

The Pilot's Log

Newsletter of the BNAPS Air Mail Study Group

Volume 19 – Number 1

January 2026

BNAPS VIRTUAL EXHIBITION AND CONFERENCE

Saturday 31st January 2026

This one-day event features both a virtual exhibition and seminars. It is open to all, not just BNAPS members. Attendance is free, but registration is required. - The seminars are open to all VEC 2026 registrants, whether or not they belong to the study group hosting the seminar.

The Air Mail Study Group will host a seminar from 11:15 to -12:15 AM Eastern Time
It will be a Show and Tell meeting, with opportunities to zoom-chat with other participants.
– Everyone is invited to share a recent acquisition or ask questions about an old one.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87378157226?pwd=HvnJi1Zfc5sliY1LUtU52vEljARbf.1>

Or go to the BNAPS website for a link <https://bnaps.org/bnapex/vec2026/seminars.htm>

If attending by telephone: Meeting ID: 873 7815 7226 Passcode: 074397

For more information see <https://bnaps.org/bnapex/vec2026/>

IN MEMORIAM - GORDON MALLET

Gord Mallett passed away in September after a long illness, shortly before he was going to give a presentation at BNAPEX 2025.

Gord was born in Camrose, Alberta and grew up in the town of Stettler. He devoted his career to education, living and working for many years in Edmonton at Alberta Vocational Centre (Norquest), and then in Singapore, where he was the senior consultant in the development of a mathematics curriculum.

Gordon had a lifelong love of aviation history, particularly the pioneering flights in Alberta that carried the first airmail to remote northern communities. He authored numerous articles and a book on the subject, and proudly exhibited his extensive collection of early airmail memorabilia at conventions across Canada.

One of Gord's major interests was the career of Walter Hale, "The Flying Postal Inspector", and the early airmail services to the North.

Gord was going to talk about "Walter Hale's Arctic Airmail Photographs 1929-1932" to the AMSG at BNAPEX, and to show his photograph album. – Dave Bartlet showed the album on behalf of Gord.

Gord wrote a terrific book about Walter Hale and these flights, called "No Englishmen Need Apply". The title is explained, and the book described in the following article.

Walter Hale was just one of Gord's interests and research topics. Gord was very generous in sharing the results of his research, and posted a number of articles and videos on the Internet. A description of these items, and links to them, are also included in this issue.



Walter Hale - “The Flying Postal Inspector”, And his Arctic Airmail Photographs 1929-1932



Walter Hale (3rd from left) accompanying a mail trip from Fort McMurray to Fort Smith in 1920.

Before the airmail service, mail was carried from Fort McMurray to Fort Smith by dog train once per month, and to Aklavik once each winter. The return trip to Fort Smith, which is just inside the Northwest Territories border, took 26 days actual travel, with four days of rest at Fort Smith

In 2010 Gord Mallett published an outstanding biography of Walter Hale, which included a DVD with copies of the photographs from Walter Hale’s arctic photograph album.

At the beginning of the book, Gord comments that:

Running away from home to join the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, jumping ship in a foreign port, receiving the Military Cross for gallantry in World War I, carrying mail by dog team to remote Canadian settlements and flying with pioneer bush pilots to far-northern outposts in oftentimes hazardous winter weather are but a few of the life experiences of adventurous British émigré Major R.W. (Walter) Hale.

Published by The British North America Philatelic Society, the book was titled “No Englishmen Need Apply”.

According to the review in The Canadian Aerophilatelist :

“No Englishmen Need Apply”, Gordon Mallett. 160 pages, 8.5 x 11, 2010. ISBN: 978-1-897391-59-4 (Colour), 978-1-897391-60-0 (B&W). Published by the British North America Philatelic Society (BNAPS). Stock # B4h043.1.1

No Englishmen Need Apply is a detailed study of the career of Major R. W. (Walter) Hale with the Canada Post Office Department and the events that led to him becoming widely known as the flying postal inspector. The British émigré’s early life adventures and military service in both World Wars also receive mention. Special attention is paid to the active role he played in the inauguration of air mail service throughout his adopted country’s vast northlands, most particularly the Great Bear Lake region and the “Mackenzie River corridor” (the Athabaska/Slave/Mackenzie waterway linking Fort McMurray and Aklavik).

By the end of his lengthy career District Postal Superintendent Hale had logged more than seven hundred hours in the air, often flying to far-northern outposts in hazardous winter weather. He flew with many of the pioneer aviators including legendary bush pilots W. R. “Wop” May, C. H. “Punch” Dickins and G.W.G. (Grant) McConachie. Their signatures appear alongside his on a number of air mail covers illustrated in the book.

The biography's storyline is presented in two formats: a 160-page text and photo narrative supported by material taken from primary references, and a parallel account recorded on a companion DVD. The signed covers and the human interest stories linked to their carriage are the main focus of the study. Reference numbers in the narrative direct the reader to supporting textual and pictorial material in the Appendices and Additional Notes sections and on the disc.

The rationale for the choice of the biography's unusual title is explained.

The title is based on an incident after Walter jumped ship in San Francisco, when he was about 20 years old: His cruiser had left harbour bound for Pacific Station just north of the Canadian border. With no worry of being detected, he started looking for work. San Francisco was still recovering from the 1906 earthquake and there was a strong demand both for skilled and unskilled workers. He decided to search for a job shop by shop, door by door, and would apply at any shop that displayed a "Help Wanted" sign. He was certain that before sunset he would be gainfully employed. It did not take him long to find such a sign but it did not lead to employment for the young jobseeker. One can only imagine what his immediate thoughts must have been when he read the signage. The hand-printed lettering prominently displayed the shop window "jumped out" at him: HELP WANTED -- NO ENGLISHMEN NEED APPLY

Similar signs appeared in windows of other shops that lined the steeply-sloped roadways a couple of blocks from the harbour. This unfortunate episode made a lasting impression on Walter and affected the manner in which he spoke to others and conducted himself, particularly during his early years in Canada.

When Gord and I corresponded about his plans to publish this book, Gord commented that:

When I first met with Tommy Hale, Walter's son, he requested that I name the work No Englishmen Need Apply. He argued pretty convincingly that that is what his father would have liked and in fact apparently had suggested, should the story of his life ever be told!

Although the title refers to Walter Hale's early years, most of the book is about the development of postal services, particularly the air mail services. There are details and anecdotes about the first air mail services to Aklavik in 1929, Embaras Portage in 1931, Cameron Bay in 1932, Camsell River in 1933, and many others. There are also numerous illustrations of First Flight Covers.

Some of the anecdotes were about the inauguration of air transport and mail service to the Cameron Bay mining camp in December 1932, when the first planes arrived without any mail! This upset the local population, which was waiting for mail that had accumulated in Fort Resolution. The first mail carrying flight had been deferred on instructions from Walter Hale, until he arrived from Edmonton with the First Flight Covers that had been sent in for the flight. - I occasionally hear comments from people who wonder whether all the thousands of First Flight Covers produced in the 1930's were really carried on the First Flights? - This incident shows that the Post Office took its commitment to carry collector's mail on First Flights very seriously!

There is a note at the beginning of the book, that it is "breaking new ground" for BNAPS publications, as the book is "almost exclusively historical". - I think Gord's book contains a lot of information that will be both interesting and useful for collectors of Canadian air mails, and am very pleased that BNAPS has published it.

Chris Hargreaves

Among the more than 300 files on the DVD are many photographs from the inauguration of the Mackenzie River airmail service between Fort McMurray and Aklavik in December 1929:



At most northern posts the planes land on the river and the mail is transferred to dog trains and carried to the Post Office some two miles away. The picture above shows mail being taken from the plane.



At the Fort Chipewyan Post Office with the first Official Air Mail.
 Left to right- Wop May T. Woodman C. Becker
 Pilot Postmaster Pilot

FORT NORMAN N.W.T.



Fort Norman is situated 1000 miles north west of Fort McMurray and is the centre of a large number of rich oil wells.

It is also the waterways terminal of Great Bear Lake.

These pictures show the planes after a 70 mile gale. It was necessary for the Pilots to dig the planes out before the journey to Aklavik could be resumed.

AKLAVIK N.W.T.

Showing the mail being transferred from plane to dog train. Bishop Geddes the Postmaster at Aklavik is seen holding a case of Canada Dry Ginger Ale which was safely transported from Edmonton on the first official flight (Postage \$9.60)



Eskimo

Glynn Roberts, Bishop Geddes, R.W.Hale, W.R. May

Also on the disc are scans of many First Flight Covers from Gord's collection of Hale-signed covers. A copy of the DVD is also available among the EARLY CANADIAN AIR MAIL resources which Gord has posted to the internet: see Mackenzie River District Air Mail Service Album. The original album has been given by Gord to Chris Hargreaves, and will become part of the CAS library.

EARLY CANADIAN AIR MAIL

The aviation/airmail studies identified below are available for viewing and/or downloading by clicking on the title. Double asterisks ** identify those studies in which the key findings are presented in narrated mp4 video format. [Note that a few moments may be required for the larger-sized files to open.]

Gordon Mallett

Katherine Stinson's Flights in Canada: — an investigation of the aviatrix's exhibition flying at Canadian fairs during the **latter three summers of World War I**. Special attention is paid to her **July 9 1918** Calgary to Edmonton flight, the first time in Western Canada mail had been transported by air and first-ever flight made between any two urban centres in the west. The known covers from the flight are examined. [142 pages, 30 000 words, vintage Canadian photos & picture postcards, 24 known covers, related memorabilia, 125 pictorials, © 1109209]

**** Katherine Stinson's Flights in Canada** [45 minutes, 762 MB]

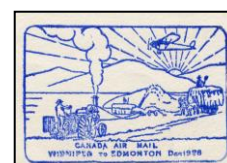


Canada's Early Prairie Air Mail Flights: — a brief history of the early flights leading to the eventual launch of regular air mail service across the prairies. Flights receiving attention: Katherine Stinson's **July 9 1918** inaugural mail flight, Western Canada Airways' **September 1928** survey circuit flight and later circuit flights, the **December 10 - 29 1928** experimental air mail flights, the **March 3 1930 - March 30 1932** Post Office Department contract service and final contract flight. [6 pages, 3 000 words]



Canada's Experimental Prairie Air Mail: — a study of the trial prairie mail flights linking Winnipeg and Regina with Calgary and with Edmonton and Saskatoon, **December 10 - 29 1928**. Daily facts about the flown legs (pilot, engineer, aircraft, mail weight, problems encountered) are charted. Eight cachet designs and five slogan cancels the Post Office used are examined. Each of the 152 legs scheduled to be flown by Western Canada Airways is assigned one of twelve classifications ranging from "complete leg flown and arrived on schedule" to "mail was carried partway by train and then transferred to plane en route for completion of the leg." The eight express mail survey circuit flights between the cities (September 13–December 7) are also investigated. [75 pages, 10 000 words, flight covers (envelopes), flight report data from the Canadian Airways Collection (MG11 A34) archived in Winnipeg, 100 pictorials]

**** Canada's Experimental Prairie Air Mail** [35 minutes, 566 MB]



Mackenzie River District Air Mail Service Album: — a collection of photographs with explanatory captions from an album titled *Mackenzie River District Air Mail Service* created in **the 1930s** by District Postal Superintendent Major R. W. (Walter) Hale, detailing his inaugural mail flights throughout the Mackenzie River corridor and Great Slave/Great Bear Lakes region. Credit is given to C.H. (Punch) Dickins and W.R. (Wop) May for inclusion of a number of their photos. [In addition to high resolution scans of the 55 intact album pages and the 130-plus individual photos, this 275-item file displays the scans of Hale/pilot-signed covers as well as Hale/May family memorabilia.]



[Mackenzie River District Flying Postal Inspector](#): — a detailed biography of Western Northwest Territories District Postal Superintendent, Major R. W. Walter Hale (1889-1950). Running away from home to join the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve—jumping ship in a foreign port—receiving the Military Cross for “conspicuous gallantry” in the Great War—carrying mail by dog team to remote northern Canadian settlements and flying with bush pilots on mail runs to outposts in oft-times very hazardous weather are but a few of the life experiences of this adventurous British émigré! Hale played a major role overseeing the inauguration of air mail delivery throughout the Great Slave/Great Bear Lakes region and Mackenzie River corridor as well as in British Columbia and Alberta. [90 pages, 27 000 words, Hale/pilot-signed covers, aviation-related monographs, maps, related memorabilia, 100 pictorials]



**** [Mackenzie River District Flying Postal Inspector](#)** [50 minutes, 1.01 GB]

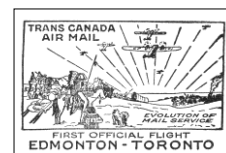
[Mackenzie River District “Pilot Since Killed”](#): — a study of major events in the flying career of Paul B. “Paddy” Calder. The former WW I pilot was appointed to Western Canada Airways staff in 1928 and flew with the company as well as its successor, Canadian Airways, until his death at age 33 in an aircraft accident near Great Bear Lake, NWT in 1933. Two rivers in Canada’s North Country are named in his honour. [16 pages, 4 000 words, 10 flight covers]



[Pilot Signatures, Canada](#): — a collection of high-resolution scans of covers signed by pilots who flew the air mail in Canada **prior to World War II**, displayed alphabetically by pilot name. Details linked to the pilot, plane and route flown are provided for a number of the covers. Letters and related items of memorabilia containing pilot signatures are also included. [300 scans, related items]



[Canadian Air Mail Cachets](#): — a chronological display of the line drawing cachets that were handstamped onto the **pre-1950** inaugural air mail covers in Canada. The high-resolution digitally enhanced scans are numbered as in the Canadian Aerophilatelic Society’s catalogue, *The Air Mails of Canada and Newfoundland*. [450 cachets, related items]



Further topics of interest:

[Canada’s Fred Jarrett – Authenticator or Forger of Air Mail?](#)

[The Centennial Flight of a Century-old Envelope](#)

[An Aerophilatelic Salute to Wop and Denny May](#)

[Canada's Love Affair with Katherine Stinson](#)

[AIR MAIL - The Board Game](#)



The study below will be of interest to enthusiasts of worldwide aviation history. ----

[Birdboy and Birdgirl in Japan](#): — an investigation of the demonstration flights that were performed in Japan by American aviators *birdboy* Art Smith and *birdgirl* Katherine Stinson in 1916/17, at which point they were recognized as the world’s two most sought-after exhibition flyers. The storyline is linked to a collection of vintage Japanese picture postcards. Caption and cachet translations help in recounting the details. Several images of the aviators’ flights in the USA and Stinson’s own flights in Canada during this same period are included. [88 pages, 10000 words, 150 pictorials inclusive of 100 vintage Japanese postcards, © 1076650]



**** [Birdboy and Birdgirl in Japan](#)** [40 minutes, 650 MB]

Sites can also be opened on the CAS website, or email canadianairmail@gmail.com

NOVEMBER DAY OF AEROPHILATELY FOLLOW UP

There were three very interesting presentations at this joint meeting with the Canadian Aerophilatelic Society, held at the Vincent Graves Greene Foundation in Toronto on November 2nd.

During the hybrid meeting in the morning there were presentations by:

- Bob Galway on “How Robert Starratt Grew Wings [1932-1941]”. – A CAHS Toronto video recording by Ken Swartz of a similar presentation by Bob can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/D8WthPnQzY0>

[More information about the Toronto Chapter of the Canadian Aviation Historical Society and its monthly meetings can be seen at <https://www.cahs.com/cahs-toronto-chapter.html>]

- Marc Castel on “Inverted overprints on Newfoundland air mail stamps”.

After lunch, John Bertram gave an introduction to the stamps designed by Harvey Prosser of the Canadian Bank Note Company.

AEROPHILATELY AT ORAPEX 2026

2026 will mark the 63rd anniversary of ORAPEX, the Ottawa philatelic exhibition. ORAPEX is one of only a few national-level stamp shows held annually in Canada. The show has two themes this year: “Aerophilately” and “Bytown”—the original name of Ottawa—which was founded in 1826, 200 years ago.

Date and time: Saturday, 2 May, 10 am - 6 pm Sunday, 3 May, 10 am - 4 pm

Venue: Nepean Sportsplex, 1701 Woodroffe Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K2G 1W2

The show features a wide range of competitive exhibits, society and study group meetings, and about 35 dealers from across Canada. Free admission and parking.

For more information see the new website <https://orapex.ca/>

BNAPEX 2026

-VALLEYFIELD, QC-

17-18-19-20 SEPTEMBER 2026

The 76th annual **BNAPS** convention

Hosted by **BNAPS STUDY GROUPS AND LA SOCIÉTÉ D'HISTOIRE POSTALE DU QUÉBEC**

Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Montreal Olympic Games, and the 86th anniversary of Valleyfield's regattas, with a 160-frame BNA exhibition and participation of 22 dealers. BNAPS Study Group meetings and seminars. Tours of the historic MOCO cotton mill.

- Thursday and Friday Tours
- Friday night out (dinner)
- Saturday reception & awards banquet
- Admission: \$5 / Day
- *Free admission for members attending one of the events

Friday 10:00 AM – 5:30 PM
Saturday 10:00 AM – 5:30 PM
Sunday 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Contact **Sébastien Crête**
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Scan the code
to get more
information.



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Hotel reservations: (450) 373-1990

Reservation code: 2609BNAPS

The AMSG operates on a cyber-only basis, so no membership dues are required. – To join and receive future issues of *The Pilot's Log*, just send your email and postal address to Chris Hargreaves, AMSG Chair/Editor, at hargreavescp@sympatico.ca