

Frank Doolittle's wartime Flying Experiences

RCAF/RAF

When I turned 18(Dec. 1941) after working on war work, in the machine shop, 12 hours/day, 7 days/week, for 10 months, I decided to join the RCAF but it had to be air crew. My education was insufficient until I completed a pre enlistment co., at government expense, in Ottawa.

After basic training at Lachine, Quebec and instruction at Eglinton Hunt Club, in Toronto, I was posted to #7 EFTS in Windsor.

Well, I got to fly but only with an instructor. I guess I wasn't a natural or was it that I found a new love that I crawled under the fence for a few times. They suggested I go Air Bomber Special so I might get to use what flying experience I had, and train in all the crew positions briefly but master the Air Bomber duties. That suited me 'cause I was always diversified.

After a brief posting to Toronto again, I was posted to Jarvis Bombing and Gunnery school where I learned a lot about bombs and how to get them on the target, practicing from Avro Ansons, dropping smoke bombs in the day and flash bombs at night. At least I was flying.

I thought I might be getting to use my parachuting training, which had involved instruction and sliding down a wire from the hanger rafters, but the Anson pilot ordered me, in no uncertain terms, to prepare myself for a crash landing. He put it down in a small field and they flew it out the next day.

Gunnery was fun too, shooting at the rifle range and shooting at Drogues, towed by Lysanders, from Bristol Bollingbrooks. I guess I was leading too much as I shot the Drogue off ounce. I can understand why they had such a long cable between the Lysander and the Drogue. Instruction from Billy Bishop didn't help much but I got acceptable marks and moved on to navigation, aerial photography, and wireless (I enjoyed sending and receiving Morse code by key and aldis lamp), etc. I did get into a link trainer (flight simulator) now and again.

I graduated at #4 AOTS, Crumlin (London) and Billy Bishop presented me with my wing. I think that made me a Flight Sergeant; really getting up there.

After a two week embarkation leave in Windsor, which really clinched me with my sweetie, I went to Halifax and was posted to Bournemouth England (a Canadian Reception base). It was a peacetime tourist and vacation city but no luxuries or elevators for us. I learned that loaded kit bags don't bounce, as the terminal velocity from my third floor balcony was enough to split it wide open and scattered the contents about.

I was on my way to Wigtown, Scotland, #1 (o) AFU, where I racked up another 36 hrs, in Ansons dropping practice bombs, infrared bombing and other training. I was RAF now and I shivered the six or seven weeks in Wigtown. It was December, very damp and freezing, or close to it, most of the time.