

The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan

One of a series of articles written specially for Weekly Newspapers by Hugh Tompkin, Editor of the Fergus News-Record

FLYING OVER ONTARIO WITH AUSTRALIAN STUDENT OBSERVERS

This is the ninth of a series of Air Force stories written for the weekly newspapers of Ontario.

I sat in the secretary's office at the No. 1 Air Observer School at Malton and wondered what would happen next. Things always seemed to turn out that way when arrangements had been made for me to fly in an R.C.A.F. plane. If there wasn't a thunder storm, there was something else. The day's thunder storm had already passed and the sky was clear, but orders had become mixed up.

On the other side of his desk, J. A. Munro, secretary-treasurer of the school, was keeping the telephone busy and now and then someone came hurrying in with a correspondence file or other information.

It was obvious enough what had happened. A phone call from the Training Command at Toronto had informed me that all arrangements were made. Meanwhile, a sudden call had taken the manager of the Malton School to Montreal and no one else knew anything about the arrangements.

As we waited for word from Toronto, the big Avro Anson out on the runway roared away. It was two o'clock, and time for them to go out on their afternoon "exercise."

Flying Officer McLeod tried to be consoling. It was a rough day, he said and I wouldn't enjoy it. He remembered one newspaper man who went up in a plane on just such a

that one plane was delayed by engine trouble. Spark plugs. I might get it in time.

A quick trip to the pilot's room where I was fitted with parachute harness—two straps over my shoulders and one around each leg. All locked together in front of my stomach. The day was hot, so I left my coat behind and went in my shirt sleeves.

Another dash across the runway to the place where the twin engines of Avro Anson No. 6837 were turning over smoothly and noisily now. The pilot was already in his seat. Hasty introductions to the two student observers, K. Allin and R. Ewitt, both of Melbourne, Australia. That was interesting. Two fine young fellows.

I shook hands with them.

"It's hot!" I said just by way of making conversation. It was a stupid thing to say because so obvious. The thermometer said 96 degrees.

"We like it," one of them replied, rather surprisingly. They were in shirt-sleeves, too, with the same kind of parachute harness. Later, Pilot Jocelin said: "The Australians just eat up this kind of weather."

A little door was open up on the side of the plane, and I climbed up. One of the Australians fastened my safety strap, a quick-release type that was new to me. Allin took his seat beside the pilot and Ewitt in the seat behind the pilot. I was in the back seat opposite the door.

The plane began to move at once, down the broad runway. We passed a silver Trans-Canada plane, just coming in and turned into the wind and in a few seconds were off the

with no towns, roads or landmarks, except the outlines of the Great Lakes and here and there, circles, with an arrow marking the compass variations—not much help that to a visitor from the other side of the world. On the table lay his simple instruments, a triangular ruler, a few pencils, a circular card with rows of figures and the name, Somebody's Rapid Calculator. Beside him was a compass and up in front two dials, one indicating the engine speed and the other the altitude above sea level.

I sat in the rear seat, directly behind the student with the exercise, but with my view to the front partly cut off by the wireless instruments, hooked by remote control from the pilot's seat. Occasionally, I saw the dials turn and the wavelength indicators change, but of the messages which passed through them I knew nothing. In front of me was a table, on which I was able to write in my notebook.

Some Towns Easy to Identify

The Avro Anson is noted for its visibility. There are windows all around. It has even been likened to a flying greenhouse. The rear seat was opposite the huge wing, but it was easy to see the landscape below and behind.

The sky held many clouds and the shadows mottled the landscape below. The air was hazy and ten miles was about the limit of visibility. After climbing to 4500 feet, we were up in the lower layer of clouds. Occasionally one would drift past almost close enough to touch. The heavier clouds, holding a hint of thunder, were higher. Two or three times we ran into rain but I couldn't see it out on the wing. Only the odd singing of the propellers and the drops on the front windows showed me the difference.

I hadn't any idea whether I would know here we were from nearly a mile up in the air. I couldn't see the compass, but the sun shone most of the time, giving a rough idea of the directions. There wasn't any doubt about the first town. Acres of green houses shone in the light, and we circled over Brampton, gaining height. I imagine it would make a wonderful target, day or night. If I had been able to lay hands on a stone, I could hardly have resisted the temptation to drop it overboard on these glass roofs.

We headed west after that, and the Credit river, dirty even from that height, was the next landmark. The little village that worried me until I decided its mill ponds were like those at Alton. Then came Orangeville. I was nearer home now and knew most of the landmarks. The provincial highway to Arthur, straight as a ruler, gleamed in the sun for miles till it crossed the Grand river. The lovely Hockley Valley lay ahead. The hills looked almost flat, but the road by the river was plain enough.

By that time, I had the road-map out of my brief case and from then on, was never lost. We passed South of Camp Borden over the great Holland marsh and the tip of Lake Simcoe, and down beside Yonge street to King, then in a bee-line for Malton. There, the students changed places and we went around another circle slightly farther east, but in sight of Brampton, Caledon Lake, Orangeville, Aurora and to the shore of Lake Ontario near Malvern. The lovely Hockley Valley lay ahead. The hills looked almost flat, but the road by the river was plain enough.

The flight over Toronto was interesting. Out to the left was the Woodbine race track then the harbor with a freight boat steaming across the Bay. The skyscrapers looked like the toy buildings. To the north, the reservoir shone as all the other ponds had done. We paralleled Dundas street out to West Toronto. I saw, a mile below me, the schoolyard where I once tried to teach a girl to skate. All large buildings were easily seen. It took about six minutes to cross Toronto, from the eastern suburbs to the Humber river at Weston.

We circled the great Malton airport, slowly, watching other planes coming in and finally, with a clear runway, came down to earth without a bump.

From the delightful coolness of the upper air we stepped out into the heat again. The students checked their maps with Pilot Jocelin, and I submitted mine. It was just two rough pencil marks on a road map but he seemed surprised that I had been so close to the real route. Most people, he said, got completely lost in the air unless they had some training. There was time for conversation now. The Australians had been six weeks at Malton. Another six and they would go to Jarvis to learn bombing and gunnery with practice bombs and real machine guns. It wouldn't be long till they were flying over Germany.

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Two future Air Observers in training at Malton leave their Avro Anson plane after an "exercise flight." Note the warm clothing, the parachute harness on the men, and the gun turret on the plane.
—Royal Canadian Air Force Photograph

day. He wasn't up five minutes till he was sick, and his trip was a total loss — and so was his lunch. Besides, the exercise for that day wasn't the most interesting kind. The student observers would be trying to make out a course as though they were flying blind, above the clouds. Another day would be more interesting and would provide better flying conditions.

There seemed to be nothing else to be done. It was a quarter after two now and I hadn't heard a plane go for five minutes. The night flight wouldn't leave till nine o'clock and might not return till two in the morning and I would have 60 miles to drive home after that. I had work to do the next morning and two members of the family waiting for me in the city. There seemed to be nothing left to do but to come back again.

The Delayed Flight
Suddenly things began to happen. Flying Officer McLeod had gone out but he came hurrying back. "Everything's O.K. We'll have to hurry, though."
We trotted across the road toward the hangar. On the way he explained

ground, heading westward into a 25-mile wind.

An "Exercise" Flight
One of the Australians had repeated the warning that the flight might be a rough one, but I did not find it so, particularly after we had climbed above a thousand feet. These large planes fly much more steadily than the small open-cockpit planes in which most of my previous flying had been done.

Up in front, on the left, sat Pilot Jocelin, two or three rows of instruments in front of him, holding on to a wheel that looked like the steering wheel of an automobile with parts of it cut away. Beside him sat one of the young Australians. In front of him, under the dash, was a hole into which he crawled from time to time, so that he could lie flat on his stomach in the nose of the plane and read the drift indicator showing how much the plane was being blown off its course by the wind.

Directly behind the pilot sat the other Australian student. He was doing his "exercise" for the day. On a table in front of him lay a map



Two Avro Anson planes fly above a solid bank of clouds, while the student Air Observer plot their course without seeing the ground.
—Royal Canadian Air Force Photograph.

Treasurer's Sale of Land for Taxes

Township of Esquesing
County of Halton

TO WIT:

BY VIRTUE of a Warrant issued by the Reeve of the Township of Esquesing bearing date the fifth day of July, 1941, a sale of lands in arrears of taxes in the Township of Esquesing will be held at the Council Chamber in the Village of Stewarttown at the hour of ten o'clock in the forenoon on the Eleventh day of October, 1941, unless the taxes and costs are sooner paid.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the list of lands for sale in arrears of taxes has been prepared, that copies of the said list may be had at my Office, that the list of all lands for sale for arrears of taxes is being published in The Ontario Gazette on July 31, August 1st and 2nd, 1941, and that in default of payment of taxes and costs the lands will be sold for the said taxes and costs.

TREASURER'S OFFICE this 2nd day of July, 1941.
NORMAN R. THOMPSON,
Treasurer.