

Donald Roderick MacLaren

WWI Fighter Ace



A Short History

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Don MacLaren was born in Ottawa on May 8, 1893 the grandson of one of the original Scottish settlers in the Pembroke area. When he was 6 years old they moved to the small town of Calgary, Alberta. The MacLaren family believed in being trained in the use of rifles and shotguns for personal protection and to make a living. His father, Robert James MacLaren gave him a small shotgun when he was eight and taught the youngster how to use it. Game was plentiful on the prairie and in the valleys around Calgary. His father start-

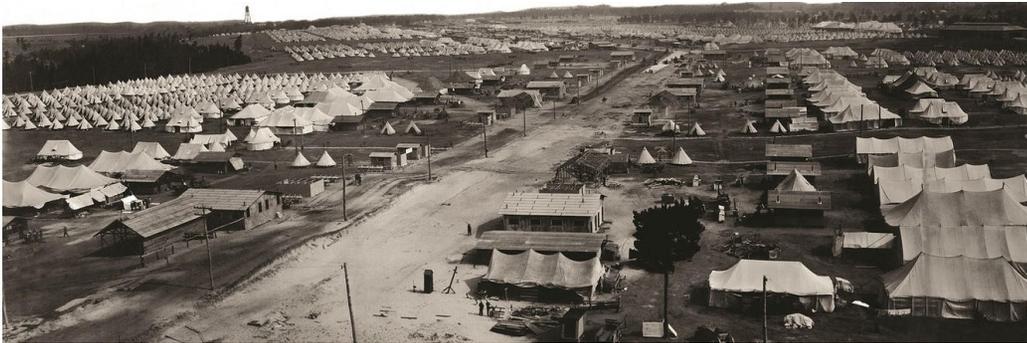
ed him off shooting clay pigeons from a trap behind their house. He soon moved on to ducks and prairie chickens as entertainment and to help feed the family.

They moved again when he was nearly 18, to Vancouver this time. He matriculated from high school and enrolled in McGill University to study electrical engineering in 1912. Nearing the end of his second year he was forced to discontinue studies due to illness and returned to Vancouver. He apparently was enrolled in a surveyor's course while in Vancouver.

Once he recovered his father, brother Roy and he packed their belongings and moved to the remote northern Alberta hinterland at Keg River Prairie (there was no mention of what happened to his mother). It was 200 miles north of the nearest railway at Peace River Crossing. There they opened a fur-trading post in competition with the Hudson's Bay Company and Revillon Freres. In this remote area Donald thrived, working hard under primitive conditions. In the summer they covered long distances by canoe, boat, horse and on foot. In winter they "mushed" dog-teams to even more remote locations to pick up furs from local natives.

In the spring of 1916 Donald traveled to the far north with a government party which was surveying the 6th meridian, when he returned in the autumn he found that his brother Roy had gone south to enlist. Donald and his father soon came to the same conclusion and sold as much of their outfit as they could by the spring and headed south to Vancouver. Donald applied for and was accepted into the Royal Flying Corps. His father was rejected due to his age, although he was more fit than most men half his age. He served with the Imperial Munitions Board throughout the war.

Donald reported to "Y" Squadron, Long Branch, just outside of Toronto (at that time). He started by going up as a passenger in a Curtiss JN-4 "Canuck". He soloed after a mere 3.5 hours in the air. By July he was transferred to an intermediate school 90 Central Training School at Armour Heights. Here they graduated from straight flying to military types of flying, learning bombing, ground strips, artillery observation and high flying called eights altitude because they went over 8,000 ft. From there he went to Camp Borden,



Camp Borden in full swing

Curtiss JN4



AVRO 504

It wasn't until August 19, 1917 that MacLaren received his pilot's wings and was sent to England. There he went to No. 43 Training School, Ternhill for aerobatic schooling. Using AVROs they did loops, spins (and most importantly spin recovery), Immelman turns, stalls and stall turns. With more experience on the AVRO they graduated to a mixture of aircraft for a few hours each, these included

Nieuports with various motors, and a scout aircraft, the D.H. 5, that hadn't performed well on front-line service. He was then transferred into the hands of instructors at No. 34 Training School for final fighter orientation on the Bristol "Scout" and Sopwith Camel. He put in 9 hours on the especially tricky Camel. This training included more loops, spins, rolls, stall turns, vertical banks, fighting practice and dives. Finally, they had live gun fire practice. Even then he received more instruction on the most recent tactics used by the English and German forces.

D.H. 5 Scout

Bristol Scout

MacLaren in front of an AIRCO DH 5, time unknown.



The training regimen had evolved so that unlike RFC training in previous years, it now took a few months, rather than weeks. Also, they flew more technically advanced aircraft like the Curtiss JN-4 "Canuck" and the AVRO 504 that gave them at least a hint of what a real fighter aircraft was like. The RFC wasn't so frantic for pilots and were willing to put more time into training them in the hopes that they would survive longer. Delaying his entry into the aerial war also had another important consequence, Don MacLaren would

In November, 1917 he crossed to France and reported to the No. 2 Air Stores Depot, which was a pilot's pool from where he could be posted to any squadron short of a pilot. It didn't take long for him to receive his posting, losses were considerable. He went to 46

Active Service

The first three months of his active service were fairly uneventful as he arrived during the lull before the storm. Following the Russian October Revolution and the withdrawal of Russia from the war, the Germans transferred many desperately needed troops to the Western Front. In an attempt to win the war before the American soldiers flooded the lines, the Germans planned a huge offensive in the spring of 1918. They wanted to control the air over the Somme for their "Kaiserschlacht" so they were conserving their aircraft and men. This meant that Don MacLaren had the luxury of learning something about the war without being in daily peril. The squadron flew daily over the front lines without meeting the enemy, only "Archie" (anti-aircraft artillery) was a threat. Long reconnaissance flights to find out what the Germans were up to had to be protected, and the occasional bombing sortie was made with Camels carrying four 20 lb. Cooper's bombs.

Finally, on March 6, 1918 MacLaren had his first aerial combat. He was with a patrol of five machines between Arras and Cambrai when the flight leader signaled that he had spotted something. About a mile away at their altitude were three aircraft, although who's was in question. Being late afternoon, the sun was behind them, effectively hiding them in its glare. They climbed and got above the other aircraft, that turned out to be German.

"I was flying next to the leader and as he dove at one machine I went for another. They were all silver-gray and had double tail-

This didn't help the Germans, the Camels were highly agile and MacLaren easily followed his prey down. Just as he was lining up for a shot the German banked sharply underneath his Camel. With a quick kick of the rudder and ailerons MacLaren spun the Camel about and closed to within 100 yards. He poured 0.303 bullets into the area around the pilot and pulled up to miss the German aircraft. As he came around for a second pass he could see the German aircraft spinning down out of control. Remembering his instructions he followed the German aircraft to ensure it wouldn't get away. It wasn't necessary, his first burst likely killed the pilot. His first "kill" smashed into the ground and caught fire although he was credited with an "Out of Control (OOC)".

Following this action the Germans became increasingly active over the front as they strove to gain superiority over their lines in preparation for what would be their last major push of the war. MacLaren found himself in more combats, and more successes followed as he proved his accuracy in his first fight was not luck. He shot the tail off of an Albatros DV four days later.

To support the Offensive the Germans installed several massive, artillery guns onto rail-cars. They had tremendous range and could shell the British rear areas with relative impunity. One such gun was busy shelling the railway junction at St. Pol from the area around Brebières, 6 miles behind the front lines. On March 21, seven pilots of No. 46 Squadron were tasked with silencing the gun as the Camels could fight their way to the location and drop bombs. Approaching Brebières they dropped low and flew single-file over the monster gun. Each Camel pilot was to drop his load of four 20 lb. bombs on the gun. MacLaren was particularly successful, making two direct hits on the gun's mountings and the tracks. The gun was out of action for the rest of the Offensive.

Climbing out of the area MacLaren spotted a German two-seater (an LVG C) directly under him. He spun about and dove at full throttle to get on the German's tail. He put 100 rounds into the enemy aircraft and saw it go down in a spin and crash near Douai.

By this time he was separated from his flight and still behind the lines, so he headed straight for home. Archie gunners were after him and while climbing to spoil their shots he nearly collided with a German observation balloon floating just under a cloud. Not wishing to miss such a juicy target he spun about and attacked the gas-filled bag. Immediately the balloon observer jumped out and deployed his parachute, the balloon lit up and burned fiercely on its way to the ground near Blache St. Vaast. Don again turned for home.

It seemed to be his lucky day, and he still had ammunition and fuel, so he loitered just behind the German lines at Graincourt. Within a short time he spotted a bright green observation plane (another LVG C) and went for it. The German pilot zoomed up under him and got in good shots with both his front gun and the observer's gun. Bullets ripped MacLaren's wings and he became more cautious. He dove again and the observation plane turned to position the rear gunner, they blazed away at each other as they got the chance. In a descending spiral the LVG pilot soon ran out of altitude and had to straighten out, at this moment MacLaren hit him with a burst and saw him smash into the ground near Marquion. He had now accounted for three and a half enemy aeroplanes, two crashed, and one shared with another officer and one out of control.

For this day's work MacLaren received the Military Cross.

London *Gazette* No. 30761

War Office,

22nd June, 1918

His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to approve of the following award to the undermentioned officer, in recognition of his gallantry and devotion in the field:

AWARDED THE MILITARY CROSS

T/2nd Lt. Donald Roderick MacLaren, Gen. List and R.F.C.

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. On one occasion, when on low bombing work, he bombed a long-range enemy gun 9,000 yards behind the lines, obtaining from a height of 200 feet two direct hits on the gun truck and two on the railway track alongside. When returning to our lines he encountered a hostile two-seater machine, which he shot down crashing to earth. He then attacked a balloon, which burst into flames, and finally, observing another enemy two-seater plane, he engaged it and eventually suc-

A few days after his highly successful day the Germans unleashed their major spring offensive, and what an onslaught it was. One hundred divisions of German troops were hurled against 60 British and French divisions, forcing the Allies to retreat before them. Allied squadrons were forced to abandon established airdromes near the front. Large swarms of German aircraft provided cover for the troops against the reconnaissance aircraft, bombers and fighters. Baron Manfred von Richtofen (the Red Baron) had developed the tactic of flying in large groups of 30 or more aircraft to give them local air superiority over the Allies. To counter the strong offensive all aircraft that could fly did so all day, every day. 46 Squadron occasionally encountered Richthofen's "Circus" of red aircraft (a mixed lot of Fokker Dr. I's, and Albatros DVas), but the German Air Service was defensive minded. They attacked only over their own lines, and would not take the fight to the Allies, so that the Allies held the initiative in the air. However, the aim of the Germans was to concentrate so many aircraft in one area as to have air supremacy for a short period of time, enough for their reconnaissance machines to get the information they needed and to get out.

MacLaren shot down a two-seater on the 22nd; shot down one, drove one down O-O-C and shared one down O-O-C on the 23rd; shot down a photographic machine on the 25th; and drove down an unusual Junkers J1 ground-attack machine O-O-C on the 27th of March (example at right). In what appeared to be a mob action five 46 Squadron pilots, including MacLaren, shared an O-O-C on

His CO in No.46 Squadron commended MacLaren and three other officers to Headquarters, 13 Wing for services in actions near Ba-paume.



This does not appear to have led directly to any award, although it may have lead to his promotion. April 1, 1918 the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service were amalgamated into the Royal Air Force with a unified command. On April 6th he was promoted to Temporary Captain.

The German AAA guns found their range and a shell smashed the centre struts on MacLaren's machine and ripped off several stay wires. Another close burst damaged the wing more, but he couldn't tell how bad it was. Being very careful he slowly approached the ground and managed to land. Such prudence was deserved, for on inspection they found that the leading edge of his wing had been cut in two and it was a miracle that it hadn't failed in the air. MacLaren lead a charmed life.

Not so for everyone. Manfred von Richthofen shot down one of their best, Captain Sydney Smith. It became apparent that the Allies would have to copy the Red Baron's tactics and fly in large groups to counter their threat. This resulted in large melees "dogfights" over the lines involving up to 100 aircraft. In a letter MacLaren described one of these fights.

"As the Germans saw us above them they began flying in a large circle (as they usually did when they expected to be attacked) and we began diving at them. We had succeeded in shooting down two when another large formation appeared, coming up from La Bas-sée. We drew out to watch them and climbed together. At that moment our Archies opened fire, the white bursts of shrapnel appearing thickly among the enemy. We were joined by a formation of S.E.5's and some Camels. Then another formation of S.E. 5's and Bristol fighters drifted along from the south."

"It promised to be a real air battle – one of the kind you read about but seldom see. We attacked the first formation of Huns, diving at them, firing a few rounds, climbing away and then diving again."

"I swooped down on an Albatross which was painted white with a red nose and closed with him. He went down in flames and I felt someone shooting at me for all he was worth. From the sound of the bullets I knew he was pretty close so I climbed away to try and get a look at him. Two of my Camels were chasing a Pfalz who tried to avoid them by turning from side to side. They got him, however, and sent him down spinning."

"There was not time to watch the show, for bullets were flying everywhere. Just then two Albatrosses detached themselves from the mess and picked on a little Camel. I went for them and managed to get close to the leading one, which went down. The other got away by diving under his formation."

"In the meantime the Bristols and S.E. 5's were having the time of their lives. One S.E. which had shot down a Hun was being given a ride by three others, but by a quick climbing turn he managed to get the advantage over one of the trio. The Hun, in trying to avoid him, turned slowly and rammed one of his fellows. Both machines were badly smashed, and went down leaving bits of fabric floating behind them."

"The Bristols had managed to split up the German formation and the enemy, thinking he had had enough, drew off and made for home as fast as he could. Our ammunition had been pretty well used up, so we decided to call it a day. We concluded that at the end of the mix-up there must have been nearly 100 machines taking part."

Even the war had its own perverse sense of humour. On a lone patrol to attack an observation balloon he met an enemy two-seater. He dove towards the front of the enemy so he couldn't get the rear gun into play. He describes the action in another letter:

"When he came within range I pressed the trigger. My gun refused to work. I could hear the trigger rattling away and knew that my firing gear was in good order, so I reloaded quickly. He was past me but I dived underneath and pulled up at him from there."

"Again I fired. Still no shots would come. I pulled off to one side and felt my ammunition chutes – both belts were broken. It was annoying, to say the least."

"The German was not shooting at me for some reason, so I sidled up to him to see what was the matter. Still he did not shoot. I went a bit closer and could see the observer standing there with his gun pointing up into the air away from me. Suddenly he waved to me and I answered. He moved his gun up and down as if to say, 'Mine won't work either.' I came very close, and the pilot waved to me. So I returned his greeting and we parted the best of friends."

He was granted leave on the 8th of April but was brought back early on the 15th due to heavy air action.

On April 21st Manfred von Richthofen was killed, either by Australian gunners or by Canadian ace Captain Roy Brown (see his biography in this series). His death had a marked effect on the morale and fighting spirit of the German Air Service pilots. While his Jagdgeschwader was only one of several at the front, Richthofen's successes and driving spirit inspired the Germans. Following his death there seemed to be a lessening of their fighting spirit, just before the opening of the Allied counter offensive.

MacLaren shot down a large number of aircraft in May. He started on the 3rd with an LVG C and a Halberstadt C, single aircraft on the 4th, 6th, 8th, 9th, two on the 15th, a DFW C and two balloons on the 20th, single aircraft on the 23rd, 26th, 28th, 30th and 31st for a total of 17, only five of which were shared with other pilots.

His C.O. Major Allen wrote of him:

"Has shown magnificent bravery and absolute fearlessness as a Patrol Leader, never hesitating to attack enemy formations no matter how heavy the odds against him might be. On May 15 leading patrol of four he attacked 11 E.A. ten miles over the lines, five of which were acct'd for, he himself bringing down two. On May 6 he and another pilot crashed a two-seater on our side of the lines. In just over two months he has acct'd for 22 E.A., destroyed and o.o.c. and thee KBs (kite balloons) destroyed. Cannot speak too highly of courage and continued devotion to duty."

June was a "dry spot" with only two aircraft falling to his guns.

The German's lagging martial spirit was given a lift in July with the arrival of large numbers of the superb new fighter aircraft, the Fokker DVII. It is generally considered to have been the best fighter aircraft of the war, it could fly higher and faster than any of the Allied aircraft of the time. Flying in large formations above the Allies the Germans would sud-

This marked a very intense period of activity for the Allied air forces and for MacLaren. His victories mounted steadily starting on the 1st with an anonymous two-seater and then on the 8th with two of the new Fokkers. A further three aircraft and a balloon fell out of the air under his attacks in July. He was also awarded a bar to his Military Cross. His C.O. wrote:

"magnificent bravery and absolute fearlessness. On 22.7 led patrol os. four E.A.; he himself fought two down to 200 ft. and destroyed them; others of patrol accounted for the remaining two, so none escaped, entirely due to his splendid leadership. In all he has accounted for 37 e.a. destroyed, o.o.c., and 6 K.Bs. all within 4½ months. A magnificent example."

London *Gazette*, No. 30901

September 16, 1918

War Office

His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to approve of the following Award to the undermentioned Officer in recognition of his gallantry and devotion to in the Field:

AWARDED THE BAR TO THE MILITARY CROSS

Captain Donald Roderick MacLaren, M.C., Gen. List, R.A.F.

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty as a fighting pilot. He has recently destroyed no less than nine enemy machines, and proved himself a brilliant fighting pilot against enemy aircraft often far superior in number. He has done magnificent service, and set a

On August 8, 1918 the great Allied attack started in front of Amiens, with the Canadian Corps in the centre. The situation was critical for the German army as they had run out of energy and men for their Kaiser Offensive. The German Jastas were ordered to keep the Allies out of the skies over their troops. They fought with a fury born of desperation and fresh confidence in their aircraft.

MacLaren was leading a flight of seven Camels between Albert and Bapaume when he sighted a German formation of twenty machines. It was a misty morning that almost hid the enemy scouts. The British artillery were putting up a heavy barrage on some point of the front lines and the German scouts were waiting for any artillery observation aircraft that would try to spot the fall of shells. MacLaren lead his flight into the clouds and followed a gap in them towards the enemy machines. He surprised four of the Fokkers that were concentrating below them and not on the clouds above. He dove on one and put about 50 rounds into it, his companions followed also firing. Pulling up into a climb away from the area he spotted two German aircraft falling away from their dive. Out of the mist appeared another five Fokkers with an advantage over the Camels. Bullets ripped through his aircraft before he scooted into a cloud. On emerging he found his flight and rejoined them just in time to be attacked by another very large formation of Fokkers. Recognizing a poor situation the Camels dove for their lines and escaped.

Late August saw an improvement in the weather and 46 Squadron went back to their deadly work. The Germans were now on the receiving end of the Allied Offensive and were being pushed back daily. Each Camel was equipped with a bomb rack to hold four of the standard 20 lb Cooper bombs, which were quite effective against troops and horses if caught in the open. Combined with their twin 0.303 machine guns and speed the Camels became a dreaded scourge of the German Army. They routinely interdicted supply and troop columns moving up to the front to kill, maim and interrupt their progress. All through September and October the RAF was called on to support the Army by attacking ground targets. German aircraft were becoming scarce due to the heavy attrition to machines and pilots. It's hard to determine what effect they had on the last stage of the war, but it was doubtless an important job to keep pressure on the Germans. Despite the dreary and dangerous work of attacking ground targets MacLaren still succeeded in shooting down German scouts.

On the morning of August 26 the entirety of 46 Squadron took off as part of a fighting scheme. They climbed to 12,000 feet and headed for the German lines near Roye. Far above them was a squadron of S.E. 5s. They crossed the front line and headed into German territory around Peronne. There they encountered a large formation of Fokker DVIIIs. The Germans had climbed quickly and were above and behind 46 Squadron, normally a very dangerous place to have an enemy force. But the Germans had neglected to see the Squadron of S.E. 5's above and behind them. This was the carefully timed trap, and before the Germans could dive the S.E. 5s were on the Fokkers. 46 Squadron turned and climbed and trapped the Germans between the two forces. Before they escaped, the Germans had lost five aircraft, one to MacLaren. The two British squadrons had no losses.

Despite the hazards of flying alone or in small groups, the offensive spirit of the British high command allowed such flights. On September 16 MacLaren and two others were on a offensive patrol behind German lines when they met four German machines. MacLaren led the attack and quickly established a superior position, forcing the Germans to dive in order to escape. During the fight that followed all four German machines were destroyed, two by MacLaren. For this daring and successful attack, which brought his score of successes to 37, he received his third decoration, the Distinguished Flying Cross.

London *Gazette* No. 30913

Air Ministry,

21 September, 1918

His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to confer the undermentioned reward on officers of the Royal Air Force, in recognition of gallantry in flying operations against the enemy:

AWARDED THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

Lieut. (T./Capt.) Donald Roderick MacLaren, M.C.

Accompanied by two other pilots, this officer attacked four enemy aeroplanes; all of these were destroyed; he himself fought two down to within 200 feet of the ground, destroying both. The two pilots who were with him each accounted for one of the remaining two. It was a well-conceived manoeuvre ably carried out, reflecting credit on all concerned. This officer has in four and a half months

Shortly after this incident 46 Squadron was dealt a grievous blow, their Squadron Leader was killed. He was leading a flight of new pilots on their first offensive patrols. The squadron met a strong force of Germans and engaged them. Most of them escaped, unfortunately one of the new pilots swung his Camel sharply and rammed the S/L's machine, both of them falling to pieces in the air. They both fell to their deaths, as parachutes were still not issued to British pilots.

MacLaren was appointed to command the squadron, only a few short months after having joined it as a junior subaltern. To keep up with their advancing troops they moved to the airdrome at Athies, recently abandoned by the Germans. Poor weather grounded them for a week, so MacLaren encouraged his men to concentrate on target shooting, especially ground targets as they were increasingly being tasked with strafing troops, guns, trucks and other German Army resources. One enterprising pilot built a large box kite and painted a target on it so he could improve his air-to-air target shooting.

On October 2nd, he lead 15 Camels over the front in flights of five, each at a different altitude. As they crossed the line 8 Fokkers attacked them out of the sun. MacLaren whipped his Camel around and engaged the leader in an intense dogfight each exchanging bursts of machine gun fire. But the Camel excelled at the close-in dogfight and MacLaren got the advantage and sent the Fokker down in flames with a burst to the fusilage

Another group of 20 Fokkers arrived on the scene, as his flight of 5 was badly outnumbered, and the others were still higher, he headed for the British lines. Some of the Germans attacked so MacLaren did a stall turn and attacked the leading aircraft. His flight did the same. Meanwhile the upper flights of 46 Squadron also attacked the Fokkers. The Germans gave up and dove out of the area. His last fight came on October 9th, only a few weeks before the Armistice with the destruction of a two-seater, leaving him with a total "kill" of 48 aircraft and 6 balloons. By the end of October he had scored more successes than almost anyone at the front, excepting his countrymen Raymond Collishaw and William Barker (see their biographies in this series).

The next day while wrestling with a squadron mate he broke his leg and was put out of action. He returned to England on November 6, 1918 and spent the Armistice in the Royal Flying Corps Hospital in London.

His last few months of WWI are well summarized by Major G. Allen, Commanding Officer of No.46 Squadron, to Headquarters, 22 Wing on 15 October 1918. The portion in bold was run through with a pen or pencil - whether by Allen or an officer at Wing level is unknown. (Public Record Office Air 1/204/36/127)

I beg to recommend the above named officer for the immediate award of the Distinguished Service Order.

On 24 August 1918 Captain MacLaren whilst on a special mission attacked a D.F.W. over Bray at 1,500 feet. He fired 60 rounds at point-blank range and the enemy aeroplane half-rolled to the left and went down in a slow spin out of control. Captain MacLaren was unable to see the machine crash owing to thick mist and smoke near the ground.

On 25 August 1918 on low bombing Captain MacLaren attacked a D.F.W. over Albert, firing 25 rounds at 50 yards range. The enemy aeroplane's observer was then seen hanging over the fuselage. Lieutenant Paton and Captain MacLaren dived on enemy aeroplane again, firing 100 rounds, causing enemy aeroplane to try to land east of Delville Wood, but it crashed in the shell holes and burst into flames.

On 27 August 1918 Captain MacLaren, with his patrol, attacked eight Fokker biplanes over Hendecourt. He picked out one and fired about 100 rounds at 200 to 100 yards range. The Fokker turned on its back and spun down out of control. Lieutenants Viall and Buchanan, of his patrol, saw a wing fall off as it went down.

On 15 September 1918, flying alone, saw a British balloon in flames west of Havrincourt Wood. He dived down and found six Fokkers round it. Although one of his guns was out of order he continued to dive at them and attacked one at about 100 yards range. The enemy aeroplane spun out of control from 3,000 feet north of Gouzeacourt. Captain MacLaren was unable to watch it crash as five of the Fokker biplanes then attacked him and he had much difficulty in escaping.

On 16 September 1918 Captain MacLaren while on patrol with four other was attacked from above by ten Fokker biplanes. Captain MacLaren, Lieutenant Sawyer and Lieutenant Viall all fired at one of them, which went down in flames.

On 24 September 1918 Captain MacLaren, on patrol with three others, attacked six Fokkers on his own level, although there were 16 more enemy aeroplanes higher up a little further north. Captain MacLaren fired a burst of about 20 rounds at point blank range at one, which caught fire and crashed near Havrincourt village.

On 29 September 1918 Captain MacLaren on patrol with three others attacked four Fokkers at 3,500 feet. Captain MacLaren fired about 50 rounds into one at 100 yards range. Enemy aeroplane half rolled and settled in a spin. It was last seen, still spinning down, but could not be observed actually crashing, as the fight with the other enemy aeroplanes was still in progress.

On 2 October 1918 Captain MacLaren, on patrol with three others, attacked four Fokkers at 12,000 feet. Captain MacLaren fired 50 rounds at one at about 50 yards range. This enemy aeroplane passed him and was fired on by two other pilots at more distant ranges. It could not be observed to crash as ten more Fokkers had attacked the patrol in the meantime and the engagement became general.

On 9 October 1918 Captain MacLaren, on low bombing, joined an SE.5 and attacked a two-seater Hannoveraner. he fired 100 rounds at 50 yards range, and the enemy aeroplane spun and crashed at Ricqueval.

Captain D.R. MacLaren is a patrol leader of the greatest dash and judgement. He has been nearly eleven months in this squadron, and has brought down 48 enemy aeroplanes and six balloons in that period, making a total of 54. The above nine were brought down since he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. His total of 54 places him in the six most successful pilots the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Air Force have ever known. In spite of the numerous and heavy fights he has taken part in, he has almost always brought his patrol home. **Also, I wish to emphasise that, in his many engagements with Fokker biplanes, he is up against a machine which is far superior to his own in performance, and has therefore been at a great disadvantage. This makes his record absolutely marvellous.**

In addition to his fights he has led many low bombing expeditions with the greatest dash.

Altogether his exploits have set a magnificent example to this squadron, especially as he has had very few experienced pilots to back him up, owing to the casualties sustained.

After the war he was awarded his fourth decoration, the Distinguished Service Order.

London *Gazette*, No. 31170

Air Ministry,

8th February, 1919

His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to confer the undermentioned Rewards on Officers and Other Ranks of the Royal Air Force in recognition of gallantry in flying operations against the enemy.

AWARDED THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER

Lieut. (A./Capt.) Donald Roderick MacLaren, M.C., D.F.C.

Bold in attack and skilful in manoeuvre, Captain MacLaren is conspicuous in his success in aerial combats. On the 24th September he and his patrol of three machines attacked a formation of six enemy scouts, although the later were protected by sixteen other enemy aircraft at a higher altitude. Firing a burst at point-blank range, this officer shot down one in flames. In all he has accounted for 48 enemy machines and six kite balloons.

He is tied 6th in the Allied lists with the South African Allan Beauchamp-Proctor and the Frenchman Georges Guynemer and is tied in 8th spot for all fighter pilots in WWI. Only Manfred von Richthofen, Rene Fonck, Edward Mannock, William Bishop, Ernst Udet,

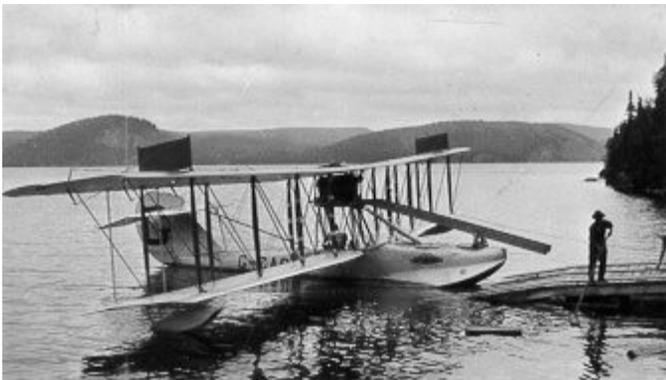


Post War

He was posted to No.81 Squadron R.A.F. on 30 December 1918 while recovering in England from his broken leg.

In July of 1919 he was also awarded two French decorations the Chevalier, Legion d'Honneur and the Croix de Guerre avec Palme. He was also promoted to the rank of Major and made the Director of Air Services, Canadian Air Force, and the Canadian Liaison Officer at the British Air Ministry. He was, in essence on loan to the Canadian government for a period of three years. During this time he was instrumental in having a mixed set of Allied aircraft turned over to the Canadian government to form a nucleus of a national airforce. The final list included Felixstowe F3s, Curtiss H16 flying boats, a Fairey IIIC seaplane, over 60 Avro 504 trainers, DH4 and DH9A bombers, SE5a fighters, a Bristol F2A Fighter and a Sopwith Snipe (other than Barker's destroyed model). They also threw in 12 airships and six kite balloons and a bunch of spare parts. They also turned over some German fighter aircraft, including several Fokker DVIIIs (one of which killed Canadian ace Major Albert Carter). In 1920, Canada decided to form a Canadian Air Force separate from the RAF. Two fighter squadrons were formed at Shoreham and MacLaren was put in charge of Fighter Squadron 1.

The Borden government soon discovered that a separate airforce was expensive, and decided to cut it back to just a nucleus of staff who would be dedicated to developing air travel and flight in Canada. Consequently MacLaren was demobilized to Canada where he resigned his commission to go into commercial aviation.



In 1921 he had returned to Vancouver and started his own one-man, one-plane (a Curtiss HS-2L flying boat) company, Pacific Airways Limited. Much of his work was fishery patrols and aerial surveys for the provincial and federal governments.

He was as tenacious in developing private air companies in Canada as he was in fighting Germans. In the spring of 1926 he felt that the newly formed RCAF was monopolising areas of business that could be done by private firms, so he sent a strongly worded memorandum to the Ministers of Public Works and National Defence. He complained that the RCAF was strangling the natural evolution of private aviation in Canada and questioned the legitimacy of the RCAF's conduct of civil government operations beyond the experimental stage. His memorandum percolated through the National Defence HQ until it reached the sympathetic audience of J.A. Wilson. It was championed by him who made good on the reorganisation of the RCAF and had a small appropriation of monies to support the formation of private flying clubs who would, in exchange, train people to fly. This provided the fledgling RCAF with a body of partially

trained men to draw on in the event of war. Sixteen clubs were set up in 1927, with two aircraft each. The Aeronautics Act was also revised to relieve the RCAF of the responsibility to oversee all aspects of Civil and Military aviation.



In the mean time, MacLaren got on with his business by merging with Western Canada Airways in 1928. He was made superintendent of the Western Canada division. He expanded their operations into the Yukon and sub-Arctic, sometimes flying their Fokker Super Universals (G-CASK and G-CASN) himself. In 1929, MacLaren and H. Hollick-Kenyon

Eventually WCA was taken over by Canadian Airways and MacLaren was made assistant general manager for B.C. James Richardson, the founder, tried to form a national airline by buying out smaller competitors. When in 1937 the Canadian government decided to form a national airline, Trans-Canada Airlines, CA went into a tailspin that it couldn't recover from. Canadian Pacific Railways bought them out in 1939 to form Canadian Pacific Airlines.

Donald MacLaren was recruited by TCA to be the assistant to the vice-president and took part in early transcontinental flights with the Lockheed Electra. In 1940, he rose to be the superintendent of stations and by the end of WWII was executive assistant to the president. During WWII he took an active interest in the Air Cadet League and in 1941 formed the first squadron in Winnipeg. He was soon appointed the League's first president. He retired from TCA in 1958. Air Canada (the old TCA) presented the D.R. MacLaren Trophy to the Air Cadet League in his honour. It is awarded annually to the most proficient air cadet squadron in B.C.