

Gander



Christmas Pictorial Edition - December 1943

Christmas Gander

It is with great pride that we, the staff, present this Christmas issue of your station magazine. We have endeavoured to have every section represented at its particular job, however, this was not always possible because of station security regulations.

DECEMBER, 1943

THE STAFF

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The magazine layout was designed by Pilot Officer McLean (right). Photographs by the Station Photography Section without whose co-operation this magazine would never have materialized. The Staff (below) planning an issue of "The Gander".





A PICTORIAL
OF THE R.C.A.F.
IN PEACEFUL
SURROUNDINGS



FOR A PEACE-
LOVING PEOPLE





Commanding Officer GROUP CAPTAIN C. L. ANNIS, O. B. E.

CHRISTMAS SAUCE FOR THE GANDER

by "The Old Man"

Although we are told that once having put our hand to the plough we should not look backward. I believe that in this, the last month of 1943, we might find time for a glance that way, a deep breath, then a look at 1944 beyond the New Year's starting line.

The musing mind will see a vista of mixed memories, nearly all happy although touched here and there with poignant pain, certainly all interesting and assuredly of a timbre and colour that only Gander could provide.

For some few the horizon will extend back even to Christmas 1941, for others to last Christmas, and for the rest of us to whatever panorama lies between our arrival at Gander and this moment.

You will remember the past year's highlights—the fire in Station Stores, the coming of the "Libs", the exchange of fighter squadrons, the change of Station command, the I. G's parade, the exciting periods of battles with U-boats, the arrival of our new friends from Botwood, and the little personal things—section picnics and dances, games and regattas, walks with the boy or girl friend in the evening. Sunday mornings in the Chapel, postings away of tried and true friends with the accom-

panying pangs and the arrival of new faces soon to become new friends, wedding bells, and fire alarms and rivetting hammers, blinding snow and driving rain and drifting dust mixed in with lovely days—all these and so many more move past in quick succession. Then there are those occasional bitter memories when tragedy has suddenly stalked among us leaving gaps at home and in our Gander "family". To all those relatives and friends whose Christmas this year is so saddened by their going I want to say that we of Gander share your sorrow and wish you comfort.

But it is in the present we live and for the future we store—so let us draw in our breath and see what may be seen.

I know we shall not fail to have the traditionally happy Gander Christmas. Food and drink we shall have in abundance, the Christmas trees have been cut, decorations purchased and ready for hanging, the Glee club has been practicing Christmas carols, gifts and packages are rolling in with ever increasing volume, and so on. All else we need is the Christmas spirit, and so well do I know our happy Gander people that your "old man" can tell you now that next best to being home with your families will be spending it with your friends at Gander. I am sure that it will linger long as a happy memory.

(Continued on last page)



Flight Lieutenant M. C. P. MACINTOSH, Senior Station Chaplain-P

Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass" are words which men will say one to the other this Christmas season in Canada and Britain, in India and Africa, in China and Japan, in Europe and Asia, in Artic regions where lie the eternal snows, on tropical isles where verdant forests grow, and in Gander where we make for a time our wartime home. It is an arresting thought that here, where a town has been hewn out of forest and rock to provide a base for men and women trained in the arts of war, we should pause in the midst of war to pay homage to the Prince of Peace.

It is indeed no accident that Christmas comes at the end of the year, for Christmas is a time of memories and a time of retrospect. It is a time when we think of our homes and our families; a time too when we think of the friends we have made throughout the year. Some are still with us; some have returned to the homeland; others have gone farther afield, while still others have gone to the "Airport of missing men, from whose bourn no pilot returns". We pause at Bethlehem to do them honour and ask that the Comforter whose birth we commemorate will bring comfort and peace to their families.

But let us not dwell merely on the past. There is a future quite unknown beckoning to us. What it holds for us we cannot say, but of this we can be confident, it will hold for us only as much as we are willing to bring into it. It can be as happy and as bright as we care to make it, or it can be as miserable and as dark as we desire. We may not get all that we want, we may not be as successful as we dare to dream, but we can be faithful, and fidelity is all that is required of any one whatever the task may be.

It is fitting and wise that we should pause at Bethlehem at the close of the year to reflect, and at the opening of the year to get a bearing on the Star of Bethlehem so that our progress and our lives will be directed in paths that are right and true. The Star of Bethlehem has not failed any navigator yet; it shines as a beacon bright and clear; and even though dark clouds may hide the sun and though the moon may refuse to shine, the Star of Bethlehem still beckons us on to planes that are higher and nobler than anything else the world has ever known.

Let us go then even unto Bethlehem this Christmas time, and if we do our Christmas will be a Merry Christmas, and our New Year will be a Happy New Year.



AIR VICE-MARSHAL F. V. HEAKES, A. O. C.

"God bless us one and all" is a phrase that always epitomizes Christmas to me. Dicken's Tiny Tim certainly said a lot when he used it in "A Christmas Carol".

It is an all-embracing thought, and when I use it in relation to the R.C.A.F. in the Island, I go much further abroad than that. My wish goes back to your own dear ones, wherever they may be, as well as to yourselves.

Life begins with the family. We are, in fact a great family in Gander and in Newfoundland, but, as such, merely an extension of the Family Canadian, with its roots so firmly established in our beloved homeland.

Mentally at least, and physically, if possible, I hope, (to use the privilege of a father with a grown family), that the girls and boys of Gander will hang up the stocking before the shrine of their home fireside, knowing that, in spirit at least, some loving hand shall fill it with dear thoughts of Christmas.

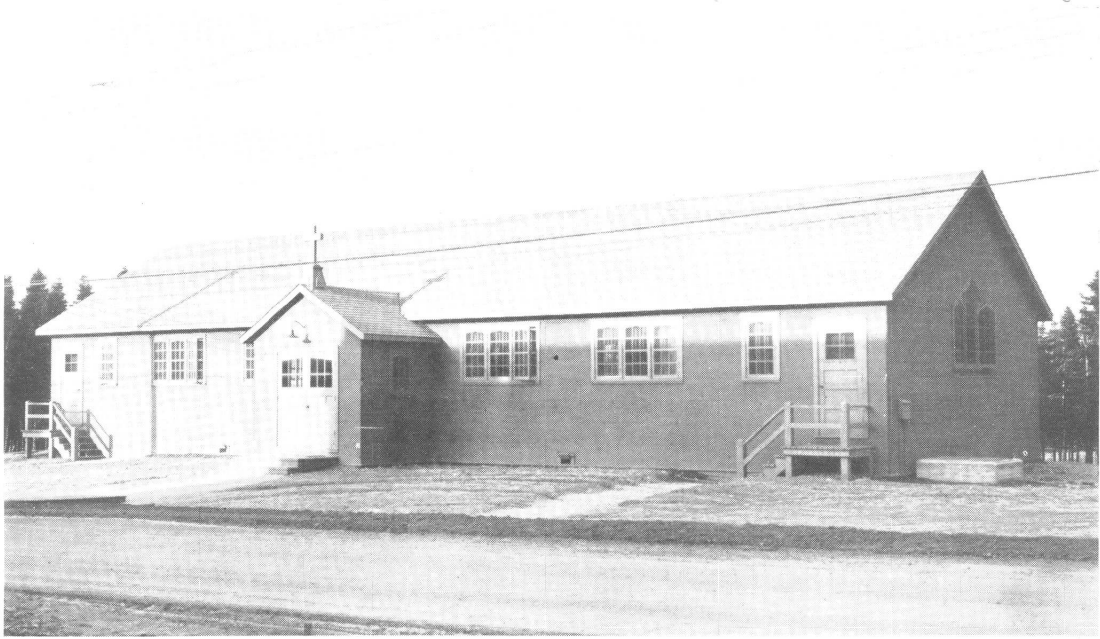
In the end, it is the kindly thought, the deep desire of, and consideration for others, that will shake this old world back into a state of normalcy, that it may be at last, the habitude of brotherhood, and where the Christmas spirit of good will towards men shall not be merely an annual recurrence, but the daily outlook of men.

The great hope of the world is that we shall come back (or move forward) towards this simple formula as the great governing guide between man and man, nation and nation. In the meantime, we still have a grim duty to fulfill. It is not so grim, however, that we cannot do it cheerfully and in good part. A fighting man who can still retain a sense of humour and balance, in the face of the severest tasks, has a tremendous advantage over the inelastic, foreboding type of fellow such as the Hun, who now fights with no hope of victory, and who finds the structure of Nazism and its rotten ideals but a crumbing shell to fall back upon.

He has violated both the Christmas and the Christian precepts of living, and for too long a time has gotten away with it. But now, to quote Prime Minister Churchill, in turn quoting from out the past: "He who sowed the wind, is reaping the whirlwind". We will go even further and say that "He who started the fire is reaping the holocaust". Berlin and a host of cities lie in ruins; the Russians are extracting the payment in millions of dead Germans.

Let us in Newfoundland, rejoice that we have contributed towards this changed condition in no small

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The chapel where all religious services are held.

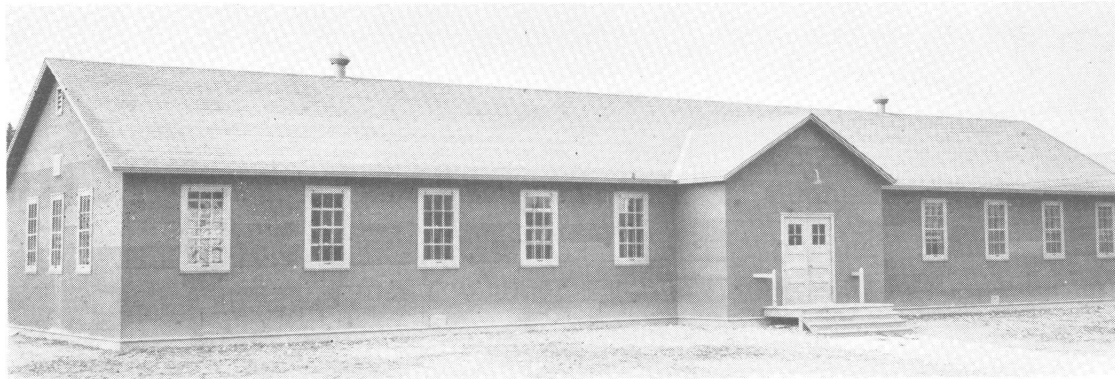
CHAPEL CHOIR

The station choir (below) has won the admiration of all who have heard them. This is a voluntary organization.



**BED ROOM
LIVING ROOM
DINING ROOM**

Our bedroom and home away from home, the barracks. A typical barrack block on this station. The living room, the canteen where we may sit and sip a coke or purchase other extras. Large quantities of cigarettes, chocolate bars, canned goods, apples and oranges are sold here. The dining room, the mess, where meals are served almost every hour of the day and night.





FOOD FOR AIRMEN

Some of the mess staff working near the huge food containers. Below: W.D.'s serving at one of the steam tables.





A section of the large group of airmen who three times daily partake of meals in the Airmen's Mess.

Returning to base after a long patrol aircrew gather in the Aircrew Mess for a hearty meal.





MAIL – THE MORALE BOOSTER

Letters and parcels from home are the best morale boosters in service life.

Our post office staff, efficient and courteous, do a fine job of dispersing letters to personnel.

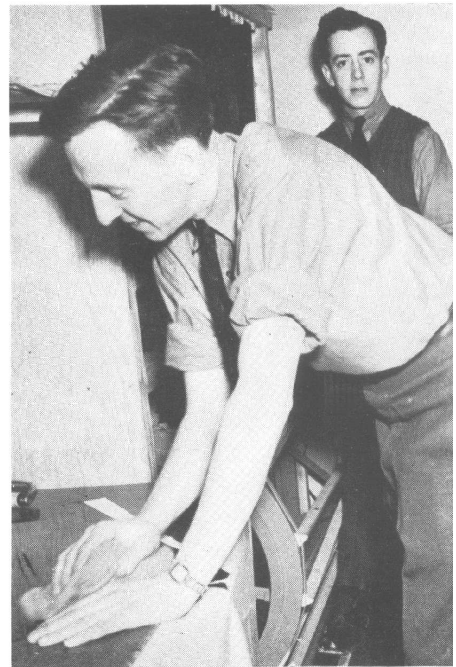




Photography

WO2 Beattie, N.C.O. 1/C Photographic Section, who assisted the staff of "The Gander" in compiling photographs for this Issue.

This band of airmen and airwomen are busy every day, rain or shine, developing, printing, repairing and servicing cameras for operational duties.



STATION WORK SHOPS

These sections handle all the repairs to buildings, furniture, plumbing, heating aircraft maintenance, etc. Below at left is F/Sgt. Smith, checking work orders for the day. At right is a group of armourers belting ammunition. The lower section shows men of the parachute section at their trade.





This group of electricians keep the electrical installations humming with life.



This happy gang are the plumbers. They are kept active repairing and servicing the huge sewerage system on this station.



Carpenters and woodworkers mend damage to buildings and equipment.

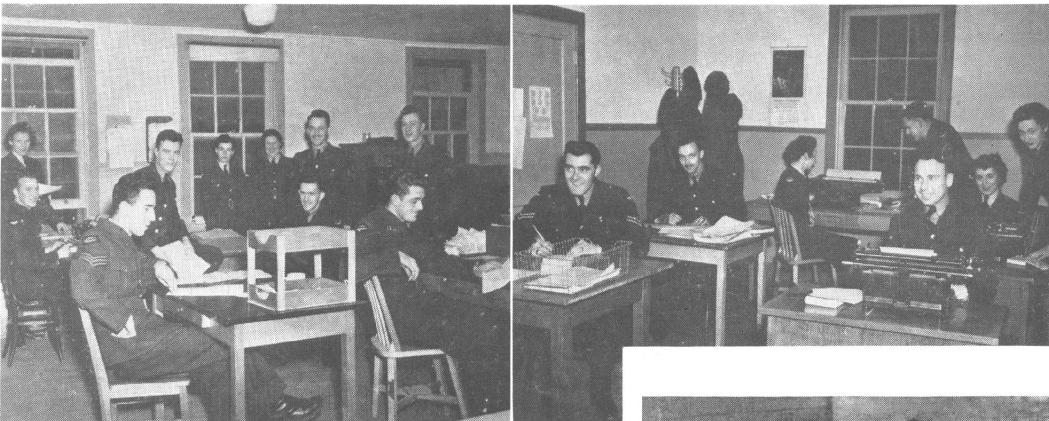
Other trades in the Airforce include the welders and machinists. These chaps help make possible the patrols which keep our sea lanes free.



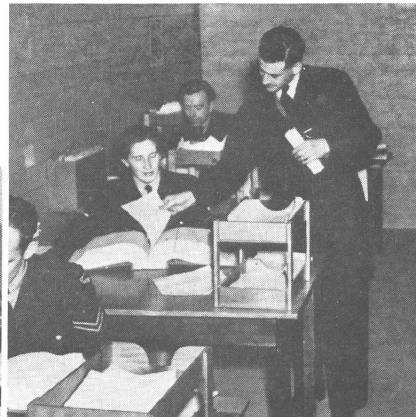


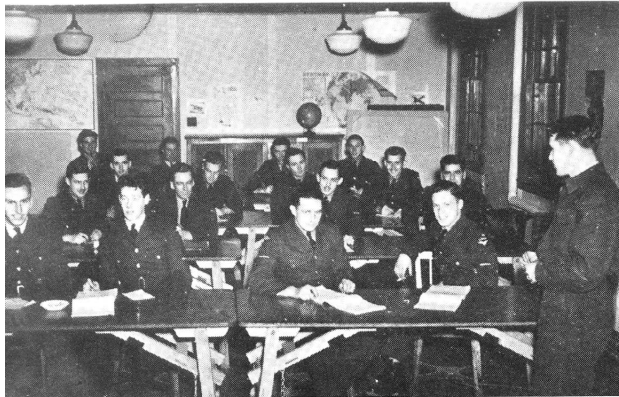
Flight Officer Jernholm, Senior Women's Division Officer.

ADMINISTRATION AND STORES



This station is big business and being so involves many hours of paper work. Above are two of the departments, the Record's Office and the Steno Pool. Between these all documents and files are kept for station useage. Station Stores being another large section also involves office work. Here are two groups of the stores staff.





AND OTHER STATION SERVICES



Important to any communication system of a large centre is the switchboard. Shown here are a few of our W. D. operators on the job. Airmen interested in remustering to aircrew are able to take a pre-aircrew course on the station under the supervision of the Educational Officer. Top left, is one of these groups. Law and discipline must be maintained, the station must be patrolled against sabotage. This is the duty of the Service Police. Another feature of our station is the ultra modern laundry. W.D's here play an important part in its operation. Vital to the safety of the station is this group of Fire Fighters.





HOSPITAL

FOR SICKNESS
AND
FOR HEALTH

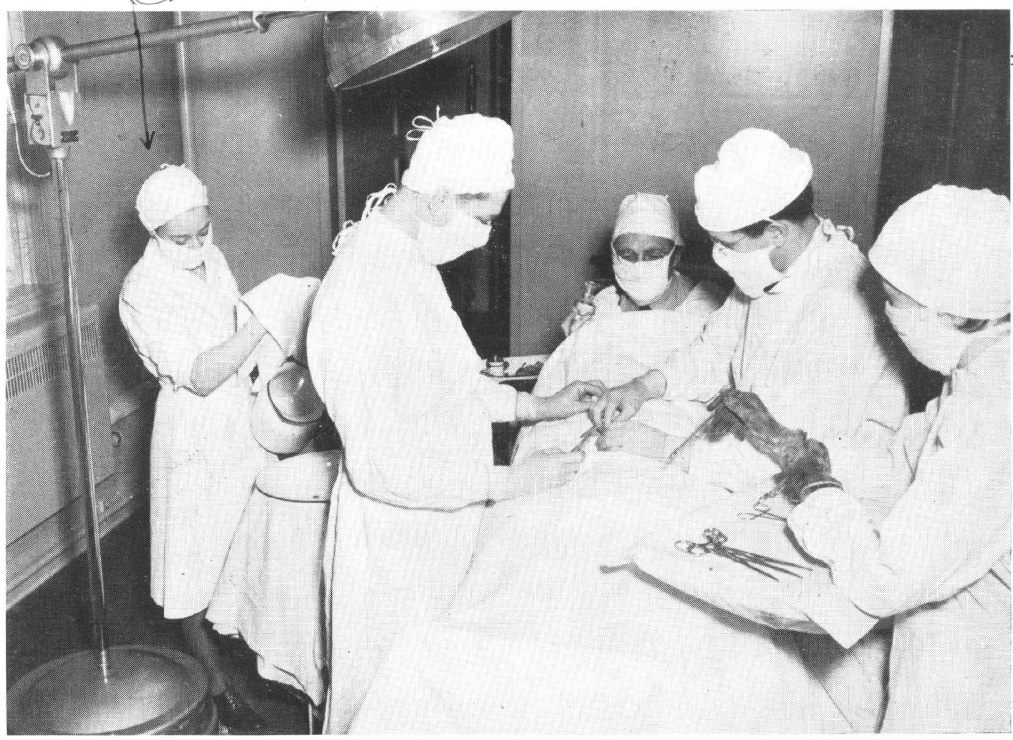
*W.W. Vachere
St. Louis
Mo. S.*

*J. G. Lewis,
Wilderbrook,
T. B.*

9 Coy. Paratroopers

*1st Lt. Reynolds
1st Lt. ...
Bellevue
4th in this ...
Winnipeg - Allen
300 ...
D. S. Thompson 710
D. S. ...*

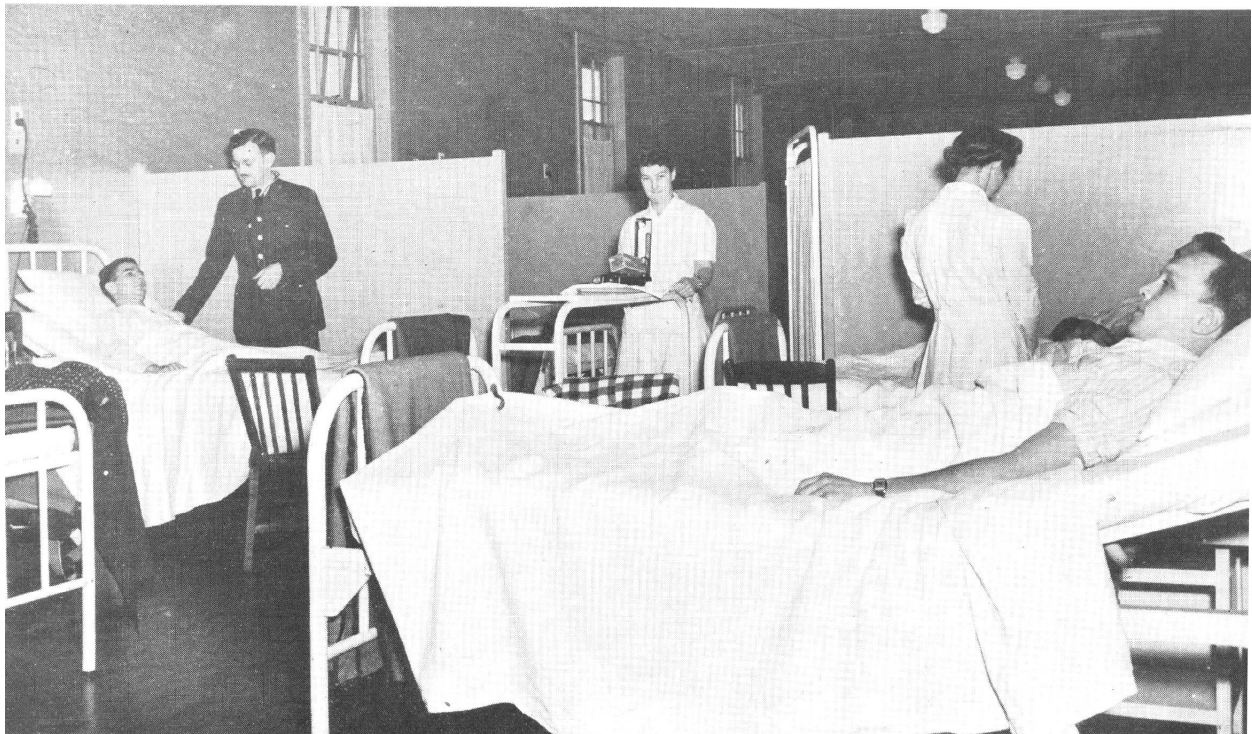
Essential to the life and welfare of any R.C.A.F. station is the Hospital. In time of peace or war the fight against disease must go on. Here, we have one of the most modern hospitals in the Command. The staff photographer caught this scene in the operating room.



*Key Room
E. ...
...*



Countless records pass through the hospital orderly room daily. Three W.D.'s recuperating in one of the convalescing wards. One of the competent Medical Officers making a daily round in a hospital ward.





Meals in the hospital are a pleasure. They are served by W. D. hospital assistants.

At a slack hour during an active day Officers, Doctors and Nursing Sisters gather in the Nursing Sisters' quarters for a brief refresher.





Yet another trade in the Airforce is Laboratory Assistant. These Lab Assistants are vitally necessary for the efficient operation of the hospital.

Skilled and highly efficient clerks prepare the prescriptions.



AND FOR CIVILIANS

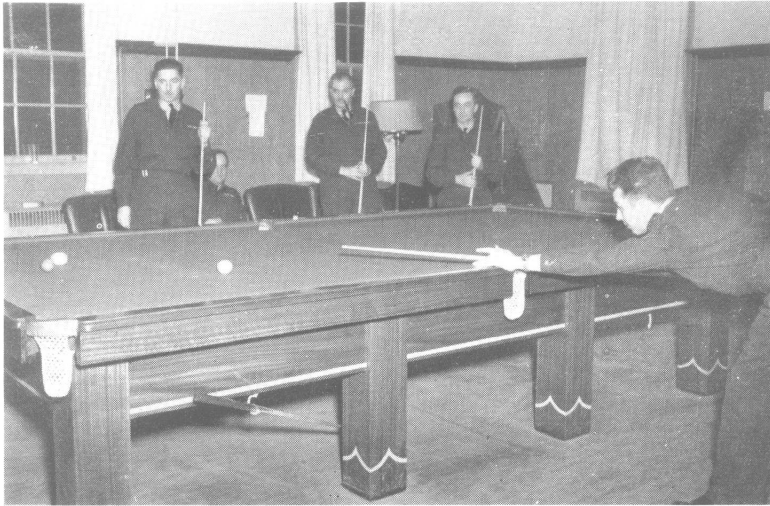
This hospital not only treats service personnel but since its beginning has treated emergency cases among nearby civilians. This has developed into a \$10,000 a year business.



DENTAL CLINIC

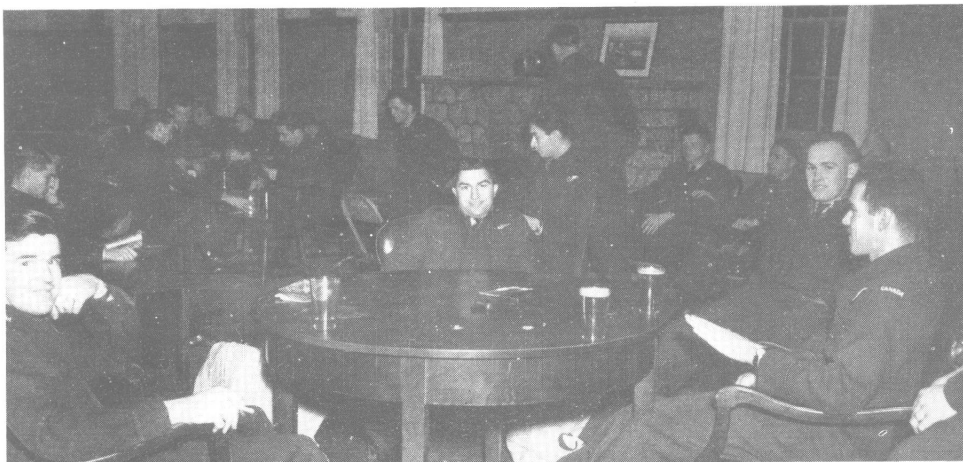
Another important department for the preservation of good health is the Dental Clinic. W. D. assistants are used here, too.





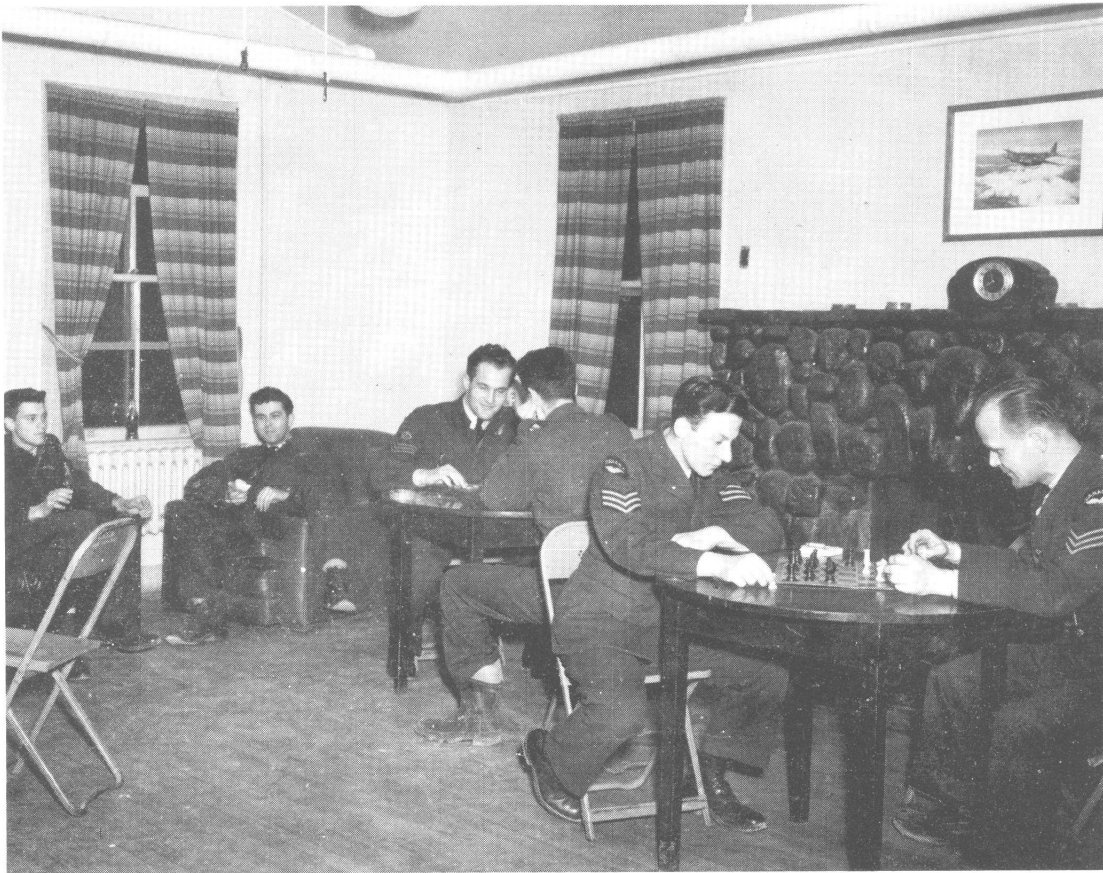
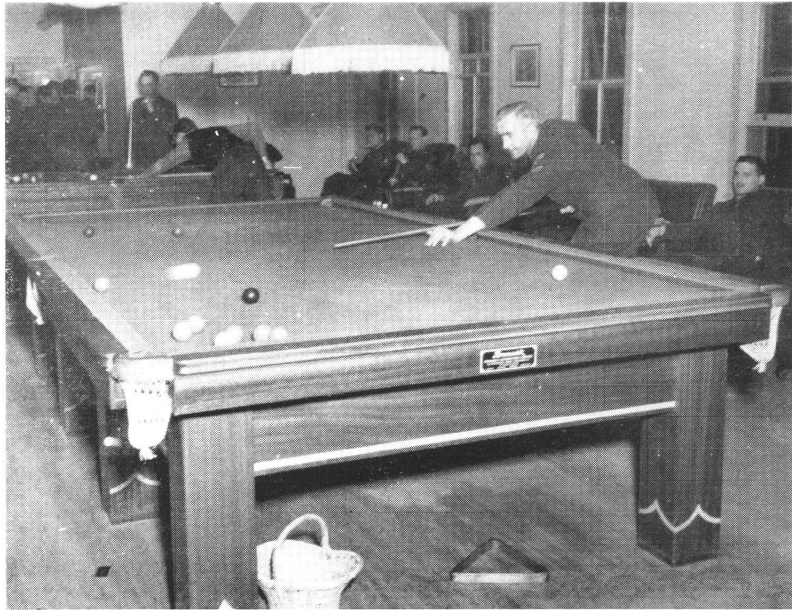
RELAXATION FOR OFFICERS

In pleasant surroundings Officers spend leisure time in the billiard room or lounge.



AND N.C.O.'S

After a busy day Senior N.C.O.'s relax at billiards or a game of chess.



THE DUMBO SQUADRON

THEY MAKE THE SEAS SAFE



F/O Gordon Craddock, D.F.C. who won his award in raids over Germany, continues to wage a relentless war against the U-Boats on this side of the Atlantic.

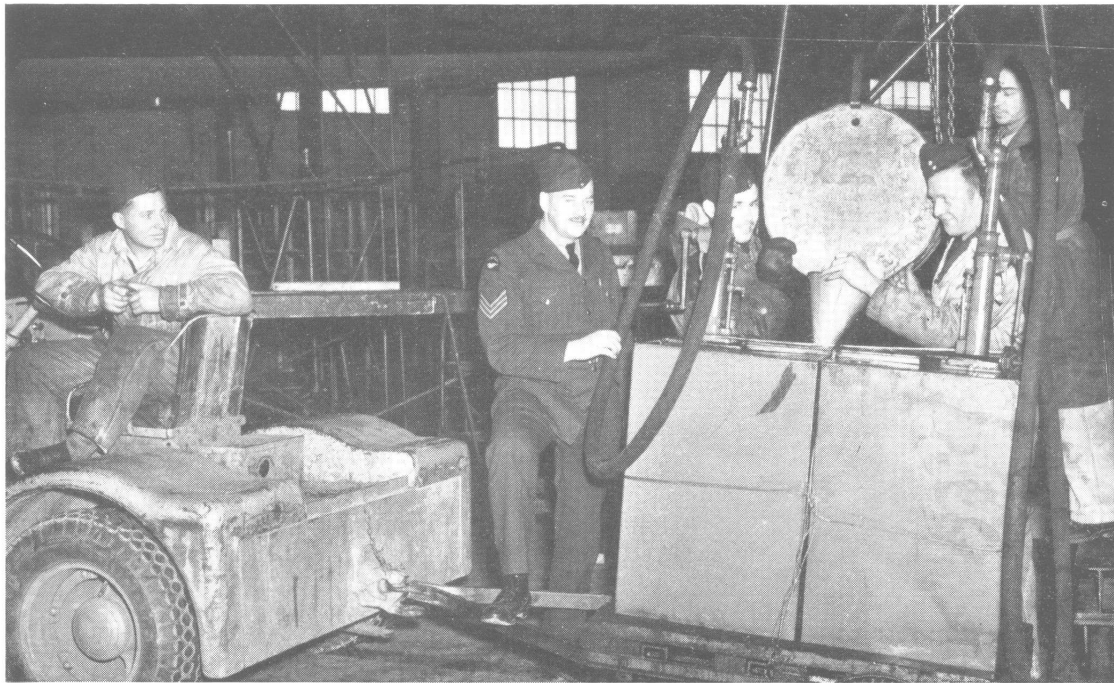
This famous anti-sub squadron has done much in making the sea lanes safe for democracy. U-Boats stand little chance against the deadly load carried by their planes. A happy station life contributes largely to the results attained by this group.





One of the teams of the squadron. Crews like this have taken a heavy toll on subs and have thus helped in stamping out the U-Boat menace.

Ground crew members, too, have had an active part in the war against the undersea prowlers by keeping the aircraft serviceable and in good repair at all time.





A.E.M.'s, A.F.M.'s, Armourers, W.M.'s, Machinists and other ground crew trades line up at a mobile canteen during a break-off period.



Ground Crew members of another famous anti-sub squadron pose for a group picture.



Repairing delicate instruments and intricate mechanism is the specialty of this group. They are members of a Repair Depot.



SCRAMBLE

Alert, sober and eager are the men of this squadron, under whose watchful eye the station is secure.



From small towns and large cities these men have answered the appeal for aircrew. Their Airforce training has resulted in making them some of the finest pilots in the world.

On call at a moment's notice aircrew of this squadron lounge in a readiness room.

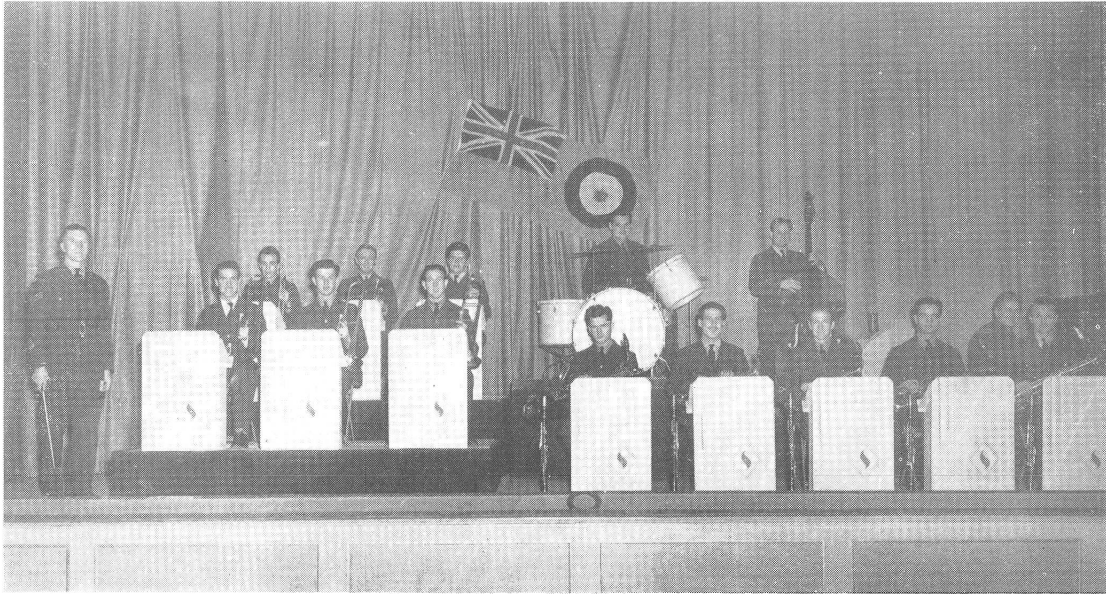


Checking and cleaning guns, the armourers are kept active. Two of the N.C.O.'s are shown in the Flight Office.



Radio equipment must be in the best of condition; here is some of it being given a check.





AFTER HOURS

One form of entertainment which is thoroughly enjoyed by the personnel are the dances. Our station band also has in its midst a dance orchestra and their efforts are sincerely appreciated by the station. Other forms of entertainment are bridge tournaments, the library, stage plays by station personnel and the movie houses.

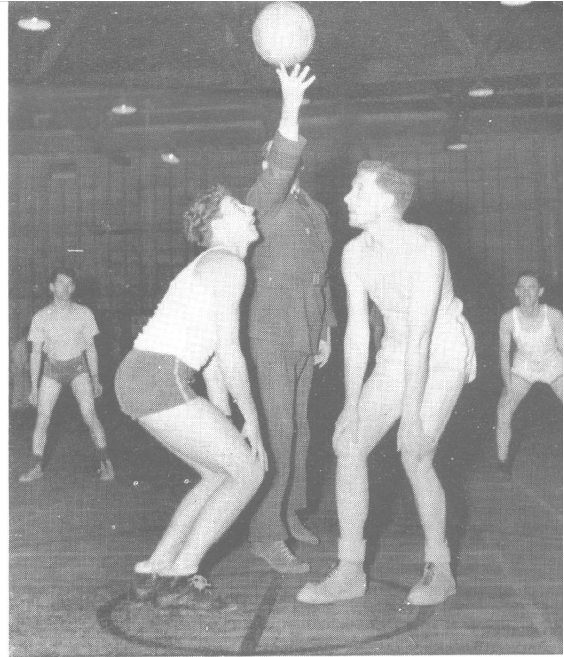


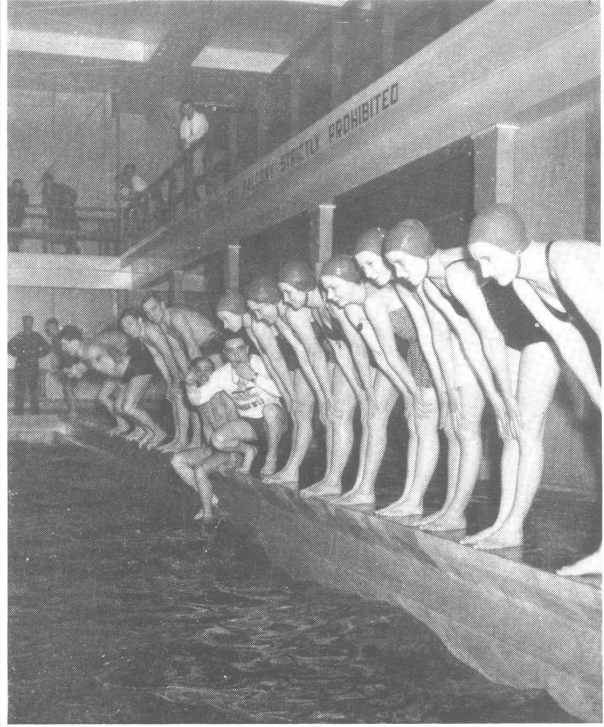
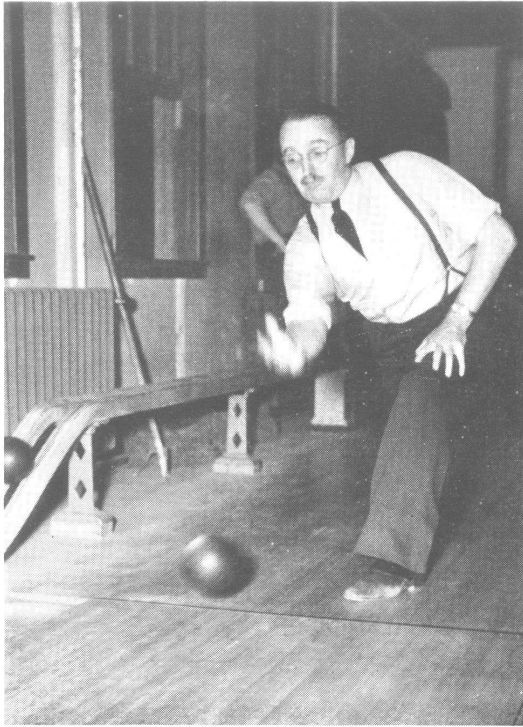


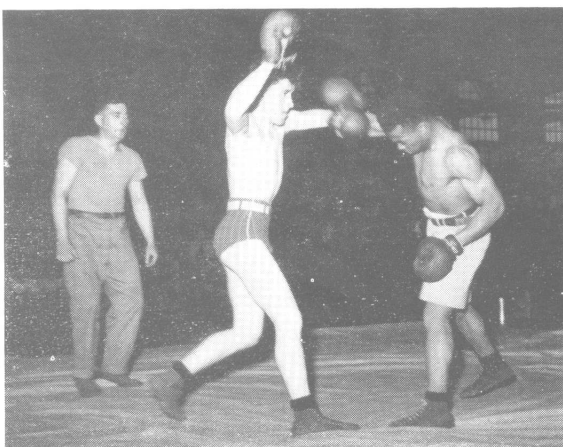
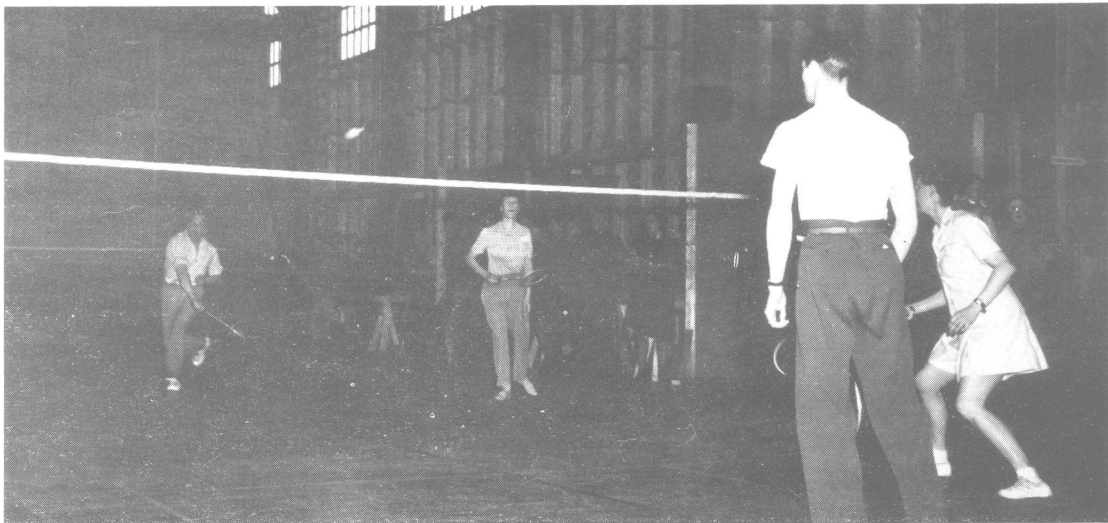
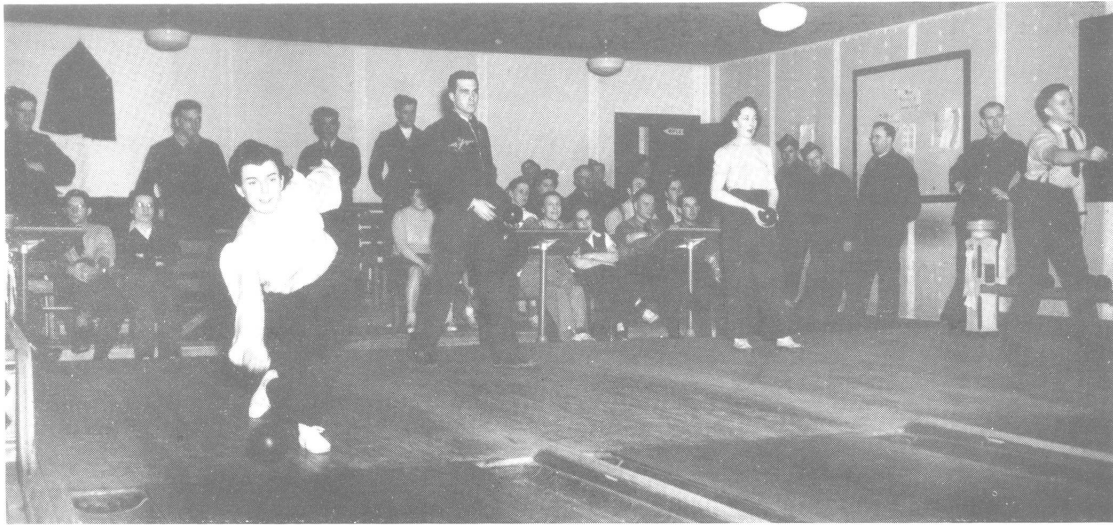


SPORTS

Keeping fit is one of the reasons why the Drill Hall is a hive of activity. There, too, is real enjoyment. Here and on the following pages are shown a few of the sports in which many of the personnel participate: Badminton, tennis, bowling, basketball, borden ball, swimming, volleyball, and floor hockey. Outdoor sports include softball, hardball, skiing, and hockey. In addition to this classes are held in boxing, wrestling and hand balancing. Every hour of the day and far into the night the Drill Hall echoes with the sound of airmen and airwomen, officers and civilians, participating in their favourite sports.









EARLY DAYS AT GANDER

Squadron Leader H. A. L. Pattison

It is difficult to give the exact date when Gander was hatched. It emerged from its shell shyly and very slowly. At that time—in 1936—there was little interest in the world in intercontinental flying. Regular services across the Atlantic by commercial aircraft were considered to be something for the far off future, and a development such as an Atlantic airport which involved a large capital expenditure—on a 1936 standard—was not one which could be rushed to completion regardless of cost in those days of meagre national budgets.

The decision to build an airport in Newfoundland was made at an air conference in Ottawa in 1935, when agreement was reached by the governments concerned to permit one British and one American company to undertake experimental flights across the North Atlantic, with a view to the early establishment of regular services. It was hoped that these experimental flights could commence in 1936, using flying boats which were already in operation by the companies and were considered to be suitable to undertake the flights under experimental conditions. It was realised that land planes would certainly be brought into operation on the North Atlantic with the normal progress of technical development in aircraft, but at this time no land plane had been developed suitable for the experimental flight. Also the time taken to develop the necessary airports would be such that it was essential to conduct the early experiments with flying boats, as a flying boat base could be developed at very short notice. Consequently, late in 1935, officials of the British Air Ministry visited Newfoundland and selected Botwood as the location of the flying boat base and this present location of Gander for the development of the land plane base.

Early in 1936 work commenced in England, Canada and the U. S. to establish the necessary ground services on each side of the Atlantic and in Newfoundland. At the same time the Eire Government came into the picture and commenced the establishment of a flying boat base, with the necessary wireless and meteorological facilities, at Foynes on the River Shannon.

The Newfoundland Government assumed the responsibility for the development of Botwood and the Airport with the assistance, both financial and technical, of the Air Ministry. In June, 1936, a band of 40 workmen arrived at the site selected. To them the site was the same as any other uninhabited location on the railway—just thick forest and bush on either side. They made their tents on the railway edge and commenced to clear an area of one mile square. They were preparing the ground for an airport, but what an airport was they had not the least idea.

The location had no name, and in those days if one had reason to visit the area it was necessary to explain to the railway engineer exactly where you wanted the

train to stop. Travellers on the train were deeply interested in the large clearing which was being made and the area became known as the Airport, although no one visualised the ultimate development and considered it a dream that aircraft would ever be seen in this location.

The name Gander is now so familiar that one cannot realise why there were early difficulties in arriving at a name. The official title "Newfoundland Airport" was adopted in the early stages of development, but when the Airport came into operational use it was realised that such a broad title was unsuitable and a name given the location was adopted.

In August, 1936, a technical representative of the Air Ministry arrived in Newfoundland with the primary object of developing Botwood as a flying boat base and to install radio facilities for the forthcoming experimental flights. In the meantime the Canadian Government, who had assumed responsibility for the meteorological services, had gathered the nucleus of a forecasting staff and commenced training in the specialised work for the Atlantic. This staff eventually arrived at Botwood in June, 1937, ready for the first experimental flight. The Botwood Radio Station was ready for operation in January, 1937, with facilities for direct communication across the Atlantic and for aircraft, together with the necessary navigational assistance in the form of medium and high frequency direction finding installation was one of the first installations of this type put into operation on the service basic. The first members of the radio staff from the Air Ministry arrived at Botwood and commencement was made in recruiting a radio staff of Newfoundland operators. In January, 1937, communication was established with Foynes, which communication has been maintained to this day although the station was eventually transferred to Gander.

Little work was carried out at Gander during the winter of 1936-'37, chiefly due to the fact that winter work was uneconomical. However, by the end of the summer season of 1936 considerable progress had been made. The working strength had risen to 500 and the acquisition of a large quantity of grading equipment had effected a surprising change in the forest and there were definite signs of the formation of the runways.

In the spring of 1937 there was considerable activity at both Gander and Botwood. The working force at Gander was increased to 900 and Botwood was ready to operate the experimental flights. The first commercial Atlantic flight was completed 5 July, 1937, when on a simultaneous crossing the Pan American Clipper left Botwood and the Imperial Airways' Caladonia left Foynes. The success of these flights and those which followed in 1937 was a happy augury for the future.

By 1938 there were signs that there might be land
(Continued on next page)





planes ready for the experimental service. To this end work was rushed at Gander in order to have at least the full length of the runways available together with a hangar. However, technical developments of the land planes on both sides of the Atlantic did not fulfil expectations and the runways still remained unused. During 1938 it was realised that the main traffic across the Atlantic would be carried out by land planes, and with the need for the permanent establishment of the Radio Station to be completed, it was decided to erect the permanent Atlantic wireless organisation at Gander. Thus on the completion of the flying boat season at Botwood in 1938, control, radio and meteorological organisations, which by this time had reached a strength of about 50, moved over to Gander. It can be taken that this date, 30 November, 1938, marks the actual bringing of Gander into the world as an operational station. The move itself is quite a story of its own, as the date chosen coincided with a particularly heavy blizzard. However communication with the outside world showed no break, and when the key was lifted at Botwood for the last time Gander was ready to take over.

With the advent of spring, 1939, the end of the project was well in hand. There remained the paving of the full width of the runways and completion of the drainage. The Airport could be considered fully ready for operation but still there was the lack of suitable aircraft for Atlantic flights. During the summer season flying operations did commence with the arrival of two refuelling aircraft which were used throughout the summer of 1939 to refuel in the air all Imperial Airways' flying boats leaving Botwood on the eastbound crossing.

By the outbreak of war in September, 1939, Gander was complete and ready for civil operation. The cost, which had given so much trouble in peace time, was forgotten. The value of a fully complete airport in such a strategic position could not be assessed, particularly when one realises that at that time Gander was the only operative airport in Newfoundland or in the Maritimes.

It appeared that commercial operation on the Atlantic would be suspended, but the civil staff waited not knowing what the military development would be. However, as a civil operation, during the winter of 1939 experiments were carried out to test the possibility of operating on wheels under winter conditions. These experiments had most valuable results, as in the following winter delivery of military aircraft to Great Britain was commenced using the original civil organization. These operations continued until the time of the formation of the R. C. A. F. Ferry Command.

During this winter of 1939-40 when experiments were being carried out on the runways, sufficient confidence was obtained to give agreement to a visit of R.C.A.F. planes on a survey flight. Thus the first R. C. A. F. aircraft and personnel to arrive at Gander was the occasion of a short visit of two Hudson aircraft on 10 February, 1940. The first detachment to be posted for duty arrived some months later. At that time the Airport was still under the control of the civil organisation, and

the detachment of Officers and men were accommodated with the civilian resident staff in the only buildings available at that time—the old Administration Building and the construction engineers' Mess which has since been removed. The experiences of this detachment is quite another story, which could probably best be told by some of these early R.C.A.F. pioneers. In spite of the lack of accommodation and the amenities as they now exist at Gander, members of this detachment still look back and talk about the "good old days". With the expansion of R.C.A.F. operational requirements Gander was formally taken over by the R.C.A.F. from the civil authorities for the "Duration of the War" in April, 1941.

SAUCE FOR THE GANDER

(Continued)

So too for the New Years. It will be kept with all its tradition. And as we face the days beyond let there be no faint hearts or irresolute hands. Let us all remember that nothing really worthwhile ever comes easily. We have a job to do and with past successes to bolster let us face only forward and get it done. Then mayhap next Christmas we can all spend it at home with our loved ones where Christmas really belongs.

May God bless you all, every one, and give you health and happiness in the year to come.

AIR VICE-MARSHAL HEAKES

(Continued)

measure, in that, without question, insofar as this half of the Atlantic is concerned, we, in conjunction with the Navy, have ensured that the essential flow of ships, materials, and supplies to Britain and the other theatres has never ceased. Ours has been a hard and unspectacular part, but nevertheless a most important part, for, without supply, Britain could not have continued to exist.

Also, let us remember that we have been the advance bastion of defence to Canada, and, in fact, the North American continent. For, had the fortunes of war gone against us in Europe, then Newfoundland would have been the gateway of attack, and this country would have become the battle-ground of the initial approach to Canada and the United States. Thus, in addition to rendering inestimable value in the battle of the Atlantic, the Canadian forces (and we do not forget our friends the Americans), have fulfilled that basic statement of our Canadian National Anthem: "O Canada, we stand on guard for thee".

I send you this mixed bag of thoughts as my Christmas greeting: first, the ideal of Christmas and the family; secondly, a reminder of our grim part in a still grim struggle being waged and to be waged. But I must return to the personal, and from the bottom of my heart, wish you one and all a Happy Christmas.

The picture on the front cover was posed by LAW Nightingale, one of our M. T. drivers.



