

# “Birthplace of the Air Force in Manitoba” RCAF Ensign Flying from Yacht Club’s Flagstaff To Mark 1921 Opening of Victoria Beach Air Station



On the hot, sunny, and windy afternoon of Saturday, July 3, the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Victoria Beach Yacht Club jointly commemorated the centennial of the Victoria Beach Air Station, which opened July 1, 1921, in a presentation and flag-raising ceremony held on Yacht Club Beach. The Yacht Club will fly the Ensign throughout the 2021 sailing season to commemorate the centennial of the Air Station’s opening, and to honour officers and other personnel who served here and in the RCAF.

Members of the public and the sailing club gathered in small, physically distanced groups along the shoreline of Yacht Club Beach to watch the ceremony. Many stood knee-deep in water, to cool off as the temperature soared over 30 degrees Celsius. Some wore T-shirts featuring silhouettes of the giant Felixstowe F.3 flying boats, more closely associated with Victoria Beach than any other place in Canada.

During the ceremony, Colonel J.G.D. (Dave) Proteau, the Commander of the RCAF’s 17 Wing Winnipeg, presented Brad Scott, Commodore of VBYC, with the gift of an RCAF Ensign. The Ensign, which has a field of sky blue with the Canadian flag in the top corner and the RCAF roundel on the fly, is the official flag used to represent the RCAF.

Commodore Scott handed the gift to Olivia Thompson, Director of Youth Development and Head Coach of VBYC, and Chris Aldridge, a past VBYC Commodore and a past Board Member of the Manitoba Sailing Association. After securing the flag to the halyard, they hoisted the Ensign for the first time up the flagstaff above the clubhouse, where it immediately stretched out and flapped loudly in a fresh breeze of 17 knots.

After the flag-raising, the VBYC invited Terry Slobodian, Executive Director of Winnipeg’s Royal Aviation Museum of Western Canada, to address the gathering. He expressed sentiments shared by many in attendance: enthusiasm and delight in being at the birthplace of the Air Force in Manitoba on its 100th anniversary, and respect and pride for those who served, or now serve, in the RCAF. He also highlighted that the RAMWC, when it reopens in 2022, will prominently feature stories of Basil Hobbs, first commander at Victoria Beach from 1921 to 1924, and of the Felixstowe F.3 flying boats based at Victoria Beach that made historic first flights into northern Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Ontario, in 1921 and 1922.

Other invited guests of VBYC on the podium included Penny McMorris, Reeve of the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach, Gord Crossley, Heritage Officer of RCAF 17 Wing Winnipeg, Ken Webb, a RAMWC Board Member and Victoria Beach resident, and Bob Hastings, CEO of Winnipeg aerospace firm West Canitest R&D Inc.

Hedley Auld, emcee and VBYC member, told those gathered that the Air Station had virtually disappeared after it closed in 1926 when most structures were moved to Lac du Bonnet: but “not quite”. A few timbers of the foundation of the slipway, built in 1924 for launching Vickers Viking amphibious flying boats, are still visible at the shoreline directly in front of the Yacht Club. The audi-

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ence was urged to look for these timbers after the ceremony, and to touch them. One who did was Amelia Proteau, age 5, daughter of Colonel Proteau.

The Victoria Beach Air Station, the first government air station in Manitoba, was operated during summers from 1921 to 1926, initially by the Flying Operations branch of the Air Board of Canada and in later years by the RCAF. It was an “air harbour” for flying boats, situated on the land and adjacent shoreline now occupied by the Victoria Beach community’s sports field and Yacht Club. Im-

mediately north-west of the sports field is an interpretive panel, erected in 2019 to mark the centennial of the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach, with archival photographs of the Air Station during its later years. To learn more about the Air Station, see the article published in The Herald’s July 2, 2021, issue.

Hedley Auld  
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### Summer Fitness Schedule

Instructors	Bootcamp	Seniors Strength & Stretch	Aerobics
Julie McPetrie & Laurel McFaden	August 2, 4, 6 July 19, 21, 23, 26, 28, 30, August 9, 11, 13		
Janice Willows		July 20, 27, August 3, 10,	July 20, 27, 29, August 10, 12
Karen Duha		July 22, 29 August 5, 12	

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