



The Gatineau Gliding Club (GGC) holds the distinction of being in continuous operation longer than any other gliding club in Canada, as well as being one of the largest in the country. Its magnificently equipped gliding airfield, Pendleton Aerodrome, is situated just north of the hamlet of Pendleton, Ontario, between the villages of Bourget and Plantagenet, and 47 km. east of Ottawa's Peace Tower.

Today, we might wonder at the club's connection to the Gatineau, since it is located in the province of Ontario, many kilometres to the east and south of Quebec's Gatineau Hills. The answer is in the annals of the earliest days of gliding in Canada, when a group of aeronautical engineers and scientists at the National Research Council (NRC) were engaged in the design and modification of aircraft, as part of the war effort during World War II.

In the spring of 1942, this small and enthusiastic group of NRC employees decided to establish a gliding club as a recreational activity. Accordingly, the would-be glider pilots set out to find appropriate terrain for an airfield, and training and equipment to carry out their plan.

The selection of a site for a glider airfield is dictated very much by topographical considerations. The group was particularly interested in a land feature, the Eardley Escarpment, situated in the province of Quebec, across the Ottawa River. The escarpment rises almost 1100 feet in height above the adjacent flat lands of the ancient Champlain Sea, and its sharp relief appeared to offer excellent possibilities for both slope soaring and thermal soaring.

With ideal conditions, the dynamic lift created by an escarpment should allow soaring to an altitude two to three times the height of the hill ¹. In this location it could mean achieving altitudes of 2200 to 3300 feet above the Ottawa River Valley. The potential for thermal currents was another exciting feature of the site. During the heat of the day, the warming of numerous sunward facing rock faces such as those on King Mountain could generate ascending thermal currents. These could take a glider even further up, sometimes to the cumulus cloud base, possibly at 6000 to 9000 feet. The power of these sources of lift is readily observable today, as raptors in this location may often be seen effortlessly soaring up on thermals high over the escarpment, with virtually no perceptible movement of their wings.

¹ Derek Piggott, *Gliding A Handbook on Soaring Flight*, (A and C. Black, London 1958),153

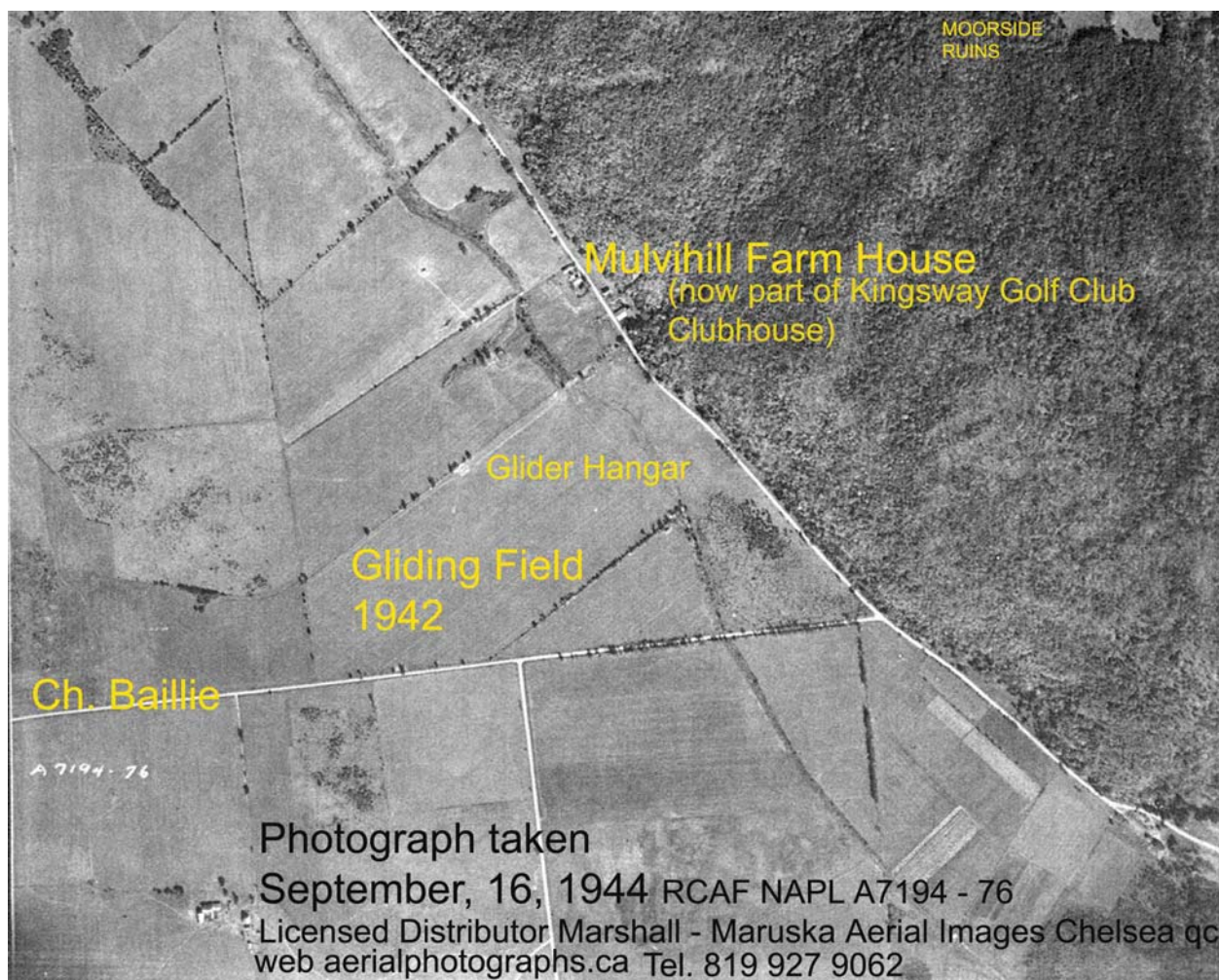
Another advantage of the Eardley location was the flat farmland at the foot of the escarpment, which provided space for launching. For winch launching, the glider was attached to a long cable, which was then reeled in to set the plane rolling. For auto towing, a long wire—some clubs used piano wire—was fixed to an automobile bumper, and the car driven forward, pulling the glider. As the towed glider accelerates it lifts off the ground and flies briefly level until a safe climbing speed, approximately 35 – 45 mph, is attained. At this point the pilot gradually pulls the control stick back and the glider assumes a very steep (and quite dramatic) angle of climb. When the Pilot reaches an altitude of 700 to 1000 feet (depending on the length of the wire or cable), he pulls a release handle to free the glider from the cable or wire and immediately sets out on a search for lift. The open agricultural fields below offer plenty of room for a safe landing if the pilot happens to miss catching an updraft.

One of the GCG's founders, Bill Campbell, gave an illustrated talk in 1992 to mark the club's 50th anniversary, and in it he recounted how he and his colleague John Orr mounted a search for a suitable location.² The two men set out by car on a Saturday afternoon after work in the spring of 1942.³ As they drove along Mountain Road (chemin de la Montagne), in what is now the Aylmer section of the city of Gatineau, they spotted exactly what they needed—a large hayfield with few obstructions, abutting the Eardley Escarpment. Its location, at the intersection of Mountain and Baillee roads, was immediately below the Mackenzie King Estate's "Moorside." They knocked at the door of the Mulvihill farmhouse and one of the owners (likely either Basil or Phillip Mulvihill) agreed to let them use the field, provided they would first help with bringing in the hay.⁴

² James Laing *GGC 50th Anniversary 1943 – 1992 Video production*, Maspie Videography, Ottawa ON

³ During wartime they worked 5½ days a week, including 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. on Saturdays.

⁴ Ownership of the Mulvill property is described in a 1963 letter written by Phillip Mulvihill framed and mounted on the wall of the Kingsway Park Golf Club's Clubhouse.

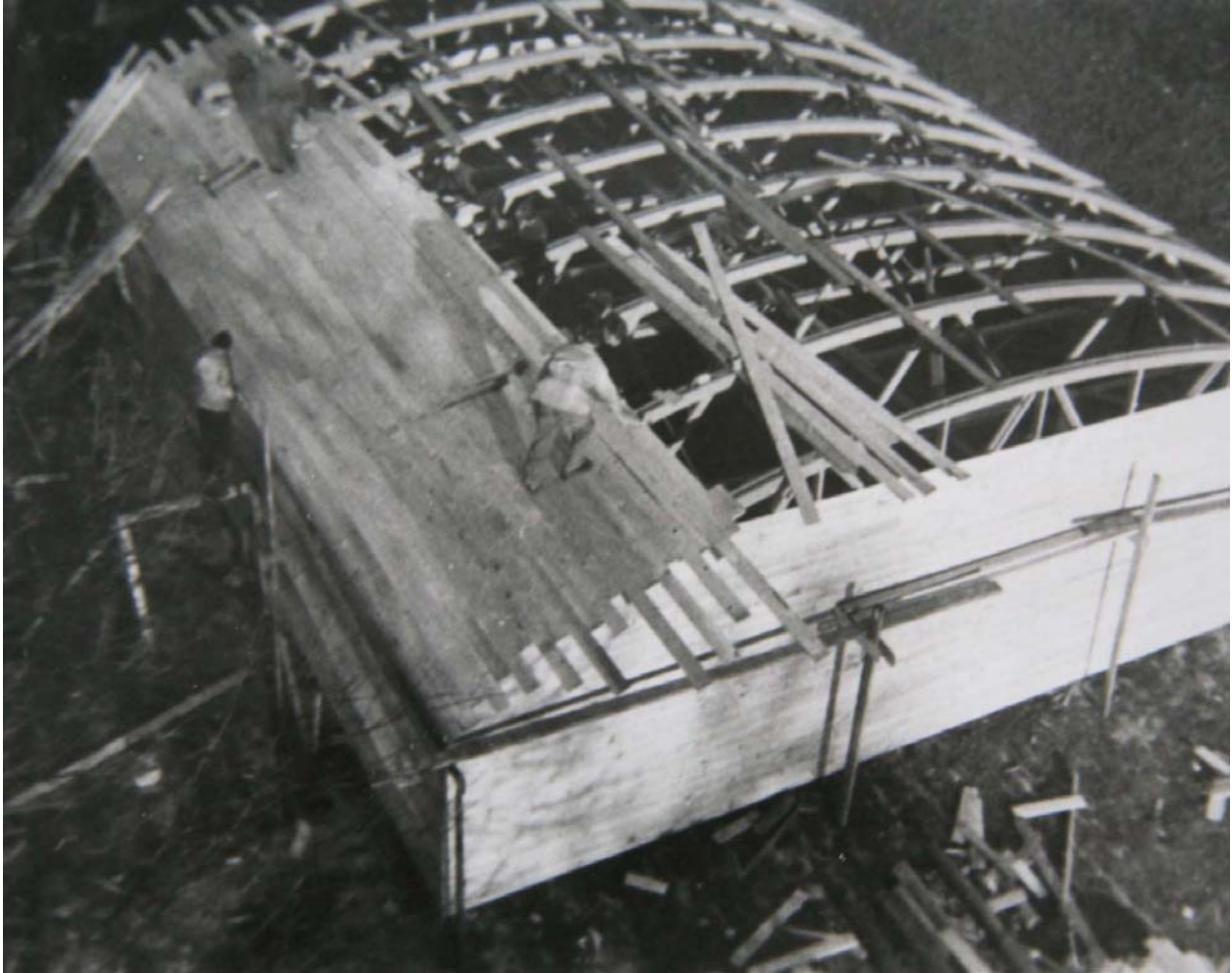


Vertical air photo of Mulvihill Glider Field dated 1944

A gliding instructor was another high priority for the club. As the group discussed ways to search for one, John Orr recalled a chance meeting earlier that year aboard a cattle boat in mid-Atlantic. Orr was returning to Canada from England when he met a McGill University student, Jim Simpson, who had learned to fly gliders in England and had gained sufficient experience there to become a qualified instructor. They decided to contact Simpson, and were thrilled to learn that his plans had changed, and he intended to transfer from McGill to work at the NRC. Not only was he coming to Ottawa, but he thought of starting a gliding club once he arrived. He was easily persuaded by Campbell to become the first Chief Gliding Instructor of the GGC.

Jim Simpson could also suggest a source for gliders and launching equipment which the club would need—he knew that at McGill University, tucked away in storage, were several gliders and a winch for launching them. They quickly negotiated an agreement with McGill and took possession of the equipment.

A volunteer crew constructed a rather rudimentary hangar to protect their gliders from the elements, but high winds destroyed it the next year. Two members of the group, Arthur Norman “Chem” Le Cheminant and Richard D. Hiscocks then designed a substantial replacement which members could erect. One feature of the plan involved a system to quickly produce trusses with a jig. Club members located used lumber for it, as building materials were in scarce supply during war time. The new building was in place by 1944.



Hangar photo

The most significant flight on the Eardley Escarpment was a 5½-hour duration flight, on August 1, 1948, by André Ovila “Shorty” Boudreault, an aero-engine engineer with the NRC. With this flight, he became the first Canadian to receive the Silver C Soaring Badge, awarded by the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI) located in Paris France⁵.

⁵ Several years ago the FAI relocated to Lausanne Switzerland

The Silver C required completion of three tasks, fully documented and certified by an Official Observer. Boudreault's duration flight, which exceeded the requirement of more than five hours, was his last hurdle for the badge. Earlier that summer he had completed a climb above release point of 1000 metres, and a cross-country flight of more than 50 kilometres, carrying a barograph⁶ to document the gain of height and distance tasks. The Official Observer sealed the barograph prior to the flight, collected it afterwards, and recorded the event.

During his duration flight, Shorty needed to maintain a sharp lookout for the rugged, rocky Precambrian terrain passing a short distance away from his wingtip as he soared up and down the ridge in turbulent air. Some accounts of this flight mention that he was susceptible to airsickness, and completed the latter portion of the flight while dealing with the sticky task of disposing of both his breakfast and lunch without the aid of a "sick sac."

The glider used for this historic duration flight was a Grunau Baby glider. Designed in Germany in the 1920s, this type of glider had a primitive open cockpit. It was with gliders like the Grunau Baby that the fledgling Luftwaffe had sidestepped provisions of the post-World War I Versailles

⁶ A barograph is a precision instrument that continuously records the gliders altitude on a rotating drum.

Treaty of 1919, which had been intended to prevent Germany from developing an air force.⁷



Grunau Baby Glider landing

Four years after earning his Silver C, Boudreault was a member of the Canadian team competing in the 1952 World Soaring Championships held that year at Cuatro Vientos Airport near Madrid, Spain. During that competition, he established a Canadian goal distance record by flying 123.9 kilometres in a Weihe glider. The Goal is pre-determined for the pilots by the contest officials prior to takeoff and to qualify for the goal flight they must land their gliders in the shortest possible time within 1000 metres of the goal.

In 1948, some of the GGC members, together with members from other gliding clubs, established the Soaring Association of Canada (SAC), which the FAI designated to represent and administer Canadian soaring interests. In later years, many members of the GGC received FAI awards for distance, altitude, and duration flights. Club members also competed successfully in National and International soaring competitions.

⁷ Margaret MacMillan , *PARIS 1919*, (New York: Random House, 2002) 481

Shorty Boudreault was honoured at the Club's 50th Anniversary in 1992, when the large World War II RCAF hangar was named the "Boudreault Hangar." A plaque at its entrance commemorates his contributions to the Club.

After the end of World War II, the club began to use Carp Airport, which had facilities suitable for aero tow. They used Carp during the spring and summer for several years, but returned to the Eardley Escarpment to experiment with winter gliding, also using aero tow. The site for these winter operations was just 2 kilometres northwest of the Mulvihill Field—the frozen surface of Beamish Lake (Lac Montagne), in the middle of what is now the Hollow Glen sector of Chelsea. They modified their single-seat Olympia and two-seater Pratt Reid gliders by fixing a substantial ski underneath each glider's skid. Their tow aircraft for launching was a CF- EMT, fitted with wide wooden skis. The CF-EMT was a DH 82C Tiger Moth biplane trainer built by de Havilland Aircraft, and one of many surplus aircraft available at little cost after the end of the war.

Beamish Lake allowed for a takeoff run of approximately 4000 feet (1220 metres). All of this distance was sometimes necessary, since the 140-horsepower Tiger Moth had to struggle to pull the heavy Pratt Reid glider up to takeoff speed. This was particularly challenging when the lake surface was soft and slushy



Photo of Tiger Moth and Pratt Reid on Beamish Lake

The Club began to rent Pendleton Aerodrome in 1950. Pendleton was originally built as an emergency field in the late 1930s, part of a cross-Canada network of landing fields intended to accommodate emergencies encountered by Trans-Canada Airline (TCA) aircraft.⁸

Initially it was little more than a levelled field, with a powerful electric light beacon mounted on a tower flashing its identifying letters in morse code to show the field's location at night. The outbreak of World War II in September 1939, and the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) led to a massive expansion of the airfield at Pendleton. The airfield was improved to include four 2600-foot landing runs and a two large Royal Canadian Air Force hangars. The government also built a large swimming pool for the station personnel and other facilities.

⁸ K.M. Molson, *Pioneering in Canadian Air Transport*, (Altona, Man: D.W. Friesen and Sons: 1978), 198. TCA commenced their transcontinental air route from Montreal to Vancouver with an inaugural flight on April 1, 1939.

In September 1942, Pendleton became the home of Number 10 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS). Over the next three years, hundreds of Canadian and Commonwealth aircrew received elementary flying training on Tiger Moth and Cornell aircraft at Pendleton, in preparation for operational flying overseas.

It took a number of years of protracted negotiations with the Federal Government's Crown Assets Disposal Corporation for the GGC to acquire ownership of Pendleton Aerodrome. The purchase agreement, signed in 1961, included 427 acres of land and all of the facilities except for one of the hangars, which was moved to Prescott, Ontario, for use as a curling rink.



Shorty Boudrault, Bill Campbell, John Orr, and Chief Flying Instructor Jim Simpson were all founding members of the Gatineau Gliding Club. “Chem” Le Cheminant, also a founding member, went on subsequently to design and construct his own sailplane, the Harbinger. This sailplane is now in the Canadian Aviation Museum in Ottawa. Another founder, Richard Hiscocks, later became a key member of de Havilland Canada's design team in Toronto. During the 1940s and 1950s they created a family of bush aircraft which included the Beaver, the Otter and Twin Otter, still used today all over the world.

The Gatineau Gliding Club continues to retain the original name, chosen by its founding members, although now it been located at Pendleton for over half a century. The former

Mulvihill glider field is now part of the Kingsway Park Golf Club, and Beamish Lake is now entirely surrounded by single family homes.

Recently, I met the Kingsway Golf Club's manager, who was unaware of the early gliding activity on his golf course. However, he mentioned that golfers on occasion have asked him about some narrow ridges, an inch or so deep, that can still be seen on several of the fairways. I was able to show him the 1944 aerial photograph of the area which, when viewed stereoscopically, reveals ruts made in the soft ground by the skids of the gliders when taking off and landing on the field 65 years ago.

These barely visible marks may well be the last tangible evidence of the early gliding activity at Mulvihill Farm, where during the height of World War II the Gatineau Gliding Club had its beginning, at the foot of the beautiful Eardley Escarpment in Western Quebec.

Readers interested in visiting the Gatineau Gliding Club's facilities at Pendleton to view gliding or take a passenger flight will find information on the Club's website at

<http://www.gatineauglidingclub.ca>

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