

MORANE MAVERICK



2Lt Arthur Gladstone Walwyn
3 Squadron RFC

By Stewart Taylor

After the 1914–1918 war, the number of surviving pilots in Canada who had flown all three Morane products – the Parasol, BB Biplane and ‘Bullet’ on operations with 1 Squadron RFC, 3 Squadron RFC and 60 Squadron RFC could almost be counted on one hand. To be exact, the total in 1920 was six. The author has interviewed half of them. Talk about ‘odd balls’. They were treated like outsiders, real outsiders, as though they were from Mars! So I learned to keep my mouth wired shut, Arthur Gladstone Walwyn straight talked the author in 1965. He and his wife Dorothy would spend their leisure hours playing cribbage and other favourite cards against the team of Mel and Clara Alexander, one of 10 Naval’s Triplane pilots and a hero of sorts. Whenever Collishaw’s ‘Black Flight’ formed the centre of discussion, Mel would often deflect admiration for what the Sopwith Triplane did, or did not do, the lowly place on the WWI totem pole of aircraft types and achievement reserved in many a biased, unknowledgeable mind for the insignificant Morane fraternity much too small in numbers to offer any defence.

An Honour Graduate in Political Science from Victoria College, University of Toronto, the first son, born on 18 February 1898 in the small community of Lucknow, Ontario, to a reverend and his wife, a feisty little Scot, Frances MacLean, would listen for hours to his father, a man in his opinion who had a level most practical head and in step with the ever changing times in Canada’s political landscape and able to voice arguments galore in support of either the Wigs or Tories. But whatever party he supported, WWI changed all that for young Arthur, as it would do for so many of his university chums. Come 16 March 1916, he had earned a commission in the 20th Halton Rifles, a militia unit based out of Camp Borden. By mid-1916, Arthur wore the uniform that represented the 216th Battalion, another one raised in Toronto, but would not reach sufficient strength to be sent overseas until April 1917, too long a wait for Arthur. He and a school chum, Allan McNab Donovan, were both all a twitter over the RFC’s Innes Ker 1916 recruiting campaign in Canada. They obtained an application, actually read the seven pages of fine print as it applied to the special entry in Canada for officers and men for the Royal Flying Corps Military

Wing, and following a hasty medical in Toronto were accepted as candidates and were booked to sail for Saint John, New Brunswick on 8 December 1916 aboard the *Missanabie*.

Allan Donovan required a minor operation until the Innes Ker recruiting officer allowed him to join Arthur. The son of a rough and tumble Toronto barrister, Donovan had been forced into an education that included university schools and UCC from September 1912 to June 1914. Far from an inspired academic the restless Donovan, aimless about his own future, had lived on his parents’ handouts and this Arthur could see was going to be a future problem should they train together once in the RFC. He would be right.

You must look after my son! These were the words, issued by Donovan’s father to Arthur Walwyn, which burned right into his brain, adding just enough extra responsibility to, for a time, act as a mental drag.

The *Missanabie* sailed a day late, took ten days to make the convoyed crossing, reached Liverpool on 19 December 1916, London on 20 December and on New Year’s Day, Donovan and Walwyn were students at Oxford. Outside both rain and mist combined to make the weather’s inhospitable drabness quite a contrast to the lectures on the Renault engine and bombs, maybe, a little more appealing. But eleven straight days of virtual repetition – enough already. Working on

maps and photography, mending canvas on actual aircraft for a couple of days was much more fun. 22 January 1917 was confined to the rigging shed and 7 February was when the results of Oxford’s aviation schooling were posted, Arthur wrote home: I passed, worth struggling for. Posted to Castle Bromwich. Those five weeks at Oxford’s Christchurch College – the course in theory more demanding than Walwyn originally contemplated, really set him up for the flying that was to come at 5 RS, Castle Bromwich. They hadn’t yet had their first flight on 9 February 1917 when Donovan started to hint that he needed extra money for whatever reason. His constant requests were a way of life.

At Castle Bromwich, where Capt H.F. Fisher used as a primary trainer alternative to the much more numerous Maurice Farman Shorthorns, 5RS retained a few Grahame White Type XV’s as ‘ab initio’ show pieces and they were not very welcome. Walwyn, as

Arthur Walwyn in flying clothing, 1918, when he was instructing at 27 TDS, Crail. :A.G.Walwyn via S.K.T

