



## **Pilot Officer Ernest Claude Hallding's Journey through RCAF Pilot Training (BCATP) & Flight Operations in England**

### **British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) Organization and Facilities in Canada: How Did It Work?**

#### **Training Commands**

BCATP activities were managed through four Training Commands. Each command was responsible for activities in a region of Canada:

- No. 1 Training Command - Toronto, Ontario covered southern Ontario
- No. 2 Training Command - Winnipeg, Manitoba covered northwestern Ontario, all of Manitoba, and part of Saskatchewan
- No. 3 Training Command - Montreal, Quebec, covered Quebec and the Maritimes
- No. 4 Training Command - Regina, Saskatchewan, covered most of Saskatchewan, all of Alberta and British Columbia: moved to Calgary, Alberta in October 1941

#### **Manning Depots**

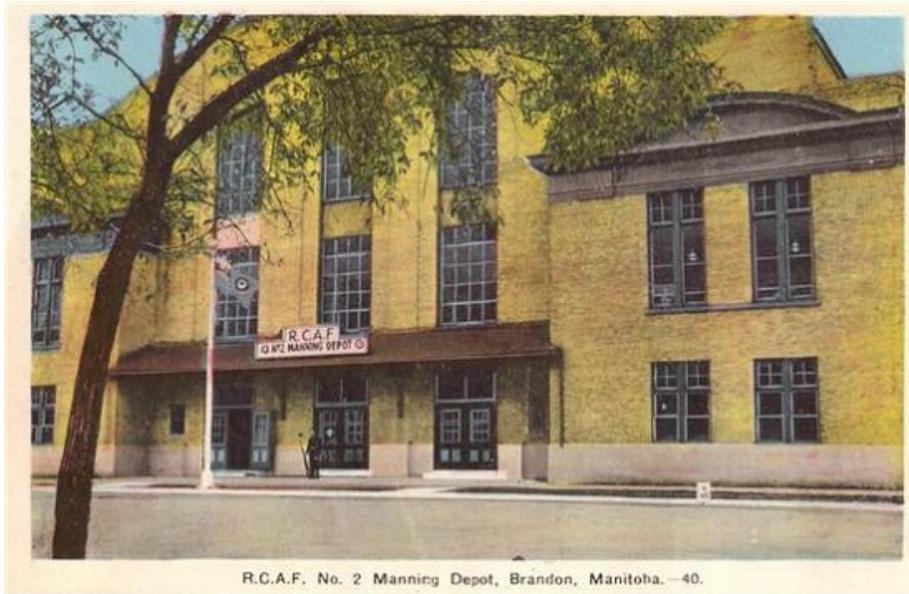
Recruits began their military careers at one of seven Manning Depots where they learned to bathe, shave, shine boots, polish buttons, maintain their uniforms, and otherwise behave in the required manner. There were two hours of physical education every day and instruction in marching, rifle drill, foot drill, saluting, and other routines. Remedial high school education was offered to bring 17 and 18 year old recruits up to the RCAF academic level. There was also a standard aptitude test: the RCAF Classification Test.

After 4 or 5 weeks a selection committee decided whether the recruit would be trained for aircrew or ground crew. Aircrew "Wireless Air Gunner" candidates went directly to a Wireless School. "Air Observer" and "Pilot" candidates went to an Initial Training School.

- **No. 2 Manning Depot** - Brandon, Manitoba  
During the Second World War, the No 2 Manning Depot was an integral component of the Commonwealth Air Training Plan. This building on Eleventh Street at Victoria Avenue in Brandon was where new recruits from all over Western Canada, some 1,000 to 1,500 at a time, trained. After securing a lease for the former Brandon Winter Fair Building (also known as the Brandon Arena) from the Brandon Winter Fair and Livestock Association

(BWFLA), work began to convert the livestock-holding structure into a military facility.

NOTE: Ernest was assigned to No 2 Manning Depot from 27 May to 13 July 1941



Recruits were often assigned “tarmac duty” to keep busy while waiting for subsequent courses or posting. Some were sent to factories to count nuts and bolts, some were sent to flying schools and other RCAF facilities to guard things, clean things, paint things, and polish things. Tarmac duty could last several months or more.



NOTE: Ernest was assigned to No 2 Bombing & Gunnery School, Mossbank, Sask from 14 July to 7 Aug 1941 while “waiting” for further training.

No 2 Bombing & Gunnery School

## AIRCREW TRAINING FACILITIES IN CANADA:

### Initial Training School (ITS)

Pilot and Air Observer (later Navigator) candidates began their 26 or 28 week training program with four weeks at an Initial Training School (ITS). They studied theoretical subjects and were subjected to a variety of tests. Theoretical studies included navigation, theory of flight, meteorology, duties of an officer, air force administration, algebra, and trigonometry. Tests included an interview with a psychiatrist, the 4 hour long M2 physical examination, a session in a decompression chamber, and a "test flight" in a Link Trainer as well as academics. At the end of the course the postings were announced: you were to become a Pilot or an Air Observer.

Occasionally candidates were re-routed to the Wireless Air Gunner stream at the end of ITS.

- **No. 4 Initial Training School** - Edmonton, Alberta - No. 4 Initial Training School (No. 4 ITS) which was located at the University of Alberta  
**NOTE: Ernest was assigned to No 4 ITS from 9 Aug to 10 Sept 1941**



An illustration of Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF)  
Station Edmonton, Alberta.  
Home of No. 4 Initial Training School (ITS).  
Located at the University of Alberta.

## Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS)

An Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) gave a student pilot 50 hours of basic flying instruction on a simple trainer like the De Havilland Tiger Moth, Fleet Finch, or Fairchild Cornell over 8 weeks. EFTS were operated by civilian flying clubs under contract to the RCAF and most of the instructors were civilians. The next step for a pilot was the Service Flying Training School.

- **No.18 Elementary Flying Training School - Boundary Bay, BC**

RCAF Station Boundary Bay is located 40 km. south of Vancouver. The first RCAF unit to locate there was No. 18 Elementary Flying Training School which was open from 10 Mar 1941 to 25 May 1942 for a total of 410 days.

RCAF Station Boundary Bay



Tiger Moth 4066 at No. 18 E.F.T.S. Boundary Bay, Dec., 1941. McLennan photo, DesMazes collection.

De Havilland Tiger Moth aircraft were used to train students. The school was sponsored by the Aero Club of BC and operated, with civilian instructors, as the Vancouver Air Training Co. Ltd.

**NOTE:** Ernest was stationed at No 18 EFTS, as part of Course No 38, from 13 Sept to 7 Nov 1941

## Service Flying Training Schools (SFTS)

Graduates of the EFTS “learn-to-fly” program went on a Service Flying Training School (SFTS) for 16 weeks. For the first 8 weeks the student was part of an intermediate training squadron; for the next 6 weeks an advanced training squadron and for the final 2 weeks training was completed at a Bombing & Gunnery School. The SFTS were military establishments run by the RCAF or the RAF.

There were two different types of SFTS. Recruits in the fighter pilot stream went to an SFTS where they trained in the North American Harvard or North American Yale.



Recruits in the bomber, coastal or transport pilot stream went to an SFTS where they learned multi-engine technique in an Airspeed Oxford, Avro Anson or Cessna Crane.

- **No. 7 Service Flying Training School**, Fort McLeod, Alberta - No. 7 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) began operation in December 1940, flying the twin engine Avro Anson.

**NOTE:** Ernest, was stationed at No 7 SFTS, as part of Course No 43, from 24 Nov 41 to 13 Mar 1942



AVRO Anson

At the end of Ernest training at No 7 SFTS he was presented his “WINGS”.



## ON TO ENGLAND

**“Y” Depot**, Halifax, Nova Scotia. No. 1 Y Depot was a holding unit headquartered in Halifax, with detachments in several large Canadian cities, including Montreal and Toronto. It was more an address than a place of residency. Airmen on the move would be assigned to this unit for pay and rations, but could be and would be physically located just about anywhere. On final graduation from their last BCATP School one could be assigned to this unit, but still in residency at the last School until travel was arranged (usually by train), and then on the books of Y Depot while on the train, while in a hotel or barracks on the east coast waiting for a ship, and on board the ship taking them to Europe. It was common to have one or two weeks leave before leaving for Europe, and one would be on Y Depot books during this time. As a result, at any given time there were "serving members" of Y Depot spread all over the country.

**NOTE:** Ernest, was on strength with No 1 “Y” Depot from 15 Mar to 30 Apr 1942

### Convoy NA 8, HMT Batory - Embarkation to England

**NOTE:** Ernest, boards his ships to England on the 30th Apr 1942, and the Convoy departs Halifax on the 3 May 1942 and arrives at the Clyde on the 12 May 1942, and on arrival was sent to 3 PRC



HMT Batory

## Convoy NA.8

**From:** HALIFAX Sunday, 3 May 1942.  
**To:** CLYDE Tuesday, 12 May 1942.  
**Official number of ships = 19 (TDS)**

Vessel	Flag	Tons	Built	Pdt.	Cargo	Notes
ANDES	Br	25,689	1939			18 DAYS REPAIRS AT LIVERPOOL
ANDES	Br	25,689	1939			
BATORY	Pol	14,287	1936			
CATHAY	Br	15,225	1925			3048 TROOPS. VIA HALIFAX 2/3.5.42
HMS AVENGER	Br	8,200	1941			
LETITIA	Br	13,595	1925			18 DAYS REPAIR
ORCADES	Br	23,456	1937			3234 TROOPS
USS.BROOKLYN						ESCORT 03/05 - 12/05
USS.CHARLES.F.HUGHES						ESCORT 03/05 - 12/05
USS.EDISON						ESCORT 03/05 - 12/05
USS.HILARY.P.JONES						ESCORT 03/05 - 12/05
USS.INGRAHAM						ESCORT 03/05 - 12/05
USS.NICHOLSON						ESCORT 03/05 - 12/05
USS.SWANSON						ESCORT 03/05 - 12/05
USS.TRIPPE						ESCORT 03/05 - 12/05

Data supplied by Don Kindell, extracted from the late Arnold Hague's papers with the kind permission of Mrs. Gill Hague.

## TRAINING IN ENGLAND

- **3 Personnel Receiving Centre** - Bournemouth, on the south coast of England. At Bournemouth training was given in parachute-harness releasing over land and water, use of the life preservers called "Mae Wests," jumping into a pool of water from a high platform, and lots of physical exercise which included routinely swimming several lengths of the swimming pool. Instruction on the use of firearms, and target practice with revolvers. As part of aircrew emergency kit, photographs were taken in civilian clothes, to be used by the underground for forged passports if forced down in enemy territory. Also training and tests on wireless, aircraft recognition, link theory, armament, ship recognition, and naval theory.

**NOTE:** Ernest was with 3 PRC from 13 May to 23 Jun 1942

### Advanced Flying Unit (Pilots)

Taught advanced flying, night flying, instrument flying, radio and Dead Reckoning Navigation, and Beam Approach Systems (is an automatic Radar landing system developed in the early 1940s)



Oxford Mk 1

- **No. 12 Advanced Flying Unit (Pilots)** - Grantham (Blenheim, Ansons and Oxfords)
- **No. 1514 Beam Approach Training Flight** - Coningsby (Oxford Mk1)

**NOTE:** Ernest was stationed at No 12 AFU (P) from 24 Jun to 17 Aug 1942 and during this time was "attached" to No 1514 Beam Approach Training Flight located in Coningsby from 27 Jul to 3 Aug 1942

**Operation Training Units** - It was at the OTU that the most decisive event so far in the life of a prospective member of Bomber Command occurred – 'crewing up'.

Crewing up has been described as an 'intense personal experience' and a critical one. The large four-engine bombers, the Halifax's and Lancaster's, which were the defining aircraft of Bomber Command from late 1942 until the end of the war, demanded a crew of seven. These men were required to undertake **thirty operations – a 'tour'** – many operations lasting up to seven or eight hours, through skies where the enemy's main aim was to destroy them. Their lives would depend on the individual ability of each man to do his job effectively under extreme pressure; a moment of inattention or hesitation from any of them could prove fatal for all.

The "crew" would then be posted to a front line Operational Unit and were together throughout their "tour"

- **No. 16 Operational Training Unit** - Upper Heyford (Vickers Wellington)  
**NOTE:** Ernest was stationed at No 16 OTU from 17 Aug to 12 Nov 1942



Vickers Wellington

**Heavy Conversion Units** - With the introduction of new heavy bombers, the four-engined [Short Stirling](#), [Avro Lancaster](#) and [Handley Page Halifax](#), the Royal Air Force introduced heavy conversion units (HCU). The heavy conversion units began forming in late 1941, to qualify crews trained on medium bombers to operate the heavy bombers before final posting to the operational squadrons.

- **No. 1657 Heavy Conversion Unit** - RAF Stradishall  
**NOTE:** Ernest was stationed at No 1657 HCU from 21 Nov 1942 to 15 Feb 1943

## OPERATIONAL SQUADRON

**Pathfinder Force** - To improve the accuracy of bombing **RAF Bomber Command** formed **No. 8 Group RAF, Pathfinder Force** from a cadre of highly experienced squadron and flight commanders supported by several highly experienced pilots, navigators and bomb aimers. The concept was for the highly experienced elite Pathfinder Force aircrews to fly a little ahead of the Main Force and drop marker flares known as "Target Indicators" directly on to the target as an aiming point for the less experienced crews following them. Pathfinders were awarded a special gilt metal Pathfinder wings to be worn on the tunic denoting their status.

- **No. 149 'East India' Squadron, RAF** - RAF Lakenheath (Sterling Mk1 & Mk3)  
**NOTE:** Ernest was stationed at No 149 Squadron, RAF from 19 Feb to 20 Apr 1943
- **No. 7 Squadron, RAF** - RAF Oakington (Sterling Mk1 & Mk3)  
**NOTE:** Ernest was stationed at No 7 Squadron, RAF from 20 Apr to 1 May 1943 (when he was reported missing from a bombing mission)

Pilot Officer Ernest Claude Hallding and his crew were shot down on the night of the 1/2 May 1943 at 0245 hours by a German Night fighter, their aircraft Shorts Sterling R.9263/G Mk1, Code "D", crashing near Communit of Dantumadeel, Akkerwoude

One crew member Parachuted and survived the crash to become a POW

Army Form W.3372

Ref:- ZWREU/2039/Air/444 Date: 13th of January, 1947  
M.R.E.U.

GRAVES REGISTRATION REPORT FORM

Report No. X.444 Schedule No:

Place of Burial: Akkerwoude Map Reference or Location Detail: U 7823

The following are buried here:

Regiment	Army No.	Name and Initials	Rank	Date of Death	How Marked	Plot, Row and Grave
R.C.A.F.	<u>R113756</u>	<u>Sobel, H.</u>	Sgt	1.5.43	X	<u>Row 16, Grave 14</u>
"	<u>R94118</u>	<u>Nutik, L.</u>	"	"	X	" " 15
R.A.F.	<u>1576201</u>	<u>Emms, A.E.</u>	"	"	X	" " 76
R.C.A.F.	<u>J17288</u>	<u>Hallding, E.C.</u>	P/O	"	X	" " 17
R.A.F.	<u>1221520</u>	<u>Deachy, N.A.</u>	Sgt	"	X	" " 18
"	<u>139947</u>	<u>Wragge, G.</u>	P/O	"	X	" " 19

Graves visited on 2.5.46  
L.R. St. Vincent F/L. No. 12 Section.

Squadron Leader,  
for Wing Commander, Officer Commanding,  
No. 2 W.R.&E. Unit. R.A.F.



Pilot Officer Ernest Claude Hallding



Shorts Sterling R.9263/G Mk 1  
Coded 'D'



Pathfinder Force

## PO ERNST C HALLDING's OPERATIONS RECORDS

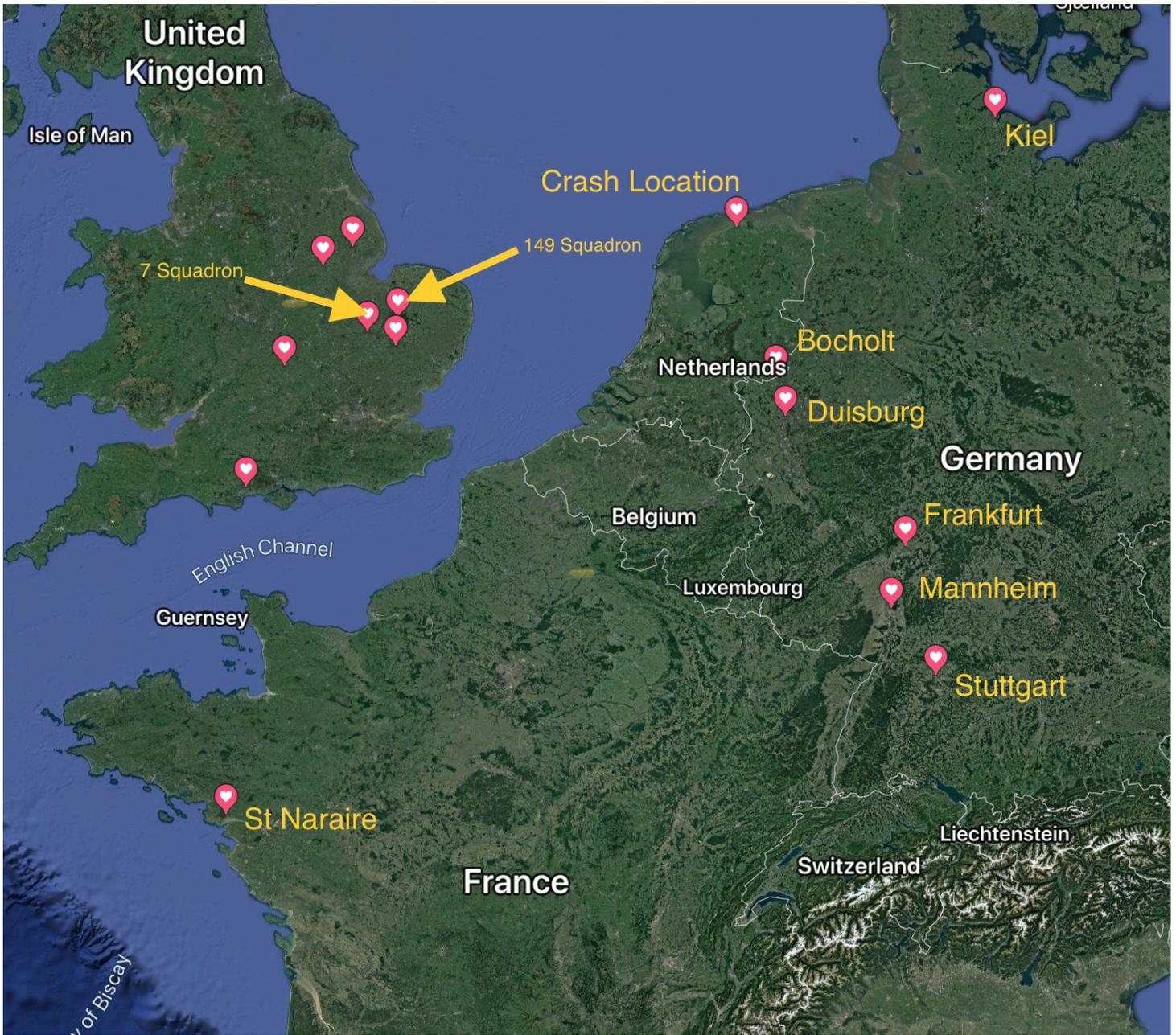
PO HALLDING, and his crew flew 8 Operational Missions, 7 with No 149 Squadron, RAF and 1 with No 7 Squadron, RAF. All of these missions were PATHFINDER MISSIONS

149 SQUADRON, RAF			
Mission Number	DATE	TARGET	REMARKS
1	11 MAR 43	STUTTGART	
2	22 MAR 43	ST NAZAIRE	Squadron recalled before reaching target
3	1 APR 43	KIEL	
4	3 APR 43	DUISBURG	
5	10 APR 43	FRANKFURT	
6	14 APR 43	STUTTGART	
7	16 APR 43	MANNHEIM	Returned early, mechanical issues
7 SQUADRON, RAF			
8	1 MAY 43	BOCHOLT	Aircraft shot down by night fighter





**P/O Hallding's locations in  
England**



P/O Hallding & Crew Bombing mission's and Crash Location