

NAVAL AIR STATION

NORTH SYDNEY

—

1918



INTRODUCTION

In August and September 1918, the North Sydney area of Nova Scotia experienced extremely poor weather. It was wet. Really wet. Rain and more rain soaked the soil. Open ground became a sea of mud requiring bionic effort to place one foot in front of the other. It was then that the first-ever naval air base was developed at Indian Point, a short distance east of the present-day ferry terminal.

Ninety years ago, the people of North Sydney, Nova Scotia witnessed tents being erected, elevated wooden platforms being built leading to the water's edge, and large crates being emptied of various aeroplane parts and engines. It was a wet and tiring task. Officers and men of the United States Navy, some two thousand miles away from the comforts of the southern parts of the United States (US), were lining up at makeshift tables for food that was barely warmer than the rain.

To make matters worse, the great majority of these US transplants had not known each other prior to arriving in Cape Breton, and were also about to create a naval air station with air crafts which were totally new to them. The first of the seaplanes had rolled off the Curtiss assembly plant in the US in late May 1918 and the first of the engines had been built on July 4, 1918. Yet, quickly and almost miraculously, these parts had found their way in a matter of a few weeks to what would soon become known as Naval Air Station North Sydney.

This is the story of that station and its American servicemen on whom Canada so thankfully depended upon to patrol Canadian waters off Cape Breton Island in search of German submarines that threatened merchant ship convoys during the fall of 1918.

CHAPTER ONE

Upon declaring war on April 6, 1917, Washington was immediately swamped with requests from allies for military assistance. The United States Navy (USN) was eager to please but with limited resources, had to be discriminating. It was decided that the British would receive a US battleship group to bolster the British fleet at Scapa Flow. The US also committed to providing numerous military escort vessels for all troop ship movements between North America and Europe.

The USN agreed to a third major function which was to combat what had become the nearly unrestricted submarine warfare being staged by the German Navy. During the month before the US entered the war, “ a total of 571,000 tons of Allied shipping went to the bottom of the sea. Encouraged by this destruction, the first ten days of April saw the Germans torpedo 205,000 tons of vessels. Shipping insurance rates bounded to heights beyond the reach of anyone. A merchant ship sailing for the war zone was assumed to be as good as sunk...and it was impossible for the allied shipyards to keep up with this rate of destruction.”¹ It was recognized that aircraft could be one of the most effective weapons against the feared submarines.

Objects beneath the surface of the water, particularly on a calm day, lay plainly defined to the eye of the aviator and had little or no defense against the airplane since the submarine only became aware of being bombed once the first bomb had hit the water. Most importantly, the majority of submarine attacks had taken place in areas that could have been patrolled by shore-based aircraft. Establishing anti-submarine aviation bases was the most logical approach to use. Thus the primary mission of the USN during the remainder of the First World War was to carry on anti-submarine warfare. The expansion of the United States Naval Aviation Service (USNAS) immediately went ahead at a rapid pace. Appendix A explains how slowly US naval aviation had developed prior to 1918.

Immediately, the USN committed its forces to establishing five US-operated naval air stations: two in Panama, two in Canada, and one in Newfoundland. As Canada developed its own Naval Air Service established on September 5, 1918, it would become responsible for the operation of the two bases in Canada by mid-1919 as well as three other Canadian bases to be established later in 1919: probably one in the Yarmouth, N.S. area, another in the Strait of Belle Isle area, and finally one in the Canso Strait region.

Thus in early June 1918, Canada approved establishing a naval air base in Sydney Harbor and one in Halifax Harbor. The location of the Sydney Harbor naval air base was to have been Keating Cove near Point Edward in mid-harbour. It was quickly realized that it would be too isolated and away from effective means of transportation. In fact, the only establishment near Keating Cove was the Regional Quarantine Hospital. The decision was then taken to use the North Sydney side of the harbor and locate the kite balloon and seaplane operations at Kelly Beach, where Munro Park is now found, and develop the airship operations at Indian Point, also referred to as Indian Beach, north east of the current ferry terminal in North Sydney, both being along the main road of the town at that time. Indian Point had been used in the 18th and 19th century as a summer encampment by the Mi'kmaq and the beach at Indian Point had also, by the 1900's, become a favorite swimming beach for residents of the greater North Sydney region.

The major points of the agreement between the US and Canada were as follows:

Canada: Provide overall control.

Provide sites, buildings, and non-aviation ground equipment.

Have the buildings built to United States standard and ready to occupy by October 15, 1918.

Meanwhile, the men at the naval air station would live in tents.

US: Provide on-site supervision and administration.
Provide aircrafts, air-related equipment, and all personnel.
Meet all operating expenses.

Authorities in Washington decided that Lieutenant Richard E. Byrd would have overall command of the USNAS forces in Canada and Newfoundland and ordered him on August 12, 2008 to leave the comforts of Pensacola, Florida. He was to go north and once in Canada proceed to Nova Scotia. There, Richard Byrd and all USNAS forces would come under the authority of the Senior British Naval Officer, Admiral W.O. Storye, RN, HMC Dockyard, Halifax, N.S. Lt. Byrd was reminded that exercise of the outmost tact, in all situations, would be required when dealing with British and Canadian military and civilian authorities.

Byrd had been ordered to establish a slightly larger naval air station to serve Sydney Harbor, and another to serve Halifax Harbor. The majority of merchant ships leaving the East Coast of Canada and the United States, tracked relatively near the eastern tip of Cape Breton Island and Sydney Harbor had become by then the most important port in Canada.

As already indicated, Byrd had also been directed to establish a naval air station in Newfoundland. In fact, it was to be a refueling station to be located ideally in the vicinity of Cape Broyle, some 60 miles south of St. John's. It was to accommodate larger seaplanes that would arrive at Naval Air Station North Sydney in the spring of 1919, which could operate longer distances and be refueled at Cape Broyle. Therefore, in support of the anticipated North Sydney naval air operations, Byrd was to ensure the Cape Broyle station had a beach upon which large seaplanes could be hauled up, or construct a floating base which could accommodate staff, equipment, radio services, and have moorings for visiting ships and aircraft. That Cape Broyle base was never developed with armistice ending the war on November 11, 1918.

The Commanding Officer appointed to the United States Naval Air Station at North Sydney was First Lieutenant Robert Donohue, of the United States Coast Guard (USCG). The US Naval Appropriation Act of 1916 had authorized the USCG to establish and maintain aviation stations on all American Coasts including the Great Lakes region and the Gulf of Mexico area in recognition of the life-saving properties of the seaplane. Upon declaration of war by the US, the United States Coast Guard service was transferred to the USN for the duration of the war.

Lt. Donohue had been the fifty-fourth person ever to qualify as a US naval aviator and only the second to have been so listed by the USCG. He arrived in North Sydney on the 21st of August 1918 and was soon followed by USN personnel and equipment. As Commanding Officer of Naval Air Station (NAS) North Sydney, Lt. Donohue was informed that the ultimate function of the station was to protect merchant ships in Canadian waters.

CHAPTER TWO

The August 26, 1918 Meeting

Lt. Donohue had no sooner given initial leadership in the development of the new station that he was called to an organization meeting in Halifax held among senior staff of the British, Canadian and United States Navies. At that meeting it was made obvious that conducting submarine patrols on a regular scheduled basis was not an objective. Instead, two seaplanes were to be kept serviceable at all times, in reserve, to be used exclusively for convoy escort work, while a third seaplane was to be assigned to anti-submarine duties. A fourth aircraft, if serviceable, would conduct patrol flights on an occasional basis. In all instances, Lt. Donohue understood that if a submarine were spotted from the air, every attempt would be made to contact a nearby allied armed vessel to support any attack by the seaplane.

The actual summary of the August 26th meeting is provided without change in grammar, spelling, and language. Note as well the use of Capital Letters within sentences. These minutes underline the worthwhile intentions of all concerned in establishing NAS North Sydney:

“ It was decided that operations should be on the following lines – the number of Seaplanes available at North Sydney is taken as being limited to 4 for the time being, though these later may be increased. As a safe estimate, the Cruising Speed of the machines is taken as being 60 knots – their Fuel Range as being 4 hours. Under the above conditions the following was decided on as the best policy –

To make efforts to keep 2 machines purely for Convoy Escort work, 1 machine for emergency ante-submarine work, 1 machine laid up for possible repairs and to make no attempts at running anything in the nature of a Routine Patrol for the time being.

Convoy Escorts will be required about twice every 8 days and the 2 Convoy Escort machines will be available for Training or such work as Lt. Donohue thinks fit during the remainder of the time, observing the importance of nothing interfering with these two machines being available on the dates required.

The Emergency machine will be kept in constant readiness for action based on Reported Submarines, care being taken to discriminate reliable from uncertain reports. As much notice as practicable to be given to North Sydney of Convoys leaving or approaching.

All references to Positions to be given on the US Squared Charts. All Times to be GMT unless otherwise specified. Air Liaison Officer to be put on the Receiving List for all Operation and Intelligence Reports, Patrol Daily Reports, and anything affecting movements of ships.

Copies of Aircraft Patrol Reports to be rendered to Senior Officer of Port & Senior Officer of Patrols, preceded by a short signaled summary immediately on return of a machine from patrol. Anything of interest re the above to be forwarded in addition to DAD (Defence Aviation Directorate) Ottawa. Copies of Weekly Summary of State of Aircraft to be forwarded to SNO of Port and SNO of Patrols and DAD.

Procedure for Convoy Escort.

Working with 2 machines on the conditions indicated previously the procedure will be as follows:

Patrol Office give warning through Air Liaison Officer at least one day before escort is required, giving particulars as to the following; Speed of Convoy (Slow or Fast) – Probable number of Ships – Course when Escort is due to meet – Time for meeting and position on US Squared Chart dependant on the following rough estimates for working with 2 machines –

Fast Convoy (12 knots) Outward Bound

First m/c (machine) to meet at harbour entrance and Escort to be for 65 miles.

Fast Convoy (12 knots) Inward Bound

First machine to meet 80 miles out and Escort to continue until harbour mouth is reached.

Slow Convoy (8 knots) Outward Bound

First machine to meet as before and Escort to be for 50 miles.

Slow Convoy (8 knots) Inward Bound

First m/c to meet 60 miles out and Escort to continue to harbour.

Note – in both the above Inward Bound cases the second relieving m/c at end of 4 hours will be so near harbour that it can continue or arrangements made for the first m/c to come out again. Detailed orders will be made out for Pilots by Lt. Donohue as to length of time each m/c will stay in touch with convoy and during this period m/cs will zigzag to keep pace with convoy.

The following was decided in addition – In view of the importance of North Sydney, that the first 2 machines (put together) in Halifax... be flown to North Sydney (for their use). That should it be possible to establish Sub-Stations this year the order of establishment should be as follows – 1. Canso, 2. Cape Sable, 3. Magdalen Is. observing in connection with the above that Magdalen Is would be of greater strategical value to Cape North.”² Walter Hose, Captain, RCN recorded the minutes of the meeting held on August 26, 1918 and agreement was conveyed by the signature of all participants.

One should note that experienced aviators actually expected that the HS-2L's would be able to conduct anti-submarine patrols over 1500 square miles during a five-hour flight. It was also anticipated that convoy patrols normally consisting of two HS-2L's would fly at about 1000 feet, as a forward screen at the head of the convoy, zigzagging to maintain contact.

Map of Sydney Harbor

A map of Sydney Harbor is found as Appendix B. It is map #1027B produced by the Survey Division, of the Canadian Department of Military Defence in 1920 at a scale of two inches equal one mile. There are four large grids, which meet at the center of the map. The top left grid can be considered as “A”. The top right grid as “B”. The bottom left grid as “C” and the bottom right grid as “D”.

Thirty-six squares numbered 1 to 36 form a map grid although not all numbered squares are shown for each of the four grids. Each numbered square in all four grids can be perceived as having a location designation, but in miniscule letters: “a”, “b”, “c”, and “d”. Consequently, a point on the map can be described as being at: capital letter, square number, and lower case letter.

Hence A-21-d is the location of Kelly Beach, where ‘A’ is the top left quarter of the map, 21 is the number of the square in that left quarter of the map, and ‘d’ is the bottom right part of square #21. In a similar vain, Amelia Point is at D13c.

The distance scale transfers to the following: Each side of each numbered square shown on the map is approximately 2,500 feet long. The map itself was reduced by 27% to fit it in this publication but it does not affect the scale values. However, image clarity suffered as a result of the reduction.

Having said all this, one should note that Indian Point although not labeled on the map is to be found at A11b, and Keating Cove, the site that had been rejected, is at A36d. Moreover, the North Sydney-Sydney ferry trajectory is among the following points: A11c - A30d - D20c - D27a.

Transportation in the North Sydney Region

In 1918, most roads within the Town of North Sydney and from major centers such as Sydney Mines and Sydney, were graveled roads with a sandy and clay top while other roads were

simply clay based. All roads served both horse and automobile traffic. There was one tramcar line along the main street of North Sydney which ran from the town limits at Kelly Beach, through North Sydney to the town of Sydney Mines a few miles away.



C/KA-P7H

Typical road network in the North Sydney Region taken from a North Sydney station seaplane in 1918.

The majority of freight destined for North Sydney arrived by railroad. In 1918, the Canadian government had agreed to take over railroads in Eastern Canada and named the new company the Canadian National Railroad (CNR). The CNR line between Point Tupper at the Strait of Canso, and Sydney, ran through George's River and Leitch Creek at the foot of the North West Arm of

Sydney Harbor. Between these two stations was a junction for service to North Sydney and Sydney Mines. This railroad line ran some 900 feet from the shore at Kelly Beach and a siding ran some 700 feet from Indian Point making for relatively easy access for station personnel to transport heavy freight items.

There was still at that time a steam ship service on Bras d'Or Lake but supplies shipped from Point Tupper by rail to St. Peter's on the east side of the lake would have to proceed by ship to the Town of Bras d'Or and then by road to North Sydney. It is therefore most unlikely that this route was used in supplying the Naval Air Station at North Sydney, except perhaps in an emergency situation.

The City of Sydney, being the largest center, was of some attraction to the residents of Cape Breton, including the personnel based at North Sydney. Access to Sydney from North Sydney was by overland car, by motor bus, by passenger train, and by ferry that ran every hour from early in the morning till late evening except in winter months when fresh water ice and drifting sea ice packed up into the harbor making it unnavigable.



C/KA-P7N

View of North Sydney Harbour with the harbour ferry SS Peerless in the center. Note sailing vessels to each side of the photograph.

CHAPTER THREE

The use of merchant convoys during wartime had been a British Navy tradition for hundreds of years, yet the Royal Navy senior leadership of 1914 had lost sight of this vital truth. These senior officers now believed that merchant ships were safer if dispersed over a wide area of the ocean.

It is not the purpose of this short story to retrace all the turns and twists of British Admiralty policy and attitudes towards merchant ship convoys. Suffice it to say that the German had begun unrestricted submarine warfare against allied merchant ships on January 31, 1917 and by July 1917 a regular North Atlantic allied merchant ship convoy system began to operate.

The American convoys would sail from Hampton Roads, Virginia, U.S.A. every four days. The initial July 7th, 1917 American convoy headed for the ports on the West Coast of the United Kingdom (UK) whereas the July 11th convoy sailed for the ports on the East Coast of the UK, and the pattern continued, alternating in that manner. Meanwhile, Canadian convoys sailed from Sydney Harbor, Cape Breton every eight days, beginning with convoy HS-47 on July 10, 1917, with the destination alternating between east and west coast ports in the UK. In July 1917, "162 ships sailed in eight convoys from Hampton Roads...and forty five ships sailed in three convoys from Sydney, (N.S.)."³ Of these, two were sunk. One was the steamer *Whitehall* that had strayed from the Sydney convoy the previous day.

The fact that German submarines increasingly began to operate near Canadian ports in the summer of 1918 was of grave concern to the Canadian Government. The use of anti-submarine aircraft was rendered more important locally with reports in Cape Breton newspapers on August 21st, 1918 that a German submarine had captured the large Port Hawkesbury-owned steam fishing trawler *Triumph*, had armed it, and were using it to raid other fishing boats and had already sunk the *Unap Saunders* out of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia.

By late summer of 1918, Hampton Roads and New York City were sending three convoys every eight days to the UK, while a slow convoy left Sydney every eight days and a faster convoy left Quebec City every eight days. The designations given to the convoys leaving North American ports were: Hampton Roads (HH), New York (HB, HN and HX), Quebec City (HC), and Sydney (HS). Ultimately, from January 1918 until the end of the war, 16,012 merchant ships sailed in convoys from the East Coast of North America. Thirty five were sunk, for a loss rate of .02%. In contrast, of the 48,861 merchant ships, independently operating, not in a convoy of any sort, on all oceans, during the one year period beginning November 1, 1917 and ending October 31, 1918, in support of the Allied war effort, 1497 were sunk; a loss rate of 3.1%.

Merchant ships that were grouped into a convoy at Sydney in 1918 were expected to achieve 8 knots on their journey to the UK but rarely averaged much better than 5 knots. Often, the merchant ships were tired old ships with many engine problems, etc...Also, it was a battle against the North Atlantic weather just as much as against the enemy. A merchant ship's crew may have included ratings who were very efficient at their job but also many who were not and might not re-join their ship in time to leave Sydney Harbor thereby imposing hardship on the rest of the crew during the crossing to the UK. Yet, it was vital to continue shipping cargo, food and raw materials to Europe. In practical terms convoys formed in Sydney harbour between May and December, while Halifax harbour which is always ice-free was used from January to April.

By 1918 as well, it had been proven that the bigger the convoy, the better the chances of sailing success since the doubling of the number of ships in a convoy did not correspondingly increase the perimeter of the overall convoy formation.

It was up to the American officers and men of Naval Air Station North Sydney to protect these convoys as they tracked near the Island of Cape Breton on their way to the UK. Reports issued

after Armistice day indicate that during all of 1918, German submarines had made only six attacks against convoys when the convoys were being protected by aircraft such as those provided by NAS North Sydney.



BICBU-77-132-266

This photograph is probably the earliest showing the ‘tent city’ being erected at Indian Point. It was taken late August, 1918. Very few people milling about. The tram tracks in the center of the road are visible. Note the use of a tent, at the main road, probably being used as a sentry hut. Also note how very wet the area is. A careful scrutiny along the shore below the two ships and just below the two sheds will reveal that there is a parallel 3rd, 4th, and a 5th row of tents about to be erected.

CHAPTER FOUR

Setting Up

With 155 of the 400 US naval personnel expected to arrive during the last ten days of August 1918, Lt. Donohue was pleased that the USN advance party had made prior arrangements for food and temporary lodgings. Already stacked on land at Indian Point were many crates full of tents provided by the Canadian army, common outdoor tools, mess hall cauldrons, pans, etc... and materials for the construction of sanitary facilities.

The fact that these items were at Indian Point was puzzling but it was soon revealed that the land at Kelly Beach would flood with a very high tide and until backfilling were completed by dredging the water off Kelly Beach and using that fill, kite balloons and seaplanes would be operated from Indian Point.



C/KA-P8E

This was certainly taken during the first week of September, 1918 and shows all forty tents each used by four to six men as well as the two larger tents in the background.

By early September, a small village of tents provided some shelter from the incessant rain that had plagued the station since mid-August. These tents, erected after raising and leveling each spot, housed the men of the squadron who slept on folding cots: aerologists, carpenters, aviation mechanics, hydrogen engineers, kite balloon winchmen, photographers, radio operators, aerial gunners, coppersmiths, blacksmiths, and a host of others all found listed in Appendix C.



C/KA-P8L

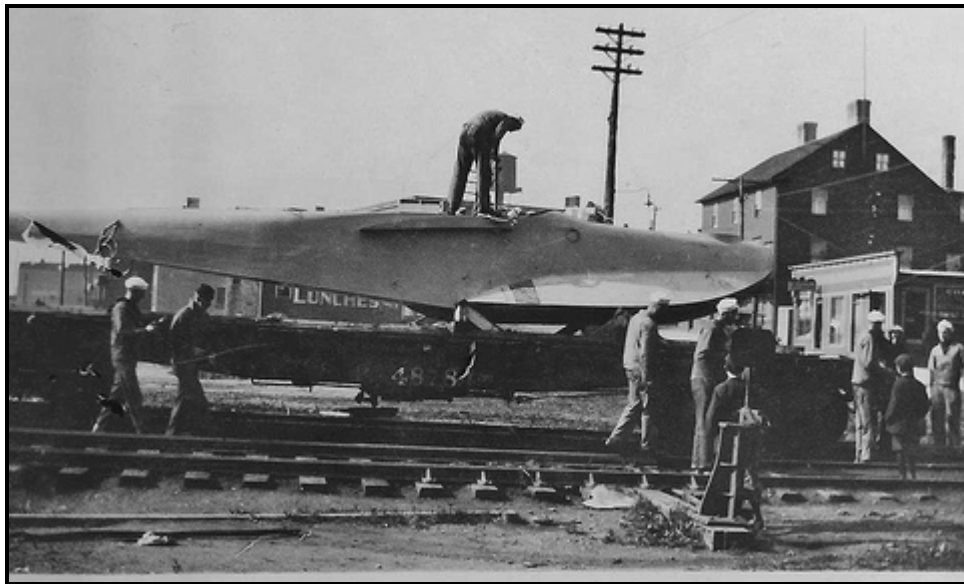
While it was not definitely established that this is the parlour of Mrs. Campbell's house, there is every possibility that it is. The photograph was taken by Lieutenant Caldwell where he resided, either at the Meech house or at Mrs. Campbell's. In any event it looks very cozy with a great big tea pot at the ready. One wonders if there is any meaning to the sword hanging on the right wall?

Meanwhile, officers were quartered in the Meech house across the street from Indian Beach, and at Campbell's on Archibald Avenue in North Sydney. Their situation provided better comfort at night while they, like others, endured the weather and the privations of the station during the day. The rain continued to descend and by the force of the wind, it sifted gently through the

‘gob’ beneath. There was fog and mist as well, whenever the downpours stopped.

Assembling the First HS-2L

Crates were received containing seaplane parts and engines. These had been sent by railroad cars through Point Tupper and Sydney River Junction. The transportation of these big freight items from the train station, and related heavy work were the responsibility of Chief Lewis and his crew.



C/KA-P81

Obviously the hull was transported by flat bed railroad car as one unit. The car has been shunted onto a siding in North Sydney and a few young fellows from town are observing the proceedings. That is the Gannon Block on the right, corner of Main and Blowers streets.

It was imperative to get aloft as soon as possible and therefore, despite the bad weather, and the fact that a few key personnel were laid up with bad colds, and the inevitable snafu that had resulted in fewer motor mechanics arriving at the station than expected, Lt. Donohue gave the go ahead to proceed with putting together the first of the HS-2L beginning Friday, September 6th.



C/KA-P7L

This photograph is intriguing. Obviously, the hull got to the station intact. Note that it is supported at the nose by a short steel bar which keeps the hull elevated at the front and resting on its port side (left for the uninitiated). Note the damaged lower wing tip on the seaplane parked behind the hull and the great variety in clothes worn: from Wellington boots to different caps. This photograph was taken on a rarely experienced sunny day, very early in September 1918.

Meanwhile, the machinists led by Chiefs Young and Sacks, somewhere uptown in the basement of an old house, were busy assembling the Liberty engines.

Whatever airplane parts had been put together on the 6th were quickly undone by the infamous gale of September 7th, 1918. Chief Robert Kerr and his crew, in raincoats, went at it again on the 8th and by Wednesday, September 11th the first HS-2L was ready for a test flight much to the delight and wonderment of townsfolk. Work began immediately on assembling the other three seaplanes.



C/KA-P7K

Two ground crew members working on the Liberty motor with the crew chief and an officer observing. Note the wooden dolly used to haul up the seaplane.

That first flight on September 11th became a special event in the North Sydney region. In a letter dated December 12th, 1963 Reverend Father John Edwards, parish priest at St. Andrew's Church in Boisdale, Cape Breton who had been a young lad in attendance on the day of the first HS-2L flight mentions, "of course our house, along with practically every other home I imagine, had plenty (of) visitors. I can still hear Dad and his cronies...talking about the big event. The general theme in which all agreed was that this sort of thing was not going to last – man was not made to fly!!!"⁴ How wrong they all were!



TNSM

This photograph although poor in original quality is of importance in that it shows what is likely a full maintenance crew as well as the aircrew which would typically have been nominated to one HS-2L seaplane at North Sydney.

Inclement weather had caused all scheduled convoy departures from Sydney Harbor to be successively delayed by one or two days. On September 22nd, convoy HS 56 was given coverage by Naval Air Station North Sydney seaplanes for nearly three hours. It had been the first operational sortie for the station. It had occurred four weeks later than it should have, had Lt. Byrd followed directives, as will be revealed in a later chapter.



BICBU - 77-134-268

The photograph shows two seaplanes afloat and two ashore if one looks very closely. It was likely taken around September 25 and there is no doubt that the man in the water (bottom right) must be uncomfortable.

Food

Paymaster Hays and his galley personnel provided a fine fare of food, most of which was being purchased from the Farquhar Trading Company in North Sydney whose advertising read: “Did you notice that the boys of the U.S.N.A.S. were all getting fat? Why? (Their) grub is furnished by...Farquhar.” By mid-September, a mess hall had evolved at the station capable of seating over one hundred men at a time, built entirely of crates and boxes. The navy carpenters had also made tables and benches out of scrap lumber. This mess hall became a true luxury for the station.



C/KA – P8C

This chow line leading to the dining room constructed of crates, shows a surprisingly happy group despite the rudimentary conditions at NAS North Sydney. A sunny mid-September day!

Coastline Identification and Navigation

A major task facing pilots was that of navigating in strange surroundings. The tracing of the coastline, fifty miles south and north of Sydney Harbour, was an immediate priority and was beautifully done by Ensign C.D. Clark. A chart was laid out in

squares, three miles each way, that also covered an area extending fifty miles offshore. It could be folded in a convenient size, or displayed on a hard chart board for easy reference by aircrew.



C/KA – P7P and P7Q

The two photographs shown on this page were taken the same day and identify some of the rugged indented coastline around Sydney Harbour. Note the fore and aft crosswire rigging on the pontoon that will be referred to on page 26, as compared to the photograph found at page 10.

Influenza Epidemic

Just when the last of the seaplanes was being assembled, an epidemic of 'Spanish' influenza hit the community. The *North Sydney Flight* records that; " No sort of story at this station and its experiences would be complete without a tribute to the faithful and heroic work of the Hospital Corps during the epidemic. Doctor Caldwell had the misfortune to go down with it himself early in the attack. A relief from Halifax, Doctor Tindall, did splendid work until he too went down with the same disease, and was eventually replaced by Lt. (j.g.) E. Jewett.

When a doctor was not available, all the nursing and care taking now fell on Chief Pharmacist Stoner and his assistants, with Lt. Caldwell providing direction and encouragement from his sick bed. Faithfully and well did they give themselves day and night to the sick bay. There were more than forty sick at (any) one time, some with pneumonia; with the poorest facilities and cramped space. They never faltered or failed in their duties...only two men were lost...Quartermaster Crilly (on September 28) and Carpenter Schaffert (on September 30). They gave up their lives in the defense of the country (of Canada), one of the allies of the U.S."⁵ Quartermaster Crilly and Carpenter Schaffert had by then been admitted at the Hamilton Memorial hospital in North Sydney, run by the Sisters of Charity, less than a thousand feet from the naval air station.

The people of North Sydney had opened their doors to a number of the station personnel to alleviate their discomfort at living in tents and being treated for the influenza in makeshift shacks until the epidemic had passed.

Lt. Caldwell had made all hands take their food from the central mess which had been extremely well disinfected, and then proceed to eat in their own tent. All staff gargled daily with disinfectant. It was indeed courageous on the part of all personnel to have lived through what they had to date and still look forward to finally putting seaplanes, kite balloons, and airships aloft.



C/KA – P8I

One of the numerous families of the North Sydney area who took in the American seamen during the influenza epidemic. Note that Lt. Calvin Caldwell appears to be wearing his uniform and using a camera on a tripod, as revealed by the shadows at the bottom of the photograph.



C/KA – P8J

This is a great view of the Lewis gun mounted on a wooden platform for gunnery practice. That is the Commanding Officer, Lt. Donohue at the trigger no doubt being the first to try his gunnery skills even though he would never normally have occasion to use them as a pilot. Aboard the HS-2L, the gun was mounted in the open seat in the nose of the seaplane.

Ordnance

Since one objective of flying convoy patrol was to discover an enemy submarine and attack it, Lt. Donohue wasted no time in overcoming a glitch in shipping. In early September, Lt. Robert Donohue had found out that the airplane bombs being transported to Nova Scotia from the United States had been lost in the shuffle. He ordered that depth charges aboard some of the nearest USN man-of-war vessels be packed and shipped to Cape Breton.

These were depth charges used by surface vessels against submarines. They were rigged with depth devices to have them explode under water. They certainly were not designed for the rough usage of airplane work and the exploding mechanisms were a threat to safety when aloft.

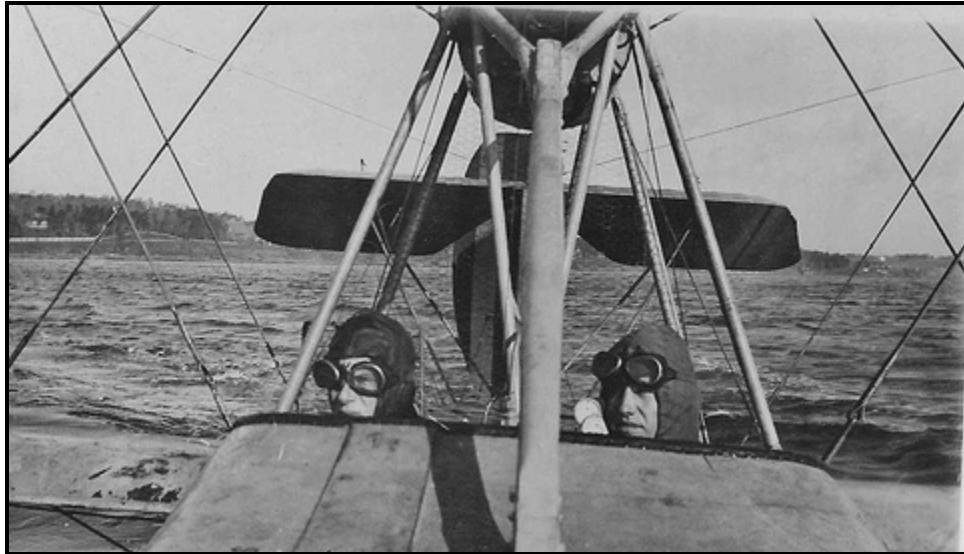
As soon as the HS-2L were flying, the ordnance department, headed by Boatswain Carlton, began arming them with the ship bombs which, during gunnery practice, proved efficient seven times out of eight. Nevertheless, their instability was a major concern and all expressed a sigh of relief when a load of air-bombs was transported by air from Halifax by seaplanes stationed at North Sydney: the first Halifax to North Sydney flight ever made.

The only light armament received for airborne use were six Lewis guns and an ample supply of ammunition. Blue flares were also provided to be carried aboard the seaplanes.

Air-Ground Communication

In September, Boatswains Kerr and Carlton as pilots with electrician Brooks in one plane, and Ensigns Clark and Long as pilots with electrician Bell as radio man in another, cruised over the Gulf of St. Lawrence sending messages every fifteen minutes up to a distance of 87 miles. This flight was the first-ever operational seaplane flight over the Gulf and within sight of Newfoundland. Lieutenant Hedtler had charge of the receiving end of the experiment and the results are noteworthy considering the

antiquated receiving apparatus. It showed that it was possible for the station to keep in touch with the seaplanes when they were aloft, and within range. It became an invaluable asset when on convoy patrol.



C/KA – P7F

Two pilots taxiing for take-off in North Sydney harbour.

HS-2L Flying in October and November

By early October, all four HS-2L were flying and two more had arrived at the station, in crates, along with additional Liberty engines. On October 8th three of the seaplanes pulled off nineteen hours and thirty-five minutes of convoy escort for HS-58 in one day with every plane ready to fly again the next day. This, despite battling the roughest weather and sea conditions that one can imagine. And as it was, the highlands and cliffs of Cape Breton continuously made for rough air. Changes in wind velocity and direction were sudden, and at times violent.

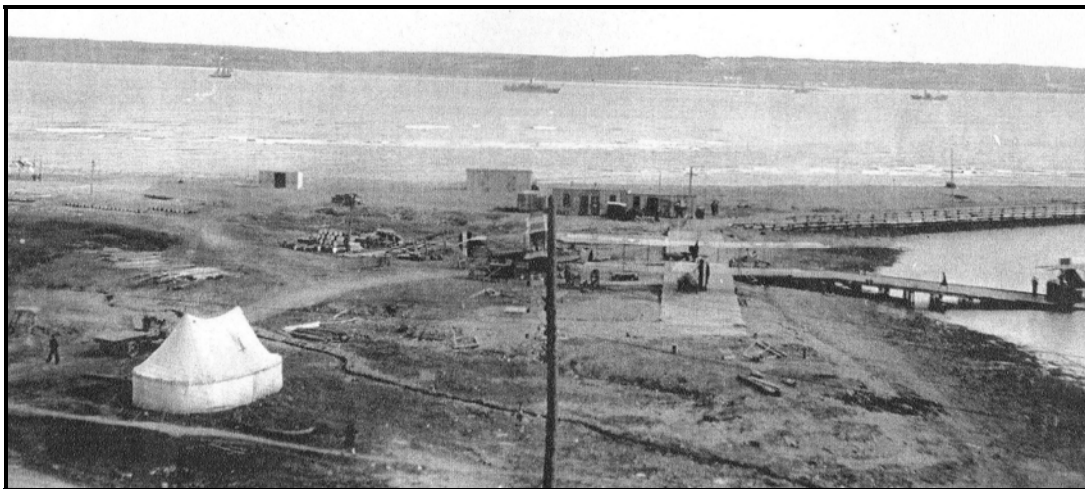
After a number of flights, the seaplanes soon began to display a need for modifications. The reinforcement of the wingtip pontoon constructed by Boatswain Kerr and Carpenter's Mate Schelen was a distinct improvement to the efficiency and

durability of the HS-2L. The forward movement of the upper wing sections which was found to develop after a number of landings was overcome ingeniously by adding steel braces made under Chief Long's direction.



C/KA – P7R

A sunny day in late September 1918 finds three of the seaplanes ashore for repairs. Note that the only evident USN markings are displayed on the tail sections of each seaplane. Maintenance obviously depended on the weather, since no hangar or other kind of seaplane shelter was available.



TNSM

This photograph although somewhat blurry shows some of the maintenance shacks built from crates and boxes. This view brings meaning to the hardship endured by the USN personnel in that a convoy seen slowly forming in the distance becomes a fine juxtaposition to its patrolling HS-2L seaplanes.

Boatswain Kerr also developed a stopcock which when placed in the fuel feed line, prevented the gravity tank being drained in a steep glide. Also implemented were special braces to strengthen the two fins on the top wing of the seaplane. Station plumbers, ship fitters, and blacksmiths played a very important role in all these endeavors. All the HS-2L designs and additions, which were created at NAS North Sydney, were duly drawn to scale, blue printed, and forwarded to the U.S. Aviation Directorate to be shared with other stations using HS-2L seaplanes.

Kite Balloons and Airships

Two kite balloons were expected to arrive in mid-October. Each was an elliptical-shaped gasbag with a basket hanging underneath. The plan was to keep them aloft during daylight hours to watch neighboring waters for submarines. Sydney Harbor Authorities planned to provide a small vessel as a base ship to which the kite balloon would be tethered about 1000 feet in the air while patrolling offshore. To the best of the author's knowledge, the kite balloons never arrived, nor was a hangar ever built for the kite balloons, despite occasional comments to the contrary in minor reports related to NAS North Sydney.

In practical terms, the concept of U.S. aircrew carrying parachutes had finally been adopted, well after the Germans had done so. This likely would have led to an innovative use of the kite balloons. As aircrew practiced parachuting it would have become evident that this new experiment was probably more dangerous than flying.

A pier could be made available at Kelley Beach for the ship towing the kite balloons. The immediate requirement was to dredge the bay at Kelly Beach and use the dredged material to fill the area near the beach for the permanent station. That plan was cancelled in early November when kite balloons failed to arrive and dredging was unnecessarily delayed, making the possibility of

establishing the station at Kelly Beach improbable before winter weather arrived.

It should also be noted that dirigible airships, which the USN had intended to operate at the Indian Point location of NAS North Sydney, never did arrive prior to war's end.



NMC



C/KA - P70

These two photographs are of the lighthouse at South Bar on the east side of Sydney Harbour at B13b . The aerial view from 1000 ft. was taken in September 1918, while the ground view was likely an early 1920's photograph as explained by Mr. Matheson.



TNSM

This photograph is just clear enough so that descendants of these men may be able to identify relatives. It is no doubt a crew with a specific function. It is headed by five senior non-commissioned officers in the center back row. It seems that they are all dressed for early to mid-October weather.

Moving to Kelly Beach

Plans involving Kelly Beach were to erect a stores building and hangar on the water side of Queen Street and to construct three men's barracks on the dry side of Queen Street. These two-story wooden buildings were ultimately to be used for mess, accommodation, and recreation for nearly four hundred men. Only one of them was completed enough by early November to be partially occupied and the third one was never erected. The two personnel buildings at Kelly Beach were named the Meech and Campbell buildings in honor of the families who had been so helpful to the station officers. Meanwhile the stores building and pre-fabricated hangar had by then become available at the Kelly Beach site.



TNSM

This photograph was definitely not taken in 1918. Probably taken in July 1919 at the earliest and not at all what NAS North Sydney personnel saw in late fall of 1918, although the basic storeroom had been constructed by then.



TNSM

Once again, this photograph was taken at the earliest in May 1919. Note the second two-storey barrack visible on the hill on the other side of the street from the hangar. The hangar had not been fully constructed by the time the first group of station personnel headed home to the United States after armistice. This end of the hangar which had been covered by a large curtain in 1918, was boarded up in late spring 1919 as shown. In fact, as can be summarized by reading this book, the Kelly Beach site was really never effectively used. The nuts and bolts of the station were at the Indian Point site till armistice.

A Time to Relax

The labor of office routines and endless paper work fell on the yeomen of the squadron. Those in the administration office under Chief Calhoun and the yeomen from supply and accounts initiated the establishment of a basketball league involving various departments of the station. North Sydney merchant Frank Bill had agreed to furnish all sporting goods needed by the station. The first league game was played on November 5th at the Empire Hall on Blowers Street, known familiarly by servicemen during the Second World War as the Knights of Columbus Hostel.



C/KA – P8D

This view shows various forms of transportation on North Sydney's main street. There are two automobiles, a horse and carriage, and two horseless carts. Looks like a sunshiny day in late September, or early October 1918.

The sports committee composed of yeomen under the leadership of Ensign Hansen pleaded with Lt. Donohue to make representation to civic authorities to finally have the station personnel put on a dance after the basketball game planned for Friday, November 8th, 1918. This would be the first dance in North Sydney since mid-September at which time Mayor Fenwick L. Kelly, in concurrence with Provincial Health authorities had put a ban on any public gathering for amusement purposes. A last

minute approval was indeed obtained by Lieutenant Donohue and a very successful dance was held November 8th with music provided by Seaman Lawrence on piano, Ship's Cook Kelly on reeds, and Air Electrician Comiskey on drums.



C/KA – P8B

Some of the station personnel on business in town, taking time to relax and enjoy a bite to eat. Note ‘gawkers’ at the doors, and the rear wheels on this truck. Are they solid rubber or wood?

Motors

A report originated by W. Steele, Jr., for the Chief of Naval Operations (Aviation) in the United States, Numbered H-S-HA, 0200-119, December 7, 1918, states that the station had been using one Indian Motor Cycle (with side car), one auto bus, one Ranier truck, one Ford automobile, one two-ton trailer, one three-ton trailer (Lignum), one motorboat, as well as a two-phase motor in the radio shop set up in the Paymaster's office. The engineering staff under Engineer Officer Hedtler managed to obtain necessary parts from various shops, garages, stores, and scrap heaps in North Sydney to keep these motors and vehicles going.

As well as doing outdoor guard duty around the clock, and assisting in all departments, seamen second class proved invaluable in scrounging for materials on and off the base, which made it possible to operate the station fairly smoothly, considering all the obstacles to be overcome in so short a time.



TNSM

This photograph is part of the fonds held by the Town of North Sydney Museum. The best way to get a clearer view of the 170 personnel depicted in the photograph is to visit the museum, housed under the Library on the main street.



TNSM

There are 23 officers represented here. The one in the center without an overcoat is the Commanding Officer, Lt. Donohue. This photograph may be viewed at the museum and at the Beaton Institute at Cape Breton University. Probably taken late October when the greatest number of personnel would have been aboard.

North Sydney Flight

Naval Air Station North Sydney issued a small farewell booklet on December 1, 1918. The Editor-in-Chief was Lieutenant (j.g.) J. P. Smith, USNRFC who was the station's executive officer. The author gratefully acknowledges that some of the information contained in this unique issue entitled, *NORTH SYDNEY FLIGHT* made it possible to bring a more personal view of the station's story.

The author is indebted to Mrs. Regis Ivers (Walsh) of Jacksonville, Florida, a former resident of North Sydney, and Mr. Parker Cann of North Sydney for providing what appears to be one of only two surviving copies of *NORTH SYDNEY FLIGHT*. They are available at the North Sydney Museum as Document #456 and at the Provincial Archives in Halifax as Vertical File 265 # 12.

Sponsors and advertisers from North Sydney, which made it possible financially in 1918 to print and distribute the *NORTH SYDNEY FLIGHT*, included the Bank of Nova Scotia, Nader Brothers Billiard Parlors, the Thompson and Sutherland Co. Ltd. Hardware, the Farquhar Trading Company, Frank A. Bill and Co. Hardware and Sporting Goods, and Cassidy's Photographic Studio.



C/KA – P8Q

This composite photograph was not trimmed before insertion in this book. It shows that Lieutenant Caldwell was quite accomplished as an amateur photographer. He created a multi-view with rudimentary equipment no doubt. It is an important photograph in that it depicts the whole station just before the epidemic struck, at a time when the station personnel were really getting their feet wet, figuratively and literally. The station had just conducted its first convoy patrol and a second patrol would obviously be needed soon.

CHAPTER FIVE

Armistice

On November 10th, 1918 in North Sydney, “ practically everyone went to Commercial Street and waved flags in frenzied excitement as over 200 American servicemen marched down the street singing and beating every pot, pan, and noise-maker they had been able to lay hands on. That evening a huge bonfire was set on the Ballast Ground.”⁶ People at the Western Union Cable Office in North Sydney had received word that afternoon that the armistice was to be signed.

There were a number of lasting friendships established between the Americans and the Cape Bretoners. The people of the North Sydney were regarded upon as being very tolerant, helpful, cordial, and hospitable.

Lieutenant Smith, Editor-in-Chief of the *NORTH SYDNEY FLIGHT* indicated that, “It is certain that every man in this command will carry away with him pleasing memories of his stay in this picturesque country. It is difficult to express into words our appreciation of the kind reception and hospitable treatment we have received in the homes of the people of North Sydney. Friendships have been made that will last through the peaceful years that now will follow. Back in the States, many mothers and wives ...with grateful hearts are remembering in prayers of gratitude the people who were kind to their loved ones far from home.”⁷ Between the years 1867 and 1919, Thanksgiving Day was always celebrated on November 6th in Canada. Numerous families and church groups in Sydney had ensured that the station personnel were treated to a fine home-style Thanksgiving dinner in 1918 even though it was a mid-week celebration. There was good cause for thanksgiving as the rumors were rampant around North Sydney that peace talks were progressing very well and that indeed everyone would likely enjoy a peaceful new year.

About one third of the station personnel were still in Cape Breton on November 25th and thus able to avail themselves of special return runs of the ferry *S.S. Peerless* from North Sydney to attend the farewell dance for military personnel held at Sydney's hockey arena. By December 11th nearly all personnel had gone back to the United States arriving home just in time for the Christmas holiday. Officially, from an American perspective, NAS North Sydney had been operated effective August 31, 1918 and had closed on January 7, 1919.⁸

The US personnel serving at the Naval Air Station, except for a few weeks in November and December, had had little comfort and conveniences yet all the men were later demobilized with spotless records and with good memories of the comradeships they had developed with shipmates who a few months earlier had been strangers. In September and October 1918, a tremendous number of North Sydney residents opened their home not only to those sick with influenza but also to others once everyone realized that the first barrack at Kelly Beach would never be ready by October 15th as committed to by the Canadian Government. It was getting very cold and the danger of an influenza relapse among station personnel was a real threat. It turns out that in early November the first floor of the one barrack which was nearly completed at Kelly Beach was occupied by those men not accommodated in town, and makeshift means of providing heat and hot water were devised as revealed in *North Sydney Flight*. It is true to this day that the spirit of hospitality, as demonstrated by North Sydney residents in 1918, is best exemplified by Cape Bretoners.

Upon return to the United States, most of the personnel reverted to Class VI reserve service, but some stayed in the regular force and went on to achieve high rank, including Robert Donohue, Commanding Officer of Naval Air Station North Sydney who retired as a Rear-Admiral after a long and epic career in the United States Coast Guard naval aviation branch.

Closing the Naval Air Station

Upon closing the naval air stations in Sydney Harbor and Halifax Harbor, the Canadian Government agreed to purchase all air-related ground equipment at both bases and in exchange, Canada received twelve HS-2L's, twenty six Liberty engines, and four kite balloons. Canada also became the beneficiary of any other items left at the two sites by the USN, upon departure from Canada. It is noteworthy that a total of eight HS-2L's were left behind in North Sydney when in fact the North Sydney Naval Air Station had only operated six. Moreover, only two vehicles of the six used at the station were found left in the hangar at Kelly Beach after the Americans had departed suggesting that some of these vehicles had been rented or leased from garages in North Sydney.

The Canadian Naval Air Service existed for only three months having been disbanded on December 5, 1918. However, the office of Director of the Royal Canadian Naval Air Service (RCNAS) was kept filled until the fate of naval air facilities like the one in North Sydney had been decided upon. On February 20, 1919, Major C. MacLaurin of the Royal Air Force, acting director of the RCNAS, provided the Deputy Minister of the Canadian Department of Naval Service with a report on the situation at the North Sydney naval air base. The following description is a paraphrase of the report that had contained information about the Halifax Harbor naval air base operation as well. The following contains related information from other sources and is accurate to date, February 20, 1919:

There are at present eight Canadian naval ratings at this station (NAS North Sydney). They are engaged in sentry duty, and keeping up the fires in the men's two barrack buildings and storeroom. There are no USN ratings aboard. There are a few USN ratings responsible to (Supply Officer) Ensign Hays located in the town of North Sydney winding up outstanding USN business with local merchants. They will be leaving for the US in a few days.

The contractors for the men's barracks and the stores building have now vacated the property entirely. These buildings have been taken over by Lieutenant Woods, Senior Naval Officer, Sydney. The men's barracks (sleeping and messing quarters) are only now finally ready for full occupation and are extremely fine structures built to (American) specifications. Wooden blinds have now been nailed over all the windows of the barracks and storeroom windows, with the exception of spaces occupied by the eight Canadian naval ratings.

The stores building is also completed and is currently filled with stores. These stores are in excellent condition, which reflects very favorably on the efforts of ERA Warburton and Petty Officer Percy Fawcette, who should be officially placed in charge of disbanding the naval air base. He could then muster the stores and issue them as necessary in future. Placing the stores building stove in a position, which does not require actually entering the storeroom, would greatly improve security over the stores.

The portable Hangar (110'X140'), which was provided by US personnel, is not in suitable condition. It has a 28-foot ceiling. It currently houses 8 flying boats, one large motorboat, and two motorcars. The roof of the hangar has already sagged about one foot, the walls are out of truth, and when the ground settles in a few months, the consequences could be serious considering the hangar stands on reclaimed land. The columns and the floor will require shoring. Curtains supported by props are covering the hangar entrance and the whole will probably blow with the first strong winds. It is recommended that the front of the hangar be boarded up, and this hangar surrounded by a fence constructed with the large number of wood pieces lying about. There is also a large amount of structural steel lying about that could be used to temporarily secure the hangar till it can be disposed of. (Sadly, in 1920, George Galpin, contractor, and worker George Cousins were severely injured and Thomas Shaw killed when the hangar collapsed as they attempted to remove it from the site.)

Major MacLaurin's own report concludes with the following remarks which are quoted verbatim and reveal the great insight which this officer had about future air forces in Canada and the use that could be made of both the North Sydney naval air base and the one in Halifax:

In Canada, "an air service, either as an adjunct to a Naval Service, or an independent Unit, seems inevitable. A nucleus of such a Service is well started in (these) two stations, and they may be completed at a very small percentage of the present cost. The stations could be operated in a small way at reasonable cost, and would perform valuable service. (Air) Machines could be used extensively and successfully in connection with fishery protection, the reporting of wrecks, and other coastal irregularities. They could be used for carrying mail between Halifax, Sydney, St. John, Newfoundland, and other important points. Forest protection would provide an important utilization for numerous machines in the vicinity of the stations. Flights could also be detailed to different parts of the country where required. In this way the service would be kept alive, up to date as regards aeronautical developments, and ready for immediate expansion in case of necessity." As is was, Canada, within 25 years of Major MacLaurin's report, was to develop both a Canadian Air Force and a Canadian Naval Air Service.

One notes that the map in Appendix B, at point A21d shows that Kelly Beach is labeled as a Royal Navy (RN) Aerodrome. There are no records to which the author has had access, which suggests that the RN had obtained formal permission to use the former NAS North Sydney as an aerodrome by 1920. Perhaps it is a simple map-making error.

CHAPTER SIX

The story of NAS North Sydney having now been told, it should be interesting to shore it up, in a chronological manner, by utilizing official military-related documents available from the Directorate of History and Heritage of the Canadian Armed Forces. These documents are grouped using letters W, X, Y, and Z which stands for the following:

W: Royal Canadian Naval Air Service Fonds 77/58, Volume 2.

X: Royal Canadian Naval Air Service Fonds 77/58, Volume 20.

Y: Royal Canadian Naval Air Service Fonds 77/58, Volume 22.

Z: Royal Canadian Naval Air Service Fonds Document
#81/520/1700/219, File 10.

The information is arranged under the terms: to, from, and date. The original wording with errors in grammar and language is used. Note the use of Capital Letters to highlight ideas within sentences:

To: Canadian Prime Minister

Fm: Sir Robert Borden

Date: July 25, 1918

What is present situation regarding provision of air craft from United States? What reply has been sent to the US Navy Department letter thirteenth June as to hydrogen plants and equipment required for stations? What is position as regards erection of hangars and buildings at North Sydney? (X)

To: Chairman, Nova Scotia Steel and Coal, New Glasgow, N.S.

From: Deputy Minister, Canadian Naval Service

Date: August 6, 1918

Telegram. Official request for temporary use of North West Bar, North Sydney (Indian Point) for purpose establishing air station for coast protection, Lieut. Johnson, USN now lent to Canadian Naval Department in connection with air service engineering will call on you tomorrow. Stop. Please grant use of this property if possible. Stop. Department prepared to pay reasonable rent for same. Stop. (X)

To: Naval Ottawa
From: British Admiralty
Date: August 8, 1918

Regret it is not possible to send any vessels for kite balloons. It is presumed that the possibility larger armed patrol vessels, or of acquiring suitable tugs or other crafts has been considered. (X)

To: Deputy Minister, Naval Service.
From: Thomas Cantley, Chairman, NS Steel and Coal
Date: August 9, 1918

Yours of August 6th with reference to use of grounds at North Sydney, the property of the Company, which your Department require for the use of a Naval Air Station at that point, we shall be pleased to grant the use of the property...for the period of the war for the nominal sum of \$1.00 per year. (X)

To: Captain Hobbs
From: Admiral Superintendent
Date: August 9, 1918

In referring to Lieutenant Colonel Cull in future, please address him as Director of RCN Air Service. Military Authorities should be communicated with regarding supply of tents mentioned and every endeavour must be made to hasten their shipment and delivery to North Sydney. (Y)

To: Deputy Minister, DNS
From: Deputy Minister, Public Works

Date: August 9, 1918

The request for permanency of buildings mentioned is due to the condition laid down by USA that buildings called upon to accommodate USA personnel, should be constructed to the specifications of the USA Naval Aviation Dept. (Ref AD 19 July 26) These stations will be required to operate in the winter to as great an extent as possible...In my opinion, Canada will not be able to drop the North Sydney station after war. (X)

To: Canadian Chief of Naval Operations

From: W.S. Benson, US Navy Department

Date: August 13, 1918

...note that the Canadian Government ...has agreed to have the permanent buildings to house the personnel ready by October 15, 1918. Some of the air materials has already been shipped to...North Sydney...and part of the operating personnel left on August 6th for ...Canada. (X)

To: Admiral Superintendent Halifax

From: Director of Naval Service (DNS)

Date: August 16, 1918

Captain Joseph Hobbs, R.A.F. employed with the Royal Canadian Naval Air Service, is now attached to your staff (Air Liaison Staff Officer) relating to North Sydney. (Y)

To: DNS

From: Lieutenant Colonel Cull, R.A.F.

Date: August 21, 1918

Reference my A.D.24, July 31st enclosing Blue Print of Station Layout #2 and requesting construction of Airship Station. The Gas Holder shown on this Blue Print is of 20,000 cubic feet capacity, and will be changed to 100,000 cubic feet. (X)

To: Deputy Minister, Department of Public Works

From: G. J. Desbarats, Deputy Minister

Date: August 22, 1918

I beg to forward herewith 4 Memos. From the Director of the Air Division of this Department covering

- (a) Expropriation for site of the Air Station at North Sydney,
- (b) Expropriation of sites for Seaplane Station at North Sydney,
- (c) Construction of Airship and Seaplane Station at North Sydney ,
- (d) Filling of Seaplane Station site at North Sydney.

I shall be obliged if you will arrange for the necessary expropriation to be made and for the work of construction to be proceeded with at the earliest possible date...As regards the construction of the buildings...immediate construction of 2 quarters and 1 Mess and Recreation Hall...will be required to accommodate 400 men as per Memo. of August 20th. (X)

To: Captain Hobbs, Washington

From: Lieutenant Colonel Cull

Date: September 5, 1918

Lieutenant Johnson, USN, civil engineer reports from North Sydney that...the hydraulic dredge is still waiting in Pictou (N.S) to be towed, the two tugs not having yet arrived from Quebec City. These were to have left August 29th...it is requested that this be considered urgent as otherwise there will be no possibility of getting foundations before frost. (W)

To: DNS

From: Lieutenant Colonel Cull

Date: September 15, 1918

(First) weekly report from North Sydney: Telegraphic report stated that the first machine had been tried September 11th. September 12th message received stated that engine in the machine was knocking, and that the machine was to be laid up for repairs. Telegram received Sunday, the 15th, that machine is all right again and ready to patrol. (W)

To: DNS and Sir Robert Borden

From: Captain John Fowler, for Director, RCNAS

Date: September 22, 1918

Report from the air staff liaison officer, North Sydney, states that four machines are now assembled, three of which will be used at once for convoy work. Slipway and platform have been built on the beach (at Indian Point). Several small temporary buildings have been erected (using crate material). Contracts have been let out and work on barracks started. Hangars will be started next week. (W)

To: DNS

From: Lieutenant Colonel Cull

Date: September 30, 1918

Events for week ending September 28...Messrs Dickson are progressing with the work on two barracks and one mess hall, completion of which is (now) called for, under their contract, by the first week of November, but their ability to do this depends entirely on the amount of labour that can be obtained, only one hundred men being available to date. Work is not yet started on the sewerage and drainage system, and nothing has been done on the Airship Station. Arrangements have been made for a water supply from Pottles Lake. The filling of the (permanent) Seaplane Station (at Kelly Beach) was to have commenced on September 23 and be completed by October 5th.

There seems to be some "hang up" with kite balloons in Washington, as they were to have left on September 20 and nothing has yet been heard of them.

A severe epidemic of influenza broke out in the Station. Four machines are assembled and in flying condition – three fitted with bomb dropping apparatus and the fourth with a gun. A few patrols have been carried out during the week, but exact details as to how many are not to hand. (Z)

To: DNS

From: Lieutenant Colonel Cull

Date: October 8, 1918

Events for week ending October 5: 2 patrols up to October 4th have been made, totalling 3 hours and 10 minutes. Nothing was sighted. The station is still suffering severely from influenza and two deaths were reported at the beginning of the week, but no further ones have occurred.

The naval authorities of Sydney have been also requested to arrange a local contract for putting the temporary hangars up at North Sydney. The Minister of Marine and Fisheries visited North Sydney during the week. (Z)

To: Deputy Minister (Desbarats)

From: Lieutenant Colonel Cull

Date: October 18, 1918

A Royal Canadian Naval Air Service department committee was held Friday, October 18, 1918 and the following points were discussed and decisions arrived at as set out below:

Captain Hobbs reported that the dredger was putting in very little work on account of the weather, holidays, etc...and that he had been over himself to see Mr. Cameron, Acting Superintendent of Dredging, who sent a telegram stating that every effort was to be made to work the dredge to its utmost capacity and instructed Mr. Blenkinsop, the Superintendent of Dredging for the Maritime Provinces, to proceed at once to North Sydney and take steps to hasten matters.

Mr. Cameron stated that considerable hindrance had been caused to the dredge by not having a tug in attendance, and it was decided to have a telegram sent to Captain Hose ordering this to be seen to, one being now available. Captain Hobbs stated that he was of opinion that the weather conditions will be too bad by the middle of November to permit operations continuing, as there no sheds and machines have to in the open. The last convoy is due to leave on the 24th of November, and it

was decided to inform Captain Hose that he could decide when the North Sydney station should be closed up, in view of weather conditions, or possibly submarine operations in the vicinity which will make it necessary to continue flying as long as possible.

Captain Hobbs states that the local freight agent, North Sydney, has not been willing to date to grant as many facilities for expediting delivery as necessary. It has been decided to write a private letter to Mr. Hayes, and Captain Hobbs is going to see the traffic manager, whom he knows.

In view of the shortage of labour, it has been decided to leave the matter of a concrete floor for the hangar until next year, as machines stored on the dry gravel floor will come to no harm during the winter.

In view of Captain Hobbs strong protest on this subject, and in view of his intended visit to North Sydney next week, it was decided to postpone the starting of work for an officer's quarters. It was also decided to inform the Public Works that the construction of a wharf (at Kelly Beach) should be delayed for a short period – until the intended visit mentioned above, and also to indicate that the accommodation for hangars is sufficient without piling.

Arrangements for providing carrier pigeons for NAS North Sydney are under way...application is being made to the Agricultural authorities for the detailing of one of their man to supervise the proper establishment of a carrier pigeon service.
(A)

To: DNS

From: Lieutenant Colonel Cull

Date: October 15, 1918

Events for week ending October 12th, 1918:
Total flying time, 27 hours and 50 minutes. Number of machines ready 4. machines not ready 2. Total time for convoy patrols, 19 hours and 15 minutes.

During the week one convoy was escorted from Sydney Harbour to seaward, a distance of approximately sixty miles, by four seaplanes in relays. One seaplane was forced to alight, through engine trouble, in a heavy swell, but was towed in by a trawler with very little damage.



C/KA - P7G



C/KA - P8K

As can be seen on the previous page, once in North Sydney harbour, the station motor launch would be dispatched to tow the disabled seaplane to the station ramp. While this view may not be showing the particular seaplane mentioned in the report, it is nevertheless depicting a NAS North Sydney seaplane being towed, as evidenced by the wake left behind the plane by both the motor launch and the seaplane, and by the anxious peering look of the officer standing in the open dual cockpit.

The men mess on the station under canvas.

Progress at the permanent station site (Kelly Beach): Barrack No. 1 The concrete foundations have set well and frame work is going up rapidly. Barrack No. 2 Foundation trenches only have been dug as yet. Mess Hall: Concrete is being poured into the foundation forms. Storehouse: Fair progress; foundations being laid. The very bad weather throughout the week has turned the site into a quagmire and the contractor is working under difficulties.

Hydraulic Dredging: Considerable time was lost through the dredge having to be moved to shelter owing to easterly gale. The dredge is only being operated ten hours a day, and owing to the lateness of the season it is advocated that orders be given that the dredge be operated continuously in order to complete the work before the ice forms.

It is deeply regretted that Lieutenant Johnson, USN, Civil Engineer, who was seconded to the RCN to oversee the initial site selection and preparation at North Sydney in August and September, 1918, died (of influenza complications) on October 13. Funerals were held on the 14 and the body taken by his parents to Ireton, Iowa. (Z)

To: DNS

From: Lieutenant Colonel Cull

Date: October 21, 1918

Events for week ending October 19th, 1918: Two machines on coastal patrol from North Sydney arrived in Halifax p.m. 17th October. One broke down 25 miles to the north east of Halifax but was safely towed in by the U.S. Destroyer 'DeLong'. These

machines were equipped with (radio) transmitters and carried out tests on the way down, a report of which is being forwarded.

Total flying time for week: 25 hours, 25 minutes. Number of machines ready: 6. Patrol flying time: 22 hours. 2 convoys have been escorted during the week, each by six machines in relay.

Progress: Barrack No. 1 will be habitable probably by November 15th. Fair progress has been made on the other buildings. Storehouse: Work is progressing rapidly. Dredging: Slow progress.

The epidemic of influenza has spread to the contractor's men and operations are being slowed to a certain extent. (Z)

To: DNS

From: Lieutenant Colonel Cull

Date: October 28, 1918

Events for week ending October 26th, 1918: The two machines referred to in the last week's report which arrived at Halifax from North Sydney on the 17th started back on October 24th. One reached North Sydney after being in the air 4 hours and 40 minutes, the other crashed at St. Peter's Inlet, near the Strait of Canso. No one was hurt.

Total flying time 15 hours and 10 minutes. Number of machine ready 5. Number not ready 1 crashed. Three patrol flights were carried out during the week, and shipping was escorted in and out of Sydney Harbour. No more cases of influenza have broken out.

Progress at (Kelly Beach Site):
Barrack 1: Good progress, nearing completion.
Storehouse: Nearing completion.

Work on the temporary hangar at Kelly Beach is being held up pending the arrival of the main steel columns. (Z)

To: DNS

From: Lieutenant Colonel Cull

Date: November 4, 1918

As soon as the survey plans of the remaining triangle of ground of the north and east section of Kelly Beach, North Sydney are received, application will be made for this land to be expropriated for the purpose of building officers' quarters.

Plans have been received from the US of a new seaplane hangar of a slightly increased span (110' instead of 105') and a modified form of this hangar will be put up, giving more space than the one originally intended.

Total flying time for week: 10 hours and 57 minutes.
Number of planes ready: 5. Number being repaired: 1. The weather throughout this week has been very cloudy and misty. One convoy flight was carried out, but the machines were compelled to return to base within 15 miles of starting owing to fog. 20 bomb-dropping flights were carried out during the week.
(Z)

To: DNS

From: Lieutenant Colonel Cull

Date: November 11, 1918

Total flying time for the week ending November 9: 14 hours and 40 minutes. 1 convoy patrol and 22 practice flights, including bomb-dropping practice. Number of seaplanes ready: 5, not ready 1. Weather throughout the week has been fair and cold. (Z)

To: DNS

From: Lieutenant Colonel Cull

Date: November 18, 1918

On November 13th, I was informed by the Deputy Minister, who had been notified by the Minister, that the RCNAS had ceased to exist, and I was told to make arrangements to cancel all existing organization.

Mr. Fuller of the Federal Public Works Department left last week to close up all buildings contracts at North Sydney.

Total flying time this week: Nil.

In view of the report from the Captain of Patrols that no further convoy patrols were needed from (NAS North Sydney), orders have been given for machines and gear to be packed up and stored for the winter. One machine which was at sea and had not returned when last week's summary was written, had a forced landing in a heavy sea and damaged its hull, being towed into the harbour in a sinking condition. It was got in successfully, and the damage is being made good from spares in the station.

Number of Machines ready: 4

Not ready: 2

Barrack No.1, which was approaching completion, is being finished, as well as the storehouse. All other work on the permanent station site has been stopped by order of the Public Works Department.

The hydraulic dredge is still continuing, as well as the erection of the temporary seaplane and kite balloon hangars. (A)

To: DNS

From: Lieutenant Colonel Cull

Date: November 25, 2008.

Events for week ending November 23rd, 1918:
Lieutenant Mobsby and Sergeants law and Wagg left for North Sydney on Sunday, the 17th instant, in connection with stocktaking. It was decided a few weeks ago that NAS North Sydney ...should be closed...and in view of the material on the station, which will be turned over to Canada, it was necessary to have a thorough stocktaking. Lieutenant Mobsby and party are expected back in Ottawa today, having finished.

No flying during this week.
On November 14th a strong westerly gale broke up the temporary wooden slipway at Indian Point. All timber, however, was salvaged and can be used at the permanent station at Kelly Beach. The weather throughout the week has been very wet and cold and influenza has again broken out. Temporary seaplane hangar is nearly completed and is being used for storage

purposes. The erection of the temporary kite balloon hangar has been cancelled.

Machines ready: 4

Not ready: 2 (Z)

To: DNS

From: Lieutenant Colonel Cull

Date: December 3, 1918

No further flying will be carried out at North Sydney this year. (Z)

To: DNS

From: Lieutenant Colonel Cull

Date: December 9, 1918

Word has been received that all American personnel, with the exception of a small care and maintenance party will have left North Sydney by December 11. (Z)

To: DNS

From: Lieutenant Colonel Cull

Date: December 17, 1918

I have returned from Washington after having settled the matter of allocation of expenses between Canada and the United States and Captain Hobbs (who had proceeded to North Sydney for the last few days of operations at the station) has now arrived back in Ottawa and has proceeded on leave pending his return to (the R.A.F. in) England.

Sub-Lieut. Frowd, ...reports that the Mayor of North Sydney has raised an objection to bombs and ammunition being stowed on the station...and has threatened to personally place these articles in the river unless they are removed or a guard put on. (Z)

No doubt aware of Mayor Fenwick Kelly's reputation, Sub.Lieut. Frowd likely disposed of the bombs very promptly.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Prior Publications About NAS North Sydney

While doing research during the last year, it was not surprising to identify that very little has been written about US Naval Air Stations in Canada during the First World War. However it was most disconcerting to realize that the little that has been recorded about NAS North Sydney is substantially incorrect. Typical of this would be the article found in the *Canadian Aviation Historical Society Journal*, Winter 1989, Volume 27, Number 4. It was entitled U.S. NAVAL AIR STATIONS IN CANADA: 1918 as written by Lieutenant (J.G.) Charles Mathews, USNRF.

The bottom of page 140 and most of page 141 explain the development and operation of Naval Air Station North Sydney and one is hard pressed to find a single element of correctness and accuracy in the text. Somehow the author has the station operating at Keating's Cove (Keating Cove), a location which, as already explained, was in fact rejected as a possible site thereby rendering little credence to the information found in the rest of the Mathews article.

On Following Directives

It appears that Lieutenant Byrd, Commanding Officer of Naval Air Station Halifax, did not adhere to the directives that had been communicated to him regarding the intended size of the North Sydney station and the imperative demand to have seaplanes on convoy patrol in North Sydney before initiating convoy patrols out of the Halifax station.

The operational meeting held in Halifax on August 26, 1918 among all concerned parties had made it clear that the first two seaplanes ready to operate in Halifax would in fact be sent immediately to do convoy patrols out of North Sydney.

Lieutenant Byrd failed to reveal that two HS-2L seaplanes had been ready in Halifax on August 25, the day before the meeting, and had in fact already conducted one convoy patrol. Nor did Lieutenant Byrd ever send these two seaplanes to North Sydney as a result of the meeting. This flagrant disregard of the agreement meant that the first convoy patrol was not conducted in North Sydney until September 22, 1918, a full four weeks after the first patrol was flown out of the Halifax station.

As previously noted, the intent was also to make the naval air station in North Sydney larger than the one in Halifax since by then Sydney Harbour had become the most important in Canada and as well, since all east bound convoys from the Northern United States and Canada passed by the tip of Cape Breton Island. Yet, as reported in the DNS fiscal report on US operated naval air stations in Canada, for the year ending March 31, 1919, the expenditures for construction of facilities at Halifax were \$335,798.94 while those in North Sydney were \$238,643.45, a whopping 40% difference, spent at the incorrect location!

These are but a few of the indications, which suggest that being Commanding Officer of Naval Air Station North Sydney must not have been an easy task for Lt. Donohue.

Acknowledgements

Significant assistance was received from a number of persons during the process of writing this book. I visited the North Sydney Museum in the summer of 2008. All arrangements had been made by Ron MacDonald, Secretary of the North Sydney Historical Society, which operates the North Sydney Museum. Local historians took time to explain the information they had prepared for me to review. Jonathan MacLeod, summer student working at the museum later sent me copies of all photographs and reports in which I had indicated an interest, communicating mostly by e-mail from

nsydmuseum@ns.sympatico.ca. Throughout the fall of 2008, I was constantly in touch with Ron MacDonald seeking additional information. He knew all the people to contact as he had recently spent a great deal of time conducting research for his book, IN AND OUT OF ORDER, the story of politicians from the North Sydney area over the years.

A visit to the Beaton Institute at Cape Breton University proved equally worthwhile with Jane Arnold, Anne MacNeil, and Krista Smith providing extensive assistance in researching the naval aviation-related material held by the Institute. Follow up requests addressed to beaton@cbu.ca were also met with care and diligence.

Contact with the current United States Coast Guard (USCG) Chief Historian, Dr. Robert Browning, led to further assistance by two other USCG historians whose expertise is in the area of Coast Guard Aviation: Captain Robert Workman and Lieutenant Commander John 'Bear' Moseley. They enthusiastically and continually update the USCG aviation history web site found at <http://uscgaviationhistory.aoptero.org/> and provided assistance to me in the process of writing this story.

Rannie Gillis, author of HISTORIC NORTH SYDNEY provided suggestions and information regarding the identity of some of the photographs used in this book.

Warren Sinclair, chief archivist at the Directorate of History and Heritage at Canadian National Defence Headquarters, was as usual most prompt in providing a stack of various documents related to the operation of Naval Air Station North Sydney. It was a tremendous effort considering the staggering number of requests he receives for historical military information each year.

I received an e-mail from Neil Matheson formerly of North Sydney who suggested that I might be interested in photographs in the Calwell/Kvaran Archives. I contacted the archivist, Einar Kvaran, and indeed obtained permission to use

some thirty photographs related to Naval Air Station North Sydney.

It turns out that the principal medical officer at the station, Lt. Calvin Caldwell was an amateur photographer and took the opportunity in the fall of 1918 to take ground level and airborne photographs some of which are shown in this book. These photographs along with thousands of others Doctor Caldwell took during his long career in the United States Navy spanning both world wars are an invaluable treasure trove of information. I was so fortunate that Neil Matheson took time to inform me about this source of photographs. It so happens as well that Neil is related to the Kelly's who sold the Kelly Beach land in 1911 to the Town of North Sydney.

Roy Grossnick was Chief Historian at the National Naval Historical Center in Washington, D.C. until he retired in 2007. He is still involved in what has now become known as the US Naval History and Heritage Command. By means of many e-mail communications, Roy was of great assistance in the verification of factual information based on the American records to which he has access.

In writing journal articles and books over the last number of years, my daughter Diane has always been faithful in assisting me with editing both text and images and showing me how best to use the personal computer in preparing the final product. To her I owe a vote of thanks for her patience and understanding.

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ENDNOTES *

1. NAVY WINGS, p.200
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3. CONVOY, p. 73
4. BEATON INSTITUTE, CAPE BRETON UNIVERSITY. Fonds # 77-134-268 contains the letter and one photograph.
5. *NORTH SYDNEY FLIGHT*, pp. 4,5, and 6
6. WINDOWS ON THE PAST: NORTH SYDNEY, p.134
7. *NORTH SYDNEY FLIGHT*, Cover Page.
8. www.bluejacket.com/usn
9. *SOME RECOLLECTIONS ... COAST GUARD AVIATION*, pp. 42 and 50

* Refer to the bibliography for the full titles of books and articles.

PHOTOGRAPHIC SOURCES

The following explains the sources of the photographs shown in this book:

TNSM: Town of North Sydney Museum
BICBU: Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University
C/KA: Caldwell/Kvaran Archives
NMC: Neil Matheson Collection

CALENDAR REFERENCE

The following is an abbreviated calendar for the summer and fall of 1918 based on the information found at

<http://www.hf.rim.or.jp/~kaji/cal/cal.cgi?1918>:

August 21: Wednesday
August 31: Saturday
September 11: Wednesday
September 27: Friday
October 1: Tuesday
October 31: Thursday
November 6: Wednesday
November 11: Monday
November 25: Monday
December 1: Sunday
December 25: Wednesday

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Front Cover: This set of wings belonged to an Ensign flying with the USN Reserve Flying Corps in 1918 and is reprinted with permission of Andrew L. Turner of Manion's International Auction House. The wings along with the Ensign's log book were on sale at the time of publication of this book at www.manions.com.

Back Cover: The author bought this stylized flag in the late 1900's. The bald eagle is the emblem of Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia. A booklet came with the flag very similar to that which appears at www.worldatlas.com.

About the Author: Peter E. Lawson, Ph.D., CD

Peter flew with the Royal Canadian Naval Air Service in the 1950's and then became a teacher, retiring in 1994 as Chief Inspector of Schools for the Province of Nova Scotia. He is the author of numerous journal articles related to history as well as many books including the following:

A GENTLEMAN AVIATOR: The biography of Canada's lone naval air ace of the Second World War.

ABOARD SHIPS WITH WINGS: The military biography of Canada's most often honored and decorated naval air pilot in World War Two.

STANLEY AIRPORT – 1941-1944: Nova Scotia's only pilot training base under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan of World War II.

VU 33 – A CHRONOLOGY: The story of the only west coast Canadian Naval Air Squadron. It operated from 1953 to 1968.

Contact

This book may be obtained by contacting Peter Lawson at:

414 – 5 Ramsgate Lane,
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
B3P-2S6

NAVAL AIR STATION NORTH SYDNEY – 1918

1. United States Naval Air Stations in World War One.
2. United States Naval Aviation
3. North Sydney, Nova Scotia, Canada.
4. Atlantic Convoy Patrols in World War One.
5. Royal Canadian Naval Air Service in 1918.
6. The Influenza Epidemic of 1918.
7. Lieutenant Calvin Caldwell, medical officer, World War One.

APPENDIX A

The Development of Naval Aviation in the US

In the years leading to 1912, the USN wondered if the aero plane would finally provide ship captains the answer to what lies beyond the horizon. If so, the major scouting problems of the future would be resolved. By the summer of 1912, the USN agreed to transfer a few officers from their regular duties aboard fighting ships to an aviation camp in Annapolis, Maryland. Three USN and two United States Marine Corps (USMC) officers formed this first group of potential naval aviators. The year's budget for this initial effort amounted to \$140,000 including the cost of six second-hand aircraft each carrying a radio with a range of 12 miles.

The period 1912 to 1915 was one of experimentation, on a terribly low budget. Consequently, the year 1915 ended with the USN possessing only 17 aeroplanes of various types and doubtful serviceability. By the winter of 1916, the delivery of twelve N-9 training planes to the Naval Air Station in Pensacola under the command of Captain J. L. Jayne put an end to experimentation with freak designs that had occurred since 1913, such as the Gallaudet biplane. Naval aviators would henceforth be flying standardized seaplanes.

The day the US joined the First World War, the entire USN regular aviation force consisted of 38 Flight Officers, 239 ground crew members, and 54 airplanes not one of which was suitable for war service. Moreover, flying in the USN came under an Assistant for Aviation, himself responsible to an Aide to the Office of Naval Operations. Hardly a high level position! This Assistant for Aviation oversaw the regular aviation force operation as well as the United States Navy Reserve Flying Corps (USNRFC). Uniquely, the designation 'US Naval Aviator' was given to qualified flight officers serving with the USN, the USMC, the USCG, and the USNRFC.

The urgent expansion due to war resulted in dramatic changes in the importance given to naval aviation in the US. By early 1918, Captain Noble Irwin was designated Director of Naval Aviation responsible directly to the US Chief of Naval Operations. Despite the higher profile, the task of forming effective naval aviation squadrons was very difficult to achieve since the USN still maintained its 'Bureau' approach to organization.

Each major Bureau of the USN became responsible to provide to the aviation section, materials and personnel related to that Bureau so that these could be sent to a naval air station and begin to operate as a squadron. For example, the Navigation Bureau provided instruments, observers, and aerographers. The Steam Engineering Bureau provided engines and radios and personnel to fix them. The Construction and Repair Bureau sent hulls and wings and people who could install them and fix them, etc...This meant that personnel from various Bureaus would be assigned to a US naval air station, not knowing other personnel from these different Bureaus, yet expected to work well together from the date of arrival at the naval air station!

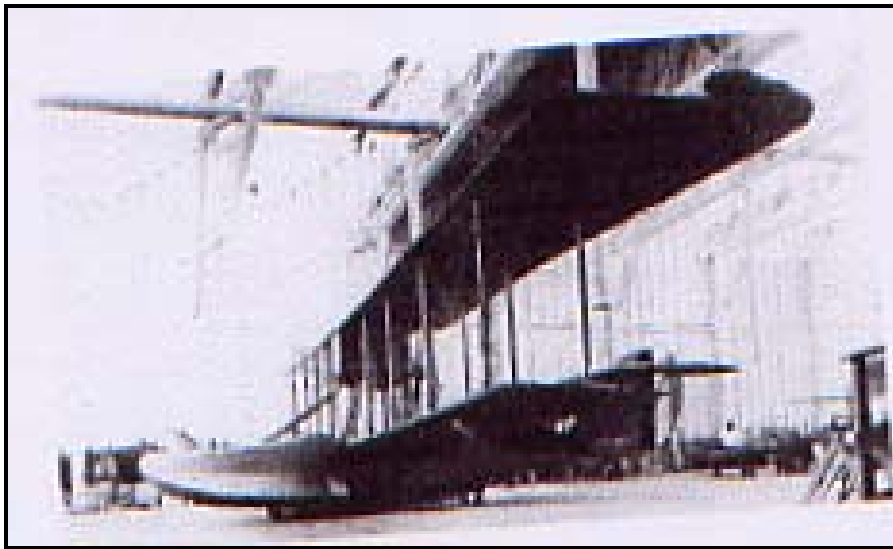
That situation is what existed in late August 1918 as USN personnel arrived to operate the naval air station in North Sydney. The difficulties were compounded by the fact that a majority of those personnel was not regular force but members of the naval reserve flying corps, which generally had received minimal training. Regular officers of the USN with years of shipboard training could not readily be spared from sea duty. Hence the sudden expansion of the USN Air Service had essentially become dependant on the USNRFC and on trained civilian pilot recruits.

The Aircraft

By early 1917, the US still did not have a seaplane for effective anti-submarine patrol work, and US experts sent to the European war front reported that none of the Allies did either, other than perhaps the 'Felixstowe, F-3' flying boat, a descendant

of the US Curtiss-built 'America' aero plane. This F-3, with slight modification, was again built by Curtiss and designated the H-16. It was to be used as a stopgap measure till a new single engine production-type patrol plane could be built by Curtiss as the HS-1, powered by a 'Liberty' engine. The HS-1 was to be able to stay aloft 4 hours and carry two 180 lbs. bombs.

However, as soon as the HS-1 could be put into service in early 1918, it was revealed that 180 lbs. bombs were no longer effective against submarines. Hence the Curtiss Company at its facilities in Buffalo, New York, added a new twelve-foot long upper wing center section, and a corresponding six-foot panel between the hull and each lower wing outer panel giving it a wing span of 74 feet, and a height of 15 feet.



Source: www.ronagl.0catch.com/seaplanes.htm

Although somewhat unclear, this photograph, taken from just under the port wing of the HS-2L factory prototype, gives a true perspective of the HS-2L's height and tremendous wing span.

The Curtiss company also rigged bigger bomb bays capable of carrying two 230 lbs. depth charges. This newest version equipped with one flexible .30 inch Lewis machine gun was designated the HS-2L, and became the standard submarine patrol aircraft for the USN aviation directorate till the end of the war.

The HS-2L was a three-seat general reconnaissance and patrol aircraft powered by the V-12 Liberty engine rated at 400 horsepower but calibrated at 320 to 330 horsepower for USN use and consequently, it had a maximum speed of 83 knots. It had a range of 515 miles and a service ceiling of 5200 feet. Its engine installed behind the wings would push the aircraft through the air giving the two pilots, mid-ship and the crewmember in the nose of the seaplane unobstructed visibility. Often, one pilot would fly and be accompanied in the dual seat by another aircrew with a designated function for that operational flight.



C/KA – P71

Although the officer is not known, it is thought that it could be Lt. Caldwell who would have gotten someone to take the photograph while he posed. The poorer quality of this photograph compared to others by Dr. Caldwell may be proof of that assumption. What is truly

crucial about this photograph is the fact that this HS-2L is making use of two propellers. It was possible for the V-12 Liberty engine rated at 400 horsepower to be calibrated at 375 horsepower and be rigged with twin propellers. These propellers came to be known as the 'Falcon' propellers. Each of the two propellers had an extra hole at the hub so that a pin could be introduced to align and secure the two propellers properly. For more extensive information, viewers are invited to visit:

www.woodenpropellers.Ocatch.com/seaplanes

and once there go to 'Ancient Propellers' followed by 'Photo Gallery'.

All originally built HS-2L's used by the USN were assigned a serial number from the following range: A-1223 to A-4229. For more specific details, reference should be made to www.shipsandaircraft.com. At that web site, bureau numbers are listed according to each of the aircraft companies that built HS-2L's once you go to 'aircraft', then 'naval aircraft', and finally to 'Curtis- HS' and scroll to the bottom of the page.



C/KA – P7M

The call sign number, or ‘bureau’ number as the USN preferred to call it, is A-1940 as shown at the top of the tail rudder when viewed under magnification. Curtiss built that seaplane. The tail markings were blue, white, and red as the end stripe.

In addition, although not captured by any of Lt. Caldwell’s photographs, there was usually near each upper wing tip of the HS-2L’s, a red disc within a five-pointed white star on a circular blue field as standard USN markings. The three-inch high numbers to the right of the ‘A’ on the white stripe of the rudder had only been exposed to salt water air for a few weeks yet were quickly becoming undecipherable.

The seaplane itself was painted with a low visibility naval grey enamel as per a directive issued on March 15, 1918 by the

USN. That order applied only to new aircraft which would see future service with the USN, and the HS-2L was one of them.

The HS-2L soon became the ‘work horse’ of the USN. “It was a heavy plane made even heavier by the materials it carried, including an anchor and anchor line, a towing line, a sea-anchor, mooring lines, water casks, emergency gas cans, tools, etc...It was staunchly built, and could land in a fairly heavy sea and take off in a moderate sea. It took off at a speed of 48 knots and flew at (a speed as low as) 55 knots leaving a leeway of only 7 knots between flying speed and stalling speed. It was doubtful that such a heavy aircraft with full crew would ever come out of a spin. It was an extremely tiring airplane to fly; constant pressure had to be maintained on the rudder-bar because of torque of the single propeller.”⁹ Once back on the ground, the pilot would obviously be hobbling, with the right instep probably numb from applying pressure.



C/KA – P8M

This trio has just landed in North Sydney after a patrol. One of them is about to hobble to the debriefing area. While dressed as warmly as possible, they certainly had not yet been issued Sidcot suits

The Naval Air Station in North Sydney ultimately operated six HS-2L's. The amazing story is that the first HS-2L did not leave the production line at Curtiss' in New York State till late May 1918, leaving very little time for each aircraft to be dismantled, crated and then shipped so as to arrive in Cape Breton in August.

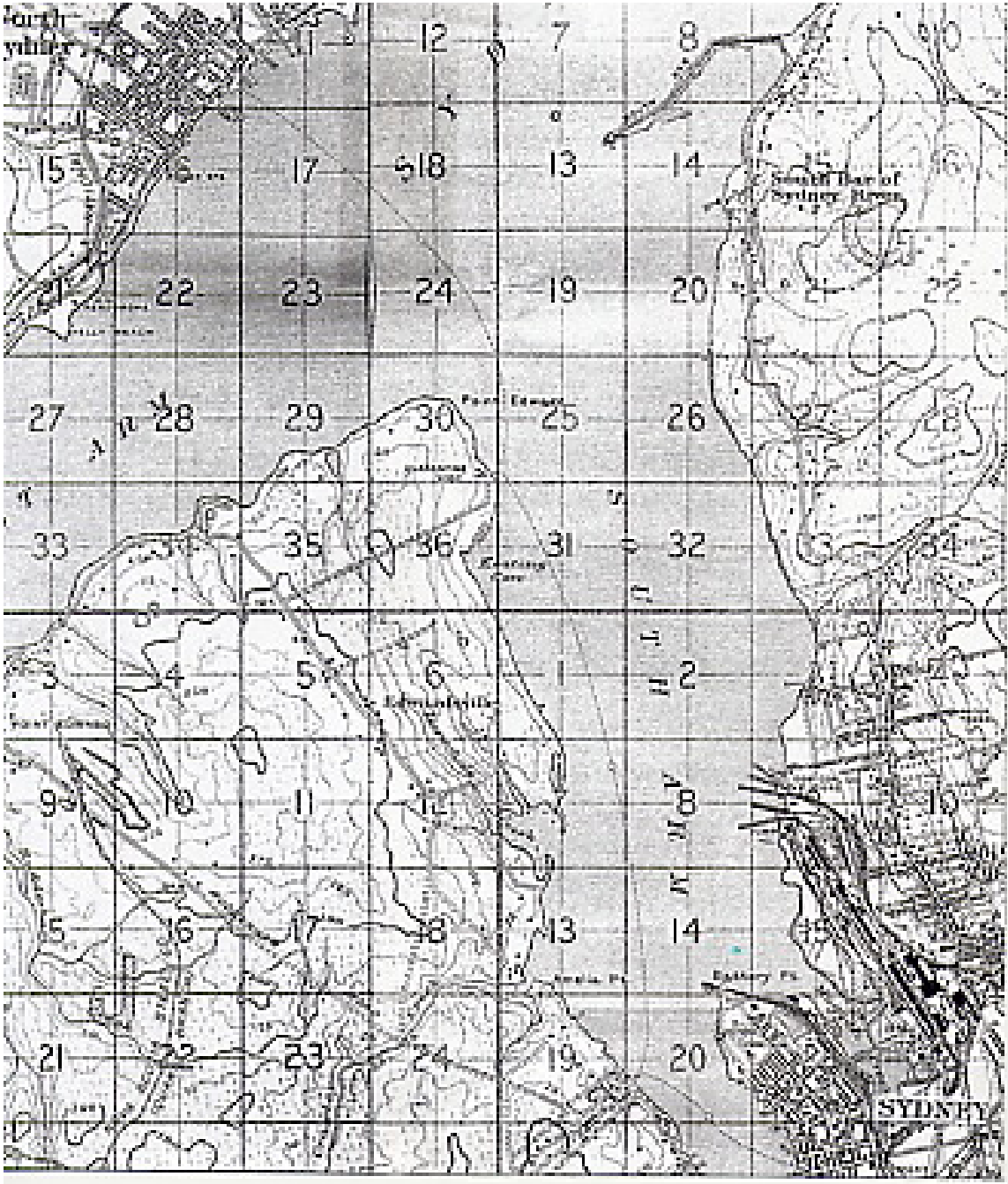
Readers who are mechanically minded will find very detailed information about the various construction phases in building the HS-2L, by logging in at www.airminded.net/curths2l.

Aircraft Engines

The HS-2L used a Liberty engine (thus the letter L after the 2), which had been restructured from an eight cylinder to a twelve-cylinder model between May 1917 and February 1918. Oiling systems, crankshafts, etc... had to be redone and the factory re-tooled to produce the newer engine. After more than one thousand changes to the engine, the first redesigned Liberty engine was not rolled off the assembly line until July 4th, 1918. Yet a few weeks later crates containing the engines arrived at North Sydney for the HS-2L aircraft. And to make matters more difficult, only a few starters that are essential to power plants in the seaplane had been sent for these Liberty engines!

As revealed in this book, despite all the drawbacks, the USN Air Service had become an engine of liberty for Canadians as it became the first ever to establish an air station in North Sydney, on the Island of Cape Breton, in Nova Scotia.

APPENDIX B



**Legend: Meridians of Longitude Indicate North/South Direction.
Each Side to a Numbered Square is 2500 feet.
One Would Proceed North and East to Reach Open Sea.**

NORTH SYDNEY NAVAL AIR STATION STAFF

Station Officers

Lt. Robert Donohue, USCG, Flight Officer and Commanding Officer
Lt. (j.g.) J.P. Smith, Flight Officer and Executive Officer
Lt. C.N. Caldwell, Medical Officer
Ensign T.M. Colston, Hydrogen Officer
Ensign E.S. Hays, Supply Officer
Lt. (j.g.) R.S. Hedtler, Engineering Officer
Lt. (j.g.) E. Jewett, Medical Officer
Ensign F.W. Reichelderfer, Aerographer

Flight Officers

Ensign H.W. Best
Boatswain W.W. Carlton
Ensign W.E. Chilton
Ensign C.D. Clark
Ensign G.M. Crosby
Ensign H.L. Harris
Ensign R.D. Hartshorne
Ensign T.P. Harwood
Boatswain R.H. Kerr
Ensign G.R. Long
Ensign T.G. Ralph
Ensign R.R. Rhodes
Ensign W.B. Scott
Ensign A.T. Smith
Ensign B.L. Smith
Ensign W.R.L. Smith

Kite Balloon Pilots

Ensign O.A. Bartholomew
Ensign A.G. Gray
Ensign P.V.R. Griffin
Ensign F.G. Hansen
Ensign T.M. Van Hulsteyn

Chief Petty Officers

Chief Boatswain's Mates

Dedrick, E.B.

Dwyer, J.F.

Chief Carpenter's Mates

Cannedy, M.

Erickson, A.G.

Chief Machinist's Mates

Lemerise, J.E.

Laag, B.L.

Long, L.D.

Sacks, W.S.

Urlick, M.

Young, A.V.

Chief Pharmacist's Mate

Stoner, R.V.

Chief Quartermasters (A)

Funk, C.A.

Roeker, A.E.

Stewart F.E.

Woods, A.

Chief Quartermaster (D)

Lewis, E.C.

Chief Storekeeper

Lukens, H.H.

Chief Yeomen

Calhoun, J.S.

Hendel, H.S.

Morris, F.I.

Specialty Ratings

Boatswain's Mate – 2C

Griefel, J.I.

Carpenter's Mates – 1C (A)

Douglas, F.B.

Noren, W.T.

Schaffert, William T. (Deceased)

Schelen, J.E.

Carpenter's Mates – 2C (A)

Laatsch, C.E.

Roudebush, H.

Carpenter's Mates – 3C (A)

Haden, J.E.

Kammer, E.P.

Lee, P.A.

Carpenter's Mate– 3C

Silvertson, W.K.

Electrician's Mates – 1C (A) (R)

Austin, L.L.

Bell, C.J.

Brooks, A.W.

Comiskey, P.

McDermott, W.F.

Vinje, B.S.

Electrician's Mate – 2C (A) (R)

Andrews, L.O.

Electrician's Mate – 3C (G)

Bollenback, H.

Gunner's Mate – 1C (A)

Darr, H.O.

Gunner's Mates – 2C (A)

Host, H.H.

Murphy, W.

Rabe, C.H.

Steer, K.O.

Gunner's Mates – 3C (A)

Baker, E.

Baker, W.H.

Wolford, W.E.

Masters at Arms – 1C

Alejo, F.

Ancheta, G.

Masters at Arms – 2C

Albola, C.

Masters at Arms – 3C

Aglygyb, M.

Albar, W.

Machinist's Mates – 1C (A)

Witler, F.H.

Thompson, W.

Machinist's Mates – 2C (A)

Boyd, C.J.

Breunig, G.C.

Erickson, J.A.
Hamill, B.F.
Hill, B.J.
Horwich, M.
Johnson, J.S.
Leobe, D.E.
Maghs, M.M.
Manion, R.E.
Moore, J.B.
Muther, C.W.
Osebold, J.T.
Parker, W.C.
Salato, J.D.
Schwartz, H.F.
Taylor, S.
Tuohy, E.P.
Weter, C.P.

Machinist's Mates – 2C

Capps, P.
Lee, V
Marsh, F.A.
Merkel, J.
Onderick, A.

Machinist's Mate – 3C

Juknavorian, A.

Pharmacist's Mates – 2C

Davis, G.C.
Hane, E.A.

Pharmacist's Mate – 3C

Bostick, S.

Quartermasters – 1C (A)

Bennis, C.J.
Lamb, N.W.
O’Eerley, H.
Ruhnke, H.F.
Simonson, A.

Quartermasters – 2C (A)

Crilly, John (Deceased)
Grischy, W.E.
Hanna, G.W.
Henderson, M.F.
Maybaum, H.S.
Miller, G.B.
Neumuth, O.A.
Paulson, K.O.
Peterson, W.
Platitz, E.B.
Pool, W.P.
Quinlin, J.B.
Rubin, A.
Ruzek, J.A.
Simmons, H.B.
Steele, M.
Swenson, H.W.
Talbot, H.S.

Quartermaster – 1C (D)

Conkling, R.

Quartermasters – 2C (D)

Attridge, W.
Blackford, N.V.

Bond, S.
Colvin, E.F.
Holland, T.B.
Malone, C.
Zeigenmeyer, H.F.

Quartermaster – 3C (D)
Nordling, C.E.

Ship's Cook – 1C
Onyett, J.

Ship's Cooks – 2C
Kelly, J.W.
Pence, W.D.

Ship's Cooks – 3C
Hyatt, L.L.
Moist, H.W.
Warble, C.

Ship's Cook – 4C
Dietrichson, C.S.

Ship's Fitter – 1C (A)
Gerriets, F.

Ship's Fitters – 2C (A)
Upton, E.P.
Walters, A.J.

Ship's Fitters – 2C
Klett, L.E.
McAuley, H.E.

Stockers – 1C

Jones, J.C.

Kenney, R.A.

Weese, F.E.

Stocker – 3C

Haft, A.H.

Ward Room Steward

Andreas, F.G.

Yeomen – 1C

Fair, B.

Stewart, J.B.

Yeomen – 3C

Albin, H.

Riley, F.B.

Winch Man – 2C (D)

Joyce, W.J.

SEAMAN RATINGS – SECOND CLASS

Brown, H.W.

Clancy, A.T.

Corso, S.

Crisco, G.A.

Daunais, I.

Dewey, E.D.

Donohue, W.M.

Edwards, E.C.

Eisler, W.L.
Eno, H.C.
Farley, R.
Farrell, J.F.
Fedelman, A.
Feeley, M.
Fosselman, E.
Friberg, C.
Gaston, G.R.
Haas, A.M.
Hagerty, C.L.
Hall, E.F.
Hamilton, C.C.
Handilman, J.
Hanley, B.C.
Hanna, C.
Hayes, J.B.
Hoekstra, J.H.
Jordan, J.
Kelley, H.H.
Klingenberg, H.
Knight, F.R.
Kolstead, J.J.
Koyen, J.C.
Lawrence, G.C.
Leslie, H.S.
Lewis, H.G.
Markowitz, S.
Martin, A.R.
Martin, J.
McIlhone, B.J.
Meidendorp, W.
Menefe, R.F.
Meyers, J.C.
Minicusci, S.

Moerlius, J.B.
Moose, O.
Muckey, W.H.
Nagler, V.
O'Doherty, J.E.
Olsen, P.E.
Perper, D.E.
Reiscke, A.B.
Rosenwald, L.
Rullman, G.L.
Sanders, H.A.
Schmutz, J.A.
Siegel, D.
Simon, S.H.
Strutter, M.J.
Subert, F.J.
Sutter, M.
Taylor, W.O.
Thornton, E.
Thurman, A
Thurman, B.B.
Tingle, P.
Tinsley, C.E.
Tosh, C.
Turcotte, H.J.
Upton, B.G.
Vance, H.B.
Wallace, H.P.
Wasgatt, L.
Weaver, P.
Wehrle, F.J.
Wellman, L.
Wells, O.M.
Wetherington, W.E.
Wheatley, J.C.

Whitaker, J.H.
Wilkey, L.J.
Williams, F.C.
Wilson, A.E.
Wiseman, W.M.
Wolf, C.B.
Wooten, J.C.

- NOTES**
1. All staff members served with the USN or the USNRFC unless otherwise noted.
 2. Trade groups to which the enlisted men of the station belonged were recorded in station records by using abbreviations. Consequently, reference was made to pages 1 to 4 of:

<http://www.naval-history.net/WWINavyUS-Ranks.htm>

to ascertain their meaning, to the best of the author's ability.

3. All personnel who served at any point in time between August 1918 and January 1919 at Naval Air Station North Sydney have been listed. The total is 250 officers and men.



C/KA – P8F

Fittingly, Lt. Caldwell was one of the last to leave NAS North Sydney. One of the final photographs he took was in early December, 1918 showing a tranquil setting in North Sydney. Peace had come at last.



Well no. There was to be no lasting peace. Here is Calvin Caldwell, this time as a senior Navy Commander in charge of the hospital at Okinawa, in the summer of 1945.

DEDICATION

The contribution of USN and UNSRFC personnel to the safety of shipping lanes in Canadian waters during World War One is heralded in this book. However, the hardships under which this success was achieved is the subject of the dedication.

The efforts of Dr. Calvin Caldwell, Lieutenant, principal medical officer, NAS North Sydney, and his medical staff towards the health of personnel at the station were outstanding. Due to their diligence and professionalism, the death rate from the influenza epidemic was limited to three men:

JOHN CRILLY Jr., Quartermaster Second Class - Air

John, 22 years of age, was the son of Mr. And Mrs. John Crilly of 3200 Thirteenth Street NW, Washington, D.C. He had enlisted in Washington on February 4, 1918. He passed away on September 28, 1918 in Hamilton Memorial Hospital, North Sydney, Nova Scotia, Canada.

It must have been terribly difficult for John's parents to read the following obituary that appeared in the Washington Post on October 1, 1918:

“ John Crilly Jr. formerly of Alexandria, and now resident of Washington, died Sunday at Quebec, where he had been assigned to duty recently in the air service. Crilly trained at a naval station in Florida for five weeks, and was then sent to Quebec. His relatives here had not been able to learn the cause of his death late yesterday.”

Considering that one of the largest Western Union cable office in North America was in the town of North Sydney during the First World War, one would think that John's parents would have been fully and accurately informed much

sooner than they were. John was serving on Cape Breton Island in the Province of Nova Scotia, which is some 950 miles to the east of the Province of Quebec. Moreover, he had passed away on Saturday, not Sunday and the cause of his death was of course pneumonia as a complication of the influenza epidemic. One has to feel pain for parents subjected to such ambiguity during a time of great sorrow.

ROBERT S. JOHNSON, Lieutenant, Civil Engineer

Lt. Robert Samuel Johnson, son of Donald G. and Annie Johnson was born in 1891 near Ireton, Iowa and graduated as a civil engineer from Iowa State College in 1914. He worked for two years before attending the United States Naval Academy in 1917. Early in the summer of 1918, he was given a secondment to serve with the Royal Canadian Naval Air Service to assist in the initial development of Naval Air Station North Sydney, in Nova Scotia. The station was to be operated by the USN at the request of the Canadian Government.

Sadly, Lt. Johnson contracted the Spanish influenza while in North Sydney. It was decided that he would be immediately transported to a hospital in Ottawa, Ontario, his home base, but pneumonia set in and he passed away on October 13, 1918 at the age of 27.

WILLIAM T. SCHAFFERT, Carpenter's Mate First Class Air

A member of the UNSRFC, William Theophilus Schaffert was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Schaffert of Spreakers, N.Y. William enlisted in Minneapolis on June 12, 1918 just in time to be drafted to NAS North Sydney. He passed away on September 30, 1918 in Hamilton Memorial Hospital, North Sydney, Nova Scotia, Canada.

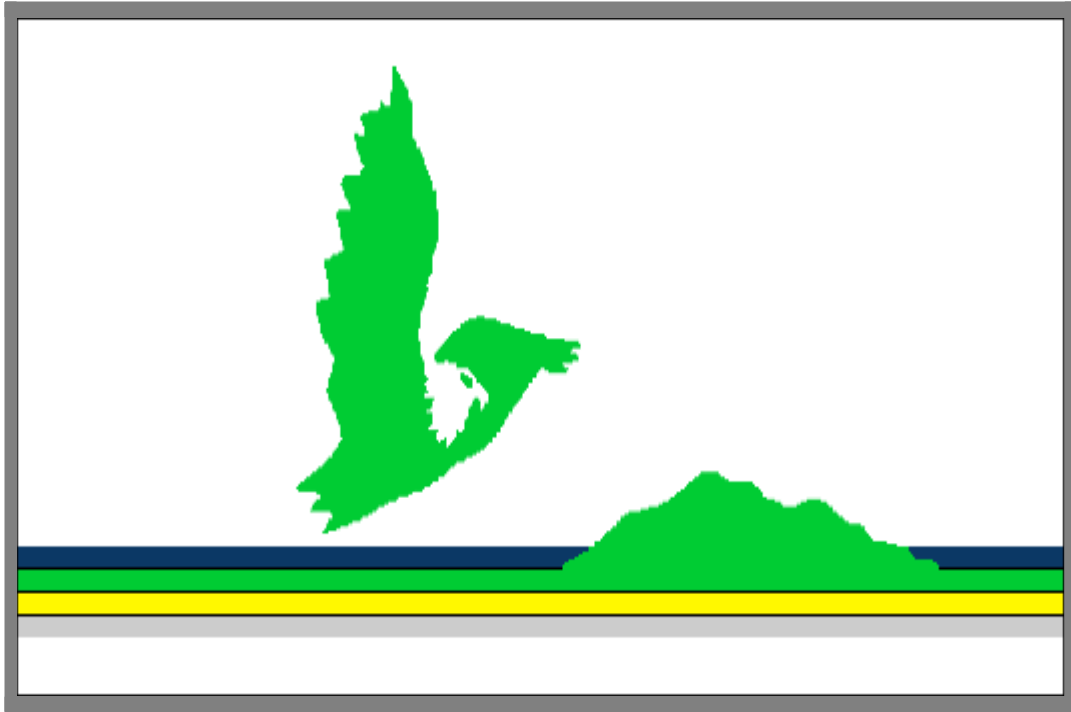


Front and center at the Canadian House of Commons building in Ottawa, a very tall and spectacular peace tower was erected in 1918 to commemorate the selfless contribution by men of various nations towards peace for Canada.

Among these defenders were

John Crilly Jr.
Robert S. Johnson
William T. Schaffert.

who served at Naval Air Station North Sydney in 1918.



AS THE BALD EAGLE SOARS
OVER CAPE BRETON SHORES
IT SERVES AS A REMINDER
THAT MANY YEARS LATER
WE STILL OWE A VOTE OF
THANKS
TO OUR ALLIES
THE YANKS