

Remembering the No. 10 Elementary Flying Training School

Dedication of memorial cairn at the Pendleton airfield

In September 1942, the community of Pendleton witnessed a period of intense activity with the opening of a flying training school. Pilots came from all over the country to this small community nestled in the heart of Prescott and Russell to receive their training before joining the war effort in Europe.

Paulo Casimiro
Pendleton

Last Saturday May 8th, on the 54th anniversary of the victory of the Allied

Forces in Europe, more than 100 Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) veterans and locals gathered at one of the remaining hangars of the Pendleton airfield, now used by the Gatineau Gliding Club, to dedicate a cairn commemorating the No. 10 Elementary Flying Training School.

Ted Mahood, Ontario Group President and George Bova, Immediate Past President of 410 Wing of the Air Force Association of Canada, unveiled the plaque.

"I would have never missed this," said Doctor Dan Komesch, who was a flying instructor at the No. 10 E. F. T. S., overcome by a flow of souvenirs. "It signifies what the war meant".

The Manotick chiropractor had mixed feelings, though. The recognition was long overdue. "Life goes on so fast, we don't have time to reflect on the past anymore".

Doctor Komesch took the battle between the Merchant Seamen and the

Federal Government as an example of the indifference of the general public towards the War Veterans. "It is a bloody disgrace. We are living today because of their sacrifice", he stated.

Thanks in part to the Gatineau Gliding Club, the Pendleton airfield is well maintained. A few buildings remain witness to the glorious past. "In another flying school, they can't find a trace of the airfield. Even if they wanted to dedicate a cairn, they don't know where to put it," added Doctor Komesch.

History

The initial school was formed in 1940 by officials of the Hamilton Are Club at the request of the minister of National Defense. The Hamilton Flying School was formed to operate No. 10 Elementary Flying Training School at Mount Hope, Ontario.

The pressure of other training activity at Mount Hope indicated the advisability of moving No. 10 E F T S by mid-summer

1942. Arrangements to move the No. 10 E.F.T.S. to Pendleton were well in hand by the end of August. Thirty-two Tiger Moths were ferried from Mount Hope to Pendleton by the end of August. The No. 10 E.F.T.S started operations in Pendleton September 1st 1942.

The first few months were very difficult, according to records. Training was ampered by extreme cold weather and frozen pipes, excessive mud and snow, delays in construction and material delivery, lack of fuel and weather variations which affected flying and almost anything that you can imagine in such operation.

From September 1, 1942 to the wind-down in September 1944, there were 17 crashes involving 19 aircraft, killing 14 people. During the same period, there were 17 accidents (taxiing, landing etc.) involving 20 aircrafts.

The first course to graduate from Pendleton on September 25, 1942 consisted of 61 students.



Photo Paulo Casimiro

Doctor Dan Komesch, flying instructor at the No. 10 Elementary Flying Training School, rekindled with an old buddy, T. A. Mullan, last week at the Pendleton airfield.

There was a drop in activity in November 1944 due to the proposed winding up of the B.C.A.T. Plan and there were many retirements and discharges. There was no training done on the station. Flying training resumed on February 5, 1945 and by the end of the month there were 73 staff officers, 168 trainee airmen, 300 staff airmen

and 60 civilians. Aircrafts consisted of 43 Cornells, 1 Harvard and 1 Hanson in storage.

A draft of 134 RAF under-training pilots were posted to No. 10 E.F.T.S. in February. For a brief period, activity picked up to the level of 1944, before the station closed on September 15, 1945 with the serviceable aircraft flown out to St. Jean, Québec.