Airplane Creek Memorial: We Will Remember – 14 July 2015
or….. KK241, lost but not forgotten.

– submitted by Simon Grant

On June 1, 1945 eleven Royal Air Force (RAF) airmen in training at Abbotsford 5 Operational Training Unit airfield climbed into the B24 Liberator bomber marked KK241 and flew into thick clouds. Their last radio transmission was to the Abbotsford airfield requesting their position. Abbotsford airfield's response was not acknowledged, despite being relayed through another bomber in the area. Further, KK241 failed to report in at its first checkpoint. Over two hundred men, and nearly fifty planes, spent sixteen desperate days searching over 1 120 000 kilometres for the plane**.** The wreckage was found near the summit of Mt. Welch, 36 kilometres off course. The retrieval group used trucks, jeeps, and even packhorses to get to an advance camp eight miles from the base of Mount Welch. The terrain became so difficult to traverse that they dismounted and travelled on foot for three days until they reached the wreckage. Because of the extremely difficult terrain the remains had to be buried in a mass grave between the summits of Mount Welch and Mount Still.

On June 11, 1983 members of the Royal Canadian Air Cadets 861 Silverfox Squadron in Abbotsford constructed a monument to the fallen airmen on an island in Airplane Creek near the base camp location of the 1945 expedition.

In 2013, Cadets from 147 Airwolf Squadron in Chilliwack surveyed the condition of the memorial. They found the 1983 memorial had fallen facedown into Airplane Creek. A new memorial was proposed soon after. The new memorial will also pay tribute to the other 55 000 personnel who perished in service to Bomber Command during WWII.

The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 280, BC and Yukon Command, 192 Airfield Engineers, and a large group of volunteers under the direction of Lt. (Navy) Ron Shore, are joining efforts to remake the memorial. A total of $63

000 of $105 000 funds wanted to cover the cost of flying the crew's family members from UK to the ceremony, ten years of maintenance, and extra benches for the memorial, including gifts in kind, has been raised so far by the Vedder Golden Branch #280 Royal Canadian Legion. The new monument is to feature three large slabs of granite stone with the engine from the wreckage embedded in the central stone. It will replace the 1983 monument on Airplane Creek.

More than 50% of all men aged 18-45 in British Columbia enlisted in WWII, the highest enlistment rate in Canada.

According to the Chilliwack War Museum, in Chilliwack the Blue Hydrangea Living Memorial has forty-nine Blue Hydrangeas planted, one for every Canadian Air Force member killed in WWII. One of the forty-nine Blue Hydrangeas was planted for the men of KK241.

This monument will tell the story and the history of the Abbotsford and Chilliwack area, and Canada's involvement in the war. "Our goal is to keep the memory alive of the brave men and women who fought for Canada and remember their important contribution during those difficult years" said Robert Love, President of the Veterans Memorial Restoration Society. The Veterans Memorial Restoration Society found there are an additional 27 other sites like this in British Columbia.
Here are some photos from the 14 July 2015 Ceremony:

Members of the Royal Canadian Legion Vedder Golden Branch, 147 Airwolf (Chilliwack) and 861 Silverfox (Abbotsford) Royal Canadian Air Cadets, 19 Wing Comox, 192 Aldergrove Airfield Engineering Flight, and company making the memorial.

Members of the Vedder Golden Branch practising to lay the flag over the engine of KK241. Lt. Navy Ron Shore (Man organizing the restoration) stands next to them.

The Sea King Helicopter from 19 Wing Comox lands the recovered engine on a trailer.

The flag party presents arms during the ceremony.

Members of 192 Wing Comox attend the ceremony.

Ron Shore addresses the congregation on the history and unveiling of the memorial.

Members of the Royal Canadian Legion Vedder Golden Branch, 147 Airwolf (Chilliwack) and 861 Silverfox (Abbotsford) Royal Canadian Air Cadets, 19 Wing Comox, 192 Aldergrove Airfield Engineering Flight, and Chilliwack 39 Combat Engineer Regiment, stand behind the engine.