

## **HISTORY of the PICTON AIR FIELD:**

During World War II, the United Kingdom was under siege and required training facilities outside the British Isles for the thousands of pilots needed for defense. Because of geographical similarities to Great Britain, sparsely populated Prince Edward County was considered an ideal location for an RAF Bombing and Gunnery School. In the summer of 1940, an aerodrome was rapidly constructed and in November 1940 the RCAF moved in and began small arms training at the facility. In April 1941, the RAF took over the base as *No. 31 Bombing and Gunnery School* and used it to train many of the aviators needed to help defend Britain as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.

Following the end of the war, the Canadian Army maintained a training facility at the old aerodrome. It was renamed Camp Picton in 1960 when it became a fully operational Army base. In 1966, it was renamed Canadian Forces Base Picton, but this was short-lived - in 1969 the base was closed down and sold as part of the consolidation and downsizing of the Canadian military. Portions of the base have been divided up and have served many functions, including conversion of one of the newer barracks sections into a hospital (now defunct) and much of the old base housing is currently occupied as rental homes. The airfield is now known as Picton Airport.

The original aerodrome facilities were built using different construction methods than most bases built by the Canadian military. The rapid construction meant that the hangars and other buildings were not designed for longevity, although most still remain standing today. The former Camp Picton now serves many diverse functions but the unique appearance of the base makes it a significant, if obscure, historical landmark.

Picton Airport is a general aviation airport used primarily for recreational flying. It is also used regularly in the summer season for Canadian Air Cadet flight training using Schweizer SGS 2-33A glider sailplanes and Bellanca Scout 8GCBC aircraft.

Due to its distinctive appearance, the dilapidated airport has been used as a filming location for several productions. External scenes for the made-for-TV film *Haven*, starring Natasha Richardson, Colm Feore and Martin Landau were filmed there. It also served as a backdrop for the 1993 CBC production *Dieppe*, and was the filming location of *Bomber Boys* and the 2005 reality-TV show *Canada's Worst Driver*. Many businesses use the facilities, including a hammock outlet, an auction house, and (since the late 1970s) the local Air Cadet squadron, 851 RC(Air)CS, Prince Edward which left that location in 2004.