



# BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT BUGLE

*News from our Airport at Biggin Hill - established 2005*



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## ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY

Yes you read correctly! Courtesy of the Vernon Flying Club, 150 children between the ages from eight to seventeen. Were afforded an introductory flight to watch the thrill of the ground falling away as they departed the Vernon runway for what was for many their first flight ever. The photo's below just some of the activity that occurred on the morning of 26 July. A more comprehensive write-up will be published next month.





## VERNON AIRPORT CANADA

### *A brief history of this airport in BC*

In the early years of aviation, the Vernon Airport was located south of the city to the west of the Vernon Army Camp. Its exact location was where the parade square and baseball diamond are today situated. In 1919, a Curtis "Jenny" from Kamloops became the first airplane to land at the site. Three days later, Captain Ernie Hoy flew from Vancouver to Vernon in just over three hours bringing with him a letter from the mayor of Vancouver, hence celebrating the first airmail delivery in Canada. His route took him along the present-day Coquihalla Highway via Merritt

The first Air Pageant was held in Vernon in 1931 followed by an Interior Provincial Airshow held in 1932. In addition, Vernon was on the map as a possible suitable landing spot on the route to Alaska.

In 1935, four local lads completed a two-place open cockpit airplane (CF-AOM) which they called the "City of Vernon". Shortly afterwards, this aircraft was flown to Edmonton becoming the first homebuilt aircraft to fly over the Rockies. A mural depicting this

aircraft and pilots Eldon Seymour and Jim Duddle, (Vernon's version of the Wright Brothers) is located in downtown Vernon.

With the Canadian involvement in the Second World War, general aviation was grounded by order of the Federal Government. The airport was taken over by the military for Armed Forces training. With the cessation of hostilities, the airport was relocated to the farmlands of Okanagan Landing with much negotiation on the part of Dick Laidman (later president of Pacific Western Airlines) who is considered the founder of the Vernon Airport (also known as Laidman Field). The airport was a grass field approximately half the length it is today.

The Vernon Flying Club was the sole tenant of the airport during the late Forties and early Fifties and during the latter period, there were only four aircraft on the field. Early in the growth of the airport, the runway was paved, but only to a width of twelve feet and a length of fourteen hundred feet. The two-inch pavement was laid over four inches of gravel grew during the sixties and seventies.

During the strong economy of the

day, the city hangar was constructed during the early fifties and airport continued to latter period, there were over seventy-five aircraft located on the field. The runway (07-25) had been extended westward onto Indian Reserve property giving 2200 feet, but it was still only twelve feet wide, this coupled with the ever-present potholes every spring meant fancy foot work for pilots to miss the holes and stay on the runway.

The airport remained this size until 1988 when the present runway became a reality. The Flying Club of Vernon and Okanagan Aviation were the primary forces behind this development with the City of Vernon being the owner/operator of the field. With the rapid growth of general aviation during the seventies, the airport function was transferred to a regional district function. This was beneficial as the majority of aircraft owners lived in the regional district rather than within the city limits. The land on which the airport was situated was also under the jurisdiction of the regional district authority. When the city limits were expanded to include the Okanagan Landing area, the airport lands fell back under the authority of the city of Vernon and the running of the airport was taken back under the wing of City Hall.

During the 1990s, in an attempt to avoid liability, the city decided to operate the airport under the envelope of a separate corporation. Subsequently, this separate

corporation was abandoned and the airport is now administered by an airport manager. Today, the Vernon and district airport is one of the most popular and busiest general aviation airports in the BC interior.

Studies done have shown that even a modest-sized airport such as ours can be a huge economic generator; not only to the city of Vernon, but also to the north Okanagan. In the words of the BC Aviation Council “...(an) airport is one mile of asphalt which gives access to the world”.

*Prepared with the assistance of T.R. Thorburn*

## VERNON FLYING CLUB: BC



The Vernon Flying Club has been a presence in Vernon for over sixty years. Started in 1946 with thirty-nine founding members, the Vernon Flying Club has grown to over one hundred members who, between them, own just under seventy aircraft. In addition to several members who already fly aircraft they built themselves, there are three members who are in various stages of doing so, one of whom is constructing his fourth. The clubhouse is the focal point for pancake breakfasts, meetings, BBQs, and twice daily “kaffee klatches”. Members are aviation enthusiasts who enjoy getting together to share stories, activities and their love of flight.

The most important priorities for new and old pilots are flying, fun, safety, comradeship and accomplishment. Some members are pilots; some own planes; and some are simply interested in

aviation. Not having a pilot licence or owning an aircraft is no impediment to membership: the one thing we all have in common is a desire to see general aviation thrive in Vernon and Canada. Indeed, one of our members, Dave Crerar, was the 2002 winner of the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association Appreciation Award for his tireless encouragement of General Aviation.



Flying Club members are big boosters of all facets of aviation, giving support to such activities as COPA For Kids, Search and Rescue, Safety Seminars for Pilots, Winter Carnival, Airport Security, the Wings and Wheels annual event, and past Fathers Day Pageants at the airport. Indeed, the first Vernon Father’s Day Air Show was organized by the members of the Vernon Flying Club several years ago when the Salmon Arm Flying Club was unable to host an air display that year.

Visitors are welcome; there is usually someone in attendance mid-morning and mid-afternoon. Stop in, say “Hello”, and have a coffee.

## BIGGIN HILL > CANADA >>



### >>> RHYS PERRATON

Ex Biggin Hill’ite Rhys Perraton moved to Canada from SE Asia 15 years ago, where he had been

flying some of Mr. Boeing’s finest machines, and gives some insight into various kinds of flying in Canuck land. (*Simply Canada*) Rhys grew up in Hayes, 5 miles from Biggin, and had his first ever flight in a joy ride Rapide at a Battle of Britain air show and at the next years display another joy flight in a Bell 47. At that time Biggin was still an active RAF station flying Meteors and Hunters.

Both of those flights, unknown to him at the time, were prophetic, as he was destined to become first an RAF pilot and later to enjoy flying many de Havilland types, from Tigers to jets, and gain his mechanical palm tree licence in a Bell 47 at Redhill. While still at school in Keston Rhys started his PPL with Alouette Flying Club who had their Taylorcraft Plus D, G-AHNG, available with Mick Ronayne’s County Flying Club alongside the Tiger Moths with instructors Bob Needham and Steve Hays assisting Mick. After soloing on the Taylorcraft Rhys gained an RAF flying scholarship through the ATC cadets and completed his PPL on the Aircoupe at Surrey and Kent flying club. One of his instructors there was a certain John Willis, along with Mike Nash-Wortham, Brian Johns, Cyril Pegram, Tiny Marshall and CFI Peter Chinn. Soon after Rhys left to join the RAF, years later to return to Biggin as an instructor, and charter pilot for Fairflight.



A dusting of snow at Vernon, but this will not effect flying as this airport is geared for snow clearing and the runway is always open year round, how good is that !



**CANADA IS SPECTACULAR**

Flying is a dream in this large never ending landscape and should be treated with respect and caution with safety a priority.

**ARCTIC SURVEY CAMPS**



These survey camps require regular supply flights from skilled pilots.



**GOOD ARCTIC CLOTHING:**

The correct clothing is a must for these latitudes where the temperature can be as low as minus 30 – 40C even with a blue sky and brilliant sunshine.

**GREAT FOR FISHING TRIPS**



Alight on the water and taxi slowly to your campsite *'pour le weekend'* with canoe attached to float strut.



**COLOUR CODED CANOES**

As well as being an ideal float plane, the extra power provides safety for associated load carrying capacity for, *'adventure weekends'*.



**FLOAT PLANES ARE GREAT**

Canada has lots of lakes which make ideal water landing sites for float planes and amphibians which can land on land as well as water. For this kind of rescue the larger models with rather big engines do have an advantage.



**WHO IS GOING TO TELL HIM**

This is not feasible..!

## DH BEAVER AT NELSON



This air day was as always a success along with the Tiger Moth which made it to Nelson 96 n.m. southeast of Vernon.



Flyin's are a popular feature of recreational flying from Vernon to other airfields. Usually with no landing fees, unlike the UK.

## DH BEAVER AMPHIBIAN



An all round aircraft for this large expanse of country.

## RHYS WITH THE STEARMAN



Built in 1941 for the US Army Air Corps it served at a number of wartime training fields before

becoming a crop duster in California. Was in Canada to spray budworm in Nova Scotia in the 1950's and in the 60's was back flying for General Air Spray when it was fitted with the P&W 985 450hp engine and was a very rare float equipped Stearman. It suffered an accident, common amongst crop sprayers and was out of service and stored for some years until being restored by a private owner and re-fitted with the Continental W670 220hp engine, the original Stearman powerplant, and flown extensively in Ontario and Nova Scotia. Interestingly General Airspray is still in business and now flies crop spraying Super Cubs and Grumman Agcats. I have been able to get some of it's old maintenance logs from the 50's and 60's which is nice, together with it's history from the military and crop spraying years in the USA. It has just finished a restoration, engine overhaul and recover and paint, and now has the registration CF-VOB again that it had when flying for General Airspray.

## GASGOYNE DIRT STRIP



Difficult to spot from a distance requires navigational knowledge of the terrain, with a fly past to inspect the surface for landing. This place is 60 n.m. east of Resolute Bay.



## GREENLAND ICEBERG



Quaanaaq Bay, this huge iceberg became trapped for the winter when the sea froze over something majestic or sinister not sure which.

An inspiring piece of ice jutting out of the frozen sea, nevertheless.

## BEAVER FLYING APPROACH



Take a firm grip of control wheel until knuckles go white, do not lose sight of airfield.



You can adjust the **power!!**

Sorry, I didn't mean to shout....

## VERNIE THE MASCOT BEAR



Sporting his Vernon Flying Club wings. He is not a real bear.



**Rhys Perraton and his friend Drew Hastie, in the cockpit of the Boeing 727.**

Before actually moving to Canada I made a trip over to get my Canadian licence. Had to do a medical, pass the ATPL and instrument written exams and an instrument rating single pilot flight test. That was done, after some training, on a Beech Duchess at Boundary Bay, ex wartime RCAF training field near Vancouver. Not having flown a light twin or single pilot IFR for many years it was an interesting time but got done OK after a few trips.

Later I did a Canadian instructor rating, got some credits for my UK one, so just had to do a written exam, some training flights and a flight test with a Transport Canada examiner. The written exams here are all multi choice but do cover a pretty large syllabus, and sometimes the questions can be more right than the others.

There is a lot of uncontrolled airspace here which is great for general aviation and freedom of flight, and you can fly VFR in some types of controlled airspace. There is a requirement to file a flight plan or flight itinerary for flights of more than 25nm from your departure point but you can include multiple stops and total elapsed time on the plan. The itinerary can be filed with a "responsible person" though rather than flight service.

Flying to and from USA is reasonably easy as long as you stick to the rules. Must file a flight plan and call in advance for a cross border squawk, comply with customs and immigration requirements, and update your ETD and ETA if things change. You don't have to leave from a customs airport in either direction, you can depart from a private strip if you want, but have to arrive at a customs airport. Private flights returning to Canada, can call on the 'phone' after landing and may be

cleared over the 'phone if no customs and immigration officer is available.

There are lots of flying clubs although some do not actually have an aircraft and are meeting places and social venues for members, many of whom, as in Vernon, have their own aircraft. Some of the clubs have grown in to quite large flight training organizations. Flying training follows the familiar pattern of student pilot, PPL, CPL/IFR and so on and instructors have to have a CPL before they can get an instructor rating, of which there are 4 grades, 4 being the basic newly qualified, 2 and 3 after some instructing experience, and 1 being required to train new instructors

There are also licences and permits and instructor requirements for gliders, helicopters and basic and advanced ultralights. Having a valid UK helicopter ATPL I was able to get my CPL[H] by doing a simple written exam on helicopter operations, and a flight test with a Transport Canada examiner.

## FLOAT PLANE FLYING

is a big thing here and the basic float rating only requires 7 hours of training including 5 solo take offs and landings and there is no written or flight test required. Insurance requirements for floats are generally higher and newly qualified CPL's would typically need at least 50 hours of float time before flying commercially. A wide variety of different single and multi engine types fly on floats, both straight and amphib, from ultralights to Beavers and single and twin Otters, and even, a few Beech 18's soldiering on, lovely.

## WINTER TIME

of which there is lots in Canada, especially in the North, means skis, and again a wide variety of types, up to DC3's, are certified on skis and again Beavers, Otters and Cessna 185's are common.

I have flown the Twin Otter extensively in bush operations in the high Arctic on skis and big tundra tyres demanding skills in

temperatures of -40C and lower

Winter drawers on chaps!

That is enough ramblings from me for now

## PPL FLYING IN CANADA

Needs a minimum of 45 hours including a at least 12 dual and 10 solo and 5 hours of solo X-country and a qualifying X-country with two landings from base. Typical prices are \$170-200 solo and 200-300 for dual which with the current exchange rate makes it quite a bit cheaper than UK I would say. Some flying clubs have aircraft for members use and around \$80-100 an hour dry would be about a going rate, with fuel for say a 172 being around \$50 an hour.

For a CPL, after PPL, there is a required 65 hour course and 200 hours total before being able to apply for the licence. Some larger flight schools link up with a college or university and offer a CPL/IR together with an aviation diploma for those interested in that kind of thing.

## FINALS AT ALBION SANDS



Bob Needham will be at the' Kings Arms' 17<sup>th</sup> Oct 1500 hrs onwards.

