

# BILLY BISHOP'S CAP BADGE

by Rutherford

When I was a kid in Toronto, while my friends obsessed about hockey players, I spent hours reading about – and building dozens of models of – WWI fighter aircraft. (Ask me anything about SE5As, Sopwith Camels, Fokker Triplanes or their pilots.)

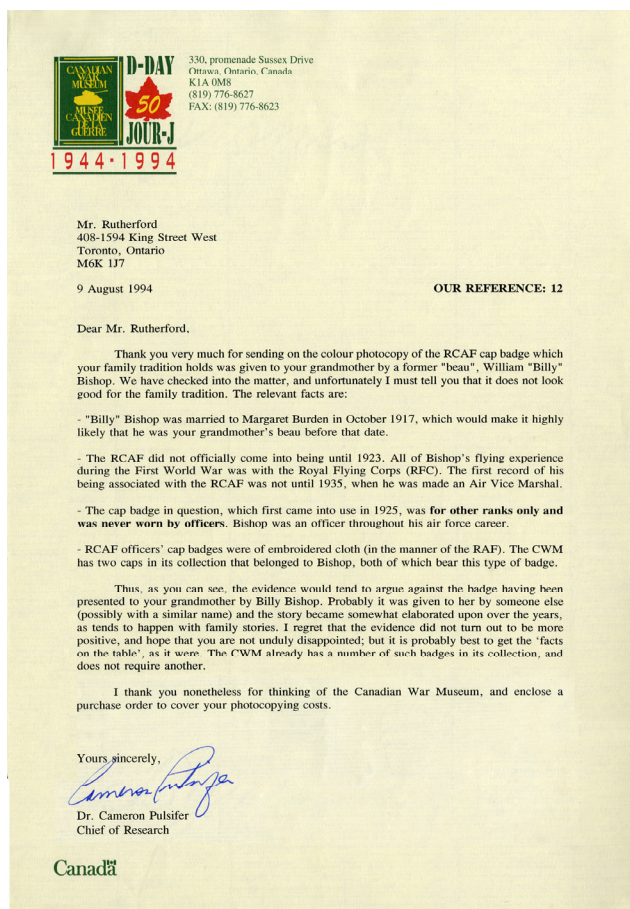
Knowing that I would enjoy having it, my adopted father gave me (what he said was) the RCAF (Royal Canadian Air Force) cap badge of Canadian WWI ace William (Billy) Bishop, who, with 72 'kills' was the fourth highest scoring ace of the War – after the German von Richthofen [80], the French René Fonck [75] and the British Edward Mannock [73]. The more famous American Eddie Rickenbacker comes in at a (relatively) paltry 26.

Asked how he had come into possession of this, he explained that his mother had 'gone out with Bishop', and he had given this to her as a keepsake.

Several years later, realising that it was too valuable an artefact to be kept in a drawer, I offered to present it to the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa.



Below is a record of the ensuing correspondence with the museum.



Dr. Cameron Pulsifer  
Chief of Research  
Canadian War Museum  
330 Sussex Drive,  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0M8

August 17, 1994

Dear Dr. Pulsifer:

Thank you so very much for your letter, received yesterday. Your kind and gentle words have done much to console and comfort our family in this most difficult and unhappy hour. As per your suggestion, and as I understand in customary in such cases, Grandmother has this day been dug up and pelted with stones in a private and very emotional ceremony. I would have liked you to be there; you would have been proud.

Now, how about a pair of boots originally belonging to Raymond Collishaw?

But seriously, I do genuinely appreciate your time and efforts in tracing the origins of the now-mysterious cap badge. I'm only sorry not to have been able to donate a historic item to the museum's collection.

I hope that I'd be welcome to introduce myself on my next trip to Ottawa and the CWM.

With warmest personal regards,

yours sincerely

Rutherford

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