

THE CANADIAN DENTAL CORPS AND OUR DEDICATED CONTRIBUTION TO BOMBER COMMAND DURING WWII

by Captain (Ret'd) EM "Dick" Lobb



During the Second World War, I served in England at various air force stations including with No. 6 (RCAF) Group Bomber Command and I wanted to share with you some of my memories from that time.

The Royal Air Force had several main commands, one being RAF Bomber Command, which was responsible for most light and medium and all heavy bomber units. First formed in 1936, there were seven active operational Groups (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6/RCAF and 8/Pathfinders), each composed of several Squadrons. The Command was responsible for destroying significant portions of Nazi Germany's industrial complex and many German cities. Unfortunately, this was accomplished while sustaining extremely high casualty rates. The Halifax and Lancaster bombers were the work horse aircraft for much of the bombing missions.

In a Squadron, a tour of duty was 30 completed operations – that being a successfully completed flight or sortie where a primary or secondary target had been attacked. Only 25% of aircrew survived their first tour, after which they served as instructors to train new flight crews. After 6 months, they came back for another 20 operations, after which they became instructors unless promoted to higher things or volunteered for more operations. The odds against survival of a second tour were 1 in 40. Of the RAF Bomber Command personnel killed during the war, 72% were British, 18% Canadian, 7% Australian and 3% New Zealanders.

One third of all Bomber Command aircrew were Canadians and in October 1942, No. 6 Group (RCAF) Bomber Command was created, solely manned by Canadian officers and men serving in 14 operational RCAF Bomber Squadrons, flying from air fields in Yorkshire, England. No. 6 Group flew a total of 40,822 sorties during the war, dropped a total of 126,122 tons of bombs and lost 814 aircraft. 8,000 decorations for bravery were awarded to the Canadian servicemen of No. 6 Group. 4,203 aircrew lost their lives. I remember a number of days when I had lunch with several of my aircrew friends just before they left on a mission and by evening time they were all dead. In 1940, Sir Winston Churchill paid the aircrews of the RAF (fighter and bomber commands) the greatest tribute stating in Parliament, *"Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."* Two future RCDC dental officers who flew with No. 6 Group were awarded Distinguished Flying Crosses – Flying Officer DH "Hap" Protheroe (the last serving member of the Canadian Forces awarded a DFC when he retired, who was then CO of 14 Dental Unit, HQ for CF Air Command), and Flight Lieutenant EMC Franklin (who flew 32 sorties over Germany).



FO H. Protheroe



FL E. Franklin

Under the leadership of Col E. Wansbrough No. 19 Dental Company was established to provide dental care for the aircrews of No. 6 (RCAF) Group. The Company, under the command of LCol RA Gilbert, had 24 dental officers supported by 24 dental assistants,

orderlies, a supply officer (Capt Rowe and later Capt Fletcher) and an administrative officer (Capt French). A central laboratory was established at Dishforth under the guidance of Maj AL Gardiner (N0.3) and (N0.4) W02 Lloyd Wansborough. Dental personnel were posted to various dental detachments including HQ at Allerton Park, Croft, Dishforth, Topcliffe, Linton-on-Ouse, Tholthorpe and Middleton St. George. Some of the dental officers who served with No. 19 Dental Company included Captains Jamieson, Duke, Belford, Parrott, Carson, Gabriel, Slack, Fisher, Verte and Day.



Col Wansbrough



LCol Gilbert



Capt Jamieson



Capt Duke



Capt Belford



Capt Parrott



Capt Carson



Capt Gabriel



Capt Slack



Capt Fisher



Capt Verte



Capt Day



Maj Gardiner



Sgt Fisher



G/Capt Tilley



Sir A. McIndoe

In July 1942, I sailed to England on the RMS *Capetown Castle*, along with Maj AL Gardiner and Sgt Bert Fisher (dental lab technician). We served together as a dental team at various air force stations in England until our return to Canada after the war. After our initial orientation in southern England at Cove and Aldershot, we were stationed with No. 410 Squadron (Fighter Command) in Scorton, Yorkshire. In 1943, we joined 1664 Heavy Conversion Unit at Croft and then moved to Dishforth, providing dental care to aircrew from No. 6 Group (RCAF) Bomber Command.

In 1944, we were posted to Queen Victoria Hospital in East Grinstead, Sussex. Here we worked in the 50-bed Canadian wing of the hospital under the command of Group Captain A. Ross Tilley. He, along with Sir Archibald McIndoe, a New Zealander, became renowned for their pioneer work in the plastic surgical reconstruction of burned and disfigured aircrew of whom 80% came from Bomber Command. Their patients

formed the “Guinea Pig Club”, celebrating their remarkable ground breaking rehabilitations that gave them the ability to lead productive lives for many years after the war and who gathered at regular international reunions.

Much of Major Gardiner’s treatment responsibilities at the Queen Victoria Hospital were dealing with complicated extractions, maxillofacial injuries and fractures. We were part of the maxillofacial unit of the Hospital, which was headed by Sir Kelcy Fry, who developed a number of maxillofacial procedures, and was supported by a group of plastic surgery and maxillofacial pioneers, GJ Parfitt, PR Shepherd and AC McLeod. Members of the CDC Unit were, Capt R. Ball, John McManus, Sid Muller, Jack Kern, Cal Fletcher, Ian Grimsguard, Vince Blackmore, Dick Lobb.



Capt R. Ball



McManus J.



Muller S.



Kern J.



Fletcher C.



Grimsguard I.



Blackmore V.



Lobb D.

At the end of the war, we were posted to RCAF HQ at 32 Lincoln Fields, London, England where Maj Gardiner was in charge of the dental clinic. In late 1945, we returned to Canada and were stationed to a variety of different locations ending a remarkable three year experience as a dental team providing dental care and surgery to aircrew in England under very challenging conditions and sometimes with unique wartime injuries.

In 2013, the Government of Canada awarded the Bomber Command bar to Canadian veterans who served with Bomber Command in the Second World War. It is worn on the ribbon of the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal above all other clasps or bars, including the overseas clasp.



Bomber Command Service Bar



Lobb, Everett (Dick). On February 20, 2016 Dick Lobb passed away at the age of 94. Dick is survived by his children Peter, Richard (Liz), Douglas (Marge) and Karen (Brian); his grandchildren Steven (Josie), Kim (Jordan), Amy (Calum), Landon, MacKenzie, Kyle, Martyn (Anitka), Mitchell, Brett and Danielle; great-grandchildren Elliana and Tristan; sister Helen Holland; and sisters-in-law Bertha and Gertie Sivertson; as well as many friends, nieces and nephews. Dick was predeceased by his loving wife Christine, and brother Orval. Dick served with the Canadian Armed Forces from 1939 to 1976. He was a member of the Royal Canadian Dental Corps, and saw service in England during WW2, with NATO in Europe and across Canada including the Yukon and Northwest Territories. His last few years were as a logistics officer but assigned to the dental services as an administrator and supply officer. He and Bill Parker were good friends and often collaborated on historic articles for the Corps archives. His last article was on Bomber Command.