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## **6 (RCAF) Group – Bomber Command**

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*Researched and Written by: Capt (N) (Ret'd) M. Braham*

*Edited by: Hugh Spence*

**Background:** No. 6 (RCAF) Group was an organization of Royal Canadian Air Force bomber squadrons which operated from airfields in Yorkshire, England during the Second World War. Although 6 (RCAF) Group was Canadian, it was controlled by the Royal Air Force (RAF) as part of Bomber Command. A predecessor No. 6 Group had been active in the RAF in 1918, and then from 1924 to 1926, and 1936 to 1939. In these periods the RAF's 6 Group had been a training organization and at the beginning of the war it was reactivated for a short period prior to the formation of 6 (RCAF) Group.

Canadian bomber squadrons began participating in the war effort in 1941 and were attached to RAF Bomber Command groups. Canada, however, wanted its own identifiable presence in Allied air operations overseas, and did not want its air force to be merely a source of manpower for the Royal Air Force. To this end, 6 (RCAF) Group was formed on Oct. 25, 1942 with eight squadrons. At the peak of its strength, 6 (RCAF) Group consisted of 14 squadrons. Headquarters for 6 Group was at Allerton Park near Knaresborough and Harrogate in North Yorkshire.

**Operations:** Significant operations involving 6 Group included raids on U-boat bases in Lorient and Saint-Nazaire, France and night bombing raids on industrial complexes and urban centres in Germany.

6 (RCAF) Group flew 40,822 operational sorties. A total of 814 aircraft and approximately 5,700 airmen did not return from operations, including 4,203 who lost their lives.

**Organization:** Several RAF stations were allocated to 6 (RCAF) Group. Like most other groups within RAF Bomber Command, the "base" system was used for station organization. A base consisted of a main base station, or headquarters, and a number of sub-stations. 6 (RCAF) Group consisted of four bases made up of 11 stations.

Late in 1943, Bomber Command bases were designated with a two-number identifier. The first number represented the group number, and the second digit represented the base within that group. The first base within the group was the group's training base, e.g. No. 61 Base was 6 Group's training base. Each base was commanded by an Air Commodore and each station was commanded by a Group Captain.

6 Group RCAF was disbanded at the end of the Second World War on Aug. 31, 1945.

### **GROUP BASES**

**Number 61 Base:** RAF Station Topcliffe in North Yorkshire, situated between the Yorkshire Dales and the North York Moors, was the Headquarters for Number 61 Base. The station

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was transferred to No. 6 (RCAF) Group on Jan.1, 1943. The station, along with sub-stations at Wombledon, Dalton and Dishforth, was designated as No. 61 (Training) Base in late 1943.

The Group Communications Flight was based at RAF Topcliffe.

RAF Dishforth was home to RCAF Squadrons 424, 425, 426, and 428 as well as the RCAF 1512 Beam Approach Training Flight and the RCAF 1659 Conversion Unit.

**Number 62 (Beaver) Base:** The Headquarters for 62 Base was at RAF Station Linton-on-Ouse, with RAF Stations East Moor and Tholthorpe as satellites.

**Number 63 Base:** RAF Station Leeming, Yorkshire was the headquarters for 63 Base with RAF Station Skipton-on-Swale was a satellite.

No. 408 Squadron was stationed at Skipton-on-Swale. In the latter stages of the war, 420 RCAF Squadron was moved from RAF Station Croft to Leeming.

**Number 64 Base:** Headquartered at Middleton St. George, near Darlington in Yorkshire, this Base had nearby RAF Station Croft as a satellite. 420 and 427 RCAF Squadrons were located at Croft along with the 1535 Beam Approach Training Flight RCAF. No. 419 Squadron was based at Middleton St. George.

### 6 (RCAF) GROUP – OPERATIONAL SQUADRONS

#### 405 (Vancouver) Squadron RCAF



No. 405 Squadron RCAF was formed at Driffield, near the Yorkshire coast north of Hull, on Apr.23, 1941, equipped with the Vickers Wellington bomber. It flew the RCAF's first bombing operation ten weeks later on June 12/13, attacking the railway marshaling yards at Schwerte. It converted to the Handley Page Halifax in April 1942, taking part in the historic 1,000-bomber raid on Cologne on the night of May 30/31, 1942.

In late October 1942, the squadron was loaned to Coastal Command to fly anti-submarine patrols in the Bay of Biscay at the time of the North African landings.

Returning to Bomber Command at the beginning of March 1943, the squadron flew with No. 6 (RCAF) Group for short time before being selected for the RAF's elite No. 8 (Pathfinder) Group, with which it served until the end of the war. Through the last 20 months of the bomber offensive the squadron was equipped with the Avro Lancaster.

During its time with 6 Group, 405 Squadron flew from RAF Topcliffe from March 1-5, 1943, and from RAF Leeming from March 6- April 18, 1943. While with the Group, the Squadron was commanded by W/C A. Clayton.

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The squadron's last operational mission took place on Apr. 25, 1945 when nine Lancasters bombed Hitler's Berghof and four aircraft bombed enemy gun batteries on the Frisian island of Wangerooge. The squadron was disbanded on Sep. 5, 1945.

**Battle Honours:** Fortress Europe 1941-44, France and Germany 1944-45, Biscay Ports 1941-45, Ruhr 1941-45, Berlin 1941, German Ports 1941-45, Normandy 1944, Walcheren, Rhine, Biscay 1942-43

405 Squadron was reconstituted in 1947 and exists today as a Maritime Patrol Squadron based at CFB Greenwood, NS.

### 408 (Goose) Squadron RCAF



No. 408 Squadron's history dates back to Jun. 24, 1941, when RAF Bomber Command's directive called for the formation of 408 Squadron as part of No. 5 Group RAF. It was to be the second RCAF bomber squadron formed overseas. Goose Squadron, as it was to become known, was initially based at Lindholm in Yorkshire, England, equipped with Handley Page Hampdens. The Goose Squadron converted aircraft several times, from Hampdens to the Halifax, and then to the Lancaster in August 1943 after moving to RAF Linton-on-Ouse and becoming part of No. 6 (RCAF) Group.

No. 408 flew 4,610 sorties and dropped 11,340 tons of bombs. A total of 170 aircraft were lost and 933 personnel were killed, listed as missing in action (MIA) or prisoners of war (POW). The squadron earned 10 battle honours for its wartime operations, and its members were awarded some 200 decorations.

Commanding Officers of the Squadron while attached to 6 (RCAF) Group were:

W/C	W. Ferris	Jan. 1, 1943-Oct. 27, 1943
W/C	A. Mair	Oct. 28, 1943-Nov. 26, 1943 (KIA)
W/C	D. Jacobs	Nov 27, 1943-May 22, 1944 (KIA)
W/C	R. McLernon	May 24, 1944-Oct. 13, 1944
W/C	J. Easton	Oct. 14, 1944-Nov. 25, 1944
W/C	F. Sharp	Nov. 26, 1944-Sept 5, 1945

On Sep. 5, 1945, 408 Squadron was officially disbanded.

**Battle Honours:** English Channel and North Sea 1942-44, Baltic 1941-43, Fortress Europe 1941-44, France and Germany 1944-45, Biscay Ports 1944, Ruhr 1941-45, Berlin 1943-44, German Ports 1941-45, Normandy 1944, Rhine, Biscay 1942-43

408 Squadron has been reactivated several times and is currently a Tactical Helicopter Squadron based at Edmonton.

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### 415 (Swordfish) Squadron RCAF



No. 415 was created at Thorney Island near Portsmouth on Aug.21, 1941 as a torpedo-bomber squadron, armed with Hampdens. It flew from a number of different bases, hitting enemy convoys and shipyards. In October 1943, it rearmed with Wellingtons and Albatrosses. Operating out of Bircham Newton in Norfolk, it became a successful E- and R-boat hunter unit. During the D-Day operations, it used its bombers to lay protective smoke screens for the Allied ships as they assaulted the coastline and landed troops ashore.

In July 1944, the squadron was transferred to RAF Bomber Command's No. 6 (RCAF) Group and transitioned to RAF East Moor, near Sutton-on-the-Forest, North Yorkshire. There, it rearmed with Halifax IIIs and began major bombing of German targets on July 28/29 when it attacked Hamburg. For nine months afterward, it made bombing runs over important enemy targets in a variety of places, until Apr. 25, 1945, when it made its last mission: an attack on the gun batteries on the island of Wangerøge. The squadron disbanded in May, 1945.

Commanding Officers of the squadron while part of 6 Group were:

W/C	J. McNeill	July 12, 1944-Aug. 21, 1944 (KIFA)
W/C	J. Lecomte	Aug. 22, 1944-Oct. 30, 1944
W/C	F. Ball	Oct. 31, 1944-May 15, 1945

**Battle Honours:** Atlantic 1942, English Channel and North Sea 1942-44, France and Germany 1944-45, Biscay Ports 1944, Ruhr 1944-45, German Ports 1944-45, Normandy 1944, Rhine, Biscay 1942-43

### 419 (Moose) Squadron RCAF



No. 419 Bomber Squadron formed at RAF Mildenhall, in Suffolk, in 1941 as part of No. 3 Group, Bomber Command. The squadron moved to RAF Middleton St. George when it became a constituent of 6 (RCAF) Group, and remained in England until 1945. The squadron operated Vickers Wellington, then Handley Page Halifax and finally Avro Lancaster bombers during this period. It was the third RCAF bomber unit to be formed in England.

The squadron started operations in January 1942, converting almost immediately to Wellington Mk IIIs and moving north to Leeming as part of the RAF's 6 Group in August 1942. Following its joining 6 (RCAF) Group, in November 1943 it was re-equipped with Halifax Mk IIIs, which it flew for the next 18 months on the night offensive against Germany. The squadron settled at Middleton St. George in November and stayed there for the rest of its service in Bomber Command. In April 1944 the squadron began to convert to Avro

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Lancasters, using the Mk X which was produced in Canada and flown across the Atlantic. The squadron remained continuously on the offensive until Apr. 25, 1945, when it flew its last sortie.

Squadron personnel flew a total of 4,325 operational sorties during the war from Mannheim to Nuremberg, Milan to Berlin and Munich to Hanover, inflicting heavy damage on the enemy. As a result of its wartime record, 419 Squadron became one of the most decorated units in the RCAF during the war. Over a span of roughly 39 months it logged 400 operational missions (342 bombing missions, 53 mining excursions, 3 leaflet raids and 1 “spoof”) involving 4,325 sorties. The squadron lost 129 aircraft lost on these operations.

Between January 1943 to March 1944, 419 Squadron was involved in over 200 sorties involving 2400 crewing operations losing 59 aircraft, a rate of one in every 40; 415 men were either killed or taken prisoner during those 15 months, averaging 4 crews a month. The average crew survival rate was between two and three months during which about 20 missions would be flown. In general, mining operations were relatively safer missions. In particular the attacks on German cities intensified from early October, 1943 when 100-plus crews were regularly dispatched to bomb Frankfurt, Mannheim, Berlin, Magdeburg, Leipzig and Nuremberg. In March 1944 there was a good deal of minelaying, but this was the precursor to 6 Group’s 118-crew attack on Nuremberg at the end of the month, when it was to suffer its worst single-sortie lost of 13 aircraft.

No. 419 Squadron was, like other squadrons in 6 Group, heavily involved in considerable activity during May 1944, probably the most active in the run-up to the D-Day landings. Rail-yards were successfully attacked at Trappes (6/7), Le Mans (13/14), Amiens (16/17), Laon (23/24), Aulnoye (25/26), Courtrai (26/27) and Vaires-sur-Marne (29/30), and mining operations were conducted in the Gironde Estuary (3/4), Brest (4/5), Lorient, Brest, St Nazaire, Terchelling Islands (11/12), Heligoland (18/19 and 30/31) and Kiel Bay (22/23). An aircraft factory at Meulan Les Mureaux was bombed on March 2/3.

419’s P/O Andrew Mynarski, a 27-year old mid-upper gunner from Winnipeg, was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry in trying to save a comrade from their burning aircraft during a raid over northern France.



**P/O Andrew Mynarski, VC**

Commanding Officers of 415 Squadron while attached to 6 (RCAF) Group were:

W/C	M. Fleming	Jan. 1, 1943-Oct. 8, 1943
W/C	G. McMurdy	Oct. 11, 1943-Oct. 22, 1943 (KIA)
W/C	W. Pleasance	Oct. 25, 1943-Aug 21, 1944
W/C	D. Hagerman	Aug. 22, 1944-Jan 25, 1945
W/C	M. Ferguson	Jan. 26, 1945-Aug. 6, 1945

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The squadron flew back to Canada in June 1945 and was disbanded at Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, on Sep. 5, 1945.

**Battle Honours:** English Channel and North Sea 1942-44, Normandy 1944, Rhine, Baltic 1942-44, Fortress Europe 1942-44, Biscay 1942-44, France and Germany 1944-45, Biscay Ports 1942-45, Ruhr 1942-45, Berlin 1943-44, German Ports 1942-45.

419 Squadron has been reactivated as an advanced tactical training squadron based in Cold Lake, Alta.

### **420 (Snowy Owl) Squadron RCAF**



No. 420 Squadron was formed at Waddington, Lincolnshire, England on Dec. 19, 1941 as the RCAF's 18<sup>th</sup> (and fourth Bomber) squadron formed overseas. During the war, the unit ultimately flew Manchester, Hampden, Wellington, Halifax, and Lancaster aircraft on strategic and tactical bombing operations. From June to October 1943, it flew tropicalized Wellington aircraft out of North Africa in support of the invasions of Sicily and Italy.

The first operational mission by 420 Squadron was on Jan. 21, 1942. Five Hampdens were dispatched to bomb a target at Emden. On the same night another Hampden laid mines in the Nectarines (Frisian Islands) area.

The last wartime operation for the squadron was to Bremen on Apr. 22, 1945. This was to be an army co-operation raid but heavy cloud prevented accurate bombing and the operation was cancelled by the Master-bomber. Most aircraft jettisoned their bombs safely in the North Sea

In April 1945, the squadron was converted to Lancasters. When hostilities in Europe concluded it was slated for duty in the Pacific and returned to Canada for reorganization and training. The sudden end of the war in the Far East resulted in the Squadron being disbanded at Debert, Nova Scotia on Sep. 5, 1945.

Commanding Officers of 420 Squadron while attached to 6 (RCAF) Group were:

W/C	D. Bradshaw	Jan 1, 1943-April 11, 1943
W/C	D. McIntosh	April 12, 1943-April 7, 1944
W/C	G. McKenna	April 8, 1944-Oct. 23, 1944
W/C	G. Edwards	Oct. 24, 1944- Nov 23, 1944
W/C	W. Phalen	Nov. 24, 1944-Jan 27, 1945
W/C	F. McCarthy	Jan 28, 1945-April 23, 1945
W/C	R. Gray	April 24, 1945-Sept. 5, 1945

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**Battle Honours:** English Channel and North Sea 1942-44, Baltic 1942, Fortress Europe 1942-44, France and Germany 1944-45, Biscay Ports 1942-44, Ruhr 1942-45, Berlin 1944, German Ports 1942-45, Normandy 1944, Rhine, Biscay 1942-43, Sicily 1943, Italy 1943, Salerno.

### 424 (Tiger) Squadron RCAF



424 Squadron was formed on Oct. 15, 1942 as 424 Bomber Squadron at Topcliffe, North Yorkshire, equipped with Wellingtons in the night bomber role. On Jan. 1, 1943 it joined No. 6 (RCAF) Group and took part in night raids on Germany until Apr. 16, 1943. It was then transferred to North Africa for attacks on Italian targets for three months, stationed in Tunisia during that time. Returning to the United Kingdom it was equipped with Halifaxes for a year and after January 1945 with Lancasters. As an RCAF bomber unit it was disbanded on Oct. 15, 1945.

Commanding Officers of 424 Squadron while attached to 6 Group were:

W/C	H. Carscallen	Jan 1, 1943-April 16, 1943
W/C	G. Roy	April 17, 1943-Oct. 2, 1943
W/C	A. Martin	Dec. 18, 1943-Jan 21, 1944 (KIA)
W/C	J. Blane	Jan 27, 1944-July 28, 1944 (KIA)
W/C	G. Roy	Aug. 15, 1944-Oct. 9, 1944 (POW)
W/C	C. Marshall	Oct. 19, 1944-March 26, 1945
W/C	R. Norris	March 27, 1945-Sept. 30, 1945

**Battle Honours:** English Channel and North Sea 1944-45, Baltic 1944-45, Fortress Europe 1943-44, France and Germany 1944-45, Biscay Ports 1943-44, Ruhr 1943-45, Berlin 1944, German Ports 1943-45, Normandy 1944, Rhine, Biscay 1943-44, Sicily 1943, Italy 1943, Salerno.

The Squadron's present-day reincarnation took place on July 8, 1968 when 424 Communications and Rescue Squadron was created at CFB Trenton.

### 425 (Alouette) Squadron RCAF



The squadron was formed at RAF Dishforth on Jun. 22, 1942, as the first French Canadian squadron, a bomber unit flying Vickers Wellingtons. On the night of the Oct. 5/6, 1942, the squadron went into action for the first time, bombing Aachen with a small number of aircraft. In 1943 the squadron flew to Kairouan, Tunisia, and from there conducted operations against Italy and Sicily, returning to the UK in November of the same year. In December, 425 Squadron was re-equipped with Handley Page Halifaxes and flew its first mission with these aircraft in February 1944. The squadron's final operation took place on the Apr. 25, 1945, when it bombed gun batteries on the tiny

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Frisian island of Wangerooge.

Following the end of the war in Europe, in May 1945, 425 Squadron re-equipped again, this time with Avro Lancaster Mk X's. In June they flew back to Canada to prepare for their role in the continuing war against Japan. The use of atomic bombs precluded the need for further offensive operations and 425 disbanded on Sep.5, 1945 at RCAF Station Debart, N.S., less than three weeks after the Japanese surrender.

Commanding Officers of 425 Squadron while attached to 6 Group were:

W/C	J. St. Pierre	Jan.1, 1943-Sept. 30, 1943
W/C	J. Richer	Oct. 1, 1943-April 3, 1944
W/C	R. McLernon	April 4, 1944-May 23, 1944
W/C	J. Lecomte	May 24, 1944-Aug. 20, 1944
W/C	H. Ledoux	Aug. 21, 1944-June 10, 1945

**Battle Honours:** English Channel and North Sea 1942-43, Fortress Europe 1942-44, France and Germany 1944-45, Biscay Ports 1943-44, Ruhr 1942-45, Berlin 1944, German Ports 1942-45, Normandy 1944, Rhine, Biscay 1942-43, Sicily, Italy 1943, Salerno.

In late 1961, the Squadron was re-established as a fighter squadron at CFB Bagotville.

### 426 (Thunderbird) Squadron RCAF



No. 426 Squadron was first formed at RAF Dishforth on Oct. 15, 1942, equipped with Vickers Wellington Mk IIIs and Mk Xs. The squadron was used as bomber unit in No. 4 Group RAF, RAF Bomber Command. Its first operational mission occurred on the night of January 14/15, 1943, when seven Wellingtons bombed Lorient. Unlike other RCAF Wellington squadrons it did not go to Tunisia in 1943, but continued operating over Germany. In June the squadron transferred to No. 6 (RCAF) Group and moved to RAF Linton-on-Ouse, where it re-equipped with the Bristol Hercules-engined Avro Lancaster II. With this aircraft it soon resumed the offensive, and continued with the night campaign from Linton for the next 10 months. In April 1944 it began to re-equip with Handley Page Halifax IIIs and VIIs, and for the next year continued to operate with

these types as part of No. 6 Group.

During the war 426 Squadron flew 261 operational missions (242 bombing missions and 19 mining excursions) involving 3,213 sorties, and in doing so lost 88 aircraft. Its last operation took place on Apr. 25, 1945 when 20 Halifaxes bombed gun batteries on island of Wangerooge. On May 25, 1945, the squadron was renamed No. 426 Transport Squadron.

Possibly, the most heroic act realized by a member of the squadron during the war took place on Oct. 20, 1943 when Flight Sergeant Frederick Stuart (the pilot) and his crew were



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sent to bomb Leipzig. During the mission he was engaged by enemy fighters, Messerschmitt Bf 109s and Junkers Ju 88s, initially managing to shake them off but not before having his aircraft rendered almost unfit to fly. It was left with a shattered cockpit and gun turrets, holes in the fuel tanks, damaged hydraulics, and no navigation instruments. Against all odds Stuart decided to continue the mission and successfully bombed his target before guiding his crippled aircraft home. He was awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal.

The squadron was disbanded on Jan. 1, 1946.

Commanding Officers of 426 Squadron while attached to 6 Group were:

W/C	S. Blanchard	Jan. 1, 1943-Feb. 14, 1943 (KIA)
W/C	L. Crooks	Feb, 15, 1943-Aug 17, 1943 (KIA)
W/C	W. Swetman	Aug. 18, 1943-April 4, 1944
W/C	E. Hamber	April 8, 1944-July 10, 1944
W/C	C. Burgess	July 11, 1944-Jan. 2, 1945
W/C	F. Carling-Kelly	Jan. 3, 1945-Jan. 28, 1945 (POW)
W/C	C. Black	Jan. 29, 1945-May 24, 1945

**Battle Honours:** English Channel and North Sea 1943, Baltic 1943, Fortress Europe 1943-44, France and Germany 1944-45, Biscay Ports 1943-44, Ruhr 1943-45, Berlin 1943-44, German Ports 1943-45, Normandy 1944, Rhine Biscay 1943.

The squadron served with distinction as a long-haul transporter during the Korean War and has subsequently been reconstituted as 426 Transport Training Squadron at CFB Trenton.

### 427 (Lion) Squadron RCAF



No. 427 started as a bomber squadron formed at Croft on Nov. 7, 1942, and spent its wartime entirely in England as a part of No. 6 (RCAF) Group. The squadron flew Vickers Wellington Mk IIIs and Mk Xs from its first operational mission on Dec. 14, 1942, a minelaying sortie to the Frisian Islands, until May of 1943 when it was relocated to RAF Leeming. Re-equipped with Handley Page Halifax Mk V aircraft, the squadron flew intensely until early 1944 when it replaced its inventory with Halifax Mk III aircraft.

The Halifaxes were replaced by Lancasters prior to the end of the war. The Lancasters were used for Prisoner of War repatriation until the end of May, 1946. 427 Squadron was stood down on Jun. 1, 1946.

Commanding Officers of 427 Squadron while attached to 6 Group were:

W/C	D. Burnside	Jan. 1, 1943-Sept. 5, 1943
W/C	R. Turnbull	Sept. 6, 1943-June 13, 1944

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W/C	C. Cribb	June 14, 1944-Aug. 27, 1944
W/C	E. Bryson	Aug. 28, 1944-Sept. 26, 1944
W/C	V. Ganderton	Sept. 27, 1944-May 8, 1945

**Battle Honours:** English Channel and North Sea 1943-1945, Baltic 1944-1945, Rhine Fortress Europe 1943-1944, France and Germany 1944-1945, Biscay 1944, Biscay Ports 1943-1944, Ruhr 1943-1945, Berlin 1943-1944, German Ports 1943-1945, Normandy 1944.

The unit is now known as 427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron.

### 428 (Ghost) Squadron RCAF.



No. 428 Squadron RCAF was formed during the war at RAF Dalton, Yorkshire, on Nov., 7 1942, as a bomber unit in No. 4 Group RAF. The squadron transferred to No. 6 (RCAF) Group on Jan. 1, 1943, operating with it until Apr. 25, 1945. The squadron was first equipped with Vickers Wellingtons (Mk III and Mk X), and its first operational mission of the war was on Jan. 26/27, 1943, when 5 Wellingtons bombed Lorient. In the early part of June 1943, the squadron moved to RAF Middleton St. George where it remained for the remainder of the squadron's service in Britain. Around that time the squadron was re-equipped with Handley Page Halifaxes (Mk Vs, later supplemented by Mk II Series IIA).

In January 1944, Halifaxes from 428 Squadron participated in the first high-level mining raid, when mines were dropped by parachute from 15,000 feet (4,570 m) over Brest. The squadron flew its last sortie with the Halifax on Jun. 12, 1944, and was re-equipped with Canadian-built Avro Lancasters (B. Mark X). The first sortie involving the squadron's new Lancasters took place on June 14, and they were used for the remainder of the war. The squadron took part in both day and night raids, making its last operational sortie on Apr. 25, 1945, when 15 Lancasters bombed gun batteries on the island of Wangerooge.

No. 428 Squadron RCAF remained in service in the UK until the end of May 1945. It then moved to RCAF Station Yarmouth, N.S., where it was taken out of service on Sep. 5, 1945.

Commanding Officers of 428 Squadron while attached to 6 Group were:

W/C	A. Earle	Jan 1, 1943-Feb. 20, 1943
W/C	D. Smith	Feb. 21, 1943-Sept. 14, 1943 (POW)
W/C	W. Suggitt	Sept. 15, 1943-Oct. 30, 1943
W/C	D. French	Oct.31, 1943-May 8, 1944
W/C	W. McLeish	May 9, 1944-Aug. 7, 1944
W/C	A. Hull	Aug. 8, 1944-Jan. 1, 1945
W/C	M. Gall	Jan. 2, 1945-June 2, 1945

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**Battle Honours:** English Channel and North Sea 1943-44, Baltic 1944, Fortress Europe 1943-1944, France and Germany 1944-45, Biscay Ports 1943-44, Ruhr 1943-45, Berlin 1943-1944, Normandy 1944, German Ports 1943-45, Biscay 1943-44 Rhine.

The squadron was finally disbanded for good on Jun. 1, 1961 with the cancellation of the Avro Arrow Program.

### 429 (Bison) Squadron RCAF



The squadron was formed at East Moor on Nov. 7, 1942 as a bomber unit within the RAF's No 4 Group, but in April 1943 it was transferred to the recently created No 6 (RCAF) Group.

Equipped with Wellingtons, the squadron moved to its new home at Leeming on Aug. 11, 1943 and the following month began to re-equip with Halifax IIs. These were replaced by Mk Vs in November and Mk IIIs in March 1944. Operations began on Jan. 26/27, 1943 when 10 aircraft set out for Lorient, with six bombing the primary, three aborting and one failing to return.

In March 1945, Lancasters replaced the Halifaxes and it was on this type that the squadron carried out its last bombing operation on Apr. 25, against Wangerooge. In August the squadron was transferred to No 1 Group RAF, joining *Operation Dodge*, the repatriation of troops from Italy, a task it continued until disbanding on May 31, 1946.

Commanding Officers of 429 Squadron while attached to 6 Group were:

W/C	J. Owen	April 1, 1943-May 31, 1943
W/C	J. Savard	June 1, 1943-June 23, 1943 (KIA)
W/C	J. Piddington	June 28, 1943-July 27, 1943 (KIA)
W/C	J. Pattison	July 30, 1943-March 2, 1944
W/C	A. Avant	May 1, 1944-Oct.10, 1944
W/C	R. Bolduc	Oct. 11, 1944-April 9, 1945
W/C	E. Evans	Oct. 9, 1945-May 31, 1945

**Battle Honours:** English Channel and North Sea 1943-1945, Baltic 1943-1945, Fortress Europe 1943-1944, France and Germany 1944-1945, Biscay Ports 1943-1944, Ruhr 1943-1944, Berlin 1943-1944, German Ports 1943-1945, Normandy 1944, Biscay 1943-1944.

Today 429 is a Tactical Transport Squadron based at CFB Trenton.

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### 431 (Iroquois) Squadron RCAF



Formed at Burn, North Yorkshire, on Nov. 11, 1942, as a bomber unit within No 4 Group RAF, in July 1943 it was transferred to the recently created No 6 (RCAF) Group.

At that time it moved to Tholthorpe near York and in December to Croft in County Durham, where it remained until the end of the war. Equipped with Wellingtons initially, it received Halifax Vs when it moved to Tholthorpe and these were replaced by Mk IIIs in March 1944.

The squadron's first operation was flown on the night of Mar. 5/6, 1943, to lay mines in the vicinity of the Frisian Islands. In October 1944, No. 431 converted to Canadian-built Lancaster Xs and it was with this type that it carried out its last bombing mission on Apr. 25, 1945, against gun emplacements on the island of Wangerooge. It returned to Canada in June 1945 and disbanded on Sep. 5, 1945.

Commanding Officers of 431 Squadron while attached to 6 Group were:

W/C	J. Coverdale	Dec. 1, 1942-June 21, 1943 (KIA)
W/C	W. Newson	June 26, 1943-May 10, 1944
W/C	H. Dow	May 14, 1944-July 25, 1944 (POW)
W/C	E. Mitchell	July 27, 1944-Jan. 10, 1945
W/C	R. Davenport	Jan. 14, 1945-March 11, 1945 (KIA)
W/C	W. McKinnon	March 18, 1945-June 15, 1945

**Battle Honours:** English Channel and North Sea 1943-44, Baltic 1943-44, Fortress Europe 1943-44, Rhine, France and Germany 1944-45, Biscay Ports 1943-44, Ruhr 1943-45, Berlin 1943-44, German Ports 1943-45, Normandy 1944, Biscay 1943-44.

Today the Squadron makes up the Canadian Forces Aerobatics Team, the Snowbirds.

### 432 (Leaside<sup>1</sup>) Squadron, RCAF



This squadron was first formed at Skipton-on-Swale in May 1943, as part of No. 6 (RCAF) Group. The unit was equipped with Wellington X bombers.

The squadron deployed to RAF East Moor in mid-September, equipping with Lancaster IIs in October. In February 1944 it was re-equipped with Halifax IIIs, upgrading these to Halifax VIIs in July.

As part of a Royal Canadian Air Force public relations plan, the town of Leaside officially "adopted" No. 432 Squadron at its formation, and the squadron took the town's name as its nickname. The sponsorship lasted for

<sup>1</sup> Later changed to 432 (Cougar) Squadron

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the duration of the war.

The squadron was disbanded at East Moor in May, 1945.

Commanding Officers of 432 Squadron while attached to 6 Group were:

W/C	H. Kerby	May 1, 1943-July 29, 1943 (KIA)
W/C	W. McKay	July 30, 1943-May 30, 1944
W/C	J. MacDonald	May 31, 1944-July 25, 1944
W/C	A. Lowe	July 26, 1944-Sept. 28, 1944
W/C	J. MacDonald	Sept. 29, 1944-Jan. 28, 1945
S/L	H. Minhinnick	Jan. 29, 1945-Feb. 27, 1945
W/C	K. France	Feb. 28, 1945-May 15, 1945

**Battle Honours:** English Channel and North Sea 1943, Fortress Europe 1944-45, France and Germany 1944-45, Biscay Ports 1944, Ruhr 1943-45, Berlin 1943-44, German Ports 1943-45, Normandy 1944, Rhine, Biscay 1943.

On Oct. 1, 1954, it was reformed as a fighter squadron at CFB Bagotville flying the Canadian designed Avro CF-100.<sup>2</sup> The squadron was again disbanded on Oct. 15, 1961.

### 433 (Porcupine) Squadron RCAF



Formed at Skipton on Swale on Sep. 25, 1943 as a bomber unit within No 6 (RCAF) Group, 433 Squadron was the last Canadian bomber unit to be formed in Britain.

The squadron operated Halifax IIIs from the start, although these did not begin to arrive until November and it was January 1944 before the squadron carried its first operation, a mine-laying mission to the Frisian Islands.

In January 1945 the squadron converted to Lancasters and these were used until the end of the war, the bombing operation being against Wangerooge on Apr. 25, 1945. Along with other units it then began the repatriation of POWs from the continent and in August was transferred to No 1 Group RAF in order to continue this work. No. 433 then joined *Operation Dodge*, the repatriation of troops from Italy, until disbanding at Skipton on Swale on Oct. 15, 1945.

Commanding Officers of 433 Squadron while attached to 6 Group were:

W/C	C. Sinton	Nov. 9, 1943-May 30, 1944
W/C	A. Lewington	May 31, 1944-Nov. 5, 1944

<sup>2</sup> The author's father commanded this squadron from 1958-1960.

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W/C G. Tambling Nov. 6, 1944-Aug. 1, 1945

**Battle Honours:** English Channel and North Sea 1944-45, Baltic 1944-45, Fortress Europe 1944, France and Germany 1944-45, Biscay Ports 1944, Ruhr 1944-45, Berlin 1944, German Ports 1944-45, Normandy 1944, Rhine, Biscay 1944.

### 434 (Bluenose) Squadron RCAF



The unit was first formed at Tholthorpe on Jun. 13, 1943, flying the Handley Page Halifax Mk V. On Aug. 13, 1943, it flew its first operational sortie, a bombing raid across the Alps to Milan, Italy. In May 1944 the unit received Halifax Mk IIIs to replace their Mk Vs. The squadron was adopted by the Rotary Club of Halifax, N.S., and to show its connection to the city took the nickname "Bluenose Squadron", as a tribute to the historic Maritimes schooner of that name.

The squadron moved to Croft in December 1943 and re-equipped with Avro Lancaster Mk Is and Mk Xs in December 1944. After VE Day the squadron was earmarked for service in the war against Japan, but was never deployed to the Far East. The unit was disbanded at Dartmouth, N.S., on Sep. 5, 1945.

During World War Two the unit flew 198 missions, including 179 bombing, 17 mine laying, one diversionary and one sea search. This record was made up of a total of 2,582 individual aircraft sorties, including 45 prisoner of war airlift sorties. They flew 14,622 operational flying hours and dropped 10,358 tons of bombs plus 225 mines. No. 434 accounted for seven enemy aircraft destroyed along with two probable and four damaged.

The squadron suffered 75 aircraft lost, with 484 aircrew operational casualties including 34 killed, 313 presumed dead, 121 made prisoners and 16 who evaded capture and escaped. The non-operational casualty total was eight killed, plus one member who died of natural causes. Unit personnel received six bars to the Distinguished Flying Cross, 108 DFCs, six Distinguished Flying Medals, one British Empire Medal and seven Mentions in Dispatches.

Commanding Officers of 434 Squadron while attached to 6 Group were:

W/C	C. Harris	June 15, 1943-Feb 6, 1944
W/C	C. Bartlett	Feb. 7, 1944-June 12, 1944 (KIA)
W/C	F. Watkins	June 13, 1944-Aug. 29, 1944
W/C	A. Blackburn	Aug. 30, 1944-April 7, 1945
W/C	J. Mulvihill	April 8, 1945-Sept. 5, 1945

**Battle Honours:** English Channel; North Sea 1943-44; Baltic 1943-44; Fortress Europe 1943-44; France and Germany 1944-45; Biscay Ports 1944; Ruhr 1943-45; Berlin 1943-44; German Ports 1944-45; Normandy 1944; The Rhine.

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After several revivals, the squadron was finally disbanded in May 2000.

### **OPERATIONAL AIRCRAFT OF 6 (RCAF) GROUP**

This section provides an overview of the types and capabilities of the principal models of aircraft used by 6 (RCAF) Group, without going into the many variants involved.

#### **Vickers Wellington**



#### Specifications: Mk III

Manufacturer: Vickers-Armstrong

Crew: Crew of eight

Number Built: 11,462 (incl. 181 Mk I, 1887 Mk Ia, 2,685 Mk Ic, 401 Mk II, 1,519 Mk III, 220 Mk IV, 394 Mk VIII, 3,803 Mk X, 180 Mk XI, 884 Mk XIII, 841 Mk XIV)

Power Plant: Two 1,425 hp Bristol Hercules III or XI Engine

Performance: Max Speed: 255 mph (411 km/h)  
Service Ceiling: 18,000 ft (5,486 m) Range: 1,470 mi (2,366 km)

Weights: Empty: 22,000 lb (8,459 kg) Max T/O: 29,500 lb (13,381 kg)

Dimensions: Span: 86 ft 2 in ( 26.26 m) Length: 64 ft 7 in (19.69 m)  
Height: 17 ft 6 in (5.35 m) Wing Area: 840 sq ft (78.04 sq m)

Armament: 2 x 0.303-in (7.7-mm) machine guns in nose turret, 2 x 0.303-in (7.7-mm) machine guns in tail turret, 2 x 0.303-in (7.7-mm) machine guns in beam positions plus up to 4,500 lb (2,041 kg) of bombs.

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### **Handley Page Halifax**



#### Specifications: Mk III

- Crew:** A crew of seven was normally carried, consisting of a Pilot, Co-Pilot/Flight Engineer, Navigator, Radio/Wireless Operator and three Gunners.
- Powerplant:** Four 1,675 hp (1250 kW) Bristol Hercules XVI 14-cylinder sleeve-valve double-row air-cooled radial engines
- Performance:** Maximum speed 282 mph (454 km/h) at 13,500 ft (4115 m); long range cruising speed of 215 mph (346 km/h) at 20,000 ft (6095 m); service ceiling 24,000 ft (7315 m); initial rate of climb 751 ft (229 m) per minute.
- Range:** 1,030 miles (1658 km) on internal fuel with maximum bombload of 14,500 lbs (6576 kg) or 1,985 miles (3196 km) with a main fuselage bomb bay load of 13,500 lbs (6122 kg) with extra fuel carried in the wing cells.
- Weights:** Empty (clean) 38,240 lbs (17345 kg), maximum take-off weight of 65,000 lbs (29484 kg). Wing loading 51 lbs/sq ft (248.8 kg/sq m); power loading 12.7 lbs/hp (5.76 kg/hp).
- Dimensions:** Span 104 ft 2 in (31.75 m); length 71 ft 7 in (21.82 m); height 20 ft 9 in (6.32 m); wing area 1,275.0 sq ft (118.45 sq m).
- Armament:** A total of nine 7.7 mm (0.303 in) machine-guns.
- Ordnance:** A maximum of 14,500 lbs (6576 kg) of disposable ordnance in main fuselage and wing cells.



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### Avro Lancaster



#### Specifications: Mk III

- Crew:** A crew of seven consisting of the Pilot, Flight Engineer, Observer/Nose Gunner/Bomb-aimer, Navigator, Radio/Wireless Operator, Mid-Upper Gunner, and Tail Gunner.
- Powerplant:** Four American-built Packard Merlin 28 Vee 12-cylinder liquid-cooled inline engines each rated at 1,300 hp (970 kW) for take-off, or four American-built Packard Merlin 38 (Merlin 22) Vee 12-cylinder liquid-cooled inline engines each rated at 1,390 hp (1037 kW) for take-off.
- Performance:** Maximum speed 287 mph (462 km/h) at 11,500 ft (3505 m), 275 mph (443 km/h) at 15,000 ft (4572 m), 260 mph (419 km/h) at 19,400 ft (5913 m); cruising speed 234 mph (377 km/h) at 21,000 ft (6401 m), 200 mph (322 km/h) at 15,000 ft (4572 m); stalling speed (clean) 95 mph (153 km/h) at 60,000 lbs (27211 kg); normal service ceiling 23,000 ft (7010 m), nominal service ceiling 24,500 ft (7468 m); absolute service ceiling 24,671 ft (7500 m); climb to 20,000 ft (6096 m) in 41 minutes and 40 seconds; initial rate of climb 250 ft (76 m) per minute with full bombload.
- Range:** 2,530 miles (4072 km) with a bombload of 7,000 lbs (1795 kg); 1,730 miles (2786 km) with a bombload of 12,000 lbs (5442 kg); 1,550 miles with a bombload of 22,000 lbs (9977 kg).
- Weights:** Empty (clean) 39,600 lbs (16740 kg), empty (equipped) 53,300 lbs (24040 kg) with a maximum take-off weight of 65,000 lbs (29480 kg). The B.Mk I Special had a maximum take-off weight of 70,000 lbs (31751 kg) while carrying a 22,000 lbs (9980 kg) Grand Slam bomb. Wing loading 52.7 lbs/sq ft (258 kg/sq m); power loading 13.3 lbs/hp (6.35 kg/hp).
- Dimensions:** Span 102 ft 0 in (31.09 m); length 69 ft 6 in (21.18 m); height 20 ft 6 in (6.25 m); wing area 1,297.0 sq ft (120.49 sq m); tailplane area: 237.0 sq.ft

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- (22.0 sq m); tail fin and rudder area: 111.40 sq ft (10.35 sq m); aileron span 17 ft 3 in (5.3 m).
- Armament: A total of ten 7.7 mm (0.303 in) Browning machine-guns in a nose, mid-upper, tail and ventral position.
- Ordnance: Up to 8,000 lbs (3629 kg) of bombs carried in a 33 ft (10.0 m) long under fuselage internal bomb bay.

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### **Captain (N) (Ret'd) M. Braham, CD**



Mike Braham is a graduate of the Royal Military College (1965) and a former naval officer and senior official with DND. He has an abiding interest in military history.