

# THE RIFLEMAN

The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada

2020 – 2021



CANADA'S LONGEST-SERVING INFANTRY REGIMENT

## WHAT IS THE REGIMENTAL TRUST?

The Regimental Trust was established in 1959 to support the Regiment, the Riflemen, the Regimental Museum, the maintenance of Regimental Monuments and Memorials, and Regimental Headquarters. The Regimental Trust accomplishes this by raising funds from donors to support the activities as requested by the Commanding Officer, the Museum, RHQ and, from time to time, the Regimental Association and Cadet Corps.

### The Trust provides funds for multiple activities that include:

- The Annual Children's Christmas Party
- Regimental sports teams
- Running club
- Hockey team

### Fundraising and support for Regimental trips to commemorate special anniversaries including:

- 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Vimy Ridge in 2017
- 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day and Normandy

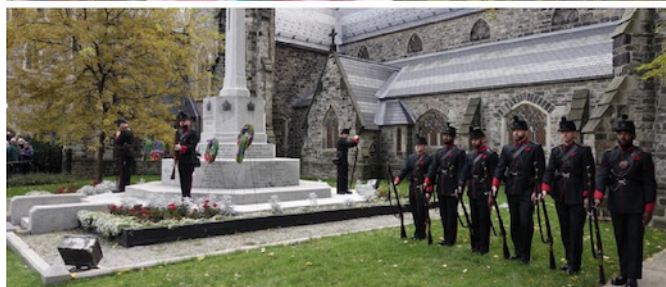
In February 2020 the Trust formed a committee along with members of the Regiment and Regimental family to examine the financial needs of the Regiment. As part of the review it became clear a major issue existed with communications within the Regimental family. After many months of review and discussion the concept of the 1860 Club was developed to deal with communications within the family and to facilitate fundraising by the Trust. Since its launch in February 2021 the 1860 Club has been a great success with regular communications to over 270 club members and significant fundraising in excess of \$90,000 for the Trust. For more information on the 1860 Club, see the back pages of this magazine.

## DONATE NOW

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The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Trust Fund  
Box 250, Suite 12A  
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Front cover illustration: "Sgt Stephen Thomas MB CD" by Gertrude Kearns, C.M. (2021, 44 x 30 inches, mixed media on paper). Ms. Kearns is a well-known and respected Canadian military artist. In 2006 she was embedded in Kandahar, Afghanistan as an official war artist with TFA ROTO 0 for the Department of National Defence. On June 27, 2019 she was appointed as Member of the Order of Canada "for her contributions to preserving and understanding Canadian war history as a contemporary artist." Her works are in the collections of the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa and the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. among others.

Back cover photo: A QOR Regimental Band and Bugles drum and drummer on the beach at Bernières-sur-Mer, Normandy during D-Day celebrations.

*The Rifleman* is published on behalf of The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada.

Submissions are welcome and may be sent as Word documents to the Regimental Secretary at [qorregsec@gmail.com](mailto:qorregsec@gmail.com). The deadline for the 2021-2022 issue is February 1, 2022. *The Rifleman* welcomes photos of all Regimental activities, past and present, that would be of interest to our readers. Preference for photos is in high-resolution JPEG format, sent to [qorregsec@gmail.com](mailto:qorregsec@gmail.com). Where possible, please also send images as separate attachments. Please include captions and photo credits. We regret that we cannot guarantee that photos submitted will be used.



## HONORARY COLONEL

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**Major General (ret'd) Walter M. Holmes MStJ,  
MSM, CD, MBE**



**A**s I write this Canada, and particularly Ontario, remains in the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic with all that the various measures and lockdowns entail. The pandemic has coloured all that the Regiment has done since March of 2020, whether that be in training or support of domestic operations by the serving component of the Regiment, or other components and members of the regimental family finding ways to manage the important business aspects of the Regiment. I salute all who have had to manage the delicate balance between getting on with things and safety. Our Senate, Trust, Museum, Association and others have adapted well to the situation allowing continuity during this challenging time.

In September, we welcomed a new Command Team, Lieutenant Colonel Scott Moody and Regimental Sergeant Major Jeff Johnston. Since taking over they have enhanced the efforts of Lieutenant Colonel Frank Lamie and Regimental Sergeant Major Donovan O'Halloran, to be the fittest, most ready and top recruiting unit in the Army Reserve. The Regiment owes a huge debt of gratitude to Frank and Donovan for their superb efforts in these areas while knowing that Scott and Jeff are carrying on ably in their footsteps. We were fortunate

to be able to have a small ceremony at Moss Park Armoury to farewell the outgoing and to welcome the new Command Team.

The most significant regimental initiative to be successfully introduced over the past year is the 1860 Club. A team of former serving and serving members of the Regiment under the leadership of the Commanding Officer and the Chair of our Trust, Major (ret'd) Tony Schultz, spent countless hours over a 15-month period developing the 1860 Club concept and the social media to support it. Designed as a nexus for regimental communications, the club is also proving to be a major source of regimental fundraising. I encourage all members of the regimental family and friends of the Regiment to join the Club, membership is free, and within your own means contribute to the financial health of the Regiment. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the team who developed the 1860 Club concept, and who now manage its day-to-day operation.

Our inability to gather has had a significant impact on how we celebrate and commemorate as a

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**ABOVE:** *The Honorary Colonel offering a Calvados toast to the health of the Regiment during a virtual Senate meeting on April 27, 2021.*



Regiment. Thanks to virtual technology, and the efforts of a hand full of technically savvy individuals in the Regiment, we have managed to produce a number of videos and social media postings that have helped us mark special occasions and events. I know I speak for all members of the regimental family when I offer my sincere thanks to all who have worked tirelessly to inform, educate and help us remember.

I will close by saying that this is likely to be my last contribution to the Regiment's foremost means of communication as it is anticipated that I will be replaced sometime in the Fall of this year. Lana and I have had the honour to serve with you for the past five years and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the way that you have welcomed us. It has been an honour to serve with the Regiment that my father served with during WWII and I hope that the things we have achieved together have set the Regiment up well for the future. We are proud to have been among you and our intent is to continue to support The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada as best we can in the years ahead.

*In Pace Paratus,*

*Walter Holmes  
Honorary Colonel*



# COMMANDING OFFICER

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**Lieutenant Colonel Scott Moody, CD**



**M**embers of the Regimental Family, it is with great honour that I am writing my first “Year in Review” article for *The Rifleman* as Commanding Officer.

At the start of 2020 the Regiment was in peak growth; it was leading the way within the Brigade, Division and Army as Primary Reserve Unit with recruiting, growth, support to courses, running, engaging and relevant training and integrating with our Regular Force partners 3 RCR.

In January and February 2020, The Queen’s Own Rifles of Canada conducted Exercises NORTHERN STAR 1 and 2. These training events exemplified what we do best: run training and courses concurrently including tactical parachute descents on DZ GORVAD/PATTERSON. The month of February was also marked by the unit’s lead with the Toronto Garrison Ball.

Once the impact of COVID-19 on our country became known in March 2020, the QOR immediately lived up to our motto as a unit *In Pace Paratus* and we were able to adapt and become a key contributor to Operation LASER, the Canadian Armed Forces support to the fight against COVID-19. This was achieved through the provision of Riflemen for the Territorial Battalions that were formed. Many

Riflemen supported long-term care homes in the Greater Toronto Area. Of particular note, MCpl Costache and Cpl Tsoi were given Commander Commendations for their professionalism.

Operation LASER, combined with health protection measures, caused our typical training rhythm to slow. Courses were placed on hold, recruiting stopped and training evenings transitioned to virtual means. This was the start of a series of challenges that required flexibility and innovation.

By mid-summer we were able to start courses again and in September we began to train as a unit under tightly controlled conditions. This helped us re-establish momentum with training Riflemen and leaders.

On September 19, 2020, we conducted a joint airborne currency exercise with 3 RCR in CFB Trenton. This brought members from both units together under canopy using a two-plane formation. This was the unofficial Change of Command in which the incoming and outgoing QOR command teams and current 3 RCR command teams jumping together.

The following day, September 20, the official Change of Command and Change of Appointment for Regimental Sergeant-Major was held at Moss

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** From left to right: Outgoing QOR Command Team RSM O'Halloran and LCol Lamie and incoming QOR Command Team LCol Moody and RSM Johnston. **RIGHT:** Photos taken during the Change of Command Ceremony.

Park Armoury. During this time LCol Frank Lamie, CD handed over to me. RSM Donovan O'Halloran, CD handed the pacesstick over to RSM Jeff Johnston, CD.

In October, November and December, we held several training events at CFB Borden and Trenton. Unfortunately, the weather and health protections measures impacted our airmobile and airborne insertion plans. However, it did give us more time to focus on the basics.

The unit did an impressive job supporting Operation IMPACT in the Middle East in the fall and winter with Captains Beaupre, Schamhart and Toohey-Faughnan, MWO Leader, WO Behan, WO Currie and Sgt Frounze deploying. This tasking is not easy in normal operating conditions, and COVID-19 has made this even more complex.

Despite the challenges, we have had the opportunity to focus on building our capacity and capability as Light Infanteers and Paratroopers. In the past year, we have qualified 4 new Platoon Commanders, 8 new Sergeants, and 2 new Platoon 2ICs with Sgt Hood and Sgt Thomas completing DP3B.

Training continues in some unique ways. We have learned to leverage technology and developed new training methods. We also did what we could with the situation that we were working with. In June we held the "Challenge March" which many of our serving and former members ("The Fossils") participated in. In May 2021 we launched a new initiative called the Ridgeway and Normandy Challenge March; this event had over 80 participants.

The 1860 Club was successfully launched in February to better unify the components of the Regimental Family, effectively communicate, and to ensure the continued health of our Regimental initiatives and projects. I highly encourage you to join, if you have not had the opportunity to do so, at [www.1860club.ca](http://www.1860club.ca). TR



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## "Road To Victory" Garrison Ball

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by 2Lt Stephen Ye



**O**n February 8, 2020 the Regiment proudly hosted the 203<sup>rd</sup> Toronto Garrison Officers' Ball, themed "Road to Victory." As Toronto's premier social event for the military community, this year's edition commemorated the sacrifices and achievements leading up to the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands and VE-Day. The gala took place at the Liberty Grand Entertainment Complex, and was attended by nearly 800 guests, including the command team of the Canadian Army, Lieutenant-General Wayne D. Eyre and Chief Warrant Officer Stuart Hartnell.

During the pre-dinner reception, Commanding Officer Lieutenant-Colonel Frank D. Lamie presented a token of appreciation to the event sponsor, Liberty Group's Nick di Donato. The formal portion of the evening began with the entrance of the head table, led by Regimental Sergeant Major Donovan O'Halloran.

Following welcome remarks from presenting sponsor Dr. Bryan Brulotte, LCol Lamie introduced the keynote speaker, LGen Eyre. After a stirring, inspirational speech, the army commander was presented with a bottle of Calvados from the Regiment's recent trip to Normandy.

The first of the evening's commemorative vignettes was read by CWO Hartnell, whose uncle landed on D-Day with the Regiment. During the dinner, further vignettes highlighting the Canadian Army's advance were read by Global News anchor Mercedes Stephenson and Deputy Division Commander Brigadier-General John Valtonen. As the dinner drew to a close, RSM O'Halloran honoured the Regiment's Victoria Cross recipient Sergeant Aubrey Cosens. Finally, the evening reached an emotional crescendo as LCol Lamie announced the positive identification of Lieutenant John Kavanagh's remains, in the presence of his family.

Following closing remarks from Brigade Commander Colonel Dan Stepaniuk, the guests retreated to the dance floor for a lively night of dancing and desserts. The evening's entertainment was provided by the Regiment's Band and Bugles, under the direction of Captain Megan Hodge. The audience was delighted by an impressive selection of regimental marches and popular hits. The spectacular event was organized by The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Officers' Mess, and marked another successful effort following the Regiment's hosting of the 2010 edition. **TR**





**PHOTOS TOP ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT:** LCol Lamie; LGen Eyre, Commander to the Army; and Dr. Bryan Brulotte, HCol of the GGFG and CEO of MaxSys, the official sponsor of the Toronto Garrison Ball.

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** LCol Lamie presents Nick di Donato of the Liberty Group with a photo of Casa Loma.

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## Little-Known Facts About A Few RSMs

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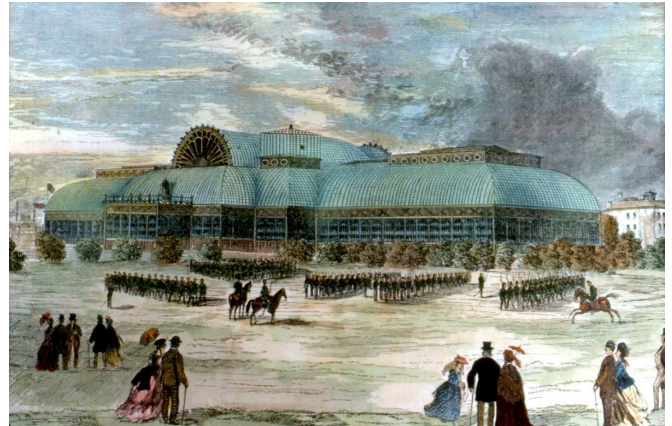
by CWO (ret'd) Shaun Kelly, CD



### THE REGIMENT'S FIRST SERGEANT-MAJOR WORE A KILT

The Regiment's first Sergeant-Major was a Scotsman named William Ramsay. Ramsay was Colour-Sergeant to No. 4 (Highland) Coy, which was formed in 1856 and was one of the six original companies that formed the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Volunteer Militia Rifles of Canada in 1860. The Highland company wore the Black Watch tartan on their kilts and trews, rifle green tunic with red facings, a glengarry with long feathers and the Officers wore the Rifles cross belt. The Highland Company fought at the Battle of Ridgeway in this uniform (highland dress with trews). There are no known photos of Ram-

**H**ere are some little-known facts about a few of the Regiment's Sergeants-Major. Did you know that the term *Regimental Sergeant-Major* wasn't used until 1908, when the Regiment expanded to two Battalions, and that most early documents use the American spelling of *colour*.



say, nor much information on his life, but it is most likely that on parade the Regiment's first Sergeant-Major would have worn full Highland regalia.

### OUR FIFTH SERGEANT-MAJOR WAS A VETERAN OF THE BRITISH ARMY

Before joining the Queen's Own and being appointed as its fifth Sergeant-Major, Irish-born Robert Taylor served with the 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot of the British Army. The 16<sup>th</sup> was stationed in Canada for many years off and on until 1869, and many of its veterans retired to Canada. In June 1866, Taylor was Sergeant-Major of the Queen's Own during the Battle of



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**INSET ABOVE LEFT:** Rifleman, Canadian Volunteer Militia, 1863-1870. Some units of the Canadian Volunteer Militia emulated the British rifle regiments, wearing a similar dark green uniform with bronze buttons and badges. Although all of the Volunteer units were armed with rifled muskets by the 1860s, the prestige and spirit of the rifle regiments remained an attraction to new recruits. This volunteer wears the full dress uniform authorized between 1863 and 1870. He carries the shorter 'two-band' pattern of 1853 model Enfield rifled musket issued to rifle and light infantry units. Reconstruction by Ron Volstad. (Canadian Department of National Defence)



Ridgeway. Astonishingly, after the battle, photos were taken of all the Companies present. There is a photo of Taylor seated with No. 1 Company; he is wearing the rank of Sergeant-Major, which was four chevrons surmounted by a crown, carrying both a sword and a Sergeant's cane and wearing an Officer's pattern cross belt.



**THE REGIMENT'S SEVENTH SERGEANT-MAJOR SERVED BOTH IN THE FENIAN RAIDS AND THE NORTH-WEST REBELLION**

Another Irishman, Patrick Cunningham was also a veteran of the 16<sup>th</sup> Foot and was with that Regiment during the Fenian Raids. Retiring from the British Army in 1867, he joined the Queen's Own and was Sergeant-Major of the Regiment's 274-man contingent that headed west by rail, wagon, sleigh and

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Crystal Palace in 1871 with what is likely companies of the Queen's Own Rifles drilling. It was located north west of King and Shaw streets and was in use from 1858-1878. (The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Regimental Museum and Archive)

**TOP:** Following the 1866 Battle of Ridgeway, RSM Robert Taylor was photographed with members of No. 1 Company. He is seated second from left in the first row.

**RIGHT:** This shadow box holds the British Army discharge papers and Fenian Raid and Northwest Rebellion medals of Patrick Cunningham, the Regiment's seventh Sergeant-Major. A veteran of the 16<sup>th</sup> Foot, Cunningham was part of the 274-man contingent that was sent to quell the North-West Rebellion in the spring of 1885.



foot to put down the North-West Rebellion in the spring of 1885. Cunningham's British Army discharge papers and his Fenian Raid and Northwest Rebellion medals were donated to the museum by his great-grandson, a retired U.S. Marine.

**PATRICK MCKELL WAS WOUNDED AT CUT KNIFE CREEK WHILE RECOVERING A WOUNDED COMRADE**

Born in Ireland, Patrick McKell fought at the Battle of Cut Knife Creek as Color-Sergeant of "D" Company, sustaining a wound to his head and risking

**BELOW:** The charge of the Fenians (wearing green uniforms) under Colonel John O'Neill at the Battle of Ridgeway, near Niagara, on June 2, 1866. In reality, the Fenians had their own green flags but wore a very mixed bag of Union and Confederate uniforms (if they still had them, or parts of them left over from the Civil War), or civilian garb, with strips of green as arm or hat bands to distinguish themselves. (Library and Archives Canada, C-18737)





**LEFT:** The Regiment's tenth Sergeant-Major, Patrick McKell, fought at the Battle of Cut Knife Creek on May 2, 1885, near Battleford, Saskatchewan. His grave marker at St. James Cemetery is likely the largest of anyone in the Queen's Own.



*right*) was asked to step down as the Regiment's 12<sup>th</sup> Sergeant-Major. In 1916, 21 years after leaving the Queen's Own, he lied about his age and volunteered for active service with the 182<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Canadian Expeditionary Force, saying he was 43 when

his life to save a wounded comrade. He died in 1890 of blood poisoning after serving only a year as the Regiment's 10<sup>th</sup> Sergeant-Major. He was quite popular and has what is likely the largest grave marker of anyone in the Queen's Own. The monument was erected by his comrades at St. James Cemetery in Toronto and stands over 15 feet high.

### RIFLEMAN IN 1879 TO PRIVATE IN FRANCE IN 1917

In 1895, due to some internal conflict with the officers, Toronto-born Hugh George (*pictured top*)

**BELOW:** The Battle of Cut Knife Creek was fought on May 2, 1885 by Lieutenant Colonel William Otter's column against the Cree and Assiniboine near Battleford, Saskatchewan. Although this illustration shows Canadian forces, with the 2nd Battalion, Queen's Own Rifles in the foreground, sweeping all before them, the battle's ultimate outcome was not so triumphant. After six hours of fighting, Otter's force withdrew, suffering fourteen wounded and eight killed. (Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas)



he was actually 59. In 1918, after a short stint in France, the Army finally realized he was over 60 and sent him back to Canada to be medically released. During his time back in Canada, while still on active service, he was run over by a car while running to catch a streetcar. His injuries were severe and he ended up with one leg shorter than the other after he recovered. Promoted to Lieutenant, George was released from active service in November 1919 at 62 years of age. George died on 6 April 1930 at the age of 73 from an accidental overdose of drugs while at Toronto Western Hospital, while recovering from injuries sustained after being run over again, this time by a car. **TR**

**BELOW:** Although the Regiment's twelfth Sergeant-Major retired from the Queen's Own circa 1895, when Canada was looking for volunteers, Hugh George did not hesitate. Lying about his age, he enlisted with the Canadian Expeditionary Force's 182<sup>nd</sup> Battalion and served overseas in France. He served with the Canadian Corps until the fall of 1919, when he was released from active service at the age of 62. (George Metcalf Archival Collection, CWM 19920044-601)



*by Major Chris Boileau,  
Officer Commanding 60<sup>th</sup> (Para) Company*

**T**he Queen's Own Rifles of Canada (QOR) could be forgiven for starting 2020 on a highly optimistic note. There was no reason to doubt that this year would be any different from the last. Fresh from their successes during the preceding autumn training cycle, 60<sup>th</sup> (Para) Coy prepared to embark upon a winter exercise series with their 32 Canadian Brigade Group partners. International media reports regarding a virulent outbreak on the other side of the world garnered limited attention.

At the end of January, 60<sup>th</sup> (Para) Coy participated in Exercise NORTHERN STAR at 4 CDTC Meaford. After completing a number of live-fire ranges that included platoon support weapons, the sub-unit was transported to Lake Simcoe Regional Airport to rig equipment and perform chalk assembly. Under cloudy conditions, jumpers conducted a descent onto a snow-covered DZ GORVAD in CFB Borden, where they conducted DZ RV drills and consolidated their position.

Less than a month later, 60<sup>th</sup> (Para) Coy would find itself back in the field during Exercise NORTHERN STAR 2 in February. On this occasion, they deployed independently to CFB Borden to conduct battle procedures, while the remainder of the Regiment and the Tactical Training Group moved farther north to RTA Burwash. After a series of rehearsals on platoon-level tactics and establishing their biv-



ouac area, the paratroopers once more made their way to the civilian-operated airhead and prepared themselves for the tactical insertion. Conditions were ideal, as at last light, full-equipment descent was performed onto a frozen DZ GORVAD for the second time that season, allowing the soldiers to achieve their objectives and perform battle task standards.

Simultaneously, 60<sup>th</sup> (Para) Coy was looking toward the future. One of the most important aspects of maintaining requisite skills and succession as the only parachute-capable infantry sub-unit in the Primary Reserve, is the continual force generation of jumpers. In early March, a combination of seven commissioned and enlisted members from QOR completed their serial of Basic Parachutist at the Canadian Army Advanced Warfare Centre.

However, that same month, the world was fundamentally changed and public health directives began to impact the unit's ability to gather, train and even participate in refreshers. The declaration of a worldwide pandemic coupled with the provincial state of emergency in response to COVID-19 effectively shuttered parachuting by 60<sup>th</sup> (Para) Coy.

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**ABOVE:** MCpl Jessome observing a member of the Jordanian Armed Forces during chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) training during Operation IMPACT, in Jordan.



**ABOVE:** CWO O'Halloran, outgoing RSM of the QOR, conducting Parachute Instructor duties.

**LEFT:** CWO O'Halloran, outgoing RSM of the QOR, conducting Jumpmaster duties.

Events through April and May were postponed as QOR adopted a virtual, dispersed approach. Despite the adversity of the first wave, there was continued optimism: QOR and the light battalions from each of the Regular Force infantry regiments attempted to set the conditions for a mass integrated drop in June. However, the evolving safety concerns required the cancellation of all planning. As the unit stood-down, it was a challenge for leadership to maintain positivity.

That said, despite the uncertainty and revolving lockdowns across the Greater Toronto Area, international operations never subsided and 60<sup>th</sup> (Para) Coy responded to omnipresent demands for volunteers for expeditionary missions. Three seasoned paratroopers deployed abroad to Jordan as part of Operation IMPACT during the summer months; they were MWO D. Leader, WO M. Currie and MCpl K. Jessome.

With a heightened protection posture and firmly established medical regulations, QOR resumed parading in September. The unit was able to leverage the critical partnership with 8 Wing at CFB Trenton in order to alleviate concerns regarding currency as, through a joint venture with 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment (3 RCR), 60<sup>th</sup> (Para) Coy provided both jumpmasters and personnel to 436 Squadron's 'War Week' readiness evaluations and training requirements.

In perfect conditions, almost 70 paratroopers descended from two Royal Canadian Air Force CC-130J aircraft, of which half were from 60<sup>th</sup> (Para) Coy. DZ HODGSON in CFB Trenton became the site for not only an impressive demonstration of interoperability, but the first static-line jump in Ontario since the onset of the pandemic and a restoration of institutional confidence. Fittingly, it also served as the final jump by the outgoing Command Team



of LCol F. Lamie and CWO D. O'Halloran, immediately prior to their complete hand-over with LCol S. Moody and RSM J. Johnston.

Aside from difficulties surrounding the coronavirus, October brought further challenges to the Coy. Acute shortages of the CT-1 and CR-1 fleets meant that all available holdings in Trenton were

**PHOTOS THIS PAGE:** Members of the QOR and 3 RCR conduct a joint static-line currency exercise in support of 436 Squadron at CFB Trenton in September 2020.



diverted to the Basic Parachutist serial, at that time. WO J. Behan, one of the unit's Parachute Instructors, was dedicated to support this course and our full-time partners at 3 RCR. Unfortunately, COVID-19 restrictions prevented attendance by any candidates from QOR.

Collective training continued apace however, and in November the unit embarked upon Exercise MAROON PHALANX 1, at CFB Trenton. The intent had been to conduct an airborne insertion by the jumpers of 60<sup>th</sup> (Para) Coy, with a follow-on force from two platoons of dismounted infantry from the Regiment being inserted via tactical air-landing onto Mountainview Airfield. After extensive preparations and battle procedure, it was



**ABOVE:** Members of the QOR and 3 RCR on DZ Hodgson during a joint static-line currency exercise in support of 436 Squadron at CFB Trenton in September 2020.

**BOTTOM LEFT:** From left to right: Outgoing QOR Command Team RSM O'Halloran and LCol Lamie and incoming QOR Command Team LCol Moody and RSM Johnston.

not to be: heavy snowfall arrived just after chalk assembly and the CC-130J was unable to leave the base. Perseverance amidst adversity triumphed however, and dry platoon-level training was conducted at the objective, which was both meaningful and symbolic. Several promotions were done at DZ HODGSON by LCol S. Moody, ending the event on a positive note.

December proved to be a bittersweet affair. Though it brought the unit closer to the holidays, in terms of unit training, it was only more disappointment. Despite having two CC-130Js dedicated from 436 Squadron, and a CH-146 from 424 Squadron to insert Recce PI, after completing battle procedure and rehearsals, the exercise was cancelled just prior to departing the armoury due to heightened concerns from higher headquarters with the coronavirus and exposure to aircrew.

It would be easy to walk away from 2020 with a sense of discontent, but upon reflection, a lot was accomplished. Many fantastic training opportunities occurred throughout the year, including light force packages on anti-armour tactics and machine-

gun employment. Particularly, the senior NCOs of the Coy sustained morale and delivered quality, engaging lessons and led practical exercises. Career courses, though limited, were still offered. Jumpers earned their maroon berets. Soldiers contributed to efforts to restore stability in the Middle East. Relationships were solidified amongst our closest friends, despite not always being in the same city or region. Most importantly, the Coy showed itself to be a true family amidst one of the most trying times in recent memory.

Of note, CSM B. Burns was recognized as Airborne Soldier of the Year, for his tireless efforts to single-handedly manage duties of currency and duties of the Air Cell during the fall of 2020, as all of his fellow Parachute Instructors (PIs) were either







deployed or tasked. He exemplified selflessness and dedication and serves as a role model to those of all ranks. **TR**

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**PHOTOS THIS PAGE:** Taken during the QOR-led Basic Infantry Course. Such courses develop the knowledge, mental and physical endurance, and combat skills necessary for the profession of arms, including expert marksmanship and small unit tactics.



## — Sports Flashback: Olympic Gold Medalist George Lyon —



by Charles McGregor



**A**lthough Canada's defence of its 112-year-old Olympic golf title got off to a fine beginning at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, it did not end well. By the end of the competition at the Olympic Golf Course, former

Queen's Own Rifles Corporal George Lyon remained as the only Canadian to have been awarded an Olympic Gold Medal for golf.

While Saskatchewan's Graham de Laet, a PGA Tour regular, shot a six under first round score of 65, one shot behind the leader, he fell off the pace to finish the tournament at minus two, well out of the lead. And George Lyon's place in history as the last Canadian to win Olympic gold on the golf course was safe. Unfortunately, the medal he won, at the age of 46, was lost many years ago.

Recalling the tournament later he said, "I finally won by three up and two to play and thus came into possession of one of the finest — if not the finest — trophies ever given in a golf tournament." He added, "I also got a very pretty golf medal."

The trophy is now on display in the Canadian Golf Hall of Fame in Oakville, Ontario. These honours came after he defeated reigning U.S. Amateur Champion H. Chandler Egan on the 34<sup>th</sup> hole of the match play final at Glen Echo Country Club, in Normandy, Missouri. When called forward to receive his awards, he shocked the U.S. golf officials,

but delighted all others present, by walking on his hands to the presentations area.

It is fair to say that his record was never threatened until 2016. Golf was struck off the list of Olympic competitions after 1904, leaving George S. Lyon as defending champion until, after an absence of 112 years, the sport was returned to the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.

In his late 20s, Lyon was a member of The Queen's Own Rifles and served in the Battleford Column during the Northwest Rebellion in 1885. He died in Toronto on May 11, 1938 at the age 80 and is buried beneath a very modest stone marker at Mount Pleasant Cemetery. A number of his Queen's Own Riflemen are also buried there, including some who died in 1866 during the Battle of Ridgeway. **TR**

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*George Lyon, a former cricket star, was Canada's amateur golf champion eight times. He is also the sole Canadian to have won an Olympic gold medal for golf in 1908.*



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# Seven Lessons Of Military Failures

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*by Larry Stevenson,  
Former Honorary Colonel*



**G**ood leaders learn from their mistakes. Great leaders learn from the mistakes of others. For a military leader, the reading of history is a must. I have found as a businessman that I learn the most about my profession from the bad deals that I have done. It is nice to celebrate the home run deals, but the ones that went sideways helped me to learn and improve the most. As a pilot, I have always studied the reports of aircraft accidents because I believe this helps make me a better pilot.

Over the years, I have read much about military disasters, and thus I wanted to share my own perspective on the worst ten military battles, and then to draw some common lessons from these infamous battles. The ten battles cover over two thousand years, from 413 BC to the Dieppe raid in 1942.

So, in chronological order, here are the ten biggest military disasters that all military leaders should study.

## **SYRACUSE (413 BC):**

The mighty Athenians launched a needless attack on Syracuse, which resulted in fighting two powerful foes. The end result of The Peloponnesian War was the destruction of Athens. As the great Greek historian Thucydides wrote, the Athenians “were destroyed with a complete annihilation of their fleet, their army, everything was wiped out.” The

combination of poor leadership, flawed strategy and rash decision-making doomed the Athenians.

## **CARRHAE (53 BC)**

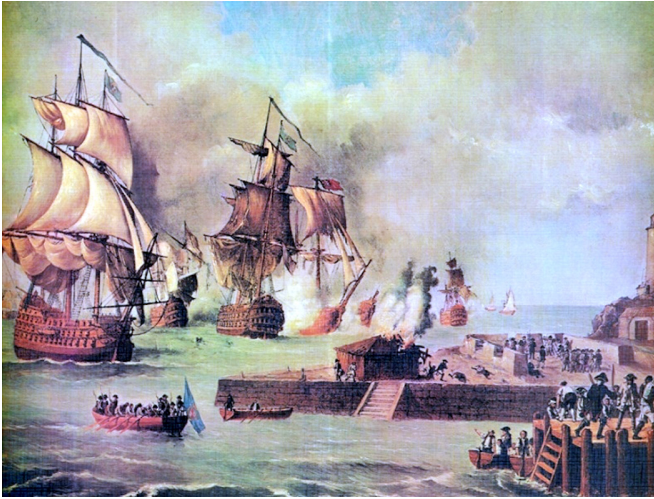
The Roman Empire was at the height of its power when Crassus (one of the members of the First Triumvirate along with Pompey and Julius Caesar) set out to Mesopotamia to conquer the Parthians. Hubris led Crassus to underestimate the Parthians, who fought a very different style of battle than the Romans. Crassus was unable to adapt the Roman strategy to beat these amazing horse-mounted archers and so he and three quarters of his fine Roman soldiers lost their lives.

## **NAGASHINO (1575)**

Nagashino demonstrates the value of adopting new technologies. This battle set the stage for Tokugawa to unite Japan under his domination as Shogun. Tokugawa and his ally Oda won the battle because they mastered the use of a new technology — matchlocks, which had been recently delivered to Japan by Portuguese traders.

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***ABOVE:** The Battle of Nagashino took place in 1575 near Nagashino Castle on the plain of Shitarabara. Tokugawa's skillful use of firearms to defeat Takeda's cavalry tactics is often cited as a turning point in Japanese warfare; many cite it as the first "modern" Japanese battle.*



### **CARTAGENA (1741)**

This battle was a massive amphibious assault that England launched against the Spanish in the New World City of Cartagena. The British hoped to push Spain out of the New World, but the expedition ended in failure. The primary reason for the disaster was the failure of the British Navy and Army to cooperate, combined with seriously deficient planning. The most famous example of the poor planning was bringing ladders to scale the walls of the fort only to find that the ladders were 10 feet too short.

### **BORODINO (1812)**

One might argue that Borodino was a victory for Napoleon, but his failure to defeat the Russian Army decisively meant that his invasion of Russia was a failure. Napoleon retreated from Russia, but some 400,000 of his 500,000 soldiers who had crossed into Russia with him six months before were now dead. Failure resulted from a poor strategy from the start, unrealistic optimism and a



failure of logistics (driven by the brilliant Russian strategy of giving ground and drawing Napoleon further into Russia). The invasion of Russia was a fatal miscalculation that ultimately led to Napoleon's downfall (another European dictator would make the same mistake 130 years later).

### **BATTLE OF BALACLAVA (1854)**

This battle in the Crimean War pitted England against Russia. The battle is arguably one of the greatest military blunders of all time: the Charge of the Light Brigade, which inspired Tennyson's famous poem: "Into the valley of death rode the six hundred." Incompetent leadership and horrendous communication caused this debacle. The British suffered 40% casualties and lost public support for the war at home.

### **PETERSBURG (1864)**

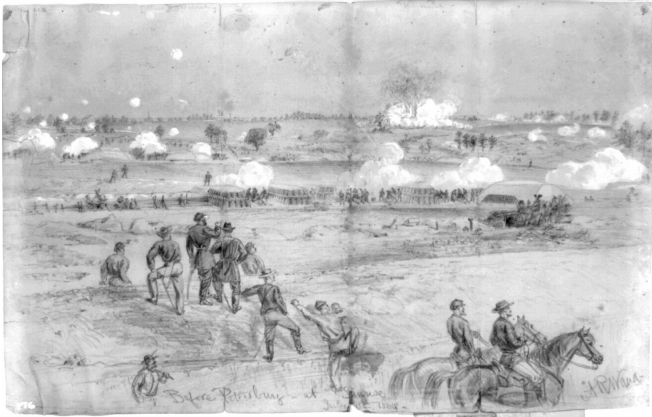
The Union had gained the upper hand in the U.S. Civil War and the key to an early victory was capturing the vital transportation hub of Petersburg near Richmond, Virginia. The Union Army devised an ingenious plan to dig a tunnel and trigger a massive explosion to stun and overtake the Confeder-

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**TOP LEFT:** "British attack on Cartagena de Indias" by Luis Fernández Gordillo illustrates the massive 1741 amphibious assault England launched against the Spanish in Cartagena.

**TOP RIGHT:** Vasily Vereshchagin's painting "Napoleon near Borodino" captures a contemplative Napoleon, sitting on a chair, surrounded by his generals.

**LEFT:** "The Charge of the Light Brigade, 1854" by Richard Caton Woodville. (National Army Museum)



**ABOVE:** The mine under the Confederate works at within Elliotts Salient at Petersburg, Virginia, explodes in the distance at dawn on July 30, 1864.

**RIGHT:** The devastating result of the 8,000-lbs of powder explosion under the Salient, 1865.



ates. Despite the brilliant plan, the attack was a disaster for the Union Army primarily because of terrible leadership and poor communication of the tactical plan. The leadership exacerbated the situation by sending in more troops when the battle was already lost, resulting in needless casualties. The failure of the Petersburg attack meant that the Civil War dragged on for eight more bloody months.

### **ISANDLWANA (1879)**

At the Battle of Isandlwana, the Zulu army, armed with spears and muskets, annihilated the well-trained British who were armed with cannons and modern rifles. Under the brilliant leadership of King Cetshwayo, the Zulus surprised the British who believed it was impossible that a band of natives could defeat their well-trained and armed soldiers. This overconfidence combined with the splitting up of the British forces allowed the Zulus to pick off the better-armed troops. The battle ranks among the greatest single-day losses of British troops from the time of Napoleon until WWI.

**RIGHT:** "The Battle of Isandlwana" was painted by the British artist Charles Edwin Fripp. It depicts the disastrous British defeat at the hands of King Cetshwayo's Zulu army on January 22, 1879. The official casualty return listed 858 Europeans and 471 Africans killed. (National Army Museum)

### **GALLIPOLI (1915)**

In an effort to break the logjam of trench warfare in WWI, Winston Churchill initiated the Gallipoli attack to drive Germany's ally, Turkey, out of the war. Gallipoli failed miserably because its strategy was flawed from the outset. Once again, the Army and Navy did not work well together and the leadership and execution were poor. As was the case with several other military blunders, the leadership made matters worse by pouring more men into the battle long after all had been lost, resulting in further needless casualties. Of the 500,000 soldiers committed to the campaign, over half were casualties.

### **DIEPPE (1942)**

In the spirit of Canadian content, I included on my top ten list the famous raid at Dieppe, which is well known to most Canadians. Too large a force to be





*Canadian dead on Blue Beach at Puys, Dieppe 1942. Trapped between the beach and high sea wall (fortified with barbed wire), they made easy enfilade targets for MG34 machine guns in a German bunker. The bunker firing slit is visible in the distance, just above the German soldier's head.*

a raid and too small a force to be an invasion, the Dieppe expedition was doomed from the start. It had no chance of success and, despite the bravery of the soldiers, it resulted in horrendous casualties. A combination of flawed strategy, poor leadership, mistakes in execution, inadequate reconnaissance and support, and inadequate equipment led to more than 4,000 casualties, most in the first few hours of the operation.

All aspiring military leaders should read the details of these and other military disasters so that lessons can be learned from them.

### **THE SEVEN LESSONS OF THESE KEY MILITARY FAILURES**

**1. Do not fight on two fronts:** Doing so is effectively the opposite of the military maxim of “concentration of force.” Splitting forces and fighting on multiple fronts hurt Napoleon at Borodino and the Athenians after they attacked Syracuse.

**2. Flawed strategy:** Almost every one of the ten disasters shared this common feature. This was most clearly the case at Gallipoli and also at Dieppe where the allied force was too large to be a raid and too small to be an invasion. The entire Napoleon invasion of Russia and the war in the Crimea were based on flawed overall strategy.

**3. Fighting the last war:** Often armies fight the last war and fail to adapt to different technologies. This was certainly the case at Carrhae, as the Parthians relied on lightly armoured horse archers to decimate the Romans in their hollow square. This same

failure to adopt to new technology (the matchlock guns) led to the defeat of Katsuryori at Nagashino. More recently, the rapid defeat of France, counting on the impregnable Maginot Line in WWII, highlights this lesson.

**4. Ponderous decision-making:** Again, this is the opposite of the military maxim “the need for speed.” Often, military commanders have lost battles because they dithered. Napoleon could have survived the Russian debacle had he retreated earlier. Speed could certainly have helped the attackers at Cartagena.

**5. Failure to coordinate arms:** The classic example of this is Gallipoli. The Army and Navy failed to work together and the result was an epic failure. The same inter-army rivalry could be seen at Cartagena, where British Admiral Vernon and Army General Wentworth constantly clashed and failed to work to accomplish a joint mission. Dieppe also had many failures of using the combined forces’ capabilities.

**6. Poor logistics:** Napoleon was generally known as the master of logistics, but Borodino was in many ways a result of over-extended supply lines. The British failure at Cartagena was partly a result of poor equipment planning, and the same can be said about the Churchill tanks at Dieppe.

**7. Poor leadership:** Just as almost every military disaster involved flawed strategy, it is certainly true that almost every one of the ten battles I highlighted featured poor leadership. This was certainly true of the Union Army at Petersburg and the British Army both at the Charge of the Light Brigade in Crimea and when fighting the Zulus at Isandlwana. Contrast this with the brilliant leadership of King Cetshwayo of the Zulus.

Today’s great military leaders will take care to learn from history, to make sure that they do not repeat these seven common mistakes. **TR**

## \_\_ Muskrat Metropolis: A Rifleman Reports From North Of 60° \_\_

by Capt Kevin Sheedy, CD



**W**hat a difference a year makes. In last year's *The Rifleman*, I described my good fortune to be still wearing The Queen's Own cap badge in Yellowknife. Who knew that the Northwest Territories would be the only Canadian jurisdiction without a single death attributable to the pandemic? Even more remarkable, life here is relatively unchanged with restaurants and pubs open for business as usual, and minimal restrictions around masks and travel for Northwest Territories residents.

For better or worse, our good luck — my good luck — must in part be due to our sparse population and inaccessible location. More importantly, the authorities, including Premier Cochrane and Chief Public Health Officer Kami Kandola, have been able to steer the ship of state in such a way that things have worked out better for us than most other places in the world.

As for me, life has changed quite a bit in that I am now serving at Real Property Operations at our detachment here in Yellowknife. This is a radical transformation given that I am (a) a reservist, (b) not a military "engineer," and (c) was supposed to continue at Joint Task Force North until December 2021. Again, luck and circumstance have played their part.

For those that recall last year's article, my main preoccupation was Operation NANOOK-NUNAKPUT,

whose purpose is to deploy Canadian Army troops to demonstrate presence and exercise surveillance over the waters of Canada's Arctic Archipelago. NUNAKPUT 2020 was mightily derailed by the pandemic so a host of planners from many government departments across the country found themselves deployed to other tasks, myself included.

Like the rest of the Army, RCN, and RCAF, Joint Task Force North stood up for Operation LASER, with its first mission being to protect the Force and, ultimately, to provide pandemic assistance to Canada wherever and in whatever form was needed. Indeed, many QOR soldiers were deployed during that operation.

Back in the Northwest Territories, the pandemic never really struck so the 350 or so members of the Yellowknife garrison had plenty of opportunity for self-reflection. Ultimately, we were able to turn our attention to matters not related to the pandemic.

My first non-pandemic task was to be the desk officer for Exercise CANOË CARCAJOU. This was an adventure training canoe expedition on the Mackenzie River. The Mackenzie, or *Decho* in Dene, is approximately 1,400 km long and flows north from Great Slave Lake to the Beaufort Sea at Tuktoyak-

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**ABOVE AND NEXT TWO PAGES:** *Some of the art and fauna that can be seen in the Sergeant's Mess, Yellowknife.*



tuk. Needless to say, our journey covered only a small portion of this mighty stream between Fort Providence and Jean Marie River. Our party of 20 canoeists successfully covered 190 kilometres in five days in what has to be a staffing and adventure training milestone in the recent history of Joint Task Force North. Anyone who has had to navigate the staff procedures required to obtain approval and funding for adventure training will understand my baldness and greying complexion at the end of that trip!

Other interesting tasks assigned to me in 2020 were serving as a duty officer in the Joint Operations Centre here in Yellowknife and also participating in Operation LIMPID, which is the surveillance and control operation that the Armed Forces conducts year-round across our national territory to ensure Canadian territorial integrity is secure and controlled at all times.

All good things must come to an end sooner or later, and my time in the military is running short. Fortunately, my civilian background in commercial real estate and professional engineering licence were of interest to the leadership at Real Prop-

erty Operations and I closed out 2020 with a new Class B contract which started in December, still in Yellowknife.

A description of my new duties will have to wait for a future edition of *The Rifleman*, but first another aspect of life up here, or rather wildlife up here, that might be of interest to readers down south. On a recent Zoom call a friend was interested in a Lynx taxidermy proudly hanging on the wall of my flat. It seems that Canadians living in bigger cities don't have much opportunity to think about where their hamburgers and bacon come from. More to the point, the abundance of our land and the opportunity to hunt, trap or eat game does not exist for most folks living in places like Scarborough, let alone Moss Park in Toronto.

Many of my colleagues both at Real Property, the Rangers or Joint Task Force North relentlessly hunt and fish. The freshwater fishery on Great Slave Lake is without a doubt the best in Canada. I have no clue how to fish, but when I put my line in the water, I have never failed to catch anything less than a 10 kg pike. With only slight exaggeration, 5, 10 or 12 kg fillets of lake trout, white fish, pickerel, coney, or burbot are readily available at the fish plant in town and the local Co-op grocery store, all at very reasonable prices.

As for game, bison, muskox, and moose are abundant and well managed by the Northwest Territories Environment and Natural Resources Department. Territorial hunter safety training includes education and the expectation that hunters will ensure that nothing is wasted when an animal is harvested, and interestingly, that the harvest will be shared. <https://www.huntercourse.com/canada/northwestterritories/> I do not hunt, but have enjoyed bison, moose, muskox, black bear, hare, dall sheep, and fowl including ptarmigan and spruce grouse. All of this has been through the generosity of my hunting friends and colleagues. Muskox, moose and bison can all top 500 kg, so sharing benefits both hunter and recipient.

Unlike the aforementioned species, my own opinion is that caribou appear to be in danger of extinction across their entire range, including



Northern Ontario. This is a very contentious topic. Our climate, Indigenous hunting rights, industrial development of all kinds, and hunting by other Canadians and tourists collide in a dilemma that has somehow caused the caribou to vanish from our landscape. Twenty years ago, vast herds of these animals could be seen on the Ingram Trail, a scant 30 km from where I sit as I write this. Before that, thousands of caribou crossed the ice on Great Slave Lake and travelled past Yellowknife to the western shores of the lake every winter. In Ontario, the historic limit of the Woodland caribou range extended as far south as Manitoulin Island and the Ottawa Valley. To date, I have not seen a single one of these animals in the time I have been in the North.

Trapping is another feature of life in the North. Almost all Northerners wear fur and trapping remains a mainstay of many Dene and Inuit families' livelihoods. When it is minus 35° C, Greenpeace and their allies are not welcome in the communities here. For more on this, check out the National Film Board movie *Angry Inuk*, which chronicles the



struggle in Iqaluit, Kimmirut and Pangnirtung on Baffin Island to sustain the commercial seal hunt. The film is a stark contrast to the well-oiled and funded marketing machine behind Greenpeace, PETA and other similar organisations. Seals are photogenic and appealing from a fundraising



perspective but are abundant across the Arctic and Atlantic Canada. They are not threatened in any way. If readers are feeling squeamish, please accept my apologies. But do think about where your food comes from and consider that most cows and chickens are not raised by gentle hippies. With the exception of the caribou, all fur-bearing animals in the north are abundant and well managed, including the many foxes, muskrats, lynx and wolverines frequently seen wandering the highways and byways of Yellowknife itself! Hence the title of this article.

With continued good fortune, my current role at Real Property Operations will continue beyond my existing contract, either in uniform or some civilian role. And as before, I invite all Riflemen past and present to seize any chance they can to check out our beautiful Arctic scenery — and cuisine — in person. **TR**

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## QOR Regimental Museum

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*by Maj (ret'd) John Stephens, CD,  
Museum Curator*

**A**s it was for most people, 2020 was a challenging year for the museum team. Physical work at the museum stopped in mid-March and continued as such through the remainder of the year with the exception of a few weeks in the early fall. Despite that, our dedicated team of museum volunteers continued to do a large amount of work from home, and we continued to meet weekly on Zoom to provide updates on our work and check in on everyone's mental health.

On February 6 we were pleased to hold our annual volunteer recognition night to thank our volunteers for over 1,400 hours of service in 2019. We were thankful to the Liberty Entertainment Group for their donation of gift certificates for our top-serving team members. We were also pleased to thank the CO, LCol Lamie, and the RSM, CWO O'Halloran, for their support to the museum throughout their terms of appointment.

Once it became obvious that an in-person event for the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Regiment was not going to be possible, the museum took the lead in initiating and coordinating production of a **15-minute video "event"** that premiered on YouTube on April 26 and gave members of the Regimental family a chance to celebrate together online. The video has been viewed over 2,800 times since then.

In September we posted an online interview with incoming Commanding Officer, then Major Scott Moody, and were pleased to upload several virtual QOR Band productions.

November was also a busy month. Thanks to Steve Yu and many other volunteers, we produced an hour-long virtual **QOR Day video** recognizing the museum's 50 years at Casa Loma; the video also included remarks from the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. We also produced a video illustrating the **evolution of the QOR Rifleman's uniform** from the 1860s to the 1990s, which was shared on the Canadian Army's social media channels and received over 11,500 views in six months. Lastly, we produced 20 street lamp banners and, with the support of Casa Loma, these were installed in key locations in mid- and downtown Toronto.

Towards the end of 2020 we had made the decision to migrate our desktop collection database software to a cloud-based option that would not only make working from home easier but would have many other benefits. We worked with our vendor to clean up our existing data and were able

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*LCol Lamie (above left) and CWO O'Halloran (above right) were among those who received recognition for their support during Museum Recognition Night on February 6, 2020.*

to make the migration over the holidays. Subsequently we were also able to launch our new public access view which allows site visitors to search through our database of over 3,400 artifacts and 3,500 related people.

We continue to share regimental history and other museum information through our social media channels including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. The series of daily posts taken from the WWII War Diaries that started in 2019 with D-Day were carried through 2020 until the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE-Day.

The museum team identified the unmarked graves of four Fenian Raid casualties who died in 1867 and whose deaths were attributable to military service. We began working with the QOR Trust's Memorial Committee to arrange similar markers to those that were previously installed on the graves of other Fenian Raids casualties. While this process was delayed by the pandemic, we hope to be able to complete it in 2021.

While accessions were down in 2020, we still received 22 representing hundreds of objects. Some of note included:

- A large number of archival materials from Lieutenant Colonel H.G. Barnum, including materials from both the First and Second World Wars.
- A QOR Ross Rifle bayonet.
- Eight pieces of 166<sup>th</sup> Battalion CEF silverware.
- A pewter stein which had belonged to Colonel J.G.K. Strathy.
- Two QOR baseball team shirts from the Toronto Garrison's Officers' Indoor Baseball League.



- A number of Second World War and Cold War era uniforms.
- Items related to former QOR officer Barney Danson.
- A Second World War era army cot.
- 44 photographs and related materials from the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, QOR.
- A variety of items which had belonged to Major General H.C. Pitts, including his jump book.

We were also pleased to co-host two virtual meetings of the Toronto Military Curators' Network with the Royal Canadian Military Institute and believe that these gatherings continue to provide valuable opportunities for and with our curatorial colleagues from HCMS *York*, the 48<sup>th</sup> Highlanders, the Toronto Scottish, the Queen's York Rangers, The Royal Regiment of Canada, the Lorne Scots, and the Ontario Regiment.

Thanks also to our Museum Board members for their assistance and support throughout the year: Jim Lutz (Chair); Major (ret'd) Tony Schultz, CD; Captain (ret'd) Adam Hermant, CD; Jenna Misner; Lisa Holmes; Michele McCarthy; and CWO (ret'd) Shaun Kelly, CD. Like most of the world, the board also pivoted and held three virtual meetings in 2020.

The 2020 Museum Management Team included: Curator Major (ret'd) John Stephens, CD; Deputy Curator CWO (ret'd) Shaun Kelly, CD; Assistant Curator Sergeant Graham Humphrey; and Collections Officer Cheryl Copson, MMSt.

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**TOP RIGHT:** A Great War-era Ross rifle bayonet that is among the items curated by the QOR Regimental Museum.

**LEFT:** Example of mess flatware owned by an officer of the 166<sup>th</sup> Battalion.





*The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada's Regimental Museum opened at Casa Loma under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel (ret'd) William T. Barnard. Mayor William Dennison cuts the ribbon at the foot of the staircase assisted by Lieutenant Colonel John Strathy.*

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### Looking Back in History

#### 25 YEARS AGO

- 1995 – Sergeant Donovan O'Halloran, Corporal Gin and Corporal Smardenkas return safely from their six-month tour with the UN in former Republic of Yugoslavia (O'Halloran with the Royal Canadian Dragoons, Gin and Smardenkas with 1<sup>st</sup> Bn Royal Canadian Regiment).
- 5 March 1995 – Contingent from QOR attend the disbanding of the Canadian Airborne Regiment. QOR Band and Bugles was asked and accepted to play the various marches required for the numerous parades and functions held during the disbandment. The Band led the Regiment to the final Laying up of Colours at the Airborne Museum at CFB Petawawa.

#### 50 YEARS AGO

- 26 April 1970 – 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion QOR (Regular Force) is deactivated [3] and renamed 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. The Colonel of the Regiment, Colonel J.G.K. Strathy, OBD, ED, CD inspected the final parade, which included a *feu de joie*.
- 7 June 1970 – Regimental Museum opens in its new location at Casa Loma in Toronto.

#### 75 YEARS AGO

- 4 May 1945 – At 1300 hrs outside Aurich, Germany, Riflemen George Fryday (aged 19) and

Melvin Smith (aged 23) of C Company are the last QOR soldiers to be killed in action. At 1500 hrs the local German commander surrenders, and at 1900 hrs it is officially announced that all German troops in Northwest Germany, Denmark, and Holland have surrendered unconditionally.

- 1 June 1945 – 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (CAOF) created as part of 2/7 Canadian Infantry Brigade to serve in the occupation force, at first stationed at Amersfoort, Holland. Lieutenant Colonel J.N. Medhurst, OBE, ED appointed Commanding Officer.

#### 100 YEARS AGO

- 18 February 1920 – A rumour that the QOR would be subsumed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Toronto Regiment became so well entrenched that a meeting was held at Casa Loma, presided over by Sir Henry Pellatt and attended by The Queen's Own officers and by ex-3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion and other Canadian Expeditionary Force unit officers who remained "loyal" to the old regiment. A brief was prepared on the matter and forwarded to General Sir Arthur Currie.
- 1 May 1920 – General Order 66 reorganized the Canadian militia. The Queen's Own Rifles would continue as a regiment but dropped the "2<sup>nd</sup> Toronto" from their name.

#### 125 YEARS AGO

- 7 March 1895 – The regiment paraded for the last time in the Drill Shed behind the St Lawrence Market. From there, with drums beating and horns sounding, The Queen's Own Rifles marched to its new home on University Avenue.

#### 150 YEARS AGO

- 16 April 1870 – The 1<sup>st</sup> (Ontario) Battalion of Rifles was authorized as part of a military contingent to quell the Red River Rebellion. The QOR provided two officers – Captain Bruce Harman and Ensign Hugh J. Macdonald (son of Sir John A. Macdonald) – and 12 riflemen. **TR**

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## Honouring A Legacy of Service

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by Capt Kevin Sheedy, CD



**O**n June 21, 2021, Indigenous People's Day, Mrs. Margaret Muriel Eagle entrusted her husband's medals to be displayed at the Vincent Massy Legion here in Yellowknife. The photo below was taken at the Legion. Seated is Mrs. Eagle. Standing are your correspondent and MWO (ret'd) Floyd Powder, formerly of 3 Commando.

### **SGT TOM EAGLE** **QOR, REGIMENTAL NUMBER SH4434**

- June 6, 1932 — September 29, 2009
- Enlisted 1951, enrolled as Rfn in QOR of C, promoted Cpl 6 months later
- 1955, married Margaret Muriel Strynadka who was born at Goodfish Lake Indian Reserve, Alberta (Whitefish Lake First Nation — Plains Cree)
- Muriel's mother, Dora Bull, was from Goodfish Lake; her father, Nick Strynadka, was from nearby Vilna, Alberta
- They raised 5 children: Bertha, Eleanor, Brian, Margaret and Raymond

- The Eagles were posted to Yellowknife in 1971, where they settled
- Sgt Eagle retained his QOR cap badge until his retirement here
- Muriel retired from Canada Post after a 30-year career.

Muriel continues Tom's legacy of service by continuing to support The Queen's Own Rifles Regimental Trust. **TR**



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## History Of A Relationship

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*Reproduced from The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Museum and Archives*



**T**he Cadet Corps of Upper Canada College (UCC) paraded with The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada for 127 years. The Corps is gone now, but its legacy is a proud part of the Regiment's traditions.

Upper Canada College formed a Rifle Company in 1860 as a volunteer 11<sup>th</sup> company attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Volunteer Militia Rifles of Canada shortly after it was founded in Toronto. This commitment by a prominent private school reflected the public spirit and volunteerism of Victorian Canada that was expressed in the militia movement of the day.

In 1866, when the Fenians threatened Ontario, the UCC Rifle Company was called to active service along with its parent regiment. While the regiment marched to **Ridgeway to confront the Fenian invaders**, the UCC Rifle Company guarded the port, armouries and government buildings of Toronto. For this deed, the student company proudly carried the battle honour "FENIAN RAID 1865-66" on its drums and colours from that day forward. Students in the battalion who stood guard also were entitled to receive the Canadian General Service Medal with their names inscribed on the medal's edge and the "Fenian Raid 1866" bar on its red and white striped ribbon.

The College continued to serve Canada and the Empire, providing six Commanding Officers of The Queen's Own Rifles: **W.D. Otter 1875-83, J.M.**

**Delamere 1897-1901, Henry M. Pellatt 1901-12, Arthur J.E. Kirkpatrick 1922-25, Reginald Pellatt 1925-30, and R.B. Gibson 1935-37.** During the Great War, 1,089 Old Boys volunteered for military service, and 176 gave their lives.

Membership in the Cadet Corps became compulsory for UCC students in 1919, with the enlarged Corps reflecting the need to ensure that Canada and the Empire were adequately prepared for any future conflicts.

[Click here for a link to a silent film clip of a 1930s inspection.](#)

When conflict did come in 1939, the Cadets of the College were swept up in the war, as were all young men of their age, and 1,580 volunteered for service, of whom 129 died for their country. During the war, UCC Cadets provided outstanding leadership to the Canadian Forces, with almost 20 per cent of the Army's generals coming from the Corps. These leaders included **General Harry Crerar** (GOC-in-C First Canadian Army) and **Major General A. Bruce Matthews** (GOC Second Canadian Infantry Division). In his later years, General Matthews was Colonel Commandant of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery and Chair of UCC's Board of Governors.

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*ABOVE: Upper Canada College Cadets 1893.*

**RIGHT:** Upper Canada College Cadets drill parade, circa 1890s.

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** Visit to 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion QOR by Field-Marshal Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, KG, GCB, DSO during The Queen's Own Rifles' 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, St Paul's Church, Toronto, 1960.



In the years following the Second World War, the Corps settled into the evolving structure of the Cadet movement, and formally bore the title 17 Royal Canadian (Army) Cadet Corps. In 1960, Field Marshal The Viscount Montgomery visited Toronto at the invitation of The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, which was celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday at the time. Montgomery of Alamein, as he was known, met with the veterans of The Queen's Own and inspected the UCC Corps, proclaiming it was "the best cadet unit I have ever seen during my long service in the army." High praise indeed!

UCC Cadets who served in The Queen's Own Rifles during and since the Second World War include **Brigadier-General J. Neil Gordon** (Commanding Officer of D Company on D-Day), **Lieutenant-Colonel Samuel H.S. Hughes** (Historical Officer in Northwest Europe and Ontario Supreme Court Judge), **Captain Adam Hermant** (Adjutant and President of the Regimental Trust Fund), and **Lieutenant Samuel G.S. Hughes**.

### **THE VOLUNTARY YEARS**

By 1975, the Cadet Corps that Monty had so admired in the 1960s had fallen victim to a variety of factors, particularly the anti-military sentiments emanating from the United States due to the Vietnam War. These had a surprisingly strong impact upon Canadians. Also, the 1970s Cadet training program, geared to mass activity for all students, was particularly inflexible. The vast majority of training was devoted to a single aim — preparing for the annual inspection parade in the spring. Apart from rudimentary map-reading and first aid training, for the vast majority of UCC students the Corps was an exercise in square-bashing in a blue dress uniform, using non-functional (drill-purpose) rifles that they saw as an irrelevant ordeal to be endured. Further-

more, the principal instructors were WWII veterans approaching retirement age. The new generation of masters at the College had neither the military experience nor the interest to help rejuvenate the Cadet program. A fair number, like their colleagues teaching at university and college level, were in fact strongly and vocally anti-military.

Discussions through 1973-75 with The Queen's Own Rifles and other supporters led to the creation of the Military Science Club, which was an attempt to offer an enhanced military program for UCC students without the formal trappings of the military, particularly the uniforms and drill. The Military Science Club was a lecture series that tried





*LEFT: New Colours dedicated and presented to the College by Old Boys in 1989.*

to balance advanced military study with talks that would appeal to young men looking for action and adventure. When this club approach turned out to be less than popular, the College announced in 1975 that student membership in the Corps would cease to be mandatory. Principal Richard Sadleir wrote to the students and parents, saying it was his hope that “a smaller group can now together accomplish more significant things which will truly enrich the lives of those participating.”

There was indeed support for a voluntary Corps, and Principal Sadleir’s words were truly reflected in the Corps that emerged in 1977, re-established as the Upper Canada College Rifles. The Area Cadet Office became involved in the plight of the Corps, and assigned Captain Walter Belfontaine, an experienced Army Cadet Officer (Cadet Instructors List), to initiate a Corps run along typical Cadet lines. Captain Belfontaine was a National Defence civilian employee, a WWII veteran and a former RQMS of 2 Field Engineer Regiment. He recruited a colleague at Canadian Forces Base Downsview, Captain Gil Gray, as his Quartermaster. Captain Gray worked in the CF Base supply system, so the Corps was superbly equipped. Captain Belfontaine also recruited young officers (starting with Steven Burns and C. Michael Gardner) to develop an active and interesting program, taking the regular Army Cadet program and tying it into weekend training exercises at the College’s outdoor property near Norval, Ontario. Captain Belfontaine’s special skill was musketry — indeed, he coached the Ca-

det summer program that sent teams to the Bisle rifle matches in England. So UCC Cadets spent many afternoons on the small-bore rifle range at Moss Park Armoury (courtesy of The Queen’s Own Rifles, who also provided military truck transport between the College and the Armoury) as well as the Moss Park parade square.

The Corps was provided with strong leadership during its voluntary years by a dedicated group of Officers (Cadet Instructor List) and Civilian Instructors. The work of Captain Belfontaine (CO 1978-82) was carried on by Captain John Stephens (CO 1982-85), Captain Geoffrey Winnington-Ball (CO 1985-87), and Civilian Instructor James Lutz (Training Officer 1984-87). John Stephens, an experienced Scouts Canada leader, exercised a fine sense of balance between allowing the Cadets to exercise their imaginations and maintaining control over their activities. Geoff Winnington-Ball was an Old Boy of the College who had been a sergeant in the Corps and was the son of an Old Boy who had served as a lieutenant in the old mandatory Corps. Jim Lutz was an Infantry veteran of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division in the Vietnam War, and brought a sense of adventure and “field-smart” skills to the Corps’ exercises.

Having been firmly established by the fine work of Captain Belfontaine, the UCC Rifles — fondly known as the Yuckers from their acronym UCCR — remained as a voluntary organization for a decade, with membership numbering in the 20s. While its numbers were never large, it retained a bold spirit, growing into a less formal but more inspirational club for students looking for adventure and challenges. The Corps’ theme was Adventure Leadership Training, focused on the experiential learning of leadership through field exercises, most of them held at Norval, northeast of Toronto. Training was given in patrolling, land navigation, reconnaissance, night operations and bivouacking. One of the highlights of field exercises was Norval Orienteering, an inverted version of standard orienteering, invented by Training Officer Lutz, which



**RIGHT:** Upper Canada College's Voluntary Cadet Corps being led from Moss Park Armoury by Captain Walter Belfontaine, CD.

required teams to compete over a course of control points with the objective of being the last team to visit more control points than any other team — a unique challenge for which there was never an obvious solution. A frequent highlight of exercises at Norval was a friendly night raid on the Mac's Convenience Store just outside the College property. Cadets from other Corps were often invited to participate in Norval weekends, and several future leaders of **2881 Queen's Own Rifles Cadet Corps** attended these exercises, including Kim O'Leary, Michael Rainforth and Shaun Bridge. Weekends at Norval were always busy, with challenging scenarios that had cadets patrolling up and down the length and breadth of the property by day and night, always ending in a climactic (and usually very noisy) assault on Norval House.

Through the efforts of Captain Stephens, the Corps expanded its field operations to the Scouts Canada reserve in Haliburton, Ontario, which led to some memorable exercises in rugged wilderness far removed from the familiar terrain of Norval. Winter exercises were held at Huntsville in January, where Civilian Instructor Tom Obright of Scouts Canada taught the Cadets how to build and sleep in quinzee huts made of snow. In 1983, the Corps had the great honour of taking to the field with The Queen's Own Rifles and participating in Exercise CHROME COBRA at Gutowski's farm near Campbellville, Ontario.

In January 1987, The Empire Club of Canada honoured the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UCC Rifles as a formal Cadet Corps with a lunch, speech and presentation to the Corps by UCC Old Boy and Minister of Defence Perrin Beatty.

In 1989, former Cadet Christopher Carnegie initiated a project to replace the old Colours of the Corps. At the time there were three known sets of Colours:

- A set presented in 1921 in memory of the Old Boys who had fallen in the Great War,



which was displayed in the front hall of the College;

- The last Colour carried by the mandatory Corps and subsequently by the voluntary Corps, retained in the College Archives; and
- A new Colour (in the same design as the second one) that had been dedicated by the voluntary Corps, but was stolen and never recovered.

Christopher Carnegie raised private funds to purchase a new set, including a Corps Colour, Union Jack and National Ensign. The Colour was made to the exact design of the second one mentioned above. These Colours were dedicated on Association Day 1989, in a ceremony that included the Pioneers and Skirmishers of The Queen's Own Rifles, its Regimental Band and Bugles, and several distinguished Old Boys including **Brigadier-General Neil Gordon**.

Originally the Cadets wore Army Cadet khaki wool battledress for weekly training, complete with puttees. By 1980, battle dress had been phased out of the Cadet system and a dark green "safari suit" style uniform had been adopted, worn with a Canadian Forces green beret. Fortunately, a small supply of UCC's historic blue uniforms had been retained when the mandatory Corps was disbanded,

and these uniforms were used by the school Colour party and later by the voluntary Corps for Queen's Own Rifles church parades, annual inspection and other special occasions (including the Corps' annual all-ranks mess dinner). This blue dress uniform was worn with black leather belts and gaiters, and black berets with the College cap badge (brass for other ranks, silver for officers). Cadets outfitted themselves with Canadian Forces-pattern combat clothing and equipment for weekend exercises.

The Cadet Commanding Officers of the Corps during the voluntary years were:

- Robert Zeidler 1977-78*
- Arthur McLean 1978-80*
- Donald Cooper 1980-81*
- Gregory Pun 1981-82*
- Adrian White 1982-83*
- Michael Eklund 1983-84*
- Matthew Bryden 1984-85*
- Thomas Simko 1985*
- Timothy Young 1985-86*
- Daniel O'Dwyer 1986-87*

Two former Cadets of the voluntary Corps subsequently served as leaders of The Queen's Own Rifles: **Lieutenant Colonel Rob Zeidler** as Commanding Officer and **Honorary Lieutenant Colonel Brendan Caldwell**. The Corps also provided a Commanding Officer to the 48<sup>th</sup> Highlanders — **Lieutenant Colonel Ian Sargeant** — as well as officers to 2 Field Engineer Regiment (Arthur McLean and John Weir), 2 Intelligence Company (Adrian White), the Toronto Scottish Regiment (Adrian White and Arthur McLean), the Canadian Grenadier Guards (Matthew Bryden), the Princess of Wales Own Regiment (Mike Eklund), the Royal Montreal Regiment (Mike Eklund) and (after years of NCO service in the Royal Regiment of Canada) a pilot officer in the Air Force (Frederick Jones).

### **THE FINAL PARADE**

By 1987, the Corps' membership was declining, and its leadership — both Officers and Cadets — recognized that it would be best to stand down with honour rather than remain the relic of a once-

great Corps. The Officers proposed to Principal Eric Barton that the Corps stand down, and the Principal accepted this recommendation with regret. On November 29, 1987, the Corps held its final parade (Exercise APOCALYPSE DAWN) at the College's Norval property. A number of past and present Cadets and Officers attended the exercise. On that Sunday, the Corps marched to a ridge on the property and buried a time capsule containing UCC Rifles memorabilia. As a light rain fell, the Corps formed ranks and an officer read from the Charles Wolfe poem *The Burial of Sir John Moore at Corunna*:

*Slowly and sadly we laid him down,  
From the field of his fame fresh and gory;  
We carved not a line, and we raised not a  
stone,  
But left him alone with his glory.*

The Corps presented arms, a three-round salute was fired, and the Corps marched off, its final exercise now history. The legacy of the Corps is still preserved in the spirit of those who served in its ranks. This spirit of leadership is expressed in the UCC Rifles Creed:

*We are the few. The proud. The UCC Rifles.  
There are not many of us.  
But there were not many Spartans at  
Thermopylae,  
nor many South Wales Borderers at Rorke's Drift,  
nor many Screaming Eagles at Bastogne.  
Yet in each case, a few good men had the will and  
the skill to change the course of history.  
A few well-led men had the determination to face  
their opponents,  
endure hard conditions, and accomplish their  
mission.  
Someday I will find myself in such a situation  
which requires action,  
initiative, decision, discipline, moral or physical  
courage.  
I will remember my training in the UCC Rifles.  
I will be the one to say  
**FOLLOW ME!***

## Jewish Volunteers During The Second World War



*by Capt (ret'd) Robert Chan, CD*

**T**he Queen's Own Rifles of Canada is Canada's oldest continuously serving infantry regiment. Since 1860, its members have served in every major conflict in which Canadians have participated. One such conflict was the Second World War. Young people across the nation joined up to fight. Amongst them were volunteers from Canada's Jewish community.

Being part of the war effort took many forms, from working as civilians in weapons manufacturing and munitions factories to military support servicing in logistics, hospitals, and headquarters. To serve with The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada and other combat units, the difference was that, as combatants, they faced and fought the enemy.

The role of The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada is to win in battle. It takes sound tactics, discipline, coordination, loyalty, leadership, well-trained soldiers, bravery, and luck. For The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, everyone joins at the lowest rank and leaders emerge out of ability, a practice that continues today.

*"Patriotic reasons were the driving motivation for joining the Canadian military during the Second World War, but for the soldiers of Jewish faith, the persecution of Jews in Europe was an added concern."*

In The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, as in all Canadian military units, Anglo-Protestant traditions prevail. Canadians brought up in traditional

Jewish families observe distinct diets and religious customs. Eighty years ago, we can only imagine bacon being served for breakfast. Church parades were mandatory. Despite many entrenched practices, The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada showed respect for the

Jewish religion. Worship in synagogues, and private and group services were accommodated and arranged throughout the war, whenever feasible.

Patriotic reasons were the driving motivation for joining the Canadian military during the Second World War, but for the soldiers of Jewish faith, the persecution of Jews in Europe was an added con-

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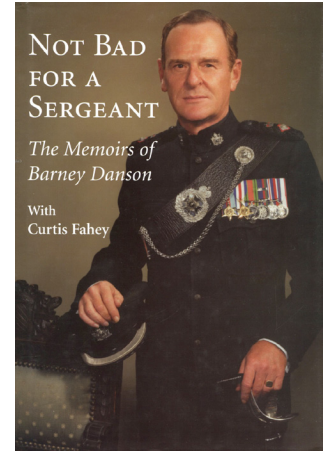
**ABOVE:** Ben Dunkelman, left, enlisted as a private with The Queen's Own Rifles, rising to the rank of Major. He was part of the Juno Beach landing at D-Day and earned numerous commendations including the Distinguished Service Order for rescuing his platoon at Hochwald. (Ontario Jewish Archives)



cern. Their fate was unimaginable if Canadian soldiers were captured by the Germans and identified as being Jewish. In planning for all eventualities, any military identification did not indicate their Jewish faith.

Two notable officers, Barney Danson and Ben Dunkelman, rose to the ranks of Lieutenant and General, respectively. During the Battle of Normandy, Lieutenant Danson was seriously wounded as he led his soldiers. After the war, he was elected in 1976 as Member of Parliament for the Toronto-area riding of York North and later appointed as the Minister of National Defence in the Pierre Trudeau government. At the time, very few politicians were war veterans. During his distinguished political career, he served as the Honorary Lieutenant

Colonel of The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada. His autobiography, *Not Bad for a Sergeant: The Memoirs of Barney Danson*, gives a first-hand account of a generation of Canadians who endured the Depression and war years. His memory of serving with The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada is most memorable.



Ben Dunkelman, before joining the army, had a privileged upbringing in Toronto. He fought from the front in the Battle of Normandy and in many other campaigns. In his book, *Dual Allegiance: An Autobiography*, he mentions shivering one wintry day in Toronto in front of his men who had just returned from the war. A soldier broke ranks and handed his own gloves to Major Dunkelman who regarded this gesture, the respect of the men, as the highest honour. The Distinguished Service Order was awarded to Major Dunkelman for his leadership in the Second World War.

*The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, 1860-1960: One Hundred Years of Canada*, written by William Thomas Barnard and published in 1960, chronicles many battles led by Major Dunkelman. Nowhere is it written that Ben Dunkelman is Jewish nor is the race, colour or religion of any officer or soldier mentioned. The author is not at fault as it was a collective effort that brought about victory.

If you visit a Canadian war cemetery, you will see rows and rows of soldiers' headstones, many engraved with the Star of David to commemorate the Jewish soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice. **TR**

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**ABOVE LEFT:** In 1941, Barney Danson (left) and Freddy Harris took advantage of their first leave to visit Trafalgar Square in London, England.

**ABOVE:** Barney Danson enlisted in The Queen's Own Rifles at the beginning of the Second World War. He served until he was severely wounded, losing an eye, in the Battle of Normandy. He later had a career in politics, serving as Minister of Defence from 1976 to 1979 in Pierre Elliot Trudeau's government.

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## 2881 Queen's Own Rifles RCACC

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by Capt (ret'd) Tom Foulds, CD



Operations and training at 2881 QOR Cadets, the Regiment's Cadet Corps, have changed over the years but never so much as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. After the closing of Dalton Armoury, the Corps office was welcomed to RCL Branch #258 Highland Creek. Training returned to the original home of the Corps, Sir Oliver Mowat CI, and the Corps was thriving right up until our 2020 March Break trip to Fort George Niagara was cancelled and we were ordered to down tools — all in-person training was stood down.

The Canadian Cadet Organization pivoted, and for summer 2020 created an expansive Virtual Cadet Training Centre, in which some of our staff and many of our Cadets participated. Training during the year went online, with the Cadets dragging the Officers into the world of online training.

The Cadet leadership team remains strong, led by Captain Calvin Facey and supported by Captain Shaun Bridge. The connection to the Regiment remains strong, strengthened by the service of two former unit members, Captain Ken Kominek and the author. The clutch of Captains is ably supported by 2Lt Mursal Sameh, a very experienced and successful former cadet, and by 2Lts Leo Afonso and Jen Anger, both with significant reserve service. The Corps Cadet leadership rests in the hands of CWO Pratinav Patel and MWO Genevieve Kaba.

On March 30, 2021, 2881 QOR Cadets were honoured to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Corps' founding in an online celebration, joining the Regiment's CO and RSM. We were also joined online by members of the Support Committee, our Liaison from Branch #258, Brian Budden, and from serving members and former Cadets, WO Jason Bridge and Pte Justin Anger, a former RSM of 2881. **TR**

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**THIS PAGE AND NEXT:** Following the launch of an expansive Virtual Cadet Training Centre in the summer of 2020, the members of 2881 QOR Cadets were able to continue training during the pandemic.






**QOR Cadets**  
2881 Queen's Own Rifles RCACC

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## LCol James Medhurst's Many Exploits

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by LCol Mark Anthony, CD



**L**ieutenant-Colonel James Nahor Medhurst, OBE, ED was a lesser-known senior officer of The Queen's Own Rifles but his service was far from ordinary. James Medhurst was born on 26 July 1899 in Toronto, Ontario. The son of a Sergeant in the Royal Canadian Dragoons (RCD), who the same year left to fight in Boer War in South Africa where he participated in every major engagement in which the RCD fought. At the conclusion of which he returned as a Warrant Officer, First Class and was later posted with his family to Fort St Jean, Quebec where he served as an instructor for several years before returning to Toronto in 1912. It was here in Toronto that James Medhurst became a member of the QOR (Cadets) and became a highly proficient marksman and signaler.

When war broke out in 1914, troops were mobilized at Camp Valcartier, and due to the large influx of troops at the overcrowded and rapidly expanding camp, communications were essential to help maintain command and control. As such, QOR Cadets with Signals training were sent to Valcartier to aid in this endeavour. As this was a pri-

mary training and staging area prior to deployment to Europe, his father, who had commissioned from the ranks to Lieutenant, arrived at the same time with the RCD. It was at this point he sought his father's permission to go overseas with the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division, but alas, he was only 15 years old, and his father flatly refused. His father had already lost his only brother, who joined the British Army under age and died in India. He did not want his son to suffer the same fate at a young age.

*"His father had already lost his only brother, who joined the British Army under age and died in India. He did not want his son to suffer the same fate at a young age."*

James Medhurst was not one to give up and, after returning from Valcartier, went to Exhibition Park where the 20<sup>th</sup> Battalion was recruiting and, on 15 April 1915 at the age of 15 years 9 months, he became a Volunteer with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. His tender age was not considered a deciding factor on his enrolment as he looked old enough and the Army was in desperate need of trained Signalers. The next month he would sail for England and commence training and kit issue. This included the issue of the accurate but temperamental Ross Rifle. Then it was across the Channel to Boulogne, France before a forced march to Ypres and into the trenches at Mount St Elois where they



*Soldiers suffered hardships and heavy loss in the trenches of France. Canadian soldiers occupy "funk holes" in a trench.*

It was in the trenches of France that Medhurst learned of the horrors of war having lost many friends in combat. His introduction to trench warfare was "immediate and brutal" as he recalled. He actually lost a friend to a German sniper. As he had a lot of training on marksmanship, he requested to be a sniper himself; it was his own personal way of gaining some sort of justice for losing his friend.

Medhurst would later be severely wounded himself on 27 March 1916 from shellfire, spending almost a year in Lewisdam Military Hospital near London, England recovering. However, the war would not end for him as upon release from the hospital he would return to France just in time for the attack on Vimy Ridge in April 1917. In preparation for the infamous Canadian attack on Vimy Ridge there were many preparations. Much of his time was spent conducting raids on enemy positions to help capture prisoners in order to gain information. This information would be used in planning the attacks. Many of these raids were meticulously planned and rehearsed, a revolutionary concept for the time that would pay off greatly at Vimy. At one point, troops were taken to the rear and tape lines were laid out to represent enemy trenches and they would train for days on how they would carry out a particular raid. These raiding parties were about 100 men strong and were so carefully

planned and rehearsed that they were able to take quite a few prisoners without any casualties. They were also so stealthful in their execution that they were able to place explosive charges during their withdrawal which caused considerable damage to German wire and trenches.

As a result of the volume of information secured during one particular raid, the troops in Medhurst's Battalion were again taken to the rear in small groups to the tape trenches to receive information and practice attacks for the actual Vimy Ridge attack. It was this new concept of briefings and rehearsals that helped reduce casualties during the actual attack in April 1917. It was shortly after Vimy on 10 May 1917 he was to be wounded again, this time from a sniper's bullet that barely missed his heart; this second wound would send him back to England. It was after this second wound that his father convinced the Army to transfer him to the RCD and he reported to the RCD Depot at Shorncliffe, England.

The RCD felt like home to the young 18-year-old, having grown up in the stables of the Dragoons. This made the transition from Infantryman to Cavalryman much easier and reminded Medhurst of his young days in Quebec. While with the RCD, due to his past experience with horses, combined with his combat experience in France, it wasn't long before he became a Corporal and eventually a Troop Sergeant. It was with the RCD that he would return to France yet again on 26 July 1918, the day of his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was here that he was tasked with being in charge of a Hotchkiss automatic machine gun section, which the section carried by pack horse.

It was only to be a few months before the Armistice on 11 November 1918, but Medhurst would remain in Europe until May 1919 when he would finally return to Canada before being discharged from the CEF and returning to civilian life. It was during this year that Medhurst would marry his wife Beatrice May (nee Kelly) on 26 December. After about a year at trying different jobs and returning



*Field Marshall Montgomery (left) and Lieutenant Colonel Medhurst (right).*

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to school to become an Elementary Electrical Engineer, the desire to return to military life came upon him. Medhurst returned to the armoury in Toronto in 1920 and joined the Mississauga Horse, a non-permanent cavalry regiment. He enrolled as a Squadron Sergeant Major based on his experience in the Great War. It was also the same year that his first son, James H. Medhurst, was born on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June. James would later go on to serve as a Major and Company Commander in the Royal Regiment of Canada and fight in the Falaise Gap.

In 1925, Medhurst was offered and accepted a Commission as a Lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals. However, his time as a Signals Officer would be short-lived as he was approached in 1928 by Col Kesbrick of the Queen's York Rangers, 1<sup>st</sup> American Regiment (QYR), to transfer to his Regiment as a platoon commander. Kesbrick had been his platoon commander in the 20<sup>th</sup> Battalion in WWI. Medhurst was keen to do this as the QYR actually perpetuates the 20<sup>th</sup> Battalion in which he served in WWI. This year would also be marked by the birth of his second son, Jack. In 1937, Medhurst received the King George VI Coronation Medal, and the next year he was promoted to the rank of Captain.

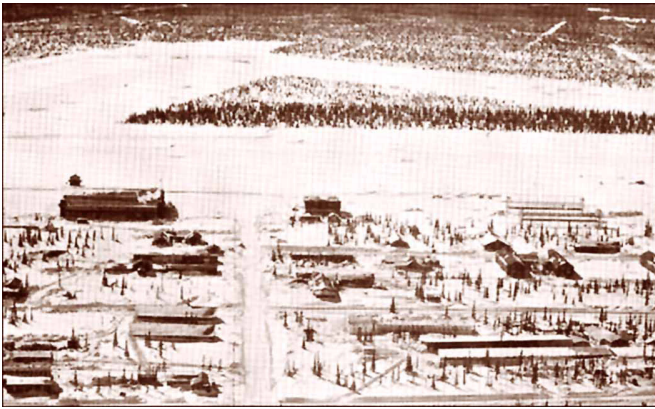
At the outbreak of WWII in 1939, Medhurst would once again be called to serve and would do so continuously until 1946. His first assignment was as a General Staff Officer (GSO), Grade II at Military District Headquarters 2 in Toronto. While there, he was under the command of Col John K. Lawson, who would later go on to be a Brigadier and the commander of the West Brigade during the Battle of Hong Kong; he would unfortunately become the most senior officer to be killed in action during the battle, and the highest-ranking Canadian soldier killed in action during WWII. During this time on the staff, he travelled throughout Ontario inspecting and observing training activities preparing soldiers for eventual deployment overseas.

In 1940, Medhurst was promoted to Major and sent to Atlantic Command in Halifax, Nova Scotia



as GSO II Weapon Training under Major-General Elkins. This was to be a very busy command covering all of Atlantic Canada and dealt with the many Coastal Defence Batteries, mobile artillery, tank training at Camp Debert, Nova Scotia, and several Infantry units spread across the area. He would be responsible for coordinating much of the training, operations, and activities of these various units as well as assisting in the inspection of convoy escort ships departing Halifax for England.

After two years as a GSO in Atlantic Command, Medhurst was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel on 15 June 1942 and appointed Commanding Officer of the New Brunswick Rangers in Goose Bay, Labrador. There they were tasked with local home defence duties of what would now become Canadian Force Goose Base. This was to become a major multinational low-level flying training location throughout the Cold War, and it is still a very large airport base continuing in its role as a low-level tactical training facility and as a forward deployment location for the Royal Canadian Air Force.



*RCAF Station Goose Bay, circa 1943. By 1943, the airfield at Goose Bay had become the largest in the Western Hemisphere, but when LCol Medhurst took command of the New Brunswick Rangers stationed there, the facilities were much to be desired and morale was low. (From: Carr, W.C. *Checkmate in the North*, MacMillan Company of Canada.)*

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Upon arrival in Goose Bay, the facilities of the day were much to be desired and morale was low. Battalion Headquarters consisted of a tent and 20 of the officers wanted to resign as they despised the idea of an Upper Canadian commanding a Maritime Regiment. However, LCol Medhurst would hear nothing of this and said he would strive to make the New Brunswick Rangers a top battalion with or without them. He set about the right way with this, beginning with the camp defences against air attack and improving the living and training conditions on the camp. The Colonel himself refused to leave his bell tent for the comfort of a dug-out cabin until every man in the unit was properly housed. After the officers understood the Colonel's sincerity, they all withdrew their resignations and got on with the business at hand. The next year was spent preparing the defences, training the Battalion and surviving the harsh sub-arctic winters. LCol Medhurst would later be appointed Commander of Canadian Army forces in Labrador. While in Labrador he had many opportunities to explore this sub-arctic region, which unfortunately included being stranded in the deep Canadian wilderness. He and one of his Company Commanders almost perished when the snowmobile they were testing broke down 16 km from the Camp in -40°C weather. This predicament was against his own orders which was "Prompt obedience to Orders."

On 4 June 1943, LCol Medhurst received a message from Command that he was to be appointed an Officer of the British Empire (OBE), and not long after this, he would return to Toronto for leave with his family before rejoining the Battalion, which

moved to Sussex, New Brunswick for more training. Following this training, the Battalion would be off again by train to Halifax to board the *Queen Elizabeth* for Europe. As LCol Medhurst was boarding the train, a staff officer approached him with a personal message from Col (ret'd) James Ralston, Minister of National Defence, offering him to Command the winter training school in Churchill, Manitoba, including a promotion to Brigadier. LCol Medhurst politely refused the offer and said he would "prefer to proceed with my Battalion." The staff officer said he would convey the message and said the "MND thought this is what you would say and wished you the best of luck."

The NB Rangers landed in England and moved to the area of Aldershot, England and later to be based north west in the nearby town of Fleet. It wasn't long before they were training again and preparing for an attack on the European continent. As training progressed, a call came from Headquarters informing the LCol that the NB Rangers were to be reduced in strength to a Heavy Support Machine Gun Company and the rank of the Commander of this Company would be a Major. LCol Medhurst was given two options. One, he could relinquish his rank or, two, he could keep his rank and be given temporary command elsewhere. He told them that it took 30 years to reach LCol from Private, so he preferred to keep his rank.

As the NB Rangers were to be reduced to Company strength, many of the officers and men would also be sent elsewhere and initially joined the LCol at the Holding Wing of the #7 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement unit in the Aldershot area, which was his next command. The breaking up of the Regiment came as a severe blow to the Colonel and his men, who had trained and worked so hard to prepare for the "big show" in Europe. In April 1944, LCol Medhurst would be transferred again to #7

*As CO of the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, one of Medhurst's first tasks was to guard German prisoners of war in Aurich, the Netherlands, as part of the Canadian Army Occupation Force. Pictured, German POWs are housed in a barn after being captured during an Allied assault in Holland. (Imperial War Museum)*

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Canadian General Reinforcement Unit as Second-in-command as the Commanding Officer was a Colonel. This unit held and trained specialty officers such as doctors, dentists, padres, clerks, etc. However, LCol Medhurst was not happy with his new post and wanted to be part of the “active part of the war” as he put it. So, he arranged an interview with General Stewart, Chief of the General Staff at Canadian Military Headquarters in London. The General asked if he preferred Italy or France, and he said “no.” A short time later, he was off to Italy on 20 August 1944.

Upon arrival in Italy, LCol Medhurst was being considered for command of another Maritime Canadian Battalion, the West Nova Scotia Regiment, but alas, his fortune would remain unchanged and command would pass to another officer. After a series of special staff projects, the Colonel would be off again, but this time to Belgium via France in January 1945. Immediately on arrival in Brussels, he was ushered in to see Major-General E.L.M. “Tommy” Burns for an interview. During the interview, the General offered an apology to the Colonel as it was he who was the Corps Commander and had denied LCol Medhurst’s command of the West Nova Scotia Regiment, and that he had done so purely on his age. Medhurst was 45 years old and most Battalion Commanders were under 40. The General also went on to explain it was dreadful as this Regiment and others suffered many casualties and this had cost the General his command. He went on to say that it may have turned out differently if he had chosen an officer with LCol Medhurst’s previous combat experience, but of course we would never know.

LCol Medhurst’s first task back on the continent was to lead the First Canadian Army Ceremonial Parade for the 28<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Vimy Ridge on 9 April 1945. This was to be a great honour having



served there so long ago with his first Regiment. After the Vimy ceremony the Colonel would be off again to take charge of the Disciplinary Centre in Varrschoot, Belgium on the direct orders of Major-General Burns. Once again, this post would be short lived as the war in Europe came to an end when the Armistice was signed on 8 May 1945 and he was summoned about a month later to the Headquarters of 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade in Ghent, Belgium to see the Commander, Brigadier General John “Jock” Godfrey Spragge DSO, OBE, ED — the same officer who led the QOR 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion ashore on D-Day.

The meeting with Brigadier Spragge was strange to say the least, as he greeted him very early in the morning wearing a bathrobe as he had just been awoken by the Duty Officer upon the Colonel’s arrival. The Colonel also noticed an ice bucket next to him containing a bottle of champagne and obviously wondered why. This mystery came to an end when the Brigadier told the Duty Officer to pour them both a drink and then raised his glass and said, “Let’s drink to the CO of the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion QOR of Canada.” The Colonel’s reply was, “I’ll drink to that; who is he?” The Brigadier replied, “You as of now and you will go to Amersfort-Holland today and start to organize the Battalion.” Not currently being a badged officer of the Regiment, he told the Brigadier that he didn’t have any QOR badges, and then the Brigadier opened his hand and gave him a set of Lieutenant-Colonel badges for a QOR Lieutenant-Colonel and told him they were the ones he wore when he came ashore on D-Day commanding the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, QOR.

The Colonel was thrilled and honoured to not only have command of his own Battalion, but to have command of a Battalion in the Regiment that he started with as a QOR Cadet, 33 years before, all of which was unbelievable. The Battalion under his command moved to Aurich, Germany and became part of the Rifle Brigade within the Canadian Army Occupation Force (CAOF) composed of 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion QOR, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Regina Rifles, and 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Winnipeg Rifles. This was the first time that these three Rifle Regiments were brigaded together. Their mission was to contain thousands of German prisoners of war on the north side of the Elms-Jade Canal and help them eventually transition back to civilian life.

Following an inspection by Field Marshall Montgomery in the fall of 1945, good fortune would befall the Colonel again as the Brigade Commander, Brigadier Gibson, would return to Canada and the Colonel would be appointed Brigade Commander of 2<sup>nd</sup> / 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry (Rifles) Canadian Army Occupation Force. He was thrilled to say the least about the appointment, although he was not to be promoted to Brigadier, but would instead receive the pay of one. He would have rather had the rank to accompany the appointment than the pay. At this time, he said goodbye to the Regiment as its Commanding Officer.

The war trials were being held in Aurich Barracks in December 1945 and the next one was to be the trial of German SS Brigadier General Kurt Meyer. As Brigade Commander he was responsible for keeping him alive and in good health to stand trial as some previous German prisoners had committed suicide. The Colonel carried out this task, thoroughly ensuring his cell was properly secured and free from anything that Meyer could use to take his life. The trial ended with Meyer being found guilty, but the court had not found him guilty of directly ordering the murders, but tacitly condoning them. The court sentenced Meyer to death. However, he would never be executed and instead spent many years in prison in both Canada and West Germany before being released in 1954.

Shortly after the trial of Kurt Meyer in 1946, the Brigade received word that they would return to

Canada. They were then taken to transit camp in England and later boarded a ship for their return to Canada and home. In June 1946, LCol Medhurst was discharged from the Canadian Army and returned to civilian life where he would first secure employment as a sales representative and manager with an oil company in Ontario, in which he would later become a controlling partner, Allied Heating Appliances. This would later be sold to Frigidaire. It was during this time that LCol Medhurst would gain a fondness for Florida, having spent many winters there. So in 1955 he left the heating business and started building a 20-foot cabin cruiser. Once he finished the boat, named *MIZPAH*, he sailed it to Florida in 1956. He later became a representative for West Chemical until his wife became ill in 1969. Then in 1972, after 53 years of marriage, his wife would tragically pass away. LCol Medhurst would spend the remainder of his life in Florida, remarrying his second wife, also named Beatrice, in 1983 before she passed away on 13 September 1988 at the age of 89.

Although LCol Medhurst's son, Major James H. Medhurst, fought in WWII, and post-war was extremely involved as a civilian with the Royal Canadian Military Institute, even acting as Chairman for the Institute, none of LCol Medhurst's grandchildren were called to serve. It wasn't until his great-grandson, LCol Mark Anthony, enlisted that the military tradition would be carried on. LCol Anthony was the son of LCol Medhurst's grand-daughter, Maureen Anthony (nee Medhurst). He joined the Canadian Army Reserve in 1987 as a Private. His mother, Maureen Anthony, had moved to Cape Breton to the home of her husband in the 1970s and raised their family there. The Regiment that LCol Anthony joined was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Nova Scotia Highlanders (Cape Breton), now known by its WWII designation, the Cape Breton Highlanders. The author of this story, LCol Anthony, would go on to be a Captain in the Highlanders before transferring to the Regular Force in 1997 as an officer in the Royal Canadian Regiment before reaching the rank of LCol, much like the career path of his great-grandfather so long ago. **TR**

## Inaugural QOR Lifetime Achievement Awards



by MGen (ret'd) Walter M. Holmes  
MStJ, MSM, CD, MBE

**O**n behalf of the Regimental Senate, I am pleased to announce that three members of the Regimental family have been awarded the Regimental Lifetime Achievement Award. 2019 was the inaugural year for the award and the nominations received were all of the highest quality and substance. The purpose of the award and the criteria for selection as stated in the Regimental Standing Orders are:

“The purpose and intent of The Queen’s Own Rifles Lifetime Achievement Award is to acknowledge and record The Regiment’s appreciation for substantial and continuous contributions by individuals that have enhanced the reputation and well-being of The Regiment.

“‘Substantial contributions’ means having real importance or value. ‘Continuous contributions’ means uninterrupted in time or sequence. An individual’s contribution shall normally have been deemed substantial when the contribution has enhanced the reputation or well-being of The Regiment as a whole rather than any single constituent element thereof. The individual being nominated for the award shall normally be retired from active service within the Regiment.”

The inaugural winners of the award are:

- Brigadier General Don Pryer (RIP, *right*), Former Commanding Officer and Honorary Colonel.
- Colonel Paul Hughes, former Honorary Colonel and generous donor to The Regiment.
- Mr. Tom Martin, President of the Vancouver Island Branch and caregiver to MGen and Mrs. Pitts.



These winners are worthy recipients of this award given their long-term continuous service and support to The Regiment. Handcrafted scrolls will be awarded to each of the recipients at a yet to be determined date/regimental event. I applaud the winners for all that they have done for The Regiment, and I look forward to acknowledging future winners in the years to come.

*In Pace Paratus. TR*

The inaugural recipients of The QOR Lifetime Achievement Award: Col Paul Hughes (top left) and Tom Martin (top right).

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## Pilot By Profession, Soldier By Heart

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by Capt (ret'd) Steven R. Harrison, CD



I was born and raised in Scarborough, Ontario. I grew up in Highland Creek (east end of Scarborough). All of those raised in the sixties around that area were called 'creekers'. It was your typical childhood of school and other activities such as fishing in the Rouge River or going on our bicycles through an area that had signs posted 'future site for the Toronto Zoo'.

My father always told me his stories of being an air cadet in downtown Toronto and attending parades such as Remembrance Day at Old City Hall and the Warriors Day parade at the CNE. As early as I can remember I was wearing a uniform of some type: Cubs, Scouts, and Air Cadets.

631 Squadron Air Cadets on Eglinton Avenue (near Birchmount) was the squadron that inspired me the most. At the time it was considered the largest squadron in the country. The squadron had so many activities going on: band, drill team, target shooting, summer camp and glider camp at Mountainview (near 8 Wing Trenton). Rifle target practice and flying were my most exciting events. Using the .303 converted 22 calibre rifle, I could hit the center of the target every time with little effort, but when it came to flying it felt like I was born to be in the cockpit of an aircraft. The little glider was not what I would consider to be the equivalent of 'Roger Ramjet' but in my mind I was.

I was promoted through the ranks to Flight Sergeant and had finally reached my 17<sup>th</sup> birthday when a friend at Westhill Collegiate High School (Morningside Avenue) named Tom Fury (some of you will recognize this name) approached me to join the Army Reserve. I didn't know much about the reserve but after hearing some of his stories I decided to give it a try. So off to Moss Park Armouries (from Westhill) we went.

The building was huge and full of activity: orders being given (especially from this tall guy with a big groomed mustache and wearing a uniform that had creases that would cut you and boots that looked like mirrors), platoon sections moving in response, everyone using this completely strange rifle with a big box thing hanging below it and everyone wearing these strange army fatigues ... wow, what a time warp of the senses.

The next week I decided to join The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada at Moss Park (... and not that other unit across the floor that wore some kind of dress, good unit I am sure but not my cup-of-tea).

Training started almost immediately. Thank god for my cadet drill training but never-the-less, it was faster drill then I was prepared for, way faster...

After being issued my uniforms and equipment, then they had us march down to the weapons lock up to be issued a rifle. When the MCpl recorded

the serial number and had me sign for it, he handed me this weird weapon which I later learned was the FNC1A1. A 7.62 calibre, gas operated, semi-automatic rifle.

I didn't even know how to properly carry it, assemble or disassemble it. The person assigned with ensuring I had all the knowledge needed for the FN was taught by WO Jerry Senetchko. He was the rifleman of riflemen. He was a crack shot and an excellent example of a Canadian soldier that I wanted to follow. To be honest, in my early days with him, he put the fear of god in me at so many levels that I would rather have been shot by the enemy than fear the wrath that would come down upon me from him if I screwed up. That being said, I later found out that there was someone even worse: that person was CSM Erik Simundson. The CSM was a man who commanded utmost respect and would not let a single error pass. He was absolutely confident on all matters of military life especially when it came to his regiment, the QOR. All members of the regiment would 'tighten up' when he was nearby.

One range weekend at the Niagara-on-the-Lake military rifle range, we had just finished a late afternoon shoot. While surrounded by other fellow riflemen, the CSM shouted "Harrison, clean my rifle." I sharply retrieved his rifle and got straight to work. While everyone watched, I went to tap the butt of the rifle to assist with the opening of the rifle when what do you hear, but a loud 'cuurrrrackkkk' as his rifle stock split right up the middle to the receiver and fell in two pieces. There was a deathly pause broken by "Steve, it was pleasure knowing you, for you are about to die."

There are many members of the Queen's Own that have had a major influence on my life but the individuals that I must mention are; Brian Budden, Ralph Schoenig, Harry McCabe and Rob Chan. They have always been strong leaders and have always provided the necessary guidance to us to be good soldiers.

In the summer of 1973, we attended summer training in Petawawa. Many regiments were represented, and good training was received. For the

final exercise the QOR were advancing towards the RCR (enemy). We were supported by artillery and air support (specifically CF-5 Freedom Fighters). On a low pass, I was waist deep with my FN over my head in some swamp water when the aircraft came over rather low and fast. I thought at that moment I wish I was in cockpit flying rather than being in a swamp, cold and wet...maybe someday.

The QOR later proved to be the best regiment that summer and we went on to win the Coffin Trophy. It was a great honour to be part of that.

The Queen's Own has an outstanding history as Canada's oldest regiment. The regiment has participated in and has been awarded several battle honours through the years to include the Boar War, many WWI and WWII engagements such as Vimy, Passchendaele, Normandy Landing and Calais. They also included recent participation in Afghanistan. One battle honour that caught the attention of CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) was that of the North-West Rebellion in 1885 at Cut Knife Hill. Mr. Pierre Berton wrote a book called "The National Dream" about building a railway across Canada. The book became an eight-part television series. The Queen's Own Rifles was approached and asked if they would participate in the series illustrating the movement of troops through Canada's north to the battle sight. Now as a member of the QOR's Regimental Pioneers and Skirmishers, I was able to be involved with the filming (a budding star sort-of-speak). During one of the several sequences of filming, there was a scene where we were conducting close order drill inside the old CBC complex. The stage was set for a realistic training environment with snow falling and temperatures below zero Celsius. The director at the time approached RSM Erik Simundson and asked if he could 'dress up' a soldier for doing something wrong during the drill. Well, I was catching the sling of my Snider Enfield rifle. So, I became the target of his wrath once more. Even when he was acting, he would put the fear of god into you.

Filming the movie was a great experience and a close representation of what the regiment endured back in 1885.



Many of the members of the regiment, myself included, were police officers or firemen for Toronto and surrounding areas. I was enrolled into the Metropolitan Toronto Police Force in 1974 and later resigned in 1979. During those years, I was assigned to 55 division located in the Beaches area of Toronto. Being a police officer in Toronto during those years was exciting to say the least. An officer could find himself involved in many various activities such as undercover work, uniformed patrol, walking a beat on the Danforth, or simply directing traffic at the CNE Princess Gates during the summer. Often, the schedule would conflict with parade night with QOR, so I had to balance my QOR training with my police schedule.

One fateful weekend I decided to help instruct our newest members of the regiment during an exercise north of Toronto. We took several vehicles and various weapons with us for the training. One of the old transport trucks (deuce and a half) had some reported issues with steering but was found to be serviceable. After the training was complete, we headed back to Toronto on the Sunday afternoon. I sat in the back of this truck with the recruits. I was sitting on the right side by the tailgate as we drove south bound in the middle lane of the Don Valley Parkway just north of Bloor St. Located on the same side of the truck but leaning in the corner near the cab was Rifleman R.N. Gurung. He was trying to catch some much-needed sleep after a hard weekend. Suddenly, the vehicle seemed to turn out of control to the right at highway speed, crossing the shoulder lane and slammed into the guard rail. The rail was the only thing stopping the huge truck from falling 20 plus feet into the valley below. We continued to bounce along the rail. The combination of the truck height and the slope of the soft shoulder caused the right-side bench to sit over the guard rail with a significant angle. I am now looking at all recruits and ordering them on

the floor of the truck as we continued south over the rail. In the flash of a second, a straight standing lamp post hit and tore through the right side. At that instance, I was looking at Rifleman Gurung when he fell onto the floor, thinking for a moment that he was responding to my order. The truck finally came to a stop just south of Bloor St. My next order was telling everyone to exit the truck and rally off the highway just north of where we stopped. Everyone exited promptly but there was Rifleman Gurung lying motionless on the floor. I immediately went to the emergency call box and stated "listen carefully, I am a police officer located on the DVP just south of Bloor, I need an ambulance RIGHT NOW ...." It seemed that the entire city exploded with the sounds of sirens. An ambulance quickly arrived on the scene and subsequently rushed Gurung to St Michaels hospital on Queen Street. A point of note is that the first police officer to arrive was one Larry Hicks (I believe he was a MCpl in the QOR at that time). Later, at Rifleman Gurung's funeral, I met his parents and only then realized that his father was a Parking Control Officer at 54 Division that I worked with often. I was filled with sadness for his family that day.

During my days with the Police Force, I was able to save a bit of money and decided to drive to Oshawa Airport to take a 'familiarisation flight' in a Cessna 172. A tall, well-dressed Newfoundlander with a small set of civilian pilot wings approached me asking me if he could help. I stated that I did some glider flying when I was a young cadet and that I wanted to pursue my interest in flying and maybe getting my private licence. Before I could change my mind, we were in the aircraft climbing towards Port Perry. Once at level flight, he carefully allowed me to have control for some very gentle turns, climbs and descents. The flight seemed to have lasted only 10 minutes but it probably lasted over an hour. I was hooked and decide to commit to getting my licence and that he (Roger Eastman) would be my instructor. After that, every opportunity I had, I was at the Oshawa Flying Club learning how to fly as fast as my savings would allow. After a year of working hard, I was now a licenced pilot.



The police force was starting to be an issue with them taking most of my time off for court, extra duties and such. One good thing that came from the police force was my wife. I had a driver stopped on east bound Queen St E near Kingston Rd. After releasing the driver, my partner and I began to walk back to the car. The next thing we see is a white car pulling in behind us. Because the police lights were still on, she thought it was a spot check. On that cool September night, the police jacket I was wearing popped a button that went through her window, straight into her top and disappeared out of site for obvious reasons. She looked at me and I stated that I couldn't have planned it better. A year later we married, and she has been with me all these years.

One night on patrol, my partner and I were working the 'gun car'. The car is equipped with additional equipment and some extra firepower to handle adverse situations. We received a call to quickly respond to the Benlamond Hotel and Bar on Kingston Rd for a man caring a gun. I was first into the bar. Based on the description given on the radio, I identified the person in amongst 20+ near a pool table. Besides the description, he was the only man in the bar pointing a .44 at me (who would have thought...). My partner was close behind me. I froze, did NOT reach for my gun as it was in a locked covered cross draw holster (he had the draw on me already). I stated that, "Son, you are in trouble but not the real trouble if you decide to shoot me," at which point my partner exposed the 12-gauge shot gun from behind his leg. After what seemed to be forever, he placed the gun pool and we then arrested him. It wasn't until that moment that I noticed that the room was completely empty. The 20+ people headed for whatever cover they could find. My focus was on the end of his barrel. I don't know why, but a .44 looks like the business end of a howitzer during times like these.

After finally going to court on this case, he was given only a few months in jail when he should have received several years. I saw him on the Danforth not much long after he was released. I was so upset that I decided the police force was not for me due



to the lack of support by the court system for such cases and decided to release. A fellow police officer asked me what I was going to do for work, I had no idea. He asked, "Steve, don't you have a pilot licence? Did you know the Canadian Forces are looking for pilots right now?" I promptly walked into 4900 Yonge Street Recruiting. After several months of testing and evaluation I was given a two week notice to get my butt out to Chilliwack, BC to begin basic officer training and to be enrolled and employed as a pilot if I passed all jet training in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.

I found basic training to be relatively easy due to my background with the QOR. During one class about various weapons, Sgt Marsh (drill sgt) pulled two other recruits from the class to perform a strip and re-assemble of the FN...blind folded.

As the class watched in disbelief, I remember methodically breaking down the weapon and re-assemble as quickly as possible. I heard on person say, "Gee, I can't do it that fast in daylight."

I finally arrived in Moose Jaw to commence jet training. The training was exciting, and I took to flying jets as if it was meant to be. On completion of pilot training, they determine what aircraft you are best suited for based on flying ability and academics. As a result of being the oldest at 27 on course, and had some life experiences already behind me,



they felt I was best suited to fly the CP-140 Aurora Anti-Submarine Aircraft. This aircraft is a 4-engine monster full of computers and sensors that are used to search for hostile submarines, search and rescue as well as fisheries and Canadian coastline patrols.

My first official posting as a 1<sup>st</sup> Officer on Auroras was to Comox, BC. It was great tour and we found our fair share of soviet submarines and other activities off of Canada's western coastline. After a short five (5) years I was now in charge of a crew and an aircraft commander. However, the military loves to post people. I asked the career manager if they could post me to fighters before I was too old (certainly a young man's game). They decided that it would be better if I went back to Moose Jaw to instructor new pilots on the CT-114 Tutor (same aircraft used by the Snowbirds today).

Moose Jaw proved to be a good three (3) year posting but I still felt the need to fly fighters. Once again, the career manager stepped in but this time he had a compromise that I might be interested in:

not fighters but something very close. I was to be selected as Canada's representative to the United States Air Force to teach their qualified pilots to be instructors in San Antonio Texas. The USAF flew a supersonic trainer called a T-38 Talon (seen in the movie Apollo 13). The T-38 Talon and the CF-5a Freedom Fighter are built on the same airframe but are painted and configured differently for the role that they are to fill. The T-38 was also painted with 'U.S. AIR FORCE' on both sides.

In order to achieve this, I was sent to Cold Lake, AB to learn how to fly the CF-5 fighter before going south. It only took about one week of ground training and four (4) flights in the jet with instructor before I was sent up flying solo in a single seat CF-5a equipped with all the bomb rails, nose gun and air-to-air refueling probe on the front. Here I was, 17 years later, in a CF-5a at about 20,000 feet and moving at 350 knots (about 320 mph) when I suddenly remembered my days in the swamp looking upward. It was that moment when I realized I had filled my dream despite the 3,500 hours I had already gained on many aircraft before then. This was the one moment that meant everything to me.

I reported to 560 Squadron "Chargin' Cheetahs" at Randolph AFB, Texas. I relieved the Canadian who was currently in position and quickly became a member of the squadron. Other countries were also represented there including the UK one of which was a Flight Lieutenant named Stuart Reid (who later returned to the UK to fly their memorial Lancaster Bomber).

I was in 560 Sqn during the height of Desert Storm. During one flight over the state of Texas, Air Traffic Control had stated that the ground war for Desert Storm had started. My student and I returned to Randolph for a full stop landing. As I pulled up to my assigned parking position, I noticed that there was a Humvee with two well-armed Marines. I was still strapped into my ejection seat while the engines were winding down and my canopy was coming up when they approached my left side. "Sir, are you Captain Harrison of the Canadian Airforce?" "Yes." "Well, you are to come with us!" "Why, am I under arrest?" "No, on the contrary, we

have had a bomb threat because of the war and we are here to protect you because of your foreign diplomatic status here.” “Well, what about my student?” “No,” they responded, “he can walk....”

Needless to say, it was a great tour and I returned to Canada. I continued to fly in various aircraft gaining much experience along the way.

One such experience was being assigned to a twelve (12) man team for a ‘Risk Analysis’ study. They needed people from various trades, and I was to fill the fixed-wing pilot position. The study was to analyse the risk that was endured by trades during operations around the world. During this twelve (12) month study, we would participate and perform the key trades in all three (3) elements: Navy, Army, Air. During this time, I was able to fire artillery (155mm), lay mines with engineers, take part in a fighting patrol with the RCR, command a destroyer (under the watchful eye of the real commander), fly F-18s, fly the CP-140 Aurora (again) and also go to Bosnia.

While I was in Bosnia, I was designated as “Defence Personal Special Security (DPSS)” which required an escort by two members of the PPCLI. I had my own 9mm while on patrol, but they had C7s and C9s. One night the Warrant Officer stated that we were going to a town that had been destroyed during the war but was still occupied. The night before, a small Canadian Patrol was ‘bullied’ by some tough guys in a small bar located near the town. We pulled up to the front of the bar and the escort Warrant Officer got out of the LAV. Unknown to him, I also got out of the LAV and followed inside only to see several people enjoying some beer, but specifically 3-5 members of the local mafia at this one table with their AK-47s leaned against the wall. It was deep inside the bar when the WO noticed I was there. He paused but a second but continued to the table, spoke to them in a deep tone saying we are Canadians and we don’t frighten easy. He banged the table with his hip, sending beer everywhere. I thought, “OMG, a gun fight, here we go.” But nothing. We returned to the vehicle. Once inside the LAV, he unloaded on me in anger. “What the hell did you think you were doing?” I replied, “I

cannot evaluate the risk unless I am also exposed to the same risk, besides, I am a former Toronto Police Officer and a former member of the Queen’s Own.... don’t piss me off.” We were now close friends.

I have often wondered what career success I would have had if I had stayed with the army rather than the air force. Through all my day, the QOR has always been the basis of my military life. This was the constant composure I carried with me when later years I was deployed to Afghanistan (Nov 2009 – Oct 2020). I filled the role at the Tactical Operations Center (TOC) as J3 Aviation (J3AVN) (Air Operations to the Battle Commander in Kandahar) and I was also double hatted as the Tactical Aviation Lessons Learned Officer (TALLO). Many of you who were deployed to Afghanistan know very well the daily threats and dangers while we carried out our duties. We were only a moment away from harm’s way. Many of us returned to our families without injury. Unfortunately, many of our countrymen and women did not have such luck. As I sat in the TOC, many a moment of calm was interrupted by a 9-liner message or TIC (Troops in Contact). As Air Ops, we were responsible for all Canadian fixed-wing and helicopter air assets for air support to allied ground troops in our district. On a daily basis, we sent CH-147 Chinooks and CH-146 Griffons towards the FOBs (Forward Operating Bases) for transport, operations, supply, however when a TIC or 9-liner came in, everything becomes very serious.

In most cases, TICs and 9-liners involved ground forces in the battle area during operations, however on one day that all changed.

On 05 August 2010, we had scheduled a typical three (3) ship of helos to move through the battle space to the various FOBs dropping off troops, supplies and water. This particular flight was comprised of one CH-147 Chinook and two escort CH-146 Griffons. The CH-147 was being flown by Captain Feilding while one of the escort CH-146 Griffons was being flown by our very own wing commander, Col Drouin.

As they were approaching a FOB and were in somewhat of a vulnerable state of flight (low,



heavy, slow) they were engaged by enemy forces and subsequently received sufficient damage creating an onboard fire. Captain Fielding (later commended and decorated for his immediate actions) managed to land the aircraft quickly thereby saving the lives of all those on board.

The TOC was informed of the TIC and 9-liner which caused us to immediately scramble additional escort helicopter aircraft for air support. The United States Airforce CASEVAC and MEDEVAC H-60 helicopters were also scrambled to support and render assistance to the injured. The TOC further directed that the local FOB deploy their Quick Reaction Team (QRT) ground forces to support and secure the area from a possible continued enemy contact.

Upon return, Col Drouin approach Captain Dan Belanger (CF-18 pilot working as Flight Safety) and myself and told us to tac up with our gear and go to the crash site via CH-146 Griffon to capture information, analysis and lessons learned. He further stated that we were going in hot, standby for close contact. Before we could depart, the QRT stated all was secured and further support was no longer needed at this time.

Throughout the tour, such contacts (both air and ground events) would result in unwanted deaths of our troops. It always followed by the late parade ceremony with us on parade and saluting the fallen as they were ceremoniously carried in a Canadian Flag-draped coffin followed by a lone piper onto a C-130 Hercules or a CC-177 Globemaster for their final ride home.

On one such occasion we were dismissed and were returning to the base, I turned and saw the proud and easily identifiable maple leaf of a Queen's Own Rifles cap badge. I made it a point of introducing myself as current air force member but definitely a former member of the Queen's Own. We had a great meeting and were immediately brothers-in-arms. I asked if he knew Captain Andrew (Andy) Sarossy. He stated that in fact he was on the same rotation but was in Kabul. It would have been great to have seen him again, especially in theatre, but it was not to happen. Andy and I went to Reforger 5 in Germany together in 1973. Great memories.

Our wing rotation was noted as being the largest and most flexible air wing in recent times while employed in an area of operations. To capture those experiences and lessons learned, I wrote a book called "Project Laminar Strike" for Post Op Athena (ISBN 978-1-100-54041-2) which was commissioned by the Canadian Forces Aerospace Warfare Center (CFAWC Trenton). This was an opportunity to capture the input and experiences of everyone who served in the Air Wing during that roto.

While on the 'Road-to-High-Readiness' for Afghanistan, we conducted many high-level meetings to ensure we were ready to go. One objective was to try to engage all capabilities of the Airforce: transport, fighters, helicopters, unmanned airborne vehicles (UAVs), etc.

One capability that was talked about but not engaged was Search and Rescue in a combat SAR role as the USAF did during TICs and 9-liners. The observation was recorded but never acted upon.

I soon returned to Canada to now work with 1 Canadian Air Division in Search and Rescue as a staff officer for systems and readiness. This position required knowledge of all aspects in aviation, both fixed-wing and helicopters. It also required sound knowledge in all policies and procedures that would maintain sound response capability in all regions of the country. It was now June of 2011 when A3 SAR Lieutenant-Colonel Lalonde approached me asking about my experience in Afghanistan and my connection with helicopters. He determined

that it was sufficient enough for the task that needed my somewhat reasonable skill sets. However, since I had just returned from a lengthy tour in Afghanistan, we needed General level authorization for me to be deployed again within a year after my return overseas. He instructed that we would be heading to Ottawa (from Winnipeg) to attend a high-level meeting in CEFCOM (Canadian Expeditionary Force Command). The task was to support LCol Lalonde as Air Operations officer in Canada's support to Jamaica during the upcoming hurricane season. Jamaica had reported that the entire helicopter force operated by the Jamaican Defence Force (JDF) was grounded for various reasons. To support, we ordered an Antonov 128 cargo plane and loaded up three (3) CH-146 SAR helicopters for transport from Trenton to Kingston, Jamaica for immediate employment. I directed that the helicopters be drawn from SAR Squadrons as they are yellow, where army helos are camouflage green. In Jamaica, the JDV supports the police during drug raids, etc. and are fired upon often. We raised a force of 65 members of various ground trades and aircrew to fly on Air Canada to Kingston for a four-month deployment (tough life I know but someone had to do it, why not us...).

Once down there, my briefing to all of the staff aircrew was that we would use the term "SAFIRE" (Surface to Air Fire) (as we referred to it in Afghanistan) if they were engaged for some reason. They were instructed to break contact and clear the area as they can't stay and fight anyway then land safely to check for damage or injury before returning to base. Thank god we never had to use this procedure.

Once we were declared IOC (Initial Operation Capable) we were tasked to our first incident, a boy in Montego Bay with life threatening injuries. SAR deployed to Montego to stabilize him then return him to the Kingston hospital. We continued to various country wide support roles of SAR and humanity while we waited for the inevitable hurricanes to arrive, but they never came. Not a single hurricane hit Jamaica or its surrounding territories during our stay. The word quickly went out to the Jamaican

Government to request the Canadians during future hurricane seasons to keep them away. During our deployment in Jamaica, Canada and her Search and Rescue capabilities were still responsible for rescuing and saving 31 lives. Our deployment was later awarded the SAR Mynarski Trophy for our actions.

I soon retired from the Canadian Forces after a combined 42 years of service with The Queen's Own Rifles and the air force.

As recent as 27 Oct 2020, I was returning from Winnipeg via Highway 11 through Latchford, Ontario when my cell phone email sounded. It was RSM (Retired) Rob Chan asking me if I would be interested in writing this short letter to reflect on my continued connection with QOR and how my path has crossed so many on similar circumstances through my career. Only a few kilometres later did I realize that I was in Sgt Audrey Cosens VC hometown and crossing the large bridge dedicated to such an outstanding individual. The connection and bond with the QOR will never break for me.

I continue to look back on my years of service, and have come to know many incredible people, soldiers, aircrew and leaders in my day. One thing that stands absolute, the military has been the foundation of my life and what I stand for: country before self, family is always first, and respect those you have served with for their sacrifice.

It is with honour that I can call you all my brothers.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Captain (Retired) Steven R. Harrison,  
GCS-SWA, GJM, CD2*

*Air Staff Commanders Commendation  
– Afghanistan*

*SAR Commanders Commendation – Jamaica*

*QOR of C 1971 - 1980*

*Canadian Airforce 1980 - 2013*



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## The Regiment's "Toughest Scrap"

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**Operation BLOCKBUSTER February 26, 1945**  
**by Col (ret'd) William C. Ball**



I am not a historian. Ever since I read about Sgt Aubrey Cosens' actions on February 26, 1945 I have been interested in the battle that took place in the Rhineland that day for The Queen's Own Rifles. Sgt. Cosens' bravery was but one piece of the overall events. A few years ago, I tried to find a complete narrative of the battle to accompany the Sergeant Aubrey Cosens Scholarship Award. However, I was unable to find a single account that chronicles the Regiment's entire battle, including the actions and comments of the survivors.

There is no doubt that it was one of the hardest fights, perhaps the hardest, that The Queen's Own fought in WWII. The Victoria Cross (the first to be awarded to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division), three Distinguished Service Orders, with a fourth awarded to Maj. Dunkelmann two days later, one Military Cross, and the Military Medal were awarded for this engagement. [Only nine DSOs were awarded to the Regiment during the war.] There were over a hundred casualties. The under-strength Rifle Companies suffered four officers killed and three wounded, 28 other ranks died with five dying later from their wounds,

*"No enemy formations had put up such bitter resistance in the course of the entire war as the paratroopers fighting for the Rhineland."*

*~ Field Marshall Montgomery  
(26-326)*

and 60 other ranks were wounded along with one battle casualty. By common military standards, an infantry unit becomes ineffective after 10% casualties and at 20% it is out of the fight. Yet during this battle companies continued to attack when left with 30 or 40 survivors and, in one case, part of one objective was captured by only three men.

Over 300 prisoners were taken, most of them paratroopers. I have studied WWII military history and I cannot recall an instance where more bayonet assaults and hand-to-hand fighting occurred. I am sure there are inaccuracies in this account; some are my fault, others are caused by

conflicting accounts in the articles and books that I used as sources. The references are listed on the last page.

### **MONTGOMERY'S MASTER PLAN**

The First Canadian Army, with the British 30<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> Corps under its command, would launch Operation VERITABLE from the Nijmegen area. The Canadians would drive the Germans off of the west bank of the Rhine and then meet the US 9<sup>th</sup> Army

*Properly dressed for the occasion, The Queen's Own Rifles move out on patrol from the Nijmegen salient, January 22, 1945. (B.J. Gloster, National Archives of Canada, PA-114073)*

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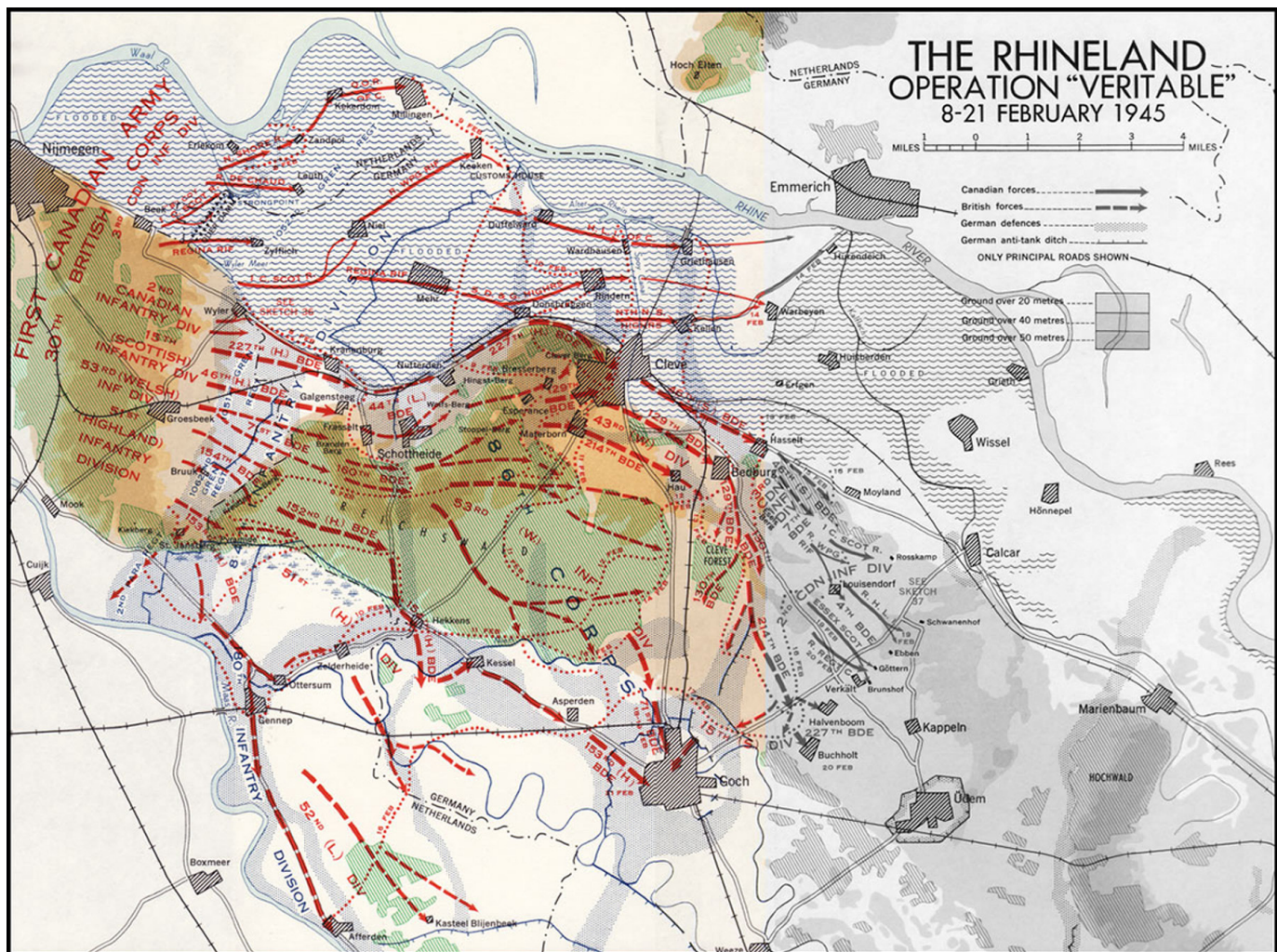
moving northeast from the Roer River in Operation GRENADE. Converging, the two Armies would trap all German forces west of the Rhine. Every German soldier was to be killed or captured. The Canadians would lead off. The enemy always gets a vote. In this case the Germans opened the Roer River dams and flooded the river preventing the US 9<sup>th</sup> Army from crossing and launching GRENADE on time. Until they could, First Canadian Army was on its own.

After the brutal fighting in the Scheldt, The Queen's Own had relieved a unit of the US 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division and spent the winter months in the Nijmegen area. During the fighting in the Scheldt the Canadian 3<sup>rd</sup> Division had 2,077 casualties, 231 were listed as missing. Their bodies were most likely swallowed by the bog. An official report listed Battle Exhaustion casualties at 18%. (10-350) In October, II Canadian Corps reported that the Canadian Army had some 870 deserters and 166 self-inflicted wounds since D-Day. The infantry units were tired. Reinforcements were not keeping up; many infantry companies that normally would have 120 men averaged 65. The 800-man infantry battalions during this time were short 200 men on average. Having based their estimate on the totals from the desert fighting, the Allied Command had seriously underestimated the casualty rates for Europe or the "human wastage." Their estimate called for 48% casualties for the infantry; it was actually 76%. There were some 120,000 National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA) conscripts guarding Canada; these were the Zombies and a source of great discontent among the combat troops. There were also 90,000 Canadian non-infantry soldiers in England. (10-363) Anti-aircraft and anti-tank units had been deactivated and sent to the infantry, service corps and other headquarters personnel had been combed out and transferred. The infantry training these men had received varied greatly: some had never thrown a hand grenade, many had never



fired a Bren gun or knew what a PIAT was. One Queen's Own officer stated, "A lot of these men were killed in their first engagement because they didn't know what they were doing." Three hundred and fifty Canadian soldiers were evacuated due to battle exhaustion during February. At least one third of those had either been wounded before or had been previously treated for battle exhaustion. The next most common characteristics were short service (less than a week in action) and exceptionally long service. One Canadian psychiatrist, Dr Travis Dancey, commenting on the "frequent appearance of the war-weary" described a typical case in these terms: "He had led a section for several months, had been blown up eight times, but had always carried on with his duties. Recently he had lost his confidence, was unable to make decisions, had become unduly cautious and felt that he was a bad influence on his section." (19)

These reinforcement problems hit the Canadian newspapers in mid-September 1944 and, after much infighting, Prime Minister Mackenzie King was forced in November to order 16,000 NRMA men overseas against their will (10-365). Eventually, only 2,463 conscripts served in Europe. (10-387) The hard fighting from D-Day through the channel ports and the Scheldt had taken a toll on the survivors and morale suffered under the constant



combat. For many it seemed that the only way out was either severe wounds, nervous breakdown or death. Sergeant John Missons remembered one young private that received a Dear John letter from his girl along with a piece of wedding cake telling him that she could no longer wait for him. The soldier put his Bren gun in his mouth, pulled the trigger with his foot and blew his face off. (10-358)

### OPERATION VERITABLE

Operation VERITABLE kicked off on February 8, 1944. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Division and The Queen's Own Rifles reverted to their role in the Scheldt, fighting where they had earned the nickname the "Water Rats." They were to clear the area along the banks of the Rhine. An attempt was made to lessen the enemy fire from the German side of the Rhine by maintaining a smokescreen on the river. However, they

still received machine gun and artillery fire from the enemy side. The Germans had breached the dikes and flooded the area and most movement had to be done by boat or in the lightly armoured Buffalo amphibious vehicles. As the water continued to rise, many units took to the second floors of the buildings and were stranded until they could be evacuated.

The town of Millingen was the major objective for The Queen's Own during VERITABLE. Daily events are in the following War Diary pages. Note the level of the water rising on February 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> 1945. Although they didn't have to fight for Millingen, on the 14<sup>th</sup> two men were killed by shell fire and others were wounded during their stay by machine gun and sniper fire. The Regiment also managed to sink a barge. On February 20<sup>th</sup>, the Regiment was pulled out and by the 23<sup>rd</sup> they arrive in the area



**OPPOSITE PAGE:**

**Operation VERITABLE:**

The QORC objective was the town of Millingen in the top left of the map where the Maas River joins the Rhine River.

The Calcar-Goch Road in the right center where the 4th Brigade is shown for Veritable would be the start line for the Regiment in Operation Blockbuster.

The escarpment can be seen by the shaded area stretching from Calcar to Udem. To the right of Udem the railway track goes through the center of the Hochwald Gap.

(Official History of the Canadian Army, Victory Campaign, Historical Section G.S. Department of National Defense P490)

Instructions regarding preparation of War Diaries (which will be kept from first day of mobilization, creation or embodiment) are contained in FS Regs Vol. 1.			WAR DIARY OR INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY		3/19A MFM 11 40/P&S/OT 1/5028
Title pages will be prepared.			(Erase heading not required)		Original, duplicate and triplicate to be forwarded to OIC 2nd Echelon for disposal.
Page Three					
Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information		Remarks, references to Appendices and initials
UBBERGEN	9 Feb 45	1430	(cont) "A" Coy arrives in MILLIGEN meeting no opposition, and contacts "B" Coy. "B" Coy at objective in MILLIGEN at 1630 hrs, meets no opposition, captures one PW and two civilians. Coy assembles in area ship yards in MILLIGEN and takes up defence role. "D" Coy house clearing according to plan. Minefield trace Mortar Fire plan Admn orders "Veritable" EDA task table & amendments Arty trace Illumination areas in Sp 7 & 8 Cdn Inf Bdes O. C. 29 "Veritable"		Appx 13 Appx 14 Appx 15 Appx 16 Appx 17 Appx 18 Appx 19
MILLIGEN	10 Feb 45	0630	Reveille - Fair & Mild Town of MILLIGEN and area very badly flooded owing to enemy blowing dykes. BHQ situated at MR 85666421.		
		1230	Water rose five inches in the last three hours, and is still rising. Coys moving to higher ground.		
		1630	"C" Coy moves to town of BEMMICH, GERMAN, Square 8663, encounter no opposition except civilians who are immediately ordered to stay in their homes. Map MILLIGEN (East) 1/25,000 Map MILLIGEN 1/25,000 Map MILLIGEN (East) 1/25,000 Map CALCAR 1/25,000		Appx 20 Appx 21 Appx 22 Appx 23
MILLIGEN	11 Feb 45	0800	Reveille - Cloudy with rain. Water risen two and a half feet during night, making movement in this area impossible without boat. "B" Coy is moving to area MR 86486182.		
		0830	8 pl, "A" Coy took two PW (Wehrmacht) this morning, PW apparently wandered into Coy lines. "A" Coy to take over "B" Coys old position. NSR to take over "B" Coys responsibility. "B" Coy has taken over many LMG posts beside the river, they afford an excellent view of the river. Arty fire is brought to bear on MR 843664, presumed enemy movement of vehicles.		
		2130	Contact patrol to NSR. All coys on fifty percent stand to until first light. Map MILLIGEN, D.F. 1/25,000		Appx

of Roland, Germany to begin their preparations for the next phase, Operation BLOCKBUSTER.

"Operation VERITABLE had not progressed as favourably as had been previously hoped. Bad weather and stiff resistance had hampered the offensive, which, as such, was virtually concluded with the final objectives yet to be reached. The momentum had been kept up to the second phase of the

**"Probably no assault in this war has been conducted under more appalling conditions of terrain."  
~ General Dwight D. Eisenhower (6-134)**

original plan before it became obvious that the strong, lay back defences which blocked the way to the Rhine were, in turn, covered by a series of well sited positions to the west." (22) The Canadian 2<sup>nd</sup> Division and the British forces to its south had been stopped by the determined defence along the Calcar-Goch road. The four-phased Operation BLOCKBUSTER was conceived to continue the push through the Hochwald and onto the Rhine. Phase one would prove costly for The Queen's Own.

On February 21-22, the Regiment was in the

town of Ubbergen on the way to Roland. The CO had ordered everyone CB'd (confined to barracks). Dick Medland, the A Company Commander, recalls telling this to his driver Rfn Tommy Twynam who

replied, "Jeez, Boss the boys aren't going to like that a whole helluva lot." Changing his mind during his Company O Group, Medland told his platoon commanders that anyone could go into town if prop-

erly dressed, had his weapons inspected and his sergeant knew where to find him in a hurry. As it was, they received three hours notice before moving out. Medland stated that they left Ubbergen early morning of the 22<sup>nd</sup> without a man missing. He also notes, "Oh, if somebody wanted to be critical, there were some in no condition at all for fighting." (6-138) They pulled into their area near Roland, Germany that night. They were close to the enemy and it was raining. The Regiment spent the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> cleaning up and resting. The of-

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks, references to Appendices and initials
MILLINGEN	12 Feb 45	0630	Reveille - Fair and mild Royal Engineers are smoking the dyke in this area, making it very difficult to observe enemy activity on other side of River Waal. Situation quiet on Coy Sectors at present, supplies in ducks arriving regularly.	<i>Sub</i>
	13 Feb 45	0800	Reveille - Cloudy with ground mist. Fifty per cent coy stand-to replaced with two men guard. 12 pl "B" Coy take a German Civilian into custody, who had apparently been living on island on "B" Coys front. Island was inspected, nothing found.	
		1245	Five Dutch Civilians cross Rhine River in Boat waving white flag. They were taken and held by "A" Coy for investigation. Impossible to see across other side of dyke in some areas, owing to very heavy smoke laid down by Royal Engineers.	<i>Sub</i>
		1455	MG 42 firing at "B" Coy Area.	
		2020	"B" Coy area was shelled, no casualties. NSR to evacuate to mainland, "A" and "B" Coys to withdraw on 13 Feb remainder on 14 Feb. QOR of C with under command "B" Coy C.H.of.O. to hold Bde Area.	
		2037	Enemy artillery active on MILLINGEN area, 10 seconds time of flight. Enemy movement of vehicles seen on dyke 85648663. "A" Coy at MR 83896458, "B" Coy at MR 86486192, "C" Coy 85166347, "D" Coy 84156434.	
MILLINGEN	14 Feb 45	0730	Reveille - Mild and Cloudy. BHQ moves to Burgomasters office in MILLINGEN MR 83866421.	
		0745	Approx three hundred enemy shells land in MILLINGEN area, direct hits on 8 Pl "A" Coy HQ. Sgt C. Webber, Provost Sgt, and Capt Bean, 2i/c "C" Coy were killed in this barrage. Tug boat seen on river so Bn on hundred per cent stand to immediately.	
		0900	Stand down.	
		1200	"D" Coy moving to take over posns. from NSR at KEKERDOM Square 8164. C.H.of O. to take over "D" Coys sector.	<i>Sub</i>
		1330	"D" Coy arrives KEKERDOM.	
		2130	Two boat loads civilians across River Waal from enemy lines.	
	15 Feb 45	0800	Reveille - Cold and wet. Water receding slightly. Captain and Sgt (Belgian) arrive from AMCOF to interrogate civilians we have in custody. The majority of the plns are ignoring compo these days, as fowl and beef (on the hoof) are plentiful.	<i>Sub</i>
		1055	Enemy MG 42 firing on "B" Coy area, Coy retaliated with Bren Gun.	

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks, references to Appendices and initials
MILLINGEN	16 Feb 45	0800	Reveille - Mild with Ground Mist Water still receding slightly. It is evident this morning that enemy barge activity took place during the night as two of their barges are resting on the river off MILLINGEN.	<i>Sub</i>
		1030	MG 42 firing on "E" Coy area. C.H. of O. retaliated with Vickers, enemy MG was not heard again. Royal Engineers have stopped smoking the dyke. Water has receded low enough, to make it possible for some pls to move back into houses.	
	17 Feb 45	0700	Reveille - Mild and cloudy. Fifty per cent stand to discontinued.	
		0930	Barge was seen by "A" Coy on Rhine River floating towards Neter Rhine. All available small arms fire was brought to bear, setting it on fire.	<i>Sub</i>
MILLINGEN	18 Feb 45	0100	Reveille - Cold and cloudy. An enemy patrol, believed to have been seven or eight men strong, infiltrated near 9 pl "A" Coy posn. It was shot up and it is believed casualties were inflicted.	
		1130	MG 42 fired approx three hundred rounds in area of "B" Coy.	
		1310	11 pl posn was shelled, no casualties.	
		1600	Our O.P.s report our arty falling short into ship yard.	
		1610	"B" Coy area was shelled very heavily.	<i>Sub</i>
	19 Feb 45	0025	Reveille - Cloudy and mild. Number of trip flares and booby traps were set off in area of Dyke. "A" Coy opened up with LMG and rifle fire.	
		0910	Enemy MG 42 wounded one man in "B" Coy.	
		1755	Boat seen on River Rhine, so LMG fire was brought to bear. No fire came from boat, but MG 42 retaliated from other side of river.	
		1643	A man from 7 pl "A" Coy who was walking along dyke, was shot through heel by sniper on the other side of River Rhine.	<i>Sub</i>



**THIS PAGE:** Operation VERITABLE with the amphibious Buffalos. Note the ladder going up to the second floor in the photo at left.

Officers were briefed on the 24<sup>th</sup> and conducted reconnaissance of their objectives beginning with the Battalion and Company Commanders followed by the company level officers. They received their detailed orders on the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup> from the CO Lieutenant-Colonel Lett.

## OPERATION BLOCKBUSTER

As First Canadian Army continued with the overall plan, LGen Simonds of II Canadian Corps would launch Operation BLOCKBUSTER on the North or left while the British continued their attack in the South or right. The strongest German positions were on the North side. The start line was the Goch-Calcar road and the objective was to drive on through into the Hochwald Gap and beyond to the Rhine. (2-193) "In the mammoth shift to reposition his various Divisions for the new thrust, Simonds made the mistake of immobilizing the bulk of his units for four days." (2-194) His German opponent, General Schlemm commanding the German 1<sup>st</sup> Parachute Army, used this time to reposition and strengthen the German defenses along the horse-shoe-shaped escarpment stretching from Calcar to Udem. Any approach across the flat open farmland broadside to the six-mile ridge would bring the units under German observation and fire. This was the mission given to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division. The Canadian 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Divisions were tasked to attack the ridge head on. The 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade was given the task of opening up the approaches to the Calcar-Udem

escarpment supported by two squadrons of tanks from the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Division was to capture the villages of Keppeln and Udem as well as the hamlets and farmhouses that dotted the countryside around them. The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada would lead off 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade's attack, moving forward through rising, open fields as soon as the barrage lifted. The QOR had been allotted a squadron of 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars tanks and some of F Troop from 52<sup>nd</sup> Battery (self-propelled 17- pounder guns) of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Anti-Tank Regiment, RCA, but the artillery program for their sector was severely limited. The QOR were, according to the BLOCKBUSTER master plan, simply securing the lower slope of the ridge, conforming to the movements of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. This meant the barrage would move on to the crest relatively quickly. (19)

Now that they were fighting on German soil the opposition became quite fanatical and the Canadians were faced by hard-fighting paratroopers of General Alfred Schlemm's 1<sup>st</sup> Parachute Army. They formed a core around which gathered "old men and young boys who had hand grenades and old rifles and hearts full of hate." (17-225) The delay of Operation GRENADE and the US 9<sup>th</sup> Army's crossing of the Rhine allowed the Germans to reposition some of those forces facing the Americans to the First Canadian Army's sector: "transferring north from the American front, nine divisions (be-





*The Kangaroo, a defrocked "Priest."*

tween 135,000 and 180,000 men), equipped with the greatest concentration of mortars and guns ever assembled by the Germans anywhere on the whole Western Front — 1,054 guns and 717 mortars. Army intelligence reported the Germans assembled 451 field guns, 179 mediums, 195 anti-tank guns, 229 dual-purpose 88mm guns, 581 heavy mortars (80 and 120mm), and 136 super-heavy mortars (150-210mm)." (23-322)

Brigadier Jim Roberts had wanted to employ Kangaroos, the defrocked Priest armoured artillery vehicles. With their tops removed and extra armour plating along the sides they could carry a section of infantry into battle and save casualties, but the limited number of Kangaroos were being used by the 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade in their attack to the north. The Brigade's armour support was also lacking with only two Squadrons of the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars Regiment assigned to the Brigade.

The attack plan deviated from the normal procedures where two Battalions advanced with a third in reserve. For BLOCKBUSTER, each of the Brigade's Battalions would go forward separately and at different times. The Queen's Own would lead at 0430 hours on the Brigade's left flank to capture the small hamlets of Mooshof, Wimmerhof, and Steeg. The Queen's Own was to move first because the movement was timed to protect

the right flank of the 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade's attack. Then at 0830 the Chaudière Regiment on the far right of the Brigade would kick off in the direction of Udem taking Halvenboom, Hollen, and Bomshof. Finally, fifteen minutes later, the North Shore Regiment would attack up the middle to take Keppeln. From its objectives the QOR was to provide covering fire for the North Shores even though they would be some 1,500 meters away.

The CO, Lieutenant Colonel Steve Lett, disliked the plan intensely. "The Germans had all that could be desired for a defensive position. The country was is open and flat. Behind this excellent tank country lays the horse-shoe shaped Calcar-Udem escarpment, while still farther to the east lays the Hochwald, an ideal gun area." He was unable to effectively reconnoiter the ground ahead because of the "flat open country completely under enemy observation." It was impossible to see the Regiment's objectives or the German strong points just over the crest of the escarpment. (3-324)

The enemy troops holding the Queen's Own objectives were first class soldiers from the 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> parachute regiments (13-247). [This is probably an error. The German 6<sup>th</sup> Parachute Regiment was not in the area, it was fighting against Amer-

icans and was near Bonn at this time. The main parachute unit was the 7<sup>th</sup> Parachute Division with its Regiments 19 through 21; the 6<sup>th</sup> Parachute Division was defending the Calcar area, with Regiments 16 - 18. The 7<sup>th</sup> Parachute Regiment was defending Udem. The Germans fed the Parachute Regiments in piecemeal as they arrived and often formed ad hoc battle groups. Perhaps this reference actual refers to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Regiments?]

Even at this stage of the war the parachute units still contained young and motivated soldiers. Al-

***"This will be the toughest scrap we've ever been in. A lot of us won't make it. Those who do, well, they'll remember it for a long time."***

***~ Major Dick Medland,***

***A Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, QOR  
(6-140)***

Instructions regarding preparation of War Diaries (which will be kept from first day of mobilization, creation or embarkment) are contained in FS Regs Vol 1.

WAR DIARY  
OR

3/19A MEM 11  
40/P&S/37 (5/52)

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Original, duplicate and triplicate to be forwarded to OIC 2nd Echelon for disposal.

Title pages will be prepared.

(Erase heading not required)

Page Six

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks, references to Appendices and initials
MILLINGEN	20 Feb 45		Reveille - Cloudy and mild.	
		0900	Bn is ordered to return to area UBERBERG via buffalos to BEEK.	
		1130	"A" and "B" Coys will not move today.	
		1220	"B" and "D" Coys embark on buffalos for BEEK after being relieved by elements of 43 Br. Div.	
		1430	"C" Coy area was shelled considerably three or four 8.8 dm.guns. "C" Coy HQ received direct hit.	
		1700	"A" and "D" Coys reported back at BEEK and leave for their old posts at UBERBERG, in area NIJMEGEN. "A" Coy reports that barge fired at yesterday was sunk in river, west of MILLINGEN. Movement was observed on it.	Sub
	21 Feb 45		Reveille - Cold with rain.	
		0001	"A" Coy shelled very regularly every 20 minutes.	
		0930	"A" Coy embarks on buffalos for BEEK, by 1600 hrs they are back in old posts in UBERBERG.	Sub.
	22 Feb 45		Reveille - Fair and mild.	
		0015	Coys are all settled down for a good night's sleep, but no such luck. Bn receives orders to move.	
		0330	Coys prepare to move on 40V's.	
		0540	Convoy leaves area NIJMEGEN and proceeds via GROSSBEEK, through REICHS WALD FOREST, on road recently constructed by Royal Engineers. Then through GLEVE, DONSBRUGGEN, and arrives at destination area ROLAND, GERMANY. BRQ situated at MR 932514. "A" Coy at MR 930511; "B" Coy 926510, "C" Coy 922522; "D" Coy at MR 929505; "Sp" Coy 927503.	Sub
ROLAND GERMANY	23 Feb 45		Reveille - Fair and cold.	
		0800	Coys commence general clean up. Weapon inspections.	
		1330	Afternoon consisted of sports and P.T. Not one house in area has escaped being hit by our arty, giving proof of the effectiveness.	Sub.
		1445	Field Marshall B L MONTGOMERY visited this area today.	
	24 Feb 45		Reveille - Fair and mild.	
		1500	"C" Group at BRQ for Coy Comdrs. Trace RCA operation Blockbuster	Sub.

Appx 25

though most had never jumped from an airplane, they were well armed and well trained for their defensive mission. There were still enough veterans of Italy, Russia and Normandy to provide the leadership. Parachute units were allotted more automatic weapons and mortars than the German infantry units. Sections were formed around a machine gun, normally the MG 42, and had at least two MP 40 machine pistols or equivalents per section. Their forward defensive line was located in reinforced concrete positions and farmhouses scattered across the front. Secondary positions were prepared and some wire, tank ditches and many mines were in place. From these positions the Germans had full view of the Brigade's attack area. The flat muddy terrain rose slightly uphill from the Canadian positions and provided the paratroopers with excellent

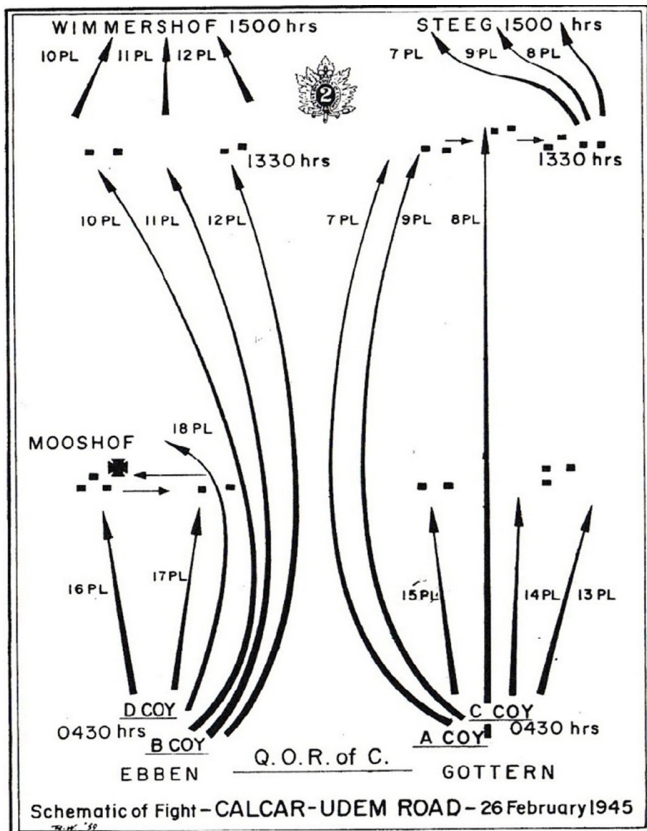
observation for artillery fires, grazing fire for their machine guns and no cover for the Regiment.

George Blackburn, an artillery FOO supporting BLOCKBUSTER, describes his feelings before the attack: "You find yourself sighing too much, and your mouth is cracking dry, your palms are damp. You try to concentrate on the Calcar sheet of the maps they've given you to invade Germany, which have been printed on the backs of maps the Germans had printed to invade England. You turn over the map and study the 'Grantham sheet of Lincolnshire' - now overprinted with the word 'cancelled.'" (23-273)

**FEBRUARY 26, 1945**

Ben Dunkelman had been with the Regiment since D-Day and now commanded D Company. He recalls

*The Regiment's plan for taking the Calcar-Udem Road.*



that morning: "We were roused at 0330 hours, a dreadful time to awaken and realize your chances of never waking again are pretty high. As usual, we were all fed hot coffee, rum, and sandwiches, and the men's equipment and weapons were checked. The artillery had reached a crescendo as we moved off towards the start line at 0400. Our first objective was a little village named Mooshof; previous attacks on Mooshof, Steeg and Wimmershof had been thrown back with heavy losses by crack German paratroopers, who had succeeded in halting the whole Allied advance on this front. We knew we were in for a real scrap." (5-132)

Sergeant Aubrey Cosens checked his men. Finding Private Don Chittenden struggling with his wet web equipment, he knelt in front of him to get the buckles done up. Chittenden felt as if he were being fussed over by an anxious mother, and when he looked down at Cosens they both laughed loudly. Private Don Cowling knew it was going to be a different affair from their previous experience when he saw Dunkelmann walking around waving his pistol and yelling, "Who's ready for war?" (14)

Sergeant Aubrey Cosens was 23 years old, from Porquis Junction near Latchford, Ontario. He spent his youth exploring Temagami's lakes and forests, prowling for weeks on end. He learned resourcefulness and gained mental and physical toughness from wilderness survival and solitude. He was a bit of a fitness buff, tuning his muscles by wrestling and weight lifting and his mind by tests of will. He loved sports and played hockey on the police hockey team. He was somewhat of a loner by inclination and a leader by nature. (2-198) Aubrey finished the seventh grade and went to work as a railway hand. In 1939 he decided not to wait for conscription, but his first choice, the Air Force, turned him down. Aubrey joined the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in Hamilton in 1940. He served with this regiment in Jamaica and Kiska; he was promoted to Corporal and then moved with it to England when it became part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division. Cosens transferred into The Queen's Own as a reinforcement on August 1, 1944. His letters to his girlfriend Jewel indicated he had found a home in the Army and intended to make a career of it. "I've had another promotion so it's Sergeant now and what a lot of work there is to do and I have a lot of dirt flung at me from all angles. But I'll beat it if it kills me. I was platoon commander for two weeks or more. That's a lot of responsibility to take, and it makes you think (about) am I doing this right? How many men will come back and so forth? If I get gray hairs, you can guess the reason. The word responsibility is a big one in the army. I've learned that." In his last letter to Jewel, he mentioned that he was acting CSM and states again his intention of remaining in the permanent force and making CSM. In his last letter to his foster parents, he talks about soon getting a leave to England and that he should have one to Canada after June. (6-156-157)

At 0345 hours the entire II Canadian Corps artillery began firing in support of the attacks. A total of 1,034 guns fired on enemy positions. Before II Canadian Corps advanced with ground troops, the Canadian Artillery fired more than 500,000 rounds

or 400 to 700 rounds per gun. The Germans offered little resistance to the tremendous shelling. For Phase One of BLOCKBUSTER, seven field and two medium regiments supported The Queen's Own's attack with fire at a "walking pace." The Field Regiments for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division were the 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Regiments. The 12<sup>th</sup> Regiment's Intelligence summary for February 26<sup>th</sup> records: "Zero hour for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division was the next morning at 0330 hours and we fired in support two hundred and thirty rounds per gun before 1400 hours. The Signallers had a difficult time keeping their lines in, as the 4<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division tanks were milling around our position all day and even the tannoy wires were ripped up." The Forward Observation Officers (FOO) from the firing batteries accompanied the Infantry Companies into battle and often suffered casualties among the FOOs and their Signallers. "Major Gilbert was the third officer killed or wounded from the Regiment since the 9<sup>th</sup> of February." (21)

The Queen's Own companies moved forward from the FUP (forming up place), following white tape that guided them to their positions on the start line. Four huge searchlights came on, bouncing the beams off of the clouds creating artificial moonlight and turning night into day. There was no ground mist, visibility was excellent. Major H.E. Dalton, the Regiment's 2IC, said afterward: "It backfired; it did us more harm than good. In that kind of hand-to-hand fighting, to clear houses, you didn't need light." There was no surprise, the Germans were waiting and saw the companies coming before they reached the start line. When the companies moved out behind a rolling barrage the Germans would follow their usual tactics of dropping their artillery just behind our barrage to catch our men. Lieutenant-Colonel Lett ordered his two lead companies to make one adjustment in the Divisional plan: "they were not to cross the start line at the scheduled hour in the hope they would be able to observe and avoid the inevitable counter barrage which the Germans would direct behind



the moving allied barrage." (11-213) The lead companies crossed the start line about ten minutes late at 0440 hours. In spite of this, some of the counter fire caught A Company, which lost seven men just reaching the start line.

Lett used the standard attack formation: two up and two back. D Company was on the left followed by B Company, and C Company was on the right followed by A Company. Each company would have a FOO with them to direct artillery fire. The mud became an obstacle for Major Jake Powell's C Squadron tanks, which were unable to match the infantry's pace; the Hussars were delayed as they slowly churned their way to the start line. The Queen's Own Rifles' C and D Companies under Major Allen Nickson and Major Ben Dunkelman started the attack without them, counting on the tanks to catch up later.

Dunkelman describes D company's attack: "As we advance, we keep as close as possible to the



**LEFT:** This fortified farmhouse near De Steeg was A Company's first objective. It was sketched later that day by Major Medland. At the time the fields were littered with the enemy's fallen. The root cellar to the left was three meters deep and filled with the dead. To the right is the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussar's Sherman that was knocked out by 88mm fire.

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** In the upper left of this map during Blockbuster the QORC attack is protecting the right flank of the 6th Brigade while securing its four objectives. The North Shore Regiment is to its right about 1500 meters away with its objective the town of Keppeln. On the 8th Brigades far right the Chauds would attack Halvenbach. (Official History of the Canadian Army, Victory Campaign, Historical Section G.S. Department of National Defense P518)

creeping barrage. Shells explode as little as ten yards ahead. Although it is four o'clock on a February morning it's as bright as day because Monty, as usual, is supplying us with artificial moonlight, produced by searchlights playing on the clouds above. I advance in the center of the company; 16 Platoon to my left, 17 to my right, and 18 under John Hancock following behind. We move as cautiously as we can, keeping close to the creeping barrage. Overcoming enemy resistance we reach our objective — the farm buildings of Mooshof. So far, so good. Not a single casualty! But I know what's coming and I roar out instructions to the platoon commanders to spread out ahead, and get dug in well away from the captured German positions. The enemy's defensive tactics are brilliantly conceived, and carried out with tenacity by some of the best soldiers in Europe. No rigid defence: under attack, they hold on as long as possible in their excellently concealed slit-trenches, then withdraw to prepared positions a little farther back. Instantly, previously ranged mortar and artillery fire is poured on the positions they've just vacated — even if a few of their own men are still there. The shelling is co-ordinated with infantry assaults to retake the ground they've just lost. Superb tactics. That's precisely what they're doing now. No sooner have they pulled back from the farmhouses than they begin their counter-attack." (5-133)

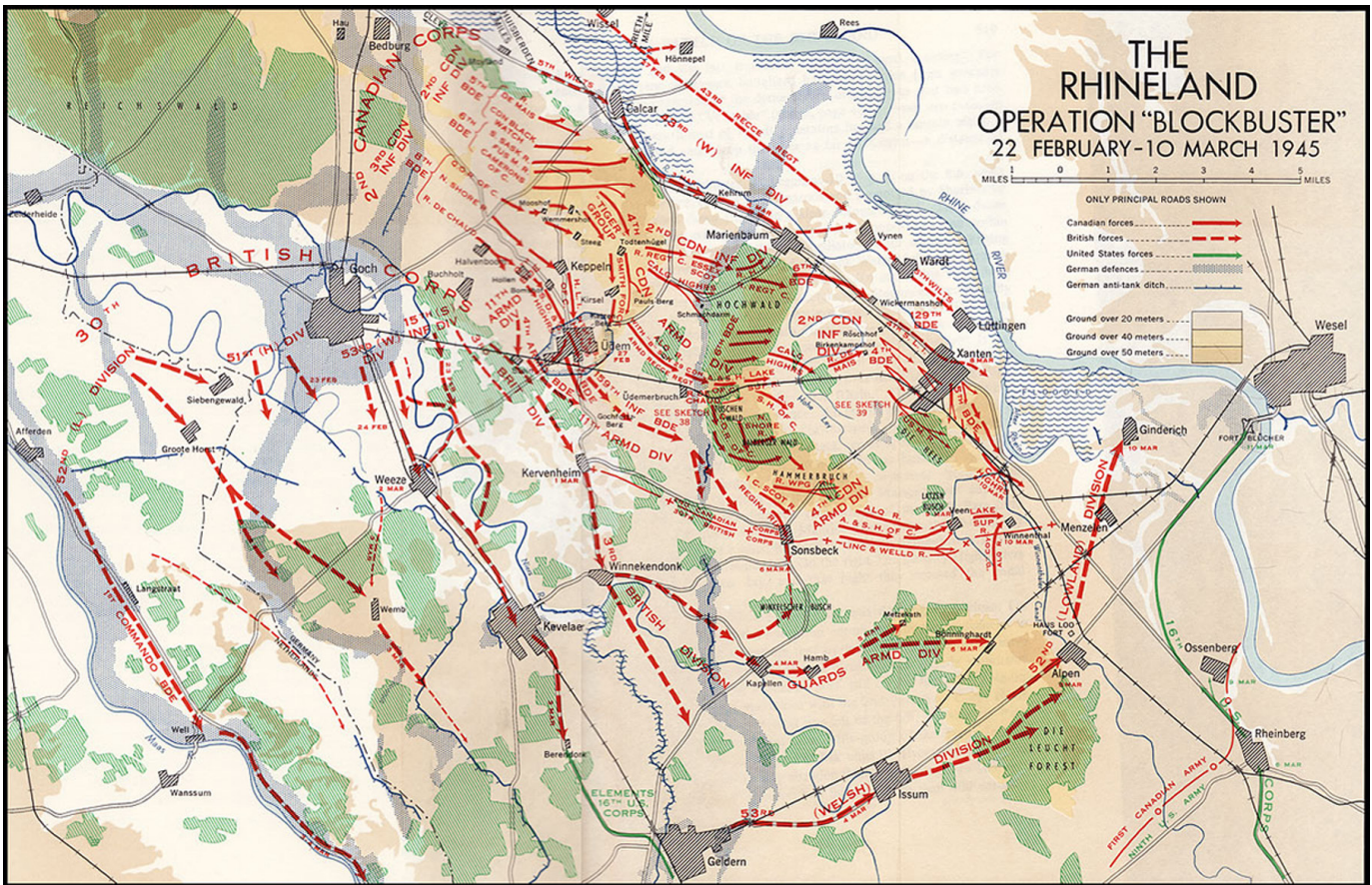
On reaching Mooshof the enemy was found to have prepared positions throughout the area and to have strong points in three farm buildings. In the noise and confusion, 16 Platoon had not pulled off the objective. The plan called for 18 Platoon to go

through and flank the enemy by swinging around the front of 17 Platoon striking 16 Platoon's objective from the right flank (see map). As 18 Platoon passed through, they strayed too far to the right following a couple of tanks. (13-249) This opened McKay's 16 Platoon to an attempted infiltration attack. The enemy then counterattacked in strength. In the darkness, and aided by their knowledge of the ground, the Germans succeeded in infiltrating into the positions which Number 16 Platoon had hastily taken up. In bitter and confused fighting, this counterattack was beaten off, but not until the platoon had suffered heavy casualties, including the platoon commander. With one tank in support, the platoon counterattacked [see Lt McKay's citation below]. No. 16 Platoon engaged in a fierce exchange of gunfire before the Germans broke it off. They were then hit hard by artillery and mortars. Lieutenant Lloyd McKay was seriously wounded and an entire section was wiped out. (3-326) Shortly after this they began falling back to 17 Platoon's positions.

The citation for Lieutenant Lloyd Carlton McKay, MC, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada reads [the citation is in error, as Lieutenant McKay commanded 16 Platoon]:

*On the attack on MOOSHOF, Lieutenant Lloyd Carlton McKay commanded 18 Platoon of D Company 1<sup>st</sup> Bn The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada on 26 February 1945. This platoon, upon reaching its objective, came under extremely heavy mortar and shell fire and the platoon*





was immediately counter-attacked by strong enemy forces.

Without regards for his personal safety, Lt McKay refused to take cover and directed the fire of his platoon under the most hazardous conditions. He then personally led three attacks against enemy counter-blows, completely disorganizing the attacking enemy forces. At this point Lt McKay was seriously wounded through the chest and legs. Despite his wounds, he climbed on to the top of a supporting tank and, although still under intense enemy fire, directed the tanks into the buildings held by the enemy. In these buildings McKay killed ten Germans and took 12 prisoners. Through his supreme courage and magnificent leadership, the company was able to consolidate its position and hold off all enemy attempts to retake it. Lt McKay's extreme bravery and coolness in action was an inspiration to all ranks and is an example of the highest standards of a Canadian officer.

Major Dunkelmann continues: "A runner comes over to tell me that 16 Platoon, which hasn't moved off the objective, is caught in a fire-storm as the bombs rain down, and is taking a battering. I run over there to find that all hell has broken loose. Every minute more men are hit. Men from 17 Platoon come over to help get the wounded out of there, and are caught in the same deadly fire. The whole area is turning into a shambles; the bodies of the wounded, dead and dying lie everywhere you look. It's a nightmare." (5-133) Dunkelmann helps patch up the wounded to save them from bleeding to death and then helps carry the bodies to cover as the counterattack slams home. "The onslaught continues, murderously effective. We try to hang on, but an enemy counter-attack secures the buildings once occupied by 16 Platoon. The fight sways back and forth attack and counter-attack, with heavy losses on both sides. The struggle for Mooshof — and a lot more — hangs in the balance." (5-134)



**LEFT:** The Queen's Own Rifles' Wasp carriers they had internal tanks, but could also tow a trailer with extra fuel. Four of these men would not survive the war. (Library and Archives Canada, 3205139)

**BELOW:** Riflemen W.T. Orton and H.H. Pennell of The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada in a Wasp flamethrower carrier near Vaucelles, France, 29 July 1944. (Library and Archives Canada, 3525739)

What remained of 16 Platoon fell back on 17 Platoon's position. Rifleman Norm Selby remembers: "The Germans were waiting for us; we were lying in shell holes. They had MG 42s upstairs in the barns. God, they were wicked guns." Rifleman Don Chittenden, Lt McKay's runner, recalled: "I went through the most horrendous artillery fire I ever experienced. It was extremely accurate; it winkled the guys right out of their slit trenches. We had terrible casualties." (2-197) Rifleman Norm Selby was pulling back slowly when Lance Corporal Edward Fraser shouted, "Speed it up, you guys." As Fraser dashed around the corner of the building, he was killed by a burst of Schmeisser fire through a window and fell dead. Selby chucked in a grenade through the window and killed the German. (3-326) Fraser was one of Chittenden's best friends: "I just stood there, stunned, staring down at Fraser's body. I was shocked because he was the first one of the guys I'd been close to." (2-198)

The citation for Aubrey Cosens' Victoria Cross was in error, as Cosens' Platoon Commander was not killed. Shelby recalls: "Our Platoon Commander, Lieutenant Lloyd McKay (awarded the MC for this action) was wounded, not killed. We know because Don Cowling and I grabbed McKay's webbing and dragged him out of there. Cowling and I had been in a shell hole. Corporal Gough had come by and said, 'Let's go fellows.' The fire was on someone else when we moved. That's how we made it. When it was over 16 Platoon didn't exist anymore. Out of maybe 30, there were only eight or nine

left." On the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle, Norm went back to Mooshof where he met the German farmer who, as a kid of 16, had hid in the cellar during the battle. He told Norm, "When you people had left, we came out, maybe in the early afternoon, and we were in shock. All those clumps of khaki in our field." That was 16 Platoon out there, taken out by mortars and artillery. (6-153)

It was at this point that Sergeant Aubrey Cosens took charge of the survivors of the platoon. Despite the platoon's terrible condition, Cosens led them on two attacks on the last three farm buildings. They were beaten back each time. Of the 30 or so men in 16 Platoon that had crossed the start line, only Cosens and eight or nine remained. "After our Platoon Commander Lt Lloyd McKay was wounded, Sgt. Cosens took over," remembers Corporal H.F. Gough. "He asked me to gather up the men who were not wounded. There were only four of us left. He asked us to give covering fire while he made a dash to find a tank." (14) [The QOR history lists the following men as the four with Cosens, but Shelby and Chittenden were certainly there as well perhaps not behind



**RIGHT:** A 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars M4A4 Medium Sherman tank with a short barrel 75mm main gun and two 30 caliber machine guns, extra track pads were often welded to the frontal armour to provide more protection.



the tank: Cpl G. Dasser, Cpl H.F. Gough, Rfn A.W. Ferrell and Rfn G.W. Parsons (13-251)] Cosens was determined to retake the buildings. Shelby recalled that Cosens was wearing a tank suit with lots of pockets and carried a pistol “Aubrey was my Sergeant. He knew what he was doing. I liked him. I never saw him with a rifle or Sten.” (3-326) Cosens ordered his four men to provide covering fire and he armed himself with a Sten gun and grenades. Cosens called for tank support.

Archie McQuade recalls: “We were occupying a building on the road that was maybe, oh, half or three-quarters of a mile away. I didn’t know Cosens had called for a tank. It stopped at our building.” McQuade had no idea what the tank was for, but assumed it was to blast the snipers out of Aubrey Cosens’ building. When told where he was to go, the tank commander (Sergeant Charlie “Andy” Anderson) said, “To hell with you, I need two guys to lead me up there. One yard one way or the other off the road and I’ll be stuck forever in the mud.” So two men guided him up to the building. (6-152)

It was about now that this 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars tank showed up in 16 Platoon’s area. Cosens dashed 25 yards through the exploding mortar rounds across the bullet-swept ground to the tank commanded by Sergeant Charles Anderson. Finding that the telephone on the rear of the tank was broken, he climbed up beside the turret to point out the location of the MG 42s in the buildings and had Anderson place fire on them with the tank’s main gun.

Don Cowling recalls two tanks being involved. (This may have been the earlier period when the platoon was counterattacking the German penetra-

tion of their position and Lt McKay took action with one of the tanks.) “I got paired off with Gough (section Corporal) and we tried some house-clearing. But at the start I was with Selby. We had come under fire from some houses and Cosens told us to dig in. Not long after two tanks headed for the trench. Someone shouted, ‘It’s okay guys, I can see ya.’ But the noise, instead of getting fainter, got louder. The second tank came right for us. Close, but no damage. The next thing I remember is Lance-Sergeant McKay coming by. Had I seen Corporal Finch? So, I

ran into one of the houses — sounding sort of silly, I suppose — calling out, ‘Hey Finch, hey Finch. All I got from that was a voice saying, ‘Was ist das?’ I found him later. His back was to the wall. He’d taken mortar fire; there was shrapnel in his stomach. They tell you, don’t try to pull it out; it could

be like an iceberg and do wider damage, so wait for the stretcher-bearers. Later I saw him again, still in the same position. But dead. I’ll tell you the sad thing in our particular section is that when Norm and I got there as reinforcements, we were green, and Pocock and Joe Sereres — they’d been soldering for some time — took us under their wing and kept us from harm. They were killed in the attack.” Both Don and Norm were from Toronto, they had

***“Remaining on the tank and completely disregarding the enemy’s superiority in numbers and the withering fire, Sergeant Aubrey Cosens led and inspired the defence. He plunged the tank, in the blackness, into the middle of the attackers.”***



*A Canadian M10 Tank Destroyer armed with a 3-inch main gun (76.2mm) and M2 50 cal machine gun.*

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gone to school together, joined up together and arrived as reinforcements together. (6-154)

Cosens was directing the fire of the tank and his small group onto enemy positions in the buildings and surrounding area when another counter-attack hit them. "Cosens continued to direct the fire of the tank and his small group to break up a second German counter-attack. Once again, the enemy counter-attacked savagely in force. Remaining on the tank and completely disregarding the enemy's superiority in numbers and the withering fire, Sergeant Aubrey Cosens led and inspired the defence. He plunged the tank, in the blackness, into the middle of the attackers. His bold tactics resulted in the complete disorganisation of the enemy force, which broke and fled after sustaining many casualties." (21)

Sergeant Anderson recalls heavy sniper fire coming from the farm buildings. "We fired 75mm shells into the building." It was probably at this point after some heavy fire had been thrown out that Cosens told Anderson about his plan to ram the first house. Trooper Bill Adams, the driver, recalls: "I put her in bull-low and advanced. When I hit, I bounced back about two feet and didn't do too much. Then I tried again and this time I did a pretty good job and went in quite a way. I was pretty careful about ramming those stone walls. Usually there's some kind of basement. We wouldn't be much use to anyone with a 30-ton Sherman tank lying around in a farm cellar." (3-327) (14) "The Germans tried to pick him (Cosens) off with tracer fire," Chittenden recalls. "It was just like bloody rain bouncin' off that tank. He stayed out there in the open with his Sten while the tank knocked out the farmhouse."

Rifleman Selby recalls: "There were only four of us by then; we needed a leader, somebody to say, 'Ok let's go.' We realized if we stayed there, we were going to get killed or captured. Cosens was screaming at the top of his lungs from the tank, 'Follow me!' So, we got behind the tank and ran in behind to give him fire support. The tank rammed into one of the houses and bashed the hell out of it, firing its turret gun into the house. Cosens jumped off the tank and tore into the house and the Krauts started coming out the other door. We got them all corralled." It was still dark. Cosens spotted the body of Corporal Fraser in the path of the tank by the flash of artillery fire. He dismounted and ran forward to Don Chittenden's location. Chittenden remembers: "He came running over to me yelling, 'Chit get your ass out of here. You're going to get shot.' He grabbed Fraser's body by the collar and straps and dragged it to one side. 'A tank is coming up this way,' he said. 'I don't want it to crush Fraser's body.'" (2-198)

Cosens then continued his attack on the second building. He had the tank fire into this building and, forcing the door open, entered it alone; the enemy had already fled. He then continued his assault under the covering fire of the tank and his remaining men. Cosens crossed the road and attacked the third building, a heavily defended two story farmhouse. He cleared the building, killing more Germans in the process and, on discovering that some were hiding in the basement, he calmly stood at the door and talked them into surrendering. Some 14 to 16 German paratroopers gave up. He had personally killed some 20 Germans and captured another 20, seriously disrupting the German counter-attack. Sergeant Cosens told Don Chittenden and Rifleman Norton to take the prisoners to the rear. "When we had cleaned out the last farmhouse," Selby recalls, "Cosens said, 'Take up defensive positions. I'm going to the company commander and report to him.' Then he started off. I guess he got about 8 or 10 feet from me and plink! Down he

Instructions regarding preparation of War Diaries (which will be kept from first day of mobilization, creation or embodiment), are contained in F.S. Regs. Vol. 1.

# WAR DIARY

M.F.M. 11  
40/P & S/GI (8/42)

OR

## INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Original, duplicate and triplicate to be forwarded to O. i/c 2nd Echelon for disposal.

Title pages will be prepared.

(Erases heading not required)

Page Seven

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks, references to Appendices and initials
ROLAND GERMANY	25 Feb 45	0800 1900	Beville - Cloudy and mild. Coys preparing for coming operation "BLOCKBUSTER". Coys leave concentration area for Assembly Area MR 968465, arrive 2030 hrs. Arty Trace, Phase I RCA Task Table #1 BLOCKBUSTER	<i>Sub</i> Appx 26 Appx 27
	26 Feb 45	0400 0645 0850 0925 0930 1445	"D" and "B" Coys cross S.L. "D" Coy advances to objective QUEER, where they are counter attacked savagely by enemy paratroops from objective OLD. Enemy attack was unsuccessful. "D" Coy reports that they have no platoon commanders left. Tanks report that CHICKEN is clear of enemy. "A" Coy on objective OLD at present, ask for fire on targets, 3311, 3313, 3314. "B" Coy moving to area "OLD", having trouble from enemy snipers. Sunray asks "A" Coy if they can support friends on right with fire. M 10's firing on "A" Coy posn. Fighting in the darkness was very vicious, and also confusing. Our M 10's leave to support Bn on our right flank. "D" Coy reported at ROOSTER. All coys to stand fast on ROOSTER and OLD until further instructions are received. During the attack enemy mortar and arty fire was very intense, and owing to darkness, house clearing was very difficult. Two Stretcher Bearers from "G" Coy were taken prisoners, and were not released for four hrs. until a friendly tank forced their captors to relinquish hold on them. Bn received approx 100 casualties in the action but left in its wake, fields littered with German dead. No. of PW taken was very hard to estimate owing to speed of attack but must have been at least 300, including many paratroops. Coys dug in present posns, 50 percent stand to all night. Map OLIVE, 1/25,000 Map XANTEN, 1/25,000 Message concerning civilians Shelltraps and mortareps Map UDEN, 1/25,000	<i>Sub</i> Appx 28 Appx 29 Appx 30 Appx 31 Appx 32
KIESEL	27 Feb 45	1100	Beville - Cloudy and mild. Coys move to area KIESEL and dig in. BHQ MR 003437. Coys holding line from MR 005435 to MR 007437. Took over from A & S Hrs.	<i>Sub</i>

went — that was it. Where the sniper came from, I don't know." (2-199)

Cpl Gough remembers: "He appeared on the top of the tank and directed fire which broke up the German counterattack. The Germans, in disorderly fashion, ran for their building. They started to open fire on us from there with automatic weapons. As he could not stop the withering fire, he crouched on the tank and had it ram the first building. With his pistol in hand, he wounded one German. After clearing the first building he had the tank move towards the building alongside. Before reaching the building, he jumped off the tank to remove Lance Corporal Fraser's body from the path of the

tank. He had the tank fire a shell into the second building. The tank then gave covering fire while he himself cleared the building. He forced his way in the front door and alone cleared the building. He then continued across the road with covering fire from the tank and cleared the third building. We followed him from building to building gathering the prisoners. The last I saw of him was when he told me where to sight my Bren gun and then he dashed off to seek the company commander to tell him that the counterattack had been broken up and the objective taken." (14)

Sergeant Charles Anderson of the 6<sup>th</sup> Canadian Armoured Regiment reported: "I, B19526 Sgt. An-



*Sergeant Aubrey Cosens, The Queen's Own Rifles, was killed on February 26, 1945 at the hamlet of Mooshof after a gallant action for which he received a posthumous Victoria Cross. (Library and Archives Canada, PA-166764)*

1945  
FORM 9-2 (REVISED)  
P.C. 1173-29-1188

**CANADIAN NATIONAL  
TELEGRAPHS**

FILE H.Q. 405-C-29,668

CASUALTY (REPORT DELIVERY) OTTAWA 4 MARCH 1945

TO:-  
MR CHARLES EDWARD COSENS  
LATCHFORD ONT  
38859

REPRIET DESPITE 1468496 SERGEANT AUBREY COSENS HAS  
BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION TWENTYSIXTH FEBRUARY 1945  
STOP YOU SHOULD RECEIVE FURTHER DETAILS BY MAIL DIRECT FROM THE  
UNIT IN THE THEATRE OF WAR STOP TO PREVENT POSSIBLE AID TO OUR  
ENEMIES DO NOT DIVULGE DATE OF CASUALTY OR NAME OF UNIT

PREPAID 22 DIRECTOR OF RECORDS 5

derson C R, 6 Cdn Armd. Regt testify that during the battle of 26 February 1945, which took place after we had reached our objective [Mooshof], a Sgt of The Queen's Own Rifles climbed on my tank and directed my fire upon the enemy who were making a heavy counterattack. Then he directed me toward some buildings where there were heavily held positions, all the while he was on top of the tank. In all his movements he was harassed by snipers. He directed me to ram the building with my tank, which I did. After that he went into the building to clean out the enemy. He took several prisoners out of the building. The Sgt then went to other buildings to clean them out while my tank gave him covering fire. There was a great deal of sniping and mortar and shell fire during the whole action in which he directed my tank." (14)

Norm Selby had a swastika flag that he had acquired earlier. All four men — Sereres, Pocock, Selby and Cowling — had signed their names on it and it is now displayed in the Sergeant's Mess along with Sergeant Cosens' Sten gun. The men of D Company recalled Aubrey Cosens as a remarkable man and leader. Don Chittenden of 16 Platoon said, "With all due respect to the platoon commander, it was Cosens who ran the platoon, who took care of morale, who knew tactics ... while the rest of us were trying to save ourselves, Cosens was off trying to win the war." Jack Staples of 16 Platoon said, "Cosens liked to be with the boys and was always joking. He was also very commanding. He knew how to handle our platoon of 38." Company Sergeant

Major Bill Ives recalls, "The very first thing he did was look after his men. He was just more caring about other people than about himself. He always seemed to know how to lift morale." (14)

Dunkelman recalls: "There were now dozens of dead and wounded in 16 and 17 Platoons, which, to all intents and purposes had ceased to exist as fighting formations. With enemy fire still raining down there wasn't much we could do, except hang on; aided by John Hancock's 18 Platoon and a few supporting tanks, and hope that the enemy counter-attacks would stop. That was exactly what happened. Cosens' heroism had broken the enemy counter-attacks; we had won the position by the simple expedient of just sweating it out. There were only 36 fighting men left in my company, out of the 115 who had crossed the start line. I was the only officer to come through unwounded along with only one NCO." (5-135) Dunkelman recognized the promise in the young soldier (Sergeant Cosens) commenting, "He was an outstanding, good-looking man, a perfect non-commissioned officer, and carried as much as 80 pounds of ammunition on his back when his platoon went into action. I cannot speak of him too highly as a fine, clean-living soldier." (14)

## **B COMPANY**

B Company passed through D Company and took their objective, Wimmershof, without a fight.

Bill Bettridge recalls: "Our platoon (Scouts and Snipers) came up in the afternoon and took over

the position. Buck Buchanan and I came across a sergeant's body. My compass had been damaged. I took his. There was no way at that particular time to know who he was or what had happened." (6-155)

## C COMPANY

C Company pushed off for their objectives at the same time as D Company headed towards theirs. C Company Commander Major Nickson recalls: "The Calcar-Udem Road is something even now I can't remember precisely or properly sort out all the details. Perhaps at that point I was a bit fed up with the war. I had seen so many die. Our platoon officers were killed and wounded before I even got to know their names. And I began to think that maybe my own luck was running out. Crossing the road in open formation, shells were overhead both ways — theirs and ours. The going was slow. Casualties were heavy. By early afternoon we had consolidated around farm buildings our objective. (6-149)

"They were struck by the same type of murderous fire from the paratroopers holding nearby farm buildings and adjacent dug outs. 15 Platoon was pinned down until one section slipped out to the right and drove in with swords fixed to take the buildings from the rear. Hand-to-hand fighting resulted. The Rifleman's sword, so seldom used in battle, here came into action. The enemy fought bitterly, tenaciously. The other two sections came up and eventually, after suffering many casualties, were victorious. The remnants of 15 Platoon provided covering fire for 14 Platoon as they gained the second group of buildings. They were assisted by a troop of 1<sup>st</sup> Hussar tanks that came up. As had happened with D Company, as C Company consolidated on its objective the German artillery and mortars struck. The first salvo killed 14 Platoon's Lieutenant and Sergeant." (3-325)

## A COMPANY

The plan called for Dick Medland's 8<sup>th</sup> Platoon to pass through C Company on the first objective about a thousand yards in front of the start line and set up a fire base slightly forward of it. 7 and 9 Platoons would sweep left to get at the flank of A Company's objective. Medland was supposed to receive word from C Company when it was on its objective. "Right away we drew small arms fire." Medland could no longer see C Company through the smoke. "I never got the word from C Company." The near constant sheet-ripping sound of MG 42 machine guns and exploding hand grenade blasts

told him there was heavy fighting out there.

"But I could see for myself. There was some close-in action in their area. I judged the situation in hand. So, I told 7 and 9 to push on, go. The Germans contested every foot. They put up one hell of a fight for a solid two hours; it was shear mad-

ness. Sometime in this inferno our company wireless network became useless for the worst of reasons: all the platoon commanders had been killed. I decided to move up a bit, closer behind 7 and 9, so I could at least try to see what was going on. They were bounding forward in small groups. And only a few yards at a time. Hand-to-hand fighting was everywhere. For only the second time since D-Day I watched in dread as the men took to using their swords. There was little I could do. To call in support fire would have caused as much damage to us as to the enemy. Everything was so close." (6-141)

"The enemy's most lethal weapons, the mortar and Nebelwerfer, continued to account for 70 per cent of all allied casualties, but German technical superiority in the design of light machine guns, armoured fighting vehicles, and anti-tank guns had a profound effect on the battle field." (12-262)

Charles Martin, A Company Sergeant Major, describes the fire: "All that morning the fire continued

*"All that morning the fire continued to fall on us — artillery and mortars, machine guns, Moaning Minnies — a horrendous and continuous racket of death and destruction."*

*~ Charles Martin,  
A Company Sergeant Major*



*Charlie Martin, center, the pirate with the .38 in his belt. CSM Charles Martin "CC" on April 16th during the attack on the village of Sneek, Holland. CC was following 8 Platoon's attack. 8 Platoon was in the ditch on the opposite side of the road. CC missed it when 8 Platoon stopped and he continued up his side of the road with 9 Platoon following. Unknowingly, he had become the point man. Just after he crossed the bridge a German with a Schmeisser fired a burst of dum-dum bullets striking CC in the right leg and left arm. As he went down without drawing the pistol from his belt, Charlie fired one shot hitting the German in the bridge of his nose. CC's war was over and he would not wake up in hospital until VE-Day, the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, but he would eventually recover from his wounds. (Lt. Frank L. Duberville, Library and Archives Canada)*

to fall on us — artillery and mortars, machine guns, Moaning Minnies — a horrendous and continuous racket of death and destruction." (7-119) The artillery was a mix of 75mm and the deadly 88s.

Medland continued moving with his CP group: "In one of these bounds I noticed a German helmet, just ahead and to the left. I shouted, 'Down!' Penny and I made it. But Rifleman Thorell, a few feet behind with the heavy wireless set, didn't. Penny kept the German occupied and I went back to Thorell. He was dead. His wireless was a mass of machine gun bullet holes. Now Penny and I had a German with a Schmeisser right in front of us. We took care of him quickly." (6-141)

Charlie Martin describes the assault with 7 Platoon: "They had to take a fortified farm building that contained an 88 and several machine guns. The Lieutenant was D.D. Chadbolt, 21 years old, the Sergeant Joe Meagher, and the Lance Sergeant Harold Clyne. They captured the building by about 6 a.m., but the fighting was fierce. The Lieutenant was killed and Joe was wounded in the spleen, so Harold took over the platoon. Then on to the next building, another 88, another heavy machine gun. Harold Clyne, Bill Grier and Charles Nahwegezhic went after this one. They got it at about 7:30 a.m. My good friend Harold was killed and Charles took

a serious wound that would later cost him his life. When the chance came, I went out to get him. Two machine guns were still in action and they opened up. I got him back, but one of their bullets hit Charles in the arm and another grazed my left leg, just enough to draw blood and scare me near to death. The remnant of the platoon had two-thirds of their objective. We pulled them together and took out the remaining three buildings. It was about nine-thirty in the morning. Objectives achieved, but 7 Platoon paid an awful price. There had been no time to release the livestock. Most of the cows, horses and other livestock were killed or badly shot up. 9 Platoon now made ready to take out the final buildings and complete the job. Their Lieutenant, J.J. Chambers, and his Corporal, Bob Dunstan, led the charge for the first group. Chambers was killed. Dunstan was wounded in the arm but still took over the platoon." (7-119-120)

Medland recalls: "We moved forward again and watched the two platoons take over their objectives. It was barely eight in the morning, not four hours since the barrage had begun. For us in A Company it was three officers and twenty other ranks killed; thirty-nine other ranks wounded. Our company strength was now down from a normal fighting level of ninety or so to about twenty-two [the actual number was 42 men]. There were two NCO's surviving — Bert Shepherd, our good and reliable Corporal, and CC. I was the only officer left." ["CC" was Charlie Martin's patrol code and every-



*Major Ben Dunkelman DSO, D Company Commander, returned to Toronto to his family's clothing business, Tip Top Tailors, after the war. In 1948 he slipped through the British lines with a forged passport to assist in Israeli's war of liberation. Ben Gurion placed him in charge of the Israeli 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, which played a key role in the siege of Jerusalem and helped win the war in the north. There is a bridge near the Lebanese border called Ben's Bridge in his honour.*

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one in the unit fell into the habit of calling him CC.] We had taken a cluster of buildings, small barns and storage sheds at a tiny hamlet called Lookerhof. Steeg, the Battalion objective, was still about seven hundred yards ahead. A hedgerow off to our right was still causing trouble. They say at that stage I rather dazedly asked Shep to check it out, find out who was there. His reply was profane, but practical." (6-142)

CC remembers the incident: "Shep's classic reply: 'What the \*? &! @ do you think is out there firing all those machine guns? The \*&!@# enemy, of course!' (7-121) So, we did our best to settle down and consolidate, getting ready for the counter-attack that surely would follow. Miraculously it didn't. Only the 88s and the ever-present shell fire persisted."

Medland used the FOO radio to report his position to his HQ and asked for the jeep and carrier to be sent up with badly needed extra Bren guns, ammunition and rum, which were delivered. Medland communicated to Steve Lett using some invented code words that he knew Lett would understand. He wanted him to know just how badly A Company had been hit. A short while later Lett called back and, using the same code, directed him to take C Company's objective, the village of Steeg. He told Medland that C Company couldn't do it and that A Company was in a better location. Lett also promised all the support he could muster for A Company's attack.

Medland continues: "The three of us — CC, Shepherd and I — quickly sketched out a plan for our pitiful remnant. We were vulnerable and our position was untenable. Bert and a small section would be the assault force. At that point it was clear from Shepherd's face that he thought I'd gone over the edge. But he said nothing, not a Shepherd charac-



teristic. So, I got back on the blower and asked for tanks. Later on, we learned that a few tanks had in fact got up to support the other companies. But only one had made it to our position. And it had been knocked out by an 88. And we would need in our support a flight of Typhoon aircraft with those wonderful rockets of theirs, all the artillery fire they could pour in, and a section of flamethrowers." [In accordance with the Brigade plan, at 1100 hours the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussar tanks had been pulled from support of The Queen's Own and, stopping only to rearm and refuel, went on to support the North Shore's attack on Keppeln.] Lett called back to confirm the flamethrowers, Tiffys (Typhoon fighter bombers), an M10 tank destroyer, a regiment of 25-pound field guns along with one battery of medium and one battery of heavy artillery would be supporting the attack. (6-143-144)

CC recalls Medland reporting back to HQ: "I saw the Boss get on the wireless to report the objective captured and held, but as he spoke the tears were streaming down his face." CC then got busy evacuating some of the casualties. As they dug in on the right flank, Al Murray and Rick Brown shared

# INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

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Page One 1st Bn The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada (AF)

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks, ref to Appendices initials
KIRSEL MR 003437	1 Mar 45	0800 1800	Reveille - Cloudy and cold Coys still in area KIRSEL. ' Cdn Inf Bde in reserve Second Div who are on edge of HOCH WALD Forest. Bn assembles in area BHQ, KIRSEL for second part. OP "BLOCKBUSTER". British rocket projectors are still active on our front. Summary - Catwire fence Amendment - Location statement	<i>JSB</i> <i>JSB</i> Appx 5 Appx 6
KIRSEL	2 Mar 45	0200	Reveille - Cloudy and cold. Bn moves to Assembly Area sq 0040. Ref sheet UDEM and digs in. Location P.W. Cage 3 Cdn Inf Div	<i>JSB</i> Appx 7
Sq 0040	3 Mar 45	0700 1000	Reveille - Cloudy and cold "C" Coy moved towards S.L. area. UDEMERBRUCH in rear "A" Coy. "A" Coy runs into anti personnel mines and opposition consisting of small arms and mortars. "D" Coy moves to S.D. in reserve of "B" Coy with three tanks in support and commences house clearing. Very heavy enemy mortar and arty fire on leading company's front. Clearing of woods BALGERWALD was very slow owing to infiltration tactics. "D" Coy arrives first objective at approx 1600 hrs and digs in MR 043382. "C" Coy on left flank could not proceed owing to "D" & "B" Coys meeting opposition, so "C" Coy digs in with "A" Coy for the night. Appx "A" & Trace "P" for BLOCKBUSTER Location Statement Location Statement - 8 Cdn Inf Bde Location Bde P.W. Collecting Post Target list	<i>JSB</i> <i>JSB</i> Appx 8 Appx 9 Appx 10 Appx 11 Appx 12
BALGERWALD	4 Mar 45	0800 1300	Reveille - Fair & Cold Enemy shelling bn posns very heavy with multiple barrell&d mortars and 88 mm guns. Bn is to clear remainder of woods. Companies have first hot meal since beginning of attack. Roads are very poor owing to incessant rain making it impossible to get rations and supplies up to company areas on schedule. Quartermasters are resorting to horse and buggy transportation, sometimes even this was not successful owing to stubborn disposition of horses in this neighborhood.	<i>JSB</i> <i>JSB</i>

a slit trench. Someone shouted something about a wounded soldier. CC and J.A. Riddell went to investigate. They found that a sniper had shot Brown between the eyes and had put another round through Al Murray's left eye which exited the back of his head. Al was barely 19 years old and his colour and pulse were good.

CSM Charles Martin describes what happened next: "So first of all we took care of the sniper. We spotted him in a clump of trees about 150 yards off. No nonsense here. The artillery observer called for a barrage right on the area. To make no mistake about it, the Boss called for the Typhoons to follow up. This was extreme overkill, but we were pretty upset at the time." (7-121)

CC describes how they evacuated the wounded. "Al weighed 170 pounds and it was a struggle to get him out of his slit trench." Back at the house [Lt Chadbolt's objective], some of the wounded

had been taken back by Dick Klintworth using the jeep. Martin was left with the Bren carrier. Two of the cases left, Charles Nahwegezhic and Murray were critical. CC was the only driver available and Medland gave him permission to go. They all piled into the carrier and the rest of the wounded — Bill Lennox, Bob Dunstan, H.S. Keeton, Charles Antonese, Pennell and Les Sheppard — held the stretchers of the two critically wounded men down for the bumpy ride ahead. Dunstan was grumbling he didn't want to go back because he wanted to take over as Platoon Sergeant. It was a mile to the Battalion aid station and, as they started out, another German mixed barrage struck. They made it through this and across two minefields to reach the aid station. The medical assistants put Murray aside to die. At this point CSM Martin ordered Dunstan, Pennell, Lennox and Sheppard to pick up Murray's stretcher and directed, "Follow me. We

went into the operating area and they put him on one of the tables." The five of them stood there in silence. "My attitude was far from polite. I don't know all that was said, but I remember saying to Dr Wayne, this man still has a good pulse. He needs attention right away." Dr Wayne stared at CC for a while and then said, "I'll look after him for you." CC went over to Al, tears streaming down his face, held his hand and patted his shoulder telling him, "You'll be fine now, and Dr Wayne has promised to take care of you." (7-122) Then CC took the carrier and went back to the war. When he spoke to the Doctor he was covered in blood from head to toe; during the fighting he had heard an 88-gun breach slam closed and had dived into a pigsty. The round went through the pigsty killing all the pigs and soaking him in blood. So, Dr Wayne faced an angry, obviously distraught Sergeant Major covered in blood with his pistol stuck in his belt and tears streaming down his cheeks. It was probably a good decision on the Doctor's part.

Rifleman Charles Nahwegezhic would not survive. Charles was 26 years old, born in Sheguian-dah, Ontario. He was an Ojibwa from Manitoulin Island. Charles's brother had died serving in the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment. Rifleman Charles Nahwegezhic was awarded the Military Medal posthumously and now lies in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery. His citation follows:

*On 26 February 1945, number 7 Platoon 'A' Company, 1st Battalion, the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, attacked a strongly held enemy position over flat open ground ... The platoon suffered heavy casualties including the Platoon Commander and Platoon Sergeant. Rifleman Nahwegezhic was seriously wounded in the head but kept advancing. Finally, the platoon had to withdraw. Rifleman Nahwegezhic refused to go back and stayed behind with his Bren gun to cover the withdrawal. His accurate and determined fire enabled the balance of his platoon to pull back and reorganize for a further successful attack. In displaying this supreme courage and devotion to duty Rifleman Nah-*

*A Company Commander Major Dick Medland DSO, CD would recuperate from the injuries inflicted by the schu-mine in hospital until July 1945. He later rejoined the Canadian Army and served with the Royal Canadian Regiment in Korea. He retired from the Canadian Army in 1968.*

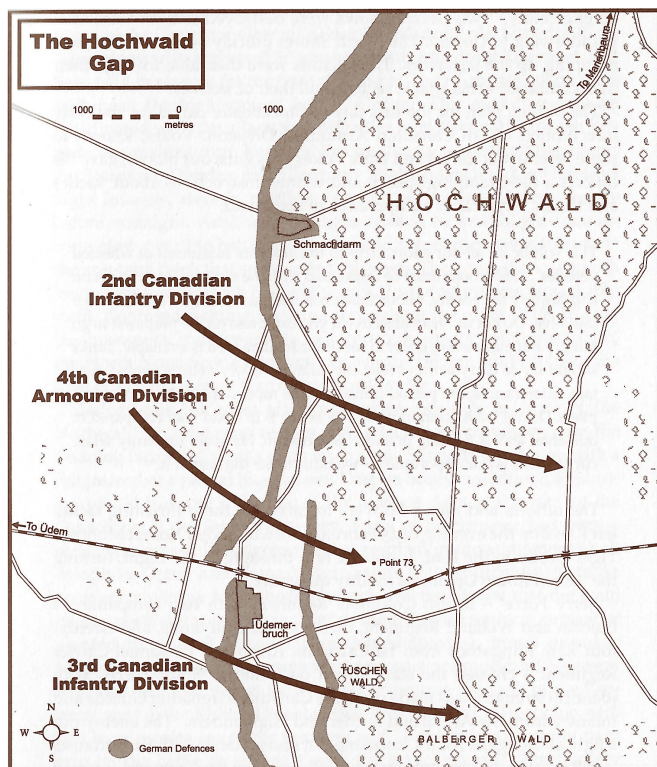


*wegezhic was in large measure responsible for the capture of the platoon objective.*

CC continues: "Bernie Bruyere and Bert Shepherd were looking after the noon meal and Parsons and Wilson were guarding twenty prisoners." They had not sent the prisoners back because there was a Gestapo officer among them and they needed an escort. Bruyere found another Gestapo man hiding in a cupboard. "We knew that the Gestapo were cruel, ruthless and dedicated to Hitler. As soon as the second Gestapo man came over the first officer, who had his hands on his head, went for a grandstand play. He pulled a pistol from a hidden holster between his shoulder blades and fired two quick shots at me from ten feet. One drew blood from my right ear, the other went through my camouflage net. Two shots from my .38, one in each shoulder. He was lucky I hadn't lost my temper!" (7-123).

CSM Charles Martin was not your typical Sergeant Major; his dress somewhat resembled that of a pirate: Battledress trousers with a flannel shirt tucked in, a leather belt on the outside with his pistol tucked into it and no helmet just a camouflage net on his head to break up the outline. From different accounts during the war, he was something of a shootist, an old west gunslinger using a Texas cross-draw and deadly with his .38.

Medland adjusted his plan based on the fire support at his disposal, including the heavy .50 calibre machine gun on the M10 from F Troop, 52<sup>nd</sup> Bat-



tery, 3<sup>rd</sup> Anti-Tank Regiment which had come up to support the company. “The simple way, however, is often the best tactic. So, I decided on a direct approach. We split our remainder and gave Bert Shepherd slightly more than half. The flamethrowers would move up with him. The others would provide the covering fire.” This refers to the M10 as the firm base along with the extra Bren guns that were brought forward and the FOO. “CC carefully organized the covering fire group. Bert Shepherd collected his dozen. They made ready to start off over the open ground. I can’t describe my feelings as they moved out. We were all filthy and covered in mud. Bert and his men were being asked to behave as if they were five times as many. They went into the job with courage and heart. Shepherd had been with us from the start, one of the best marksmen in our 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, irreverent, but always reliable, and this was a case where his regard for duty was overriding his common sense.”

Medland felt badly staying with the cover-fire group and watching Bert’s small section moving out in skirmishing formation. Bert was in the center of the first line with a smaller section follow-

ing behind the first. “CC picked up on my feelings as usual. He didn’t say anything, just gave me a hand wave. He moved out to be with Bert, just a few yards behind him. Bert and his section, in two’s and three’s, made the best use of every speck of ground cover. Moving with them, the flamethrowers were firing their stuff at anything that even remotely looked like a place that contained enemy soldiers.” (6-144-145) Sergeant Wilf Mercer, who had been with 7 Platoon on D-Day, came forward in charge of the Wasp flamethrower carriers and told CC that the Wasps would go forward with the lead section. Their range was short and they had to get in close to be effective. (3-329)

As they set off, they had about 500 yards to cover over open, bare, sloping ground to reach Steeg. In a matter of seconds, 88mm guns had knocked out all the Wasps except the one with Mercer on-board. His struck a mine and Mercer was trapped in the flaming wreckage by a mangled leg. CC recalls: “Two Riflemen rushed over to him and I followed, getting a needle of morphine ready. The Riflemen couldn’t shake him loose so I had to give him the needle right through his tunic. All the time he was shouting at us to get away. He knew the flamethrower could go up at anytime. Somehow — I don’t know how we did it — we yanked him out and managed to get twenty yards away before, sure enough, up it went, both the unit and the carrier towing it. Not a scrap of metal hit anyone, but the heat was terrific. Our clothes were scorched.” (7-124) Mercer was evacuated and survived.

Medland recalls: “They got near Steeg. Bert and his men were closing in, we could see. Their groups were on the move and very close. Suddenly, it happened. The white flags came out.” Medland estimated the prisoner count near 130, not all from Steeg, and there were over 200 German bodies in their area.

We will never know why the Germans at Steeg gave up. They had been hammered by Medland’s supporting artillery, Typhoons and the M10’s 3-inch main gun and .50 calibre machine gun. They certainly must have feared more Wasps coming up and they knew that units of the 4<sup>th</sup> Armoured

## INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Page Two

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks, to Appen init
(Con'd)	4 Mar	45 1600	Clearing remainder of woods begins. "A" Coy reaches objective MR 06053825 at 1730 hrs meeting no opposition. The coy had 8 wounded during the entire operation but took 45 PWs and killed approx 60 enemy during second part of OP "BLOCKBUSTER". "C" Coy arrives objective after encountering enemy MG and Mor fire. "D" Coy arrives objective MR 058380 after successfully using PIATS on enemy MG 42's. "B" Coy arrives MR 059389 after encountering light enemy small arms fire. There was heavy enemy shelling during night.	
		1900	Ninth Cdn Inf Bde moves through our posns and clears area SE of Forest BALBERGER WALD "I" Summary 8 Cdn Inf Bde Map UDEM 1/25,000 with Arty targets Map XANTEN 1/25,000 with Arty targets Map UDEM 1/25,000 with Bde axis of advance	Appx 1 Appx 1 Appx 1 Appx 1
BALBERGER WALD	5 Mar	45 0800	Reveille - Cloudy with rain BHQ at MR 04603850. "A" Coy - 06053825, "B" Coy 05903890, "C" Coy 05783800, "D" Coy - 05503810. Enemy still shelling area heavily.	
		2000	Bn moves to SDG posns in front of BALBERGER WALD to area BOGEL KATH. Ref sheet XANTEN MR 063378 Map XANTEN 1/25,000 with Bde Axis of advance "I" Summary 8 Cdn Inf Bde	Appx 1 Appx 1
BOGEL KATH	6 Mar	45 0800	Reveille - Cloudy and cool. New positions are an improvement, compared to old ones in forest. Bn is in buildings and farm produce is plentiful. BHQ at MR 063378, "A" Coy - 062378, "B" Coy 067372, "C" Coy 058375, "D" Coy 055373.	
BOGELKATH	7 Mar	45 0800	Reveille - Fair and mild. No enemy shelling on area during the night. Coys cleaning weapons and maintenance on vehicles. Roads are still very bad, and showing no signs of improvement. Air photographs of BALGERGER WALD Fores: Control of German civilians	Appx Appx

Division and 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade were behind them heading for Udem cutting off their retreat. There had been plenty of hand-to-hand combat and sword/bayonet work that day, something the Germans didn't care for. It doesn't really matter; Bert and his men were ready to take them on. There was a reason that the Germans called the Canadian infantry 'Tommy SS.'

"The Queen's Own captured more than 300 prisoners 'practically all of them paratroopers' in a series of tank infantry assaults. Lett was effusive in his praise of the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars, noting that 'the excellent work of the tanks in supporting the infantry was the deciding feature in ousting the enemy from his well dug in positions.'" (11-214)

The CO of 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars said a few days later that his unit had suffered serious losses during BLOCKBUSTER — 40 officers and men and 21 tanks supporting The Queen's Own Rifles and the other 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade units during the operation. "The troops were exhausted. I found two crews asleep in their tanks before the area they had helped capture was mopped up. The tanks were manned by composite

crews of knocked out tanks, regardless of Squadron or Troop. The resultant teamwork, thanks to good training, was splendid. I have never been prouder of the Regiment." (18-198)

In light of what had happened on the 26<sup>th</sup>, the Regiment's Battle Diary for this day is disappointing to say the least. Perhaps the recorder didn't yet understand the extent of the fighting or perhaps he was just tired.

But BLOCKBUSTER was not over for The Queen's Own. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, the Regiment moved to the area of Kirsell, where they rested and reorganized. The tanks of the 4<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division attempted to rush the Hochwald Gap, but were ambushed and suffered heavy casualties in tanks and troops. The Hochwald to the north of the gap and the Balberger Wald to the south would have to be cleared by infantry before the armour could attempt to break through again.

### MARCH 2, 1945

Clearing the Balberger Wald was given to the 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade. The attack started on the afternoon of



*Pictured are Joe A. Sereres, D. Pocock, Norm Selby and Don Cowling with a Dutch civilian. Sereres and Pocock were the veterans who took Selby and Cowling under their wing when they came in as reinforcements. Both Sereres and Pocock were killed at Mooshof on February 26, 1945. They were the original four to sign Norm Selby's Nazi flag that today resides in The Queen's Own Sergeant's Mess.*

March 2<sup>nd</sup> with The Queen's Own on the left and the North Shore Regiment on the right. No reinforcements had reached the Regiment. Ben Dunkelman reacted when Lett told them the Battalion would clear the Hochwald. "I was astounded. I told him that I had thirty-six combat soldiers, with one NCO, Sergeant Jones, and no officers, and that the company was unfit for action." [Regimental history lists an additional two Corporals with 35 men total.] There was no change in the orders; Ben was told to follow behind the other companies and do what he could. Lieutenant-Colonel Steve Lett recalls: "We had been fighting for over a month, steady. We were getting pretty ragged in those days." (2-230).

The advance began at 1500 hours with a troop of 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars (four tanks) supporting each company. B Company followed by D Company was on the right or southern edge of the woods. The B Company scouts walked into a minefield and several of them stepped on schu-mines while at the same time one of the tanks hit a Teller mine and had a track blown off. One of the crew jumped out of the tank and he stepped on a mine. The wounded men were lying on the ground and everyone was screaming in agony. Dunkelman went forward to find that neither B Company nor the tanks were prepared to move. He wanted one of the tanks to lead the way through the mines but the command-

*"German fire-power in the Rhineland was more heavily and effectively applied than at any other time in the Army's fighting during the present campaign."*

*~ General Harry Crerar,  
Commander, First Canadian Army*

er refused, even after Dunkelman threatened him with his pistol.

Dunkelman then gathered D Company and told them they were taking the lead. He asked for ideas. If you were planting a mine field in the woods how would you do it? Someone mentioned it would be hard to do with all the roots. Dunkelman seized on this idea and had his men advance through the forest by leaping from tree to tree. They were out of the minefield in an hour. Later that evening Company Sergeant Major Billy Ives somehow negotiated his way through the same minefield to bring a hot meal to the company. (5-138)

In spite of the mines and enemy fire, half of the woods were cleared by nightfall. CSM Charlie Martin had left A Company to get them a hot breakfast, thinking that they would still be planning the next day's attack by the time he returned. He included a couple of bottles of rum in the food pack he was carrying. When he reached the company he found that Medland had been given an urgent mission to attack a farmhouse at the bottom of the hill that was a threat to Battalion HQ.

CC describes the scene: "The Boss had sent two platoons of about fifteen men each down the forward slope and through the trees. The woods were full of anti-tank mines and booby traps. Before long they were pinned down by terrific machine gun fire and exposed to sniper activity. The Boss [Major Medland] at the start point had stepped on a schu-mine and was badly wounded." CC knew if they stayed where they were the platoons would

be picked off by sniper fire and if they dropped back, they'd suffer the same fate. He was working his way forward with the pack on his back when he caught a flash and spotted a nest of snipers in a tree platform. Then he moved up and took out one of the snipers. This attracted more fire at the group. "Picking up the rum I worked my way over to Jackie Bland and suggested we get out of there fast. [Sergeant Bland was the Platoon Sergeant of 7 Platoon. He had been left out of battle (LOB) for the attack on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Canadian infantry units routinely left some of their officers and NCOs out of battle in order to have a cadre left to rebuild the unit after suffering heavy casualties.] We would fix swords and charge straight on. I turned to Wilson, the Bren gunner, and said keep that gun on automatic. He said, 'Charlie I can't.' We were desperate and I flared at him. Then he showed me his right hand. It was shattered. He was a brave guy; he told me if I'd take the Bren, he'd stay with me and carry extra magazines in his left hand. In the midst of this crazy charge, we sensibly took time to think of the rum. It was left behind a tree to be picked up later."

Then the 30 or 40 of them that were left fixed swords and charged straight ahead, screaming like Apaches. It was a do or die affair — they couldn't stay and they couldn't go back. The enemy kept up a steady fire for a time, but then they broke and ran, some of them carrying their guns and ammo boxes. They suffered many casualties and lots of prisoners were taken. CC thought that D Company, which was on their right and pinned down, heard the command and went forward at the same time. He recalls, "I remember rushing one of the two farmhouses. Around the corner an enemy soldier appeared. He was just as surprised as I was. I took a bayonet wound over my left eye and a bad cut on my left hand as I tried to ward off his weapon. I fired my Bren at the same time. A few rounds went into his side, wounding him and putting him out of action." (7-127-128)

In D Company, Dunkelman had just made his runner, Paradis, a Sergeant — against the man's wishes. "'You're a Sergeant now,' I told him. He looked unhappy at the idea because he never wanted a

*Sergeant Aubrey Cosens, The Queen's Own Rifles, was killed on February 26, 1945 at the hamlet of Mooshof after a gallant action for which he received a posthumous Victoria Cross. (The Queen's Own Rifles Regimental Museum)*



promotion. But I insisted." The company came under fire and

was pinned down. Dunkelman had a replacement officer with him and told him to take some men with him and go around the side to see if he could get whoever was firing at them. Paradis volunteered to go with the officer. "They set off around the flank, as I told them. But the officer, inexperienced and excited, led them around the wrong side of the knoll — straight into the enemy's line of fire. Paradis was killed." (5-139)

On the morning of March 4, the attack resumed only to find that the Germans had left. The 9<sup>th</sup> Brigade passed through and the 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade and The Queen's Own went into reserve. In clearing the Balberger Wald, The Queen's Own suffered another 12 ranks and two officers killed and two officers and 20 ranks wounded with one battle injury. The Regiment pulled back to the Reichswald forest to reorganize. Camouflage sniper jackets were issued to everyone. (13-254-255) For the Regiment, Operation BLOCKBUSTER was over.

Operations VERITABLE and BLOCKBUSTER would be two of the most costly military operations carried out by the First Canadian Army during the war. Some 5,304 were dead, wounded or missing. Two thousand six hundred Canadians became casualties during BLOCKBUSTER alone. "German fire-power in the Rhineland was more heavily and effectively applied than at any other time in the Army's fight-



*Aubrey Cosens lies in Groesbeek Cemetery with the rest of his family of 16 Platoon who died that day. Nearby are Rifleman Nahwegezhic and others from A, B, C and D Companies who gave their last full measure on February 26, 1945. In 1986 in Latchford, Ontario, the arch bridge spanning the Montreal River on Highway 11 was dedicated in Aubrey's name. A monument was erected in the nearby veterans park for "A Magnificent Canadian," Sergeant Aubrey Cosens, VC (1921–1945).*

fired a burst of dum-dum bullets striking CC in the right leg and left arm. As he went down without drawing the pistol from his belt, Charlie fired one shot, hitting the German in the bridge of his nose. CC's war was over; he would not wake up in hospital until VE-Day, the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, but he would eventually recover from his wounds.

Men like Norm Shelby, Don Cowling and Bert Shepherd returned home to pick up their lives and do their best to forget the things they had seen and done. There was no PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] counselling or even awareness in those days; it was called "old soldiers disease" and you just learned how to live with it. Most of them were successful in piecing their lives back together. Quite a few joined their local Legion to be among those who would understand what they had experienced.

The citation in the *London Gazette* of May 18, 1945 for Sergeant Aubrey Cosens's award of the Victoria Cross follows:

*In Holland, on the night 25/26th February, 1945 the 1st Battalion The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada attacked the hamlet of Mooshof. Sergeant Cosens' platoon, with tanks in support, had as their objective enemy strong-points in three farm-buildings. They were twice beaten back and were then fiercely counterattacked. Their casualties were heavy, including the platoon commander killed. Sergeant Cosens assumed command of the few survivors of the platoon, and placed them so as to give him covering fire while he crossed open ground to the one remaining tank and directed its fire. After a further counter-attack had been repulsed, Sergeant Cosens ordered*

ing during the present campaign," stated General Crerar, Commander, First Canadian Army. (23-273)

A Company Commander, Major Dick Medland DSO, CD would recuperate from the injuries inflicted by the schu-mine in hospital until July 1945. He later re-joined the Canadian Army and served with the Royal Canadian Regiment in Korea and retired from the Canadian Army in 1968.

On April 16, during the attack on the village of Sneek in Holland, CSM Charles Martin (CC) was following 8 Platoon's attack. 8 Platoon was in the ditch on the opposite side of the road. CC missed it when 8 Platoon stopped and he continued up his side of the road with 9 Platoon following. Unknowingly, he had become the point man. Just after he crossed the bridge, a German with a Schmeisser



*the tank to attack the three farm-buildings, the remaining men of his platoon following in close support. He himself entered the three buildings in turn, alone, and killed or captured all the occupants. Immediately afterwards he was shot by a sniper, and died almost instantly. His outstanding gallantry, initiative and determined leadership resulted in the capture of a position which was vital to the success of the future operations of the Brigade.*

### **SOURCES**

I used the following sources in my attempt to piece the battle together. In the cases where I plagiarized someone else's work, I used the following order, the reference followed by the page (e.g., 2-158). It's not the standard reference procedure, but it simplified things.

1. "Battle Diary 1st Battalion QORC".
2. "The Rhineland", Whitaker & Whitaker.
3. "Forgotten Victory", Mark Zuehlke.
5. "Duel Allegiance", Ben Dunkelman.
6. "Canadians, A Battalion at War", Roy Whitsed.
7. "Battle Diary", Charles Cromwell Martin.
8. "We Will Remember Them", Charles D. McGregor.
9. "In Peace Prepared", Charles D. McGregor.
10. "Fight To The Finish", Tim Cook.
11. "A Nation at War", Terry Copp.
12. "No Price Too High", Terry Copp.
13. "The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, 1860-1960: One Hundred Years of Canada," Lieutenant Colonel W.T. Barnard
14. "The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada in the Rhineland, 1945." Warfare History Network. Article by Angus Scully, educator and historian.
15. "The Lions of Carrentan" Fallschirmjager Regiment 6, 1943-45 Volker Griesser pg 229
16. "Storming Eagles" German Airborne Forces in World War Two James Lucas, pg 173-176.
17. "Out of the Shadows "Canada in the Second World War, W.A.B. Douglas, pg 224.
18. "The Best Little Army in the World", The Canadians in Northwest Europe 1944-1945, J.L. Granatstein, pg 198.
19. "Operation Blockbuster Begins: Army, Part 44", Terry Copp, Legion Magazine.
20. "Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War, Volume III, THE VICTORY CAMPAIGN, The Operations in North-West Europe 1944-1945"
21. "Sgt Aubrey Cosens shatters the Germans at Mooshof–World War II Today" (ww2today.com)
22. Directorate of History National Defence Headquarters, Ottawa, Canada K1A 0K2. Report Number 171, Operation "Blockbuster", the Canadian Offensive West of the Rhine, 26 February-23 March 1945. Preliminary Report; Declassified September 18, 1986.
23. "The Guns of Victory", George G. Blackburn.
24. Queen's Own Rifles Museum; <https://qor-museum.org/soldiers-of-the-queens-own/cosens-aubrey/>, Panorama Video 1964 interview with Ben Dunkelman and Don Chittenden.
25. "Jump Into Hell: German Paratroopers in World War II", Franz Kurowski.

### **MAPS AND PHOTOS**

1. Map: The Regiment's Plan: "One Hundred Years of Canada", Bernard P250.
2. Map: The Hochwald Gap, "Cinderella Army", Terry Copp, P233.
4. Picture: Amphibious Buffalos: #1 Pinterest.com. #2 Battle Diary, Charles Martin, P80.
5. Picture: The Kangaroo a defrocked Priest: Pinterest.com.au.
6. Picture: German Fallschirmjagers: Pinterest.com.
7. Sketch by Major Medland fortified farmhouse near De Steeg: "Canadians A Battalion at War", back dustcover.
8. Picture: Queen's Own Wasp carriers: "One Hundred Years of Canada", Bernard, P209.
9. Picture: 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars M4A4 tank: "Fight to the Finish", Tim Cook, P184.
10. Pictures: the telegram, Dick Medland, Ben Dunkelman, and Aubrey Cosens: The Queen's Own Rifles Museum website.
11. Picture: Sereres, Pocock, Selby and Cowling: "Canadians A Battalion At War", Whitsed, P152. **TR**

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## QOR Association's Tour Of Camp X

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by WO (ret'd) Jerry Senetchko, CD



In early October of 2020, a tour of Camp X was given. Located in Whitby, Ontario, on the north shore of Lake Ontario, Camp X was the wartime location of a spy training school. Opening in December of 1946 and officially known as STS 103 (Special Training School 103) by the Special Operations Executive (SOE), a branch of MI6.

Camp X's sole purpose was to develop and train all agents in every aspect of silent killing, sabotage, partisan work, recruitment methods for the resistance movement, demolition, map reading, weaponry, and Morse code. Camp X ceased operations in 1946.

Its present location is now covered by warehouses and factories, but some of the training areas, for example the demolition grounds, are still visible. A monument commemorating the historical significance of the area, called Intrepid Park, is visible from the road. **TR**



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**TOP RIGHT:** Major William Fairbairn demonstrates how to disarm and counterattack an enemy at Camp X in July 1942. Fairbairn was Camp X's expert on silent killing and the man in charge of teaching "ungentlemanly" techniques to operatives in the SOE — the secret agents who supported resistance movements in enemy-occupied countries.

**ABOVE RIGHT:** The radio communications centre at Camp X used a high-speed transmitter known as Hydra. (Whitby Archives Photograph 29-005-002)



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## QOR Association's Toronto Branch Report

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*by CWO (ret'd) Brian Budden, CD*

**T**he Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Association (Toronto Branch) since the pandemic in March 2020 has not had the opportunity to be as active as we were in previous years. To keep members connected, one of our Executive Members, Jerry Senetchko, came up with the idea to form a group called **Keeping Connected** — via the Internet. There are nearly 60 former members that have served in the Regiment and some that continued serving in Canadian Regular Forces, British Forces, and American Forces. So we have members living all across Canada, England, Ireland and USA.

It has served as very beneficial as we share stories from when serving, photos, laughter and showing the good times when serving together. It also connects with those that are living alone and need some comfort during these strange times.

I also have set up a **ZOOM Get-together** thanks to QOR Museum Curator John Stephens every 6 weeks. This gives us the opportunity to see how we look like now and, not being physically there, you can express the feeling of seeing each other.

Earlier this year, in 2021, the Association lost 4 outstanding Riflemen — **Major (ret'd) Norm McCracken, Clay Downes, Sgt (ret'd) Ralph Schoenig, and WWII Veteran Ernie Hughson.**

Also in 2020, there were a number we lost, and they are included in the Last Post of this year's journal.

This year's Rifleman of the Year Award goes out to **Jerry Senetchko** for his outstanding contribution and his hard work setting up the QOR Keeping Connected group. Well done Jerry! Also, the Colonel Paul Hughes, CD & Bev Hughes Award for Excellence for their ongoing contribution within the Regiment and Association goes to former **RSM CWO Donovan O'Halloran**. Well done Donovan and deserving too.

I would like to thank all members of the Association that renewed their **2021 membership**; it is greatly appreciated. And to members of the Executive for their continuing support while going through these trying times. **Thank You!!**

Also for members, I encourage you to join the 1860 Club. For more information go to [www.1860club.ca](http://www.1860club.ca).

Visit the Association Facebook Page for information and updates: [www.facebook.com/qortoronto-association](http://www.facebook.com/qortoronto-association)

Stay Well, Healthy & Safe !!!

Look forward to meeting up again.

*In Pace Paratus*

*Rifleman Strong!!*

*CWO (ret'd) Brian Budden, CD*

*QORA (Toronto Branch)*

*President & Health & Welfare Chairman*

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**ABOVE:** Rifleman of the Year recipient Jerry Senetchko.

by Alex Adair



**A**lex Adair, one of our last surviving D-Day veterans, gave this speech to a branch of The Royal Canadian Legion on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day. He asked that it be included in this year's edition of *The Rifleman*.

**W**e are assembled here today to commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landings by the Allies, American, British and Canadian on the coast of France, the 6<sup>th</sup> of June 1944 — known as D-Day.

There had been other invasions by the Canadian Army. During the evacuation of Dunkirk, a decision was made by the powers that be to send the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division — consisting of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, The Royal Canadian Regiment and the 48<sup>th</sup> Highlanders — from England to France to relieve the retreating army. Upon reaching France, the troops boarded trains and headed inland. A wise decision was made that the trains return to the ports of St. Malo and Brest. The troops boarded the ships that came in and returned to England. Not a man was lost. This took place in June 1940.

The Hong Kong adventure was a disaster. All the Canadians were killed or captured. This took place

in December 1941. Dieppe was no better. Practically the whole 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division were killed or captured. This took place in August 1942.

Here I must also pay tribute to the men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division and later the 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division who invaded Sicily and Italy 61 years ago, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1943. Don Cormier, who is with us today, was with the 1<sup>st</sup> Anti-tank Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division as they invaded Sicily. Stan Scislawski, who is with us today as well, was with the Perth Regiment when the 5<sup>th</sup> Division came into the campaign. Bill Charlton is also with us today, landed in Sicily on July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1943, and was with the 1<sup>st</sup> Ack-Ack, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battery.

This first front is credited with taking the brunt of the fighting until the invasion of France.

We have with us today those men who landed on D-Day, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944:

- Alfred Lott, RCA, 25-pounders in support of the 9<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division.
- Bruce Teskey, RCE, who landed shortly

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**ABOVE:** Jack Hadley, Alex Adair and Edward Butler gathered to celebrate Ed's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Illustration of The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada landing at Bernières-sur-Mer on June 6, 1944. (photo courtesy of the QOR Regimental Museum)

after the first infantry at Bernières-sur-Mer. Bruce was carrying a box of plastic explosives as he came ashore. He had been told not to get close to anyone, as a bullet would explode the whole thing.

- Darius Johnston, not with us today, 14<sup>th</sup> Field SP 105s. All members of this branch.
- Fred Bernard served with the North Nova Scotia Highlanders. He was taken prisoner in July of 1944 at Tilly-la-Campagne and spent the rest of the war behind wire in Germany and Poland. He had survived the Battle at Buron and Authie after being overrun by the 12<sup>th</sup> SS Panzer Division under the command of Kurt Meyer. Many of Fred's unit were taken prisoner and murdered during and after this battle on June 7 and 8, 1944. I met Fred for the first time last Monday at his home in Kingston.

A and B Companies, The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, sailed out of Southampton on the SS *Monowai* on the morning of June 4<sup>th</sup> to rendezvous with other ships. There was a 24-hour delay before General Eisenhower gave the Go, before steaming around the Isle of Wight into the Channel headed for Normandy, France.

We were in our hammocks early — it would be an early reveille at 3:30 a.m. Two men from each section were sent to the galley to get our breakfast of eggs, bacon, tea, bread and jam.

We climbed into the landing craft which were at deck level, and lowered away into a very rough sea. Five landing craft carried 11 Platoon on the left, 10 Platoon centre, and 12 Platoon on the right. Attached were Engineers, Signals, and Medical personnel. We had been told that the Fort Garry tanks would go ahead of us, but the sea was so rough that this was impossible.

As we approached shore, the craft I was in hit an obstacle with a Teller mine on top. Everyone in front was killed, and those of us left bailed out into fairly deep water to struggle ashore. When I finally struggled ashore, I looked to the left where 10 Platoon was.



They had touched down right in front of a big bunker pillbox still belching out heavy and light machine gun fire. 10 Platoon was wiped out, lying face down in the sand. 11 Platoon had better luck in that the craft they were in went off course out of most of the heavy fire. They were able to get over the wall and drop grenades into weapon slits and so on.

Major Charles Dalton was with them. Though he had a rather bad head wound, he did his best to rally the remains of his B Company.

### **POSTSCRIPT:**

John Lizon and I completed advanced infantry training at Camp Borden during the summer of 1943. We reinforced The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada after we arrived in England. John was 10 years older than most of us. He had a great sense of humour and joked about situations we found ourselves in as we did landing exercises along the south coast of England during the fall, winter and spring of 1943-1944.

We were in the same landing craft as we made the run into the beach at Bernières-sur-Mer, France, on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944.

The Queen's Own Rifles suffered 63 fatal casualties on D-Day, 35 of them with B Company. 62 of the 63 have known graves. John's name is engraved on the Bayeux Memorial. He was born on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1914 and died on his birthday. He has no known grave. **TR**

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## A Final Salute From The Honorary Colonel

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**MGen (ret'd) Walter Holmes,  
Former Honorary Colonel**



**T**his is the speech that I was prepared to deliver during the Regiment's Remembrance Sunday ceremony on the 7<sup>th</sup> of November. I was only able to deliver a few words of thanks at the time due to the circumstances so I thought it would be appropriate to add these few words to this month's edition of the 1860 club report. During the ceremony I was presented with the 4<sup>th</sup> bar to my CD and was subsequently honoured by a final march past bringing to an end my five years as your Honorary Colonel and 56 years in an Army uniform.

Ladies and gentlemen,

A fourth bar to my CD, that more than likely means I have more time in uniform than anyone on parade today has been alive. Another interpretation could be that I am demonstrating just how old I am with the receipt of this award.

Seriously, I am very honoured to receive the fourth bar to my Canadian Forces decoration, especially in front of our sacred Cross of Sacrifice here at St Paul's, and with troops of the Regiment on parade as witnesses, you all look splendid, as soldiers of The Queen's Own Rifles always do.

The Cross of Sacrifice has been a sacred and important place for generations of members of the Regimental family to pause, reflect, pay respects,

and honour those who have gone before. Today, on Remembrance Sunday, we should all consider how fortunate we are, and give thanks to those who gave their lives and futures so that we can enjoy the freedoms that we do today. Cherish and be prepared to defend your freedom as it is a fragile thing that could easily slip away.

To the soldiers on parade, I offer a few words of advice based on my now 56 years in uniform:

Stick with it, you too could be awarded a fourth bar to your CD someday.

Keep yourselves physically and mentally fit, to do otherwise may cost you your life, or the lives of your mates when in combat.

Master your craft. Field craft, musketry, airborne and other skills have to be mastered and, once mastered, sustained. Don't let the side down by letting your skill sets slip.

Study military history, learn from those who have gone before, study both good and bad lessons.

Leaders must lead with compassion and respect and always have the best interest of their soldiers at heart. This is not as easy as it seems.

Lastly, be proud of yourselves and your Regiment, you are making a contribution to the security of our nation, and nothing could be more honourable.



I could go on, there is nothing new in what I am saying, however, a gentle reminder from an old soldier isn't necessarily a bad thing.

Lana and I have enjoyed our time with the regiment immensely, so much so that we will continue to support and participate regimentally as we are able to. The Regiment is very well led and supported, and I anticipate nothing but good things for the Regiment in the years ahead.

To the family and friends who have joined us today, thank you for coming. Lana and I appreciate you being here to support us as we end this chapter of our lives while wondering what's next. Well maybe not!

Thank you to St Paul's for facilitating the events here today as you do each Remembrance Sunday and Remembrance Day. We are fortunate to have such a fine Regimental church and your support to the Regiment is very much appreciated.

I salute you all and wish you a future of good soldiering.

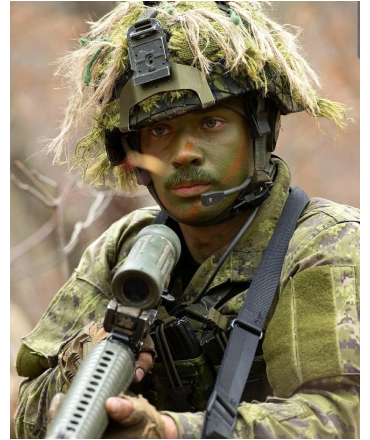
*In Pace Paratus. TR*



# Riflemen: Training Exercises & Deployments







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## Harry Groom: A Pillar In All Communities

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by Micky Fleming



Joseph "Harry" Charles Edward Groom passed away peacefully on August 30, 2021 in Victoria, BC at 87 years of age. Harry was born on December 23, 1933 in Verdun, Quebec to John Richard Groom, fire fighter (23 Dec 1898 Charlottetown, PEI — 20 Sep 1973 Verdun, Que) and Rose Marie Marguerite Joncas (8 Feb 1906 Jacquet River, New Brunswick — 17 Sep 1984 Verdun, Que).

Harry had a good family life in Montreal answering the call of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada in May 1951 when he was 17. He was immediately deployed to post-war Germany. When accepting the Citizen of the Year Award in 2000, Harry stated that "I learned more about people in those two years, than I have in the last twenty. It taught me a lot about comradeship and that you can't get by on your own. Let's just say that I grew up in a hurry."

At age 20, Harry was posted to Calgary, becoming one of the youngest sergeants in the military, working his way up through the ranks to become responsible for a battalion of 200 soldiers. Harry worked at the Quebec Command between 1957 and 1959. In 1960, Harry returned to Calgary where a beautiful young cowgirl from Crossfield, Alberta, Ethel Irene Bartholomew (1928–2002) captured his heart. Harry was posted to Germany again in November 1960. Harry and Ethel were

wed in Iserlohn, Germany on May 22, 1962. It was in 1963 that the young Groom family was posted to Victoria, when the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion QOR was relocated from Currie Barracks in Calgary to Work Point Barracks at Esquimalt Garrison. In 1965, Harry did his first tour of duty as a QOR peacekeeper for the United Nations in Cyprus, where he received a very important — yet very brief — telegram. "Son born 4 Jun 65. Both well" announcing the birth of their only child, Terence John Groom. In 1970 Harry was promoted again to Company Sergeant Major, and again deployed to Cyprus. In 1970, with the downsizing of the Canadian Forces, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada was rebadged as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. In 1975, Harry completed his third and final tour of duty with the PPCLI in Cyprus, which by this time had become a bloody war zone. Harry decided to retire from the military in 1978.

In the words of Harry's last commanding officer: "Groom is scrupulously honest and a completely trustworthy man who can be totally relied upon to loyally execute any task assigned to him. He is quick to grasp the crux of problem situations and able to apply common sense and initiative in resolving difficulties. His ability to manage people, individually and in groups, is highly developed. In his capacity as Company Sergeant Major, he has been

responsible for the daily activities of up to two hundred soldiers, duties which have been accomplished flawlessly. His personal and social life is beyond reproach and has been an example for others to emulate. In summary, Master Warrant Officer Groom has set and performed to the highest possible standards throughout his 25 years of service to his country and his regiment,” wrote H.G. Leitch, Lieutenant-Colonel Commanding Officer.

Harry went on to work as a Victoria Sheriff for 17 years. After Harry retired from active duty in the military, he became very involved in the Princess Patricia Branch #91 Legion in Langford in 1978, holding many Executive and Chair positions year after year, including Branch President for 10 years. Harry worked tirelessly beside volunteers. When the Goldstream Food Bank needed a new home and was dangerously close to closing, it was Harry that brought the Legion to their aid, giving them the Legion base-ment. President of the Legion housing society for many years, Harry was hands on looking after the Prince Edward Lodge.

Harry was the consistent and courageous leader behind the creation of the Alexander Mackie Retirement Community, which provided financial sustainability for Branch #91. Harry had a hand in the naming of Veterans Memorial Parkway. When Branch #91 needed a new cenotaph, it was Harry that brought people together. His favourite word was “team.” Together we built Veterans Memorial Park in tribute to the “Birth of a Nation” where, at the Battle of Vimy Ridge, Canadians gained a sense of national pride and awareness, where the Canadian values of valour, fearlessness, inclusion, compassion, courage and intelligence gained international and self-recognition, for the first time. To say thank you for doing what could not be done, France gave Canada an area one square

kilometre in size at Vimy, which is still Canadian territory today.

Harry’s bronze statue in Veterans Memorial Park can be seen sitting on a bench, reading to a young boy (*photos previous page*). Even with Harry’s accomplished professional and volunteer careers, he still found time for his family, to coach kid’s hockey, teach cadets and scouts, and find a new love. Harry married widow Phyllis Irma Wansbrough

(nee Hopkins 1937–2009) who shared Harry’s passion for their community. With the two of them working together, the Food Bank was a happy place. Harry was a happy man who loved music, the Montreal Canadiens, and to sing and charm the girls with his humour.

Harry had an impeccable military record with

27 years of service and 17 years in the Sheriff’s Office. He was recognized in both 2000 and 2008 as Citizen of the Year, was granted the Royal Canadian Legion’s highest honour, the Meritorious Service Award, in addition to other awards which are among too many to name. Harry Groom was a pillar of our community. What would Harry say about all this? “Not too bad for a guy from Montreal, eh?”

Harry is pre-deceased by his siblings, Mary Myrtle Groom (Lavoie – Favreau), Lottie Groom (Gill), “Jack” John Richard Groom, fire fighter (Gloria), Madeleine Francis Groom (Favreau), George Joseph Groom, Mary Ellen Groom (Little), Kenneth Groom and Linda Groom (Spencer). He is survived by his only child Terence Groom (Theresa Mahan), grandson Michael Groom of Edmonton, AB, who is father to his great grandson, Skyler Groom, and grandson, Hayden Groom of Inukjuak, Quebec.

Harry lived a life of service; he made the world at large and his local community a better place. You will forever inspire the best in us. Harry, we salute you. Safe travels my friend, until we meet again, Micky Fleming. **TR**

***“Groom is scrupulously honest and a completely trustworthy man who can be totally relied upon to loyally execute any task assigned to him. He is quick to grasp the crux of problem situations and able to apply common sense and initiative in resolving difficulties.”***  
***~ LCol H.G. Leitch, CO***

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## John Bennett: One Of The Good Ones

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by CWO (ret'd) Mike Holland



This may sound mean to people today who did not serve before PC was invented, but Johnny Bennett was the butt of countless jokes and pranks because he was such a yappy, pompous pain in the ass. But he was OUR yappy, pompous pain in the ass and we wouldn't want it any other way.

Some scattered memories:

Johnny getting mad or insulted, getting red faced and tapping his foot like Thumper the rabbit.

Tommy MacAdam, Fred "the Bear" Ablett, Johnny and I going to the Swiss Bear lounge and making a stop at the washroom in Union Station to shave off half of John's moustache. Well, it was funny at the time.

The Pioneers coming back in a station wagon from a job at Camp Ipperwash, stopped by the side of the road for a beer and pit stop. Johnny, Billy Cox, Don Peers, Ian Muir climbing an apple tree and all fighting when Billy stepped on John's hand.

Johnny throwing a (training) grenade in through the window of the Officers' Mess at Richmond St Armoury.

Johnny writing a nasty letter to Prime Minister Pearson on QOR letterhead.





Johnny meeting a beautiful young lady and doing the smartest thing in his life, marrying June.

John climbing the roof of Aurora Armoury to make Billy Cox come down, then being insulted when Harry Binns threatened to charge them both.

Going to Barberian's Steak House with John a few times while we were on callout.

Also on callout, John went out to get a haircut while on duty. We wrote up a fake charge sheet for being AWL, CSM Vince Jensen (RCR) formed up Orders Parade with Tommy MacAdam and I as escort, Stan "Magoo" Morris as witness and Johnny as accused.

Paraded before Capt Bouchard, Johnny was given a warning on the AWL but ordered to properly trim his "unmilitary" moustache. John nearly exploded and wouldn't listen when we told him it was a joke.

Always being able to count on John to do any job. One of the most conscientious workers ever.

No matter what jokes were played, Johnny would bounce back.

Going out to lunch or dinner with John & June, Sasquatch & Darlene, Heather & I.

We really did love him. **TR**



*A long serving Senior NCO with The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, John Bennett remained involved with the Regiment even after retiring in the early 1990s. Born in Northern Ireland in 1935, John immigrated from Ulster with his parents in 1935 after serving in the Royal Ulster Rifles. Joining the QOR in 1957, he was a member of the Pioneers and Rifle Team.*



**Q.O.R of C RIFLE TEAM NIAGARA ON THE LAKE 1966**

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## Norm McCracken: A Fighter Till The End

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Canada lost another Canadian veteran, as Major (ret'd) Norman Timothy John McCracken (August 18, 1932 – February 1, 2021 ) left this world on the first of February 2021 for a journey to “meet his maker” in his 89<sup>th</sup> year after a courageous battle with numerous issues, especially Pulmonary Fibrosis, COPD and congestive heart failure. After 32 years together, his final moments were spent with his loving wife Trish.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, his 88<sup>th</sup> birthday was celebrated quietly in August 2020 with his wife and siblings. He took pride in his three siblings living past 80 years of age. Norm graduated from Northern Secondary School and the University of Toronto. His career took him to working for the Nipissing and Toronto District School Boards. He was born in Toronto and lived also in North Bay, Washago and Orillia.

His Army career started in 1947 when he was 14 years old, and he spent his summer at the Royal Canadian Army Cadets Camp in Ipperwash. Following in his father's footsteps, he joined The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada in 1949 and rose through the ranks to become a major in 1966. He spent a lot of hours at the Moss Park Armoury on the Parade Square.

He was an active community volunteer in a wide range of service. Some knew him from his volunteer

leadership of the Young Adult Group at Yonge St. United Church; some because he was a founding member of the 4S Club at Yonge St. United Church; some because he was a President of the Ontario School Counsellors Association; some because he represented the QOR for over 20 years on the National Council of Veterans Associations; some because he was a two-term President of the QORC Association; some because they were teaching colleagues; some because they were students at Park Public School (now Nelson Mandela), Glenview Sr. PS, or Chippewa Secondary School; some because they were fellow members of the Masonic Lodge (North Bay #617), The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, and the Royal Canadian Legion (Branches 344 and 34); some because he participated as an actor in community theatre; some because he was a member of Phi Kappa Sigma; and others because he played hockey and other sports.

Even when life was tough Norm was positive. He will be sadly missed by his family, his QOR family and his many friends.

A service will take place at the National Military Cemetery, Section 103 of Beechwood Cemetery in Ottawa, on April 30, 2022 at 10:30 a.m. For more information, please contact Trish McCracken at [TrishMcC@bell.net](mailto:TrishMcC@bell.net). TR

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## Last Post



In addition to those Riflemen noted elsewhere in this issue, the following members of the Regiment passed away since the last issue of *The Rifleman*:



Gord Hryhoryshen

Ralph Schoenig (*pictured, left*)

Norm McCracken (*pictured, right*)

Clay Downes

Ernie Hughson

Ronald Harvey

Bob Titus

John Bohusz

Hugo Grout

John Bennett

Ray Descotes

Robert (Bob) French

Gord Jenkyn

Don Pryer

Tom Midgley

William Stanfield

Korean Veteran Frank Sypulski

WWII D-Day Veteran Ivor Rooney

Phillip A. Roy

Clifford O'Brien

John Cresswell

Gord Callaghan

Charles Cowan

Charles Edward Groom

Roland (Sam) Stuart

Bob Titus

George Carsted

William George Mountain







**THE 1860 CLUB**  
Supporting The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada

Dear Members of the Regimental Family:

We would like to formally introduce you to the 1860 Club. Since its inception in February of 2021, it has proven to have achieved its intent of unifying and enhancing communications to the Regimental Family and improving fundraising.

The 1860 Club website at [www.1860club.ca](http://www.1860club.ca) is a digital platform that has facilitated a significant enhancement to our communications, allowing members to stay connected through emails comprised of reports: namely, the monthly "The Rifles Report", the quarterly "Powder Horn" newsletter, and the annual "Rifleman" magazine. The Club has further extended regimental communications through a robust social media presence.

Fundraising is essential to the continued support of our members and their families and the preservation of our history. As you are aware, the lead component for fundraising within the Regiment is the Regimental Trust—which, as a registered charity, manages all aspects of fundraising and accounting.

With 2021 being the inaugural year, the 1860 Club has introduced a special category of donor called "Founders." This category is only available to donors who contribute \$1860.00 or more to the Trust by the 31st of December 2021. The Founders will be recognized as such for the life of the 1860 Club.

The 1860 Club portal on the website allows you to donate securely to The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Trust Fund. The technology associated with the 1860 Club tracks contributions on a cumulative basis, allowing the Regiment to publicly recognize and reward the generosity of our donors. A donation chart listing the benefits of membership in the 1860 Club at four contribution levels is included in the attached membership guide.

We encourage you to visit the Club website at [www.1860club.ca](http://www.1860club.ca). Membership is complimentary, which will guarantee that you will have access to the monthly reports and other important regimental notices. If you wish to make a donation to the Trust, you may do so after creating an account, or at any time in the future. As noted above, if you contribute \$1860.00 or more to the Trust by the end of the year, you will be permanently designated as a Founder of the Club.

Thank you for your continued support to the Regiment.

*In Pace Paratus,*

Major General (Ret'd) Walter M. Holmes MStJ, MSM, CD, MBE  
Former Honorary Colonel, The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada

Lieutenant Colonel Scott Moody, CD  
Commanding Officer, The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada

Major (Ret'd) Tom Schultz, CD  
President of the Regimental Trust



SOUTH AFRICA 1899-1900  
FESTUBERT, 1915  
FLERS-COURCELETTE  
ARRAS  
AMIENS  
PURGATORY MONS  
CAEN  
FALAISE  
CALAIS, 1944  
WALL FLATS  
DVENTER



YPRES, 1917  
YWANTAGE  
ANGRY RIDGE  
SCARPE RIVER  
TRENCHENTREAN  
FRANCE AND FLANDERS, 1917-18  
COFFERT  
DUNKIRK  
THE BULLETS  
THE BOMBERS  
WALLON WEST OF BRUSSELS, 1918

ALLIED WITH  
THE BRITISH ARMY