

R.A.F. MV Flight Lieutenant Douglas Barber

Douglas Barber served with RAF bomber command squadrons from 1939 to 1945. After 74 operations he was awarded the Soviet Medal for Valour 21 March 1944. His investiture ceremony was held at the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, 5 December 1944. He and his family lived in the Nanton area from 1953 to 1961. He worked for Canadian Pacific Air Lines helping repair and maintain planes for the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan at nearby stations.



THE “KIT” CAME BACK

LOST RAZOR RETURNS TO THE BARBER FAMILY AFTER 70 YEARS

by C. B. Sikstrom

During 2020, Fin Kearns noticed a small bright metal box in Glenn Whaling’s home near Millarville. It had been found, by his son Brad, in a Canmore garage 25 years earlier.

The box is a Rolls razor kit. It is nickel-plated with a three-row Greek column key design on two covers for the honing stone and strop. A *Whetter* trademark is impressed into the metal near the end of the case.

This kit was a little unusual because it is engraved “23 London St. Brighton. Sussex.” on one edge and “D. Barber. 613054. R.A.F.” on the other. Fin became curious and suggested Googling the name and number. That is how I was tracked down on an internet web site for R.A.F. researchers.



The Rolls razor kit of MV Flt. Lt. Douglas Barber

Fin Kearns emailed photos of the kit to me in late 2020. He became my liaison with Brad and Glenn Whaling who are military history buffs and supporters of the Bomber Command Museum of Canada. We exchanged stories.

The story of the razor is a bit fabulous. An electrician named Stan helped renovate the Nanton General Store after World War II. He and another R.C.A.F. wounded veteran met in England. They started a business together named Vets' Electric in Nanton. Stan's father was the owner of the General Store. The counters and bins were of high-quality custom-made construction. Stan could not see them destroyed so he took them to his garage in Canmore. Brad went to school there and Stan put him up during school years. Brad found the kit and that is how it got to his father's home near Millarville.

I confirmed that the “kit” engravings were Douglas Barber's and that he was born in Brighton and served as an R.A.F. officer. The kit is an Imperial Type 2 razor manufactured in 1940: the year Douglas turned 21. Rolls razors were often gifted to sons when they came of age. The engraved number is his officer commission number.



The Rolls razor kit was an ingenious design and commonly gifted to young men when they turned 21. Mister Barber (I always called him that) joined the R.A.F. in 1938 and flew more than 74 operational missions for Bomber Command squadrons, 226, 110 and 180. His various roles were as wireless operator, navigator but mostly as an air gunner on Mitchell B-25 bombers. He also crewed on Fairey Battles, Blenheims, and Lancasters before posting to Transport Command in late 1945. Transport Command involved no operational sorties as he flew post-war flights, to India and Ceylon. He was released from the R.A.F. 10 September 1947.

During his long service he was wounded in France (1940), commended (7 June 1942) for some “emergency” and severely reprimanded (24 January 1944) for some unknown reason. On 21 March 1944 a Soviet Decree was approved for seven RAF fliers to receive the Soviet Medal for Valour. The official announcement was published 11 April 1944 in the London Gazette. After that, Barber was sent to an Air Transport course in Comox, British Columbia, Canada. On his return to England in December, he was honoured to receive his Medal at the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa. The event received national press attention. It was reported to be the first Soviet medal presented in Canada. Even Canada’s National Film Board showed up. There is a two-minute film

clip of the ceremony in WW II Canada Communique No. 16. [Canada Communique No. 16 by - NFB](#)

He met his future wife while training in Canada. She lived in Vancouver. They married in England 1946 and began a family. He and his young wife and two boys left England in November 1951 for Vancouver, British Columbia. Mister Barber worked briefly for Queen Charlotte Airlines. His 1951 British passport describes his occupation as “radio engineer.” Somehow, he began working for Canadian Pacific Air Lines (CPAL). He variously worked in Calgary (1953), Nanton (1954) and Claresholm (1958). A daughter, my wife, was born in 1954 at High River. CPAL was a fledgling airline using Vulcan’s former British Commonwealth Air Training Plan facilities for private purposes. The NATO Aircrew Training program ended, and the station officially closed 25 August, 1958. He moved to Calgary in 1961 and continued to work for CPAL until 1964 when they closed CPA Repair Depot No. 10 at Lincoln Park, Calgary.

The family knew nothing about the missing kit. Somehow it was lost in Nanton before they moved to Calgary. After 70 years, it was found in Canmore and returned to the Barber family as a treasured heirloom. As Glenn said at the handover, “You can’t get any more personal than that...”: a razor that was used to shave your father’s face 80 years ago.



*After 70 years the kit was returned to the family September 2021.
(Brad Whaling left, Cal Sikstrom middle, Glenn Whaling right.)*



*Douglas Barber weds Helen Brandt
Brighton, England 31 July 1946*



*The Barber family immigrated to Canada 23 November 1951
First residence at Sea Island, Vancouver, British Columbia*



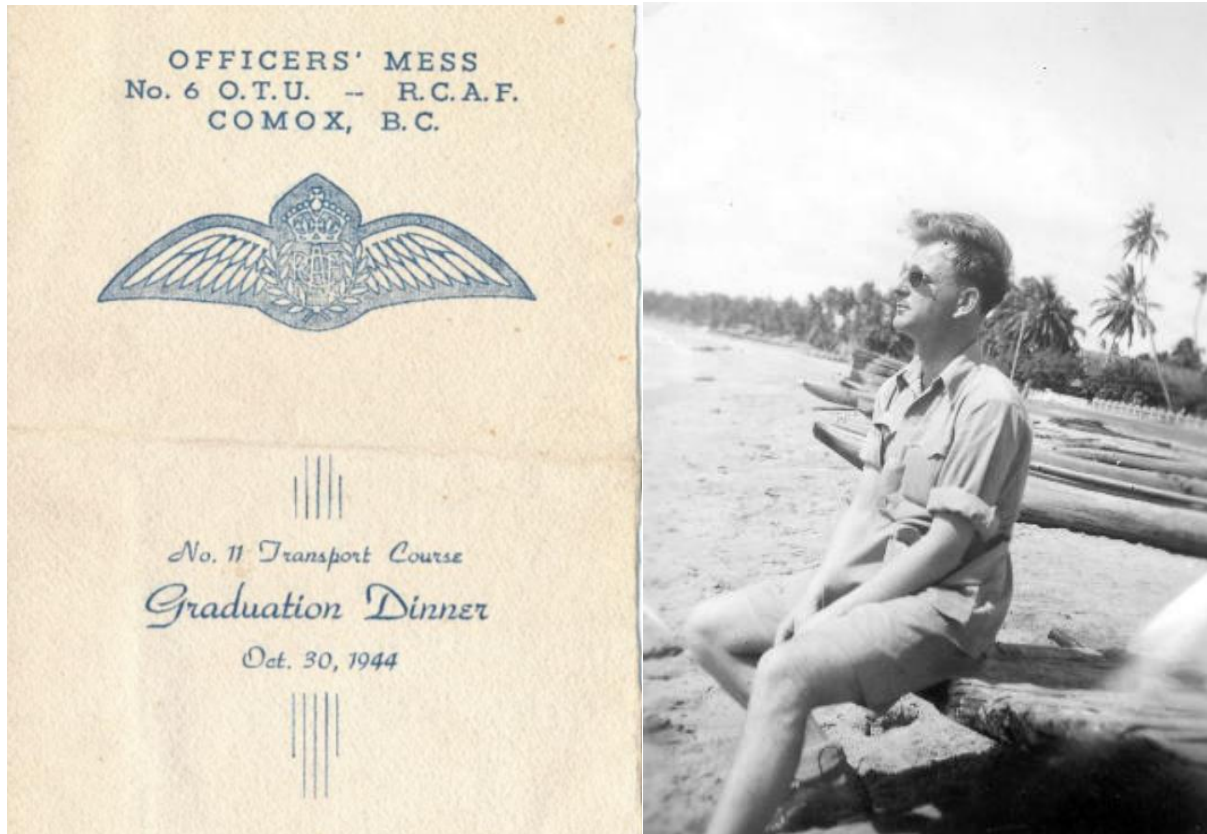
*The growing Barber family
Howard, John and Patricia Barber, Nanton 1957*



A snowy trip to RCAF Vulcan 1955. The former BCATP training station is 28 km east of Nanton.



*Douglas Barber at work. RCAF Vulcan during mid-1950s.
He appears to be repairing a radio.*



32 O.T.U. - R.A.F. was redesignated as No. 6 O.T.U. - R.C.A.F. in 1944. It operated from 1 June 1944 to 31 December 1945 as support for the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan program. Douglas Barber graduated from No. 11 Transport Course before posting to R.A.F. Transport Command in 1945. He regularly flew to India and Ceylon. He served in R.A.F. Transport Command from 1945 to 1947.