
The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP)





The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP), or Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS)

The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) was a deal signed in 1939, Canada agreed to provide facilities and training for airmen from every part of the Commonwealth. Canada was ideally suited for this program because our country was far from most of the active fighting and had lots of wide-open spaces and good flying conditions.

The BCATP was an enormous undertaking. In 1939, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) had only 4,000 personnel, less than a dozen airports of its own and training facilities for only 400 ground crew per year. Now the RCAF was expected to train thousands. It had to recruit instructors, build air bases, acquire aircraft, and develop training schools for different specialties. By war's end, there were 151 training schools and every province had BCATP installations. Canada was, in U.S. President Roosevelt's words, "the aerodrome of democracy".

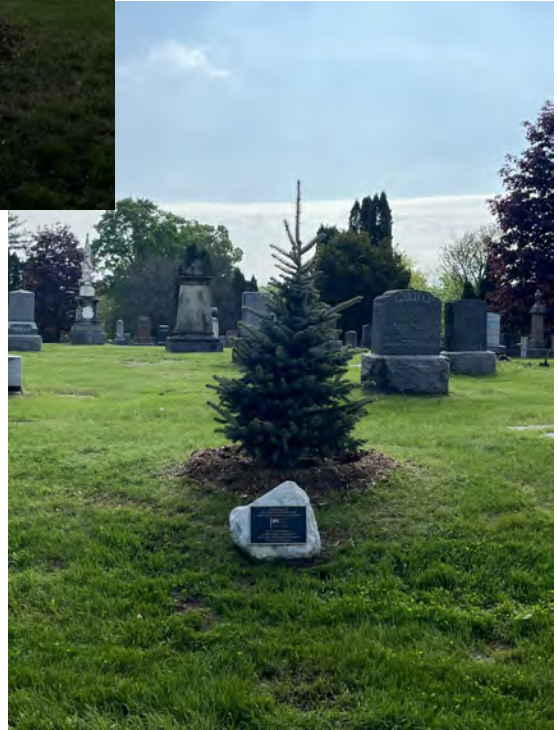
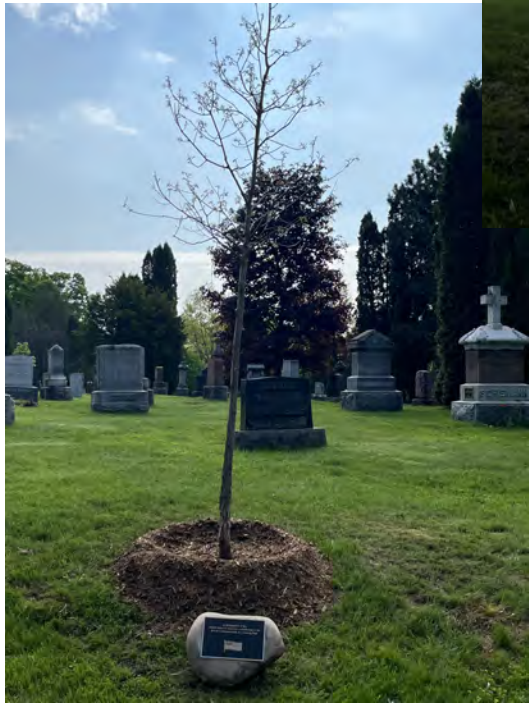
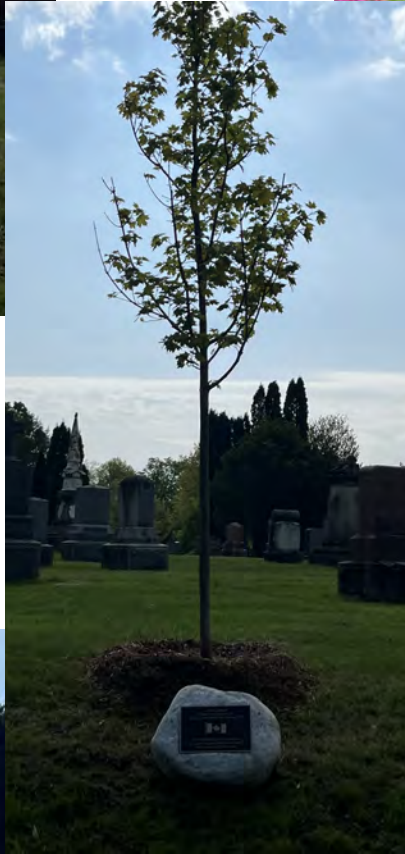
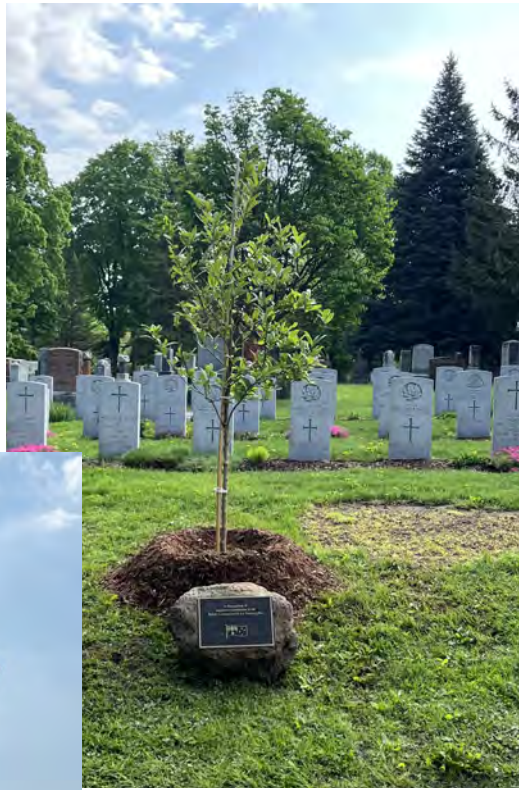
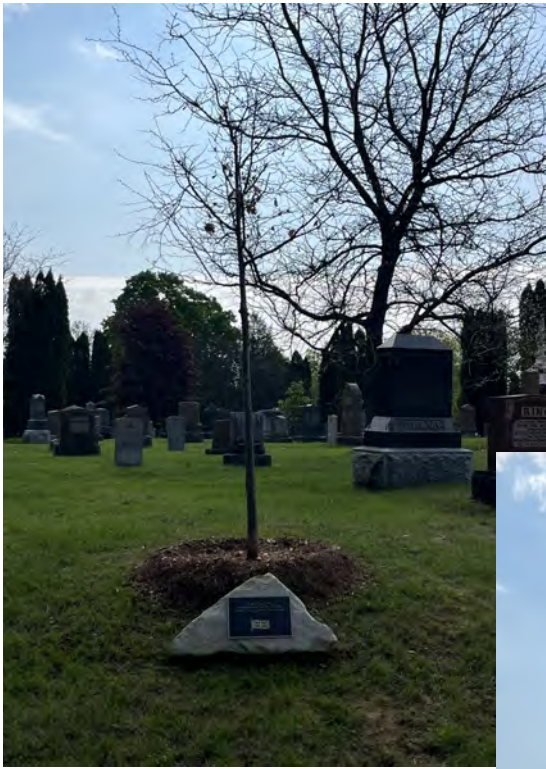
The BCATP was an outstanding success. By the end of the war, it had graduated 131,533 pilots, observers, flight engineers, and other aircrew for the air forces of Canada, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand.

- 72,835 graduates joined the Royal Canadian Air Force
- 42,110 graduates joined the Royal Air Force
- 9,606 joined the Royal Australian Air Force
- 7,002 joined the Royal New Zealand Air Force
- Approximately 9,000 American citizens had joined the Royal Canadian Air Force. After Pearl Harbor 1,759 American members of the RCAF transferred to the armed forces of the United States. Another 2,000 transferred later and about 5,000 completed their wartime service with the RCAF.

While over half the BCATP graduates came from the North American continent, the plan trained personnel from all over the world including about 2,000 French, 900 Czechoslovakians, 680 Norwegians, 450 Poles, and about the same number of Belgians and Dutch.



Signs such as this became part of the Canadian landscape as schools and airfields opened throughout the nation under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. The sign reads "ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE / Service Flying Training School / BRITISH COMMONWEALTH AIR TRAINING PLAN". PHOTO: DND Archives, PL-3306



British Commonwealth Air Training Plan Living Forest

Living forests stand as poignant tributes to the valour and sacrifice of those who served in the British Commonwealth Air Training Program (BCATP), ensuring that their memories are never forgotten. Through the deliberate cultivation of trees linking two sections of the National Military Cemetery, these living memorials serve as enduring symbols of remembrance, honouring the courage and contributions of the individuals who trained and served during World War II. Just as the English Oak holds a special place in the hearts of the British people, each tree within these forests represents the sacrifice of a nation and its people.

By fostering vibrant ecosystems that embody the resilience and strength of those who served, living forests provide spaces for reflection, education, and gratitude. As visitors wander through the leafy canopies of these memorials, they are reminded of the sacrifices made and the freedoms preserved, ensuring that the stories of the BCATP members live on in the collective consciousness of future generations.

Canada's arboreal emblem, the Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*), though closely associated with the country, was officially designated as the National Emblem of Canada only in 1996. While the Sugar Maple is perhaps the most famous among native maple species, Canada's national emblem encompasses the broader category of maple species. The maple tree holds significant historical and ecological importance in Canada, contributing to its commercial development and serving as a symbol of national identity. Indigenous peoples were among the first to recognize the value and benefits of the maple tree.

In the United States, the Chinkapin Oak (*Quercus muehlenbergii*) holds prominence as a native tree species, found primarily in eastern and central regions of North America. While it spans a wide range from Vermont to Minnesota, south to the Florida panhandle, and west to New Mexico in the U.S., it is only found in southern Ontario in Canada. The oak tree was officially designated as America's National Tree following the passage of a historic bill by Congress and presidential signing.

In the United Kingdom, the English Oak (*Quercus robur*) reigns as the ruling majesty of the woods, deeply embedded in the culture, history, and affections of the people. Renowned for its role in supporting diverse ecosystems, even its fallen leaves contribute to biodiversity.

Australia boasts the *Magnolia stellata* Royal Star, a vigorous and visually striking tree known for its spectacular display of fragrant white flowers tinged with pink at the base, which adorn trees in April, captivating onlookers with their beauty.

New Zealand is home to the *Picea pungens* 'Baby Blue Eyes', a semi-dwarf variety of the Colorado Spruce. This distinctive tree was discovered as a chance seedling within a cultivated group of grafted *Picea pungens* 'Moerheimii' trees, adding a unique charm to the New Zealand landscape.



The Canadian Shield Defender

Rank: Defender of the North

Unit: Royal Canadian Air Force

Date of Birth: Timeless, carved from the rugged terrains of the Canadian Shield

Place of Birth: Canadian Forces Base Borden, Ontario, Canada

Date of Enlistment: Since the dawn of aviation

Years of Service: Eternal Vigilance



Military Decorations:

- Symbol of Canada's Military Legacy: Embodied the valor and resilience of Canada's military heritage, standing as a testament to the proud traditions of service and sacrifice.
- Tribute to Allied Cooperation: Represented Canada's pivotal role in fostering international cooperation and camaraderie among allied nations.

Service History:

- Originated from the historic grounds of Canadian Forces Base Borden, the birthplace of the Royal Canadian Air Force and the largest training wing in the Canadian Armed Forces.
- Traced the footsteps of the brave aviators who trained at CFB Borden, playing a vital role in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.
- Bore witness to the enduring legacy of CFB Borden and the sacrifices made in the pursuit of freedom and peace.

Personal Statement: I, the Canadian Shield Guardian, stand as a proud defender of freedom and democracy, forged from the rugged terrains of the Canadian Shield. My journey began at Canadian Forces Base Borden, where I enlisted in the Canadian Armed Forces with a steadfast commitment to duty and honor. Throughout my years of service, I have borne witness to the valor and sacrifice of those who came before me, embodying the noble traditions of Canada's military heritage. As a symbol of allied cooperation and unity, I stand ready to uphold the proud legacy of CFB Borden, ensuring that the sacrifices of the past are never forgotten.



The Eternal Vigil of The Canadian Shield Defender

In the heart of the Canadian Shield, amidst the rugged terrains of Ontario's Canadian Forces Base Borden, a timeless guardian emerged, known as The Canadian Shield Defender. Carved from the very essence of the land it hailed from, this stalwart figure stood as a symbol of Canada's unwavering commitment to defend freedom and democracy.

Since the dawn of the Royal Canadian Air Force, The Canadian Shield Defender has stood as a silent sentinel, bearing witness to the proud traditions and sacrifices of Canada's military heritage. Born from the historic grounds of Canadian Forces Base Borden, the birthplace of the Royal Canadian Air Force, the Defender embodied the valour and resilience of those who trained on its soil.

Throughout its eternal vigilance, The Canadian Shield Defender traced the footsteps of the brave aviators who honed their skills at CFB Borden, playing a vital role in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. This historic initiative, known as the 'aerodrome of democracy' as United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt described it, saw Canada train 131,533 pilots and aircrew for the Allied war effort. As part of this monumental endeavor, CFB Borden became a beacon of hope and unity, fostering international cooperation and camaraderie among allied nations.

The Defender's service history echoed the enduring legacy of the allied Air Forces and the sacrifices made in the pursuit of freedom and peace. From the training fields of Canada to the skies of Europe, The Canadian Shield Defender stood as a steadfast symbol of allied cooperation and unity, ensuring that the sacrifices of the past were never forgotten.

Journeying beyond its birthplace, The Canadian Shield Defender made its way to Ottawa, the nation's capital, where it found its final resting place alongside boulders representing other nations at the National Military Cemetery. Here, amidst the solemn grounds dedicated to honoring the fallen, the Defender stood as a testament to the enduring bonds of friendship and cooperation forged in the crucible of war. Forever enshrined among comrades from around the world, The Canadian Shield Defender's legacy lives on, a silent defender of Canada's proud military heritage.



Three Spitfires, with RCAF markings visible, flying over France. (RCAF 414 Photo Squadron, courtesy Jack Ford).

The Point Cook Protector

Rank: Protector of the Skies

Unit: Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF)

Date of Birth: Timeless, carved from the ancient landscapes of Point Cook, Victoria, Australia

Place of Birth: RAAF Williams, Point Cook, Victoria, Australia

Date of Enlistment: Since the dawn of aviation

Years of Service: Eternal Vigilance



Military Decorations:

- Symbol of RAAF and RCAF Kinship: Embodied the historic link between the Royal Australian Air Force and the Royal Canadian Air Force, symbolizing the camaraderie and cooperation between nations.
- Tribute to Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams: Honored the legacy of the 'father' of the RAAF, Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams, in whose name RAAF Williams was chosen.

Service History:

- Originated from the historic RAAF Williams, Point Cook, the birthplace and spiritual home of the Royal Australian Air Force.
- Traced the footsteps of the brave aviators who trained at Point Cook, the oldest continually operating military airfield in the world.
- Bore witness to the enduring legacy of the RAAF and the sacrifices made in the pursuit of freedom and peace.

Personal Statement: I, the Point Cook Protector, stand as a guardian of the skies and a symbol of unity and remembrance. My existence embodies the enduring bond between the Royal Australian Air Force and the Royal Canadian Air Force, honoring the sacrifices and valor of aviators who served their countries with unwavering devotion. As a protector of the skies, I vow to uphold the memory of those who have gone before me, ensuring that their legacy lives on for generations to come.



The Point Cook Protector

In the heart of the rugged landscapes of Point Cook, Victoria, Australia, the timeless spirit of aviation found its guardian in the form of the Point Cook Protector. Carved from the ancient terrains of RAAF Williams, this stalwart figure stood as a symbol of honour and unity, embodying the enduring bond between the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF).

Originating from RAAF Williams, the birthplace and spiritual home of the RAAF, the Point Cook Protector bore witness to the historic connection between Australia and Canada as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. During World War II, young Australian pilots embarked on a transformative journey across the seas to Canada, where they honed their skills and forged lifelong bonds in the vast skies of the Great White North. Traversing oceans and continents, they left their mark on the annals of history as they trained tirelessly to defend freedom and democracy.

As a protector of the skies, it carried the spirit of camaraderie and cooperation between nations, symbolizing the shared sacrifices and valor of aviators who served their countries with unwavering devotion. From the visionary leadership of Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams to the dedication of countless aviators who followed in his footsteps, the guardian stood as a testament to the enduring legacy of RAAF Williams and the sacrifices made in the pursuit of peace.

Retracing the footsteps of those young Australian pilots who ventured to Canada, the Point Cook Protector embarked on its own journey across continents, carrying with it the echoes of bravery and determination that defined their path. From the training fields of Canada to the battlefields of World War II, the protector honours the courage and resilience of those who dared to soar through the skies in defense of freedom.

As its journey came to an end, the Point Cook Protector found its final resting place alongside boulders representing other nations at the National Military Cemetery of Canada. Here, amidst the solemn tributes and whispered echoes of remembrance, it stood as a triumphant symbol of the shared sacrifice and solidarity of nations united in the pursuit of peace. And as visitors passed by, pausing to pay their respects to the fallen, the Point Cook Protector remained a silent sentinel, a protector of the skies, ensuring that the legacy of those brave aviators who came before would never be forgotten.

The Wigram Boulder

Rank: Sentinel of the Skies

Unit: Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) Service

Date of Birth: Ancient, dating back to the formation of the Southern Alps

Place of Birth: Ōtautahi/Christchurch, Te Pātaka-o-Rākaihautū/Banks Peninsula, New Zealand

Date of Enlistment: Since Time Immemorial

Years of Service: Eternally vigilant



Military Decorations:

- Symbol of the RNZAF's Legacy: Carried the spirit of Wigram, birthplace of the RNZAF, and bore witness to the training and sacrifices of aviators throughout history.
- Guardian of Remembrance: Stood beside the RNZAF Roll of Honour, honouring fallen comrades with solemn reverence.
- Pilgrim of Unity: Retraced the historic journey of RNZAF pilots as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, symbolizing the shared sacrifice and solidarity of nations

Service History:

- Embarked on a timeless journey across the Pacific, retracing the footsteps of courageous RNZAF pilots who ventured forth to distant shores.
- Bore witness to the camaraderie and resilience forged in the crucible of training, standing as a silent sentinel amidst the trials and triumphs of aviators.
- Found a final resting place at the National Military Cemetery of Canada, alongside boulders representing other nations in tribute to the shared sacrifice of those who served.

Personal Statement: I, the Wigram Boulder, stand as a testament to the indomitable spirit of those who dare to dream and soar through the skies. My existence embodies the enduring legacy of the RNZAF, honouring the courage, sacrifice, and unity of aviators past, present, and future. As a guardian of remembrance, I solemnly vow to uphold the memory of those who have served and sacrificed in service to their countries, ensuring that their legacy lives on for generations to come.



The Wigram Boulder

As the sun cast its golden glow upon the rugged landscape of Ōtautahi/Christchurch, the boulder stirred with memories etched deep within its ancient form. Among the tales of skies conquered and dreams realized, one journey stood out, a pilgrimage retracing the footsteps of heroes.

In the hushed whispers of the wind, the boulder recalled the courageous pilots of the Royal New Zealand Air Force embarking on a journey across the vast expanse of ocean to distant shores. Following in their wake, the boulder traversed the same path, carried by the currents of time and destiny.

Across the boundless expanse of the Pacific, the boulder sailed, a silent companion to those who braved the unknown. From the verdant shores of Aotearoa to the rugged coastline of Canada, the boulder retraced the route of the brave aviators who ventured forth as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.

In the echoing halls of memory, the boulder bore witness to the camaraderie forged in the crucible of training, the bonds of friendship that transcended borders and oceans. Through the trials and triumphs of their journey, the boulder stood as a silent sentinel, a testament to the indomitable spirit of those who soared through the skies.

And as the boulder found its resting place beside the RNZAF Roll of Honour, it carried with it the echoes of that epic voyage, a tribute to the courage and sacrifice of those who crossed continents and oceans in pursuit of a dream. There, in the quiet stillness of remembrance, the boulder stood, a timeless symbol of resilience and unity, forever bound to the legacy of those who dared to reach for the stars.

Continuing its journey, the boulder crossed the threshold of nations, carried by the currents of history and remembrance. Across the vast expanse of the North American continent, it made its way to the hallowed grounds of the National Military Cemetery of Canada, a place of solemn reverence and tribute.

Amidst the rows of silent sentinels and whispered echoes of the past, the boulder found its final resting place. Alongside boulders representing the other countries who participated in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, it stood as a testament to the shared sacrifice and solidarity of nations bound by a common cause.

In the quiet serenity of the cemetery, the boulder became more than just a stone; it became a symbol of unity and remembrance, a tangible link to a shared history and destiny. Surrounded by the echoes of generations past, it bore witness to the enduring legacy of those who answered the call to serve.

As visitors passed by, pausing to pay their respects to the fallen, the boulder stood as a silent guardian, a beacon of hope and a reminder of the bonds that unite us all. In this sacred place, where nations come together in solemn tribute, the boulder found its true purpose – to honor the memory of those who gave their all in service to their countries, ensuring that their sacrifices are never forgotten.

The Prestwick Sentinel

Rank: Guardian of the Skies
Unit: Royal Air Force (RAF)
Date of Birth: Timeless, hewn from the rugged landscapes of Scotland
Place of Birth: Glasgow Prestwick Airport, Scotland
Date of Enlistment: Since the dawn of aviation
Years of Service: Boundless vigilance



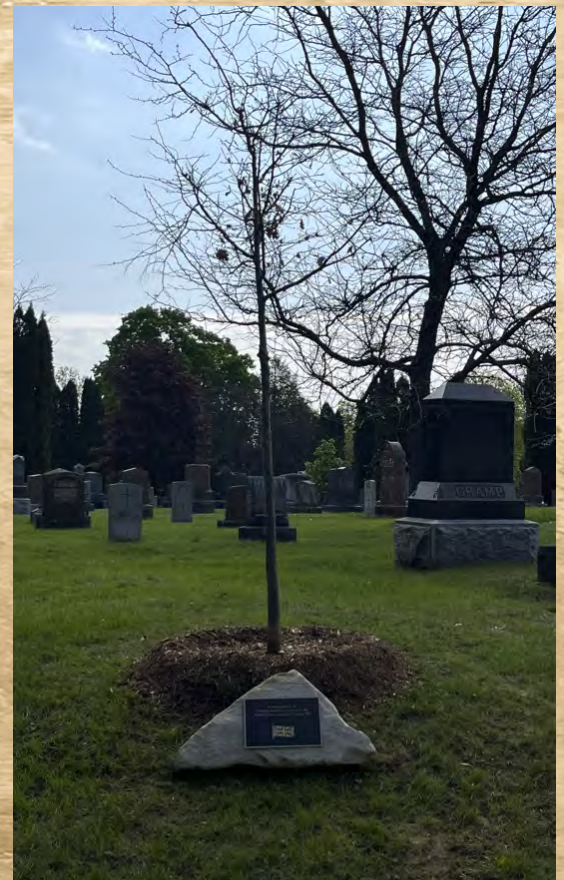
Military Decorations:

- Emblem of RAF and RCAF Brotherhood: Embodied the historic link between the Royal Air Force and the Royal Canadian Air Force, tracing the routes of RAF pilots training in Canada during World War Two.
- Symbol of Unity and Remembrance: Carried the spirit of cooperation and solidarity between nations, standing as a silent witness to the sacrifices made in the pursuit of freedom.

Service History:

- Originated from the strategic hub of Glasgow Prestwick Airport, Scotland, serving as a vital waypoint for RAF and RCAF operations.
- Embarked on a historic journey across the Atlantic, following the paths of brave aviators training in Canada as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.
- Bore witness to the dedication and courage of RAF and RCAF personnel, standing as a silent sentinel amidst the tumult of war and the echoes of history.

Personal Statement: I, the Prestwick Sentinel, stand as a guardian of the skies and a symbol of unity and remembrance. My existence embodies the enduring bond between the Royal Air Force and the Royal Canadian Air Force, honouring the sacrifices and valor of aviators who served their countries with unwavering devotion. As a sentinel of the skies, I vow to uphold the memory of those who have gone before me, ensuring that their legacy lives on for generations to come.



Echoes Across the Skies: A Journey of Remembrance and Unity

A solemn arrival stirred the tranquil skies above Trenton, Ontario, heralding the arrival of a silent sentinel from across the Atlantic. Carried by the wings of an RCAF aircraft operating out of Prestwick in Scotland, the boulder embarked on a journey spanning continents and generations. Originating from the rugged landscapes of Scotland, both the boulder and the aircraft traced their roots to the land of heather and tartan.

As the aircraft touched down on Canadian soil, the boulder bore witness to a legacy intertwined with sacrifice and valor. It retraced the routes of RAF pilots who, like the aviators of the Royal Canadian Air Force, came to Canada to train before returning to the UK to fight in World War Two. Memories of No. 22 Sector RAF Second Tactical Air Force echoed in its ancient form, a testament to the camaraderie and courage forged amidst the chaos of war.

In modern times, the historic link between the Royal Air Force and the Royal Canadian Air Force remained steadfast. The RCAF's detachment in Scotland evolved into a hub for supporting multiple operations, embodying the enduring bond between the two air forces. Glasgow Prestwick Airport, nestled along the western coastline of Scotland, served as a vital waypoint for RCAF operations, its familiarity and strategic position making it an ideal choice for logistics support.

The airport's infrastructure and proximity to key regions facilitated the rapid establishment of operations, allowing the RCAF to execute missions with efficiency and precision. Led by the expertise of 8 Wing, the Tactical Air Lift Detachment (TAL Det) swiftly took shape, with accommodations, meals, and transport for personnel arranged seamlessly. Planners worked tirelessly to build a flying program, coordinating with partner nations to provide airlift support for donors of equipment and munitions.

As the boulder settled into its new home, alongside the other boulders representing nations united by a shared cause, it bore witness to the enduring bonds forged in the crucible of conflict. And amidst the echoes of history and the whispers of the wind, it stood as a silent guardian, a symbol of unity and remembrance for generations to come.

Its final destination awaited at the National Military Cemetery of Canada, where it would stand alongside boulders representing the other countries who participated in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, a solemn tribute to the shared sacrifice and solidarity of nations.

The Congressional Boulder

Branch of Service: United States Air Force
Unit: Congressional Cemetery, Washington DC
Date of Birth: Timeless, hewn from the bedrock of American democracy
Place of Birth: Congressional Cemetery, Washington DC, USA
Years of Service: Eternal Vigilance



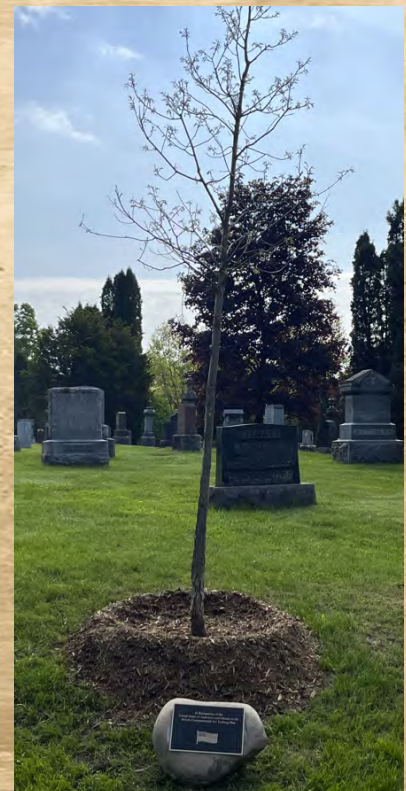
Military Decorations:

- Symbol of American Air Power: Embodied the spirit of American air superiority, standing as a beacon of strength and resolve.
- Tribute to Allied Aviators: Represented the courage and camaraderie of the volunteers who joined the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, forging bonds of friendship across nations in the fight for freedom.

Service History:

- Born from the historic grounds of the Congressional Cemetery in Washington DC, The Congressional Boulder emerged as a symbol of America's unwavering commitment to defend freedom and democracy through the skies.
- Hewn from the bedrock of American democracy, the Boulder stood as a silent witness to the valor and sacrifice of those who soared through the heavens in defense of liberty, standing sentinel over their graves for decades.
- Throughout its eternal vigilance, The Congressional Boulder served as a reminder of America's steadfast dedication to air power and the brave volunteers who joined the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.

Personal Statement: I, The Congressional Boulder, stand as a proud defender of freedom and democracy, forged from the bedrock of American air power. My journey began at Congressional Cemetery, where I enlisted in the United States Air Force with a steadfast commitment to duty and honor. Throughout my years of service, I have borne witness to the valor and sacrifice of those who came before me, embodying the noble traditions of American air superiority. As a symbol of allied unity and cooperation, I stand ready to uphold the proud legacy of the United States Air Force, ensuring that the sacrifices of the past are never forgotten.



The Congressional Boulder

In the heart of Washington DC, within the solemn grounds of the Congressional Cemetery, a silent guardian emerged, known simply as The Congressional Boulder. Carved from the timeless bedrock of American democracy, this stoic figure stood as a testament to the nation's unwavering commitment to defending freedom and democracy, particularly through the skies.

Born amidst the historic grounds of the Congressional Cemetery, The Congressional Boulder embodied the spirit of American air power. It stood as a silent witness to the valor and sacrifice of those who soared through the heavens in defense of liberty, a steadfast symbol of the nation's proud military heritage.

Throughout its existence, The Congressional Boulder served as a poignant reminder of America's dedication to air superiority and its role in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. This historic initiative saw brave volunteers from the United States join allies from around the world in the fight against tyranny, forging bonds of friendship and cooperation that transcended national boundaries.

As part of this monumental endeavor, The Congressional Boulder represented the courage and camaraderie of those who trained tirelessly to defend freedom. It stood as a silent sentinel, bearing witness to the sacrifices made by aviators who braved the skies in the name of liberty.

The 'aerodrome of democracy'! So United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt described Canada's role as the trainer of 131,533 pilots and aircrew for the Allied war effort. This profound statement echoed across the skies, underscoring the significance of allied cooperation in the face of adversity.



Instructor and student with North American Harvard IIs, No.2 Service Flying Training School, July 1941. (Photo Credit: BiblioArchives / LibraryArchives / Wikimedia Commons CC BY 2.0)



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