

# 2016 HHAS Remembrance Day Ceremony at Springbrook

By Jodi Smith

This fall is the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this airport, or aerodrome as it was called in 1941. If you were here 75 years ago it would have been a bustling place with hundreds of young men coming and going, almost all with British accents. The newest ones would be in ground school but the rest would be learning to fly twin engine Air Speed Oxford MkI planes. It was a Royal Airforce Base staffed entirely by Brits and was built as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Program (BCATP).

Our society has taken responsibility for preserving the history of both BCATP bases in Central Alberta: No. 32 Elementary Flying Training School near Bowden (now the Bowden Institution) and No. 36 Service Flying Training School here at Springbrook, both of which were RAF bases during WWII. Initially both bases were staffed entirely by RAF personnel.

This year is the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of both bases. No. 36 SFTS was established in late August 1941 and No. 32 EFTS at Bowden in late November 1941.

By November 1941 this base would have been in full operation with several classes of students at different stages in their training. No. 36 SFTS took on students in groups of about 60 and each group was given a 'courses number'.

It was here at No 36 SFTS that students finally 'got their wings'. So in addition to British accents there would have been the din of twin engine Air Speed Oxford engines as students practiced landing and taking off, etc.

At Bowden the training was done by 'flights' with about 30 students in each flight. Students would not have arrived until after Christmas, 1941. Flying instruction was initially done with de Havilland DH.82 Tiger Moths, biplanes like the ones we are restoring.

Four service men died while on active duty during the first six months of operation of the two bases. They died and were buried (Innisfail and Red Deer) far from their homes. None were married. They left only their parents and perhaps sibling to remember them. Today we remember them.

They are

**LAC Philip Edward Bushell**, 1313133 at No. 36 SFTS Penhold age 29 from Hampshire England who died on January 6, 1942

**LAC Arthur Stanley White**, 1318607 at No. 36 SFTS Penhold. age 21 from Berkshire, England who "Died as a result of multiple injuries sustained in a flying accident on January 29, 1942."<sup>1</sup>

**LAC Reginald, James Whyte**, 658004 at No. 32 EFTS Bowden. Age 25 from Surrey England who died on Feb 19, 1942 in a flying accident at Netook, a relief landing field between Bowden and Olds.

**Cpl. Stanley Ryder**<sup>2</sup>, 571644 at No. 36 SFTS Penhold. Age 20 from Yorkshire, England. "Fractured base of the skull, which was the immediate cause of death sustained on 29<sup>th</sup>, January 1942, when a tractor he was driving overturned."

[note]

In 1941-42 training at Bowden (EFTS) took about 7 weeks and 10 weeks at Penhold (SFTS). These times were increased in Sept 1942 to 8 weeks at EFTS and 12 weeks at SFTS and in February 1944 to 10 weeks at EFTS and 20 weeks at SFTS. <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Words in parentheses are direct quotes from the official record of death.

<sup>2</sup> He was one of three airmen whose deaths during WWII at the two bases did not involve flying accidents

<sup>3</sup> Aerodrome of Democracy F.J. Hatch 1983 page122:

## Outline of Remembrance Day 2016 talk

HHAS preserves the history of this base (No. 36 Service Flying Training School) and the base that was at Bowden (No. 32 Elementary Flying Training School)

Fall 2016 is the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the start of both bases which were part of British Commonwealth Air Training Program (BCATP)

Both bases were run by the Royal Airforce and taught mainly British men to be pilots

De Havilland DH.82 Tiger Moths were used at Bowden; Air Speed Oxford MkI planes were used at Penhold

It was at Penhold where students finally got their 'WINGS'.

Depending on whether they were flying fighters or bombers between 1/3 and 1/2 of these pilots would die during the war.

Four died while in active service at these two bases during the first six month of operation. None were married; they left to remember them only their parents and siblings. Today we specifically remember them.

**LAC Philip Edward Bushell**, age 29 from Hampshire England who died on January 6, 1942

**LAC Arthur Stanley White**, age 21 from Berkshire, England who on January 29, 1942."

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