

FLIGHT-WATCH

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THE BRITISH COLUMBIA AVIATION MUSEUM – HONORING CANADIAN AVIATION HERITAGE

I. The Setting

Ensnconced among the trees and mountains on the island of Vancouver in the province of British Columbia is the British Columbia Aviation Museum. The grounds are neat and manicured. The museum is located adjacent to a narrow road which winds along the southern perimeter of Victoria International Airport (YYJ).

A flying club located on the airport traces its heritage to the pilots who returned from the First World War. The wall of the flying club is adorned with pictures of aircraft flown by pilots from British Columbia. A Canadian pilot viewing this display is inevitably impressed with the lineage of Canadian aviation heritage.

Besides the close proximity of the museum and the flying club, it is worth mentioning a building dedicated to cadets is positioned between the museum and the flying club. Young men and women viewing aviation as a profession or avocation have at their disposal resources to kindle and encourage ambitions of flight

II. The Facility

Upon arriving at the museum, I was welcomed by Bill and Morris, two of the many volunteers who serve the museum. There are three hangars. Bob, my guide, took me for a tour of the hangars. The first hangar is a display hangar that houses most of the aircraft and the displays. The second hangar is the restoration facility with aircraft in various stages of repair and restoration. The third hangar is home to a rare Vickers Viscount, an A-26 Invader, a Beech 18, an Auster AOP6 and a Lincoln Sport homebuilt biplane.

III. Notable Aircraft

A Canadian built version of the Bristol Blenheim Mk. IV bomber, the Bristol Bolingbroke Mk. IV is a twin-engine attack aircraft with machine guns nestled in the wings on a gunsight directly above the instrument panel. Although not as large as a B-25 Mitchell, it is nevertheless an imposing aircraft. A composite of two aircraft, the wings for their

specimen were obtained from a local farmer while the fuselage was obtained elsewhere.

The Avro Anson Mk. II on display appeared in the bright yellow colors of a training aircraft. Equipped with wooden, fixed pitch propellers, one is left to wonder if the aircraft could maintain altitude on a single engine in the absence of the ability to feather a propeller.

The Noorduyt Norseman, a high wing radial engine aircraft, served for years as a work horse transporting goods and persons throughout Canada. Although displayed on wheels, a set of skis was positioned adjacent the aircraft to remind the viewer of its operation on that configuration.

The Vickers Viscount is a four engine turbo-prop passenger aircraft. Powered by four Rolls Royce engines, the aircraft's cockpit has fairly basic instrumentation with the number one navigation radio driving a glideslope and localizer display while the number two featured a radio-magnetic indicator (RMI). The Viscount features large oval-shaped windows and the entrance door has a pronounced oval shape as well. While the cockpit radio package appears dated by modern standards (no glass cockpit or GPS displays) externally, it appears to be a sleek aircraft.

The Canadair T-33 Silver Star (a license built Lockheed T-33) appears in polished aluminum in bright Canadian colors and is an asset to the display. Adjacent to the T-33 is a display depicting the men who have led the Canadian Snowbirds, Canada's precision flight team.

IV. The Memorial Room

The museum pays tribute to airmen who served in the First and Second World Wars. Helmets, goggles, flight jackets and uniforms are on display in the Memorial Room along with model aircraft and a diorama depicting the airfield as it appeared during the Second World War.

In addition to the Memorial Room and the collection of artifacts it houses, the museum has on display many other artifacts such as a great number of vintage aircraft propellers, a Rolls Royce Merlin V-1650 engine, a Martin-Baker ejection seat and many other interesting items.

V.
Summary

If your travels lead you to Vancouver Island and the town of Sidney, a visit to the museum provides the opportunity to view several rare aircraft and to develop an appreciation for the aviation heritage of Canada.



Front Entrance of the British Columbia Aviation Museum



Bristol Blenheim Mk. IV



Auster AOP6



Avro Anson Mk. II



Noorduyn Norseman