

HAMILTON'S D-DAY CONNECTION

By Robert Williamson

Hamilton Mountain's best known connection to D-Day is the Canadian Warplane Heritage's (CWH) restored Avro Lancaster bomber. Although it flies regularly overhead on missions of Remembrance, most people do not recognize it as a D-Day Memorial. It represents over 7,000 of its kind that contributed to the success of D-day by bombing enemy fortifications, transportation facilities, supply depots, troop movements, and secret weapon installations. It has been christened VERA for its call sign VR-A and is dedicated to Victoria Cross hero Andrew Mynarski.

One of our Hamilton-born Lancaster heroes was Fred Passmore. Born in 1924, he enlisted at the age of 18 and flew **34** missions as a Lancaster tail gunner in the RCAF No. 428 Ghost Squadron. He passed away in 2017 at the age of 94 after a full life as a Dundas / Binbrook farmer and Head of Security at International Harvester. He was an honorary crew member of VR-A, the Warplane Heritage Lancaster and volunteer member of the Board of Governors of the Hamilton Corps of Commissionaires.

Fred's RCAF # 428 Ghost Squadron was one of **13 squadrons that made up Canadian No. 6 Group of Bomber Command**. In 1944 Fred's Squadron converted to Canadian built Avro Lancaster bombers in time for D-Day, flying 2,000 sorties until the end of the war.



Fredrick Cunard Passmore

What many people don't comprehend is that in addition to supporting the D-Day Invasion, Bomber Command also had to deal with the V1 Nazi Terror Weapon launch sites which were initiated just a week after the Normandy Invasion began. The V1 known to the Allies as a Buzz Bomb was a short range, very primitive version of a cruise missile. Totally indiscriminate, it was aimed blindly at large cities like London. Consequently 25% of bomber operations in July and August 1944 had to be diverted away from supporting the invasion to suppress the V1 launch sites along the Pas de Calais coast of France within 200 miles of London. 6,000 civilians were killed and 17,000 injured until the invasion advance overran the launch sites. *9,251 V1s were launched.*

It was during this time that **three** of the highest medals for bravery were awarded to airmen for attacking V1 sites: Pilot Officer Andrew Mynarski RCAF V.C., SQDN LDR. Ian Bazalgette RCAF VC., and Lt. Joseph Kennedy Jr, USN

Navy Cross (JFK's older brother).

Mynarski, upper middle gunner of Lancaster VR-A # 419 Moose Squadron was posthumously awarded the VC for valor during a raid on the railway yard at Cambrai in northwest France near the Pas de Calais / Dover coast. It was the focal point of the Vengeance Weapon sites. On June 12/13 1944, Lancaster VR-A was shot down in flames by a German night fighter. Mynarski died as a result of burns suffered while attempting to rescue a crew member, Pat Brophy who survived.

Date	Hour	Aircraft Type and No.	Pilot	Duty	Remarks (Including results of bombing, gunnery, evasion, etc.)	Time carried forward
						Day Night
June 6/44	0211	A	Fo DE BREYNE	A.B.	MERVILLE LONGUES	4:50
June 6/44	0209	A	Fo DE BREYNE	A.B.	COUTANCES - D DAY	3:55
June 7/44	2306	A	Fo DE BREYNE	A.B.	ACHERES MARSHALLING YDS.	4:50
JUNE 8/44		A	Fo DE BREYNE	A.B.	KADAK X COUNTRY	4:40
June 12/44	1203	D	Fo DE BREYNE	A.B.	FIGHTER REFUEL Y PHOTO WAREHOUSE	1:25
June 12/44	12100	A	Fo DE BREYNE	A.B.	CAMBRAI	MISSING
TOTAL DAY						6:05
TOTAL NIGHT						13:36
TOTAL FOR JUNE						19:40
D.C. Hagerman						
SR. O/C A. FLT.						

Canadian Warplane Heritage recently recovered bomb aimer Jack Friday's log for Mynarski's VR-A Lancaster. It shows the aircraft's last missions during the D-Day period. Photocopy courtesy Al Mickeloff CWHM.

June 5 - Merville and Longues-sur-Mer (These were heavy caliber gun emplacements in concrete casemates along the Normandy beaches).

June 6 - Coutances (was the main road junction leading to the Utah landing beach south of Cherbourg).

June 7 - Acheres (was a major railway marshaling Yard crossing the Seine River to Normandy).

June 12 - Cambrai (the main railway depot in the centre of the V1 bomb launch sites).

Notice that the entry for June 12 was made by Squadron Leader Hagerman O/C A. FLT. when the aircraft failed to return and is listed as **missing**.



Flight crew of Lancaster VR-A # 419 RCAF Moose Squadron June 1944. Left- Rear Gunner Pat Brophy; centre- Andrew Mynarski; right- Bomb Aimer Jack Friday.

CWHM photo Mountain Memories, written by historian Robert Williamson for the Hamilton Mountain Heritage Society appears monthly. For information on events and publications, see the Society's website <Hamiltonheritage.ca>