

# 434 Niagara

## BULLETIN



Vol. 25 no 3 Jan-Feb, 2023

### General Meetings

3rd Saturday of each month at

Welland Optimist Club, 38 Patterson Ave., Welland, ON L3B 2C4

until further notice. Due to present Covid restrictions future meeting dates will be advised by email and telephone.

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

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**434 (Niagara Peninsula) Wing**

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**Royal Canadian Air Force Association of Canada**

# Chairman's Report January 2023

I'll begin by wishing you all A Happy New Year and hope that 2023 will bring Happiness, Health & Prosperity to everyone.

We have managed to come through another year still coping with the challenges of COVID although there appears to be a brighter light on the horizon, let's hope that the progress that we have seen continues and that we will eventually come out of what seems to have lingered on making life difficult for many.

Our functions for 2022 were a great success from our Awards Dinner in June through Canal Days, our Battle of Britain ceremony, the Ted Barris presentation and our Christmas Luncheon. Besides the aforementioned, we did a number of fundraisers Big Red meats did very well as did our set up at Canal days where many of our kit shop items were for sale. Our First VP Julie Sheppard along with our Kit Shop manager Rod Lee set up a booth at Merritville Speedway where once again our kit shop items were for sale. Our pocket planners did extremely well thanks in great part to member Thomas Taborowski. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone from those that did the organizing to all that participated to make these fundraisers a success, without your help none of this is possible.

434 (Niagara Peninsula) Wing was well represented at the 79 Squadron Air Cadet Christmas function in Port Colborne and I have to thank CO Capt. Belansky & Cindy Loyst for the invitation.

This year we are planning a number of things but the only items that have been secured are the Battle of Britain, Awards Dinner, and our Christmas Dinner, in an attempt to avoid the booking problems we had in 2022 we had to make sure that we booked early. Consideration is being given as to a trip/trips and we have several locations to choose from there will be more to discuss on these items at our General meeting January 21 so please try to attend.

As you are all aware, due to COVID over these last many months we have not been able to secure any speakers, so I again appeal to the membership, if any member knows of a speaker that might be willing to give a presentation please come forward and let one of the Board members know it will help a great deal with our planning things in advance.

I am going to appeal to our members now and ask everyone to consider lending a helping hand when we do our fundraisers i.e. Giant Tiger BBQ'S etc. it is very noticeable that the responsibility for these things falls squarely on the shoulders of the same people time and time again, it only requires a short amount of time and it benefits the Wing whereby we can offer financial assistance to the Cadet Squadrons and recognize the local Legions for what they do for us, so please when there is an announcement of a fundraiser give some thought as to how you might be able to help, this way, it gives others a bit of a break.

Just a further reminder at this time regarding our January 21<sup>st</sup> general meeting we are heading into a new year so let's get started on the right foot, this your Wing and we can all ensure its success.

Secretary George will be putting out a notice.

**Bill Heron (Chairman)**

*Per Ardua Ad Astra*

# Awards, Prizes, Recognition

No one left without at least one prize at the 434 Niagara Wing Christmas dinner, which is now a Christmas luncheon, on December 10th at the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 56 in Port Colborne.



## Awards, Prizes, Recognition continued



In a surprise presentation, Chairman Bill Heron announced that Secretary **George Groff** had been awarded the Meritorious Service Award which is the third highest award which the RCAFA can give to its members. Only six are awarded in Canada each year.



Chairman Bill Heron presented **Tom Vance** with two congratulation certificates which had come in too late to be given for his 100th birthday.

One certificate was from the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau.

The other certificate was from the Governor General for Canada, the Right Honourable Mary Simon.



Membership Chair Jeanette Lee presented **Deborah McCarthy** with her five year service pin. Five year Service pins were also given to **Jo-Ann Mascitelli** and **Michael Mascitelli, Jr.**

## Our New Member



**David Boyd** was inducted as our new member by Membership Chair, Jeanette Lee



Iris Pierce and RCAFA Award of Merit recipient, Wesley Pierce

## Awards, Prizes, Recognition continued



**Wesley Pierce** was presented with the RCAFA Award of Merit in recognition of his contributions to 434 Niagara Wing,



**Rod Lee** won the RCAFA Award of Distinction for his activities in the Association, his dedication, performance of his duties and his length of continuous service to the Wing.

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## *Birthdays*

### January

Jeanette Lee

Deborah Wilkes Whitehall

Brian Heikkila

Michael Mascitelli



### February

Wesley Pierce

Julie Sheppard

## In The News

### Turkiye's Prototype Indigenous Fighter Jet TF-X In Final Stages

**Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI)** is in the final stage of assembling a prototype of the country's first indigenously-developed fighter jet, the TF-X.

The first prototype of the stealthy TF-X, built under Turkey's Milli Muharip Ucak (MMU) or National Combat Aircraft project, is now on the assembly line in Ankara, with the bulk of the fuselage and wings having been brought together.

The new combat aircraft is planned to leave the hangar on March 18, 2023. The first part of the production of the MMU was completed in November 2021. It will make its maiden flight in 2025 and enter duty in 2028.

TF-X's size is somewhat in-between U.S.' F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and F-22 Raptor, with an overall length of 60 feet and a wingspan of 39 feet.



TF-X in final assembly line in Turkey @SSB

The MMU aircraft is planned to be kept operational in the Turkish Air Force inventory until 2070s and will be interoperable with other critical assets such as F-16.

On November 24, Turkey's industry and technology minister Mustafa Varank announced that the computer for TF-X had been delivered to TAI. It was designed by the Informatics and Information Security Advanced Technologies Research Center (BİLGEM) under Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK).

### Plans for New European Fighter Jet Move Forward



**France, Germany and Spain** have reached a deal to start the next phase of creating a fighter jet in Europe's largest defence project, which has an estimated cost of more than €100 billion (\$103.4 billion).

The European fighter jet, known as the Future Combat Air System (FCAS), is intended to be in service by 2040 but has been plagued by months of disagreement between Airbus and Dassault Aviation. Political agreement on FCAS has now been reached which will allow the parties to move forward in cooperation.

It strengthens Europe's military capabilities and secures important know-how not only for our but also for the European industry. Launched by France and Germany in 2017 and since joined by Spain, FCAS aims to fly with integrated drone fleets.

In August 2021, the three countries signed an agreement to inject a combined €3.6 billion into the project's initial stage, known as Phase 1B, for building a "flight demonstrator" starting in 2025. Further progress had been delayed by continued negotiations between Airbus and Dassault which were recently resolved, allowing the parties to move forward.

# In The News

## Britain, Italy and Japan to Cooperate in Building a Sixth Generation Fighter Jet

Tempest is a sixth-generation combat aircraft being developed for the UK Royal Air Force (RAF) under the future combat air system (FCAS) programme to improve the nation's air combat capabilities to address evolving threats.

The aircraft is being developed by Team Tempest led by BAE Systems, a UK-based aerospace company to start replacing Typhoon combat jets beyond 2040. The team also comprises industry partners including Leonardo, an Italian aerospace company, MBDA UK, a division of European missile systems provider MBDA, and Rolls-Royce.



UK, Italy, and Sweden commenced industry discussions in July 2020 to tap the potential of the industry from the three nations for the development of a future combat air capability.

The three countries signed a trilateral agreement for the development of Tempest in December 2020.

Britain and Japan have been building a defense relationship for a while. The UK partnered with Japan to develop a jet engine demonstrator for the future fighter programme in December 2021. The two countries signed an agreement to jointly conduct research on the development of the JAGUAR universal radio frequency sensor technology for use in fighter jets in February 2022.

On December 9, 2022, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced a collaboration between the UK, Italy and Japan to develop a new fighter jet that uses artificial intelligence. For the moment there is no mention of whether Sweden remains interested in joining the program.

## Colombia Shortlists Rafale for Purchase

Colombia has opted to choose the French made Rafale aircraft over the competing Swedish Gripen and American F-16 fighters to replace the Israeli Kfir aircraft presently in its inventory. The Colombian government said France offered to sell 16 Rafale fighters with an estimated budget of 15 billion pesos (about \$3 billion). The Rafales represent “the best option for the country in terms of price, efficiency and operability,” a statement from the presidency said. “So far, the Rafale aircraft proposal is the best option for the country in relation to price, efficiency and operability. One hour of flight time in a Rafale aircraft is approximately 30% cheaper than one hour of flight time in a Kfir,” said the government in a statement. A key factor may also be the rapid delivery schedule being offered by the French. The FAC's Kfirs are desperately in need of replacement and are to be phased out from 2023. If, as expected, a Rafale contract is signed in early 2023, the first deliveries could begin before the end of the year. France has already shown in the Greek and Croatian Rafale deals its willingness to divert its own aircraft and production slots to provide early deliveries to export customers.

Columbian President Gustavo Petro stated that Colombia's purchase will be paid for in five years and none of the funds will come from a tax reform recently approved by Congress aimed at financing greater social spending to combat poverty and inequality.



# Canada's Remarkable Fighter Pilots

## W/C Vernon "Woody" Woodward, D.F.C. & Bar

Woody Woodward was the third highest scoring Canadian ace, after George Beurling and Russ Bannock. Woodward was a quiet man of few words, was not considered heroic enough to be sold to the public and like Bannock, he was overlooked by the propaganda machine in Canada. He has 25 confirmed kills to his credit and likely destroyed 14 other German and Italian aircraft. At one point in 1941, he was Canada's leading ace.

### Rejected By RCAF

Woodward was born on December 22, 1916 in Victoria, BC. He had always wanted to fly but couldn't be accepted for pilot training in the elite Royal Canadian Air Force at the time because he didn't have a University degree. So, like Beurling and many other Canadians, in 1938 he made his way to England and joined the R.A.F. At this point in time the RCAF had now turned down two of what were to become its top three aces.



### North Africa

In May 1939 Woodward was posted to 33 Squadron in Egypt where they were to guard the Suez Canal. Woodward was flying the open cockpit Gloster Gladiator, the last biplane fighter ever built and which was out of date when it came off the assembly line as Britain was about to build Hurricanes and Spitfires and Germany was already producing the Messerschmitt 109. When war broke out in September 1939, Woodward and his squadron members were told to make out their wills! They were also issued with fireproof identification cards which they were told to wear at all times.



Gloster Gladiator

### Top Canadian Desert Air War Ace

In September 1939, Woody became a Flying Officer. The squadron left its base near Cairo and flew off into the desert in order to be within striking distance of the Italian forces in Libya. There were only 75 Gladiators in Egypt and they were up against 100 Italian fighter pilots, some of whom had had combat experience in the Spanish Civil War. As always, the weather was the first enemy to face. They had to learn to cope with intense heat, blinding sandstorms, gales and torrential rains.

### June 10, 1940, Italy Enters WW2

On June 14, 1940, Woody, while flying with two other RAF flyers, strafed an Italian airbase and destroyed a Ghibli Bomber sitting on the runway. Later that day Woody intercepted a flight of bombers and aiming for the engines, he sent one bomber down which crashed in a group of English tanks where the crew was captured, earning Woody the distinction



Fiat CR-32

# Canada's Remarkable Fighter Pilots continued

## W/C Vernon "Woody" Woodward, D.F.C. & Bar

of being the first to score against the Italian Air Force. Woody then turned on one of the escorting Fiat CR-32 fighter planes and shot it down. No one saw it crash so Woody was credited with a probable kill. The rookie pilot in his first encounters knocked out three enemy aircraft. Two weeks later, on June 29th, Woody posted a double kill by downing two Fiat Falcons, forcing one to land near Fort Capuzzo and sent the other crashing into the desert after a long dogfight. On July 25th he shot down one Fiat and shared in the destruction of another. During this encounter he suddenly found himself alone with seven Italian fighters. Woody calmly turned to face them in a head on attack. His Gladiator received only three bullet holes from the encounter.

During December Woody destroyed six more Fiats, probably destroyed another and damaged four others. Woody's successes in North Africa between June and December of 1940 resulted in his award of the Distinguished Flying Cross

### Greece and Hurricanes

In February 1941 the Squadron converted to Hurricanes and moved to Greece where they were under the command of the legendary ace Marmaduke Pattle. Twenty-four confirmed victories made Pattle the top scoring Allied ace up to that time. On April 5th, Woody shot down a Fiat, his first victory since the unit's arrival. The next day he scored a triple victory by downing three Cant Z 1007 bombers from the Greenmice Squadron commanded by Mussolini's son.



Fiat Falcon



Cant Z 1007 Bomber

A week later Woody shot down his first German plane, a Messerschmidt 109 and damaged another. The following day Woody destroyed two Junkers 87 Stuka dive bombers. Notwithstanding the victories, the situation in Greece became increasingly hopeless. The Luftwaffe had arrived to help the Italians, giving the Axis 1,300 aircraft against 80 Allied fighters. The Germans were raiding RAF bases around the clock. On April 20th more than 100 German planes attacked Athens against a handful of Hurricanes. During the ensuing battle Pattle was shot down and killed. At this point he had an unequalled record of 40 victories. It was obvious that the situation in Greece was out of control. The Squadron was ordered to Crete to defend the largest of the Greek islands. With Pattle dead, Woody was the leading ace in the theatre and the others were looking up to him for leadership.

### May 1941 Crete as Flight Commander

In May Woody moved to Crete as a Flight Commander. On May 20th an Axis invasion of Crete through amphibious and airborne attacks took place. Crete would both give the Germans a good base in the eastern Mediterranean and prevent the British using it to mount operations in the Balkans. The 33rd Squadron was effectively destroyed by the invasion and Woody, along with the rest of the Allied fighting men was forced to retreat. Leading 100 men on an 18 mile march through enemy lines in the dead of the night, he was twice intercepted by the Germans. Both times he and his men escaped by making as much noise as possible, convincing the enemy that they were facing a large force. During daytime, the men hid in caves. Eventually they reached a cliff and climbed down 500 feet to the beaches before loading on to

# Canada's Remarkable Fighter Pilots continued

## W/C Vernon "Woody" Woodward, D.F.C. & Bar

a waiting Australian destroyer. The remaining pilots from 33 Squadron were then evacuated to Egypt where Woody learned that he had won the Distinguished Flying Cross. They were attached to the 274 Squadron at Amriya. Woody was glad to be back in the air and on June 17th he shot down a Fiat G50 fighter and damaged another. On July 12th he scored his final victory in the air by shooting down a Ju 88 near Amriya.

Woody completed his tour in September 1941. He was then posted to Rhodesia as a flying instructor.

### Egypt 213 Squadron RAF 1943

In January 1943 Woody returned to operations to take command of the 213 Squadron RAF in Egypt who were flying the Hurricane IIc. The Axis were now in full retreat and the Squadron occupied their time guarding convoys off North Africa. He was awarded the Bar to his D.F.C. on August 6, 1943 in recognition of his work in Greece two years earlier.



Hawker Hurricane IIc of 213 Squadron

### Wing Commander

Shortly afterwards he attended the Middle East Staff College in Haifa. He was promoted to Wing Commander in June 1944 and in April 1945 he took command of the Mediterranean Middle East Communications Squadron flying Dakotas and other transport aircraft.

Woody returned to the UK in November 1945 and decided to remain in the R.A.F. upon being granted an extended service Commission as a Squadron Leader. Three years later he was awarded a Permanent Commission. Woody's peace time career included various administrative and instructional postings but he also served many hours on flying duties. In August 1949 he commanded 19 Squadron flying Hornets. In August 1956, he went to Germany as the commanding officer of 322 Wing flying Hunters. In 1958 he moved to 69 (PR) Squadron as the commanding officer flying Canberra's. 69 Squadron moved from Germany to Malta and later was renumbered as 39 Squadron. In late 1959 he went to the Ministry of Aviation.

### Retirement from RAF

In 1963 Woody retired with more than 3,300 hours in his logbook. He moved to Australia where he operated a successful charter airline business.

### Canada

In 1967 Woody returned to his native Victoria, BC where he joined the Corps of Commissionaires in the Security Section of Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt. He returned to Canada virtually unknown and yet he was the third-highest scoring Canadian ace. He was ranked as the twelfth best fighter pilot in the British Commonwealth. Woody had single-handedly wiped out the equivalent of two German and Italian squadrons.

Woody passed away in Victoria on May 26, 2000.

## 431 RCAF SQUADRON AKA "The Snowbirds" 431 AD (Air Demonstration)



As can be seen above, today we know 431 Squadron as the Snowbirds, but long before the Snowbirds came into being, 431 was a very active Squadron during WWII as part of Bomber Command.

431 Squadron was formed at Burn, Yorkshire, England in November 11<sup>th</sup> 1942 and that time under the command of 4 Group. The moto on the Squadron crest is in the language of the Iroquois "The Hatiten Ronterios" – Warriors of the Air.

In World War II, RCAF Iroquois Squadron 431 executed 2,584 sorties, dropped 14,004 tons of bombs, lost 72 aircraft, and suffered 490 aircrew casualties, including 313 deaths, and 14 operational personnel deaths.

Great Britain's Royal Air Force's Bomber Command was formed on July 14, 1936 and became part of the air defence of the country. It was made up of groups and the Canadians were included in these groups. Group 6 was established on January 1, 1943 and was entirely made up of Canadian squadrons. At its peak, there were 14 squadrons belonging to group 6, including Iroquois Squadron 431

Formed overseas, the unit flew Wellingtons, Halifax Mark V and Mark III ultimately converting to Canadian built Lancaster X all flown on strategic and tactical bombing operations. The Halifax and Lancaster aircraft had higher speed and greater bomb loads than earlier aircraft.<sup>4</sup> The Canadian squadrons were stationed in Burn, Tholthorpe, and Croft, Yorkshire, allowing them to make sorties out across the English Channel, out into the North Sea, and into mainland Europe. Their targets included military targets, U boats, industrial centres, and Nazi occupied territories. The battle honours of Squadron 431 include the English Channel and North Sea, the Baltic, Fortress Europe (areas occupied by Nazi Germany), France and Germany (1944-45), ports in the Bay of Biscay, the Ruhr valley, Berlin, German Ports, Normandy, and the Rhine.

431 Squadron remained under the jurisdiction of 4 Group until July 14<sup>th</sup> 1943 and was moved to Tholthorpe July 15<sup>th</sup> 1943 until December 9<sup>th</sup> 1943 and became part of the Canadian 6 Group, and were once again on the move to Croft (Northwest Yorkshire) as of December 10<sup>th</sup> 1943. This station would be their home for the duration of the war. Since their formation the Squadron had 7 Commanding Officers and the only non-Canadian C.O. to command was the first C.O. W/C John Coverdale RAF.



# 431 RCAF SQUADRON AKA "The Snowbirds" 431 AD (Air Demonstration)

Continued

## Summary

431 Squadron flew 2,584 sorties, 11 airlifting POW's back to England.

Operational/non-Operational flying hours 14,621 – 8,986

14,004 tons of bombs dropped.

6 enemy aircraft destroyed – 1 probable – 4 damaged.

Operational casualties 72 Aircraft, 490 aircrew, of which 313 KIA,

Non-Operational casualties 14

54 Missing, 104 POW, 18 safe, 1 injured

Honours and Awards – 1 DSO – 63 DFC – 10 DFM – 2 CGM – 1 MiD

## Battle Honours

English Channel and the North Sea 1943/1944

Baltic 1943/1944 – Fortress Europe 1943/1944

France and Germany 1944/1945 – Biscay Ports 1943/1944

Rhur 1943/1945 – Berlin 1943/1944 – German Ports 1943/1945

Normandy 1944 – Rhine and Biscay 1943/1944

Squadron history as recorded in National Archives, Ottawa.

When next time we see the Snowbirds performing their amazing aerobatic displays remember, they bear the Squadron number of a Squadron formed many years ago not to perform aerobatics but to defend a cause manned by brave men who answered the call to duty and did it without question.

I feel that I should admit that in putting the above together it was done with my Brother in mind; he flew with 431 Squadron as a Rear Gunner during the war in Halifax aircraft both he and the rest of his crew survived and completed their tour of operations but not without their share of close calls.

Bill Heron



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