

Centenary of Trans-Canada Air Flight 7-17 October 1920

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.

Rare items are framed in BLACK

Plan: Title, Plan
1970 Commemoration
2020 Museum Material
2020 CAS Material



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 above was picked up in Regina and delivered in Calgary on 11 October. The back has the handstamp shown above the cover.

Commemorative Events - 1970

The commemoration of this flight is primarily limited to the 50th Anniversary until it was again commemorated at the centenary.. One of the prime movers for the 50th Anniversary was Major R.K. Malott. The goal of this commemoration was to do a re-enactment of the flight route with private aircraft of all sorts. They were aware that this could not be done in mid-October since the weather in the mountains is often bad at this time which could result in the loss of life. The decision was to do the re-enactment in the early summer.



The Royal Canadian Flying Clubs Association organized a cavalcade of light aircraft flying between Halifax and Victoria from June 26th to July 5th. Different legs had multiple aircraft flying with some joining and some leaving. Four aircraft made the complete journey. Early summer was selected to do the flight since the weather in mid October when the original flight took place would be risky due to weather. Covers were made from various point on the route to Vancouver. The example below was cancelled in Ottawa on June 28, 1970

Commemorative Events - 1970

While the cavalcade of planes flew successfully across the country in June, that left commemoration for the actual dates. Maj Dick Malott arranged a series of 12 covers with cachets of the planes used for each leg and had them cancelled at the points at which the 1920 flight stopped at. The following cities had special cancels made:

Halifax, Fredericton, Riviere-Du-Loup, Sault St Marie, Kenora, Winnipeg, Calgary, Revelstoke, and Vancouver. Three cities just used regular cancels and were Hardings Point, Ottawa and Merritt.



The October 7 cover from Halifax has a cachet showing the Fairey Seaplane. The plane was replaced with a HS2L Flying Boat out of Hardings Point and Fredericton due to damage to the Fairey Seaplane during a landing after crossing the Bay of Fundy.

Commemorative Events - 1970

Flight covers cancelled in Riviere-Du-Loup on 8 Oct 1970 and Sault Ste Marie and Kenora on 10 October.



Commemorative Events - 1970

Flight covers cancelled in Winnipeg on 11Oct, 1970 and Calgary 13, Oct and Vancouver on 17 October.



Weather delayed the Calgary departure, and again in Revelstoke and Merritt more weather delays occurred.



Commemorative Events – 2020 - Museum

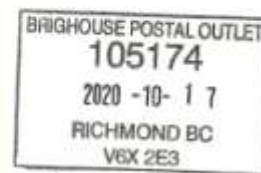
With the pandemic on, and the Maritime provinces in a bubble, performing a commemorative flight or moving flight covers across the country was difficult. We teamed up with the Shearwater Museum in Dartmouth who had requested help in the commemoration. The following pages show the various covers, stamps and other philatelic items created to commemorate the event.



The Shearwater museum (John Orr) made an information brochure which it handed out at the commemoration ceremony at the museum on 7 October. This brochure has cancels from Shearwater (7 Oct) Winnipeg, (10 Oct) Calgary (13 Oct) and Vancouver (17 Oct) It is also signed by the pilots on the WestJet flight used to carry the mail on 11 October Winnipeg to Calgary, and Calgary to Vancouver on 17 Oct. There were 10 cards flown and cancelled.

Commemorative Events – 2020 - Museum

The Shearwater Museum had to limit attendance, but made an invitation given to attendees. This one was also cancelled in Shearwater and Vancouver. The photo at the ceremony shows the special canceller being handed over to the post office representative by the Museum curator. Photo by Hugh Rathbun and invitation made by John Orr.



Fairley 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

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>

Commemorative Events – 2020 - Museum

For the ceremony, the museum made a large postcard on which a Museum Picture Postage stamp was affixed and cancelled with a special cancel made by the Museum for use in the Shearwater post office and for this event. Some cards were additionally cancelled in Winnipeg, Calgary and Vancouver on the appropriate date. The card below was also signed by the pilots flying Winnipeg to Calgary and Calgary to Vancouver on 11 and 17 October.. The card was designed by John Orr. 100 cards made, 80 stamped, 11 flown.



Commemorative Events – 2020 - Museum

For the ceremony, the museum (john Orr and Hugh Rathbun) made a commemorative cover with an image of the DH9A aircraft used on the flight from Winnipeg to Vancouver.

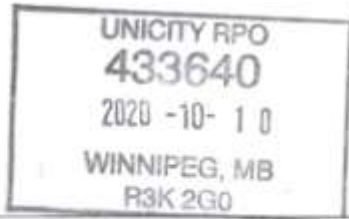
**100th Anniversary Trans-Canada Airmail
Halifax-Vancouver Flight Oct. 7-17, 1920**



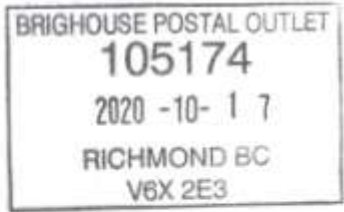
**Air Commodore Tylee with DH9A in Revelstroke, BC
(Image credit: Revelstroke Museum & Archives)**



This cover has additional signatures by the pilots flying from Winnipeg to Calgary on 11 Oct (top 2), and the pilots on 17 October flying from Calgary to Vancouver. Being the bottom 2 signatures. Flights were WestJet flight 205 Piloted by Capt David Roger and Capt Dustin Daines to Calgary and Flight 123 Piloted by Capt Mike Luteijm and Capt Bill Butchart going to Vancouver.. 50 covers made, 20 were flown and received all cancels 4 of these signed, 25 were used by the museum at the ceremony.



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



The back of the museum covers had 4 cancels, Selkirk 10 Oct where the eastern leg of the flight ended, Winnipeg on 10 Oct where the Western leg began, Calgary on 13 Oct and finally Vancouver (Richmond) on 17 Oct. A bilingual red handstamp was also applied by the museum.

Commemorative Events – 2020 - Museum

A few miscellaneous items were created for the event.



Covid restrictions prevented many people from attending the ceremony and Hugh Rathbun created a cover showing the masked participants. The cachet here shows the mailbag being handed of to the post representative by the museum curator.. There were 19 of these covers made.



This postcard from the museum had a picture postage stamp applied and cancelled on 7 October. There were 5 of these cards stamped – with CAS stamps and cancelled.

Commemorative Events – 2020 - Museum

The picture postage stamp was made by Hugh Rathbun for the museum in conjunction with the CAS. Three printings of the museum stamp were made, the first 2 printings being 9 booklets each, and a third of 11 booklets. The first printing is shown here. Most covers are franked with stamps from the first 2 printings.



Revised Museum



Commemorative Events – 2020 - CAS

The Canadian Aerophilatelic Society (CAS) Dave Bartlet, worked with the Shearwater museum (John Orr), and Halifax support (Hugh Rathbun) to create the philatelic commemoration items. The flyer below was created by Dave Bartlet of the CAS. It is cancelled in Shearwater, Selkirk, Winnipeg, Calgary and Vancouver on the dates the original flight went through these cities, and pilot signed. Each CAS cover contained this.

TransCanada 100th Anniversary Flight October 7-17, 1920-2020



Fairey III C Seaplane G-CYCF.

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).

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.



Commemorative Events – 2020 - CAS

The CAS cover cachet shows the starting aircraft (Fairey) and the Western segment plane (DH9A). Two picture postage stamps were made for the event, one of the Fairey seaplane and the DH9A.



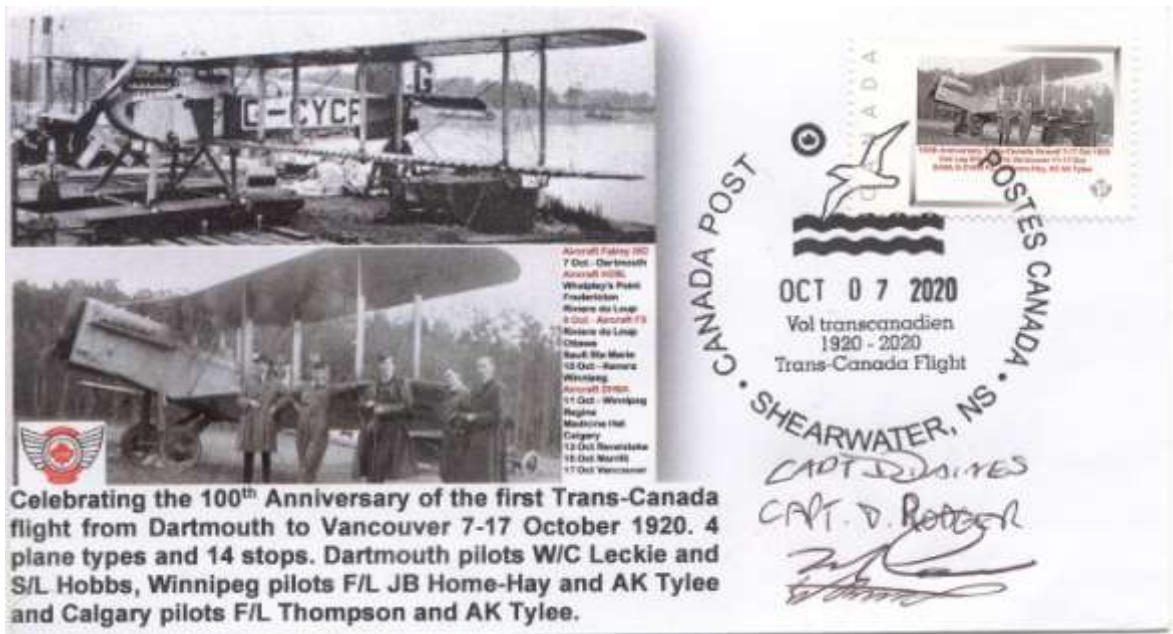
The covers had either of the stamps (some had both). This cover additionally has the signatures of the WestJet pilots on the flights from Winnipeg to Calgary (top) and the Calgary/Vancouver flight on the bottom 2 signatures. The back of the cover has a picture of F3 Flying boat at Sault Ste Marie.



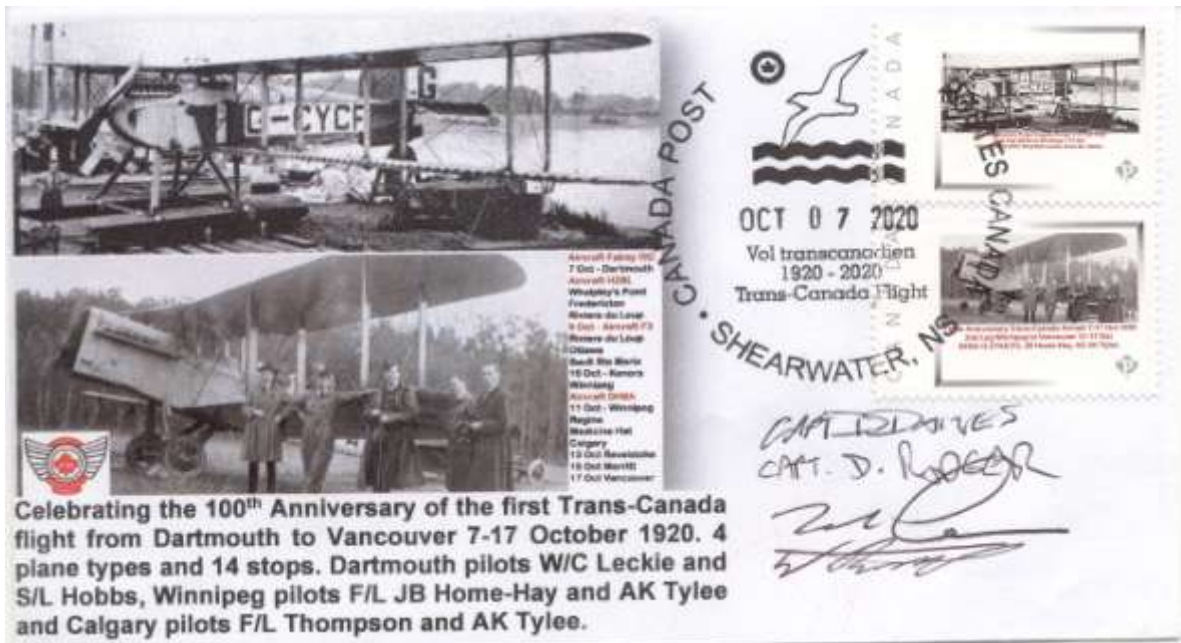
The back of the CAS covers had 4 cancels, Selkirk 10 Oct where the eastern leg of the flight ended, Winnipeg on 10 Oct where the Western leg began, Calgary on 13 Oct and finally Vancouver (Richmond) on 17 Oct. A red handstamp was also applied by the CAS.

Commemorative Events – 2020 - CAS

The CAS cover cachet shows the starting aircraft (Fairey) and the Western segment plane (DH9A). Two picture postage stamps were made for the event, one of the Fairey seaplane and the DH9A.



The second of 2 stamps designed for the event. There were 32 covers made with each of the single stamps, while 17 covers were made with the 2 stamps. Two of each cover design were signed by the Westjet pilots for the legs Winnipeg/Calgary and Calgary/Vancouver.



Some covers were made with both stamps applied. All covers with the CAS design have the cancels on the back as shown earlier in this exhibit.

Commemorative Events – 2020 CAS

The CAS picture postage stamp was made by Dave Bartlet. Two printings of the booklet stamps were made, each printing had 11 booklets. The first printing was used mostly for the covers. In the first printing the booklet cover had a DH9A plane on the front, and the Fairey Seaplane as the stamp, while the second booklet had the Fairey on the cover and the DH9A on the inside.



Revised Fairey



Commemorative Events – 2020 CAS

The second printing of the booklets had the cover image the same as the stamp image. Some image changes were also made to the Fairey stamp, with the stamp shown below.



Revised DH9A

