

Duncan Bell-Irving



Duncan was the second-youngest boy of a distinguished Vancouver family that sent all 6 boys and the eldest daughter overseas in the Great War. Serving initially as a dispatch rider with the Canadian Expeditionary Force, in 1915 he transferred to the Royal Flying Corps as an observer. In September of 1915 he was shot-down but unscathed, only to be wounded in action that December.

In England for recovery, he trained as a pilot and was posted back to France in July 1916. On 28 September 1916 he achieved his 4th and 5th aerial victories, thereby becoming the first Canadian Ace in the RFC. After two more aerial victories he was shot-down and badly wounded on 9 November 1917. Duncan finished the war as the Chief Flying Instructor at Gosport, where he was credited with the invention of the aircraft communication device known as the Gosport Tube.

Returning to the RCAF in WW-II, Duncan finished the war as Commander of the Central Flying School at Trenton, Ontario with the rank of Air Commodore. He then returned to Vancouver and entered the insurance business.

For service to Canada and in view of his role in the founding of the Air Cadet League in BC, a cadet squadron in Vancouver was designated #135 Bell-Irving Squadron.

Military Pilot

Inducted: 2018

Born: 28 August, 1894
Vancouver, BC

Died: 24 April 1965
Vancouver, BC



The BC Aviation Museum displays a Nieuport 17 in the livery used in 6 of 7 of Duncan's aerial victories.



In The Great War Bell-Irving was awarded the Military Cross with Bar for his aerial exploits.

