



# WINGS & TAILS

## THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NO. 6 RCAF DUNNVILLE MUSEUM

*Telling the stories of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, the No. 6 Service Flying Training School, and the RCAF Veterans, to the Communities of Canada.*



### 2019 Marks the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the No. 6 RCAF Dunnville Museum

*After years of planning, preparation, and hard work, the No. 6 RCAF Dunnville Museum opened its doors on July 5, 2003.*

Thousands of artifacts, including photos, memorabilia, records, individual memories, uniforms, and more have come to the Museum from generous donors. Some of the founding members, other dedicated volunteers, and long-time members are no longer with us, but their efforts and support are visible everywhere.

On Saturday, May 30, 2009, more than 100 guests gathered to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the incorporation of the No. 6 RCAF Dunnville Assn. Speakers included Toby Barrett, MPP for Haldimand-Norfolk, then Haldimand County Mayor Marie Trainer, and author and historian Robert Schweyer. Museum member Charles King was the official piper, as he has been for many occasions since.

Plans for the Museum's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration are in the works.

**Watch for details and join in the celebration!**

### “The Wearne Gibbon Affair and No Monkey Business”

In August 1940, 21-year-old Australian, Leslie John Wearne, joined the Army like so many others did in times of war. He worked in various medical capacities until one day in 1943, he read a magazine article describing the experiences of members of the RAAF (Royal Australian Air Force) training in Canada. He was taken by the stories of “airmen on leave in the Rocky Mountains, at Banff in the ice and snow and being entertained by local lasses...which looked like a better way to serve your country”.

Les joined the RAAF. He was posted to an Initial Training School on the east coast of Australia, and then to an Elementary Flying Training School on the west coast where he learned to fly Tiger Moths. Two-thirds of Les' course was bound for Canada. The majority of those went to Claresholm, Alberta, to fly Ansons, “and the lucky ones went to Dunnville, Ontario”. Two months, several types of transport, and thousands of miles later, Les and his mates arrived at the No. 6 Service Flying Training School.

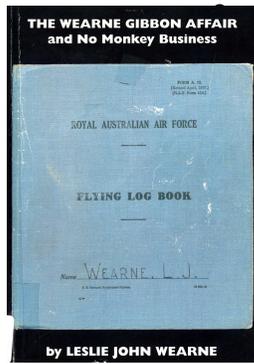
The rest, as they say, is history and is recounted in Les' autobiographical book “The Wearne Gibbon Affair and No Monkey Business”.

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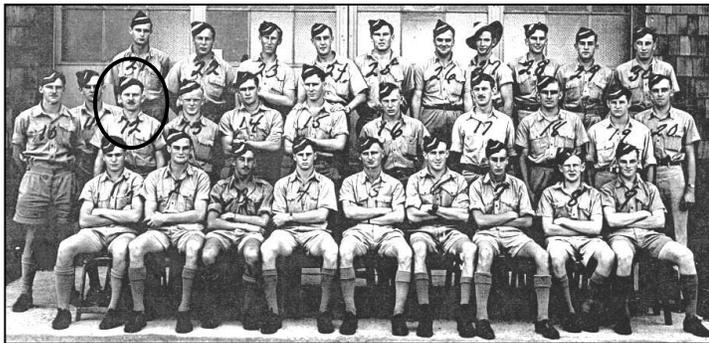
# “The Wearne Gibbon Affair and No Monkey Business”

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When Les was posted to Canada, he decided to keep a diary. The contents of the diary, his log book (*shown on the cover of his memoir at the right*), and letters between he and his Canadian bride, Elspeth, during 1944-1945 form the basis of the 145-page book. A copy was presented to the Dunnville Library in 2008.



Les' memoir is one of the few, if not the only, detailed account of what it was like to be a pilot trainee, and what it was like to be in training in Dunnville. He began his training at the No. 6 SFTS on May 1, 1944. He was part of Course 106 - Section 2 (*photo below*), the last course to train there. His picture is circled in the course photo. As this course was late in World War II, it was longer than earlier training courses. Les received his wings on November 17, 1944.



A few reminiscences from Les' book are below:

*On arriving at the No. 6:* “We were taken in open trucks from the rail terminus to our RCAF station in Dunnville and were surprised how noisy the Harvard planes were as they flew nearby....It was a nice station, very compact with hangars, barracks and mess all close together and the entertainment hall also nearby.”

*On his first class:* The instructor praised the ground staff who maintained the planes. “He emphasised that if anything went wrong it was most likely human error.” The instructor went on to say, “Why only two or three weeks ago the pilot in control failed to carry out his cockpit drill properly and took off with the pitch (of the propeller) not in ‘fine’. They went in beyond the runway and were ‘burnt to a crisp’. He repeated ‘burnt to a crisp’. Now that was very impressive stuff and you can imagine the reaction when the class or rookies were dismissed for morning break.”

*On being introduced to the Harvard:* “The Harvard is a good looking plane a lot heavier than the Tiger Moth, being all metal and having a much more powerful Pratt and Whitney engine.”

*The Link Trainer:* “I was introduced to their Link Trainer (simulator) and it's no better than at Cunderdin” [EFTS] “—they are so artificial and I didn't enjoy it.”

*On the Hostess House:* “We were very fortunate whilst stationed at Dunnville...to have a Hostess House in addition to the YMCA Reading Room and Canteen provided by the Air Force. Facilities included tables and chairs, lounges, a small library and a kitchen to provide tea or coffee and cool drinks....I used the Hostess House a lot when writing letters, or studying in the evenings.”

When Les completed his training at the No. 6 SFTS, he handed in his parachute and his log book (EFTS and SFTS) in which he recorded:

- Dual 139 hrs 10 mins
- Solo 100 hrs 05 mins
- Night Dual 12 hrs 30 mins
- Night Solo 9 hrs 05 mins
- Navigation 13 hrs 15 mins
- Instrument Flying - Dual 36 hrs 10 mins
- Link 44 hrs 45 mins



Les flying in formation

14 trips for 17 hrs 10 mins with 3 aircraft, 7 trips for 9 hrs with 6 aircraft, 4 trips for 6 hrs 45 mins with 9 aircraft, and 1 trip for 1 hr 15 mins Dual Squadron, over 34 hrs all together. “That's a lot of concentration. I was surprised at the hours we had spent flying in formation at Dunnville.”

Cross-country flight also accumulated.

- Dual 25 hrs 50 mins
- Solo 24 hrs 20 mins, including 5 hrs 50 mins low level
- Night Dual 4 hrs 30 mins
- Night Solo 2 hrs

Due to the length of the training period, Les had a lot of time to travel. Among other locations, he visited Toronto, Niagara Falls, Crystal Beach (where he was taken by the Giant Cyclone Coaster), Montreal, and Washington, D.C. One memorable trip was to New York City—he had been asked to play cricket with the Mt. Hope team in their return match with a team at New York Stadium.

For the rest of his many stories, you'll have to read “The Wearne Gibbon Affair and No Monkey Business”.



Les Wearne (left) lives in the family home in Australia and is 99 years young. He is the last remaining veteran of World War II who is a member (Life) of the Museum.



The picture to the right is of Les and Elspeth, his Canadian bride (née Gibbon from Toronto) on their wedding day, November 27, 1944. They raised five children.

Les' children graciously sent us these pictures.



## RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2019

*Your membership counts!*

If you have already renewed, thank you!

If not, please send in your renewal (\$50/person) as soon as possible.

Mail your cheque TODAY to:  
No. 6 RCAF Dunnville Museum  
P.O. Box 232, Dunnville, ON N1A 2X5

### *A Letter from the President*

I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas and that 2019 will be a happy, healthy and prosperous year for you and your families.

We had a good 2018--many new visitors and some who return periodically to see what's new. Our fundraisers were successful. In the past year, several new displays were mounted, including displays that honour our member veterans who have passed away. We added special chains around the aircraft for visitor safety, and put in a new furnace. We also added popular new merchandise.

This year will mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the incorporation of the No. 6 RCAF Dunnville Museum. In 1999, a forward-looking group of volunteers began creating our unique Museum. We are one of only two museums in Canada to preserve the memory of Service Flying Training Schools. We hope to have many more years of operation with your help.

Your President, Don Oatman

### **A Tip of the Wing...**

To the 2019 sponsors of our Memorial Garden flags:

Canada - Lori Lymburner & Shirley Poolton  
New Zealand - Marion Tait Smith  
RCAF - Sherry & Stan Swayze  
Union Jack - Sandy & Jack Murphy  
United States - April Cormaci

*Sponsorship for the Australian flag is available at \$100.*

If you are interested in sponsoring the Australian flag, the Fleet Finch or the Nieuport, please send email through our website or call the Museum.



**WORK ONE DAY A YEAR!  
SHORT HOURS. GREAT BENEFITS.  
NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY.**

Many current volunteers have been with the Museum since its founding, and they continue to spend many hours helping out. Others have joined them over the years. As with most long-time groups, though, we are losing volunteers due to ill health and other issues.

Most of our needs are handled by the Tuesday Work Crew, the Executive and other Committees. We need help greeting visitors and showing them the Museum during the summer season--Saturday and Sunday afternoons, Victoria Day weekend through Labour Day weekend.

Can you volunteer **ONE AFTERNOON** during the summer season? You will help preserve a historical treasure, and enjoy chatting with the visitors.

You **DON'T NEED TO KNOW A LOT**. We have a handy guide for volunteers and handouts for visitors that describe what happened at the No. 6 SFTS and answer the usual questions.

**YOU WILL NOT BE ALONE**. Two volunteers staff the Museum every open afternoon. An experienced volunteer will be with you at all times...until you become one!

**Call the Museum or send email before this great opportunity is gone!**

To the 2019 sponsors of our aircraft:

Anson - Don Oatman  
Cornell - Lynda Bain  
Mosquito - Lynne & Charles King  
Tracker - Floyd Smelser  
Yale - Joanne Villeneuve

*Sponsorships for the Fleet Finch and the Nieuport are available at \$200 each.*

# Mark Your Calendar!

## SELKIRK HERITAGE DAY

**Mon., Feb. 18, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.**

Selkirk Community Hall, 34 Main St. W., Selkirk

*Historical displays, food, music & more.*

*Visit our table!*

## LIONS HOME & GARDEN SHOW

**Thurs., April 18, 10 a.m. - 9 p.m. &**

**Sat., April 20, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.**

Dunnville Memorial Arena,  
275 Ramsey Drive, Dunnville

*Displays by local businesses and community groups, craft room, food, free draws & more.*

*Visit our table!*

## MUSEUM SEASON OPENING

**Sat., May 18 (8 a.m. - 5 p.m.)**

**Sun., May 19 (1 - 5 p.m.)**

**Mon., May 20 (Noon - 5 p.m.)**

## YARD SALE (MUSEUM FUNDRAISER)

**Sat., May 18 (8 a.m. - 5 p.m.)**

**Sun., May 19 (10 a.m. - 5 p.m.)**

**Mon., May 20 (10 a.m. - 5 p.m.)**

*Donations welcome on Tues. mornings, at monthly meetings and during the sale.*

## ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE & CAR SHOW

**Sat., July 6, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.**

## ANNUAL CHICKEN BBQ

**Sat., July 6, 4-6 p.m.**

## 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

*Date and time to be determined.*

## ELIMINATION DRAW & SILENT AUCTION

**Sat., Aug. 24, 5:30 p.m.**

## MONTHLY MEETINGS & LUNCH

Museum Meeting Room, 10 a.m.

March 9	July 13	Oct. 12
April 13	Aug 10	Nov. 9
May 11	Sept. 14	Dec. 14
June 15		

# 2019

## Our Hangar Art



**Harvard Mark IV**  
2009 by Derek Burrage,  
Cam Grey, Stan Swayze &  
Ross Watterworth

**1944 RCAF Standard Flag**  
*Flying at the Airport*  
2012 by Derek Burrage



**Tiger Moth Flying Over**  
**No. 6 Airfield**  
2012 by Derek Burrage

## Memorial Bricks

The memorial bricks placed around the Harvard Memorial are a special way to acknowledge the sacrifices made by our veterans and family members. Bricks must be ordered by April 15 to be installed in time for the Memorial Service held during the July 6 Annual Open House. The cost per brick is not confirmed at this time. Please send email through the website for information.

### 2018-2020 EXECUTIVE

#### Officers

Don Oatman, President	Tim Logan, Secretary
John VanLuttikhuisen, 1st Vice Pres.	Joanne Villeneuve, Treasurer
Frank Phillips, 2nd Vice Pres.	

**Directors:** Lynda Bain, April Cormaci, Ian Durand, Don Hart, Jack Murphy, Lori Lymburner, Paul Segui

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Building/Grounds - Jack Murphy	Merchandise - Lynne King
Fundscrip - Rick Pleasance	Museum - John VanLuttikhuisen
Lottery - Sandy Murphy	Newsletter - April Cormaci
Membership - Joanne Villeneuve	Website - Tim Logan

### VISIT THE NO. 6 RCAF DUNNVILLE MUSEUM

**Location:** 536 Port Maitland Rd., Dunnville  
(former Dunnville Airport, Hangar 1)

**Mailing Address:** P.O. Box 232, Dunnville, ON N1A 2X5

**Phone:** 905-701-7223

**Website:** [www.rcafmuseum.org](http://www.rcafmuseum.org)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/rcafdunnvillemuseum/](http://www.facebook.com/rcafdunnvillemuseum/)

**Hours:** Victoria Day weekend through Labour Day weekend:  
Sat. & Holidays, noon-5 p.m., and Sun. 1-5 p.m. Tues. year round, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Remembrance Day, noon-4 p.m.

To arrange for a tour, send email through the website or call 905-701-7223.