

PLAQUES IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Location Yellowknife: Bristol Freighter

Map Ref

Acquired by City of Yellowknife Date 1969

Description plaqued by the Yellowknife Museum Society
near Yellowknife Airport

Text

Bristol Freighter 170MK31

This aircraft was donated by Wardair Canada Ltd. as a monument to commemorate the work done by this type of air freighter in developing northern Canada by servicing trading posts, schools, mining properties, oil exploration crews, and un-named Arctic islands.

This particular aircraft was retired from active service early in 1968 after making history of May 6, 1967, when, piloted by Captain Don Braun, it was the first wheel equipped aircraft to land at the North Pole.

Bristol Freighter getting face lift

by Mark Sproxtton
Northern News Services

Yellowknife's wings of welcome will soon have a new sparkle.

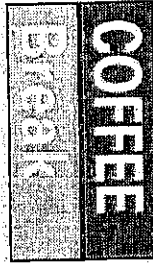
"Welcome to Yellowknife," says the sign next to the Bristol Monument at the

corner of Old Airport Road and Highway 3.

The greeting sign will soon be upgraded, as will

the aging paint on the plane that was once synonymous with the growth of Yellowknife's economy.

The sign welcomes visitors



to gold city, but it's the plane that will linger in people's memories. And the plane's history is entwined with that of modern Yellowknife.

Bought by bush pilot Max Ward in the late 1950s, many thought the purchase of the Bristol Freighter 170 would be the demise of Wardair.

The plane looks awkward, but in his autobiography, Ward said the ugly duckling was beautiful in a way unlike any other plane then built — its hauling capacity.

The Bristol could carry six tons of freight or 42 passengers, or a combination of the two. When it came to payload, such stalwarts as Twin Otters and Beavers were not in the same league.

Business boomed for Ward and his new plane. Mining and exploration firms booked the plane regularly to haul supplies to camps across the North.

Mayor Dave Lovell helped clean up some of those camps and flew on the aircraft that now rests near the airport.

"It was an amazing plane," he said. "I was always cold on it, but it was the right plane and the right time."

The Bristol was also the first wheeled plane to land at the

Plane helped develop the North

North pole. Flown by Don Braun, Wardair later bought other Freighters and eventually purchased all the spare parts available in Canada.

The Bristol Monument plane was retired from service in March, 1969. It was bought

from Wardair in 1970 by the Yellowknife Museum Society and later hoisted to its current location.

The spot was actually the second choice for the monument, said Lovell. The first is now the home of the Explorer

Hotel.

At the time it was uncertain how the plane would get to the top of the hill, so the decision to build the hotel may have saved a headache or two, Lovell said.

The old paint on the Bristol has been sand-blasted off. City

crews want a few back-to-back days of sunshine before applying a new paint job, completing the plane's aura on the podium.

His old plane is stationary, but Max Ward still wings in and out of his Old Town float base every summer — in a shiny Twin Otter of the same color as the Bristol Freighter.

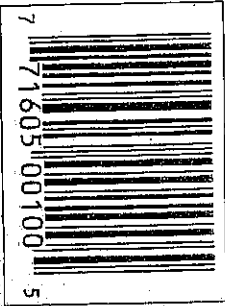
Quote

"Those who believe in aliens tend to fall into two categories," says Pastor Roger Woods

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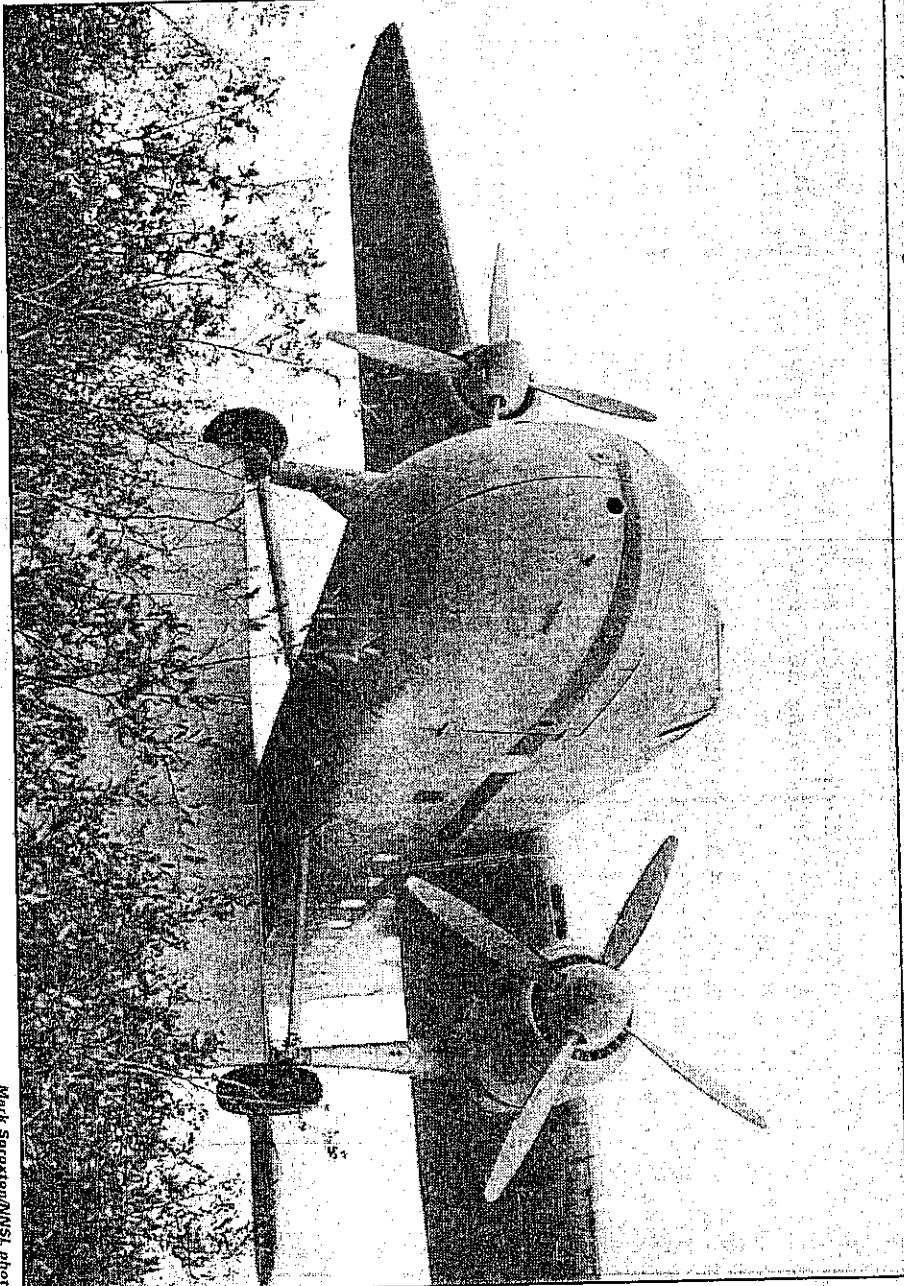
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Yellowknife

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Mark Sproxtton/ANSL photo

The Bristol Freighter, one of the first sights people see when driving into the city, is being refurbished for the first time in years. It was the first large-capacity plane to operate in the North.