. Investigation is ongoing as to how we can plan out the best course of action for this undertaking. We thank Tom for his generosity in this regard.

Following the General meeting in September we held a meeting of the committee responsible for drafting the Wing by-Laws. We reviewed the suggestions as sent by our Regional Director and implemented changes drawing from her suggestions and set aside those that we thought in our case did not apply. They have been passed along to the Regional Director for further review and hopefully acceptance.

I wish you all well, be safe.

Bill Heron Chairman

# 434 Niagara and Battle of Britain 2020 Ceremony

434 Niagara held a modified service, by invitation only, no spectators, for the Battle of Britain Ceremony. Dignataries attended and spoke at the ceremony September 20th, which Cogeco videotaped and has presented on TV several times. The ceremony included a flyby with two T-28 Trojan aircraft and a Harvard, compliments of Alf Beam and fellow pilots.



Secretary Treasurer George Groff and Welland Mayor, Frank Campion are shown with Air Force Ensign



Raising of the Air Force Ensign at Welland City Hall Friday, September 11, 2020 to mark Battle of Britain Week.



Vance Badawey, MP (L & R Photos)



Jeff Burch, MPP



Tom Vance, Spitfire Pilot



Wreaths



Welland Mayor Campion

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## ERNIE ALLEN, LIBERATOR PILOT

Ernie Allen wrote a fascinating and detailed account of his career with the 59th Squadron, RCAF from his enlistment to his discharge to the Reserve RCAF. The account is divided into four parts which are too lengthy to include in this bulletin so we have included the Prologue and a short excerpt from Part Three - Liberators. We encourage you to read the entire account at <http://www.doralholdings.com/eallen/>.

### Prologue

**World War II, Liberator pilot, Ernest Allen details herein his memoirs of service on the coastal command in the 59th Squadron for the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) in conjunction with the Royal Air Force (RAF). For his achievement, Ernie Allen was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. In post-war years, E. Allen went on to become a successful land developer including founding the Seaway Mall in Welland Ontario Canada. We invite you to read this fascinating account and to drop a line to the author's son at: [mike4761@gmail.com](mailto:mike4761@gmail.com)**

“November 10. A few days later we were on anti-sub patrol in the Bay of Biscay patrolling at 5000 feet when we spotted a U-boat on the surface headed north. We were on a southerly heading so it was straight in with bomb doors open. We could see light machine-gun tracer headed our way as we approached but it quit when we were still out of range. We dropped six depth charges when the conning tower was still visible as we dived. George was sure he got a straddle and the photos subsequently confirmed this. We circled and waited for evidence of damage. After about ten minutes, the nose of the U-boat broke the surface and kept coming up at a very steep angle until we estimated it was one-third out of the water. We steep turned around it and the gunners all had the excitement of machine-gunning the exposed portion. We got a lot of hand held camera pictures. After about one half-hour, it slowly slipped back below the surface.

We headed home for St. Eval. This time there was not disappointment at the official result. The Admiralty, which was the authority on damage assessment, gave us a confirmed kill. Apparently the photos showed straddle with the conning tower still visible, and the confirming evidence was the very steep angle at which the U-boat bow surfaced, according to the experts had to upset the batteries which always produced some kind of poison gas. The subject of having killed a bunch of people was never discussed in the crew. These U-boat crews were sinking hundreds of Allied ships and killing thousands of those on board, so as far as I was concerned, the more of them we could kill, the better. I never lost one minute of sleep over it. “

## WHY CANADA DOES NOT NEED THE F-35

While the Lockheed F-35 might well, in spite of the current development saga, turn out into the much dreamed-of ubiquitous replacement of the F-16 – the conditional tense remains of use for now, the question remains of whether the choice of this new machine is appropriate for Canada. The purpose of this article is to show that this is not the case, and that there are better, cheaper, more adapted alternatives.

### **What are Canada's needs for the next 30 years? One can investigate several likely directions.**

Canada needs a long range fighter to fulfil its NORAD and NATO commitments, as well as provide adequate defense assets for the Canadian territory. The fighter must be capable of both combat air patrols and / or long range interceptions, with a low-speed cruising capability as well as fast accelerations. Mach 2+ would be an asset. It may be argued that 5<sup>th</sup> generation fighters such as the Russian Sukhoi T-50 or its Chinese equivalent might, in one or two decades, if their developments are successful and their deployments practical, change the correlation of forces in the air.

### **Why the F-35 does not meet Canada's needs ?**

The latest information available on the Air Force version of the F-35 reveals a remarkably short range. This is clearly insufficient in a vast country where interceptions could involve total distances 5 or 6 times longer and would require a substantial increase of in-flight refuelling capacity.

One may also question the relevance of a single-engine aircraft over large area. Engine failure on a single-engine aircraft means the loss of the machine, whereas a twin-engine aircraft can often limp back to its base, a simple fact that has contributed to the increased proportion of twin-engine aircraft among 4<sup>th</sup> generation fighters.

### **There are alternative choices available**

One could recommend the purchase of Eurofighter *Typhoon* or Dassault *Rafale* as the optimal aircraft for Canada's air forces. The *Typhoon* is optimised for the RAF long patrols over the North Sea and is an excellent air-superiority platform, but has less developed air-to-ground capabilities. The *Rafale* has lower air-to-air capabilities, but is a better, combat-proven multirole fighter-bomber. Regarding potential alternatives, one has to rule out the agile and inexpensive Saab *Gripen*, as its short range and single engine makes it better suited to air policing missions over smaller territories. The interest of the Canadian Air Force is clearly an open competition process where different options can be weighted and an informed and well prioritised choice can be made.

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# Happy Birthday

**November**

**Chuck Leguerrier** Congratulations Chuck on your 90th Birthday!

### **UK to significantly reduce orders for Lockheed Martin F-35B**

As the UK prepares its next defense review there is increasing talk that it plans to cut its proposed purchase of the F-35B from 138 to 70 aircraft. Increasing attention is being placed on the Tempest program (see Sept-Oct 2020 Bulletin, "Team Tempest") Results will be known when the defense review conclusions are released this year. The Tempest program will create 20,000 jobs and contribute 25 billion GBP to the UK economy.



Tempest



Rafale

### **Greece to purchase Dassault Rafale**

Increasing tension between Greece and Turkey has encouraged Greece to increase military spending which will include the purchase of 18 Rafale fighter jets. The first Rafales are to arrive in Greece in mid 2021. The Rafale has been purchased by Qatar, Egypt and India but the Greek purchase is significant because Greece is the first European nation to move away from the purchase of Typhoons or the US F-35.

### **Germany Does Split Purchase of the Eurofighter and the US F-18**

In what is being seen as the largest rearmament of the German Air Force since WW2, Germany is purchasing 93 Eurofighters (Airbus) and 45 F-18 (Boeing) fighter jets. The German decision to not consider the US F-35 and instead select the Eurofighter as its lead fighter is interpreted as a new policy to keep European military purchases within Europe.



Eurofighter Typhoon

# Black Thursday, December 16, 1943



December 16, 1943 was another cold, dark and damp day in the English winter, a time if given the choice, one would stay home by the fire. However, orders had been issued, the RAF Bomber Command was mounting another attack on Berlin. At 4:00 pm as the sun began to set and the mist rolled in across eastern England, on

airfields from northern Yorkshire to southern Cambridgeshire, 483 Lancaster bombers and 15 Mosquitos took to the air for an approximate three and one-half hour flight each way. Except for the 15 Mosquitos the raid consisted exclusively of Lancasters because they were more reliable in unstable weather than the Halifaxes.

They flew across the North Sea, over Holland and into northern Germany. The Germans were able to plot the advance, estimate the target of Berlin and direct their night fighters. In all, 23 Lancasters were shot down over enemy held territory with a loss of 148 men and a further 17 bombers returned damaged from flak or enemy fighters.



The raid that night was considered effective. The damage to the Berlin railway system was extensive and 1,000 wagon-loads of war material destined for the [Eastern Front](#) were held up for six days. The National Theatre and the building housing Germany's military and political archives were both destroyed. The effect of the bombing campaign had made unusable more than a quarter of the living accommodation in Berlin.

The surviving bombers headed back for England to a dark night with limited visibility, where a dense fog had settled in and was getting thicker by the hour. The first back was Flying Officer A W Wales of 460 Squadron who landed safely at 23.09 at Binbrook. Then the crashes began. At 00.27 Lancaster LM389 piloted by Sergeant L M Cooper of 101 Squadron crash landed at Eastrington near Howden in East Yorkshire, killing all on board. It was an area of flat farm fields and no hills. Sergeant Cooper had taken off from Ludford Magna in Lincolnshire 8 hours earlier and had been diverted to Holme-on-Spaulding Moor, six miles to the north on his return. It appeared that he had run out of fuel and was unfamiliar with the area.

## Black Thursday for the RCAF



**Beningbrough Hall**



**Stonefall Cemetery, Harrogate**

In 1943 the aerodrome at Linton-on-Ouse was transferred to the RCAF and RCAF Squadrons 408 (Goose Squadron) and 431 were stationed there. The airmen resided at Beningbrough Hall, about one mile from Linton. The two squadrons supplied 30 aircraft for the December 16th raid on Berlin. By the morning of December 17th, 28 airmen from five of its crews were killed, 13 were lost over enemy territory, many over Berlin and 15 were strewn across fog bound northern and eastern England when returning aircraft crashed. Their ages ranged from 29 (426 Squadron Leader Thomas Kneale) to 19 (Sergeant R K Rye). They are now together in graves at Stonefall Cemetery at Harrogate, far from their homes in Canada.

**The final totals from the December 16, 1943 attack on Berlin:**

**From the attack itself 23 Lancasters were shot down over enemy territory, 17 bombers were damaged and 148 men were killed.**

**Of the survivors returning to fog bound England 43 aircraft were lost, 150 Bomber Command Airmen were killed and 40 were injured. The losses due to the weather outweighed those caused by flak or night fighters over enemy territory**

Many Lancasters returning from Berlin that night were badly damaged by flak, their aircrews were injured, their engines were damaged, several limped back to England on three engines and yet they made it home, only to have their aircraft crash, often killing all on board causing more losses in England than were incurred flying to Berlin and returning. What went wrong? It seems everything.

### **Weather was a factor.**

The weather the day of the 16th was touch and go for flying. At 10:30 am the Met Office at the Air Ministry in Kingsway, London issued a forecast which included wording that "visibility will be poor over England, Wales, the north east of England and south Scotland. . . ." There would be local fog and cold. However, the aircrews left England in conditions that were considered as acceptable for flying. As the night wore on to the time when aircrews would be returning weather conditions had deteriorated to the point where flying was unsafe. On the night of December 16th, the east coast of England was covered in thick fog, Returning pilots would be flying blind to land. The three rules of descending into low clouds or fog: (1) check your position, (2) check your altimeter, (3) check your safety height. Safety height meant the aircraft must be 1,000 feet above the highest ground which is within 20 miles either side of your flight path. For aircraft returning to North York, including the Canadians flying back to Linton, the Moors rise 1,100 feet so the minimum altitude would be 2,100 feet coming in off the North Sea.

## **Faulty Altimeters**

Altimeters of the time were not as accurate as they are today. Inaccurate altimeter readings were a serious problem. Records show one aircraft previous to December 16th sitting on the airfield with an altimeter reading of 1,000 feet, another had crash landed with a reading of 500 feet, etc. Rapidly changing weather on December 16th resulted in inaccurate barometric readings being given to returning pilots in turn resulting in altimeters being set inaccurately. In North York with hills, Lancasters returning flew into tree lines, hillsides, water towers, church spires, etc. A subsequent investigation concluded that the use of radio altimeters must be increased.

## **Fuel vs. Bombs**

The less fuel an aircraft carried, the more bombs could be loaded. The policy was to reduce fuel to the amount necessary to fly the distance plus add a small amount in case of trouble which varied from group to group. No allowance was made to recognize that different pilots use different amounts of fuel according to way they fly. No allowance was made for returning aircraft the night of December 16th to circle above their airfield for an endless amount of time waiting for clearance to land or flying around trying to locate their airfield in the thick fog or to be diverted to another airfield. Aircraft simply ran out of fuel.

## **Diverted Aircraft**

With the solid cloud cover and thick fog that blanketed eastern England that night there were a few areas that were perfectly clear such as east of Lincoln and for aircrews returning to airfields in these areas it was a normal night and there were no crashes. There is no understanding of why more returning aircraft were not diverted to airfields in the few clear areas rather than diverting aircraft from one fog bound airfield to another fog bound and possibly unfamiliar airfield.

## **Navigation Problems**

Returning pilots faced with fog, low cloud cover and limited visibility necessarily relied on instruments. There were two main systems, GEE and Standard Beam Approach (SBA). However, pilots had limited training using GEE and the use of SBA varied from group to group with discussions of abandoning its use altogether. Many aircraft took off knowing their diversion area but they were not outfitted with the SBA requirements for the particular aerodromes.

A subsequent investigation was carried out and several recommendations were made to improve the safety of the aircrews and avoid a further Black Thursday tragedy.



**Crashed Lancasters were a common sight after the night of December 16-17th, 1943**

# The Necessity of a Flight Engineer

From the memoirs of RAF 431 Squadron Flight Engineer Bill Baluk

Our crew had been posted to 431 Squadron (Croft) November 11/1944.

Six members of the crew had already flown together on Wellingtons and on converting to Lancasters they had to acquire a Flight Engineer.

Outside of our Skipper it was difficult to justify the necessity of my aircraft trade; I was considered excess baggage and almost every other description you could think of.

All of this discussion came to an end on our very first operation December 15/1944. About thirty minutes before our bombing run we lost the entire electrical system, no lights, no radios, no radar and no instrument lights; we were in absolute total darkness.

In a way it was quite a thrill to lose our lights prior to bombing and nearing the German coast. With flashlight in hand, I ran over my emergency checks – The Pilot followed suit but with no luck. Every time I turned on the thermostatic trip switch it would immediately snap back to the off position. Somehow we managed to arrive at the conclusion that the problem was in the Port inner engine which I shut down and feathered. Trying the trip switch again for about the tenth time, it remained on. Thank god for thermostatic trip switches. We were flying in a Mark X Canadian built Lancaster – if we had fuses instead, we would have run out long before we located the problem.

From that time on I had no more static from the crew about useless excess baggage. We completed our bombing run and returned to England on three engines

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## 434 Niagara General Meeting September 17, 2020



Observing Covid-19 protocols, 434 Niagara members were able to hold their first fall general meeting.

## 2nd Vice Chairman Norm Sonnenberg Gets Taken For a Ride!

While Alf Beam's fly in sunset barbecues were cancelled this year, it did not stop our 2nd Vice Chairman, Norm Sonnenberg from taking to the air in a T28 Trojan owned by Alf Beam



The T28 Trojan with co-pilot Norm, taxiing to runway at the Alf Beam International Airfield. Citing the high speed of the aircraft, our military photographer was unable to capture photos of any loops, spins or dives while co-pilot Norm was on board. Our readers must use their imagination.

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### 434 Niagara Web Site [434Wingrcafa.com](http://434Wingrcafa.com)

The RedFlagDeals.com 2020 Holiday Survey predicts that 93.55% of Canadians will make online purchases during the holiday season this year. Many people will make purchases on Amazon. I would like to join with our Kit Shop Director, Rod Lee, and urge members to use our web site as their gateway to Amazon. For every purchase made this way on Amazon, 434 Niagara will earn a commission which will be applied in support of the Air Cadets and for Wing activities.

The procedure is straightforward and quick.

Google [434Wingrcafa.com](http://434Wingrcafa.com) and open the web page

At the top of the first page in the black band are the words "KIT SHOP shop with us" Click on this heading. This will take you to the Kit Shop page. At this point you may wish to bookmark the KIT SHOP page for faster future reference.

On the KIT SHOP page you will see the wording **find the perfect gift** in bold. Click on the underlined words and you will be taken directly to Amazon or to your Amazon account page.



### Restoration Completed

Restoration of the Avenger at CWH is now complete and it will soon be ready to fly.

# Sponsors

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