

# No. 434 (Bluenose) Squadron

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OF ALL the R.C.A.F. squadrons which served at home and overseas during the Second World War, few had a sterner introduction to the meaning of the word "ardua" in the motto of the Royal Air Forces than did No. 434 Squadron. It was engaged on operations with No. 6 (R.C.A.F.) Group of Bomber Command for a period of just over 20 months, from 12 August 1943 to 25 April 1945, and in that time it lost 484 officers and airmen killed or missing on sorties against the enemy. (There were also nine fatal casualties to aircrew and ground personnel due to training accidents, mishaps, or natural causes.) As the squadron's average aircrew strength was about 248 men, these losses meant that No. 434 was wiped out twice during its relatively brief operational career. Most of these very heavy casualties were sustained during its first six months of operations (August 1943 to February 1944) when 43 crews, a total of 313 officers and airmen, failed to return, representing a casualty rate of 11.8% of the 364 sorties. Then, having passed "per ardua", the squadron entered upon happier days, and in the last 14 months of the campaign its casualties showed an appreciable decrease; 25 crews (171 men) were lost in the course of 2223 sorties, a ratio of only 1.1%.

No. 434 Squadron was the thirteenth heavy bomber squadron formed by the R.C.A.F. overseas during the Second World War, and it was on a thirteenth that the first member of the new unit reported for duty — a combination of thirteens that the superstitious may say "jinxed" the squadron during its early months, but which certainly did not in any way affect the morale of its personnel. The squadron's birthplace was Tholthorpe, in Yorkshire, and the date was 13 June 1943. The first commanding officer of No. 434 was Wing Cdr. C. E. Harris, a Canadian in the R.A.F., and from its Nova Scotian-born commander the squadron received the nickname ("Bluenose") by which it was known during the war. The squadron badge depicts its namesake, the famous schooner "Bluenose", the design being taken from that on the Canadian ten-cent coin. The motto "In Excelsis Vincimus" means "We Conquer in the Heights".

When No. 434 was first formed at Tholthorpe the station was still under construction, and mud lay everywhere. Although its setting beside a quaint old-world village was rather picturesque, conditions were for a time somewhat primitive and crowded. Despite these initial handicaps of an unfinished station and the inevitable lack of equipment and supplies, the unit quickly got into shape, thanks to a fine spirit of co-operation and willingness to work long and hard. On the night of 12 August 1943 — two months from its first stirring into life — No. 434 carried out its maiden operation when nine *Halifax Vs* bombed Milan in northern Italy as part of the aerial preparation for the invasion of Mussolini's homeland.

The squadron's second operation, on 17 August, was against another distant target and one which, in contrast to Milan, was very strongly defended. Peenemunde, the Nazi V.1 and V.2 experimental station on the shores of the Baltic, was extensively damaged, but night-fighters swarming over the area took a heavy toll, Wing Cdr. Harris's unit losing three of the ten crews which it sent out. After

Peenemunde, the squadron made seven further raids on Germany between 22 August and 6 September, attacking some of the most heavily defended targets in the Reich — Berlin (twice), Leverkusen, Nuremberg, Muenchen-Gladbach, Mannheim, and Munich, and lost six more crews, three of them on operations against the German capital. One of the missing bombers was captained by Sqn. Ldr. R. A. McLernon, one of the flight commanders, whose *Halifax* was shot down in flames by a night-fighter over the Danish coast. Taking to his parachute, McLernon landed in shallow water, waded ashore on an island and, after hiding for a time, was assisted by some Danish workmen who arranged for his transfer to Sweden. He was then flown back to Britain after an absence of just four weeks. Sqn. Ldr. McLernon was the first of fourteen "Bluenose" airmen who successfully evaded capture when shot down over enemy-held territory; two others escaped after being taken prisoner.

In the attack on Muenchen-Gladbach, Sgt. James Geddes, an R.A.F. flight engineer, won the squadron's first decoration (a D.F.M.) for exemplary conduct on his first sortie when, despite a wound in the stomach, he calmly continued with his duties and did not disclose that he had been injured until the aircraft was safely home.

A long spell of bad weather interrupted operations until 15 September, when No. 434 took part in two successive attacks on rail targets at Montlucon and Modane, in central and southern France, in support of the invasion of Italy. Then it returned to the strategic bombing campaign against Germany, making fifteen raids between 22 September and 3 December on targets at Hanover (three times), Mannheim, Kassel and Frankfurt (twice each), Bochum (the squadron's first target in the Ruhr), Dusseldorf, Leverkusen, Berlin, Stuttgart, and Leipzig. "Bluenose" crews also completed their first "gardening" operation to plant mines in the western Baltic and a Danish fjord. Twenty crews were lost on these missions, representing almost one crew out of every nine that took off. The heaviest blow of all was an attack on Kassel (22 /23 October) when four crews, one-third of the "Bluenose" force, did not come back.

In one of the raids on Mannheim, flak sent Flt. Sgt. E. H. Ells' bomber spinning earthwards. The captain told his crew to prepare to bail out, but when the rear gunner reported that his turret was jammed, his companions elected to remain on board and attempt a forced landing in enemy territory at night. Ells put the *Halifax* down in a ploughed field and all but one of the crew survived the crash-landing. Even more remarkable were the experiences of members of another crew whose bomber was shot down by a night-fighter near Leverkusen on the night of 19/20 November. One member of the crew was killed by the fighter's bursts, but five others bailed out and were captured. Sgt. A. V. McIntosh, the flight engineer, did not remain long in enemy hands. Locked up overnight in an old prison, he managed to force the boards in the cell door, slipped out of the jail, and made his way across the frontier into Holland. There the Dutch underground took care of the Canadian airman until he was able to return to Britain in September 1944. He was the first member of No. 434 to escape from captivity.

The story of another member of the same crew is an amazing mixture of luck, persistence, and courage, beginning with a miraculous escape from death and ending with the award of the British Empire Medal. When the captain told the crew to jump, Sgt. J. L. N. Warren, the rear gunner, did not hear the order because his intercom, had been shot away. Thinking that the *Halifax* was on its way back home, Warren remained at his post for a time until, becoming uneasy, he climbed back into the fuselage, found that the rest of the crew had gone, and was shocked to see that the altimeter read only 950 feet. He hurried back to the turret for his parachute, but before he could clip it on, the *Halifax* struck the ground and burst into flames. Despite injuries, Warren got free and hobbled away from the blazing wreckage. He tried to make his way back to freedom, but was so weak and sick that he finally had to give himself up. In the spring of 1944, after one unsuccessful attempt, he escaped from prison

camp, reached Holland on a freight train, and made contact with the underground movement. For about six months he remained in hiding, dodging pursuit from one shelter to another, until a surprise search by the Germans one morning finally caught him. With several Dutch and Polish companions, he received brutal treatment at the hands of the Gestapo, who accused the Canadian airman of being a terrorist.

Early in February 1945, Warren and other prisoners were loaded into boxcars to be taken to a prison camp in Germany, each man being given a loaf of bread as rations for the six-day journey. Still determined to escape, Warren and some of his companions pried open a small window in their car, dropped off the train and took to their heels across country under fire from the guards. The Canadian airman again got in touch with the Dutch underground, who sheltered him for several weeks. When an attempt to cross the Rhine by boat was frustrated by enemy fire, Warren again went into hiding until British troops finally reached the town in April 1945 and liberated him.

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Three weeks after Warren and his crew went missing, No. 434 moved, on 11 December 1943, to a new base at Croft on the northern border of Yorkshire. Like the previous station, Croft was still under construction when the squadron moved in, and once again it had to contend with primitive conditions and oozing mud for a time. Here the "Bluenoses" remained until the end of the war in Europe. A change of location, however, did not bring a change of luck. In its first two months at Croft, No. 434 carried out seven operations and lost 16 of the 82 *Halifaxes* that were sent out, a casualty rate of almost one in five. The "Battle of Berlin" was at its height at this time. The squadron had already made three attacks upon "The Big City" while at Tholthorpe, and four of the first seven operations from Croft were also directed at this strongly defended target. The first in the series was completed with the loss of one airman killed by flak, but the other three cost ten aircraft and eight crews. Half of these losses (five aircraft and four crews, including both flight commanders) were sustained in one attack on 28/29 January 1944, the most disastrous in the squadron's history, when only seven of its twelve bombers returned. The other targets, Frankfurt, Magdeburg, and Leipzig, were also well protected by flak and night-fighters, and six more crews went missing while attacking them.

The raid on Leipzig, on 19/20 February 1944, marked the end of this long series of heavy losses; a new and much more fortunate chapter now opened in the squadron's history. From the strategical bombing campaign against Germany, the "Bluenose" crews turned to shorter-range and less heavily defended targets in France and the Low Countries, as Bomber Command directed most of its great offensive power against rail centres and airfields in preparation for the launching of "Overlord", the invasion of Normandy. Four months elapsed before No. 434 again had a German target in its bomb-sights. Another feature of this new phase of the bombers' war was an intensification of the mine-laying campaign to impede the movement of U-Boats and disrupt enemy shipping activities along the European coast from Norway to the Netherlands. The scale of operations was sharply increased, the number of sorties (362) in March and April 1944 alone almost equalling the squadron's total (380) for the previous seven months. At the same time the casualty rate showed an even greater, and most comforting, decrease to just over 1 % of the aircraft sent out during the last year of the war.

Early in February 1944, Wing Cdr. Harris, who had led the "Bluenoses" since their formation in June 1943, left the squadron for another post in No. 6 Group, with the tribute of a D.F.C. for the "high skill, fortitude, and devotion to duty" which he had displayed on operations against the enemy. His successor in command was Wing Cdr. C. S. Bartlett, D.F.C., another Canadian officer in the R.A.F., who had won his decoration for gallant services in the Middle East, which included a secret mission to destroy a strategic bridge on the Mosul-Aleppo railway. Under their new commander, the

"Bluenose" crews devoted most of their effort through the next three months to laying mines in "garden" areas along the Frisian Islands, around Heligoland, in Kiel Bay, Flensburg Fjord, and the western Baltic. Between 25 February and 7 May the squadron sent out 154 *Halifaxes* on fifteen of these missions, losing one crew which crashed while returning to base, and, on the other hand, claiming the destruction of a Ju. 88 night-fighter which was shot down in flames. In another encounter with an enemy fighter, Sgt. Joe Petsche, one of the gunners in a *Halifax*, won the D.F.M. for gallantry in helping to extinguish a fire in the bomber despite the fact that he had been wounded and was in great pain and suffering from the loss of blood.

While the mine-laying activities were going on, "Bluenose" crews had also been busy bombing tactical targets, rail yards, and airfields in northern France and Belgium, as Bomber Command joined in the "Transportation Plan" to paralyse enemy communications in that area before the invasion began. No 434's contribution "to the campaign was 17 raids in the three months before D-Day against objectives at such places as LeMans, Amiens, Laon, Trappes, Aulnoye, Vaires, Lille, Lens, Villeneuve-St. Georges, and St. Ghislain. Some of the attacks were outstanding in their results, and the Plan as a whole "proved singularly successful" and was a major contribution to the success of the invasion. Two crews were missing from these attacks, both being lost over Montzen on 27/28 April, when night-fighters were very active. The squadron claimed one Ju. 88 destroyed and another probably destroyed during these operations.

As D-Day drew nearer, the bombers turned their attention to the enemy's coastal defences. The "Bluenoses" made two attacks on gun batteries at Calais and single attacks on the defences at Boulogne, Trouville, Le Clipon, and Merville-Franceville, and they also bombed an enemy radar-jamming station at Leubringhen in the Calais area.

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Activities in May had been somewhat reduced while the squadron converted from the *Halifax V* to the more efficient Mark III. Operations on the V ended on 11/12 May, after 779 sorties had been flown on that type, and the IIIs made their first sorties on the night of Victoria Day. Some of the new aircraft were fitted with H<sub>2</sub>S radar, while others carried a mid-under turret armed with a .50 machine-gun and had an extra gunner in the crew. When D-Day came, No. 434 had been out on operations 76 times since the day of its formation. One of the original crews, captained by Flt. Lt. J. M. Snelgrove, had taken part in 38 of these missions and was the first full crew to complete a tour with the squadron.

After pounding the coastal batteries at Merville-Franceville at the mouth of the Orne on the eastern flank of the invasion area at midnight of 5 /6 June, No. 434 resumed its attacks on the enemy's lines of communication for a fortnight, delivering loads of 500-lb. bombs to the rail yards and junctions at Conde-sur-Noireau, Versailles, Arras, and Cambrai. It also attacked the airfield at Le Mans and, on its first daylight mission, the harbour and E-boat pens at Boulogne. One crew was lost in the attack on Versailles, and enemy fighters were again very much in evidence over Arras on the night of 12/13 June, when three aircraft did not return. Among the missing was Wing Cdr. Chris Bartlett, whose inspiring example as "a forceful and courageous leader" had won him a Bar to the D.F.C. Four members of another crew, including Sgt. Joe Petsche, D.F.M., who were shot down that night, successfully evaded capture, thanks to the French underground, until Arras was liberated in September. In the course of many combats fought in the target area, "Bluenose" bombers accounted for two of the enemy. After a long absence of four months, No. 434 returned to Germany on 16/17 June to join in an attack on a synthetic oil plant at Sterkrade in the Ruhr. It was another tragic operation. Aided by the lack of complete darkness in the short summer night, strong concentrations of enemy fighters got into the bomber streams and took a heavy toll. Thirty-one aircraft, one-tenth of the

attacking force, did not come back, four "Bluenose" crews being among the missing. After Sterkrade, No. 434 Squadron, now under the command of Wing Cdr. F. H. Watkins, its first R.C.A.F. leader, embarked on a new campaign, known as "Crossbow", directed against the flying-bomb sites and depots in northern France. Between 21 June and 28 August, its crews made 19 attacks, most of them in broad daylight, against the small well-camouflaged targets in the Pas de Calais and the Somme Valley. Flak, the only opposition encountered on these attacks, shot down one *Halifax*, from which three of the crew became "evaders".

Although "Crossbow" was the major commitment of the squadron during the last two months of the Battle of Normandy, it also made a number of attacks on other targets, including three in support of Army operations in the Caen area (on 18 July, 7 /8 August, and 14 August) as well as seven others against oil storage depots, freight yards and coastal batteries in France and a Luftwaffe airfield in the Netherlands. There were no losses on these varied operations, but five attacks on German ports and industrial centres in July and August cost the squadron four aircraft and three crews. A well concentrated raid on Stuttgart (25/26 July) was casualty-free, as was another on Bremen (18/19 August), where the defences were quite ineffective. As the bombers flew homeward from Hamburg, however, on 28/29 July, night-fighters caught up with the stream, inflicting some losses which included two "Bluenose" *Halifaxes*. On 12/13 August, the anniversary of its first operation against Milan, No. 434 carried out its 110th mission to bomb Brunswick in central Germany, and once again the enemy intercepted the homeward-bound bombers. A twin-engined night-fighter was destroyed by one of Wing Cdr. Watkins' crews, but another *Halifax* did not return.

Over Kiel a few nights later, one bomber was so badly damaged by flak that the crew had to ditch in the North Sea. Thanks to the coolness and efficiency of Flying Officer John Wagman and Flt. Sgt. H. K. Kaufman, the captain and wireless-operator, both of whom were subsequently decorated, the whole crew was picked up by the Air-Sea Rescue Service.

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August set a record in the long bomber campaign. No. 434 flew 1206 hours on 246 sorties for 19 bombing operations (plus a sea search for Wagman's crew), in the course of which they dropped 2,149,670 pounds of H.E. and incendiaries on enemy targets. Flying Officer M. Harvie and his crew also set a record by taking part in 14 of the month's attacks, while a second crew, skippered by Flt. Lt. R. B. McCullough, marked up yet another record by winning six D.F.C.s on a particularly eventful tour. Also decorated with the D.F.C. was Wing Cdr. Watkins, who completed his tour of operations late that month and was succeeded by Wing Cdr. A. P. Blackburn.

By the close of August, the Battle of Normandy had ended and the German forces were in full retreat eastward, with the allied armies following in close pursuit, driving across the Seine and the Somme towards the Rhine. As the tide of battle ebbed eastward, Nazi garrisons were cut off in several French ports, Le Havre, Boulogne, and Calais. Although the Fuehrer ordered them to hold out to the last man to deny the Allies the use of the valuable port facilities, Bomber Command helped to persuade the garrisons to surrender quickly. No. 434 took part in six of these daylight attacks in September, bombing Le Havre and Boulogne once and the defences around Calais and Cap Gris Nez four times.

Then, since the capture of the flying-bomb sites in France had ended the "Crossbow" campaign and there were, for the time being, no further tactical commitments for the Army, Bomber Command turned its whole strength once again to the strategical campaign against the industrial basis of Hitler's "Thousand-year Reich". In September, while No. 434 was pounding the Nazi hold-out garrisons, it also made five attacks on targets in Germany, added ten more in October and a further nine in

November. Most of the targets (15 of the 24) were in the Ruhr valley, where the synthetic oil refineries had high priority on Bomber Command's list of objectives. Several raids were also made on coastal targets, including the U-boat pens at Bergen in Norway and the ports of Emden, Kiel, and Wilhelmshaven, as well as the great inland shipping-centre at Neuss. Although "Happy Valley" had long been renowned for its flak and fighter defences, the squadron lost only one crew missing on these operations, in addition to two men killed by flak and six more who died when their aircraft crashed shortly after taking off from base.

Outstanding among the attacks were those against Emden in the early evening of 6 September, Dortmund on 6 October, a "double-barrelled" blow at Duisburg on the morning and night of 14 October (in which 2000 bombers took part), two raids on Cologne in the last days of October, and fire-raising attacks on Dusseldorf and Bochum early in November, which turned the targets into "a seething mass of flames and smoke". During a raid on Oberhausen on 1 November, Warrant Officer Cyril Ferris' bomber was hit by flak from the Duisburg defences. Although the wireless-operator was instantly killed and several of the crew were wounded, Ferris pressed on to the target and Flt. Sgt. C. A. Barber, the air bomber, released the load of incendiaries despite serious head injuries and damaged equipment. Both men were decorated for showing courage and tenacity under such difficult and harassing circumstances. Me. 262 jets were seen with the enemy's fighters that night; one of No. 434's *Halifaxes* was counted among the missing.

One of the operations in the late autumn of 1944 was a tactical attack in support of the U.S. Army's offensive towards Cologne. When the crews came back from Julich, one of three communication centres which Bomber Command blasted on 16 November, they reported that they had left the target "an unrecognizable heap of rubble" surrounded by a churned-up sea of craters. Good results were also achieved in an attack on the marshalling-yards at Soest early in December, from which one crew did not return.

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Winter weather, with its frequent fogs, naturally caused many interruptions in the bombing campaign, and activities were further restricted for a time by conversion to a new type of aircraft, the Canadian-built *Lancaster X*. "A" Flight was the first to convert, while "B" continued operation on the *Halifax III* until late in December. On the 17th, after a long stand-down due to fog, the *Hallies* bombed Duisburg once more in a raid that was marked by bad weather, the loss of one aircraft, and numerous combats in which "Bluenose" gunners destroyed an Me. 109. The *Hallies* made the last of their 1267 sorties on the 21st, when they attacked a marshalling-yard at Cologne in an attempt to disrupt the movement of enemy troops and supplies to the Ardennes, where the Americans were engaged in the "Battle of the Bulge". Three days later, the *Lancs* made their first appearance, Wing Cdr. Blackburn leading seven crews to an airfield at Dusseldorf as part of a large-scale offensive against Luftwaffe bases in support of the Ardennes battle. (The normal bomb-load of the *Lanc X* was 12,000 pounds of explosives, which usually included one 4,000-pound "cookie".) Small forces of *Lancs* took part in further attacks on the Opladen and Kalk yards near Cologne, an oil plant at Scholven in the Ruhr, and war industries at Nuremberg, until "B" Flight completed its conversion course and the whole squadron then went out to bomb Hanover with conspicuous success on the night of 5/6 January 1945.

In December, Wing Cdr. Blackburn's crews won a trophy for the highest bombing accuracy in No. 6 Group, and the next month they carried off another award for the lowest accident rate in the Group.

Unfavourable weather in January kept activities down to 91 sorties on seven operations. Two of the attacks were on oil targets at Merseburg and Zeitz, deep in Saxony, both of which places suffered

very extensive damage. Fires raging in Zeitz lit up the night sky so brightly that one crew claimed they could have read a newspaper. Despite the depth of these penetrations into Germany, the enemy was unable to offer any strong opposition. One of the relatively few night-fighters that got into the bomber stream on the Merseburg operation was shot down in flames by an alert "Bluenose" crew; on the other hand, a *Lancaster* was lost over Zeitz.

In February the bombing campaign began to quicken once more, and No. 434 was out nine times by night and twice by day. In March the tempo became even faster, with five night attacks and eight by day, and in April, when the number of available targets was shrinking daily and almost hourly, there were seven operations, three of which were in daylight. From all these attacks four crews did not return. Outstanding among the operations carried out in the last months of the war was one against Dresden on the night of 13/14 February. Planned to support the Russian advance into Germany, the attack was the longest mission ever flown by No. 434 Squadron, involving 10 to 11 hours flying. The Saxon capital, crowded with refugees fleeing from the Red armies, was swept by great fire-storms which raged unchecked through the city; the lowest estimate put the number of casualties at 25,000. The next night Chemnitz, 35 miles southwest of Dresden, was the target for a two-pronged attack from which one "Bluenose" bomber did not return. After further attacks on Dortmund (where there were many combats with night-fighters) and Duisburg, the squadron went to Pforzheim, on the edge of the Black Forest, where the town was devastated by fire in one of Bomber Command's most successful operations.

On 27 February, No. 434 resumed daylight missions, flying in "gaggle" to bomb Mainz. Early in March two more "gaggle" efforts were directed against Mannheim and Cologne, followed by destructive night attacks on Chemnitz and Dessau. Essen was bombed by 1050 aircraft on 11 March in the largest and heaviest daylight assault yet mounted by Bomber Command. This attack, in which one "Bluenose" *Lancaster* was a victim of the flak defences, put the finishing touches to the Ruhr industrial metropolis. The Battle of the Ruhr was now drawing to a close as Allied armies closed the circle around "Happy Valley"; before it ended, however, No. 434 made three final attacks on Dortmund, Hagen, and Mathias Stinnes. In the raid on Hagen (15/16 March), a *Lancaster* captained by Flying Officer J. O. Stewart was shot down by a night-fighter, only one of the crew surviving. Just a few days previously Stewart had won the D.F.C. for determination in completing his first operational sortie despite an unserviceable engine and intercom system.

In support of American ground operations, the squadron attacked Zweibrucken on 14 March. Another night attack on an oil refinery near Hemmingstedt in Schleswig-Holstein, where great fires and explosions were touched off, was followed by two daylight raids on Hildesheim and Hanover on behalf of the Allied crossing of the lower Rhine at Wesel. Then, on the last day of March, the "Bluenoses" went to Hamburg. This mission was noteworthy in that it was one of the very rare occasions on which Bomber Command encountered strong enemy fighter opposition on its daylight forays during the last months of the war. As No. 6 Group's "gaggle" came in on the target, some minutes late and well behind the main bomber stream with its fighter escort, thirty or forty Me. 262 jets rocketed up from the cloud-banks to engage the bombers. No. 434's crews fought at least ten combats, in which one crew was shot down (the squadron's last war casualties), one jet probably destroyed, and two more jets were damaged.

Paul Blackburn had now completed his tour, with a D.F.C., and Wing Cdr. J. C. Mulvihill, A.F.C., led the squadron during the last few weeks of the campaign. Thick cloud and heavy icing hampered an attack on the Leuna plant at Merseburg early in April, but a night attack on Hamburg was more successful and added another Ju. 88 to the list of enemy aircraft destroyed by "Bluenose" gunners. Freight yards at Leipzig were well cratered on the 10th in a record-making deep penetration of the

Reich by Bomber Command in daylight, and another rail target at Schwandorf was obliterated by No. 6 Group's precision bombing on the night of 16/17 April. The shipyards at Kiel received some damage in another night attack. An attempt to support the Army closing in on Bremen was abortive, in so far as No. 434 was concerned, because of cloud over the aiming-point. Operations ended on 25 April with a daylight attack on coastal batteries on Wangerooge island in the Frisians. There were no more targets left for the heavy bombers in the ruins of Hitler's third Reich.

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During its tour with No. 6 Group of Bomber Command, No. 434 Squadron had flown 2597 sorties on 199 operations and had dropped 20,700,000 pounds of bombs and laid 450,000 pounds of mines. It had lost 74 aircraft and 68 crews on operations and training, the casualties in personnel totalling 493 officers and men. Of these, 358 were killed or presumed dead, 117 were prisoners of war, 14 evaded capture, 2 escaped, and 2 others were reported safe. In air combat, ten enemy aircraft were claimed as destroyed, two as probably destroyed, and thirteen as damaged. On the squadron's roll of honours and awards there were 128 names, including six Bars to the D.F.C., 108 D.F.C.s, six D.F.M.s, one B.E.M., and seven Mentions in Despatches.

After V-E Day, the squadron participated in Operation "Exodus" to fly liberated prisoners-of-war home to Britain from the continent; then it settled down to a programme of intensive training. With seven other Canadian heavy bomber squadrons, No. 434 had been selected for "Tiger Force" to take part in the "Second Phase" against Japan. On 7 June, the first crews left Croft to fly home to Canada, and the others followed three days later. On arrival in Canada, the crews were sent on leave before undergoing further training; but Japan's capitulation ended these plans, and, on 5 September 1945, No. 434 Squadron was officially disbanded at Dartmouth, N.S.

Almost seven years later, the "Bluenose" name and number were revived with the formation of a fighter squadron at Uplands, Ont., on 1 July 1952. Under the leadership of Wing Cdr. J. D. Mitchner, D.F.C. and Bar, the new No. 434 Squadron was quickly rounded into shape, and eight months from the day of its formation it was ready to "leap-frog" overseas to join No. 1 Air Division. On 5 March 1953, Nos. 413, 427, and 434 Squadrons (the three squadrons which were to form No. 3 Fighter Wing) gathered at St. Hubert for an official farewell ceremony. Two days later sixteen "Bluenose" *Sabres*, led by Flt. Lt. H. S. Tetlock, took off from Uplands en route to Goose Bay on the first leg of Leapfrog 3. When No. 434 reached its new base at Zweibrücken, it had added to its record the unique achievement of being the only squadron in No. 1 Air Division which had flown the Atlantic both ways — east to west on *Lancasters* in 1945, and west to east on *Sabres* in 1953.

The squadron's war-time badge, depicting one of the fastest and most graceful ships ever to sail the seas, is still appropriate for the unit in its new role of flying sleek and swift jets; and the motto "In Excelsis Vincimus" is no less appropriate for the *Sabres* than it was for the *Hallies* and *Lancs*.

