

Media Release



Stratford Adds Third Interpretive Panel

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The Town of Stratford, with funding through the Museum Development Grant from the Community Museums Association of PEI, unveiled a third interpretive panel. The latest interpretive panel tells the wartime story of an 80-year-old accident which claimed the lives of seven individuals in Stratford on January 12, 1942.

At the unveiling eyewitness to the accident, Carl Hamm, provided his recollection of the events where as a young schoolboy he, along with Jack Farquharson, ran from the schoolhouse against their teachers wishes and were the first on scene. With a chuckle, Mr. Hamm reflected on the threat of a three-day expulsion from their teacher as they raced out the school door to see if they could help. He recalled the horrific scene they arrived upon and said he could see it in his mind as if it had happened just yesterday.

As the interpretive panel explains, the two aircraft were undergoing routine air testing after having been recently serviced when they were observed maneuvering and banking. After a few minutes of this, one plane clipped the wing of the other and both were sent crashing to the ground. All of the six crew members and one civilian, a 16 year old civilian who worked in the canteen at the Royal Air Force Station No. 31 General Reconnaissance School which was located on the present day Charlottetown Airport property, were killed. Reports of numerous air force officials and civilians, including many farmers from the area, responded quickly however there was nothing they were able to do to save any of these young lives.

All of the airmen were in their 20's and left behind grieving parents but no descendants. A family member of Flying Officer George Calderhead, one of the British Airmen who was killed, Mark Smith, had this say about the project, "What a wonderful and beautiful thing to do. I was in law enforcement for over 40 years, and I relate to the training, wearing a uniform, duty, orders, and death. George Calderhead's father would have been my great uncle. I never met either of them. I so wish I could talk to them about their lives. The air accident had to be a horrible affair, as any parent can imagine. It wasn't discussed a whole lot. We were too removed from it. I don't know that my dad and his brother knew many details. They are both gone now. They would have been amazed to know about what you are doing there. Thank you for remembering. Hopefully someday, we will visit the Island. Thank you one and all again."

Residents are encouraged to view the three interpretive panels when they are next at Stratford Town Centre. These, along with the walkway installation around the cenotaph ensure that we will not forget the sacrifices made.

Mayor Steve Ogden also officially named the greenspace area surrounding the cenotaph which will now be known as Veterans Memorial Green at the ceremony. This naming project was brought forward by the Town of Stratford Heritage Committee with the intention of ensuring that future development of this area is in keeping with the theme of service recognition and remembrance. Any future work in this area will be done to complement the

existing interpretive panels, honour roll, walkway, and cenotaph area. “We look forward to continuing to develop this space as a place of reflection, remembrance and education. Lest we forget,” said Mayor Steve Ogden.

The Town of Stratford would like to recognize and thank members of the Heritage Committee for their leadership and assistance with these projects.

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