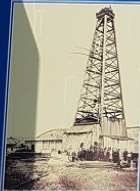


Canmore to Fort Macleod, AB

Monday morning was cloudy and wet as we left Canmore. We drove Hwy 1A (we'd had enough of the 4-lane "freeway" heading east). As we wound our way through the hills and valleys, we commented on how pretty the views were.



At Cochrane, we turned south towards Bragg Creek where we stopped for coffee. Continuing our journey south, we stopped for a bite at Turner Valley.



Turner Valley Oil Field

Dingman No. 1, 1914
Provincial Archives of Alberta, Harry Pollard Collection, P101

View looking north toward the town of Turner Valley, c.1930
Provincial Archives of Alberta, Harry Pollard Collection, P101

In the nearby town of Turner Valley is the discovery well of the first major oil and gas field in Alberta, drilled by Calgary Petroleum Products. Dingman No. 1, named after a major stockholder, blew in on May 14, 1914. The well produced large quantities of gas and light oil and began Alberta's first oil boom. With the boom came a flood of stock speculation, but by late that summer the boom had collapsed. Many new oil companies had proven fraudulent, other wells were disappointing, and soon the investment capital that was needed for more development was focused on the war effort instead.

The second boom began in 1924 with the Royalite No. 4 well owned by Imperial Oil. Royalite No. 4 produced even more of the light-gravity oil called naphtha than the discovery well, but was not deep enough to reach the crude oil below. In June 1936, a new well discovered extensive oil deposits at 2,081 metres. This well, called Royalites No. 1, produced almost 1,000 barrels of oil a day, reviving interest in oil exploration in the field. By late 1936 the whole Turner Valley field was producing about 10,000 barrels per day.

From 1914 to 1947, Turner Valley produced nearly all of Alberta's petroleum, and it remained Canada's most important oil field from 1925 until the discovery of oil south of Edmonton, near Leduc, in 1947.

We rested in the shade of cottonwoods before turning east towards Okotoks.



It was mid-afternoon when we were checked into the Okotoks Lions Campground by our friend Barb (whom we had met at Pedder Bay the winter before last).



OKOTOKS LIONS CAMPGROUND

PUBLIC CAMPGROUND

FULL HOOK-UP Per Night \$40+ GST	TENT SITES Per Night with Power \$25+ GST
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← VISITOR PARKING

PROCEEDS GO TO COMMUNITY PROJECTS AND PARK IMPROVEMENTS

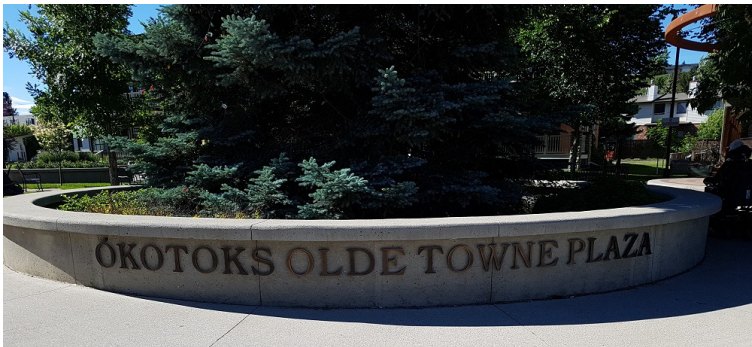
CODED SECURITY GATES

PARK MANAGEMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REFUSE ADMISSION



We're here for 3 days (to visit the colleges in Calgary). We did just that, averaging about 60 miles each day. Boy, Calgary has sure grown since I spent a winter here back in '75!

One afternoon Jen and I strolled across the pedestrian bridge over the Sheep River and into 'Olde Towne Okotoks'.



The next day, I visited the downtown colleges. Afterwards, Jen wanted to see the Peace Bridge, opened in 2012. The river walk, along the Bow River, is under construction which spoiled the walk to the Peace Bridge. But we found the bridge and walked across it.



As we headed back to Alfie, it was definitely time for a coffee. We stopped at a busy café. While I had some delicious Carrot Cake, Jen enjoyed a Passionfruit with Blackberry Compote cheesecake.

We spent our last evening in Okotoks with Barb & Jim. Jim cooked some Walleye he'd caught while Barb did the rest. What a great evening with a lovely couple. It was well past sunset when we said goodnight.



The next morning (Thursday June 28) we left Okotoks and headed south on Hwy 2 towards Nanton. The WWII Bomber Command museum is located there.





AVRO LANCASTER

The Avro Lancaster was the most successful bomber used by Bomber Command during World War II. It flew a total of 156,308 sorties.

Generally flying under the cover of darkness, air gunners manned the rear and mid-upper gun turrets but the Lancaster had virtually no defensive armour. A pilot, flight engineer, navigator, wireless operator and bomb aimer/front gunner completed the crew of seven.

The Lancaster's huge bomb bay enabled it to carry a variety of weapons including the Dams Raid bouncing bomb and Tallboy and Grand Slam earthquake bombs. A British design, the Lancaster first flew in January, 1941 and became operational in March, 1942. A total of 7374 were built (430 of them in Canada). 3932 were lost in action.

CANADIAN SERVICE

Canadian airmen were flying in Lancasters with both RCAF and RAF squadrons as soon as the aircraft became operational. As Canadian-built Lancasters arrived in Britain, the Canadian squadrons (6 Group) were all equipped with Lancasters.

The RCAF continued to use the aircraft in maritime reconnaissance and other roles until the early 1960's.



Canadian-built Mk. X Lancaster

THE MUSEUM'S LANCASTER

The museum's Lancaster (Serial # FM-159) did not see wartime action but served extensively with the Royal Canadian Air Force from 1953 until 1958. Initially based at Greenwood, Nova Scotia, it later served with No. 407 Squadron at Comox, B.C. where it was designated "RX-159." In 1960, three Nanton residents purchased the aircraft, towed it across the fields from the RCAF base 25 km to the east, and placed it on display, and donated it to the Town. In 1990, the aircraft was dedicated to the memory of S/L Ian Bazalgette, an Alberman who was awarded the Victoria Cross, and it now carries the markings of his aircraft, "F2-T".



LANCASTER SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINES
Rolls-Royce (Packard) Merlin 224 V-12; 1620 hp

DIMENSIONS
Wingspan: 102 (31.1 m)
Length: 69' 6" (21.1 m)
Height: 29' 4" (8.2 m)

WEIGHT
Loaded: 65,000 lbs (29,484 kg)
Empty: 35,240 lbs (15,985 kg)

PERFORMANCE
Max. Speed: 272 mph (432 km/h)
Cr. Speed: 200 mph (322 km/h)
Climb rate: 910 fpm (277 m/min)
Range: 1660 miles (2671 km)
Ceiling: 24,700' (7530 m)

ARMAMENT
8 .303 Browning Machine Guns
Loaded: 22,000 lbs (4536 kg)
Max Bombload: 22,000 lbs (4536 kg)

THE DAMBUSTERS

75th ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION
During 2018 the markings of the 'Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster' (F2-T) have been temporarily replaced with 'AJ-M' - those that were on the aircraft flown by **F/Lt. John Hoggood** on the Dambusters Raid. As well, the bomb doors and mid-upper gun turret have been removed as they were for the legendary Dams Raid. A full-size, steel Upkeep (Bouncing Bomb) mock-up will be placed on the aircraft.

AJ-M's Crew

John Hoggood DFC was an RAF pilot and had been selected for the secret raid from 106 Squadron, having served there under W/C Guy Gibson who wrote, "As soon as I saw him I thought, "What an ideal squadron type. I like that chap."

There were two RCAF airmen on the crew, F/O Ken Earnshaw from Oshon, Alberta was the navigator. He had completed a tour of operations with 50 Squadron prior to being selected to join 617 Squadron. The other crewmembers were RAF - Sgt. G. Brennan (flight engineer), Sgt. J.W. Minchin (wireless operator), P/O G.H. Gregory (front-gunner), and P/O Tony Burcher DM (rear-gunner).



F/Lt. John Hoggood DFC

FLYING TO THE MOHNE DAM

Like all the attacking aircraft, Lancaster AJ-M flew to the Dams at an extremely low level. At one point the rear-gunner, saw a looping arc of high tension cable above his line of vision. It then seemed to drop away behind the aircraft as Hoggood gained height. "Right under the bloody things!" exclaimed the front-gunner. "Sorry about that," said Hoggood.

Soon after that, AJ-M was raked by ground fire. Burcher, the rear-gunner, was hit in the groin and stomach. A searchlight blazed onto the aircraft but Burcher shot it out. Then a shell burst alongside and Hoggood feathered an engine that had been set on fire.

As well as Burcher being wounded, the wireless operator had been hit in the leg and the front gunner did not respond over the intercom, having been seriously injured or killed. The flight engineer shouted, "Christ, look at the blood" as he held a handkerchief to his pilot's head. "I'm OK," shouted Hoggood. "Carry on and don't worry."

It was still an hour to the Mohne Dam and F/Lt. Hoggood could certainly have returned to base with honour. But his character and determination was typical of those chosen for 617 Squadron and he pressed on to the target.

ATTACKING THE MOHNE DAM

AJ-M was the second aircraft to attack. Bomb-aimer John Fraser recalled, "Gibson got away with it because he had the element of surprise. They (the guns in the towers) crossed up on us and the light flak battery came in on the side. We had to fly through the middle of it. I released the bomb. We were put on fire in the port wing. The one engine came on fire immediately. We flew on and the pilot gave the order to abandon the aircraft within about 25 seconds after we passed over the dam."

Hoggood shouted over the intercom, "If only I could get another 300 feet. I can't get any more height." He was struggling to get enough altitude so that some of his crew could escape. He knew that he would not survive. Burcher was struck by the tail plane as he jumped from the crew door. His back was broken but he survived. Fraser recalled, "I knelt facing forward over the escape hatch and I saw that the trees looked awful damn close. I thought there was only one thing to do and that was to pull the rip cord and let the pilot chute go out first and then let it pull the chute out and me after it and that's what I did. I rolled out and the tail wheel whizzed by my ear. I swung to the vertical and within two or three seconds I touched the ground. While I was in the air, before I touched the ground, the aircraft crashed."

A voice overheard on the squadron radio lamented, "Poor old Hoppy."
Sgt. Fraser and P/O Burcher became Prisoners of War. F/Lt. Hoggood and the other four crewmembers were killed.



F/O Ken Earnshaw



Sgt. John Fraser



AJ-M approaching the Mohne Dam by Mark Postelthwaite

AJ-M over the Mohne Dam by Len Krenster

Back on the road again, we continued south. As we crossed the Oldman River, just before the junction of Hwys 2 & 3, we noticed a couple of RVs parked in the trees. We turned right into the Oldman River Provincial Recreational area, found a nice secluded spot, and set up camp. We're here for the Canada Day long weekend.

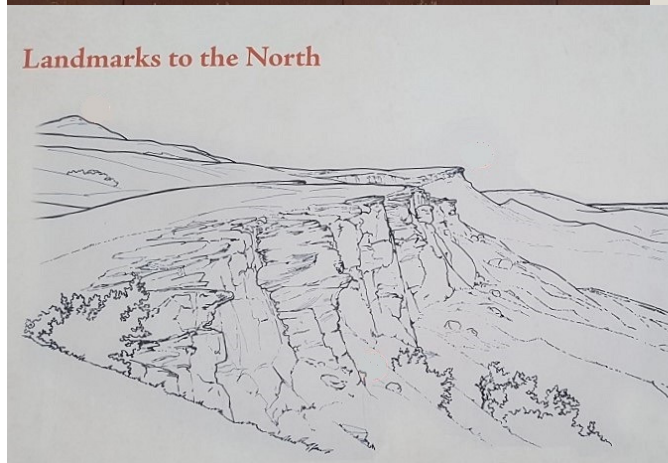
I no sooner turned the engine off than the welcoming committee flew in.



After registering, we drove a few clicks to Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump World Heritage Site. The interpretive centre was really spectacular. I'll let the pictures do the talking.



A long time ago, according to one legend, the people were driving buffalo over these sandstone cliffs. A young brave wanted to watch the buffalo tumbling past. Standing under the shelter of a ledge, as if behind a waterfall, he watched the great beasts fall. The hunt was unusually good that day and as the bodies piled up, he became trapped between the animals and the cliffs. When his people began the butchering, they found him with his skull crushed by the weight of the buffalo carcasses. Thus, they named this place "Head-Smashed-In".



Landmarks to the North

The Buffalo.

Many adult male buffalo lived a solitary existence through most of the year. Most males were about one and three-quarters metres tall and weighed more

than half a tonne. Females were smaller, but still massive. Calves weighed less than 40 kilograms when born.



Buffalo Behaviour

Buffalo are social animals that depend on each other for protection. Herds are led by dominant females. When in danger, herds will stampede under the direction of the lead cows. Stampedes are usually for short distances; the herd runs in a tight pack and only the lead

animals can see where they are going. Buffalo have relatively poor eyesight but an excellent sense of smell. It is often the smell of a threat, such as a prairie fire, human hunters or wolves, that causes a herd to stampede.



No one knew when or where the next jump would be.

Other buffalo jumps were scattered across the Plains, and if that was where the buffalo were, that was where the hunt would be.

Head-Smashed-In might sit unused for generations, until only a pile of sun-bleached bones, half-covered with blown soil, and a blanket of cracked

boiling stones remained.

When the buffalo returned to the area, if the camp was ready and the weather was right, the medicine people would build a sod altar, bring out the iniskim, and begin the ceremonies that prepared both people and buffalo for the next jump.

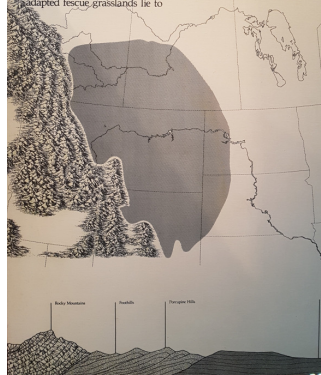
Suddenly the buffalo were falling.

By the time the panic-stricken lead buffalo topped the short rise before the cliff and saw the edge,

it was too late. Its own momentum and the herd behind pressed it over the edge.



Head-Smashed-In is on the edge of the Forcypine Hills and straddles a boundary where cool adapted fescue grasslands lie to the west, and the drier mixed grass prairie and shortgrass prairie lie to the east.



To the right is a scale model of the facility.

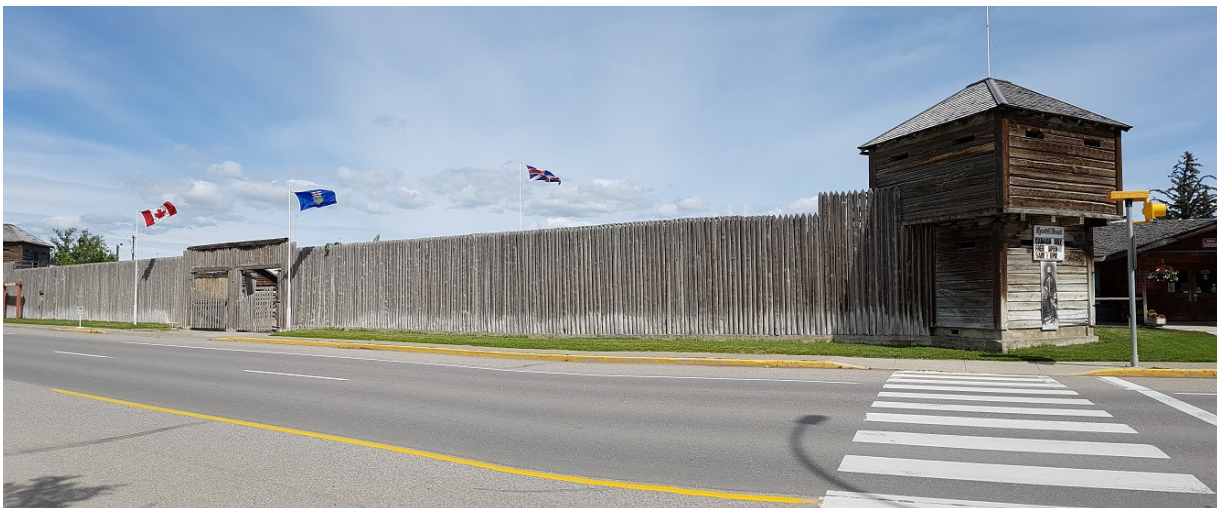
Set into the hillside, it blends in well.



If you are ever in the Fort Macleod area, do yourself a favour and visit this World Heritage Site.

Now it is Saturday morning (June 30). We decided a visit to the local library (free wifi) was in order. Well, welcome to small town Alberta (or perhaps small town anywhere this holiday long weekend!). The library is closed—for the entire weekend! Oh well.

Jen had noticed a walkway through the buildings so we decided to go explore. Turns out the "alleyway" leads to the Fort



Tomorrow, Canada Day, there are all sorts of celebrations happening at the Fort. And it's free. We'll come back tomorrow.

Back at camp, while we enjoyed an afternoon tea, I had to try out our new selfie stick (free on a bottle of wine in Okotoks!).

See you tomorrow at the Fort!

