



# Sabretache

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THE CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## R.A.F. Pilot comes to Canada

Reginald Charles Nutter, known throughout his life as Reg, was born in 1921 at Dover England. His father, Charles John Nutter, served in the Royal Navy.



The family moved to Portchester, Hampshire in 1923/24 when Nutter Snr. was posted to *HMS Warspite*. When the battleship sailed to join the Mediterranean Fleet in 1926 the family, including Reg's younger brother Geoffrey, followed to Malta, highly unusual then for the family of a Petty Officer.

They lived in Malta for three years and a sister, Rita, was born there. In 1929 *HMS Warspite* struck some uncharted rocks in the Aegean Sea and, after being made seaworthy in Malta, sailed for England for a complete refit and modernisation. Reg's mother and baby sister returned by P&O liner while the two boys were deemed old enough to be able to sail back onboard with their father. They had a great time after being firmly told which parts of the ship were 'out of bounds'.

In the Spring of 1931 Reg won a County of Hampshire Scholarship which enabled him to attend Price's School at Fareham. Also that year his father was posted to Plymouth on standby for a new ship due for completion in late 1932. It then departed on a 'showing the flag' deployment around Africa for the next two and a half years. Reg left school in 1938 and started working at Lloyds Bank. He was already interested in flying, partly inspired by his uncle Commander Victor Flowerday of Imperial Airways. He captained the aircraft that took Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain on his famous third and final visit to Adolf Hitler.

Nutter joined the RAFVR in March 1939 as an Airman u/t Pilot and began his flying training on evenings and weekends, making his first solo flight on 6th June 1939. In July he moved to Portsmouth for more advanced training. Called up at the outbreak of war, he was awarded his wings and was posted to 601 Squadron at Tangmere in May.

**He writes** *However on 21st May I was posted, with Sgt. Don Hulbert, to 257 Squadron which was being re-formed at Hendon. I was assigned to A Flight commanded by Flt/Lt. HRA Beresford. Our Spitfire aircraft were arriving in twos and threes and after a short ten minute check flight in a Miles Master with F/Lt. Beresford I was authorised to make my first flight in a Spitfire.*

*The weather was very warm and I was warned by the ground crew not to spend too long taxiing around on the ground or the aircraft would overheat. On take-off I was very impressed by the power of the Merlin engine and the consequent rapid rate of climb of the aircraft. In the air I found the Spitfire a beautiful aircraft to handle because it was so light on the controls. I was somewhat disconcerted when it came time to land as Hendon looked like a small green postage stamp completely surrounded by houses. However, I managed to make a very creditable landing and feeling quite proud of myself took off again and made another one. Most of the pilots joining the squadron had never been in a fighter squadron before nor had they flown Spitfires. So we all spent the next three weeks or so working-up on Spitfires, before they were taken away from us and we were re-equipped with Hurricanes. These began arriving in the first week in June, and on the*

*14th June I made my first flight on this type of aircraft. I found it much heavier on the controls and far less responsive and somewhat slower than the Spitfire.*

*While all this was going on the squadron was non-operational, meaning that it was not ready for combat. We were kept busy learning such things as correct radio procedure, formation flying, air gunnery, both air-to-air and air-to-ground, and many other procedures.*

**Reg describes some of the unique training.** *During this working-up period Don Hulbert and myself were sent to RAF Station Uxbridge for a course on radio procedures. This course proved to be quite interesting as it had a twofold purpose - to train pilots in RT (radio transmission) procedure and to train controllers who would later control us from Operations Rooms. Marked out on the playing fields at Uxbridge was a large map of the British Isles and part of Western Europe. We pilots were given tricycles which had formerly been used to sell ice cream. In the box on the front of the tricycle was a TR9 radio which at that time was standard aircraft equipment. We wore headphones and were surrounded by a set of blinker-like boards which restricted our vision. We just had a small hole which gave us very limited forward vision. The driving chain and sprockets were arranged in such a way that when we pedalled about 25 turns the rear wheel turned just once! Thus our speed across the map matched the speed of fighter aircraft across the ground at normal throttle settings.*

The next CMHS meeting will be held on  
**Tuesday,**  
**November 21**  
**2017**  
**7:00 pm**  
At the  
Petty Officers' Mess  
HCMS Tecumseh

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE  
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The  
CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

is a non-profit registered society  
which fosters the study of the  
military and the police, and the heritage of  
Canada, the British Empire, and the world  
as well as the preservation of military  
artifacts and records.

The CMHS meets once every calendar month  
at: Petty Officers' Mess  
HMCS Tecumseh  
1820 - 24th Street SW  
Calgary AB T2T 0G6

## Notice of Next Meeting

The next CMHS meeting will be held on  
**Tuesday, November 21, 2017**  
**19:00 (7:00 pm)**

At the Petty Officers' Mess, HMCS Tecumseh.

Members are reminded that an offering of foodstuffs for the Legion Food Bank is considered your unofficial entrance fee to our regular scheduled meetings.

The unofficial agenda of this meeting will be:

Introduction of guests, Minutes of last meeting Correspondence, Membership report Treasurer's report, Old business / New business Break, Show & Tell  
The President, **Allan Ross** would like to invite everyone to remain after the meeting for an informal time of fellowship.

*Down in the stadium a complete operations room had been built. This was fully manned by the controllers who were undergoing training, WAAF plotters, etc. On top of the stadium was a spotter who passed our position and the position of the person designated as 'the enemy' down to the ops room. The W/T controllers could then vector us by radio to make interceptions. We both learned a lot from the course but found it somewhat difficult to sit down on our return to the squadron. Pedalling around in the hot sun in a serge uniform made one quite sore in a certain portion of one's anatomy!*

*At first we were used as a mobile squadron and flew down on a daily basis to the area where there was the most air activity, returning to our home base in the evening. In early August we were declared fully operational and joined 11 Group of RAF Fighter Command. During the first half of August the squadron also operated on a daily basis out to provide convoy escort to ships proceeding up or down the East Coast. On the 8th August while on one of these convoy escort patrols members of the squadron tried to intercept bombers who were attacking the convoy but were themselves jumped by enemy fighters. In this first major action involving the squadron we suffered the loss of three pilots, This loss coupled with the recent change in command dropped squadron morale very sharply.*

*About 15th August the squadron moved to Debden. This airfield had only just been completed and was very modern. Again we did a lot of convoy escort but did do some interceptions on larger raids in the London area. Sometime toward the end of the month the base was heavily bombed and the squadron moved to Martlesham temporarily. It is funny how things stick in one's memory but I remember that the Sergeants' Mess at Debden had a grand piano. The only one I ever saw in an NCO's mess, but the last time I saw it, just after the bombing, it was trying to hold up the concrete roof! During this period Sgt. Girdwood was shot down and slightly wounded, and P/Os Chomley and Maffett were killed.*

*September was a very busy month with the squadron flying many sorties and getting involved in plenty of air fighting. During this period the Germans were putting up really large fleets of bombers with heavy fighter escort and the squadron suffered further casualties including F/Lt. Beresford, F/O Mitchell and P/O Bonseigneur who were all killed.*

*On 2nd September while the squadron was patrolling off the North Foreland I managed to get some fairly good bursts at a Me109 which swung in front of me while attempting to attack the squadron from the rear. He immediately dived, streaming coolant etc., but I lost sight of him in the thick haze. On 3rd September while intercepting a force of bombers attacking North Weald, I foolishly allowed myself to watch the fall of their bombs on the airfield instead of watching my tail. I was promptly pounded upon from the rear by a Me110. Although the aircraft was quite badly shot up with a fairly large hole in the starboard wing, and leaked petrol all over me, and I had received shrapnel wounds to my right side and legs, I did manage to make it back to Martlesham Heath.*

**This action was continuous all through October, November till Dec 17th. With a great cost to the squadron.**

*On 17th December the squadron moved to Norfolk. The next day I left the squadron to take up my new posting as an instructor in Training Command.. I had completed 112 operational flights with 257 Squadron, and I said goodbye to the only two remaining pilots who had been with it since its formation some seven months earlier, P/O. David Coke and P/O Carl Capon.*

*Then on 27th February 1941 along with nearly 700 other RAF personnel, I sailed on the Polish ship 'Batory' to Halifax, Nova Scotia. After travelling by train for four days and four nights we arrived at our destination on 14th March - Medicine Hat, in southern Alberta - to establish 34 SFTS. **#34 SERVICE FLYING TRAINING SCHOOL MEDICINE HAT** (The Canadian Government had commenced work on the airfield in the summer of 1940, and also on a prisoner-of-war camp close to this small city of about 10000 population. The RAF personnel received an impressive reception from the townspeople, who conveyed them in a relay of private cars to the airfield, about 2 miles out of town). After a couple of days to settle in I began advanced flying training began using two main types of aircraft - the single-engine North American Harvard and the twin-engine Airspeed Oxford. The official opening of 34 STFS took place in April and it was at this function that I met a young local lady named Hilda Flynn. In June 1941 I was commissioned as a P/O and on 11th November I was posted to the new 36 SFTS Penhold, training with Airspeed Oxfords. On 31st January 1942 Hilda and I were married in Medicine Hat, and on 1st February I was promoted to F/O - a very nice wedding present!*



## Minutes of the last meeting of The Calgary Military Historical Society

### Meeting held on October 17, 2017 at the Petty Officer's Mess, HMCS Tecumseh

- 1. Meeting called to order** By President Allan R. at 7:00 PM. 21 members in attendance.
- 2. Minutes of Previous Meeting.** Discussed no correction. Member Bob M. moves that the Previous Meeting Minutes be accepted. Seconded by Brian H. Approved.
- 3. Newsletter.** No issues or concerns.
- 4. Treasures Report.** Report by Floyd S. Lists of monies collected from book auctions, donations etc. Listing of expenditures. Floyd reports, with last month expenses, a slight increase. Member Brian H. moves that the Treasures report be accepted as reported. Seconded by Don S. Approved.
- 5. Membership Report.** Report by Floyd S. Total 45 members (2 Life, 2 Hon, 41 Regular). Member Herb J. moves that the Membership report be accepted as reported. Seconded by Member Don S. Approved.
- 6. Correspondence:** None
- 7. Announcements:** - David Hiorth, Toronto Military Antiques, has purchased Service Publications.  
- Military Museum events:  
- Wed. Oct. 18/17 - The Leopard C2 Tank and ARV Taurus - John Senior  
- Oct. 24/17 - Passchendaele - Norman Leach  
- Thur. Oct. 26/17 - Contemporary Strategic Trends & the CAN Army - Dr. Elinor Sloan
- 8. Old Business.** - Calgary Military Show - Oct. 7, 2017 - Participation way up, attendance down.  
- Edmonton Gun Club, St Albert Show - Oct. 7, 2017 - Attendance and sales down.
- 9. New Business:** - 2017/2018 Society Executive Election  
- President, Alan R.; Secretary; Martin U. and Treasurer, Floyd S. All acclaimed.  
- New Member - Kathy Roberts. Nominated by Bob M., Seconded by David L. Approved.

### BREAK

- 10. Ticket book auction:** - Conducted by David G.

### 11. Show and Tell:

- Alan R. - 2 Commonwealth WW1 medals issued to Indian Army: Mon's Star to 2206 K. Dafr, 9<sup>th</sup> Horse & War Medal to 1155 Mohamad Khan, 123 Outram's Rifles
- Kevin R. - Selection of Saskatchewan/Manitoba CEF insignia
- David G. - "Last Civil War Veteran" article discussed; New York Herald 1861 paper; 2 photos 436 Squadron in Europe given to Garrett L.
- Alan M. - Rhodesian medal issued to an African in the Police Reserve.
- Bob M. - Selection of medals & coins: medal group with Iron Cross 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, Saxony medal for Bravery, War Cross 1914-18 with swords, Hungary 1914-18 Commemorative, Bulgaria Memorial medal of European War. German 5-mark silver coin dated 1900.
- Allan - Strip photo of his father's unit, 21 Battery Canadian Field Artillery in England 1949.
- Darryl K. - 105 Howitzer shell casing from Afghanistan 2004.
- Gary M. - 1885 Reil Rebellion unnamed medal; replica medals WWII UK war medal & Arctic Star.
- Herb J. - WWII late war Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) women pilots service cap
- James B. - Veteran Affairs Canada student educational materials: WWI-WWII pamphlets, posters and newspaper.

- 12. Adjournment:** President Allan R. calls for motion to adjourn. Member Kevin R. moves to adjourn. Seconded by Bob M. Approved. **Meeting Adjourned. 20:20**



#34 Service Flying Training School Medicine Hat

I was then posted Bagotville, Quebec, as a flying instructor using Canadian-built Hurricanes. My wife and I drove there at 40mph, this limit having been imposed after Pearl Harbour in order to conserve fuel and rubber. It was a long tedious trip! Also I found that I had run into another atrocious winter with temperatures as low as -50F and 19ft of snow. We did manage to get some flying done but really very little. We were not broken-hearted therefore in March 1943 when I was posted to 31 SFTS, Kingston, Ontario. This time the pupils were British and training to be FAA pilots, who would be taking off and landing on aircraft carriers. Needless to say the instruction was totally different from that used at the other SFTS's in Canada, and as much of our flying was done over Lake Ontario, we also had on station a Walrus amphibious rescue aircraft ! In June 1943 I was promoted to Flight Lieutenant. In March 1944 I sailed in RMS 'Andes' for Liverpool. When my new orders came through in May it was to 175 Squadron who flew Hawker Typhoons – an aircraft with which I was not familiar! It was about twice as big as a Hurricane or Spitfire. I had to do a series of practice flights to find out how it handled and acquaint myself with the various systems it carried for dropping bombs and firing rockets. But I never made an operational sortie before D-day because I went down with severe sinusitis, and was sent to Morecambe in Lancashire for treatment. This eventually was successful and a Medical Board declared me fit for flying duties in August 1944.

I then joined 245 Squadron at Antwerp in Belgium, and the first operational sortie I made was to try and render some assistance to the airborne troops who were unsuccessfully attempting to capture the bridge at Arnhem. About two weeks later the squadron moved to an airfield at Volkel in Holland, and remained on this airfield throughout the Winter of 1944-45 operating over Germany and occupied Holland.

Then came the big surprise. In April 1945 the W/Cdr. told me I was to be temporarily removed from flying and attached to the British 7th Armoured Division, the famous 'Desert Rats', advancing from the Rhine to Lubeck. I was responsible for communications with pilots, and at one stage was in a tank equipped with nine radios, directing aircraft onto specific targets or to carry out reconnaissance. We reached the southern outskirts of Hamburg quite quickly, and here we stopped because it was obvious a surrender was going to occur at any time. I bid the Army farewell and rejoined the squadron at Celle airfield. VE-Day was a day or two after I arrived. **And it was here that I learned that I been awarded the Air Efficiency Award and the DFC accompanied by the following citation (gazetted 14th September 1945):** *This officer has completed numerous operations against the enemy in the course of which he has at all times displayed outstanding courage, fortitude and devotion to duty.*

Nutter emigrated to Canada in June 1946 and began employment with the Canadian Pacific Railroad as a Trainman at Medicine Hat, Alberta in August. By 1949 he and his wife were firmly established with two young children and a brand-new home and he was promoted to Conductor in 1951 In September 1960 he enrolled in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, Calgary, and graduated with a Bachelor of Education (with distinction) in 1964. After a family holiday back to England for the first time since 1946, he began teaching at St. Mary's School for the Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education. He retired from teaching in January 1986 and remained in Medicine Hat with his wife, Hilda, until 2003 when they moved to Calgary to be nearer their children. Hilda passed away in Calgary on 4th July 2005 and Reginald passed away on 9th December 2014 also in Calgary.

Reginald was very proud to have a Canadian grandson join the British Army and receive a commission from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in 2011. His grandson is currently serving (2015) with the Second Battalion, Yorkshire Regiment.



245 Squadron, Belgium  
Nutter, standing centre

