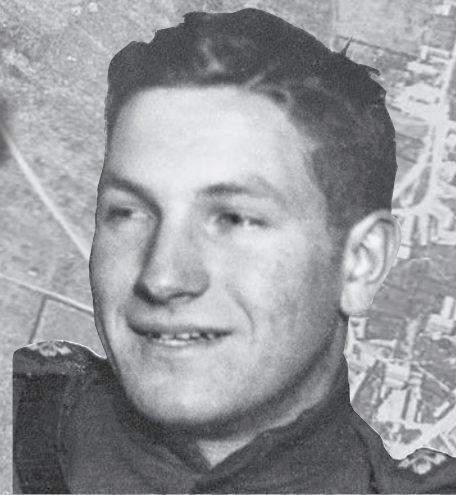


# Emotional Overload

Lt. William Henry 'Bill' Boyd

A Flight, 3 Squadron, RFC/RAF 1918

by Stewart K. Taylor



One hundred and fifty percent emotional, 'Bill' Boyd rarely failed to speak his mind. This had both served the old Royal North-West 'Mounty' and later Ontario Provincial Police Officer well but sometimes brought deep, dark moments of endless despair.

One of four children, he had an older brother and sister as well as a younger brother. Born 28 April 1898 William Henry 'Bill' Boyd, always had a hankering to wander, as did his young mind. How he completed public and high school in the town of Camp Belford, Ontario even he could not explain, except to say that, as captain of the Cadet Corps, he managed to stay relatively sane. Once he completed Grade 10 (age 17) Bill took matters into his own hands, completed a solo tour of Northern Ontario, then headed west with a slight chip on his shoulder. He had first enlisted with the 40th Regiment from Cobourg, Ontario in August 1914 but, as he was underage, his father objected. Once discharged, he headed west and joined the RNWMP on his eighteenth birthday, in Regina during the spring of 1916 as Cadet No.6533.

Mistakenly he was under the impression the RNWMP was going to mobilize and send a force overseas. When this never materialized, this time, with both parents' permission, he

2Lt William Henry 'Bill' Boyd, Manston War Flight, February 1918.

:W.H. Boyd via S.K.T.



was allowed to join the RFC at Toronto and placed in Cadet Course No.8a which graduated on 19 July 1917. This big farm boy – while with the North West Mounted Police he had become a 'poster boy' and for years a photo of him riding a horse past Lake Louise in the Rockies adorned Canadian Pacific Railway's postcards, also, having been detailed to escort the Duke of Connaught when he visited the then 'Wild West', was far from an impediment during flight instruction.

After two weeks ab initio training, Bill Boyd told the author, *I was made an instructor at Camp Mohawk, Deseronto and come the fall of 1917 asked to go overseas. This request was granted. I received a short course in aerial gunnery at Camp Borden in September 1917 along with Harry Compton, a fellow instructor. My total flying time was approximately 150 hours!*

The SS *Canada* transported 2Lt W.H. Boyd – he, like the others, among Overseas RFC/Canada Draft No.6, was promoted on probation to officer rank as of 13 October 1917 – along with 75 other second lieutenants, embarked on 29 October 1917 from Halifax and, once ashore, learned that 43 TS Ternhill was to be his destination; the date was 23 November 1917. He progressed from Avros then 1½ Strutters and a Bristol Scout before graduating on a Pup and finally the DH5, all with 43 TS, but upon completion of this phase, on 9 January 1918, the remainder of the training process, 2 (Auxiliary) School of Aerial Gunnery and 1 School of Aerial Fighting, brought about a change in the type of single seater he would fly if and when 2Lt Boyd received notification he should embark for France.

Almost at the eleventh hour, the War Office pulled a switch. He and three other Canadians at Ayr with him, were told they should report to a Home Defence unit, the Manston War Flight, as an introduction to the Sopwith Camel, the machine each were designated to operate in France. Boyd's time there lasted from 9 to 20 February 1918, giving him, he recalled, that *extra flicker of confidence* which he had needed and then some. Such concern resulted from a letter he sent to a woman in the US that he had met in the Rockies while in RNWMP uniform and struck up a relationship with. Most indiscreetly, he let it be known while at Ternhill that crossed aileron wires in a 1½ Strutter almost cost him his life, and the nineteen year old's ire was so uncontrolled that he blabbed to his instructor an intention in a letter addressed to the fair sex south of the Canadian border, the entire crash would be described in great detail, not realizing this could mean a court martial. Before no other than Lt General Sir David Henderson, he was paraded and 'dressed down'. One more disgruntled 'peep' from him and the RFC was history and with it any further connection involving the military or police forces anywhere in the Empire! That was that.

## The March Push

He had argued continuously with the lieutenant general, who tried his authoritarian best to intimidate and make the