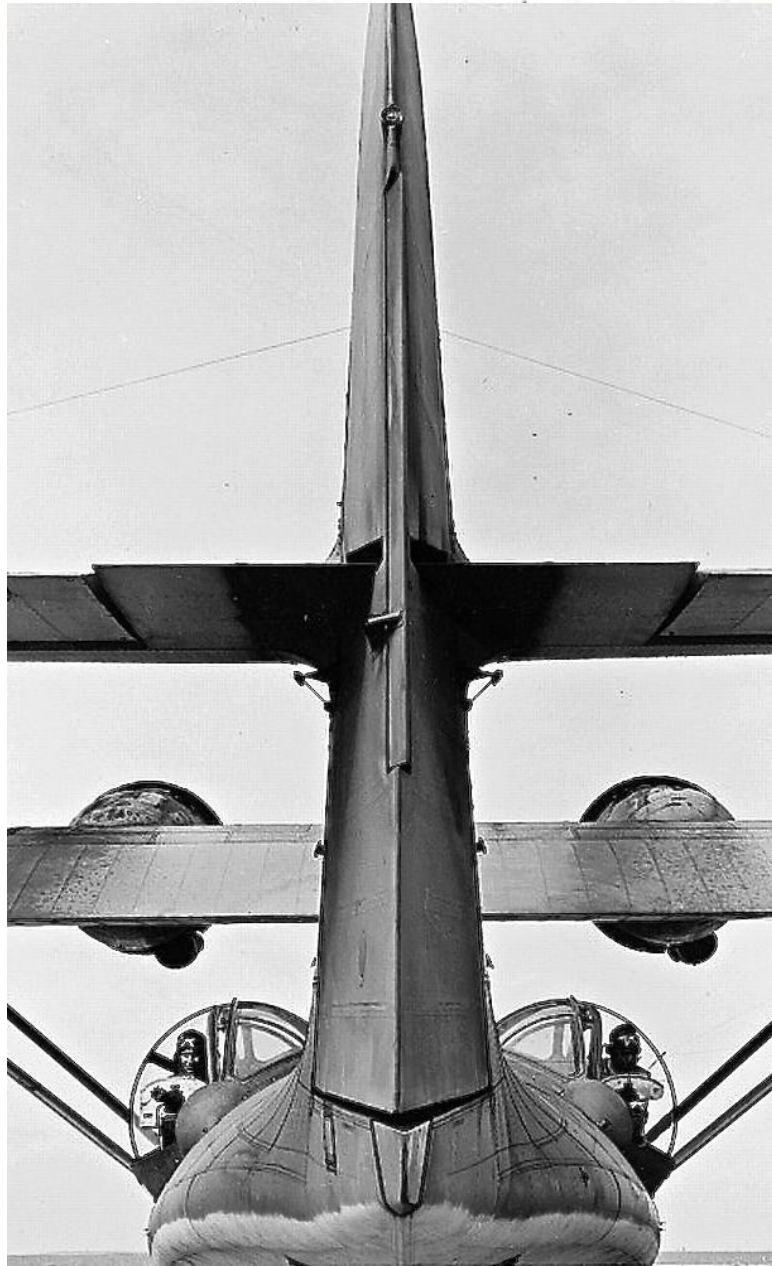




Sabretache

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF
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**The Consolidated Canso A - Part of Canada's and the
Royal Canadian Air Force's aviation history**

Can you help: The button mystery. Page 6



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CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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HMCS Tecumseh

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**This June Extra #4 was provided by David Gale and "button" story
by Dave Love**



Consolidated Canso A

The origins of the RCAF Canso go back to 28 October 1933. On this day, the U.S. Navy awarded the Consolidated Aircraft Corp., at Buffalo, N.Y., an order to build a experimental patrol aircraft designated XP3Y-1. This aircraft was first flown on 21 March 1935, at Hampton Roads, Va. After a number of modification the U.S. Navy, now impressed by the spectacular performance of the XP3Y-1, ordered 60 P3Y-1s, later designated PBY-1, on 29 June 1935. Eleven were delivered in 1936 and forty-nine in 1937.

These production aircraft were built at Consolidated's new plant in San Diego, Calif. Shortly another order for 50 machines was placed; these were the PBY-2s with minor changes. Of this order, 36 were delivered in 1937 and the remainder in 1938.

It was with the RAF that the PBY received the name 'Catalina' (later used by the U.S. services as well), and also saw its first action. The first PBY was received in July 1938 and afterwards orders were placed for 30 Catalina Mk. Is. Deliveries commenced in early 1941 and the aircraft went into service during that spring. It was Catalinas of No. 209 Squadron that shadowed the German battleship "Bismarck" until the Royal Navy sank it during the last part of May 1941. Eventually a total of about 650 Catalinas were supplied to the RAF.

After the RAF, the RCAF was the next biggest user of the PBYs, operating thirteen squadrons; five on the Canadian west coast, six on the east coast and two overseas. In the RCAF, the Catalina first went into service in Eastern Air Command with No. 116 Squadron at Dartmouth on 28 June 1941. These first aircraft were ten Catalina Mk.

Later Catalinas ordered by the RCAF and built to RCAF specifications were called Cansos. At first the aircraft were supplied from Consolidated-Vultee through RAF contracts and Canadian orders.

During early 1941, under an agreement between the U.S. and Canadian government, **Canadian Vickers Ltd.**, at Cartierville, Que., and Boeing Aircraft of Canada at Vancouver, B.C., began production of the PBY-5 and PBY-5A. During early 1942 Canadian Vickers began delivery of its first batch of Canso flying boats for the RCAF. However the first 36 aircraft were to go to the RAF as Catalina IIAs to replace Catalinas the RCAF had received earlier from RAF contracts. Of these 36 aircraft, only 29 were actually delivered, the rest going to the RCAF. The first PBY-5A Canso A was completed on 3 April 1943. When production ceased on 19 May 1945, Canadian Vickers had built 369 aircraft of this type. The RCAF received 139 aircraft from Vickers and the USAAF took delivery of 230.

The Sub Hunters

No. 5(Bomber Reconnaissance) Squadron at Dartmouth, N.S., formerly flew Stranraers, re-equipped with Catalinas and later Cansos during August 1941. From Dartmouth, the squadron later moved to Gander, Torbay, Yarmouth, and Gaspe. Although the squadron carried out many patrols and convoy escorts, they did not make contact with the raiding U-boats until 1943. During February, four attacks were made; two by F/L F.C. Colborne and crew, and one by F/O D.G. Baldwin and crew. It is not known who made the other attack, and in April, F/L J.W.C. Langmuir made an attack on a U-boat. However, in these attacks no definite results were observed and the best that could be hoped for was a 'damaged'.

4 May 43: S/L B.H. Moffit and crew, based in Gander, Newfoundland, in Canso 9747 'W', sank the U-630 some 750 miles northeast of Torbay. After this battle Moffit sighted another sub but was unable to make an attack. On the same day Langmuir and crew attacked a U-boat but his depth charges missed and after a running gun battle the sub escaped.

No. 116(BR) Squadron was formed at Dartmouth on 28 June 1941 with nine Catalina Mk.1s. Later the squadron was equipped with Canadian-built Cansos. During its operational service the squadron operated out of Botwood, Shelbourne, Gander and Sydney. On 22 July 1941, an attack was made on what was thought to be a U-boat by F/L N.E. Small near Halifax. In mid-October 1941, three of no. 116's Catalinas were based at Botwood to keep watch for four U-boats operating in the Cape Race area. On 21 January 1942, F/L Small and crew attacked and slightly damaged a U-boat. On 28 April, they attacked another sub but again with no definite results. Later on the 2 and 5 August, Small and crew made two attacks on the U-89. Neither attack was successful.

No. 162(BR) Squadron was formed with Cansos at Yarmouth, N.S. F/O C.C. Cunningham and crew made the first sighting and attack on a U-boat from this new base but could only claim it as damaged. The squadron was moved temporarily to Wick, in northeastern Scotland, to intercept enemy submarines moving out from Norwegian ports during the first days of the Normandy invasion. .

22 Feb 44: Consolidated Canso A, RCAF s/n 9841, aircraft of No. 162 (Bomber Reconnaissance) Squadron based at Reykjavik, Iceland with Flying Officer C. C. Cunningham and crew, attacked and damaged a German U-boat (U-550).

17 Apr 44: Consolidated Canso A, RCAF s/n 9767, aircraft of No. 162 (Bomber Reconnaissance) Squadron based at Reykjavik, Iceland with Flying Officer T.C. Cooke and crew, sank U-342 at 60-23N 29-20W.

3 Jun 44: Consolidated Canso A, RCAF s/n 9816, aircraft of No. 162 (Bomber Reconnaissance) Squadron operating from Wick, Scotland with Flight Lieutenant R.E. MacBride and crew, sank U-477 at 63-59N 01-37E in the face of intense AA fire from the U-boat.

11 Jun 44: Consolidated Canso A, RCAF s/n 9842, aircraft of No. 162 (Bomber Reconnaissance) Squadron operating from Wick, Scotland with Flying Office L. Sherman and crew, sank U-980 at 63-07N 00-26E.

13 Jun 44: Consolidated Canso A, RCAF s/n 9816, aircraft of No. 162 (Bomber Reconnaissance) Squadron operating from Wick, Scotland with Wing Commander C.G.W. Chapman and crew, sank U-715 at 62-45N 02-59W. As a result of AA fire from the U-boat, the Canso had to ditch and the crew spent nine-hours in the water; one crewman drowned.

24 Jun 44: Consolidated Canso A, RCAF s/n 9754, aircraft of No. 162 (Bomber Reconnaissance) Squadron operating from Wick, Scotland with Flight Lieutenant D.E. Hornell and crew, sank U-1225 at 63-00N 00-50W. As a result of AA fire from the U-boat, the Canso had to ditch and the crew spent 21-hours in the water with one dinghy. Two members died before they were rescued. **Flight Lieutenant Hornell** died shortly after rescue and was posthumously awarded the **Victoria Cross** for inspiring leadership, valor and devotion to duty.

Further story on Flight Lieutenant Hornell is on Page 4

30 Jun 44: Consolidated Canso A, RCAF s/n 9841, aircraft of No. 162 (Bomber Reconnaissance) Squadron operating from Wick, Scotland with Flight Lieutenant R.E. MacBride and crew, damaged U-478 at 63-27N 00-50W; the U-boat was subsequently sunk by a Consolidated Liberator Mk V of No. 86 (RAF) Squadron based at Tain, Scotland.

4 Aug 44: Consolidated Canso A, RCAF s/n 9759, aircraft of No. 162 (Bomber Reconnaissance) Squadron operating from Wick, Scotland with Flying Officer W.O. Marshall and crew, damaged U-300.

David Ernest Hornell VC

David Hornell was born in Toronto, Ontario on 26 January 1910. In 1941 he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), qualified as a pilot and was commissioned in 1942.

At the time of the action for which he received the Victoria Cross posthumously, Flight Lieutenant Hornell was flying as aircraft captain on Consolidated Canso amphibians with No. 162 (Bomber Reconnaissance) Squadron, RCAF from Royal Air Force (RAF) Station Wick in Northern Scotland.

Late in the day on 24 June 1944, Hornell's Canso was at the end of a 12-hour patrol over the North Atlantic when the German submarine U-1225 was sighted on the surface approximately 120 miles north of the Shetland Islands. As the aircraft made its attack run, heavy and accurate anti-aircraft fire from the U-boat crippled the starboard engine and started a fire on the starboard wing. With great determination and skill, Hornell held the vibrating Canso on course and delivered his four depth charges on target, sinking the submarine. Shortly thereafter the starboard engine fell out of the wing, forcing Flight Lieutenant Hornell to ditch the aircraft, by now a flaming wreck, in the heavy seas. With only one dinghy serviceable, for several hours the eight members of the crew had to take turns holding on to the life-raft's side while immersed in the icy water. Although the dinghy was spotted by a Consolidated Catalina flying boat from No. 333 (Norwegian) Squadron, RAF five hours after Hornell had ditched, for the next 16 hours rescue attempts were frustrated by high seas and malfunctioning equipment.

Two of the crew eventually died of exposure. At one point, Flight Lieutenant Hornell had to be restrained by his comrades when, though at the end of his own strength and about to go blind, he proposed to swim to an airborne lifeboat that had been dropped. Finally, after 21 hours, a rescue launch arrived to pick up the survivors, but all attempts to revive Hornell failed, and he died of exposure.

Flight Lieutenant Hornell was the first member of the RCAF to be awarded the Victoria Cross.



This story features the "Consolidated Canso A". Many other RCAF crews successfully fought the "U Boats" in a number of other aircraft: the **Short Sunderland Mk III**, the **Vickers Wellington Mk XII**, the **Douglas Digby No. 10** and the **Lougheed Hudson Mk IIIA**



The Citation

Ignoring the enemy's fire, Flight Lieutenant Hornell carefully manoeuvred for the attack. Oil was pouring from his starboard engine, which was, by this time, on fire, as was the starboard wing; and the petrol tanks were endangered. Meanwhile, the aircraft was hit again and again by the U-boat's guns. Holed in many places, it was vibrating violently and very difficult to control.

Nevertheless, the captain decided to press home his attack, knowing that with every moment the chances of escape for him and his gallant crew would grow more slender. He brought his aircraft down very low and released his depth charges in a perfect straddle. The bows of the U-boat were lifted out of the water; it sank and the crew were seen in the sea.

Flight Lieutenant Hornell contrived, by superhuman efforts at the controls, to gain a little height. The fire in the starboard wing had grown more intense and the vibration had increased. Then the burning engine fell off. The plight of aircraft and crew was now desperate. With the utmost coolness, the captain took his aircraft into wind and, despite the manifold dangers, brought it safely down on the heavy swell. Badly damaged and blazing furiously, the aircraft rapidly settled.

After ordeal by fire came ordeal by water. There was only one serviceable dinghy and this could not hold all the crew. So they took turns in the water, holding on to the sides. Once, the dinghy capsized in the rough seas and was righted only with great difficulty. Two of the crew succumbed from exposure.

An airborne lifeboat was dropped to them but fell some 500 yards down wind. The men struggled vainly to reach it and Flight Lieutenant Hornell, who throughout had encouraged them by his cheerfulness and inspiring leadership, proposed to swim to it, through he was nearly exhausted. He was with difficulty restrained. The survivors were finally rescued after they had been in the water for 21 hours. By this time Flight Lieutenant Hornell was blinded and completely exhausted. He died shortly after being picked up.

Flight Lieutenant Hornell had completed 60 operational missions, involving 600 hours' flying. He well knew the danger and difficulties attending attacks on submarines. By pressing home a skilful and successful attack against fierce opposition, with his aircraft in a precarious condition, and by fortifying and encouraging his comrades in the subsequent ordeal, this officer displayed valour and devotion to duty of the highest order."

(London Gazette, no.36630, 28 July 1944)



The Button Mystery

Original request through canwehelp@cmhs.ca website from **Robert Lefebvre** <rlefebvre@axion.ca>

Subject: *BUTTON H.S.C.*

Brass button King Crown at 12 o'clock One small maple leaf each side

H.S.C. in middle with a beaver under neat at six o'clock, made by: SMITH & WRIGHT LTD, B'HAM

Could you please inform me ,if this WW1 or WW2 and does it stand for Headquarters & service Command in ww2 ?

Thank you for your help, Bob L

From: dlove@davincibb.net Re: **BUTTON H.S.C.** Hi Bob, This is Dave Love from the Calgary Military Historical Society. Thank you for your question. Up front, I can say this with reasonable certainty. It appears to be World War 1 +/- vintage and given the beaver and maple leaves, it is definitely Canadian. From your description it would appear consistent to a military button also but that is less certain. It could possibly be of more recent vintage if the organization has used a traditional design. This is a common practice. The long and the short is that right now, I just can't say anything for certain.

I did a really quick initial look and did not come up with the meaning of H.S.C. but that doesn't necessarily mean anything at this point. I have a lot of other sources that I have yet to check. One thing I did check was the manufacturer, Smith & Wright, Birmingham. My main source lists that company as a manufacturer of buttons, including military and naval buttons from 1882 - 1899. In the early 1900's it was taken over by the insignia company, Firmin and Sons. I haven't had a chance to check that out either to see if the Smith and Wright name continued to be stamped on buttons manufactured by Firmin. That also has been known to happen. In the meantime I will do some more searching and get back to you. I love a mystery

From: dlove@davincibb.net June 15, Hi Bob I can tell you beyond as doubt that no such regiment ever existed. Further the spelling used for Hussar in the article you found is incorrect, note the single S. The button in question is what collectors refer to has a Kings Crown button. This means it dates from the period following Queen Victoria's Death (1901) and ending with the ascension of Queen Elizabeth to the throne (1952). During this time period only three cavalry regiments operated in that region, 7th Hussars, 11th Hussars, 26th Stanstead Dragoons. All of these had unit specific buttons that are well documented. There is a book that covers this subject fairly well titled 'Buttons of the Canadian Militia, Army, Navy and Air force 1900-1990. author Eric Smylie. Neither of your buttons are listed in this work. I still suspect that these are related to police, railway or some other such organization that existed during this time period. Sorry I can't offer more.



Note from the Editor....Can You Help. Any ideas on these buttons are welcome. Contact Dave Love dlove@davincibb.net . I have also heard from Dave and he has been in contact with the original manufactures. (they have been in business for 400 years.) and so we will probably hear more from him.