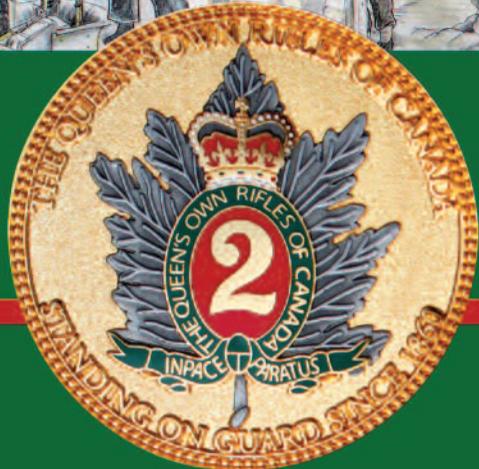


BOTWOOD



**The Queen's Own Rifles
Association of Canada
Maritimes-Newfoundland Branch
August 2015**



A heritage that has been forged by individual bravery and quiet commitment to friendship.

"...and the story is told, of human veins and pulses, of eternal pathways of fire, of dreams that survive the night, of doors held ajar 'n storms"
- E.J. Pratt, Newfoundland



GANDER

*The
Queen's Own Rifles of Canada
Garrisoned in Botwood and Gander
in
1940*



*The
Queen's Own Rifles
Association of Canada
Maritimes-Newfoundland Branch
August 2015*



Description –

Front and Back Cover:

Up the left side and across the top are pictures from **Botwood**.

Craig Goudie, a well-known visual artist in the Grand Falls-Windsor area, said he is proud to be a part of the project that will depict scenes of the community's important role in World War II.

His concept sketches shown on the top of our front cover was chosen from a number of submissions that were adjudicated during a public viewing session.

“I understand the importance of holding up Newfoundland's story in World War II in general, but I also want people to realize the key role that Botwood played in the war effort as well,” said Craig Goudie.

Botwood was a strategic point of contact between North America and Europe during the war. Before the Gander Airport was opened, Botwood already had a seaplane base from which ‘flying boats’ transported thousands of soldiers to and from Europe.

“With the passing of time many people have forgotten about Botwood's significant role in the war,” Goudie said. “I hope my mural, which will be based on photographs and oral history, will help bring back Botwood's wartime story to the area.

Mural Arts Society President Mike Shainline noted that, “a salute to our veterans (WWI through to the present) is the theme of one mural while the other will feature Botwood's military history during WWII.

Goudie has continued his research since submitting the

Newfoundland & Labrador 2015

sketches and will be adding a few elements. Most people are unaware that there were 14 army regiments serving in Botwood during WWII as well as at least 4 Air force squadrons, a military hospital and naval base.

Shainline added the unveiling is scheduled for Aug. 9 as part of the 75th anniversary celebration of The Queen's Own Rifles WWII service in Botwood.

The metal arch joining the two walls contains the phrase “Lest We Forget” and is adorned with a few poppies. Jim Gosse is fabricating it in Northern Arm.

Across the bottom of the front page and up the right side are pictures from **Gander**.

The proposed Gander Heritage Memorial Park is a project of former students who attended a school reunion in Gander in 2010.

Prompted by the need to leave some type of lasting legacy in the Town, it was decided that the Reunion's Organizing Committee would transfer its focus to seek a suitable project that would be of a permanent nature and be available for public viewing as well as contributing to the wartime history of Gander's unique part in that effort.

The erection of a statue of the Newfoundland war dog, “Sergeant Gander” and his contribution to the defence of Hong Kong Island in 1941 was determined to be an appropriate and fitting project that would be attractive to today's children as well as representing a gift from the early children of Gander.

The statue would be positioned at the present cenotaph site and

would be a life-size monument of the dog sitting with his soldier handler.

The Committee realized that a transformation of the area needed to take place. A landscape architect was engaged to plan and design a new concept that would not only encompass the cenotaph but would also be attractive to residents and visitors as a place of retreat and reflection. The “park” would also include other monuments, tributes, etc. relating to Gander's role in aviation history.

The QOR

The center of the front cover, against a background of green is each side of the coin designed by us for this event. It is very simple and self explanatory.

The Back Cover

Inside are old pictures from the time the QOR were in Newfoundland. Most of them are mentioned in the stories contain herein. I should mention that other famous regimental mascots include Sam who went with the Royal Canadian Regiment to England in 1858. He always led the band on parade and upon his death in 1866; his skin was tanned and used as an apron for the bass drummer. The Royal Newfoundland Regiment in World War One had *Sable Chief* (shown with his handler) as their mascot. Upon his death, Chief was stuffed and now resides in the Military Museum at St. John's.

Outside Back Cover is a collage of pictures from various places, reachable by car in Newfoundland.

May your weekend be joyful and long may your big jib draw.



Operation Reunite- Botwood & Gander- August 7th, 8th & 9th- 2015

Some 3 years ago, your executive held a meeting to discuss a reunion in 2015, marking the 75th anniversary of The Queen's Own Rifles being garrisoned in Botwood and Gander in 1940. We wanted it recognized and remembered.

At the time, on my note pad I wrote, "Operation Reunite." We wanted a stone marker in both towns. We wanted to reunite as many members of The Queen's Own Rifles with the community as well as raise the citizen's awareness of this historic event.

This was "No piece of cake" and "we pushed opened doors when it said pull." After dozens of meetings, hundreds and hundreds of phone calls and thousands and yes thousands of emails, we are where we are today.

All members here can be proud of "Operation Reunite." We have successfully reunited with one another as well as reuniting with the community and reuniting this milestone in the history of the Regiment.

For that, I am proud to have been part of this process in the communities of Botwood & Gander and our province. I am particularly proud to be a member of The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada. Thanks for your support. Wayne.



Yes, John tasked us with the job of getting it done. When John goes after something he is relentless and that we didn't have to put up with as he found a whole new purpose in life, yet he always gets his part done.

Both Wayne and I had only our partners, our best buddies to put the pressure on us. Without my best buddy I would have not gotten it all done. She was my proof-reader and overseer for tedious tasks that were strictly my responsibility. I would imagine Wayne was in the same boat. A rising tide raises all boats in the water.

Everything that you will do and see this weekend we had a part in it. We reduced the overall cost per every attendee by designing and executing lotto draws. The **Stone Markers** we designed, we raised funds and paid for them. The coin was designed by us; we raised funds and paid for it. This brochure we pretty much designed, including the most of the Ads and we had the brochure printing paid for with its own Ad funds and some to boot.

We had Jacques De Winter who made the Memorial Glass Panel and donated it to us and *we raised* over \$1800. We had a few large donors and a very large one given by Herb Pitts who gave back his winnings of over \$1100. There were many individuals who gave plenty from their own pocket and also participated in every fund raisers we had. We can forecast we will be able to pay all our bills.

Yes, we did it all for you with your help. We hope you enjoy every moment of it. **Thank you so much for your generous support.**

We know everything will run perfectly. O.K. let's be serious - that's not possible. Every-thing? NO, but we planned to make everything run smoothly. If something does go askew we hope it will be something to add to your memory that you may laugh at later.

I guess my space has run out. I hope you'll enjoy the weekend and get some spare time for exploring our province. So keep laughing and enjoy life as you should. Long may your big jib draw. IPP - Ben



The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Association, Maritimes Newfoundland Executive.



Left to Right-John Metcalfe- President, Wayne Thomas-V-President, Ben Turpin-secretary/treasurer/webmaster

As I reflect back over this past 10 years there has been many fond memories.

My first meetings with several individuals were skeptical as to the viability of our forming an Association of The Queen's Own Rifles in the Maritimes.

I was determined and spent countless hours visiting where possible and telephoning former members soliciting support.

Volunteers were not jumping out of the woodwork, although I had a few who supported the cause and believed in what I was doing. Without their help, the success of our Association would not have been possible and I thank each of them very much.

As we grow older, we slow down and the time has come to pass the reigns over to others. It is with a certain amount of sadness that I step back as your President of the Maritimes Newfoundland Association Branch.

As we continue our journey of ensuring our Association continues and with our struggle to maintain present members and add new members, we must not forget the sacrifices the members before us gave to make a difference to all our lives.

I would like to personally thank Ben and Wayne for their overwhelming support for the 75th Anniversary of The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada having been garrisoned here in Botwood and Gander in 1940.

Have an enjoyable weekend, enjoy our Province and have a safe trip home.

Until we meet again, In Peace Paratus

Yours truly,

John Metcalfe

Newfoundland & Labrador 2015

The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Association, National President

On behalf of the Regimental Association, I would like to congratulate Newfoundland & Maritimes Branch and their organizing committee for putting together this dual town weekend and reunion event.



It was 75 years ago this Monday, August 10th, that the 1st Battalion, The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada arrived in Newfoundland.

I was very fortunate over the years to meet many of the veterans who served here in Newfoundland and was the beneficiary of their very interesting stories.

One common thought voiced by all was that the time spent garrisoned in Newfoundland was the occasion when the Battalion really came together as a cohesive unit. They were able to train independently in smaller formations, at their own speed and to develop the skills that would later serve them so well in Northwest Europe.

That is why it is important to commemorate the time spent here by The Queen's Own.

Newfoundland & Maritimes Branch took the initiative to plan and execute this event, including the design and manufacture of the stone markers we will be dedicating in Gander & Botwood.

Thanks to the organizing committee, they have provided us with not only an opportunity to recognize a significant event in the history of the Regiment, but also a chance to see old friends and make new ones. And best of all, to sample that famous Newfie hospitality!

Have a great weekend and hats off to Newfoundland & Maritimes Branch!

Regards, Bob Dunk
President, The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Association
In Pace Paratus

The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Association, Toronto Branch Executive.



(Back Row – Left to right) Phil ten Kortenaar (Treasurer), Neil Arsenaault, Bob Dunk (National President), Scott Patterson, Gerry Senetchko, Harry Rollo, Andy Macnaughton.

(Front Row –Left to Right) George Walford, Shaun Kelly, Ron Craig (President), Brian Budden (Vice President), David Lavery (IPP)

I want to congratulate the Maritimes – Newfoundland Executive for their hard work and dedication to make the 75th Anniversary celebration of The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada arriving in Botwood and Gander in 1940 – a great success. This is an important event in QOR Regimental history, and we are pleased that we are able to join you for this special celebration.

The reputation of the Newfoundland – Maritimes Branch for hosting an outstanding event is legendary within all the Association Branches across Canada. I know our Members who will be attending are looking forward to renewing old acquaintances and enjoying your hospitality. Again, congratulations on organizing an outstanding event.

Ron Craig

President

Toronto Branch, QOR of C

Newfoundland & Labrador 2015

The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Association, Calgary Branch Executive.



(Left to Right) - Gilles Pharand – Treasurer, Scribe & Kit Shop, Louise Hodder – Secretary & Membership, Ken Moynahan - Vice President, Bob Titus – President, Arlene Albrecht – Entertainment and (seated) is Jeannie Pendlebury – Entertainment.

The Executive Committee meets monthly and the Branch Annual General Meeting is usually scheduled to coincide with the Branch's Regimental Birthday celebrations in April.

On behalf of my fellow committee members and the Calgary Branch, I would like to applaud you on the celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the posting of The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada to Newfoundland. The placement of markers commemorating our regiment garrisoned there is the right thing to do. We wish you all the best of luck.

Gilles

The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Association, Victoria Branch Executive.



Left to Right:

Vice President, Robert Scrafton, Member At Large-Herb Pitts, Secretary-Janice Mercer, Treasurer-Ed Titus, President-Tom Martin, Member At Large Gord Hryhoryshen, Missing-Kit Shop-Peter Kolbe.

On behalf of the Vancouver Island Branch Executive and our members I would like to congratulate the Maritimes-Newfoundland Executive and all members for hosting the 75th Anniversary of The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada being garrisoned in Newfoundland at Botwood and Gander in August of 1940.

We are pleased to participate in this event with you and from past experiences we know full well how much behind the scenes work it takes to organize, to plan and to implement such a function. You can be proud of your efforts and truly do look forward to a "wonderful grand time me bye."

IPP

Tom Martin

President

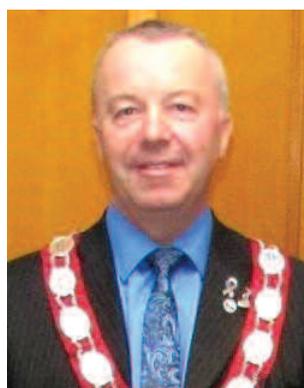
Vancouver Island Branch, QOR of C

Newfoundland & Labrador 2015



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
Botwood, Newfoundland

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



8:00 a.m., August 10th, 2015 marks the 75th Anniversary of the arrival of The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Regiment, at the Port of Botwood during World War II. Once at dockside, the troop ship, Duchess of Richmond, on the morning of August 10th, 1940, saw the disembarkment of 903 troops consisting of four companies.

"A" and "B" companies were posted in Botwood, under the command of Major W.L. Bryan, with the remainder seeing assignment to Gander. The Botwood and Gander companies later exchanged venues. Their deployment was for the purposes of relieving the Black Watch Regiment, and the continuation of their work in developing defensive tactics to protect our seaplane base for reconnaissance of the North Atlantic, for potential and real threats, highlighted by German U-Boat activity.

To all deceased, former, and current Regiment members, please accept our humble thanks for your having been here then, and our warm welcome for your being here now.

We wish to salute all who participated in the organization of this momentous occasion, to ensure its success, be it, in whatever capacity.

As it is with the setting of the sun, so too, the role played by you in our Town's journey, has not gone unnoticed. From the bottom of our "hearts", please know of the immense satisfaction derived by us all in being able to refer to "The Queen's Own Rifles" as one of our own.

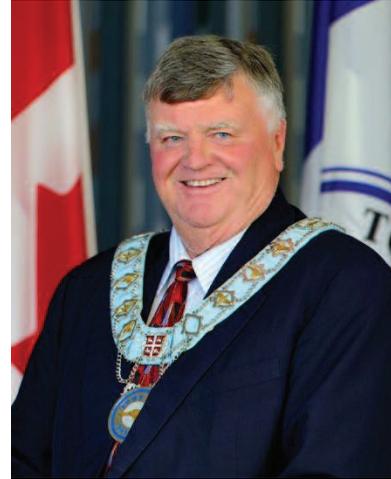
Sincerest regards,

Jerry Dean
Mayor Jerry Dean
Town of Botwood



Town of Gander

**Message from
Claude Elliott
Mayor, Town of Gander**



On behalf of my fellow Councillors and the Citizens of Gander, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the Town of Gander and to the 75th Anniversary of the posting of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada.

Gander's history has been closely intertwined with our military community and the placing of a Memorial Stone Marker commemorating our affiliation with the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada is a tremendous honour.

We trust that you will enjoy our hospitality and hope that your time in Gander is both enjoyable and rewarding.

Sincerely,

Town Council of Gander

**Claude Elliott
Mayor**

Our Guest Speaker



General R.J Hillier (Retired) Former Chief of the Defence Staff for Canadian Forces – the Canadian Forces' Highest Rank

Born in Newfoundland and Labrador, General Rick Hillier joined the Canadian Forces as soon as he could. Having enrolled in the Canadian Forces in 1973 through the Regular Officer Training Plan program, he graduated from Memorial University of Newfoundland in 1975 with a Bachelor of Science Degree. After completing his armour officer classification training, he joined his first regiment, the 8th Canadian Hussars (Princess Louise's) in Petawawa, Ontario. Subsequently, he served with, and later commanded, the Royal Canadian Dragoons in Canada and Germany.

Throughout his career, General Hillier has had the privilege and pleasure of commanding troops from the platoon to multi-national formation level within Canada, Europe, Asia and the United States. He has worked as a staff officer in several headquarters, first at the Army level in Montreal and later at the strategic level in Ottawa.

In 1998 General Hillier was appointed as the first Canadian Deputy Commanding General of III Corps, US Army in Fort Hood, Texas. In 2000 he took command of NATO's Stabilization Force's (SFOR) Multinational Division (Southwest) in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In May 2003 General Hillier was appointed as Commander of the Army and subsequently, in October 2003, he was selected as the Commander of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul, Afghanistan.

General Hillier was promoted to his present rank and assumed duties as the Chief of the Defence Staff on 4 February 2005.

General Hillier and his wife have two sons, a daughter-in-law, and a new grandson. General Hillier enjoys most recreational pursuits but, in particular, runs slowly, plays hockey poorly and golf's not well at all.

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THE HILLIER
INSPIRATION
Series

About the stories:

The RSM of the QOR in the early days of WWII was WO1 Harry Fox, MBE. Harry wrote a book called "**Born Lucky: One D-Day Dodger's Story**". He had a very good account of the days in Botwood & Gander. We have taken much of Chapter 5 from his manuscript and not the printed book and used a lot of it here.

We have found many pictures that we included to enhance each story. Some of the photos are from QOR of Canada D-Day Veteran James Wilkins. Thanks to Brian Budden for obtaining and sending them. Others came from the Botwood Museum and some from the WEB.

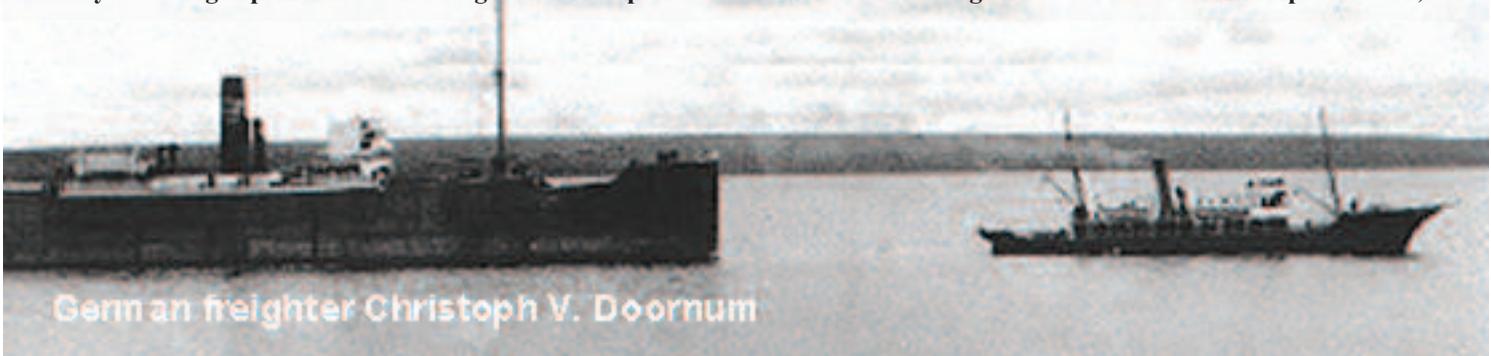
We have used material from our Regimental History, authored by Lieutenant-Colonel William T. Bernard, ED, CD. The title was "**The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada**, 1860 - 1960, One Hundred Years of Canada" and was published in 1960.

We used items first published in "**In Peace Prepared**," the modern history of **The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada**, 1950-2015, written by Charles McGregor.

Some stories were sent to us and were edited to fit the available space. Bits and pieces were found on the internet. For example this paragraph came from: <http://botwood.tripod.com/waryears.html>.

Newfoundland came into World War II in the early hours of September 3, 1939. That day at approximately 11:00 am the people of Botwood became the first on this side of the Atlantic to capture an enemy vessel. At the time, the German freighter M.S. Christoph V. Doornum was in port to load a cargo of ore concentrates from the Buchans mine. The ship had docked several days earlier and under normal circumstances would have been back out to sea but it was delayed by a series of unexplained technical problems. Shortly after, the Newfoundland Constabulary appeared on the wharf to seize the vessel as a prize of war. The captain and crew were removed, put aboard a Botwood Railway Company Passenger Coach, taken to St. John's, and from there to maximum detention for the duration of the war. Customs officers boarded the ship afterwards and seized all its supplies; later the ship was taken to Halifax, renamed, and sailed under the British flag.

S.S. Clyde towing captured German freighter Christoph V. Doornum to her mooring in Botwood harbour on September 11, 1939.



This is the BLACK WATCH

The group the QOR Replaced

Thanks to all who gave permission and provided copy.



QOR in Newfoundland

In 1940 Newfoundland was not yet a province of Canada and was under direct control of Britain. It was called a Commission Government because the island colony had had serious financial trouble during the Depression years forcing Britain to intervene.

Newfoundland was vital to the defense of Canada and indeed North America and hence Canadian infantry units were stationed there for defense against possible German attacks. You have to remember that this was the era of the mighty German battleship Bismarck.

Bismarck



The Queen's Own Rifles arrived in Botwood, Newfoundland August 10, 1940. The trip over here was via the Duchess of Richmond.



Destroyer H60 accompanied the ship and by a curious coincidence the first airplane sighted on escort duty bore the number 753. The serial number of the battalion was also 753.

A & B Companies with part of Headquarters Company remained in Botwood, after arrival in early August. C & D Companies, with the Commanding Officer and the rest of Headquarters Company, headed by rail to Gander Airport. The main task at Gander was guarding the bombers and other planes against saboteurs. Gander was one of the main refueling stops for bombers flown from the U.S. to Britain.





We replaced The Black Watch (of the 2nd Division) who had been there since June and they were only too happy to go - conditions were primitive, to say the least.



“Accommodations in Botwood and Gander was pretty much this”

The Black Watch at least had had decent summer weather. It was close to the end of summer and Newfoundland is never as warm as southern Ontario.

Charlie Company exchanged with Able in early September and took up the Botwood duties. One of the responsibilities while Charlie Company was stationed at Botwood was sending a four-man detachment to the outpost at Lewisporte, a hamlet on the southern side of the Bay of Exploits. While the weather was still good in September, I went out with a relief of riflemen to spell off my friend, Sergeant Dave Hazzard, who had been at Lewisporte for about a week. (Hazzard was later commissioned and killed in action with Baker Company on July 5, 1944 in Normandy while moving up to Carpiquet.)

We had to take a small boat to get to them. We tried not to keep them out there long. It was fairly tedious watching the sea for German ships or subs and there were very few distractions.



Lewisporte Outpost Trip - September 1940- Boat used to travel on Brown's Arm to Lewisporte from Botwood.

Even though life was a struggle in Newfoundland, there was the occasional humorous moment. For instance, one day, I had the company drawn up perfectly. Not a man was out of *line*. The equipment gleamed in the autumn sunshine. I gave the stand at ease order and began my address. "Now listen to this," I told them, trying to *be sure* their attention would be riveted. Sheep were grazing on the hillside behind me. "Now, listen. . ." I started again, allowing for a *small pause*. This was the moment one of the sheep chose to *speak up*. "*Ba -a-a*. The men collapsed. There was times when life was not the easiest, even for a sergeant major.

People often forget that the Battle of the Atlantic began very early in the War as Britain was dependant on Canada for many of its necessities as well as weapons of war. The Germans sent several battle cruisers into the Atlantic in 1940 to try to cut off Britain's lifeline from North America. The first two that went up and down the Atlantic raising havoc with the convoys were the *Gneisenau* and the *Scharnhorst*. These two German ships sank the British carrier *Glorious* off Norway in May 1940. This was before the U-boats were available in large numbers. From late 1941, the subs conducted the main German offensive in the Atlantic. We had one advantage over the Germans in that we got meteorological reports from Northern Ireland and Iceland. There was a rumor that the Germans had established





a weather station on Greenland but that was never proven to the best of my knowledge.

This was before the Bismarck and the Prince Eugen were able to break out from the Baltic into the Atlantic in May 1941. By that time the other two battle cruisers were at port at Brest, on the Brittany coast of France. It was part of the "big picture" of why The Queen's Own was stationed in Newfoundland.

On their off hours, the men would often go fishing in a local stream for trout, with swords, (in Rifle regiments) if you can believe it. The water was only six inches deep and the trout were plentiful. Another favorite pastime was drinking naturally



enough. The men's canteen was reached by walking along the narrow gauge railway track. It was necessary to check the line to ensure that no rifleman was passed out on it, as the train schedules were quite erratic. The men developed quite a taste for Newfie Screech - the local rum. By the end of four months on the "Rock," many of our lads were seasoned drinkers and figure they could drink with the best of them.

Peddle bikes were used as a means of transportation as well as motorbikes.



"I needed some lessons on the motorbike. We were going down a street in a group. The rider ahead put on some speed. I did the same. Ahead was a barracks block with a flight of wooden steps in front. As the bike drew near, for some unknown reason it wheeled left, pranced the steps and hurled me into a mess of what had become brand new kindling. The street instantly filled with men in loud voices asking what had happened and

equally loud voices explaining. ... what had happened. They picked me out of the mess, strapped me onto a stretcher and I was taken to the aid post. There was nothing wrong, not a scratch, as it turned out. In the Army this was my first escape from injury or worse. There were many more, for the next five years, in England, in the Italian fighting ... missed shaking hands with a mortar *bomb* ... I was a lucky man" (In *Canadians: A Battalion At War*, P. 251-2).





Botwood, Newfoundland, September 1940.



**CSM Harry Fox (third from left back row) & Charlie Company NCOs.
Cpl G. Ibbitsan (back row- far right - KIA Carpiquet - 9 July 1944; Cpl J. Gould;
USgt Clay Bell (third from right back row)- Wounded 18 July 1944 Giberville; Cpl
L. Knowles- back row 4th from right - KIA 9 Sept 1944 - La Capelle; Sgt Ed Fox;
Cpl R. Rea (later Lt) - lost a leg on D-Day;
Front: L- R: Cpls Van Horne, Morton & Bennett.**

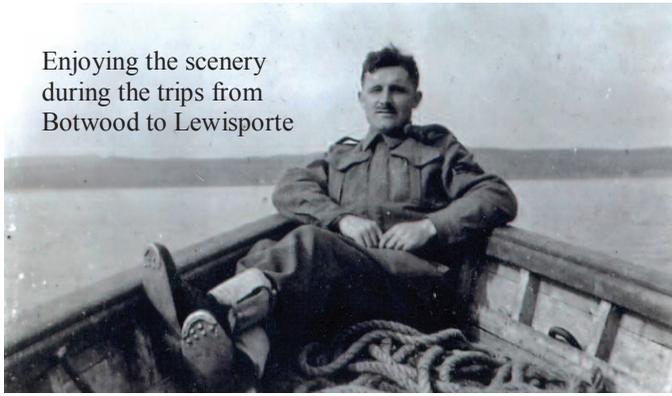
Digging trenches in Newfoundland was more than a one man job. It was nothing but rocks and more rocks. After all it is called the "Rock"?

There were plenty of picks and shovels to be used. The going was hard. The only way to get out large rocks was to lift them out as can be seen in the soldier's hands in the far background. When a really large boulder was encountered in the path of a trench you would have to go around it.



There will always be those who will put on a show behind someone's back when the camera is present as seen to the left with the two lads with a pick each.





Enjoying the scenery during the trips from Botwood to Lewisporte



The Polar Swim



Manning a Louis machine gun position



No trouble to catch a dozen or two.



1940 Hospital in the background. Residents fenced properties in the foreground. Many grew their own vegetables on their property. Beds with trenches can be seen in the left foreground.





Rare to see a color picture from the 40s. David Fletcher, later to become Sergeant David Fletcher. (Picture courtesy of his son Glenn Fletcher.) (Sent to me by Brian Budden) David would have been 16-17 years of age in the picture. Fix sword, rifle and all the gear on.

Guarding the trains in Newfoundland.



Meanwhile in Gander winter began to show its face.



A snow storm struck on 18 October and a period of violent weather set in. Section posts were flooded and drinking water became in short supply. To add to the trouble the pipes leading to the showers burst. Once again the pioneer platoon swung into action.

A lot of trouble was experienced now with boots. The shoemaker couldn't cope with the hundreds that had been worn out on the rocks. The snow was turning to slush and, despite greasing, the boots were soaked in very short time. No reserve stock was available and rubber boots were in very short supply.

The Officers' Mess and sleeping quarters were sufficiently completed by 2 November so that the officers could move in. The pioneer platoon had constructed a fireplace in the Ante-Room complete with regimental crest. It all seemed very luxurious.

On 10 November at 1900 hrs, the first flight of seven Hudson bombers took off for England. All arrived safely. It was spectacular, unarmed and carrying every

gallon of fuel possible, roared, with the exhausts spitting flame, down the mile-long runway.

Now a shortage of coal and firewood was experienced and the incidence of minor illness rose sharply. Training went on, nevertheless. Roads were built around the hutments.

A fire broke out on 12 November at No. 7 Airport post. The post was completely gutted and all stores destroyed. Fortunately, no one was hurt. By now all water-pipes had been repaired and insulated.

By this time practically everyone had but one dilapidated pair of boots left. Lt. S. M. Lett had joined dozens of others stricken with colds and influenza; the RCE officer was on sick leave; so Lt. J. N. Gordon took over as Works Officer.

Back in Botwood near the end of November we knew we were moving when an advance party from The Royal Rifles (a sister Rifle regiment from Quebec) appeared in Botwood. Their regiment was not placed in one of the first five divisions for overseas service as it was deemed by the higher-up to be "not up to combat standard." Yet despite this perception, the Liberal government of MacKenzie King still allowed The Royal Rifles, along with The Winnipeg Grenadiers, to go to Hong Kong in 1941 as a token defense garrison. We were in Aldershot when we heard that they had been sent to Hong Kong and for a short time, were quite envious. This was before Pearl Harbor and no one really imagined them fighting against a battle-hardened force like the Japanese Army. Incidentally, one of our original "potato sackers" named Barnett, B64068, took sick while we were in Sussex and didn't sail with the Regiment to England. Somehow he found his way to





The Royal Rifles and went to Hong Kong and was killed in action there. Barnett was the only QOR rifleman killed in the Asian theater of war.

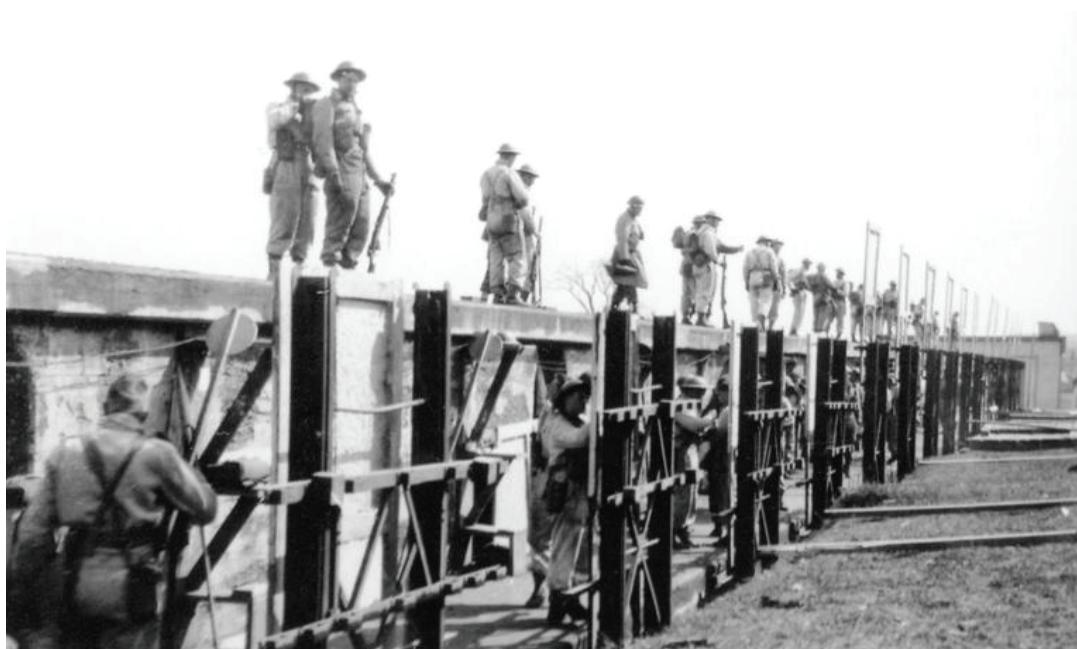


Charlie Company was in the first "flight" to depart on the SS *New Northlands* on November 30th for Halifax. This was the only ship available and would hold just a couple of hundred soldiers. It was winter and bitterly cold on board the ship. We wore all our winter kit and balaclavas. The seas were rough and many were seasick. We took several days to reach safe harbor in Nova Scotia. From there we took a train to Sussex, New Brunswick to join the rest of the newly created 8th Brigade of the 3rd

Infantry Division.

In reflecting on what Newfoundland had meant for the Regiment, Charlie Martin commented that: ". . . the Queen's Own Rifles were firmly welded into a family unit" (*Canadians*, p. 303). Newfoundland had some benefits for the Regiment,

primarily in the area of physical toughening and adapting to adverse circumstances. I think we got shortchanged however; on the normal procedure of training for an infantry battalion. For example, we should have spent the first two months doing nothing but parade square "bashing", kit inspections and building up our physical fitness, then mastering the basic weapon, the rifle, followed by the Bren gun, the mortars and so on. We didn't get enough time in the period before Newfoundland to do these things.



In Newfoundland we did finally get rifles and spent some time on improvised ranges as well as map and compass work (navigation). Still, we were far from a well-trained outfit at that point. We did very few rucksack marches in Newfoundland and spent much of our time improvising and adapting to the harsh living conditions.

It was in Sussex, New Brunswick that we started to get into more formal training for combat.



Letters to Home - 1940

The Queen's Own landed in Botwood, Nfld., on Aug. 10, 1940, after travelling in style on the ocean liner, Duchess of Richmond. Audrey and the girls had been able to make one last trip to Camp Borden on a Sunday afternoon to say goodbye.

David's company headed off to Gander, a crucial airfield during the war, to guard against sabotage from enemy agents. "The country here," he wrote, "is about as wild and desolate as anything you ever saw."



To an Ontario boy who had never before swum in salt water, north-eastern Newfoundland was foreign country – literally, since the province had yet to join Canada.

No one hurries here, he remarked to Audrey; the trains never run on time, the mail comes through only if it can do so "without causing a disturbance." He was astonished by the reception the troops received; the men were billeted in private homes, and "entertained as if they were visiting royalty," with softball

games and dances.

David was posted to the nearby town of Lewisporte for several months to watch the coast for enemy action. He stayed in a hotel overlooking the bay, and the main hardship was walking four kilometres to a pond for a bath.

He became friends with a doctor in the area, and occasionally, went dancing – a pastime that would become a source of tension between him and Audrey, though he always assured her that his behaviour was above reproach.

Botwood, Nfld. Sept 7, 1940

I doubt you would recognize me now. I have sprouted a moustache as a result of a contest we started in our platoon. Everyone donated 10 cents and when we leave the country the man with the bushiest and the man with the neatest moustache will split the pot.

Talk continued incessantly about where they would end up. "No one had any definite information, and it is my belief that matters are still up in the laps of the gods," he observed wryly to Audrey in October. He was assigned quartermaster duties, organizing the supplies of the regiment, even monitoring the bar tabs. Not a bad job, he said, but he hadn't joined the army to be a clerk.

Audrey continued her constant flow of letters and packages – peanuts, gum, soap and razor blades. As the temperature dropped, he wrote asking her to organize a group of friends to sew pyjamas for his platoon, since none had arrived by regular channels.

He was adjusting, perhaps more than he liked, to a soldier's life: "I probably won't be able to sleep at home," he wrote, "except on the floor."

Final training

In November, just as winter was setting in, the regiment left Newfoundland for Sussex, N.B. Now back in Canada, the men were promised a short Christmas leave. In preparation for their reunion, David wrote to Audrey that, as per her wishes, he had shaved off his moustache.



Sussex, N.B. Dec 19, 1940

When you get [this letter], I'll be with you. Just think – all you have to do now is to look up and there I am. How's about a kiss?

On his return to Sussex, training began in earnest. In Newfoundland, the regiment had experienced the mental game of soldiering – the tedium of waiting around, the isolation, the discomfort of hard beds and bad weather. But some of the soldiers had yet to practice throwing a grenade or handle a Bren machine gun, which would be Canada's main combat weapon for the infantry.

"So you think I will be an accomplished dancer, at least, when I leave the army?" he wrote in one letter. "Maybe so. I've done more since I joined than for quite a while previously, and paradoxically, less shooting. Figure that one out."

Now, with the war advancing in Europe, new equipment began to arrive. David received night classes in map reading, tactics and discipline – what he saw as his first practical lessons since being mobilized.

Back in Mimico, the headlines grew more urgent, and the gossip at the Ladies Guild more colourful, particularly when one wife received a letter from a pregnant woman in Newfoundland who claimed her husband was responsible. The date of the regiment's imminent departure for England was guessed at weekly.

THE FINAL INSPECTION ~ Author Unknown

The soldier stood and faced God,
Which must always come to pass..
He hoped his shoes were shining,
Just as brightly as his brass.

'Step forward now, you soldier,
How shall I deal with you ?
Have you always turned the other cheek?
To My Church have you been true?'

The soldier squared his shoulders and said,
'No, Lord, I guess I ain't.
Because those of us who carry guns,
Can't always be a saint.

I've had to work most Sundays,
And at times my talk was tough.
And sometimes I've been violent,
Because the world is awfully rough.

But, I never took a penny,
That wasn't mine to keep...
Though I worked a lot of overtime,
When the bills got just too steep.

And I never passed a cry for help,
Though at times I shook with fear.
And sometimes, God, forgive me,
I've wept unmanly tears.

I know I don't deserve a place,
Among the people here.
They never wanted me around,
Except to calm their fears.

If you've a place for me here, Lord,
It needn't be so grand.
I never expected or had too much,
But if you don't, I'll understand.

There was a silence all around the throne,
Where the saints had often trod.
As the soldier waited quietly,
For the judgment of his God.

'Step forward now, you soldier,
You've borne your burdens well.
Walk peacefully on Heaven's streets,
You've done your time in Hell.'



Sergeant Gander the Newfoundland Dog

In Newfoundland in 1940, QOR James Wilkins had a Newfoundland dog that kept following him around everywhere he went. All dogs were on the loose and strayed everywhere. He was large, about 67 kilo or 150 lb. He was very playful and strong. He was called Pal by the family that owned him. He accidentally scratched a friend of the owner family's kids and he was kept away from coming inside their home.

The Lab was befriended by the QOR group and wondered in with them on a daily basis for food and petting until they had to leave the island and were replaced by the Royal Rifles. This Newfoundland dog became the regimental mascot to the Royal Rifles of Canada and they renamed him "Gander."



Gander with the Royal Rifles of Canada departing for Hong Kong in 1941. Source: Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association.

"He became part of the regiment and policed the perimeter of their barracks," said co-author Sue Beard who wrote the book alongside Sergeant Major George S. MacDonell, a veteran who remembers the dog named Gander.

Gander would follow them to the rifle and grenade range. He became conditioned to the noise and became very protective of his soldier friends.

In October, 1941 the Royal Rifles were shipped out to Hong Kong and the soldiers took their friend Gander with them. Things were quiet for awhile until December when the Japanese military attacked. Out-numbered three to one

the Canadians and their allies had a fight on their hands. As fighting intensified Gander didn't as much make a flinch. The Japanese were now landing on the beach and Gander would run out to them and bark and snap at their legs, causing them to move back into the water away from the beach as if protecting the Royal Rifles from their enemy. It is still a wonder how he didn't get shot. The Royal Rifles promoted him to Sergeant.

Rifleman Fred Kelly was responsible for taking care of Gander. During his time in Hong Kong, Kelly let Gander take long cold showers to help deal with the immense heat. According to Kelly, Gander was also a fan of beer.

Sergeant Gander was protecting a group of injured soldiers in a bush off the side of a road. When a grenade was tossed their way Sergeant Gander ran to it, picked it up to return it to the owner of the grenade as if he was playing a game of Fetch. As he drew near the enemy the grenade exploded killing him instantly.

This act saved the injured Canadian soldiers' lives. In October 2000 Sergeant Gander was posthumously awarded the Dickens's Medal; often referred to as the animals' Victoria Cross. In 2009 a Hong Kong Veterans Memorial Wall was built in Ottawa to list the 1,977 Canadians who served in that War. Survivors insisted that Gander's name be added. Inscribed on that monument today is the name **Gander**.

The citation on the medal reads as follows:



For saving the lives of Canadian Infantrymen during the Battle of Lye Mum on Hong Kong Island in December 1941. On three documented occasions "Gander" the Newfoundland mascot of the Royal Rifles of Canada engaged the enemy as his regiment joined the Winnipeg Grenadiers, members of Battalion Headquarters "C" Force and other Commonwealth troops in their courageous defense of the Island. Twice "Gander's" attacks halted the enemy's advance and protected groups of wounded soldiers. In a final act of bravery the war dog was killed in action gathering a grenade. Without "Gander's" intervention many more lives would have been lost in the assault. Gander's medal is on permanent display in the Hong Kong section of the Canadian War Museum.

In 1997, before the Dickens Medal, Clare Shannon seen fit to write this poem:

SERGEANT GANDER

Brave, Courageous and Bold!
 The story that is often told
 By soldiers returning from Japan
 About a fearless dog from Newfoundland

Adopted as their Faithful Mascot
 He stood among them as they fought
 A grenade he caught and hurled on high
 And into the Japanese line it did fly.

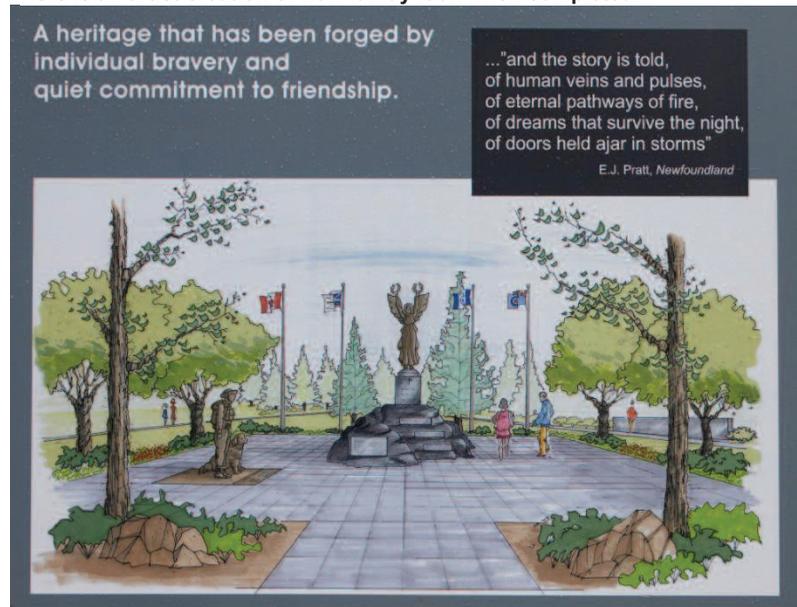
His own life was taken and the enemy too,
 "Saved his Canadian Friends" is what he did do.
 His rank became "Sergeant" on that day
 And in the soldiers memories he always will stay.

Sergeant Gander will be the name
 That we place today on this special wall of fame
 So that every Canadian old and young
 Will know about this great "hero unsung".

Clara Shannon (Shannon)
 Clara Shannon 1997 Before Dickens Medal



Here is an artist creation of how it may look when completed.



Another war memorial is taking shape in Gander's Heritage Memorial Park. In it there will be a commemorative life size statue of Sergeant Gander sitting with his handler by his side.

Philip Doddridge, National President, Hong Kong Veterans' Association wrote during the summer of 2010:

"I speak on behalf of all Hong Kong Veterans and especially us who were members of the Royal Rifles of Canada and were so fortunate to have adopted that magnificent dog, Pal, whom we renamed Gander. He soon became everyone's pet, following us on maneuvers and being present at all important functions. His final act of bravery has endeared him forever in the hearts of all Hong Kong Veterans and his legend has become the subject of books and magazines stories.

The posthumous award of the Dickens Medal is little reward for his sacrifice in battle when he harassed the enemy and finally gave his life to save many of his human comrades.

We are grateful for this further recognition of our famous dog and pleased beyond compare that it should occur in the place of his birth. His name engraved on the memorial Wall in Ottawa is testimony to the respect he has earned from all Hong Kong Veterans."



Sources:

1. Beard, Sue and Sergeant Major George S. MacDonell, A Dog Named Gander, Toronto: 2014.
2. Internet and various other sources.

Bringing the Poppy Home

On November 11, 2011 the last Canadian Remembrance Day Ceremony was held at Kandahar Air Field (KAF) in Afghanistan. The former Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Peter MacKay, and



Lieutenant-General (LGen) Jonathan Vance were present for this historic event with the Minister reading off the names of the fallen and LGen Vance placing a poppy on each of the designated plaques.

The following day, November 12, 2011, all of the poppies were collected and placed in the care of WO Renay Groves.

With Renay (a Newfoundlander) as the lead a team was formed for what became known as “**Bringing the Poppy Home**” project.



Through LGen Jonathan Vance’s assistance, the team engaged 202 Workshop Depot in Montreal and a memorial was built to the specifications required using parts of a battle-damaged Leopard tank. With the exception of the base, which is made of aluminum, all other parts of the memorial are from the battle damaged Leopard tank, *shown in the background*, even the Maple Leaf which was cut from the back deck.

Jacques De Winter, a member of **The Queens Own Rifles of Canada** and **member of our branch**, has produced a stain glass panel replica of the memorial.

Jacques has obtained an original bronze poppy from Renay belonging to the original memorial and it is now



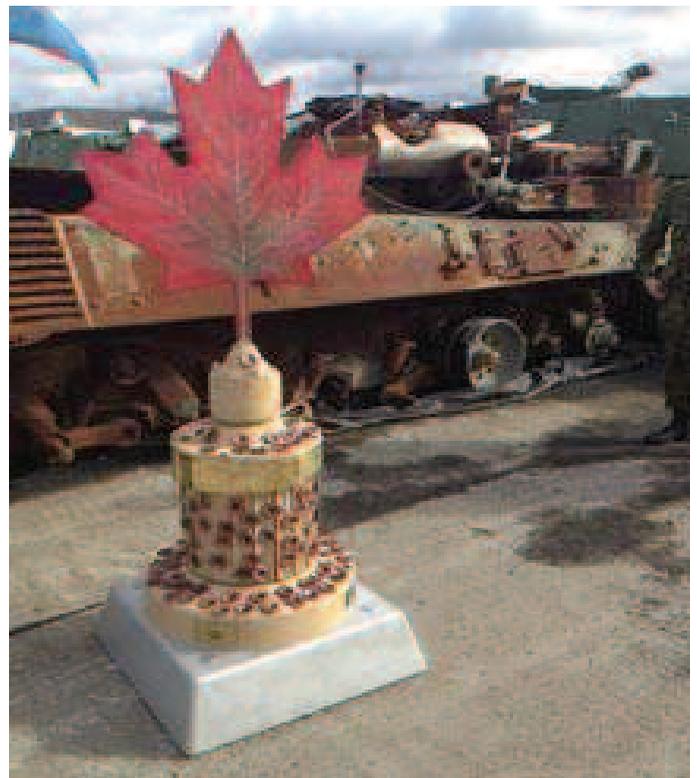
attached to the glass panel replica making this truly a “**one of a kind**”.

This replica glass panel has traveled with the memorial and was displayed at various locations across Canada. It will remain with the travelling memorial till the tour is over or our event begins whichever comes first.

Jacques has kindly handed over ownership of

this unique glass panel to our branch, to be used as a fund raiser for the 2015 event. As of this writing we have raised well over **\$1800.00**.

A very special thank-you to Jacques de Winter for this marvellous gift to the Maritimes Newfoundland Branch.





SARAH FINDS A FAMILIAR FACE

What a small world, Sarah discovers photos of her Grandfather in Botwood, NL.

I was reintroduced to my Grandfather through a Queen's Own Rifles group photo at the Botwood Heritage Centre. Since then, Everett Elliot has helped me to find more information about my grandfather: William Henry Ives. The only other evidence of my Grandfather in Botwood was in a poem Everett found that had been written in 1940.



I didn't know that my grandfather had spent time in Botwood. He passed away on August 5th, 2013 at the age of 93. He didn't speak much about his experience in the war, the only clues I had were a few photos of him in uniform and one with my grandmother in his arms. My grandmother, Verna Evelyn Ives, had told me that the photos she had given me were taken in Newfoundland but didn't mention exactly where. I've held on to them since, wondering if I'd ever be in the place where they

were taken.

I was very delighted to know that while I had come to Botwood to work with Culture of Outports, I would find a part of my family. I spoke to my grandmother about this experience and she was delighted to hear what I had to say. She mentioned 'he [William] was there with the regiment and he liked it'. She also mentioned, 'I was there briefly to visit and we went back together after the war'. Similar to my feelings towards Botwood, my grandmother told me that she enjoyed staying there and expressed a strong memory of the kind people who lived there.



That Special Place

Take my hand and come with me
To a special place across the sea
A sacred place in hallowed ground
A place where love and sorrow's found
It's not a church you'll understand
Just a part of home in another land

A place where gravestones stand arrayed
Like a phantom army on parade.
Stand close by me and patience keep

And soon you'll see a brave man weep
He cries for his comrade beneath the stone
And I tell you friend he's not alone.

Scenes like this are commonplace
In our special meeting place
So as you stroll down memory lane
Think of us who must remain
And now it's time to say adieu
But remember friend we died for you.

Cyril Crain



MGen Pitts Persevered Until All QOR Korean War Dead Were Honoured

After a crusade which began in 1966, in 2012 Major General Herb Pitts, MC, CD, could report "mission accomplished" when the names of all those members of 2nd Battalion The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada who lost their lives during the Korean War were, finally, completely and fully recognized.

MGen Pitts had spent considerable time and effort into getting all regimental and other records to accurately reflect those members of the regiment who were casualties in the Korean War. He had learned that of the 516 dead listed on the Roll of Honour in the Book of Remembrance in the Peace Tower in Ottawa, two of the six from 2nd Battalion's tour in 1954-55 were not recognized on all Korean War memorials. The six dead are Lt N.M. Anderson, Lt M.C. Vipond, Sgt G.W. Koch, Rfn ME Ferland, Maj EH. Gower, MC, and Rfn G. Reid.

The names of Gower and Reid were those not fully recognized.

"The first four named soldiers are buried in the United Nations Memorial Park in Busan and their graves were visited and decorated by LGen Charles Belzile and me in November 2011, during a revisit program sponsored by the Korean Government's Ministry of Veterans and Patriots Affairs," MGen Pitts said.

"While the other two are not buried in the UN Cemetery in Korea, their names are now included on all memorials honouring the Canadian Korean War dead (Busan, Seoul, Brampton and Ottawa.) All regimental records and memorials now include the names of Maj Gower and Rfn Reid. This has long been the focus of my endeavours," MGen Pitts said.

"In early December, 1956, Maj Gower was the last man of ours to leave Korea. At that time a small 1st Battalion rear party remained in Currie Barracks. The battalion was in Halifax and had an advance party in Naples, Italy, as the main body waited to board HMCS *Magnificent* for deployment on Operation Rapid Step in the Suez Canal area'. "On 9 December on his way home to Calgary, Maj Gower called his wife, Ann, from Vancouver to say he'd be home in a couple of hours. He never got there," MGen Pitts said.

Major Gower had boarded Trans Canada Airlines Flight 810, along with 61 other passengers, including members of the Winnipeg Blue Bombers and Saskatchewan Roughriders, on their way home from the annual CFL East-West All-Star Game in Vancouver. Shortly after takeoff the plane encountered severe icing and turbulence and eventually disappeared from radar. It was later learned that the Canadair North Star flew straight into the third peak of Mt. Slesse in the Cascade Mountains, at well in excess of cruising speed, falling in pieces, along with its doomed passengers. "The crash site, which is in remote and dangerously inhospitable territory near Chilliwack, was not discovered until the following May, when three hikers came upon the debris," MGen Pitts said. "No identifiable bodies were ever recovered."

A memorial to honour the dead travelers was placed on a spur road just above the Chilliwack River Road. After the discovery of the crash site and some human remains were found by visitors to the area, these were gathered into a common grave and, with others found by climbers and hikers over time, were placed in a shrine in a discreet, weather-protected location. "Since the 1990s, the site of the crash has been designated by the provincial government as a restricted area with signage warning that access



Major General Herb C. Pitts, MC, CD.



is prohibited," MGen Pitts said. "Strictly off limits to everyone. So Maj Gower rests in peace up there."

Details of Rfn Reid's death are not known other than that the 2nd Battalion had departed and he was taken on strength at another unit, presumably until his tour was completed. It is thought that he may have died from non-combat-related injuries, possibly sustained in an accident and could have been evacuated to Japan where he died in hospital. As far as is known, he is buried there.

However, MGen Pitts noted that, "After years of trying to get all six casualties recognized as they were listed in the Peace Tower, this is now accomplished and all regimental records and memorials now include Maj. Gower and Rfn Reid. They deserved to be recognized along with their comrades, and they now are."

POSTSCRIPT

Major General Herb Pitts' Korea posting began in early June, 1952, six weeks after he graduated from The Royal Military College in Kingston. Commissioned in Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians), he was posted to Korea, where he was soon designated as a platoon commander with 1st Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. He never did serve with a Strathcona's armoured squadron, remaining with and transferring to the infantry before his Korean tour ended.

In Korea he spent six months in command of 11 Platoon, D Company in both 1st and 3rd Bns, three months as an instructor at the Commonwealth Division's Junior NCO School and three months as the base plate fire controller on 3rd Bn's mortar line. He was in three major engagements and numerous patrol activities in his tour and was awarded the Military Cross in recognition of bravery and leadership in two of the larger engagements.

He returned to Canada prior to the signing of the ceasefire agreement and enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts Degree (Honours History) course at McMaster University in Hamilton. There he met Marianne, who was enrolled in a nursing program who was to become his wife. They were married after he had reported in May, 1954, to 1st Bn, The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada in Calgary, where he served for three years until posted to 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade HQ in Germany.



Since 2009, youngsters in Doorn, Holland have been caring for their town's Queen's Own Rifles memorial. Known as the "A" Team, they are supported by members of the Vancouver Island Association and Nanaimo Legion.

In his long military career he served with 1st and 2nd Bns of The Queen's Own Rifles, was Brigade Major in Germany from 1964-67, commanded 1st Bn in Victoria from 1967-69, and The Canadian Airborne Regiment in Edmonton from 1971-73. Promoted Brigadier General in 1973, he closed his career with a five-year posting to NDHQ in Ottawa and, now Major General Pitts, MC, CD, served in various capacities until his retirement in 1978.

Following retirement he was named Colonel of the Regiment, the Canadian Airborne Regiment and the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, Colonel Commandant of the Canadian Infantry Corps and Honorary-Lieutenant Colonel of The Queen's Own. His accumulated service in uniform was almost 45 years.

Chapter 80, from "In Peace Prepared," the modern history of The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, 1950-2015, written by Charles McGregor.



Jim Sheppard's Museum

More than a half century ago, a young man from Rencontre East, Newfoundland, Jim Sheppard, enlisted with The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada. His first posting was Calgary and over the years served in many different bases of the Military throughout Canada in his 32 years of service.

From the very beginning, Jim was interested in Military memorabilia and over the years this interest grew from collecting a few items to the collection it has become today. So much so, that he has his own Museum Building in his home town of Rencontre East.

The biggest tourism attraction in town is Jim's Independent Military Museum, officially opened on Remembrance Day, 2011. Inside are displays of military memorabilia, biographies of individual soldiers, books, brooches, cap badges, clocks, flags, military musical instruments, military tools, newspaper articles, plates, posters, shadowboxes, table settings, uniforms, medals and citations depicting the history of the military in Newfoundland and Labrador and in deed Canada.

Jim's desire to collect and display military memorabilia does not go un-noticed. It is this type of person with his determination that will allow our Military History to be passed on to future generations.

Besides serving a term as the Town's Mayor, Jim is a strong advocate for veterans and is very active in his community. We encourage you to visit Rencontre East & Mr. Sheppard will gladly give you a personalized tour.



Marking remembrance, awareness with Canadian Heroes Vehicle #9



Randy Edison photo

Ex-serviceman Darren Bennett (left) has travelled the province for three years in Canadian Heroes Vehicle #9 to mark the memory of fallen Newfoundland and Labrador soldiers and raise awareness of the contributions of all military. His partner, Colleen Patey, and their Newfoundland dog, Badger, often join him on the journeys. Patey is a cousin of Badger native Capt. Frank Paul, one of the 11 fallen Newfoundlanders depicted on the vehicle.

Badger couple travels province engaging families, veterans

It's honorable, it's respectful, and certainly is touching," said Colleen Patey of the purpose of Canadian Heroes Vehicle #9 and the effect it is having on Newfoundlanders and Labradoreans.

The vehicle, which carries photos of 11 Newfoundland veterans who fought and died in Afghanistan, has been on the road for three years, evoking memories and raising awareness of the efforts of the military. The vehicle is maintained and operated by Darren Bennett, a Badger native and ex-military man.

The genesis of the Canadian Heroes vehicle lies with ex-serviceman Chris Eckland, who wanted to do something to recognize the efforts of Canadian soldiers involved in recent conflicts, Bennett told the Advertiser last week.

"There was no one there to meet and greet them when they were escorted off the plane," he explained. "He took it to heart and decided to have a vehicle done up. Since then he's been going to greet and escort all the returning soldiers."

Bennett explained that about three years ago, a medic from Afghanistan was touring Atlantic Canada with Vehicle #8, "and I suggested we should have one here. It was two years in the making before it became a reality. All the expenses come out of my pocket, I ask for nothing from anyone," he said.



“Some people donate, but we don’t go looking for that. I trained with some of the ones (photographed) on the vehicle, so I knew them personally.”

All 12 vehicles in the nation-wide fleet are official escort vehicles. In fact, the arrival of Vehicle #9 in Newfoundland created a bit of a conundrum.

“Eckland donated the vehicle to Newfoundland and Labrador and it had to be registered in my name,” Bennett said. “It was this province’s first memorial vehicle, and at first they would not accept the donation. They were going to put a black book value on it. But, eventually the vehicle was sold for \$1.”

“When he left to go get it, it was just a plain black SUV,” said Patey, who didn’t have a prior connection to the military, but now, is very attached to this vehicle.

Her cousin (and another Badger native), Frank Paul, is one of the fallen soldiers remembered on the vehicle.

“None of this was known to me until we got together,” Patey said. “It is one of the most touching, inspiring things ever. I remember the first family I met. The mother was heartbroken. She was crying seeing her son on the vehicle. When we left in the afternoon, we were so close she didn’t even want us to leave.

“It’s not only therapeutic for people who view it, but very therapeutic for us, too,” she continued. “Knowing that we could help pick her up, listen to her story, sympathize with her, it was of equal balance all the way around.”

Patey noted one particularly touching encounter while at a Big Bike Ride in St. John’s. “Cpl. (Jamie) Murphy’s mother saw the vehicle for the first time. When she touched his picture, tears were coming down her face and it was a very memorable moment, not only for her, but it’s also big for us.

“We end up getting an attachment with the family as they do with us,” Patey added.

In a lot of respects the vehicle visit is an opportunity for emotional release for the families, Bennett noted.

“In the towns where the fallen soldiers are from, the families can’t relate. They can’t explain to people the loss, and people are apprehensive of approaching them because they don’t know what to say,” the 15-and-a-half year veteran of the Princess Patricia’s Light Infantry said. “When we go there, it’s just like a big icebreaker. They explain, ‘It’s just like you brought our son home; he’s in Newfoundland again,’ and it’s a big thing for the parents.”

“As I explained to Mrs. Murphy, the troops are usually only remembered once a year or probably on the anniversary of someone passing on, but with this vehicle here, it’s a remembrance every single day. It’s in the public’s eye every day.”

Far-reaching effect

Bennett noted that the vehicle is “really for all vets, all ages and from different wars, so it’s for all military.”

“Although it’s all fallen soldiers pictured on it, there’s a lot of people who came back from tours with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), so it’s a huge awareness of that as well,” he said. “There are a lot of soldiers who come back and they’re not the same people. We meet people who will say, ‘My son is here, but he never came back. He’s not the same.’

“A lot of people commit suicide, and a lot drop dead from PTSD,” Bennett added. “I buried my best friend a few years ago in St. John’s because of it.”

The couple estimates Vehicle #9 has covered about 90 per cent of the island, and some of Labrador.





“If we’re at home, he’ll come and say, ‘We’re hitting the road,’ and I can’t wait,” Patey said.

Sometimes it’s a random road trip, but quite often it’s by invitation.

“If communities would like the vehicle to visit, they can contact me at 290-1999 or by email badgersplace@hotmail.com,” he said. “We go everywhere.”

Their Newfoundland dog, Badger, has become a big part of the travelling road show.

“We went to a daycare in Grand Falls-Windsor with the vehicle and Badger,” Patey noted. “These are young people who aren’t even in school yet, but when they see the vehicle, they get excited because they’re waiting to see the big Newfoundland dog.

“Badger and the vehicle both appeal to people,” she continued. “It’s not only us who respect the vehicle. We could be stopped getting gas or on a highway and strangers pass us and wave. If they’re military, they salute or give us a wave.

“It makes us that much more honoured, and proud.

“There are vets out there that just like for us to sit with them and they can tell their story,” she said of the encounters along the road. “Everywhere we go, especially around Remembrance Day, we stop into practically every cemetery and visit gravesites of those who have gone before and put a poppy and a flag there.” Even the first trip with the vehicle (after picking it up in Hamilton) was filled with stories and encounters. What was supposed to be a week to 10 days took almost a month.

“They gave him an itinerary of families and where to stop,” explained Patey. “By the time he got home, he had so many stories you’d need a dozen cups of coffee to get through them.”

One particularly rewarding stop for Bennett, who served in Cyprus and the Balkans, was at a seminar at the rehab centre Portage in New Brunswick.

“A friend of mine was manager of a facility there for troubled teens, ones with problems with drugs, alcohol, crime and whatever,” he said. “I did a slide show and after I finished, even though it was pouring down rain, they all went out to look at the vehicle. They were all so attentive had a lot of questions.

“I asked how many were considering joining the military and whether they were apprehensive because of (the danger),” Bennett continued. “I think there was a few who were signing up, and they really loved what Canadian Heroes was about. I got a lot of hugs from them.

“Remembrance Day is awesome, but there’s 364 days in between that. I wouldn’t say it’s forgotten because it’s never really forgotten, but this is a great reminder,” Bennett said.

“Every day is Remembrance Day for us,” Patey concluded.

For those wishing to contribute to the effort, there is also a Canadian Heroes Foundation — a registered, not-for-profit organization formed to create awareness and support for front line responders, fallen heroes and families. It serves as a tribute to those who have served in the past, present and future.

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By Randy Edison – randy.edison@tc.tc
TC Media



I Was A Soldier Once

I liked the idea that as the commercial said; we did more by 0700 than most people did all day. I loved as range safety officer getting shots down range by 0800. I loved the brutality of route marches because they set us apart from my civilian friends, as most of them could never have hacked the pace. I liked standing in a United Nations observation post just before dawn in a far away land, realizing that I and other soldiers in my unit were doing something very special by representing Canada and the Canadian people, undergoing physical and mental strains that many could not or would not face to keep our country safe and ready. I loved climbing up cargo nets in full battle order and repelling down cliffs. I loved running the assault course. I liked the early morning runs and the late night polishing before a parade.

I liked the smell of the quartermaster stores, an odd mixture of gun oil, canvas preservative, leather, hemp rope and cigarette smoke. I liked the racks of rifles and sub machine guns and I loved the gun sheds and tank hangers where the vehicles and weapons of war gleamed dully and exuded strength and capability and the power to "git 'er done" if need be. I loved the name of the equipment when I started off, Sherman, Fabrique Nationale, Sten and Bren because they spoke to me of the proud days when our Fathers used them successfully in WW2. Our #36 Grenade was the same as our grandfathers used in WW1 for God's sake! I also loved when the 105 mm and the M 109 gave way to the M777 and the guns could shoot accurately over 30 kilometres. I loved it when the old lady "the duce and a half" was finally replaced by the modern MLVW. The Centurion tank gave way to the Leopard and within weeks our tankers showed NATO they were the best.

I liked our soldiers, from all parts of the land, from cities of upper Canada, small towns of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. They came from the mountains and from the prairies from all walks of life. I trusted and depended on them as they trusted and depended on me for professional competence, for comradeship, for strength and courage. In a word we were "soldiers", then, and forever. I liked the surge in my heart when word was passed that a unit was deploying, and I loved the infectious thrill of riding homeward in convoy waving at the cars we passed and at pedestrians who I was sure looked at us with envy as we rolled through their villages on our way back to Base. I loved waving from the back of a truck at the kids in cars that would trail us for a while before finally passing.

The work was hard and dangerous; the going rough at times; and the parting from family painful, but the companionship of robust army laughter, the "all for one and one for all" philosophy of the military was ever present. I once enjoyed the best 2 hours sleep in my life laying on the ground at a rest halt while doing a patrol. The weather was overcast but warm and a slight drizzle did not deter my snoring, which could be heard 4 men down the line. Another 4 or 5 hours would have been nice, but there was work to be done.

I liked the fierce and dangerous activity of the Infantry Rifle Coy as we began an advance to contact. I liked doing the recce for a harbour where I had to hide up to 40 pieces of wheeled and tracked equipment from the enemy. I hated having to run ahead of our vehicles in complete darkness and trying to be quiet as the drivers and co-drivers tried to back vehicles and trailers into a black hole as quickly as possible so others in line could pass and find me and also be properly positioned and put away. One could hear cursing and unmeant bitching as crews stumbled in the dark to erect cam nets and digging in for protection from an enemy attack, we cut and poked branches holding up the nets to break the vehicle outline so as not to be recognised. The lucky ones had a relatively small vehicle, others, a two and a half or a 5 ton to cover that even in day light would take an hour or more. At night it was dangerous, demanding and extremely hard work. In the rain or freezing snow this necessary chore was brutal.

Watching my fellow soldiers as they took down the cam nets, loaded fuel, ammunition and rations for yet another long day, feeling truly exhausted and knowing it was going to get a lot worse before it got better, actually added value to the experience. We were soldiers and this is what it was like.

I loved the name and the history of my Regiment; "The Queens Own Rifles of Canada,"

I loved the parades, the colours on parade and the guidon presentation, the march past, the roll past, the advance in review order and the sound of my hand slapping the stock of my rifle during the Present Arms. I could feel the National Anthem inside me while the band played it. Some liked "The Queen" or "O Canada". I loved "The Maple Leaf Forever".

I loved walking through our position in complete darkness checking the welfare of my men and NCO's and ensuring them that they were not alone, as we stood in our trench at first light, on stand to. I liked the weight of my steel helmet on my head and the embrace of my webbing. It made you feel like superman though in your heart you surely knew you were not. I loved the weight of my rifle or pistol and knowing I could outshoot a lot of my men. It was an ongoing competition during range practice to out do your friends as well as your superiors. There was pride in self and country; and growing mastery of the soldier's trade. An adolescent could find adulthood. A man could find fulfilment and an old man finds great joy. I will never forget that I was once a soldier. There is no higher calling. I would do it again in a heart beat. I liked the traditions of the Army and those who made them for. . . . I was a soldier once. . . .

Author Anonymous.

The Queen's Own Rifles Association

Special Thanks

To all of you who helped make this event whatever it will be, we send 75 years worth of thanks to each and every one of you.

To all of you that came from a distance, Thank you for coming and sharing this special time with us. We're so happy you were able to make it to our event.

To all of you who helped us lean our ladder of success against the right wall thank you so very much.

Maritimes Newfoundland Executive

Botwood



The Town of Botwood, incorporated in 1960. It is a former WWII anti-submarine base; a place to see beautiful murals, Flying Boats museum, vintage snowmobiles, displays of early aviation 1919-1945 and much more.



Make Botwood a stop on your itinerary and I'm sure you'll agree, Botwood truly is one of Newfoundland's best kept secrets!





*Mayor Claude Elliott
&
the Town Council of Gander*
WELCOME
QUEEN'S OWN RIFLES OF CANADA
75th ANNIVERSARY
PARTICIPANTS

**As you partake in the celebrations
of your 75th Anniversary,
may you enjoy time spent with fellow
members reminiscing.**

**Also, we invite you to take time
to discover all the
beautiful sights Gander and
the Kittiwake Coast has to offer.**

Congratulations

*on your 75th Anniversary
and the placing of a
Memorial Stone Marker in
Gander and Botwood.*

Ross T. Petten,

NL Command President

On behalf of the Royal Canadian Legion, NL Command, I am extremely pleased to welcome everyone who has come to Botwood, Gander and to Newfoundland & Labrador to be a part of the 75th Queen's Own Rifles Celebrations.

The QOR has had a long and rich history that even predates Confederation in 1867. It is a regiment that has been called out on active service on a variety of occasions in its history including World War II. In 1940 the QOR was sent to Newfoundland in defense of the strategic airfields of Botwood and Gander before embarking to Britain in 1941. This posting, was a very memorable one, one that bonded it and the island together for all eternity. In particular, time spent in Newfoundland was well spent preparing its members for what was to follow. Indeed, on June 6th, 1944, following the D-Day landings, the regiment was the only one to meet its objective on that "the longest day".

On a personal note, I had the honour and privilege to travel to the battlefields of both France and Belgium on the 65th Anniversary of D-Day in 2009 with some former members and current members of the QOR. During that trip I got to know and experience a group of extremely

dedicated and committed individuals – no different I am sure from the people who served here some 75 years ago.

In conclusion, I congratulate the organizers of these celebrations. The itinerary looks to be filled with a variety of activities which concludes with the unveiling of Stone Markers to commemorate the service of the QOR at Botwood and Gander in 1940-41. To all, enjoy the opportunity to meet up

with old friends and comrades and certainly to meet new ones as you all I hope enjoy the weekend.

"Lest We Forget"

Yours in Comradeship,

Ross T. Petten,

NL Command President



Legion

A large, stylized red poppy flower with a black center and a black outline, positioned to the right of the word "Legion".



The Grand Princess Entering St. John's



Newfoundland & Labrador 2015







Scenes from Newfoundland

