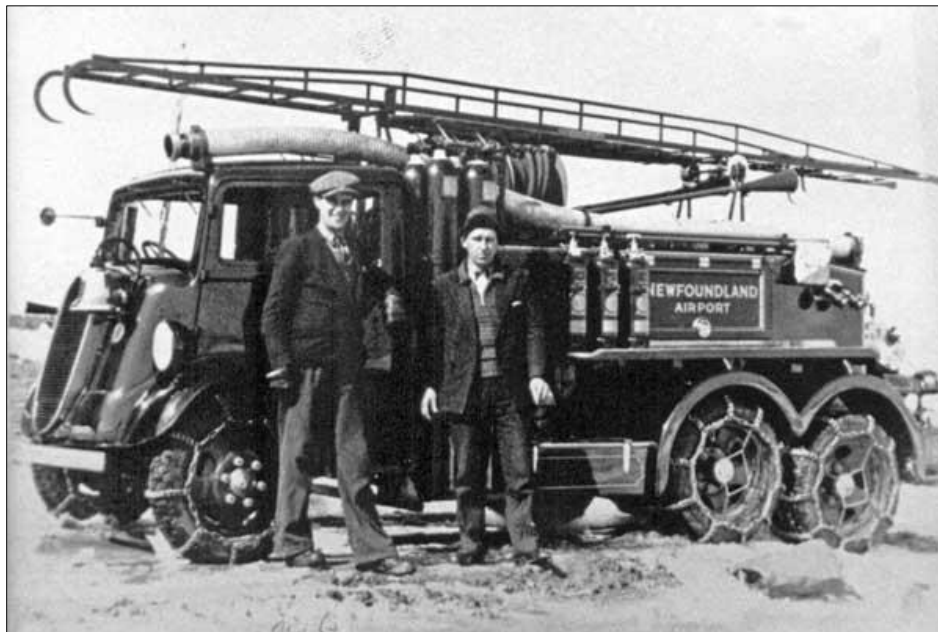


Gander's First Fire Engine

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<http://crossroadsoftheworld.ca/>



A tweet on the Gander Airport Historical Society website in March 2018 showed a photo of Gander airport's first fire engine and posed the question of its fate. Documents at the Rooms provincial archives shed some light on the matter. Correspondence between F.C. Jewett, chief engineer in charge of airport construction, and Raymond Manning, Newfoundland government secretary for Public Works, suggest that the British-made Merryweather fire engine arrived late in 1938. The airport transferred the fire engine to the RCAF when they assumed control of the airfield in April 1941. The following year, a fire destroyed the original airport garage along with the Merryweather and a Stewart truck, valued at \$3500 and \$1000, respectively. The garage itself was valued at \$4600.

In July 1942, in a memorandum to the Newfoundland Commission of Government, Sir Wilfred Woods, Commissioner for Public Utilities, reported that investigators were unable to determine the exact cause of the fire. However, added Woods, "it seems probable that it was caused either by live coals falling from a defective stove on to the oil-soaked floor of the repair shop or by oil being thrown on the fire in the stove in an effort to stimulate it," although there was no evidence to support the latter theory. In any event, after only three years of fire protection services, the inferno had reduced the airport's first fire engine to a burnt shell.