

# Centenary of the First trans-Canada Flight 7-17 October 1920-2020



Presentation by Dave Bartlet  
November 2020

# History

On 12 August 1920, Wing Commander J.S. Scott, Superintendent of the Certificate Branch of the Air Board, requested from the Air Board that approval be given for a transcontinental flight from Halifax to Vancouver:

“to demonstrate the feasibility of such a flight from the commercial point of view; to prove the possibility of a fast trip from coast to coast without undue strain on the pilots or machines; and to serve as recruiting propaganda for the Canadian Air Force, and to stimulate an interest in aviation by commercial firms and the public generally”.

The Air Board approved the project and the flying was supported by two branches with the Flying Operations Branch (supervised by W/C R. Leckie, DSO, DSC, DFC) covering Halifax to Winnipeg and the Canadian Air Force (commanded by Air Commodore A.K. Tylee from Winnipeg to Vancouver.

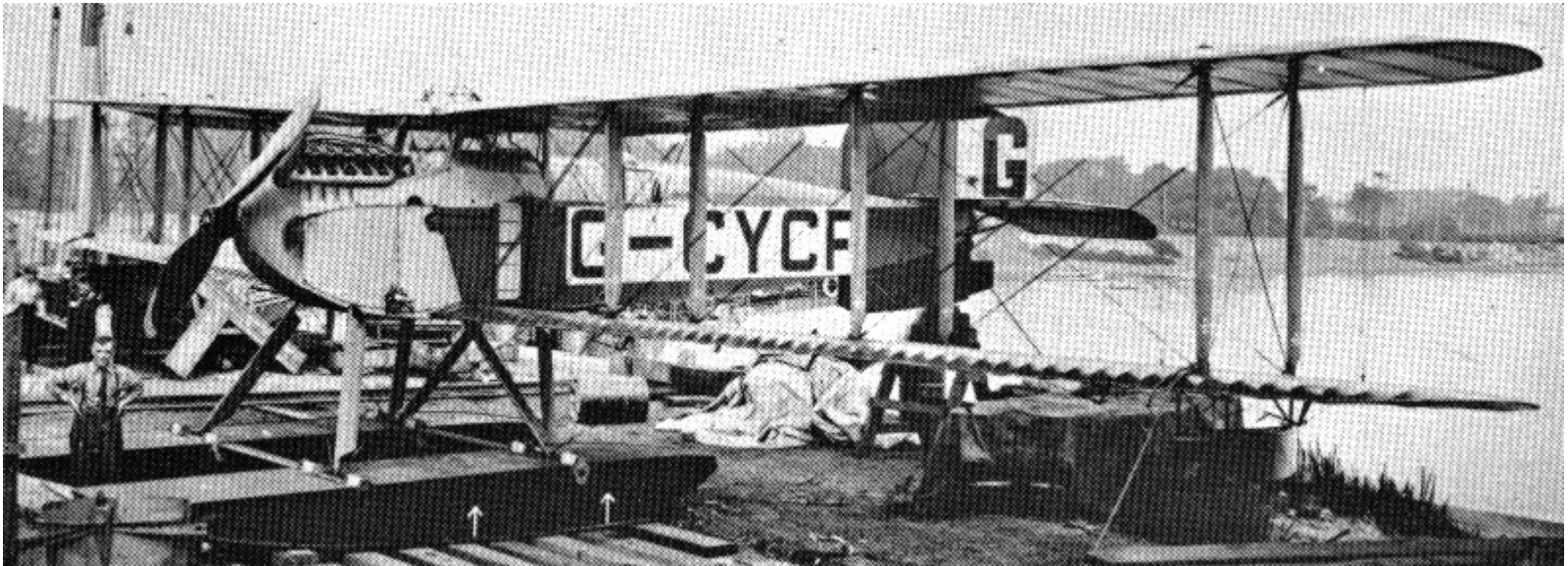
Air Commodore  
AK Tylee



W/C R. Leckie

## History cont'd

On 7 October 1920 at 0800 the Fairey seaplane G-CYCF took off from Dartmouth Air Station for Ottawa with W/C Leckie as pilot and S/L Hobbs as crew. A bag carried official correspondence and letters. The Fairey seaplane was forced to land at Whelpley's Point, NB on the Saint John River due the loss of engine cowling and during landing the propeller and undercarriage were damaged.



# History cont'd

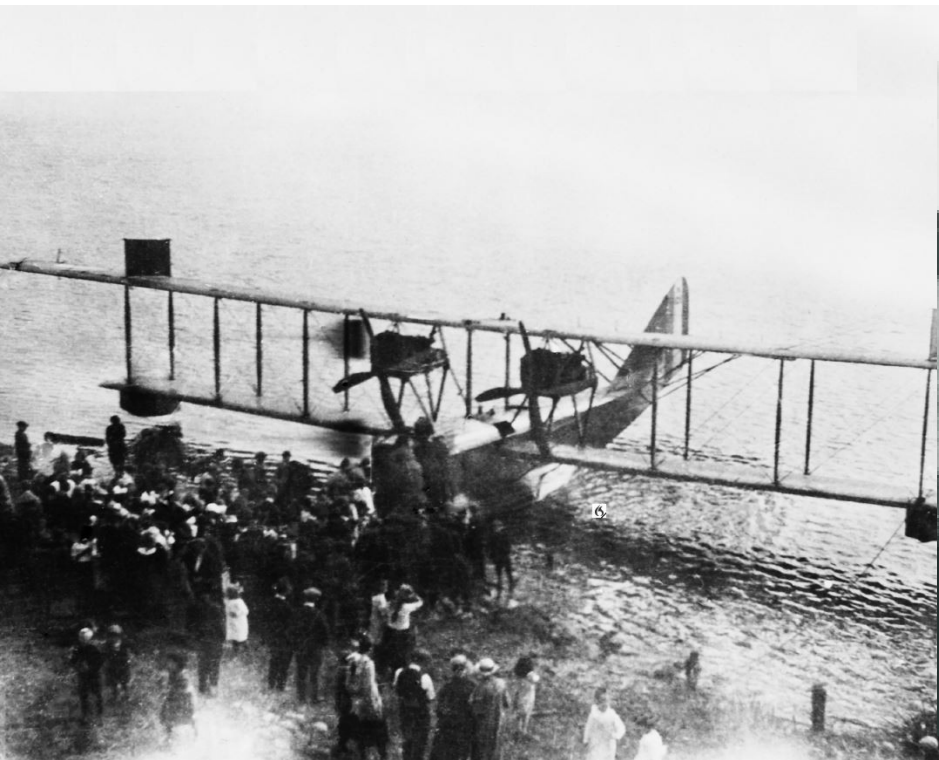
A new plane, an HS2L flying boat G-CYAG was flown to the Point and Leckie took off for Fredericton arriving at 1810 for refueling. They then took off for Riviere Du Loup and arrived safely at 2305 despite fog and rain.





# History cont'd

On 8 October, at 1820 they used a Felixstowe F3 flying boat to head to Ottawa and they arrived at Rockcliffe at 1230. Engine problems delayed the departure until 9 October and Leckie and crew departed for Winnipeg. At 1635 they landed at Sault Ste Marie. Fog prevented takeoff until Sunday 10 October at 0730 and they arrived at Kenora at 1555. After an engine repair they left for Winnipeg at 2015, but fog on the Winnipeg River forced them to fly to Selkirk and bring the letter bag down to Winnipeg for the next leg.



Sault Ste Marie



Kenora

# History cont'd

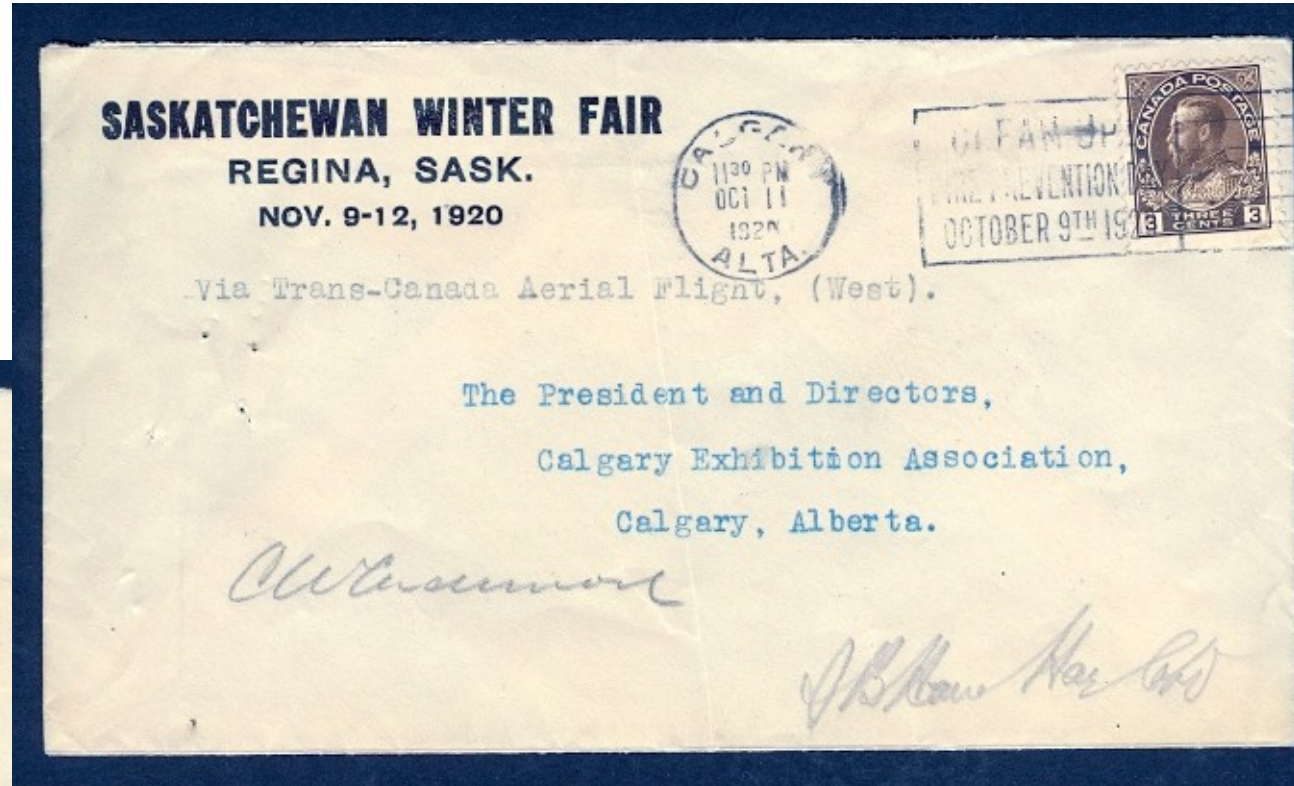
The second leg of the flight began at the St Charles Aerodrome in Winnipeg and was piloted by F/L J.B.Home-Hay and Air Commodore A.K. Tylee as passenger left for Moose Jaw at 0430 on 11 October along with the bag of official letters. Engine problems forced them to land just beyond Regina at 0740 and a new plane was brought in from Moose Jaw. They departed at 1100 for Medicine Hat arriving 1345. Leaving at 1510 they arrived in Calgary at 1710.



# History cont'd

While not officially an Airmail flight, letters were carried from Halifax to Vancouver. Additional mail was picked up and mailed at various point along the route. The cover below was picked up in Regina and delivered in Calgary on 11 October.

Air Force handstamp



Cover signed by pilot F/L JB  
Home-Hay



## History cont'd

Bad weather delayed the Calgary departure until 1155 on 13 October using another DH9A piloted by F/L Thompson, and Air Commodore Tylee as passenger. Bad weather forced them to land just south of Revelstoke at 1510 where they waited for 2 days. On Friday 15 October at 1150 they departed for Vancouver but weather forced them to land at Merritt at 1315.



Revelstoke



# History cont'd

After spending a day in Merritt they finally left on 17 October at 0940 and made it through the Pass and arrived at Minoru Park (Richmond) Vancouver BC.



Minoru Park arrival 1920



Minoru Park today

# History Tidbits

- Flight originally was to end in Vancouver, on 21 October the plane was flown to Esquimalt
- Flight was considered successful
- 10 ½ days elapsed to complete the flight
- Flying time was 49 hours 7 minutes
- 3341 miles were flown
- average speed 63 mph
- 5 planes were used to complete the flight – Fairey IIIC Seaplane from Halifax, HS2L St John to Riviere-du-Loup, Felixstowe F3 to Winnipeg, DH9A from Winnipeg, DH9A from Regina to Vancouver

# History - 1970 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

The Royal Canadian Flying Clubs Association organized a cavalcade of light aircraft flying between Halifax and Victoria from June 26th to July 5<sup>th</sup>. Different legs had multiple aircraft flying with some joining and some leaving. Four aircraft made the complete journey. Covers were made from various point on the route to Vancouver.

Covers from 1970 flight period



Dick Malott Covers

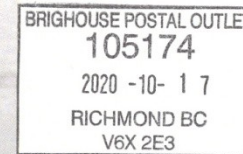
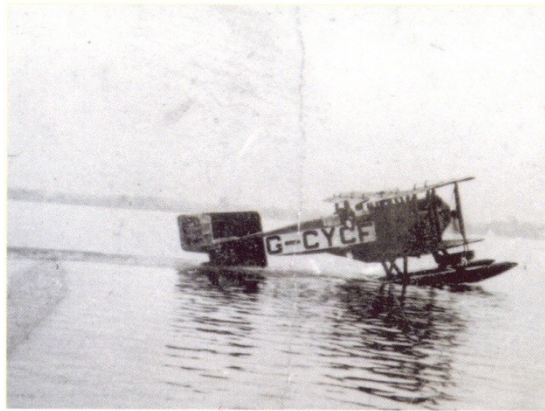


# **2020 Celebration Planning Timeline**

- 9 August - First contact with Chris Hargreaves by John Orr of the Shearwater Museum
- 12 August - Decision to assist given
- 23 August – Preliminary Shearwater card design by museum
- 4 September - Chris creates journal article on the flight, preliminary discussion to get a Halifax contact due to Covid
- 10 September – two CAS PP stamps ordered in booklet form
- 14 September - enlisted Halifax collector Hugh Rathbun to assist Shearwater Museum
- 18 September – Hugh and John meet to review cancel options.
- 21 September – Hugh designs Picture Postage on behalf of museum
- 24 September – Shearwater canceller ordered
- 28 September – CAS cover designed
- 30 September – museum PP stamps delivered
- 5 October – CAS covers arrive Halifax, cancelling started
- 7 October – Museum ceremony
- 10 October – Covers and other materials cancelled in Winnipeg and Selkirk
- 13 October – Covers and other materials cancelled in Calgary
- 17 October – Covers and other materials cancelled in Vancouver



# 2020 Shearwater Invitation



*Fairey III C (G-CYCF) departs Canadian Air Board Station Dartmouth on the first leg of the trans-Canada flight on 7 October 1920. Credit: CASM 08274*

Copies of this invitation are available, but have no postmark.

## An Invitation

Date: 7 October 2020

Time: 10:30 am

Location: Shearwater Aviation Museum Forecourt.  
(Inclement weather – inside the Museum.)

Dress: Jacket and tie

Note: Please observe COVID-19 precautions

Please join the Mayor of Halifax and the Commander 12 Wing Shearwater in marking the centennial of this significant milestone in Canadian aviation history.

The idea of a trans-Canada flight was seized upon in order to demonstrate the utility of aviation to the Canadian public. Not incidentally, it was also an account of guts and determination as a small group of aviators battled the elements and blazed a trail across the country.

Originally planned to take 48 hours using relays of aircraft across the country, the flight eventually took 10 ½ days. Given the state of aviation at the time and the perils involved with flying open-cockpit aircraft across Canada in October, this was a remarkable achievement.

RSVP requested: <jandcorr@hotmail.com>

# 2020 Shearwater Ceremony October 7



Speech from Halifax Mayor  
Mike Savage





# 2020 Shearwater Ceremony October 7



The following guests attended:  
Mayor Mike Savage, Halifax Regional Municipality  
Mr. Carl Kumpic, Chairman of the Board, Atlantic  
Canada Aerospace and Defence Association;  
Mr. Dave McMahon, President of the Atlantic  
Canada Aviation Museum;  
Mr. John Cody, Chairman of the Shearwater  
Aviation Museum Foundation;  
Mr. Bob Goodwin, President of 111 Wing, Royal  
Canadian Air Force Association;  
Mr. Hugh Rathbun, Representative of the Canadian  
Aerophilatelic Society;  
Ms. Kim MacLean, CANEX sub-post office Mgr and  
Ms. Christine Hines, Curator, Shearwater Aviation Mus.

Museum Curator Christine  
Hines presents canceller and  
mailbag to Kim MacLean



# 2020 Halifax October 7

Due to the Covid pandemic, normally Dave would have flown to Halifax and brought the covers to an intermediary point such as Ottawa or Winnipeg. However with the Atlantic bubble requiring 14 day quarantine for people entering the Maritimes, this was not possible.

As an alternative the covers were shipped west via Fedex Next Day delivery via air. As a result we do not know the Fedex pilots, nor are there things like boarding passes.





# 2020 Winnipeg October 10

To recreate the flight portion from Winnipeg to Calgary, WestJet Flight 205 Piloted by Capt David Roger and Capt Dustin Daines was used.


<b>STANDBY</b>			
	BOARDING PASS/CARTE D'EMBARQUEMENT <b>BARTLET/DAVID WILLIA</b>		
	PNR <b>TYBSSU</b>		
	SEAT/PLACE <b>5A</b>		
	CABIN/CABINE <b>ECONOMY</b>		
	WESTJET REWARDS <b>355376523</b>		
			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"><b>UNICITY RPO</b> <b>433640</b> <b>2020 -10- 1 0</b> <b>WINNIPEG, MB</b> <b>R3K 2G0</b></div>			
<div style="color: red; font-weight: bold;">The First trans-Canada Flight Halifax to Vancouver 7-17 October, 1920 Canadian Aerophilatelic Society</div>			
YYCDK218	8382157782929/2	160	KS

FLIGHT/VOL <b>WS205</b>	
DEPARTING/DEPAR <b>10OCT20 7:35PM</b> <b>WINNIPEG, MB (YWG)</b>	
ARRIVING/EN ARRIVANT <b>10OCT20 8:45PM</b> <b>CALGARY, AB (YYC)</b>	
BOARDING TIME <b>6:55PM</b>	GATE <b>7</b>
HEURE D'EMBARQUEMENT	PORTE
GATE CLOSES <b>7:20PM</b>	
FERMETURE DE LA PORTE	
ZONE <b>3</b>	SEAT <b>5A</b>
ZONE	PLACE

# 2020 Calgary October 17

To recreate the flight portion from Calgary to Vancouver, WestJet Flight 123 Piloted by Capt Mike Luteijm and Capt Bill Butchart was used.

WESTJET	BRIGHOUSE POSTAL OUTLET 105174 2020 -10- 1 7 123 RICHMOND BC V6X 2E3	STANDBY/D ATTENDE BOARDING PASS/ CARTE D EMBARQUEMENT BARTLET/OWEN MR 17OCT20 FLT/VOL 123	
17OCT20	FLT/VOL	GATE /PRT B31	
BARTLET/OWEN MR		SEQ 013	SEQ 013
CABIN/CABINE: ECONOMY		PNR RFTUVD	PNR RFTUVD
DEP: CALGARY INTL AB 12:00PM		<b>The First trans-Canada Flight</b>	DEP: YYC
ARR: VANCOUVER BC 12:30PM		<b>Halifax to Vancouver</b>	ARR: YVR
		<b>7-17 October, 1920</b>	
		<b>Canadian Aerophilatelic Society</b>	
ZONE	BOARDING TIME/ HEURE D EMBARQUEMENT	SEAT/PLACE	SEAT/PLACE
3	11:20AM	7C	7C
ELECTRONIC/ELECTRONIQUE 8382157844504/6			





# 2020 Richmond BC, October 17

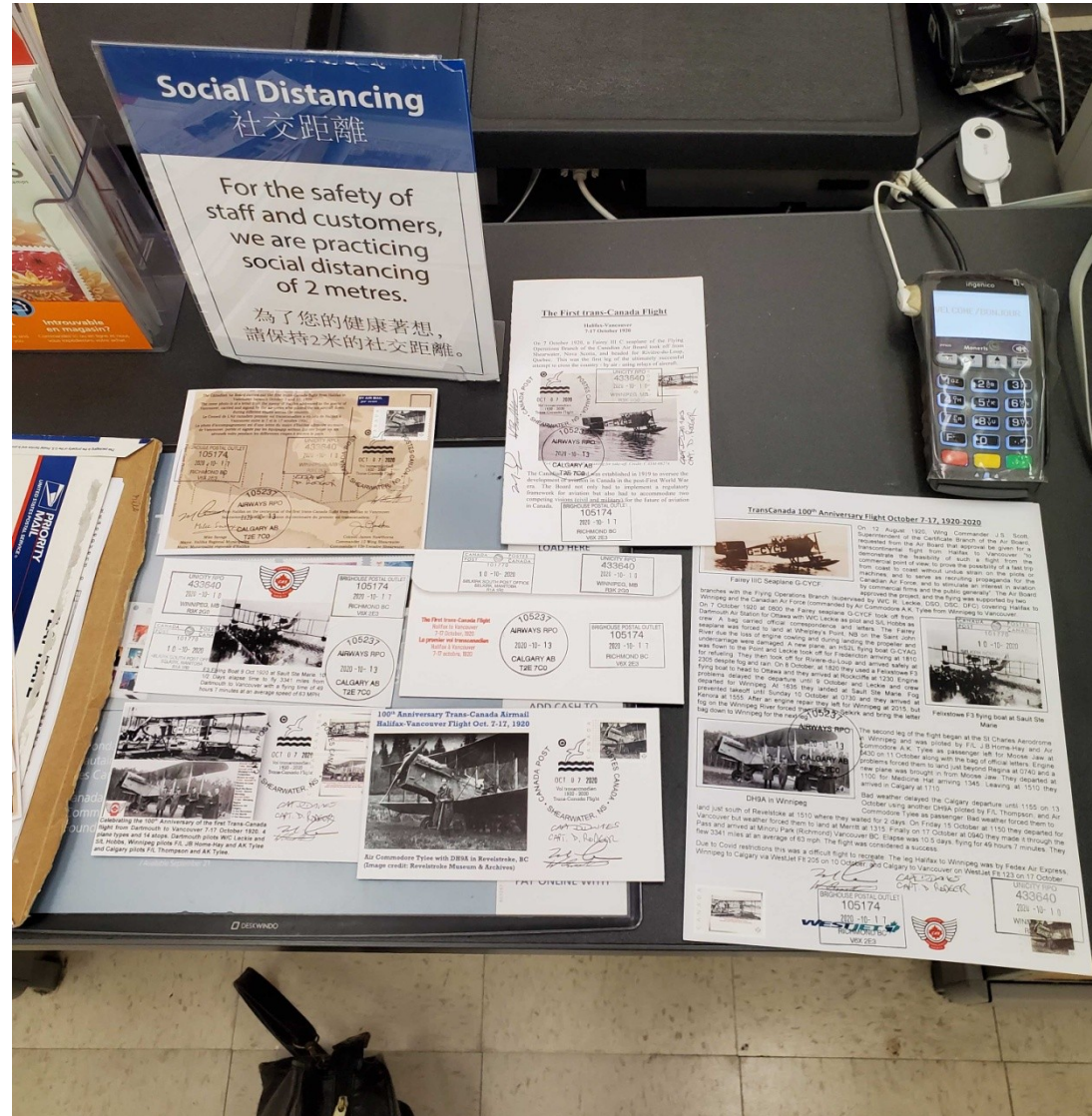


Minoru Park today,  
Richmond post office with  
cancelled covers





# 2020 Richmond BC, October 17

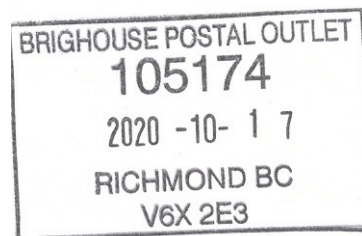


Dave holding cancelled info flyer, and a display of the items cancelled at the post office



# 2020 Cancellations Used

Cancels include (left to right)– Shearwater NS 7 Oct, Selkirk MB 10 Oct, Winnipeg MB 10 Oct, Calgary AB 13 Oct, Richmond BC 17 Oct. Museum Handstamp (Red Bilingual), CAS Handstamp.



**The First trans-Canada Flight**  
Halifax to Vancouver  
7-17 October, 1920  
**Le premier vol transcanadien**  
Halifax à Vancouver  
7-17 octobre, 1920

**The First trans-Canada Flight**  
Halifax to Vancouver  
7-17 October, 1920  
Canadian Aerophilatelic Society

# **2020 Commemoration Material**

While there had not been specific plans to commemorate the centennial by the CAS, when approached by the Shearwater Museum on how and what souvenirs they might make, Chris Hargreaves stepped in, and Dave Bartlet assisted.

The original request was with regards to a post card and Chris provided that information. We suggested Picture Postage stamps and covers, but the museum team was unsure. In the interim time, Dave Bartlet decided that the CAS could create commemorative covers and stamps, and produced two stamps and a cover for purposes of cancelling across the country.

Due to Covid travel restrictions, the CAS was able to recruit local collector Hugh Rathbun to assist us with cancellation. We also had him in discussions with the museum and he was then able to create a stamp and cover for the museum.

The following pages show the items created and used in a postal sense by the Museum, Hugh Rathbun and Dave Bartlet (CAS)

# 2020 Museum Commemoration

For the commemoration the following items were created – Postcard, Flight Information sheet, Picture Postage stamp. Postcards and Information sheets have mainly Museum PP stamps, but also some have PP stamps. Only 2 of each are pilot signed.



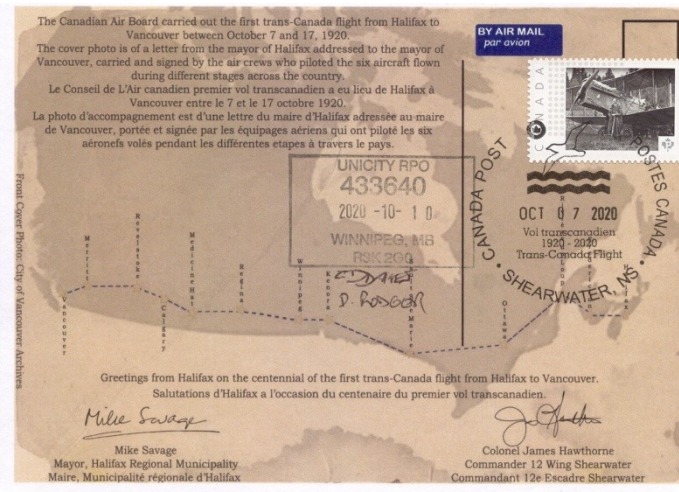
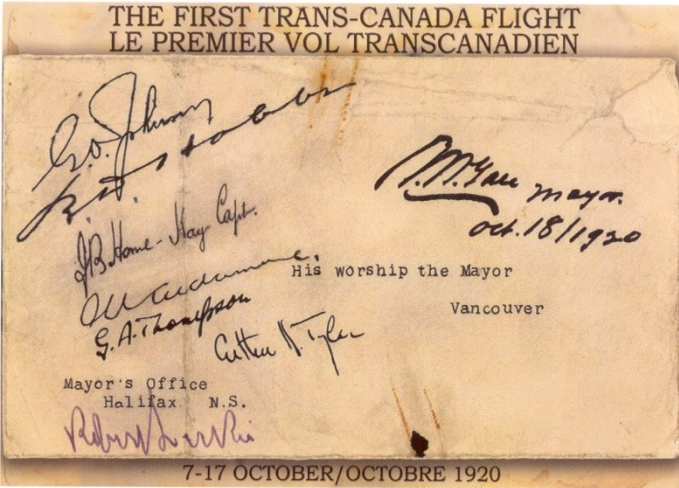
Booklets/stamps are available on request if there is sufficient interest. 9 booklets first order with 9 more in the second order.- used on postcards and covers.





## 2020 Museum Commemoration

Museum Postcard Front and back. The stamp and two cancels are added. 80 cards were made, 40 used at the ceremony, 11 flown across Canada, 30 available - 12 with Museum stamp cancelled in Shearwater, 28 with no stamps.



Postcard with Museum PP, and cancels Shearwater 7 Oct, Winnipeg 10 Oct, Calgary 13 Oct, and Vancouver 17 Oct. Red CAS handstamp added, pilot signed below Winnipeg and Vancouver cancels.



# 2020 Museum Commemoration

An information flyer printed on heavy stock paper and folded in two resulting in 4 pages of text given out at the ceremony. 10 were flown and cancelled, uncanceled also available.

## The First trans-Canada Flight

**Halifax-Vancouver**  
**7-17 October 1920**

On 7 October 1920, a Fairey III C seaplane of the Flying Operations Branch of the Canadian Air Board took off from Shearwater, Nova Scotia, and headed for Rivière-du-Loup, Quebec. This was the first leg of the ultimately successful attempt to cross the country - by air - using relays of aircraft.



The Canadian Air Board was established in 1919 to oversee the development of aviation in Canada in the post-First World War era. The Board not only had to implement a regulatory framework for aviation but also had to accommodate two competing visions (civil and military) for the future of aviation in Canada.

The Board quickly realized that in order to survive, it would have to demonstrate the utility of aircraft to the Canadian public and, perhaps more importantly, to Canadian politicians. The idea of a trans-Canada flight was seized on in order to achieve this objective.

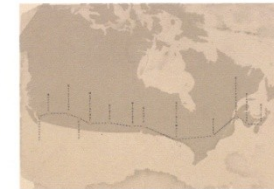
Originally planned to take 48 hours, the flight eventually took 10 1/2 days. Given the state of aviation and the perils involved with flying open-cockpit aircraft in Canada in October, this was not an unreasonable amount of time. It became an account of guts and determination as a small group of airmen battled the elements in war-surplus aircraft and blazed a path across the land.

Among the several achievements of the flight was the transport of letters from mayors across the country to the Mayor of Vancouver. At right is a letter from Mayor J. S. Parker of Halifax to Mayor R. H. Gale of Vancouver.

The upshot of the flight was that although the path was neither straight nor smooth, the Air Board established aviation, both civil and military, in the Canadian psyche.

And more importantly, it bore out the truth of the words of former Governor-General Vincent Massey who stated that "The aircraft came to Canada as a godsend. It probably has meant more to us than it has to any other country."

## The Flight



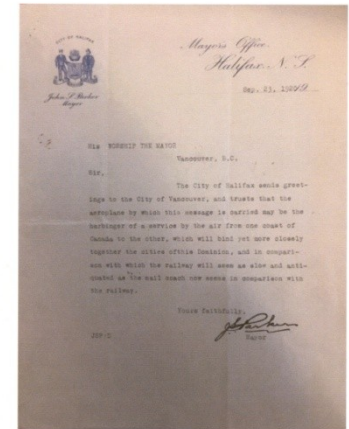
Credit: Aviator Joclyn Buell, 12 Wing Imaging Services

**Halifax - Winnipeg**  
**Flight Operations Branch**  
**7-10 October 1920**

Lieutenant Colonel Leckie  
Squadron Leader Hobbs  
Flight Lieutenant Johnson  
Foreman Mechanic Heath

**Winnipeg - Vancouver**  
**Canadian Air Force**  
**11-17 October 1920**

Air Commodore Tylee  
Flight Lieutenant Home-Hay  
Flight Lieutenant Cudemore  
Flight Lieutenant Thompson



Credit: City of Vancouver Archives



Flyer front with CAS PP, and cancels Shearwater 7 Oct, Winnipeg 10 Oct, Calgary 13 Oct, and Vancouver 17 Oct. Red CAS handstamp added, pilot signed YWG on right and YYC on left. This is the only signed flyer.

# 2020 Hugh Rathbun Commemoration

**100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Trans-Canada Airmail**  
**Halifax-Vancouver Flight Oct. 7-17, 1920**



**Air Commodore Tylee with DH9A in Revelstoke, BC**  
 (Image credit: Revelstoke Museum & Archives)

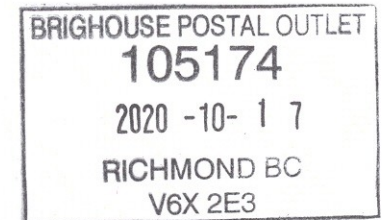


Hugh Rathbun made 50 covers franked with the museum stamp. 20 were flown and cancelled, and only 4 were signed. Some of the 20 covers used the CAS stamps. 25 covers were used by the museum with some being distributed at the Oct 7 Ceremony.



Cover back with cancels  
 Shearwater 7 Oct, Winnipeg 10  
 Oct, Calgary 13 Oct, and  
 Vancouver 17 Oct. Red Museum  
 handstamp added, pilot signed  
 YWG on top and YYC below. Four  
 covers were signed.

**The First trans-Canada Flight**  
 Halifax to Vancouver  
 7-17 October, 1920  
**Le premier vol transcanadien**  
 Halifax à Vancouver  
 7-17 octobre, 1920





# 2020 Hugh Rathbun Commemoration

Hugh Rathbun made 19 special Covid-10 covers franked with the museum stamp. The purpose was to show the impact of Covid, however it did not stop the event or commemoration events afterwards. Museum Curator Christine Hines presents canceller and mailbag to Kim MacLean on the cachet.

## **COVID-19 Influences Ceremonies**



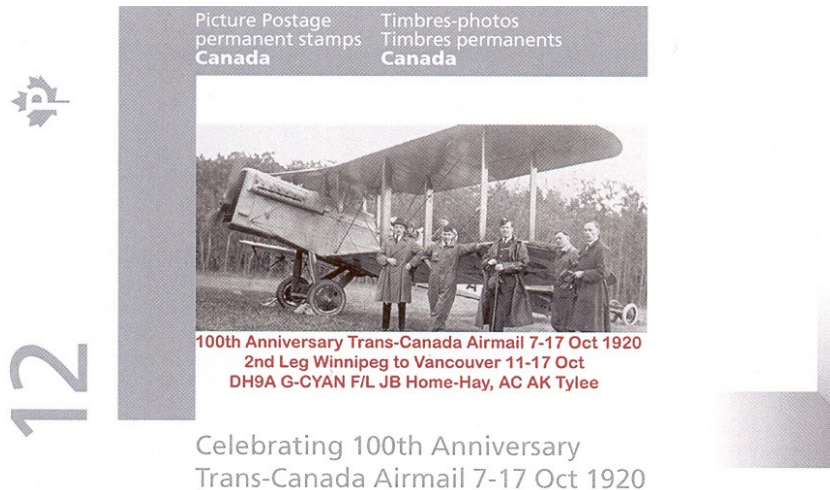
**Ceremony Marking the Centenary  
Of the First Trans-Canada Airmail  
Flight**      **Shearwater, NS Oct. 7, 2020**

CANADA



# 2020 CAS Commemoration

For the commemoration the following items were created – Cover, Flight Information sheet, two Picture Postage stamps. First booklet shown.



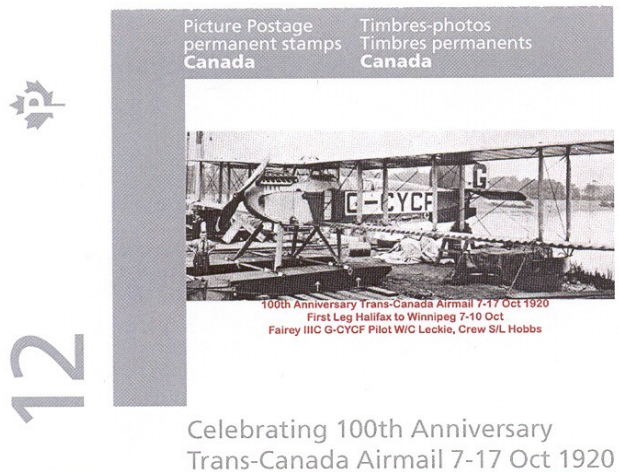
Booklets/stamps are available on request if there is sufficient interest. 7 booklets of each stamp ordered - used on postcards and covers.





# 2020 CAS Commemoration

For the commemoration the following items were created – Cover, Flight Information sheet, two Picture Postage stamps. Second booklet shown.



Booklets/stamps are available on request if there is sufficient interest. 7 booklets of each stamp ordered - used on postcards and covers.

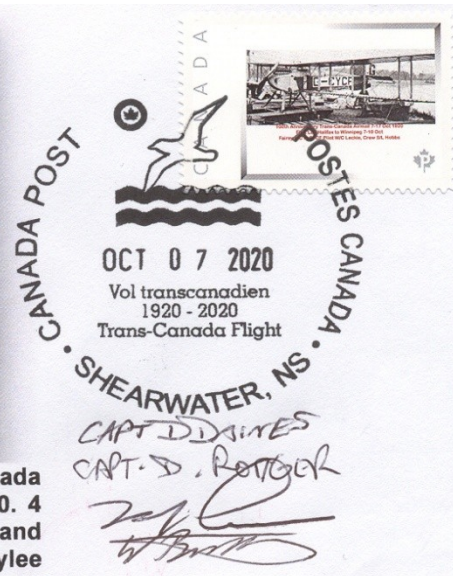




# 2020 CAS Commemoration

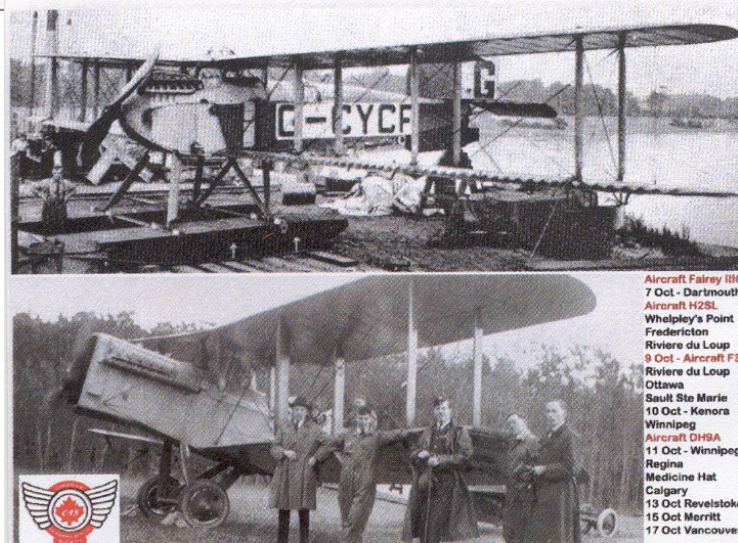


Celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first Trans-Canada flight from Dartmouth to Vancouver 7-17 October 1920. 4 plane types and 14 stops. Dartmouth pilots W/C Leckie and S/L Hobbs, Winnipeg pilots F/L JB Home-Hay and AK Tylee and Calgary pilots F/L Thompson and AK Tylee.

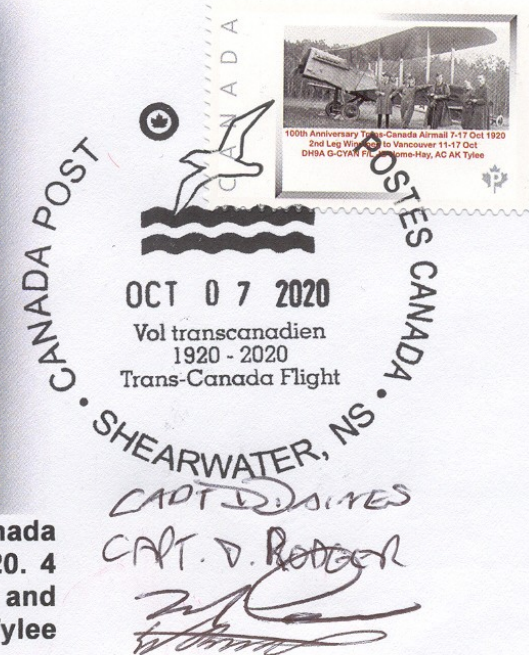


32 CAS covers of each picture Postage stamp were made. 2 of each cover were pilot signed. There are some covers with the museum stamp.

Cover front cancelled in Shearwater on 7 Oct.



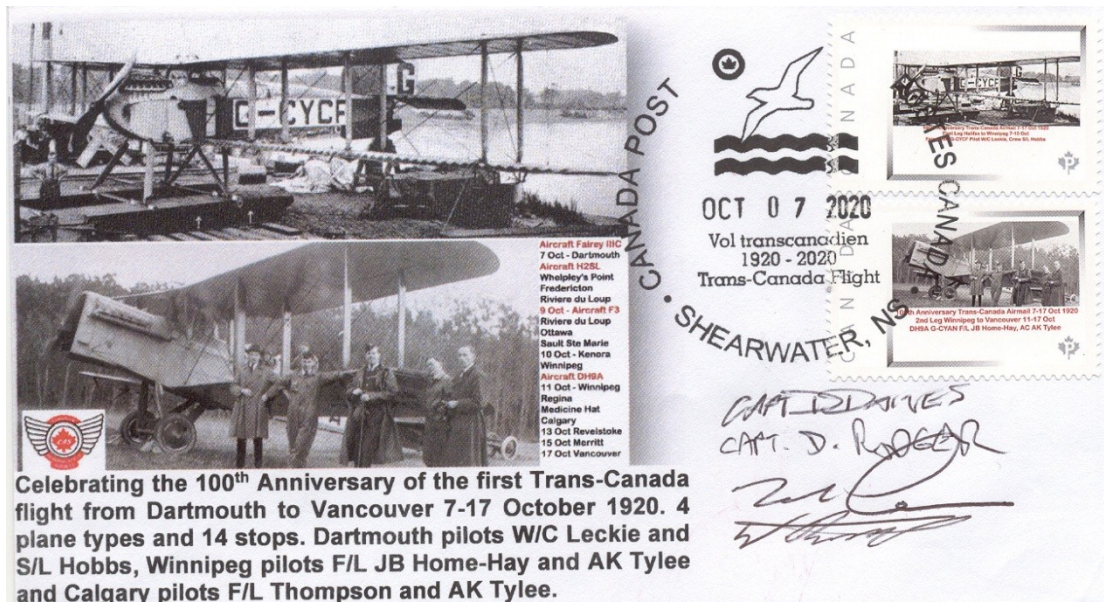
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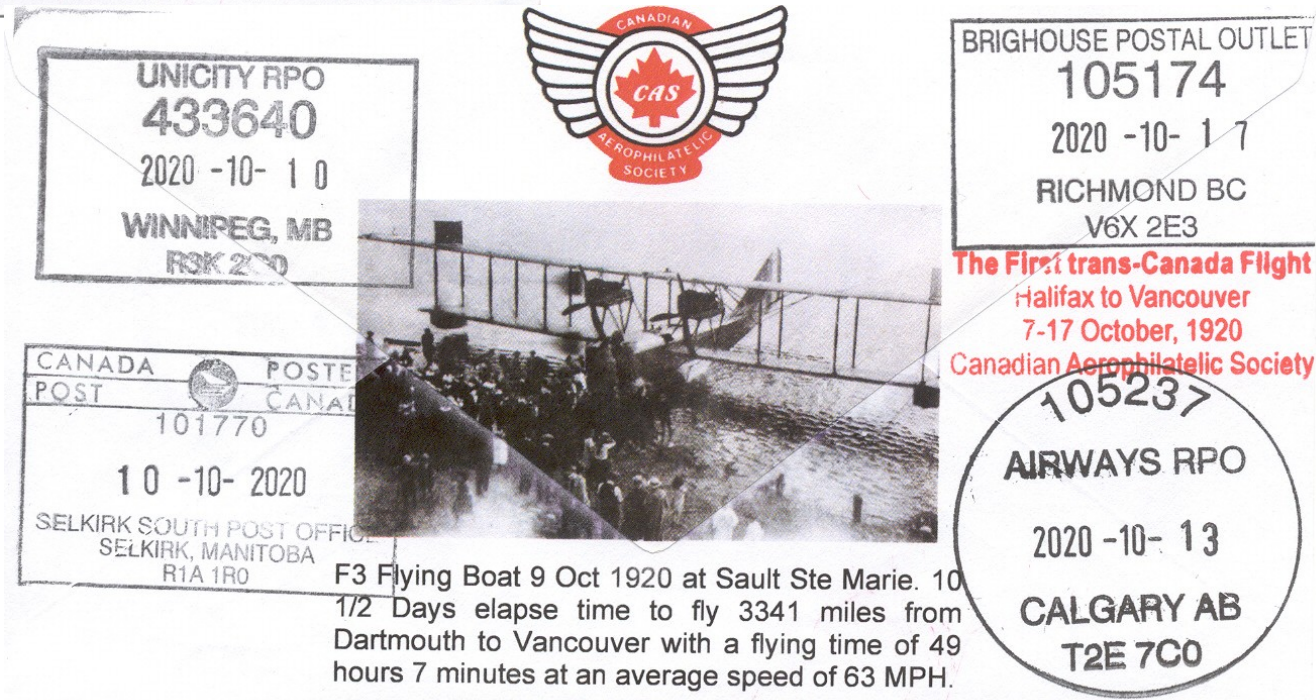
# 2020 CAS Commemoration

16 CAS covers had both stamps franked on the cover. 2 of the covers were pilot signed.



Celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first Trans-Canada flight from Dartmouth to Vancouver 7-17 October 1920. 4 plane types and 14 stops. Dartmouth pilots W/C Leckie and S/L Hobbs, Winnipeg pilots F/L JB Home-Hay and AK Tylee and Calgary pilots F/L Thompson and AK Tylee.

Cancellations include Shearwater on the front 7 Oct, on the back there is Selkirk MB and Winnipeg MB on 10 Oct, Calgary on 13 Oct and Richmond on 17 Oct. The Red CAS handstamp is also on the covers.





# 2020 CAS Commemoration

An information flyer printed on regular paper describes the flight and is inserted into the CAS covers. The sheets are cancelled in Shearwater, Calgary and Vancouver. Two sheets were pilot signed, and 10 had stamps cancelled on them.

## TransCanada 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Flight October 7-17, 1920-2020



Fairey III C Seaplane G-CYCF.

branches with the Flying Operations Branch (supervised by W/C R. Leckie, DSO, DSC, DFC) covering Halifax to Winnipeg and the Canadian Air Force (commanded by Air Commodore A.K. Tylee from Winnipeg to Vancouver.

On 7 October 1920 at 0800 the Fairey seaplane G-CYCF took off from Dartmouth Air Station for Ottawa with W/C Leckie as pilot and S/L Hobbs as crew. A bag carried official correspondence and letters. The Fairey seaplane was forced to land at Whelpley's Point, NB on the Saint John River due the loss of engine cowling and during landing the propeller and undercarriage were damaged. A new plane, an HS2L flying boat G-CYAG was flown to the Point and Leckie took off for Fredericton arriving at 1810 for refueling. They then took off for Riviere-du-Loup and arrived safely at 2305 despite fog and rain. On 8 October, at 1820 they used a Felixstowe F3 flying boat to head to Ottawa and they arrived at Rockcliffe at 1230. Engine problems delayed the departure until 9 October and Leckie and crew departed for Winnipeg. At 1635 they landed at Sault Ste Marie. Fog prevented takeoff until Sunday 10 October at 0730 and they arrived at Kenora at 1555. After an engine repair they left for Winnipeg at 2015, but fog on the Winnipeg River forced them to fly to Selkirk and bring the letter bag down to Winnipeg for the next leg.



Felixstowe F3 flying boat at Sault Ste Marie



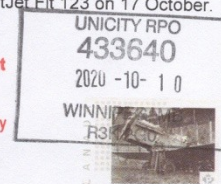
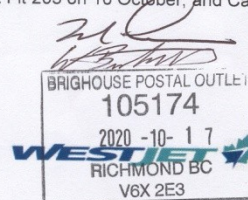
DH9A in Winnipeg

The second leg of the flight began at the St Charles Aerodrome in Winnipeg and was piloted by F/L J.B. Home-Hay and Air Commodore A.K. Tylee as passenger left for Moose Jaw at 0430 on 11 October along with the bag of official letters. Engine problems forced them to land just beyond Regina at 0740 and a new plane was brought in from Moose Jaw. They departed at 1100 for Medicine Hat arriving 1345. Leaving at 1510 they arrived in Calgary at 1710.

Bad weather delayed the Calgary departure until 1155 on 13 October using another DH9A piloted by F/L Thompson, and Air Commodore Tylee as passenger. Bad weather forced them to

land just south of Revelstoke at 1510 where they waited for 2 days. On Friday 15 October at 1150 they departed for Vancouver but weather forced them to land at Merritt at 1315. Finally on 17 October at 0940 they made it through the Pass and arrived at Minoru Park (Richmond) Vancouver BC. Elapse was 10.5 days, flying for 49 hours 7 minutes. They flew 3341 miles at an average of 63 mph. The flight was considered a success.

Due to Covid restrictions this was a difficult flight to recreate. The leg Halifax to Winnipeg was by Fedex Air Express, Winnipeg to Calgary via WestJet Flt 205 on 10 October, and Calgary to Vancouver on WestJet Flt 123 on 17 October.





# 2020 Commemoration Epilogue

Despite Covid we have been able to create commemorative material for this important flight in Canadian aviation history.

If you are interested in any of this material please contact Dave Bartlet at [dave.bartlet@shaw.ca](mailto:dave.bartlet@shaw.ca). For items not listed contact Dave.

Items available:

CAS Cover with Fairey IIIC stamp - \$5

CAS Cover with DH9A stamp - \$5

CAS Cover with both stamps - \$8

CAS Booklet with DH9A stamp - \$25 (by request with minimum of 3 orders)

CAS Booklet with Fairey IIIC stamp - \$25 (by request with minimum of 3 orders)

Museum Postcard (no stamp) - \$3

Museum Postcard stamped - \$5

Museum Postcard stamped with additional cancels - \$10

Museum Booklet - \$25 (on request with minimum of 3 orders)

Museum Cover - \$5

Prices are destination related – for Canada these are \$CDN, for elsewhere \$US

Shipping in Canada \$1 first item, \$2 for more than 1 item, outside North America \$3 first item, \$4 for more than 1 item.