

# The Closest of Friends



by Stewart K. Taylor

Captain W.G. 'Dozey' Claxton DSO DFC

Captain F.R.G. 'Freddy' McCall DSO MC\* DFC MiD

*Roughly 138 Canadians were considered to have achieved 'ace' status in World War One. Here is a short look at the fifth and sixth in that Canadian 'Hit Parade'.*

**W**HEN IT CAME TO PERSONAL GROOMING, William Gordon Claxton exasperated his senior officers in the RFC and RAF with his own lax brand of dress code. This 18 year old, born on 1 June 1899 in Ogilvie, Manitoba and educated at Trinity School, Port Hope, Ontario, had just matriculated and was living with his widowed mother and her daughter in Toronto at the time of his enlistment. A mere schoolboy, and still under age, he initially attempted to join the RNAS. Later, he tried the RFC, the moment they set up a training programme in Canada. At first he was refused enlistment until he reached his 18 birthday.

His Canadian initial flight training was completed when he graduated on 21 September 1917 and he sailed to England aboard the *Megantic* during the following month. Claxton

*A sombre looking RFC AM3 Cadet W.G. Claxton the day he graduated from Ground School, Course No 8, on 12 July 17 at the University of Toronto, Eight days later he began actual flying instruction at 84 CTS, Deseronto, Ontario.*

*:Public Archives of Canada*



already had the reputation as a teenage oddball, paying little or no heed to anything remotely regarded as proper protocol; often refusing to button his tunic or fly. On board ship he was the only one of the forty-nine RFC/Canada graduates who did not wear his 'wings', feeling he had no justifiable reason to do so until he had completed all of his pilot training. 43-plus solo hours on a JN-4 was hardly worthy – in his estimation – of such recognition.



*Always the 'oddball', AM3 Cadet Claxton, arms behind his back second from left front rows stands out not only in size but by his different 'stand at ease' posture in this September 17 photo taken at the SAG (School of Aerial Gunnery) Camp Borden, Ontario.*

*J.J. Lanctot via S. K Taylor*

*These six Canadian RFC cadets had only just begun flight instruction at 82 CTS, Camp Borden, Ontario during the first week of August 1917 when snapped while sitting on the stepped entrance of the Officer's Headquarters. Still wearing his goggles after a morning flight in JN-4A C732 Claxton, second row on the left – nearly always the diffident – squints against the afternoon sun.*

*:C.T. Aulph via S.K. Taylor*

